

Panel on Manpower

List of outstanding items for discussion

(position as at 25 May 2006)

**Proposed timing
for discussion**

Items proposed by members

1. Report of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China in the light of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights issued its Concluding Observations on 11 May 2001 after its hearing on the above Report. The United Nations Committee has raised a wide range of issues in its Concluding Observations. At its meeting on 12 June 2001, the LegCo Panel on Home Affairs suggested that the relevant Panels should discuss issues raised in the Concluding Observations under their purview. The Chairman of the Panel on Manpower has agreed that the Panel should discuss issues raised in the Concluding Observations which are under the purview of the Panel.

To be confirmed

In its letter to the Chairman on 23 June 2003 (LC Paper No. CB(2)2744/02-03(01)), the Administration advised that the Second Report had been submitted to the Central Government.

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights issued its Concluding Observations on 19 May 2005 after its hearing on the Second Report submitted by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government. The Concluding Observations had been circulated to members of the Panel on Home Affairs and all other Legislative Council Members vide LC Paper Nos. CB(2) 1634/04-05 and CB(2) 1706/04-05 on 20 and 30 May 2005 respectively.

**Proposed timing
for discussion**

2. Problem of unemployment of the youth

Hon CHAN Yuen-han suggested on 30 October 2001 that the problem of youth unemployment should be discussed by the Panel, and youth organisations should be invited to give views on the subject.

To be confirmed

At the meeting on 18 April 2002, the Administration briefed members on the proposed Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme which aims at addressing the rising unemployment rate of young people aged between 15 and 24.

At the meeting on 31 October 2002, the Administration briefed members on a series of measures to promote employment opportunities for people at all levels.

At the meeting on 20 February 2003, the Administration briefed members on a special project entitled "Action S4" which aims to provide intensive training and counselling services to vulnerable trainees of the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme.

At the meeting on 17 July 2003, the Administration briefed members on the progress of the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme and a special project co-organised with the Professional Validation Council of Hong Kong under the Scheme entitled "Youth Work Experience and Skills Enhancement Programme for the Manufacturing Industry" which aims at providing employment and training opportunities for young people and supply a pool of well trained personnel to meet the needs of the manufacturing industry.

At the briefing on the Chief Executive's (CE's) 2004 Policy Address on 15 January 2004, the Administration briefed members on the proposed extension of the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme for 2 years and a one-year pilot scheme to train and assist 1 000 young people aged 18 to 24 to become self-employed. Members discussed and supported the proposals at the Panel meeting on 12 February 2004.

Funding approval for the two proposals was given by the Finance Committee on 27 February 2004.

**Proposed timing
for discussion**

Upon request by members at the meeting on 17 June 2004, the Administration has provided a paper on the progress of the youth employment and training programmes offered by the Labour Department (LD). The paper was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(2)3136/03-04 on 21 July 2004.

At the meeting on 21 March 2006, the Administration briefed members on the progress of the Youth Pre-employment Training Programme and the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme, and the findings of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (HKPU)'s consultancy studies on the two programmes. The studies conducted by HKPU concluded that both programmes had positive functions and were of value to society. They also recommend improvement measures to the Government and its social partners participating in the programmes. Members noted that LD would continue to offer the two programmes for youths in 2006.

3. Problem of unemployment of the middle-aged

Hon CHAN Yuen-han, Hon WONG Kwok-hing and Hon KWONG Chi-kin suggested in their letter dated 16 December 2004 that the problem of unemployment of persons aged 40 to 50 should be discussed by the Panel.

To be confirmed

4. Proposals to extend the applicability of the Employment Ordinance to government employees on non-civil service contract terms, and employees who are not employed under a continuous contract

At the meeting on 2 November 2001, Hon LEUNG Fu-wah indicated that he and two other members in the Labour Constituency would jointly introduce a Member's Bill to extend the applicability of the Employment Ordinance to those who are employed by the Government on non-civil service contract terms. They will make another proposal to extend the same to those who are not employed under a continuous contract (i.e. persons who are employed for less than four weeks and whose working hours are less than 18 in each week).

To be confirmed

**Proposed timing
for discussion**

At the meeting on 15 November 2001, Hon LEUNG Fu-wah informed members that the said Member's Bill jointly proposed by Hon CHAN Kwok-keung, Hon LI Fung-ying and himself had been submitted to the President of LegCo for consideration. Members agreed that the proposals should be discussed by the Panel when ready. On 14 March 2002, the President ruled that the Bill relates to public expenditure and Government policy and therefore may not be introduced by the members.

As suggested by Hon LI Fung-ying at the meeting on 16 May 2002, members agreed that the report by LD concerning protection for workers who are not employed under a continuous contract should be discussed by the Panel once it is ready.

The protection of workers not employed under a continuous contract was discussed at the Panel meeting on 16 June 2005. The Administration advised the Panel that it would conduct a special topic enquiry to gather updated information on employees who were not working under a continuous contract and study overseas experience. The matter would then be discussed by the Labour Advisory Board before reverting to the Panel.

5. Creation of job opportunities

At the meeting between Members and Kwai Tsing District Council (K&TDC) members on 29 November 2001, K&TDC members expressed concern about the Government's assistance in the placement of workers with low educational attainment for jobs in a knowledge-based society. They requested that consideration should be given to developing labour intensive industries, such as catering and food packing industries to complement the promotion of Hong Kong as an attractive tourist destination, as a long-term measure for provision of job opportunities to workers of low educational attainment. As the matter relates to policy issues, Members present at the meeting agreed that it should be referred to the Panel on Manpower for follow-up.

To be confirmed

At the meeting on 31 October 2002, the Administration briefed members on a series of measures to promote employment opportunities for people at all levels.

**Proposed timing
for discussion**

The second progress report on job creation as at 30 September 2002 provided by the Administration was circulated vide LC Paper No. CB(2)456/02-03 on 25 November 2002.

At the meeting on 28 March 2003, the Administration briefed members on measures to strengthen assistance to the middle-aged unemployed to seek employment.

At the briefing on CE's 2004 Policy Address on 15 January 2004, the Administration briefed members on the progress made in 2003.

Hon CHAN Yuen-han, Hon WONG Kwok-hing and Hon KWONG Chi-kin suggested in their letter on 16 December 2004 that the following issues related to the creation of jobs should be discussed by the Panel –

- (a) assisting the development of the recycling industry to create more jobs;
- (b) local precasting of more construction parts to create more job opportunities for local workers;
- (c) the employment of more local workers in public works projects/contracts.

Regarding item (b), Hon LI Fung-ying requested in her letter dated 27 April 2006 to the Panel Chairman and at the Panel meeting on Manpower on 28 April 2006 that it should be brought up for discussion, in the context of encouraging locally-precast construction components for use in public works and public housing projects. Members expressed support and further suggested that a joint meeting with the relevant Panels could be held, if necessary. Government bureaux, including the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, the Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau and the Economic Development and Labour Bureau should be invited to the meeting.

**Proposed timing
for discussion**

6. Employees' claims for periodical payment for temporary incapacity and other compensation as a result of work-related injury

On 30 April 2002, some DRMs met with a deputation comprising a group of injured workers who requested for an improvement in the services provided by LD in assisting injured workers to claim for outstanding periodical payment for temporary incapacity and/or other compensation as a result of work-related injury.

To be confirmed

In a case conference with the Administration on 21 May 2002, DRMs present at the meeting opined that instead of employers making periodical payment and other compensation to injured workers and seeking reimbursement of the amount paid to injured workers from insurers thereafter, insurers should be required to settle the periodical payment and other compensation direct with injured workers. These Members suggested that the matter be followed up by the Panel on Manpower.

At the meeting on 17 July 2003, members agreed that the Administration should provide further information before deciding on whether to delete the issue from the list of outstanding items.

7. Feasibility of provision of one-stop service by the Labour Department in handling cases of arrears of wages

Item raised by Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung at the meeting on 21 November 2002. At the meeting, he pointed out that employees who are owed wages by their insolvent employers are normally required to go through a number of processes with LD, the Labour Tribunal and the Legal Aid Department before they could apply for financial assistance from the Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund. To streamline the administrative procedures involved and to expedite the process, he suggested that the feasibility of LD providing one-stop service for handling cases of arrears of wages be explored.

To be confirmed

**Proposed timing
for discussion**

Members agreed that the issue should be discussed at the meeting in January 2003 if the relevant information from the Administration will not be ready for discussion at the meeting in December 2002. Subsequent to the meeting, the Administration has advised that the relevant information will not be ready for discussion at the December meeting.

At the joint meeting of the Panel on Administration of Justice and Legal Services and Panel on Manpower on 6 May 2003, members again requested the Administration to consider the provision of one-stop service by the Labour Department. At the Panel meeting on Manpower on 19 June 2003, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan suggested that the item should be discussed at a future meeting.

The suggestion of the provision of one-stop service by the Labour Department was raised again by Hon LEE Cheuk-yan at the Panel meeting on 18 December 2003. The Administration did not find the idea useful in reducing the time required for the different services. To expedite the wage claim process, the Administration was discussing with the Judiciary and reviewing the streamlining of the administrative procedure.

8. Financial position of the Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund

When the Finance Committee considered the proposal of extending a bridging loan to the Protection of Wages on Insolvency Fund (PWIF) at its meeting on 8 November 2002, the Administration made the following undertakings in the light of the views expressed by Members -

To be confirmed

- (a) to report to the Panel on Financial Affairs and Panel on Manpower the outcome of the review of sections 273 and 275 of the Companies Ordinance (Cap. 32), with a view to ascertaining the need to introduce amendments to these two sections to enhance deterrence against unscrupulous employers or company directors for abusing the PWIF; and

- (b) to keep the Panel on Manpower posted of developments in relation to adjustment to the level of Business Registration Certificate levy where circumstances warrant.

Regarding item (a), the Administration has advised that sections 273 and 275 of the Companies Ordinance are related to insolvent trading, and are being reviewed in the context of the insolvent trading provisions under the Companies (Corporate Rescue) Bill (the Bill). The scrutiny of the Bill has been held in abeyance since December 2001 to allow time for the Administration to conduct consultation on the trust account arrangement under the Bill. The Administration issued the consultation paper in early September 2003 and intends to revert to the Bills Committee after the expiry of the consultation period in early November 2003.

The prevention of abuse of PWIF was discussed at the Panel meetings on 26 April 2005 and 15 December 2005.

9. Protection against anti-union discrimination

At the meeting on 6 May 2003, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan requested the Administration to respond to the recommendations of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to address the complaints lodged by the trade union of Cathay Pacific Airways concerning discrimination against trade union. The Administration undertook to respond when official documents were received from ILO.

To be confirmed

10. Factories and Industrial Undertakings (Medical Examinations) Regulation and the related Industrial Training (Construction Industry) (Amendment) Bill

The above Regulation and Amendment Bill were held in abeyance due to economic reasons. At the meeting on 6 May 2003, the Administration said that it would review the situation at the end of 2003 and consult the relevant parties on the way forward. It also undertook to revert to the Panel once a decision on the way forward was made.

To be confirmed

**Proposed timing
for discussion**

The Administration advised on 29 January 2004 that it was reviewing the implications of the proposed Regulations for affected employers and employees under the present economic climate and employment situation. Relevant employers' associations and trade unions as well as the Labour Advisory Board would be consulted in due course.

The Bill has lapsed following the dissolution of the second term of LegCo.

The Administration has advised that it has carefully assessed the implications of the proposed Regulation and the Amendment Bill for employers and employees under the current economic climate and come to the considered view that it would not be advisable to re-introduce these pieces of legislation. Nevertheless, the Labour Department will continue to promote voluntary medical examination of workers engaged in the hazardous occupations through disseminating publicity materials, organizing health talks and exhibitions, and conducting promotional visits to target establishments. The Department has also sent letters to relevant employers' associations and labour unions, and to all doctors to raise their awareness of the importance of medical examinations for workers.

11. Establishment of a central compensation fund

At the meeting on 20 May 2004, Hon LEE Cheuk-yan requested the Administration to brief the Panel on the results of its study on the establishment of a central compensation fund. The Administration advised that the study, also undertaken by the insurance industry, would not be ready for discussion until after July 2004.

To be confirmed

The proposed measures to improve the employees' compensation insurance system in Hong Kong was discussed at the Panel meeting on 19 May 2005.

**Proposed timing
for discussion**

12. Problem of arrears of wages of workers in the catering trade

Hon CHAN Yuen-han, Hon WONG Kwok-hing and Hon KWONG Chi-kin suggested in their letter dated 16 December 2004 that the problem of arrears of wages of workers in the catering trade should be discussed by the Panel.

To be confirmed

13. Employment policy

Hon CHAN Yuen-han, Hon WONG Kwok-hing and Hon KWONG Chi-kin suggested in their letter dated 16 December 2004 that the relationship between population and employment policy should be examined to facilitate the formulation of long term population policy and employment policy.

To be confirmed

14. Establishment of a re-employment support scheme

Hon CHAN Yuen-han, Hon WONG Kwok-hing and Hon KWONG Chi-kin suggested in their letter dated 16 December 2004 that the establishment of a re-employment support scheme to encourage the unemployed to join the labour force should be discussed by the Panel.

To be confirmed

15. Progress of establishment of a qualifications framework

Hon CHAN Yuen-han, Hon WONG Kwok-hing and Hon KWONG Chi-kin suggested in their letter dated 16 December 2004 that the progress of the establishment of the qualifications framework proposed by the Administration should be discussed by the Panel.

To be confirmed

16. Measures to combat illegal employment

Hon CHAN Yuen-han, Hon WONG Kwok-hing and Hon KWONG Chi-kin suggested in their letter dated 16 December 2004 that the measures adopted by the Administration to combat illegal employment should be jointly discussed by the Panel and the Panel on Security.

To be confirmed

**Proposed timing
for discussion**

17. Problems relating to the Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme

Hon CHAN Yuen-han, Hon WONG Kwok-hing and Hon KWONG Chi-kin suggested in their letter dated 16 December 2004 that the following issues related to the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) scheme should be discussed by the Panel –

- (a) failure of employers in the construction and catering industries to make MPF contributions;
- (b) MPF coverage for domestic helpers; and
- (c) problem of employers evading MPF contributions through renewal of employment contracts at less than 60-day intervals.

Hon LEE Cheuk-yan suggested at the meeting on 16 February 2006 that the following issues should be examined by the Panel –

To be confirmed

- (a) whether severance payment and long service payment should be offset by employers' MPF contribution;
- (b) whether housing allowance should be counted towards relevant income in the calculation of employer's MPF contribution;
- (c) whether the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority should be empowered to recover the outstanding MPF contribution from an employer, if the employer had not enrolled in a MPF scheme for one or two years; and
- (d) whether employers should be allowed to choose MPF schemes for employees.

Hon CHAN Yuen-han suggested at the meeting on 16 February 2006 that, with the increase in the number of self-employed persons and casual workers in many industries, the extension of Industry Schemes should be studied.

**Proposed timing
for discussion**

18. Recognition of sick leave certificates issued by chiropractors as valid sick leave certificates

Item proposed by Hon CHAN Yuen-han, Hon WONG Kwok-hing and Hon KWONG Chi-kin on 8 April 2005, who considered that the Employment Ordinance should be amended to recognise sick leave certificates issued by chiropractors as valid sick leave certificates.

To be confirmed

19. Employment services for unemployed Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients

Item proposed at the meeting on 17 November 2005 by Hon CHAN Yuen-han, who was concerned about the employment services provided to unemployed Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients.

To be confirmed

20. Review of the Employment Ordinance

Item proposed by Hon WONG Kwok-hing at the meeting on 19 January 2006. The issue was scheduled for discussion at the meeting in March 2006 but deferred at the request of the Administration.

To be confirmed

The Administration has proposed to brief members at the meeting on 28 April 2006 on a legislative proposal to amend the Employment Ordinance to ensure that commission is included in the calculation of Holiday Pay and Annual Leave Pay. Prior to the April meeting, the Administration requested that the item be deferred until the Panel meeting on 30 May 2006.

**Proposed timing
for discussion**

Items likely to be proposed by the Administration

21. Funding requirements of the Pneumoconiosis Ex Gratia Scheme

The Administration intends to consult Members on a proposal to provide capital injection into the Pneumoconiosis Ex Gratia Scheme which is funded by the Government.

To be confirmed

22. Provision of additional compensation for non-compliance with compulsory order of reinstatement or re-engagement

The Administration intends to inform members of the progress of the Administration's proposal to include in the Employment (Amendment) Bill a provision on additional compensation for the employee in case the employer fails to comply with a compulsory order of reinstatement or re-engagement.

To be confirmed

23. A Review of Hong Kong's Occupational Diseases in 2005

The Administration intends to brief Members on Hong Kong's occupational diseases in 2005.

To be confirmed

24. A Review of Hong Kong's Occupational Safety Performance in 2005

The Administration intends to brief Members on Hong Kong's occupational safety performance in 2005.

To be confirmed

25. Measures to promote harmonious labour relations

The Administration intends to brief members on measures taken to reinforce the promotion of harmonious labour relations with particular reference to the construction industry.

To be confirmed