

立法會
Legislative Council

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Paper for the House Committee meeting on 29 June 2007

Proposed overseas duty visit by the Panel on Manpower

Purpose

This paper seeks the permission of the House Committee under rule 22(v) of the House Rules (HR) for the Panel on Manpower to undertake an overseas duty visit to the United Kingdom (UK) and France for the purpose of understanding their experience in implementing statutory minimum wage.

Background

2. The Panel on Manpower is tasked to monitor and examine Government policies and issues of public concern relating to labour and manpower planning matters. The issue of whether statutory minimum wage should be introduced in Hong Kong is one of the major areas of concern of the Panel.

3. On 11 October 2006, the Chief Executive announced in his Policy Address the launching of a Wage Protection Movement (WPM) for employees in the cleansing and guarding services sectors. Under WPM, participating enterprises/organisations pledge to offer cleaning workers and security guards wages not lower than the relevant average market rates as stipulated in the Census and Statistics Department's Quarterly Report of Wage and Payroll Statistics. An overall review of WPM will be conducted by the Labour Advisory Board in October 2008. If the review finds that WPM has failed to yield satisfactory results, the Administration will set out to prepare for the introduction of legislation for a minimum wage in these two sectors. The subject matter has become a standing item for discussion at the Panel's regular meetings.

4. Some members have expressed doubt about the effectiveness of WPM in providing wage protection, given that WPM is a voluntary movement. These members are strongly of the view that legislation for a minimum wage should be introduced without delay so as to protect the interests of the low-income group. Some other members, however, consider that the introduction of minimum wage legislation is not necessarily the only way to provide wage protection. In their view, sufficient time

should be given for WPM to prove that the purpose can be achieved without enactment of legislation.

5. To enable members to have a better understanding of overseas experience, the Panel agreed at its meeting on 17 May 2007 that the Panel should undertake a duty visit to UK and France to study the two countries' experience in implementing statutory minimum wage. Specifically, the visit aims to study -

- (a) Government's policy on minimum wage;
- (b) the mechanism for setting and adjusting the statutory minimum wage;
- (c) the enforcement and monitoring of the implementation of the statutory minimum wage;
- (d) the impact of the statutory minimum wage on the business environment and labour market; and
- (e) measures adopted by the Government to address issues of concern or problems arising from the implementation of statutory minimum wage.

Details of the visit

Visit programme

6. The Panel has agreed that the visit will be from Sunday, 23 September 2007, to Saturday, 29 September 2007. During the stay in UK and France, the delegation will hold meetings with relevant government officials, enforcement agencies, monitoring authorities and other relevant organisations, such as employer associations and labour unions.

7. The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices in London and Brussels are drawing up a visit programme and will provide assistance in making preparation for the visit.

Members of the delegation

8. Seven Members (including one non-Panel Member) have indicated interest in joining the visit. The names of these Members are in **Appendix I**.

Funding arrangements

9. As approved by The Legislative Council Commission, each Member (except the President) is provided with an overseas duty visit account of \$55,000 for the purpose of duty visits outside Hong Kong organised by committees, other than the Parliamentary Liaison Subcommittee, of the Council during the 2004-2008 term. Any expenditure incurred in the term in excess of \$55,000 has to be borne by the Member personally. However, if by the end of the term, there are unused balances in Members' overseas duty visit accounts, the funds available will be used to pay those Members who have expended more than their allocation, in proportion to their excess qualifying expenditure.

10. A preliminary estimate of the expenditure to be incurred by each participating Member for the duty visit is about \$30,600 (economy class air passage) or \$58,000 (business class air passage). A breakdown of the estimated expenditure is in **Appendix II**.

Advice sought

11. HR22(v) provides that should any Panel consider it necessary to undertake any activities outside Hong Kong under the name of the Panel of the Council, the prior permission of the House Committee shall be sought.

12. The House Committee's permission is sought for the Panel to undertake the overseas duty visit as proposed.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
27 June 2007

Panel on Manpower

**Members who have indicated interest in joining
the duty visit to the United Kingdom and France
(23 to 29 September 2007)
(position as at 27.6.2007)**

Panel members

Hon LAU Chin-shek, JP (Chairman)

Hon LEE Cheuk-yan

Hon CHAN Yuen-han, JP

Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung

Hon LI Fung-ying, BBS, JP

Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung

Non-Panel Member

Dr Hon LUI Ming-wah, SBS, JP

Total: 7 Members

Panel on Manpower

Overseas duty visit to the United Kingdom and France
from 23 to 29 September 2007

Breakdown of the estimated expenses

Items	Estimated expenses HK\$ (per person)	
	<u>Economy class</u>	<u>Business class</u>
1. Return air ticket Hong Kong / London / Paris / London / Hong Kong	8,200	35,000
2. Hotel accommodation		
(a) London (3 nights) (23 - 25 September 2007)		7,100
(b) Paris (2 nights) (26 - 27 September 2007)		4,400
3. Meals, in-town travelling and sundries		
(a) London		4,700
(b) Paris		3,000
4. Travel insurance		1,000
5. Airport tax and charges	2,200	2,800
Total :	30,600	58,000

NOTE :

1. Other expenditure including hospitality, local group transportation, interpretation services and souvenirs will be charged against other votes of the Secretariat.
2. Updated rates of overseas subsistence allowance are adopted.
3. Exchange rate as at mid-June 2007 -
1 GBP = HK\$15.4325
1 EUR = HK\$10.52975
4. Airfare quotation obtained in June 2007.