

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)2164/10-11

Ref : CB2/PL/MP

Paper for the House Committee meeting on 24 June 2011

**Proposed overseas duty visit to the Republic of Korea
by the Panel on Manpower**

Purpose

This paper seeks the permission of the House Committee for the Panel on Manpower ("the Panel") to conduct an overseas duty visit to the Republic of Korea to study the experience in the implementation of standard working hours.

Background

2. There have been calls over the years from labour unions and some Legislative Council Members to prescribe maximum working hours in Hong Kong. According to the Administration, the issue of standard working hours is a complex one. Employers, employees and various sectors of the community have divergent views on whether standard working hours should be introduced in Hong Kong.

3. On 13 October 2010, the Chief Executive announced in his Policy Address that with the enactment of the Minimum Wage Ordinance (Cap. 608), it was time to embark on a policy study on standard working hours. At the Panel meeting on 21 October 2010, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare advised in connection with his briefing on relevant policy initiatives in the Chief Executive's 2010-2011 Policy Address that the Administration would conduct an in-depth study on the issue.

4. To enable members to grasp the latest development on the subject and facilitate their deliberations on the issues concerned, the Panel found it worthwhile to make reference to overseas experience in respect of the implementation of standard working hours. The Panel had asked the Research Division of the Legislative Council Secretariat to gather information on the implementation of standard working hours in 10

selected places (namely, Finland, France, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, the United Kingdom and the United States).

5. According to the research findings of the Research Division, the Republic of Korea first introduced a standard working hour requirement of 48 hours per week in 1953. The requirement was revised to 46 hours in 1989 and 44 hours in 1991. Thereafter, the requirement was further revised to 40 hours per week, which was to be implemented in six stages. The first stage was implemented on 1 July 2004 and the last stage was to be implemented on 1 July 2011. The Panel decided at its meeting on 17 March 2011 to conduct a duty visit to the Republic of Korea in late July 2011 to study the following areas in respect of standard working hours -

- (a) government policy on standard working hours;
- (b) the enforcement and monitoring of the implementation of standard working hours;
- (c) the impact of standard working hours on the business environment and the labour market; and
- (d) measures adopted by the Korean Government to address issues of concern or problems arising from the implementation of standard working hours.

The visit

Visit programme

6. The delegation intends to meet with the relevant committee of the National Assembly, relevant government officials, academics, as well as major labour unions and employers' associations. The Panel has agreed that subject to the confirmation of the receiving organizations, the visit should be tentatively scheduled from 24 to 28 July 2011.

7. Assistance is being sought from the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Tokyo in drawing up the visit programme and making preparation for the visit.

Participants of the visit

8. With the approval of the Panel, a circular has been issued to invite Panel members and other non-Panel Members to indicate interest in joining the visit. As at 21 June 2011, a total of eight Panel members and four non-Panel Members have indicated interest in joining the visit. A list of the participants is in the **Appendix**.

Funding arrangements

9. As approved by The Legislative Council Commission, each Member is provided with an overseas duty visit account of \$55,000 for the purpose of duty visits outside Hong Kong organized by committees of the Council. The fund in the account is for use by the Member in a four-year term. Any expenditure incurred in excess of the available balance in a four-year term has to be paid by the Member personally.

10. A preliminary estimate of the expenditure (including airfare, hotel accommodation, meals, in-town travelling and miscellaneous expenses etc.) to be incurred by each participating member for the proposed duty visit is about \$17,393 (for economy class air passage) or \$28,293 (for business class air passage).

Advice sought

11. Rule 22(v) of the House Rules 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 conduct the overseas duty visit as proposed.

Panel on Manpower

**List of Members who have indicated interest in taking part in
the duty visit to the Republic of Korea from 24 to 28 July 2011**

(Position as at 21 June 2011)

Members of the Panel on Manpower

Hon LEE Cheuk-yan (Chairman)

Hon LI Fung-ying, SBS, JP (Deputy Chairman)

Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung

Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che

Hon WONG Kwok-kin, BBS

Hon IP Wai-ming, MH

Dr Hon PAN Pey-chyou

Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung

Non-Panel Members

Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP

Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP

Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau

Hon WONG Yuk-man

(Total : 12 members)