

Advisers reach consensus on civil servants' files

By M Y Sung in Beijing

A CHINESE advisory body on Hong Kong affairs has reached a consensus on handing over civil servants' files, but will only announce its decision this afternoon.

The dispute over the transfer of information on civil servants was triggered off by a government revelation that sensitive information about civil servants would be destroyed.

The row escalated when the government said the archives would be directly handed to the future Special Administrative Region (SAR) government, with Beijing maintaining the information must be given to China rather than the SAR.

The Preliminary Working Committee's

(PWC) political sub-group began a two-day session in Beijing yesterday, in which it discussed a report on civil service affairs submitted by the sub-group's civil service panel.

The report also touched on the sensitive issue of the transfer of information.

PWC political sub-group leader for the Hong Kong team, Leung Chun-ying, said the sub-group had reached consensus, adding that he would only disclose its decision through a formal written press release today.

"Our position will be made very clear. To be prudent, we will tell the public in written form," Mr Leung said.

Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office

director Lu Ping had issued a tough warning to the government that information on civil servants must be handed to the China's central government.

Mainland team convener Xiao Weiyun revealed that the sub-group's view would be within the scope Mr Lu had indicated.

Mr Xiao refused to say through which channel the information would be transferred to the Chinese government. He said he would not say, but that it was easy to guess.

Possible channels are the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group (JLG), the first chief executive of the SAR, and the preparatory committee, a powerful body representing the Chinese government on the sovereignty

transfer. PWC member and academic Lau Siu-kai said the sub-group had reached only basic consensus that the information be handed to the Chinese government.

However, no concrete arrangements had emerged for formally receiving the archives.

Professor Lau said the JLG would possibly be the channel for the transfer, but there might be other alternatives.

The report of the civil service panel covered a wide range of topics, including civil servants involvement in politics, consultation with trade unions and ratification of the system.

Mr Leung said the Basic Law's article 103 regarding civil servants would be further

discussed as its stipulation was essential to the stability of the civil service.

Hong Kong's previous system of recruitment, employment, assessment, discipline, training and management for the public service, including special bodies for their appointment, pay, and conditions of service, should be maintained, except for provisions for privileged treatment of foreign nationals.

Meanwhile, the PWC's legal sub-group leader Simon Li expressed discontent over the government's announcement that the briefing would be scheduled next week.

Mr Li said the government should not unilaterally make the decision as they had not yet agreed to any specific date.

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