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# Activists in last-ditch bid to save labour laws

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Pro-democracy groups and unionists are making last-ditch efforts to oppose the suspension of five labour laws.

Two groups of Democrats will stage sit-ins outside MTR stations this afternoon following the start of a 48-hour sit-in by colleagues at Kwun Tong MTR station yesterday.

The Legislative Provisions (Suspension of Operation) Bill 1997 is expected to be passed at a sitting of the Provisional Legislative Council tomorrow. But members will attempt to allow a bill increasing compensation for occupational deafness to take effect.

Hunger striker and unionist Leung Yiu-chung said he was hopeful the deafness law would be passed, but added the other four labour laws were as important. He said he would continue his hunger strike until tomorrow.

A group of democrats led by ousted legislator Fred Li Wah-ming yesterday began a 48-hour sit-in outside Kwun Tong MTR station.

One of the petitioners, provisional urban councillor Francis Tang Chi-ho, said he thought the laws would be frozen, but believed it was worthwhile to organise a signature campaign.

"This is a good chance for us to educate the public, especially workers, about labour rights. Many people have been influenced [by the claim] the bills were passed in a rush, so we can explain to them what exactly is happening now."

The signatures will be presented to the Chief Executive's Office tomorrow and a rally will be staged.

Another group of democrats, including ousted legislators Dr Yeung Sum and Tsang Kin-shing, will peti-

## LEGISLATION FACING SUSPENSION

### Employment (Amendment) Ordinance 1997

**Aim:** Strengthen protection of employees against anti-union discrimination.

**Government view:** Labour Advisory Board (LAB) did not support it. Similar to a government bill, giving rise to confusion. Inappropriate for courts to order re-employment of staff by companies.

**Unions:** Ordinance fully protects employees. Government ordinance was taken into consideration.

### Occupational Deafness (Compensation) (Amendment) Ordinance 1997

**Aim:** Increase compensation for workers who go deaf because of industrial noise.

**Government:** Funds will be exhausted within a year. The Occupational Deafness Compensation Board will not be able to function. LAB did not support it.

**Unions:** The Government should ensure funds and should be accountable to the legislature by working out how to implement the ordinance.

### Employees' Rights to Representation, Consultation and Collective Bargaining Ordinance

**Aim:** Give new rights to union members. These include right to be consulted on matters affecting their interest.

**Government:** Existing system of dispute resolution works well. Not conducive to industrial harmony. Inadequate consideration of employers' interest. Economic competitiveness undermined. Most LAB members did not support it.

**Unions:** A stable and fair system will maintain harmonious industrial relations. Recognition of status of unions will improve healthy competition. The law does not hinder dispute resolution.

► The pro-Beijing Federation of Trade Unions (FTU) has reservations and wants the issue dealt with by the LAB.

### Employment (Amendment) No 3 Ordinance 1997

**Aim:** Adding May 1 as a statutory holiday.

**Government:** Hurts production and work schedules and adds costs to businesses. LAB did not support it.

**Unions:** Costs are minimal.

### Trade Union (Amendment) Ordinance 1997

**Aim:** Ease curbs on trade unions. Allows them to set up 'political funds' that can be used for wider purposes.

**Government:** Not conducive to trade union development. Using funds for non-labour matters is contrary to union objectives. Employers on LAB did not support it.

**Unions:** Union members' interest best served by allowing them the final say on how to use funds.

► FTU has reservations.

tion outside Chai Wan MTR station today. Mr Tsang said the provisional legislature was ignoring public opinion and represented tycoons, rather than ordinary people.

The Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood will stage a sit-in outside the Legislative Council chamber from tonight until 1.00 pm tomorrow.