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Exco.
Labour Union
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Approval for plan to import more workers

By FANNY WONG

THE Executive Council yesterday approved a scheme which allows the import of up to 25,000 skilled and semi-skilled foreign workers to ease the labour shortage.

The decision met strong opposition from the six employee representatives on the Labour Advisory Board and two Legislative Councillors representing unions, who issued a joint statement demanding the abolition of the scheme.

Officials will brief the board and the Omelco Manpower Panel about the decision tomorrow.

The two bodies were notified of the planned meetings yesterday afternoon.

A coalition of unions will tonight hold an emergency meeting to plan protest action against the scheme.

Officials are expected to start implementing the scheme as soon as possible.

Yesterday's Exco discussion was the second on the expanded scheme, as councillors deferred their decision last month until officials had supplied more information.

The statement put out by the Labour Advisory Board and Legco representatives

denounced the Government for ignoring the views of local workers.

Under the scheme, the 25,000 imported workers, double the current ceiling, can have their two-year contracts extended twice, meaning they can work up to six years in the territory.

The decision not to set sub-quotas for individual industries is considered by the unionists to be questionable.

They said it showed the Government was not fully aware of the current shortage and that was why it failed to come up with a breakdown.

Just before Exco voted on the government proposal yesterday morning, about 100 construction workers protested outside the Central Government Offices.

The Hongkong Construction Industry Employees General Union urged the Government not to extend the stay for the overseas workers.

The Federation of Hongkong and Kowloon Labour Unions said allowing in more foreign workers would deal a blow to local workers facing problems of unemployment and under-employment.