

Academic for Umelco's presence in JLG talks

AN academic has suggested that Umelco members should attend some of the meetings of the Joint Liaison Group, but without a permanent membership in the body.

Dr Hocking Wong of the International Affairs College told a seminar yesterday that Umelco members should not have statutory membership in the group as it would be against foreign diplomatic principles.

But when the liaison group discusses issues concerning only Hongkong, with no other countries involved, Umelco should have the right to send representatives to attend the meeting.

Last week, the question of whether a local Chinese official should be included in the British side of the Joint Liaison Group had engaged the attention of the public.

The general sentiment was that the territory would benefit with the presence of a local official in the group as he will represent Hongkong's interest.

At this juncture, Wong said the matter could be settled with the granting of diplomatic privileges and immunities to the official in Beijing, London and Hongkong as required under Annex II of the Sino-British Joint Declaration.

He pointed out that China would not object to the choosing of the Secretary for Trade and Industry, Mr Eric Ho, as a member as his expertise is needed to deal with Hongkong's future trade and commerce.

As for an earlier speculation that the Deputy Secretary for General Duties, Mr John Chan, has been proposed as one of the members in the British team, Wong said China did not like the idea as Chan holds a political role.