



## DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Governor's question-and-answer session

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Following is the transcript of the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten's question-and-answer session in the Legislative Council today (Thursday):

President (in Chinese): Will members please remain standing until the Governor has come into this chamber. The Governor of Hong Kong. The Governor will answer questions on the three topics which have been notified to members. A member who has asked a question and received a reply, may, for the purpose of seeking elucidation only, ask a short follow-up question. The three topics are: human rights, housing and services for the elderly and new immigrants. A show of hands please.

Mr Lau Chin-shek (in Chinese): I would like to know whether the Government would continue to review existing legislation in order to determine whether these Ordinances are in breach of the Bill of Rights Ordinance and whether they should be amended because of that? And, whether the Government will, before the end of its term, submit new Amendment Bills to this Council?

Governor: We have almost completed our review of Ordinances. There are one or two other Ordinances that we have been looking at, for example, the Telecommunications Ordinance following the proposals of the Law Reform Commission. I have said again and again to this Council that it was our determination to make sure that we place before the Council before June 30, proposals which would ensure that our statute book was in line with the Bill of Rights. I haven't changed my position and the Government hasn't changed its position on that, so we may be requiring even more work from the Legislative Council in the future.

Mr Lau Chin-shek (in Chinese): In his reply the Governor mentioned the Telecommunications Ordinance. I would like to hear a little bit more from him, say about the independent police complaint mechanism and the relevant legislation, and whether anti-discrimination legislation will also be considered by the Government to this effect?

Governor: Let me distinguish between those issues. First of all on legislation on discrimination, the honourable gentleman will know that we already have in place legislation dealing with discrimination against people on the grounds of gender, he will know that we have legislation in place against discrimination on the grounds of disability, and he will know that we are acting, as well, on discrimination on family responsibilities. On all those issues we are legislating and we are asking the Equal Opportunities Commission to cover those questions as part of its responsibilities.

He will also know that we have proposed to take administrative measures rather than legislate in regard to discrimination on the grounds of sexual preference, he will know the proposals we have put forward regarding discrimination against those of older years, and he will also know that we are consulting the public about the very good study that has been carried out on whether or not there is discrimination in Hong Kong on the grounds of race. We haven't thought it appropriate at this time to go for legislation on each of those subjects but by and large we have, I think, gone as far as the community thought was sensible. And I am delighted the Equal Opportunities Commission has made such a good start.

As far as the police complaints machinery is concerned, the honourable gentleman will know that we are putting that on a statutory basis and that there are proposals before the Legislative Council which the Legislative Council is debating. But let me just repeat, I have said consistently that we would review all our statute book to make sure that it was in line with the International Covenants and the Bill of Rights. Even those who do not agree with me would, I think, concede that I do what I say I will do, and that remains our intention.

Mr Lee Kai-ming (in Chinese): Thank you Mr President. A question for the Governor. Will the Governor accept what is said in the letter given to the Governor a moment ago and that is a request made by the five trade unions and that is to increase the CSSA by \$300 and to increase the amount even further so that the elderly people in their twilight years will be given some degree of warmth?

Governor: I was grateful for the honourable gentleman's briefing outside the Legislative Council. There were one or two of my old friends and customers there as well, but it was a particular joy to have the honourable gentleman waiting for me with a lantern and his cheery good wishes for the New Year.

I understand the concern which all members of the Legislative Council have about the living standards of the elderly. It's understandable that as Hong Kong becomes more prosperous and the scale of Hong Kong's prosperity was once again underlined in the admirable speech which my honourable friend the Financial Secretary made earlier today, I think it's understandable that people should want to ensure that the elderly share in our increasing prosperity though the elderly themselves would, I'm sure, wish us to keep a prudent control over public spending just as they have prudently managed their own finances over the years.

The honourable gentleman may know that since 1992, we've increased spending on services for the elderly by about 94 per cent in real terms. CSSA rates for the elderly have, I think, gone up by about 100 per cent in real terms. Now that has led some to assert that we're driving the car too fast. I think that was the metaphor. It's led some to assert, which isn't as good for my reputation as I would like, that I'm a socialist or a welfarist, that I'm wrecking Hong Kong's economy. I'm sure the honourable gentleman would be the first to denounce those who made those sort of allegations. The truth is that we've been meeting our obligations to the elderly. We must continue to give their concerns and interests the highest priority, while, of course, ensuring that Hong Kong's economy is managed very sensibly.

Perhaps I can just add two things. The Social Welfare Department is conducting two studies at the moment which will, I am sure, be the focus for considerable discussion and debate. The first is a study which will be available in the late summer, into the financial needs of the elderly and how those are met at the moment. The second study which I think all members would regard as particularly important is into the reasons why some elderly people who are existing on very low incomes at the moment don't claim social security seek to make do on their own without the help to which they are wholly entitled. I think both those studies will ensure that we can develop our policies in a way which is both generous and well-targeted.

Mr Edward Ho (in Chinese): Thank you Mr President. My question for the Governor is this, I would like to ask a question pertaining to housing. Recently, the Long Term Housing Strategy Review consultative document said that in the coming decade in Hong Kong, the demand for housing would be very strong and great and it is anticipated that every year the housing production would have to reach 85,000 units before the demand can be met. I would like to ask the Government whether consideration has been given to manpower resources, whether there is sufficient manpower resources in order to produce 85,000 units a year?

Governor: I think that we should have enough resources to meet those targets but I do see the point which the honourable gentleman is making, not least as a professional in this field himself. And I think it is a point that has been made by his honourable friend on his right. We do need to look at our administrative procedures and we do need to look at the quantity of professional support that we have in order to speed-up those administrative procedures wherever possible. Some of the hold-ups we have are because of the lack of professional expertise when so much is happening in Hong Kong, when there is so much building going on. We have got ideas about sharpening-up our procedures and I hope that we will be able to do so.

Can I just add a word or two to what the honourable gentleman has said. We should be able to reach that rather higher target of 85,000 homes a year, largely because we have actually increased the amount of land available in the next five years for private development by about 80% over the amount of land that was available in the last five years.

We are of course looking beyond 2001, beyond that five-year time horizon as well, we are looking to the years beyond that when it is our intention to try to build-in some margin for error in the calculations made, for example, in the Territorial Development Strategy Review, and add about 7 per cent to the target figure for housing each year in the period beyond that. That is going to require a lot of administrative drive from the Government and we are well aware of some of the problems that we have got to overcome.

Mr Edward Ho (in Chinese): Actually, my question is concerning manpower resources. Apart from professionals, I am also talking about labour. I would like to know whether the Government will give consideration to this. Say, for the upper core programmes, will the Government put together a co-ordinated programme to supply labour so that the construction industry is given sufficient labour?

Governor: I have to say to the honourable gentleman that the question of supply problems because of a shortage of skilled labour in the industry isn't something that has been raised with me before. I very much hope that as our training schemes become more flexible and take greater account of industrial demand, if there are shortages in the construction industry, of plumbers and electricians and so on, that the training body will be able to help us deal with that problem more quickly. But if the honourable gentleman has particular problems of labour shortage in mind, perhaps he could let me know and I will look into them for him.

Dr Law Chi-kwong (in Chinese): Mr President, through you I direct this question to the Governor. In January last year the Government estimated that by July 1, 1997 there would be 29,000 Chinese children who would enjoy the right of abode in Hong Kong. Does the Government have any policy to make sure that these 29,000 children who are able to come to Hong Kong after July 1, 1997, will they all be flooding into Hong Kong right after July 1? If not, how will the Government make sure that education and welfare and other needs - housing needs - will be met?

Governor: Perhaps I can give the honourable gentleman a rather more extensive set of figures which will give some indication of the demand that we may well have to adjust to. The latest estimates we have - and we went through this exercise in November last year - the latest figures that we have suggest that at the end of 1996 there were 84,300 women married to Hong Kong men who had the right to come to Hong Kong, and there were, in China, 46,200 children with the right of abode in Hong Kong in July 1997. We reckon that by the middle of this year, in other words by July 1, those figures will have fallen somewhat but there will be about 76,500 women and 34,900 children, making just over 111,000 altogether.

The honourable gentleman will know that for almost two years, since July 1995, we have increased the daily quota into Hong Kong from 105 to 150 and as a result of that, legal immigration from China last year totalled just over 61,000. And that has, of course, put something of a strain on welfare and educational and housing resources in some parts of the community.

I have recently been, for example, to Sham Shui Po, to Eastern District, to Kowloon District, talked to the District Boards and others in those communities about the way that they are coping with these issues. I went to an extremely good elementary school in Kowloon the other day and saw what they were doing. I met a group of new immigrants in Eastern District and talked to them about the sort of information they need in order to adjust to life in the community.

We do have to do more in areas like education in order to help new immigrants. The Council has only recently voted another \$500 million to help with the training of newly arrived immigrants. I am sure that this is a subject which the Financial Secretary, in due course, will want to address over the next year as well. I think the whole community recognises the importance of us ensuring that immigrants are able, as soon as possible after their arrival in Hong Kong, to make a full contribution to our economic and social life. Very often that means better targeted programmes to help them.

Dr Law Chi-kwong (in Chinese): Chairman, the Governor has not answered the crux of my question. The Governor has given us some latest statistics. I mentioned 29,000, he mentioned 34,000. According to the Common Law system, if they sneak into Hong Kong or if they overstay their two-way permit, we cannot deport them from Hong Kong. In other words, if, as these 34,000 arrive in Hong Kong, how can we deal with them? There are so many snakeheads who are spreading rumours about the possibility of staying in Hong Kong once they sneak into here. Now, with 34,000 children coming to Hong Kong we will need anything up to 35 schools to take them all and how do we cope with the problem?

Governor: Can I distinguish between the importance of discouraging illegal and encouraging legal immigration on the one hand, and secondly, the impact on our educational service caused by the increase in the number of children who are coming into Hong Kong - very often with language difficulties and other difficulties in adjusting.

On the first of the honourable gentleman's questions, there is certainly, as far as I recall, no recent evidence of an increase in illegal entry into Hong Kong by people from China, whether or not people with the right of abode after July 1, 1997, and I think that is probably partly a result of the sensible decision that we took, I think, with the support of this Council, in the middle of 1995, to increase the numbers coming here legally.

On the second question, we do recognise the additional educational demands and we do recognise that we can only meet those demands by the allocation of additional resources, and that is something which the Financial Secretary and the Secretary for Education and Manpower are well aware of.

Mr Martin Lee: Governor, I expect a very short answer from you to my long leading question.

Governor: Sounds rather dangerous.

Mr Martin Lee: The Foreign Secretary has recently called for the Chinese Ambassador to the United Kingdom and raised with him the recent remarks by the Chinese Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen, in relation to certain human rights, or the press freedom in particular, in relation to Hong Kong. And since then, I understand that China, of course, did not give a satisfactory answer or assurance. And also, in relation to the vexed question of whether or not the setting up of the provisional legislature would constitute a breach of the Joint Declaration, again the Foreign Secretary recently, in Hong Kong, said although it is still on the table - that is his suggestion, his request that China should submit to the jurisdiction of the ICJ on this question is still on the table, he could take it no further.

Now, in relation to both matters, are you going to press the British Government to refer both questions to the Security Council of the United Nations in order that it would make the request to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion?

Governor: I noted that the honourable gentleman had made this suggestion the other day, and I don't think I give away any secrets in saying that I think it was part of the conversation which the honourable gentleman had with the Foreign Secretary in London. But I am not quite sure that I understand what the purpose or value of that particular proposal would be. Let me explain myself.

The Security Council of the United Nations customarily deals with issues which threaten international peace and security. Now, worrying and damaging to Hong Kong as both the provisional legislature is, worrying and damaging to Hong Kong as the undermining of civil liberties in Hong Kong is, of concern as those matters are to the international community which is going to look at the way China handles Hong Kong as a sort of test of how China is going to behave more broadly in the next few years, I think there would be members of the Security Council who would raise questions about whether the issues which the honourable gentleman and I both feel very strongly about, actually represented the same sort of threat to international peace and security as was represented at present by, for example, the crisis in Rwanda or Zaire which are taking up so much time at the United Nations.

It has been the British Government's policy - one which I strongly support - to ensure that there is as much international support for Hong Kong and Hong Kong's freedoms as possible, and I think that that obliges us to look at ways of encouraging support which would be regarded by others as sensible, rather than ways which would not be regarded as sensible. But I will certainly consider the honourable gentleman's proposal and talk to him further about it, if he would like.

Can I add, however, just one point. I do think that everybody in Hong Kong recognises the degree of concern felt outside as well as inside our community, by those proposals on the Bill of Rights and associated legislation which, in the words of the leaders of our legal profession, threaten to undermine the rule of law. And there is just one point, one plea that I want to make. Hong Kong is a very successful society, a society with a successful government, with successful institutions, with successful defences of its way of life.

It is, to borrow an analogy, it's a Rolls-Royce of a society. And what people outside, I think, find so difficult to understand is why, instead of just driving the vehicle away, why Chinese officials and the Chief Executive designate and his colleagues seem to want to examine the engine, tinker with the tyres, rather than just turn on the ignition and drive the Rolls-Royce as successfully in the future as it has been driven in the past. I think that causes genuine incomprehension elsewhere, as well as genuine concern.

Mr Martin Lee: Maybe - Governor, maybe they want to make sure there is no bomb planted in this Rolls Royce, but my supplementary is this; here's another attempt on my part to get a short answer from you Governor. Wouldn't it be wonderful if, as a result of the advisory opinion given by the ICJ on both of the matters I mentioned earlier at the request of the Security Council, China would then be persuaded to change her mind and not persist in mucking about with the Rolls Royce, as you put it, or by not pursuing its plans to change laws through the appointed provisional legislature?

Governor: I mustn't pursue the Rolls Royce analogy any further. I don't think the manufacturers would necessarily care for it. I think it may be the case that the, and this is the risk of abusing metaphor, I think it is probably the case that what makes Hong Kong motor forward so successfully, that is a combination of economic and political freedom, worries some Chinese officials, though worries them wholly unnecessarily.

On the ICJ, yes it would be a very satisfactory outcome if the Chinese would accept the invitation, which is still on the table, to go to the ICJ for arbitration and would then accept what the ICJ had to say. There aren't actually all that many members of the Security Council which do accept the binding arbitration of the ICJ. I think I'm right in saying that the United Kingdom is the only permanent member of the Security Council which does so. I think I'm right in saying that, though I'm happy to be corrected.

It's worth adding that elsewhere where we think there is a clear obligation on China to follow procedures under the auspices of the United Nations, it's arguing at present that it doesn't see the need to do so. I'm referring of course to the reporting obligations under the international covenants on civil and political rights and on economic, social and cultural rights. So I agree with the honourable gentleman about the desirability of the outcome he's mentioned. I'm not sure that his proposal about the Security Council would be the right one. I am sure that it should remain a priority for the United Kingdom in the conduct of its foreign affairs to ensure that there is the maximum international support for the survival of freedom and the rule of law in Hong Kong.

Mr Lee Cheuk-yan (in Chinese): Thank you Mr President. In answer to Mr Lau Chin-shek's question the Governor said that the Government would review the legislation in Hong Kong to ensure compliance with the international covenant and Bill of Rights ordinance.

Now what is of most concern to me, as you know Governor, is the human rights for the workers in Hong Kong. I have submitted two private member's bills, one on the trade unions amendments. I feel that trade unions can organise cross-membership unions and the participation in international trade unions would not need the approval of the Government. I think that would be in line with the ICSCR provisions.

The second amendment is to make sure that the trade union membership will not be discriminated against and reinstatement should be allowed. And that is also in line with the freedom of association under the ICSCR. I also would submit another private member's bill on the collective bargaining position and that would be in line with no. 98 of the international labour convention.

Now the Government's position is in opposition to my private member's bills. This seems to be contradictory to what you are saying Mr Governor. It seems to me the Government is not interested in allowing Hong Kong workers these kind of rights.

Governor: Well, let me respond directly. The fact is that we don't agree with the honourable gentleman that the present state of the law which he wishes to change contravenes our obligations in the Bill of Rights and in the international covenants. We disagree on that point. I don't think we disagree about the importance of applying international covenants to Hong Kong.

Where we also disagree is in the approach which the honourable gentleman has taken to, not in every case, but in this case, has taken to labour legislation. The honourable gentleman knows because he's been a distinguished part of the process. That we've tended to legislate in the labour sphere on the basis of a consensus reached in the labour advisory board. I think what that has meant in Hong Kong is that there's been far less scrapping between employers and employees over legislation, far less here than exists in some other communities we're seeing in this region at the moment. Indeed the honourable gentleman I think has had first-hand experience of what's happening in this region at the moment where there isn't a consensus on labour legislation.

So I would prefer to proceed on that basis. Though I understand that the three issues which the honourable gentleman is talking about, two I think in one bill and the other in another, are matters about which he and his trade union colleagues and his own trade union have felt strongly about for many years and have argued about both in Hong Kong and internationally for many years, and I'm sure will continue to do so. The honourable gentleman may well be able to get a consensus in the LAB on those matters, though I wouldn't advise him to hold his breath.

Mr Lee Cheuk-yan (in Chinese): Thank you Mr President. Well Mr Governor, probably you haven't read the ICSCR yourself. Maybe I'll refer you to that international covenant. It's not a question of how you implement the provisions. The fact remains that the provisions, the legislation is in contravention of these provisions. So I hope that you would review the legislation in the context of my bills. That would be in the interests of Hong Kong. It's not simply a question of interpretation. There is a blatant contravention there. Under the international covenant there is expressed provision about freedom to join the trade unions and also freedom of association and so on.

Governor: I can only repeat what I've said. That we don't wholly agree with the honourable gentleman about our own law being out of line with the international covenant and the Bill of Rights. The honourable gentleman will know that one reason why we have carried out this very comprehensive review of laws, which I think has led so far to about 38 different parts of ordinances being changed, maybe slightly more than that now, one reason why we carried out that review is that we didn't want to be taken to court over existing laws which it could be argued were out of line with our international obligations as applied to Hong Kong law through the Bill of Rights. I think the fact that we haven't been subjected to a legal challenge on that particular point may speak volumes but I'm not encouraging the honourable gentleman to take legal advice.

Mr Zachary Wong (in Chinese): Thank you Mr President. Yesterday at Tin Shui Wai, once again there was another unidentified gas incident and that was the fourth time within a year and this time around even more people were affected. Eight schools were affected and so I would like to get confirmation from the Governor. Yesterday whether any government department, whether CSD or the British military force or any other government departments were practising the firing of tear gas in the firing range in Castle Peak? I would like to get confirmation on that.

And secondly, what measures will the Government take in order to identify the cause of the gas incident and to take measures to prevent a recurrence of such incidents?

Governor: Well now that I've had notice of that question, which I suppose imaginatively one could relate to housing, the welfare of the elderly and human rights, in one way or another, I'll seek to reply to it in appropriate detail.

I very much doubt whether the British Garrison were firing tear gas yesterday because they did have the Secretary of State for Defence with them.

Mr Zachary Wong (in Chinese): Of course it's related to housing because the entire neighbourhood was affected and all the residents were affected. So I would like to make a recommendation because similar things have happened elsewhere in Hong Kong and of course the frequency in Tin Shui Wai is particularly high and afterwards no cause has been identified and it seems that there is no way to identify the cause. And so I would like to suggest that maybe the EPD should set up a working group to really look into this in depth because previous incidents have not returned any causes and investigations have not returned any causes.

Governor: It's a serious issue. I can assure the honourable gentleman that we will give it serious attention. I understand why he raises it in that imaginative, if tangential way and I think that many parents will have been particularly concerned because of the effect on school children in the area and we will try to give the honourable gentleman, who represents the interests of people in the community, in this case so successfully, we'll try to give him a full and early answer. I doubt whether it needs the establishment of a special committee. What it does require is an urgent and comprehensive answer to his question.

Mr Lawrence Yum Sin-ling (in Chinese): Thank you Mr President, a question for the Governor. I was one of those who submitted the letter to the Governor about the CSSA. Ten minutes before your arrival, Mr Governor, I also asked the Financial Secretary to take the letter down there but he refused. The Financial Secretary would give us the Budget and the Budget Debate would cover March and April, and many people are predicting that the provisional legislature will become a rubber-stamp. Would we be taking a pre-emptive step to become a rubber-stamp now, here?

Governor: I am not quite sure that I wholly follow the honourable gentleman's question but let me seek to respond to each of the parts that I did understand.

First of all, I was grateful for the honourable gentleman's attendance in the welcoming party down below. I think he will understand that the Financial Secretary, while the most obliging of men, wouldn't wish, even for the honourable gentleman, to play the role of Postman Pat. My honourable friend the Financial Secretary had the great benefit of substantial consultations with members of the Legislative Council earlier in the year about his Budget and spending priorities. I think he is well aware of the concerns of honourable members, just as he is well aware of the concerns in the financial markets and the concerns in the broader community that we should continue to enjoy a reputation for care in our public spending.

Can I add two points. First of all, the Budget this year, as the whole Council knows, as the whole community knows, is a curious one. It is, if you like, a one-off. The Budget takes place in a year in which sovereignty changes after three months - just over three months. Now that has inevitably made that our procedures have been different this year, though Chinese officials have said on a number of occasions and I hope on this occasion that they mean what they say, that this is a one-off. That they wouldn't seek to be involved in Hong Kong's budgetary procedures in this way again. But it does cause some problems. The honourable gentleman will know that Mr Qian Qichen, among others, has made it clear that there is only one Legislative Council before July 1, and I'm sitting in it and the Legislative Council has the authority to vote the budget and I hope will do so with enthusiasm.

The other point that I would like to make is this; Hong Kong is in an extremely strong and healthy position economically and fiscally. Where other communities very often fight over deficits, we find ourselves sometimes it appears embarrassed by our surpluses. But because you've got a surplus as a Government, as a community, if you have a surplus as a family, it doesn't mean that the sensible thing to do is to spend it all. I think that whatever the size of our surplus may be and the honourable gentleman will know that when you add the land fund to our aggregate surplus, we're extremely well off. Whatever the size of those figures, I don't think that anything would justify breaking the link that we've welded over the years between the growth in our overall economy and the growth in public spending. One of the reasons why we've got so much to spend today on areas like health and welfare and education is precisely because we've been sensible about relating spending to the growth in the economy in the past. So I hope the community and this Council will continue to be mature about the responsibilities of handling a surplus sensibly. It's on the whole a rather nicer problem to have to face than dealing with deficits.

Mr Lee Wing-tat (in Chinese): Mr Governor, recently from the newspaper it is said that Mr Tung Chee Hwa was hoped to be public opinion leader. I hope that when you solve problems you also act as public opinion leader. I have done a survey. Ever since you reported to this post and there were two issues at the top of the list of matters of concern of members of the public. First Hong Kong's future political matters, the other issue is housing and for the housing issue, in the past six months actually it has topped the other issue on the list. I would like to know whether in your dream you have felt that the housing issue is no longer on the top of the list but actually has dropped to say seventh of eighth so that you are happy in your dream? Now we really don't have too many opportunities left to ask you questions about housing because there are only several other months to go. So you have been here for five years, so what do you think is really the root of the housing problem. It seems that it is not a very difficult problem to solve but after five years we still don't see any light at the end of the tunnel in the near term and we cannot say certainly that in the coming ten years housing problem will cease to be at the top of the list of concerns of members of the public.

Governor: First of all I very much agree with what the honourable gentleman said about the priority which the public give to housing. And I must say that it's not only in this community. When I was myself a member of parliament, I think the issue that more than any other dominated my post bag as a MP was housing. And it's understandable. It's related to people's sense of their own family security, it's related very much to people's financial position. It's related to their concerns about bringing up their children. It's very often related to their health as well and not surprisingly here in Hong Kong, because of increasing immigration still, because of the increase in household formation, because of the very substantial size still of the queue of people on the waiting list for housing, housing is a dominant feature.

I don't want, I've got them all here but I'll recognise the seriousness of the honourable gentleman's question. I don't want to go through all the figures of what we've done and what we've achieved in the last four and a half, five years because I want to address a question which I won't be around to help solve.

I think there are two real issues at the heart of our housing problems. The first is that despite the increase in the income in people's pockets, despite the effect that economic growth has had on things like median household incomes, there are still too many people who find it difficult to do what they want to do, that is to become a home owner. And if you look at world bank comparisons, in Hong Kong there should be far more people able to do that given our median household incomes.

Secondly, despite the fact that we put a huge amount of effort and a huge amount of resources into the provision of public housing, we still don't give enough assistance to those in the greatest housing need and there is very little choice at all in our housing provision, particularly for the needy and the disadvantaged. What on the whole happens, what on the whole happens at the moment is that after five, six, seven years on the waiting list, a family get a housing authority flat and they're then in it for life and sometimes their family are in it after. They will pay in that housing accommodation flat about a third as a proportion of their household income that they were paying in private sector probably far worse accommodation. If they're lucky they may be able to get into the HOS, into the home ownership scheme but nine out of every ten who apply for that scheme aren't lucky. But I repeat we put a huge amount of effort, of money, of energy into trying to cope with the problem but we've still got probably 80,000, I know the waiting list is bigger than that, but 80,000 who are actually qualified to get public housing and are having to wait for too long.

That's why I think the issues that are raised in the long-term housing review are serious ones which the community has to address. We've got to try to ensure that public housing goes to those who need it most. We've got to ensure that there is more flexibility in our housing provision and we've got to ensure that it becomes easier for people to become home owners than it is today. And in trying to achieve that we don't give up what we've got to do for those who are still in real need. I was standing on a rooftop in Sham Shui Po the other day looking at some of the awful housing that people still have in what is one of the most prosperous communities in the world. It is a challenge to us administratively and a challenge to our social consciences as well. These are big problems. I don't think we can go on trying to tackle them in the way that we've been using for the last ten or twenty years.

Finally, I'd commend to the whole Legislative Council a speech made on this subject about a fortnight ago by the Director of Housing in which he set out all these issues, I thought with considerable clarity and considerably verve.

Mr Lee Wing-tat (in Chinese): A very short question. So Mr Governor has let us know how he feels. I would like to give him two of my observations. First, everyone in Hong Kong, especially middle-class has got one motto, we are all of us are actually working for life for real estate developers and this is a very important fact. Mr Governor, you have never mentioned the interests of real estate developers and the relationship between real estate developers and the Governor.

Secondly, I would like to express appreciation towards the steering committee of ACB, headed by Madame Chan. I think over a period of five years they have achieved so much and so this is a great feat among government departments to look at land vetting, to look at environmental protection and other disciplines. Why is it that it takes 14 years for land to be vetted, to be supplied and before a unit is actually produced? As the head of the administration, don't you find this unacceptable?

Now it takes five years to build an airport. Why can't the period for building units be shortened?

Governor: I can't speak for the Chief Secretary but I suspect that she and I would have a good deal of sympathy with the honourable gentleman's question and I think that we do have to speed up our procedures very considerably. The honourable gentleman referred to the position of real estate developers. It is interesting and I'd better be careful with what I say. I don't think that in late February 1997, it's entirely sensible for me to open up yet another front, it is interesting that in a community which is recognised internationally for its ability to deliver spectacularly good value for money in spectacularly short periods, that we don't have that reputation in housing. I've been very careful in the way that I've said that, but for example, you don't see, setting aside the government or government subsidised schemes, you don't see quite as much competition at the lower cheaper end of the market as you see in comparably well-off communities and I think that that's a subject which I know everybody else talks about a great deal, it's perhaps dangerous for the Governor to flirt with it. Perhaps the honourable member would like to come in.

The President: This is the Governor's question time!

Mr Albert Ho Chun-yan (in Chinese): Chairman, in answer to Mr Martin Lee's question the Governor gave a reply which disappointed me. The Governor seems to be saying that for the legality of the provisional legislature to be handed over to the UN would be worthless and there may be difficulties with procedures and so on. But the Governor has close links with the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister, I am sure they would understand the problems. If you cast doubt on the validity of this point, why did the Foreign Secretary mention this very point? Was this just grandstanding or would it achieve any particular purpose?

I did some research before I came here, I read some information on International Law. I have got the book here with me, perhaps I can make available a copy to the Governor himself later on. It is just a few pages about the procedures for the International Court, it is not all that complicated; I think the UK Government can take the first step regarding the litigation and let the Chinese Government respond. I think the Security Council or the full Council of UN can seek some opinion from the ICJ. As long as the UK Government takes the first step, we can sit back and wait for the Chinese Government to reply, we don't have to take it for granted that the Chinese Government would be resistant to these ideas. Maybe the Chinese Government would like to use the International Court to prove that the provisional legislature would be lawful, or they would like to use the International Court to challenge your constitutional reform, Mr Governor. I don't think you should take it for granted that the Chinese Government would object to that. I hope that you would answer me categorically. Will you urge the UK Government to take the very first step so that we can have a fair resolution?

Governor: I am not, as I have had to point out to the council before, a lawyer, though I have become more knowledgeable about legal matters since I have been Governor of Hong Kong and I am sure that after speed-reading the document which is at present in the President's hands, I will be --

President: Is it meant for me or meant for you?

Governor: -- even better informed. It is called "Stark on International Law". I have in my hands the 8th Edition and I am looking forward to reading it later on this afternoon.

To be serious, the simple position - and I think Mr Stark or Professor Stark or Lord Justice Stark or whoever he is will agree with me - the simple position is that where two countries agree to take a dispute to the International Court of Justice, the International Court of Justice will accept the case from them. If one of the parties to the dispute does not accept that and resists going with the other party to the ICJ, then the party which is concerned has to get the agreement of the General Assembly of the United Nations to the ICJ's role in the case.

Now there may be an argument for doing that but I would just like to point out to the honourable gentleman that the General Assembly of the UN does not meet until next autumn, and next autumn is after July 1, by which time I suppose it is possible that the business in Shenzhen will have moved south, much to the discredit of those involved and much to the disadvantage of Hong Kong.

What I want to assure the honourable gentleman of is this. That this issue will remain an important issue for the United Kingdom Government. It is not something about which the British Government has agreed to disagree - to borrow a phrase. We have to take our responsibilities under the Joint Declaration seriously and intend to continue to do so. That applies to human rights and human rights legislation and it also applies to the question of democratic development.

I can assure the honourable gentleman of one other thing. We are told that an early priority in the months after July 1 will be to design election arrangements for the elected legislature after the handover. I think the United Kingdom, like other countries around the world, will be looking at those arrangements with great interest. We will be interested if those arrangements prove to be fairer than the present ones. We will be interested if those arrangements increase the suffrage in Hong Kong. We will be interested if those arrangements have the principal purpose of reducing those who can get elected on a democratic platform. Those are all issues which are going to be of considerable concern to the United Kingdom, the United States - as the United States has made clear - and to others. And I think what we have to do is to maximise interest in those issues and concern about those issues by behaving in the way which is most likely to build an international consensus rather than in a way which may narrow international support for decency, good sense and the rule of law in Hong Kong.

Mr Albert Ho (in Chinese): Chairman, a short follow-up. Mr Governor mentioned a few points, obviously these are of concern to all of us here in this Council. We would do what we have to do to make sure that the election would be fair. Now what is of concern to us is that the Joint Declaration will apply to Hong Kong for 50 years. Now there is a blatant contravention of it and the Bill of Rights Ordinance. These things are getting escalated albeit partially, and all these problems are problems that we have to address.

The Governor mentioned taking the matter to the ICJ. Now in this booklet there are so many procedures. I hope that the UK Government would take the responsibility and take the first step. I think that in the next month the Human Rights Commission will hold the first meeting, a general meeting. I hope that the Governor would convey to the UK Government the message that the Bill of Rights does not really contravene the Basic Law and the Joint Declaration. I hope that he will arouse more concern in the Human Rights Commission. I hope that the Chinese Government will also pay attention to this regard.

Governor: Let me follow what the honourable gentleman said. I would guess that the honourable gentleman, like me, has yet to hear from anyone who is supporting what he described as the emasculation of our civil liberties legislation, has yet to hear a single rational description of in what way our civil liberties legislation breaches the Basic Law. All that we hear is that the Bills are going to be changed because of Article 160 in the Basic Law which is the Article which says that Bills can be changed if they are not in line with the Basic Law. I mean it is a completely circular argument, it is like a cat chasing its own tail. I think that was the point made by the Chairman of the Bar Association.

Why is it - why is it that these laws are going to be changed? Not a single argument about them being in contravention of the Basic Law. But a lot of implied concern that somehow they will bring about social chaos and instability in Hong Kong. We have had these Bills and where is the social chaos.

I looked up, before today, the figures for marches and demonstrations in Hong Kong and it is perfectly true that as Hong Kong has become a more open, more plural society, as it has developed a civic consciousness, so there have been more marches and demonstrations. The figures increased very substantially over the last decade. At the same time, our economy has doubled in size and crime has fallen, so nobody can say that allowing people to demonstrate, allowing people to let off steam is bad for our economy or that it is bad for social order. The fact of the matter is that if you try to stop people using safety-valves, the steam will come out in other ways, and in ways which do lead to social disharmony.

The United Kingdom has made it clear that the report that will go to Parliament every six months on the implementation of the Joint Declaration, will be made available to the treaty-watching bodies in Geneva so that even if there isn't proper reporting from Hong Kong, at least there is some focus for Geneva's consideration of what is actually happening in this territory.

End

Transcript of remarks by Financial Secretary

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Following is the remarks made by the Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang, at a media session after attending the luncheon of the Hong Kong Investment Funds Association at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel this (Thursday) afternoon:

FS: Well since I'd made my speech in English, if you wouldn't mind I want to say a few words in Cantonese and I may be able to answer a few questions in either English or Cantonese.

Q: Mr Tsang, has the feel good factor returned?

FS: The feel good factor returned in 1996 and they are strong with us that is reflected in the level of investment in Hong Kong, particular in the private sector. You can see the numbers growing in the stock market and the property market. I think it is going to stay with us for a long while.

Q: How confident are you that inflation or the CPI(A) would be restrained in seven per cent or kept at seven per cent?

FS: Well, that is our forecast at this moment in time, and we're going to review it in the middle of the year. But I do see in terms of the level of investment and the general economic activities that we would not be able to hold inflation rate down to six per cent as in 1996 and it is likely to edge upward, and I think seven per cent is a reasonable estimate.

Q: Given the strong reserve and that is the last Budget before the handover, are you considering giving a gift to the Hong Kong public in your Budget announcement?

FS: You don't know the amount of the reserve, let me tell you on March 12. Thank you very much indeed.

End

## FS forecasts a promising economic outlook for Hong Kong

\* \* \* \* \*

The Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang, said today (Thursday) Hong Kong would start life as a Special Administrative Region in sound economic shape, with every prospect of remaining the most attractive business location in the region.

Breaking with tradition, Mr Tsang has chosen to announce the economic forecasts for 1997 in advance of his Budget Speech, which he will deliver at the Legislative Council on March 12.

In his Budget Prelude Speech entitled "Hong Kong 1997 Economic Outlook" to the Hong Kong Investment Funds Association, Mr Tsang said: "I believe it is right to demonstrate as plainly as possible that market forces, not the annual budget, determine Hong Kong's economic performance."

In describing the economic outlook for 1997, Mr Tsang said he forecast GDP to grow by 5.5%.

"But let me emphasise that this figure is not a commitment, not even a target. It simply represents our best, objective estimate of how the Hong Kong economy will perform during the current year," he said.

"This would give us another year of solid economic performance, with growth very much in line with our medium-term forecast of 5%.

"This growth rate is about the right, sustainable level for our mature economy."

Mr Tsang expected the economy to perform better in foreign trade, and the growth rate of private consumption expenditure to pick up to 5.5%.

"Unemployment will remain low. Stronger earnings and a tighter labour market will boost consumer confidence. In addition, the recent boom in the property market will be a positive influence on consumer psychology," he said.

The growth rate for overall investment would slacken during 1997, Mr Tsang said. Gross Domestic Fixed Capital Formation is forecast to grow by 7.4%, with expenditure on building and construction rising by 5.8% and expenditure on machinery and equipment by 7.6%.

Mr Tsang expected that there would be a rebound in foreign trade in 1997.

"We expect that Hong Kong's status as a Special Administrative Region will create new trade and investment opportunities as the modernisation process continues to transform the Chinese economy," he said.

"We forecast that Hong Kong's exports of services will grow by 8%. Total exports of goods will grow by 8.5%, with domestic exports static but re-exports rising by 10%."

Now that the Airport Core Programme projects had entered the final stage, Mr Tsang expected the public sector investment to slow down in 1997. Mr Tsang was also aware of the pressure on consumer prices as a result of faster economic growth.

"Lower unemployment rates could also put pressure on wages," he said.

"Hence we are expecting the Consumer Price Index (A) to rise at a somewhat higher rate than last year and to record an average increase of 7% for 1997."

In his speech Mr Tsang also summarised Hong Kong's performance in 1996.

"The key feature of our performance in 1996 was the speed at which the economy turned itself round. GDP growth reached a low point of 3.3% in the first quarter of last year. In the second half of 1996, GDP was already growing faster than our medium-term trend forecast of 5%. For the year as a whole, GDP grew by 4.7%," he said.

Accounting for this performance, Mr Tsang said that the recovery was generated mainly by revival in consumer spending. Private consumption expenditure rose by 4% for the year as a whole.

He supplemented: "The revival reflected:

- \* a rise of 3.2% in real household income,
- \* a decline to 6.7% in the inflation rate by the end of the year, and
- \* a fall to 2.6% in the unemployment rate by the fourth quarter."

Mr Tsang observed that the strong growth of investment also underpinned performance. Gross Domestic Fixed Capital Formation rose by 11%, the second highest rate recorded so far in the 1990s.

On external trade, a growth rate of 6% was recorded for export of services.

"Because imports of services grew at only 2%, the surplus on invisible trade was enough to offset a very large part of the deficit on visible trade," Mr. Tsang noted.

As regards exports of goods, a drop of 8% in domestic exports and an increase of 8% in re-exports were recorded. Mr Tsang said that a slowdown in the growth of exports was to be expected after the continuous double-digit expansion in the first half of the 1990s. The less favourable market conditions in the US and Germany and the new tax and customs measures in China also contributed.

Looking ahead, Mr Tsang said that 1997 would bring its special challenges and anxieties. He pledged that the Government would play its part by sticking firmly to its budgetary guidelines and maintaining tight control over government spending.

"The outlook which emerges from these forecasts is encouraging, and we are poised to achieve a 5.5% increase in GDP," he concluded.

End

#### Hong Kong Foreign Exchange Reserves at end-January 1997

\* \* \* \* \*

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) announced today (Thursday) that, as at the end of January 1997, Hong Kong's foreign reserves held in the Exchange Fund stood at US\$65.9 billion, up from the corresponding figure at the end of December last year of US\$63.8 billion. This reflected largely the increase of foreign reserves held in the Exchange Fund as backing for additional banknotes issued ahead of the Lunar New Year.

Including forward transactions to be settled, Hong Kong's foreign reserves at the end of January 1997 stood at US\$71.1 billion, compared with US\$69.6 billion at the end of December 1996.

This is the first time the HKMA moved on to monthly disclosure on foreign exchange reserves of Hong Kong, as part of the ongoing effort to increase transparency of the HKMA's operations. An HKMA spokesman cautioned, however, that "monthly figures are likely to show sharp seasonal variations."

Foreign Reserves Ranking

1.	Japan	US\$217 billion	Jan 97
2.	China	US\$105 billion	Dec 96
3.	Germany	US\$88 billion	Dec 96
4.	Taiwan	US\$88 billion	Dec 96
5.	United States	US\$77 billion	Dec 96
6.	Singapore	US\$77 billion	Dec 96
7.	Hong Kong	US\$65.9 billion	Jan 97
8.	Spain	US\$59 billion	Dec 96

Sources: IMF, HKMA

Exchange Fund

Foreign Currency Assets

	Excluding forward transactions	Net forward transactions	(US\$ Bn) Including forward transactions
March 95	52.4	(0.2)	52.2
June 95	53.6	-	53.6
September 95	51.8	2.8	54.6
December 95	55.4	1.8	57.2
March 96	58.1	1.7	59.8
June 96	57.3	2.7	60.0
September 96	55.4	6.7	62.1
December 96	63.8	5.7	69.6*
January 97	65.9	5.2	71.1

\*Does not cross-add due to rounding

End

Overall food hygiene standard acceptable

\* \* \* \* \*

The Department of Health today (Thursday) announced at a press conference the results of its food surveillance programme for 1996.

The food surveillance programme is conducted by the Department's Hygiene Division to monitor that food supplied to the community is wholesome, unadulterated and properly labelled. A total of 47,104 samples were collected for chemical, bacteriological and radioactivity tests in 1996.

Commenting on the surveillance results, Assistant Director of Health (Hygiene) Dr Leung Pak-yin said: "The overall trend in 1996 is similar to that of 1995 and is within acceptable levels."

Of the 29,504 samples for chemical analyses, only 543 (1.8%) yielded unsatisfactory results. The majority of these unsatisfactory cases were vegetable samples containing excessive pesticide residues.

Dr Leung said: "This is due to the much larger number of samples collected at the new Man Kam To Food Control Office which commenced operation in early 1996 and has enhanced import control at the border and provided better safeguard for public health."

As for the 16,635 samples for bacteriological examinations, 1,260(7.6%) gave unsatisfactory results. Compared with other food items, samples of sashimi (39.2%) and sushi (49.1%) collected at wholesale and retail levels yielded the highest unsatisfactory rates in 1996. It was however noted that their hygienic condition was improving over the year: the unsatisfactory rates for sashimi and sushi had dropped from 43.2% and 51.9% respectively in the first half of 1996 to 37.3% and 47.8% respectively in the latter half of the year.

Dr Leung attributed the slight improvement to the efforts of the two Municipal Councils, the two Municipal Services Departments and the Department of Health over the hygiene of sashimi and sushi and the widely publicised message of the importance of proper handling and processing of this kind of food.

"The situation hopefully would further improve after putting premises preparing, serving and selling sushi and sashimi under licensing control by the Urban Services Department and the Regional Services Department in early 1997," he added.

All the 965 samples for radioactive examination were found to be within acceptable level.

Regarding food poisoning, the incidence rate (i.e. number of cases per 100,000 population) increased from 3.25 in 1995 to 4.98 in 1996. However, the number of people affected dropped from 1970 to 1820. The incidence rate due to pesticide contaminated vegetables also decreased by more than half in 1996 when compared with 1995 and the number of persons affected dropped from 48 to 8.

More than 80% of the food poisoning outbreaks were due to bacterial contamination. The public are reminded to observe strict personal and environmental hygiene when preparing food, particularly in the summer months.

It was noted that the number of food poisoning outbreaks related to meals taken in food premises was on the increase. Investigation revealed that most of these cases were due to improper handling and storage of food and hygienic food preparation practices.

Separately, the number of food complaint cases rose from 367 in 1995 to 641 in 1996. Dr Leung said that the great increase was due to the growing awareness of the public over food hygiene and the strengthening of publicity on how to lodge food complaints. Commenting on the nature and subjects of complaints, he said that most of the substantiated ones were made against the presence of foreign substances in foods consumed in food premises.

Dr Leung said: "Although the overall situation is still acceptable, the Department's Hygiene Division will step up health education work in 1997 among the management and operational levels of food premises in the light of the findings pertaining to food poisoning and food complaint cases."

Focus will be on hygienic handling and processing of foods to prevent cross contamination.

Other initiatives will include publishing a "Food News", preparing guidelines or codes of practice on food safety for food traders and organising training courses for the trade, he added.

End

### Area Traffic Control System to be installed in Sha Tin

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The Transport Department today (Thursday) awarded a \$22 million contract to ATS Technology (Hong Kong) Limited for installing an area traffic control (ATC) system in Sha Tin.

The contract covers the supply and installation of 83 new traffic signal controllers to replace existing ones in Sha Tin, Tai Wai and Ma On Shan together with other associated civil works.

Speaking on the project, a spokesman for the department said: "There will be about 19 junctions operating in a fully traffic responsive manner.

"Under the control of the ATC system, signal plans will be generated and implemented automatically to meet the demand of prevailing traffic conditions as measured through detectors on roads.

"The ATC system seeks to improve traffic surveillance by ensuring smooth co-ordination of traffic signals and instant response to fluctuating demands."

Motorists travelling in Sha Tin and Ma On Shan area will benefit from a reduction in the number of stops at traffic signals.

"It is estimated that journey time will be reduced by about 20 per cent to 30 per cent," the spokesman said.

A fault management system will be installed at the same time to enable prompt repairs to traffic signals.

The project is expected to complete in April 1998.

End

### Civic Education Exhibition moves to Ma On Shan

\* \* \* \* \*

The Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education (CPCE) will stage its latest round of exhibition in Ma On Shan tomorrow (Friday) focusing on the promotion of the concepts of human rights and equal opportunities, and the Basic Law.

Entitled Civic Education Exhibition '97, the event will be held with free admission from 10 am to 8 pm until March 2 (Sunday) on Level 2 of Sunshine City Plaza in Ma On Shan.

On display will be the full text of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Basic Law, as well as easy to understand visual presentations on the protection of privacy in relation to personal data.

An introduction to the major principles of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance and the Disability Discrimination Ordinance will be on display to enable visitors to acquaint themselves with the rights and protections enshrined in these two ordinances.

There will also be exhibits showing the three winning projects of the Community Participation Scheme '96 and the work of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Three publicity films on the importance of the rights of the individual, equal opportunities and protection of privacy, together with a TV series, "Know more about Basic Law" will be screened during the exhibition designed in the ancient Greek architectural style.

Another attraction will be a garden-like setting showing life-size models of a four-member family - the "Human Rights Family" - together with the sunflowers which featured prominently in the Committee's publicity films.

Souvenirs, cassette tapes, leaflets on the Committee and the Civic Education Resource Centre as well as pamphlets on sexual orientation and protection of privacy rights will be distributed to visitors at no cost.

The exhibition is the last of the series organised by CPCE. Two previous exhibitions mounted in Whampoa Garden and Taikoo Shing in November and December respectively last year attracted a total of 12,000 visitors.

End

Plea for public participation to regulate broadcasting

\* \* \* \* \*

The Chairman of the Broadcasting Authority, Sir Roger Lobo, today (Thursday) paid tribute to members of the Television Viewing Groups and Advisory Panels for their hard work in making Hong Kong's broadcasting industry "vibrant, progressive and responsive".

Speaking at a reception hosted in their honour by the Broadcasting Authority (BA), Sir Roger said their opinion, suggestions and advice on the performance of the broadcasters, as well as the appropriateness of the programme and advertising standards had been most valuable.

"You have done a wonderful job, sacrificing your time to complete questionnaires and attending the district and regional meetings. Your contributions are deeply appreciated," he said.

In his welcoming speech, Sir Roger also reviewed the work of BA in the past year which included the mid-term review of the sound broadcast licence of Metro Broadcast, the launching of a home page on the internet to enhance communication with members of the community, and the opening up of meetings of the Codes of Practice Committee to the public.

Echoing Sir Roger's views, the Commissioner for Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA), Mr Eddy Chan, stressed the need for public participation to ensure effective regulation of broadcasting.

He noted that in 1996, the public had lodged as many as 2,500 complaints against television and radio broadcasts with BA, an increase of 49 per cent compared with the previous year. This indicates that more and more people are now aware of BA's Complaints Hotline and are using it as a channel for monitoring of broadcasting services.

He undertook to keep the complaint procedures under constant review so as to provide a fair, reasonable and satisfactory response to every complainant and broadcaster.

The Television Viewing Advisory Scheme has been set up to solicit public opinions from all walks of life, and to keep the authorities abreast of public moods and trends.

Under the scheme, 18 district Television Viewing Groups, with a total of over 500 members, are formed in the Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories. Together, they become a territory-wide network from which the Broadcasting Authority can obtain feedback on the prevailing programme standards and consider the adequacy of TELA's regulatory work.

End

#### Ten organisations to raise funds in March

\* \* \* \* \*

A total of 10 organisations have been granted permission to raise funds for charitable purposes next month (March), a spokesman for the Social Welfare Department said today (Thursday).

They will either sell flags, tokens or similar items, or place donation boxes in designated public places.

Members of the public can call the Department's hotline 2343 2255 in case of doubt.

Any organisation planning to hold activities involving collection of money or sale or exchange for donation of badges, tokens or similar articles in a public place for charitable purposes should apply for a public subscription permit from the Social Welfare Department.

The spokesman appealed to organisers to take precautions against any possible fraud.

"Sellers should display the permit or carry copies of the permit for inspection upon request if the fund-raising is mobile," he said.

The spokesman also advised them to prepare guidelines for sellers, setting out the places and the times for selling and the collection points for bags.

"Organisers should inform the Police in case of loss of property, and seek their help when fraudulent acts, such as tampering of collection bags or making unauthorised selling, are found," he added.

Permits are given to the following organisations for raising funds next month:

Flag Day

<u>Event Day</u>	<u>Organisation</u>
March 1	Wu Oi Christian Centre Ltd.
March 8	Hong Kong PHAB Association
March 15	Hong Kong Blind Union
March 22	Breakthrough Ltd.
March 29	The Lutheran Church - Hong Kong Synod

Subscription

<u>Event Date</u>	<u>Organisation</u>
March 1 - 31	International Buddhist Progress Society (HK) Ltd.
March 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30	Jesus is Lord School of Ministry (HK) Ltd.
March 9	Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Hong Kong)
March 16	Earthcare (Hong Kong) Ltd.
March 31	The Association of Chinese Evangelical Ministry Ltd.

End

Applications invited to sponsor 1998 fireworks display

\* \* \* \* \*

The Broadcasting, Culture and Sport Branch today (Thursday) invited organisations wishing to sponsor the 1998 Lunar New Year fireworks display to submit expressions of interest to the Government.

Since 1982, fireworks displays have been held over the Victoria Harbour in the evening of the second day of the Lunar New Year to celebrate the spring festival.

"Over 650,000 spectators turned out to watch the 1997 display," a spokesman for the Branch said.

Applications should be addressed to the Secretary for Broadcasting, Culture and Sport, 41st Floor, Revenue Tower, 5 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai on or before April 30.

Further enquiries can be made on telephone 2594 5657 during office hours.

End

Fire safety talks for schools

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Secondary schools are encouraged to take advantage of talks by officers of the Fire Services Department to enhance fire safety education for students.

An Education Department circular being sent to schools announces that with immediate effect, the Fire Services Department will conduct, upon request from schools, fire safety talks about twice a year to all secondary school students.

"The talks aim to strengthen among our young people fire safety knowledge and raise their awareness about the importance of fire precaution in their daily life," a Principal Education Officer, Mr Andrew Poon said.

"Schools are encouraged to participate in this meaningful activity."

The school circular also contains a list of names and contact phone numbers of responsible station commanders of Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories.

"Heads of schools should make prior arrangement with the respective Fire Station in the district so that talks can be delivered immediately after the conduct of fire drills in schools," Mr Poon said.

Enquiries and requests for talks should be directed to the station commander or in his absence, the Duty Officer of the fire station in the respective district.

End

#### Donation to agricultural trust fund

\* \* \* \* \*

The Director of Agriculture and Fisheries, Dr Lawrence Lee today (Thursday) received a \$50,000 donation on behalf of the J.E. Joseph Trust Fund which has been providing agricultural credit to local farmers through agricultural co-operative societies.

The donation was made by the Federation of Pig Raising Co-operative Societies of Hong Kong, Kowloon and New Territories, Limited in support of local farming.

Dr Lee thanked the Federation after receiving the cheque from its chairman, Mr Leung Chik, at a presentation ceremony held at the Agriculture and Fisheries Department (AFD) headquarters this morning.

The J.E. Joseph Trust Fund was established in 1954 under the J.E. Joseph Trust Fund Ordinance for the purpose of encouraging and improving agriculture in the New Territories.

The Fund, together with the Kadoorie Agriculture Aid Loan Fund and the Vegetable Marketing Organisation Loan Fund, are administered by the AFD to meet farmers' credit needs.

Loans have been made from the Fund to farmers' co-operative societies for running animal feed/breeding stock bulk purchase schemes, or for relending to individual member-farmers as farm development or working capital.

At present, the revolving Fund, including accumulated surplus, exceeds \$10 million.

In 1996, a total of 440 loans amounting to \$27,739,000 were made to farmers through the three loan funds to meet their credit needs.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tender results

\* \* \* \* \*

Tender date	:	27 February 1997
Paper on offer	:	EF Bills
Issue number	:	Q072
Issue date	:	28 February 1997
Maturity date	:	1 April 1997
Amount applied	:	HK\$14,545 MN
Amount allotted	:	HK\$5,000 MN
Average yield accepted	:	4.97 PCT
Highest yield accepted	:	5.00 PCT
Pro rata ratio	:	About 27 PCT
Average tender yield	:	5.03 PCT

End