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Transcript of the Governor's media session

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The following is a transcript of the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten's media session after the Governor's Summit Meeting on Employment today (Thursday):

Governor: Good afternoon. We've had a good and instructive meeting. I think for me the two most important things were first of all that there's a genuine wish to see a co-operative approach to the problems that we face of job creation over the coming years and secondly, I think that there was today very much of a focus on the measures that we need to take in order to sort things out in the medium and long-term and make sure that Hong Kong has the best possible strategy for job creation and further economic growth.

We reported back on the measures that we've taken since the last meeting on employment, five or six months ago, and in subsequent discussion I think there was agreement on the following points:

First of all that we need to continue to take more vigorous measures to get rid of illegal employment and to deal with abuse in the existing schemes for labour importation. There was quite a lot of strong feeling that sentences should be a genuine deterrent.

Secondly, we believe that there should be more effort and resources going into job matching efforts. With 50,000 vacancies it's obviously important to match those to those who are seeking work as rapidly as we can.

Thirdly, it was agreed that we needed, with the Employees Retraining Board and the Vocational Training Council to map out over the coming months what their role should be so that we can come back in six months' time and discuss a longer term job creation, job enhancing programme for Hong Kong. We need to look at what's required to give Hong Kong the jobs that we need in five to ten years' time, and there were a number of very helpful suggestions made about retraining and about the Vocational Training Council's role, for example by the new Chairman of the ERB, Mr Tam Yui-chung. So we will be looking forward to working with the ERB and the Vocational Training Council to work to map out their strategy.

We told the meeting that we'd be hoping to come forward with final proposals on labour importation over the coming weeks, which we hope will ensure that we have as fair and effective a system as possible. I don't think that we can ignore the genuine concerns which have been put forward by employees representatives and unions about labour importation. I don't think that we can ignore the genuine worries in the community, but I think there's also a recognition that you can't run a sophisticated, modern economy like Hong Kong with absolutely no capacity to bring in people to meet skill shortages where that's required and what the Government has to do is to get the balance right.

Over and over again there was reference to the importance of us working together, of us having a tripartite approach to these problems and we'll be looking at whether we need to make any institutional changes to take account of that, by the time we come back for our next meeting.

Question: (inaudible)

Governor: There were no other specific proposals put forward this afternoon but we're carrying on the discussions with LegCo, with the LAB, with employees representatives, with employers, and we hope that we will get as broad a base of support for whatever proposals we finally come to, as possible.

Question: (inaudible)

Governor: Well, there were quite a lot of people who said that we needed to enhance the work of those bodies which already bring together employees, employers and Government, to look at the job market and there's one very valuable body that works with the Labour Department and of course, the LAB itself plays a part in that role. But we'll obviously be looking at whether we need to do more and to give any of those bodies a rather higher profile.

Question: (inaudible)

Governor: I'm absolutely convinced that the Government can and should do more to make the labour market more effective and flexible and that the Government can and should do more to improve our education and school base in Hong Kong which is going to be the source of our future growth and employment opportunities. There was a very, very substantial focus today on retraining, on skills, on education and I think that's absolutely right.

Question: (inaudible)

Governor: I've always been convinced that the Government has an important role to play. Not only ensuring that we pursue sensible macro-economic policies in Hong Kong but that we also give Hong Kong the skills and educated work-force that it needs. It's worth remembering that the size of our labour force in Hong Kong, since 1979, has increased by a third, but at no time during that period has unemployment gone above five per cent. And so with a large increase in the number of people looking for jobs, we've on the whole managed to keep unemployment pretty low. In the last couple of years the number of people in the labour force has gone up by 180,000, after, in the previous five years, only going up by about 60,000. Now that's a huge increase and our problem in the last few months has been that though we've increased the number of jobs, the number of jobs hasn't increased by as much as the increase in the number of emigrants returning to Hong Kong or Chinese immigrants coming legally into Hong Kong and so on and we've got to do more to create jobs. OK? Thank you.

Question: (inaudible)

Governor: Sorry?

Question: (inaudible)

Governor: I would be crazy if I offered you predictions about either the employment rate or the inflation rate or any other economic statistics six months ago and you can go and ask stockbrokers the answer to that question and you may or may not believe them, but not everybody who believes them makes money. Thank you very much.

End/Thursday, November 9, 1995

Governor's opening address at Summit Meeting

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Following is the opening address of the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, at the Governor's Summit Meeting on Employment today (Thursday):

Good afternoon, can I welcome you to the second meeting like this that we have had on employment. I know that I have got to take one or two lessons from the last meeting. First of all, there must be no discrimination on grounds of whether or not people are wearing ties. I notice that there are one or two people wearing ties today who were not wearing ties last time, but that wasn't really necessary. Secondly, I hope that we have not been cruel to the tortoise.

I would like to start by welcoming you all this afternoon and by addressing what, I suppose, are the basic questions: why are we holding this meeting at all, and why are you all here? I think the answers are simple. Most of us would agree that unemployment is the number one issue on Hong Kong's economic agenda. It causes problems and hardship for those who have lost their jobs, and it causes worry to those who fear that they may lose their jobs.

It is true, of course, that unemployment is far higher in most other places; so is crime; so is drug abuse. But just as with those social issues we have acted, so we want to take steps on employment which will avoid the problems that other people face elsewhere in the world. And why are you all here? Well, I presume it is because you share my view that we will tackle these problems best if we try to tackle them together.

I must say, I personally hate the expression "the two sides of industry". I think antagonism and conflict are both unnecessary and undesirable in industry and in industrial relations. We are all in this together in Hong Kong; our interests, I think, are the same, and we should all work together.

I hope we can look beyond our own propaganda at what has happened in Hong Kong in the last few years, and what is actually happening today. In the last 15 years, the size of the local labour force has grown by more than one-third but unemployment has stayed at below five per cent throughout that period. Over the same span of years, manufacturing industries have shed 450,000 jobs but the number of people employed in private services has gone up by 1.1 million. What does that tell us? Well, among other things, that we must have got some of the fundamentals right in Hong Kong in order to have made those transitions so well. For example, the productivity improvements by our own workforce have been excellent.

Why has unemployment grown recently? I think the figures are compelling because there has been an unusually fast increase in the size of the labour force which has outstripped the increase in the number of jobs available. From 1987-1992 the size of the labour force in Hong Kong increased by 60,000. In three of those five years, the number of people in the labour force actually fell. In 1993 and 1994 the labour force grew by 180,000, mainly because of returning former emigrants and legal Chinese immigrants. The most recent figures show a 4.3 per cent increase in the labour force year on year. But job creation has lagged behind that very substantial increase in the size of our labour force, partly because of flat consumer spending with the impact that that has had on jobs in catering and retail industries in particular.

At the same time as we consider those statistics, we need to look at some of the longer trends as well. They are trends which will require us to take long term measures directed towards our competitiveness and the flexibility of our own labour market.

Today, my colleagues at this table will report on the action that we have taken on the package of measures that I announced at our last meeting in June, the measures that we have taken on illegal employment, on the abuse of existing labour importation schemes - and there has been some abuse; on job matching, on training and retraining, and the proposals that we have put forward on labour importation itself.

I hope that we can focus, today, on positive proposals that will make our labour market fairer - I repeat, fairer - and more efficient, for local employees and for local employers in both the medium and the long term. I hope that we won't focus, to the exclusion of all else, on the importation of labour. There are a couple of things that I would like to say about that.

Last year our labour force grew by nearly 100,000. Less than five per cent of that figure was made up of workers who came in under both the General Labour Importation Scheme and the Scheme for the Airport Core Projects. The number of workers who have entered Hong Kong since 1992 under the General Importation of Labour Scheme - and that figure is about 6,000 - is less than half the figure that came in under the scheme before 1992. So even though I think we should all concede that this issue is important, it isn't the whole answer, it isn't the key to all our problems. And if we were to go outside and say, well, we have done something about labour importation so everything is going to be alright, we would be kidding people.

Nevertheless, we must address the question of labour importation. It does worry the community, which wants to see a fair deal for local workers without making management's job impossible. I believe our new proposals strike a reasonable balance. I don't think you can simply ignore unemployment figures in discussing labour importation, nor do I think anyone seriously suggests that there should be no importation of any labour at all. We will go on talking after today to try to get as much consensus as possible on the way forward on this issue. We genuinely want to meet employees' and unions' worries, and match employers' reasonable expectations. So I hope we won't get too bogged down on this question, I hope we can look for agreement and think positively.

I would now like to ask, in the first place, my officials to report on the progress that we have made since June, and then I will ask the Chairman of the ERB, whom I would like to congratulate on his recent appointment, to address us. Then I would like to ask the panellists representing employers and employees respectively and then we will have a general discussion, inviting you to comment from the floor. First of all, the Financial Secretary.

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Governor's closing remarks at Summit Meeting

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Following is the closing remarks of the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, at the Governor's Summit Meeting on Employment today (Thursday):

Thank you all very much indeed. I wonder if I can briefly try to summarise and suggest one or two ways forward. First of all I would like to thank everybody for contributing both from the panel and from the body of the meeting. I think it has been a very useful discussion, several good ideas have come forward, and I think that there is a general agreement on at least the basics that what we all want is the highest possible employment in Hong Kong. We want good well-paid jobs that will last, we want our businesses to thrive, and we want Hong Kong to stay competitive and sustain our remarkable decades of economic growth well into the next century.

What are we committed to doing and what do we need to look at rather more thoroughly as a result of this discussion? Well, first of all, we are committed to clamping down firmly on illegal employment and to dealing with abuse of imported workers. And we were given some evidence of that sort of abuse during the discussion. Mr Lau Chin-shek said that we needed to make sure that heftier fines did represent a real deterrent and that our fines were not just taking account of inflation year on year. I won't go into a discussion about fees and charges at this point but we will stick to penalties.

I think that we do need to make sure, as you said, that fines do deter, that sentences do deter, because illegal employment abuse is not only unfair to the broader community but is unfair to the individual workers concerned who are often working in appalling and sometimes dangerous conditions as well. So I would like to follow up that point that you made. We need tougher enforcement, and as Joseph said earlier, we do need to have a regular review of those who come into Hong Kong for training, and the Director of Immigration made that point too.

Secondly, I think there is general agreement that with 50,000 vacancies for example, and the mismatch between vacancies and people looking for jobs, we need to put more effort, and as Selina Chow said, more resources, into our Job Matching Programme. Martin Barrow made a number of proposals during his remarks. For example, an index of vacant jobs, a register for those seeking work. We need to follow up the point that was made about vacancies in the public sector and see if we can reduce the percentage vacancies, which would help those seeking work. And I also think the idea of job fairs is one that should be followed up.

Next, there was obviously a good deal of emphasis on the importance of working with the Employees Retraining Board and the Vocational Training Council to review their work and priorities, and I think there is a general view that we should try to plan ahead for the job market over the next five to ten years as a result of the studies that we are doing with the Employees Retraining Board and the VTC.

I do want to assure the new Chairman of the Employees Retraining Board that we are not going to allow financial constraints to grip or confine his activities in any way. And I say that with the Financial Secretary sitting beside me. It is an important point and I am sure that all of us recognise that training and education, developing our skill and education base, our knowledge base, have to be two of our principal priorities for public resources, given their impact on our economy.

We had a number of practical examples from employers of their genuine difficulties, even in the present state of the job market, in getting the employees that they want. And I do think that we need to allow our basic philosophical positions from time to time to be fertilised by the facts, and there were one or two interesting facts that we heard this afternoon. I am sure that everyone in this room wants local jobs for local people, in Ian Christie's phrase; and as Martin Barrow said, I am sure that all of us want to put Hong Kong workers first. But we do have to find a system which not only meets those requirements but also meets the genuine requirements of some employers who have difficulties finding individuals for jobs.

We want to implement proposals, therefore, on labour shortage and importation where it exists, which have the broadest possible community endorsement. We want to put in place proposals which suit the needs of the economy and the needs of the labour market, and we will continue our discussions with LegCo Members, with LAB, with labour groups and with employers, so as to try to come up with some proposals which plug the gap - or plug the holes in the boat - if and when they exist.

I do hope that we won't allow that particular issue, in some genuine differences of opinion, to become the focus of too much acrimonious argument when there are so many other things that we need to be working on and trying to get right together. But I am sure myself that those who talked about the importance of tripartite monitoring have a very good point because whatever we do has to carry the confidence of the community, and that means employees as well as employers.

Martin Barrow - and it was a point that Henry Tang referred to and that others referred to - Martin mentioned the information gap. And it is not a way of avoiding making decisions to say that very often we have felt that we don't have as much information on some of these areas as we should have. So we do want to try to get a more thorough grasp of what is actually happening in the labour market with enhanced surveys, and we will be trying to put those in place over the coming weeks and months.

I hope that we have made it clear once again today that we do want to work with you employers and employees to tackle these problems. We don't believe that the Hong Kong Government can do everything itself or should try to do everything itself. I think Mr S.K. Chan underlined the great importance of us working together and trying to ensure that there is co-operation right across the community, and it will certainly be our intention to operate in that spirit. Mr Chan and others referred to the possibility of establishing a tripartite committee on employment generation or to enhancing that degree of tripartitism - if there is such a word - which already exists, and we will certainly look at that proposal and those ideas because they have come forward from a number of people.

As has been mentioned, we are looking at the work of the Employees Retraining Board and the Vocational Training Council. I hope that the surveys which are being put in hand will be completed within the next five or six months and we would want, I think, to come back to you at that stage with the findings of those surveys and discuss with you the way forward in developing a long term strategy for job creation for enhancing employment opportunities in Hong Kong. So I fear that we will be asking you to come back and talk to us again in five or six months when we have got all that basic information available.

Thank you very much again for coming this afternoon. We have found it very helpful. A number of useful ideas have come up and we will now try to take those forward in as effective a way as possible. We have got to remember that at the end of the day, the people we are talking about need us to come up with practical solutions because it is their jobs that are on the line. Thank you very much.

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Government's role to continue

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The Government must continue to encourage business and investment in order to create job opportunities, the Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang, said today (Thursday).

Speaking at the Governor's Summit on Employment, Mr Tsang said this meant minimum Government interference and maximum support.

"We are already heavily involved in providing the physical, human, legal and regulatory infrastructures," he said.

Referring to recent calls to "kick-start the economy" or "create jobs", Mr Tsang said the Government could not stimulate the economy through tax cuts or higher public spending. "Taxes are already low and the public sector is too small an element in the total economy," he said.

"In practical terms, it is difficult to identify what sectors or occupations the Government might choose for artificial job-creation," he added.

Mr Tsang said the Governor's Summit on Employment was an important and constructive dialogue between employers, employees and the Government on tackling the problem of unemployment.

"We can show our investors - local and overseas - that all three parties stand ready to work together to overcome our problems," he said.

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Measures taken to tackle unemployment problems

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The Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Joseph W P Wong, today (Thursday) appealed to employers and employees to work closely with the Government to tackle the immediate unemployment problems and to develop a longer term manpower strategy.

Speaking at the Governor's Summit Meeting on Employment, Mr Wong stressed that differences over the issue of labour importation should not be allowed to affect the harmonious labour relations which had hitherto been the hallmark of Hong Kong's success story.

Noting that the Job Matching Programme (JMP) operated by the Labour Department (LD) had been well received and effective in helping employers to find staff and the unemployed to find jobs, Mr Wong urged the trade union representatives to ask the workers in need to come forward and register with JMP as there were still plenty of jobs waiting to be filled.

From April to October this year, JMP, which is specifically designed to help unemployed workers aged 30 and above to find employment, has secured 2,594 job offers for 4,041 job-seekers, the success rate is 64 per cent.

Also, since June and up to last month, LD's Local Employment Service has placed about 11,000 workers, as against 7,600 for the same period in 1994, an increase of 44 per cent.

Other initiatives undertaken by the Government since the last Summit in June included the setting up of an outreaching placement service to provide on-the-spot assistance to workers affected by major retrenchments and taking a more proactive approach to contact employers for information on job vacancies.

LD also organises and takes part in job bazaars, seminars and briefings to facilitate placement.

To further enhance the employment service, Mr Wong said the Government was taking steps to computerise JMP and to provide more staff to LD, as the programme would be an integral part of the proposed Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS).

Incident at San Po Kong demolition site

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The Director of Buildings, Mrs Helen Yu, expressed concern over the incident occurred at the demolition site in San Po Kong this (Thursday) evening.

The Buildings Department will investigate into the cause of the incident.

Meanwhile, Buildings Department staff are on site to work with the site constructor to take all necessary measures to restore safety.

Mrs Helen Yu also extended condolence to the family of the deceased.

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Government committed to tackle prison over-crowding

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The Government is committed to do its best to tackle the problem of over-crowding of penal accommodation and will continue to search for solutions, the Secretary for Security, Mr Peter Lai, said today (Thursday).

Speaking at the Correctional Services Department's passing-out parade, Mr Lai said in the next three years the Government would provide an additional 1,250 places of penal accommodation, at a capital cost of over \$800 million and recurrent expenditure of more than \$60 million.

"This should bring some relief to the pressure on Correctional Services staff while the Government continues to search for longer term solutions," he said.

Mr Lai said the Government was deeply concerned with the problems arising from over-crowding, which was still present despite efforts to expand penal accommodation in the past years.

"It is not just a question of numbers; over-crowding also gives rise to management and discipline difficulties, imposes pressure on staff, as well as undermine the quality of the care and rehabilitation programmes for the inmates. "I would like to take this opportunity to thank the department and all its staff for maintaining high standards of professional conduct and efficient performance in the face of a difficult situation," he said.

Mr Lai also expressed his appreciation to the Commissioner of Correctional Services, Mr Raymond Lai, and his staff for their active participation in managing Vietnamese Migrants (VM) camps, and in carrying out operations under the Orderly Repatriation Programme.

"Managing VM detention centres requires a set of skills totally different from those needed to manage penal institutions," he noted.

"Carrying out Orderly Repatriation Programme operations is a sensitive exercise which needs to be undertaken with tact, patience and courage.

"It is a credit to you that these tasks have been carried out with a high degree of professionalism and dedication, often in the face of enormous pressure and outside scrutiny, and sometimes against harsh and unfounded criticisms," he said. On the reform and rehabilitation of offenders, Mr Lai said over the years, a variety of rehabilitation programmes had been developed to cater for different types of offenders.

"This is in line with our belief that the ultimate purpose of any correctional programme is to enable inmates to turn over a new leaf and reintegrate themselves into civilised society," he said.

Noting that the Correctional Services Department had established an impressive record of success in its rehabilitation efforts, Mr Lai said the enactment of legislation earlier this year to introduce post-release supervision for adult prisoners was another initiative aimed at providing care and assistance to prisoners, thus enabling them to reintegrate into society better.

"Next year, we will be introducing legislation to provide a statutory framework to deal more effectively with prisoners serving long or indeterminate prison sentences," said Mr Lai.

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High level of Air Pollution Index recorded

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The Environmental Protection Department today (Thursday) recorded the air pollution index values for industrial, urban and new development areas as 90, 84 and 93 respectively.

Slightly worse air quality with forecast index values of 95, 90 and 100 is expected for tomorrow.

Principal Environmental Protection Officer, Mr Tse Chin-wan, said air quality with an index value exceeding 100 was considered to be unhealthy.

"In case the index exceeds 100, some people who are already suffering from asthma, lung or heart illnesses may be adversely affected. They are advised to avoid physical exercise and laborious outdoor activities as far as possible," Mr Tse said. "This air pollution incident was associated with the northeast monsoon which brought in cool and dry air. The windy and dry conditions cause high dust levels.

"According to the monitoring results, this effect appeared to be more serious in areas with more construction activities like Yuen Long and in industrial areas.

"Due to changes in weather, the level of air pollution fluctuates everyday. For a few days a year, the air pollution can be so bad that some people may feel an immediate effect on their health. The air pollution index system is put in place to alert the community when these days occur or about to occur."

Members of the public can check the API readings on 2827 8541.

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FS visits Marine Department

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The Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang, continued his current round of visits to government departments and called on the Marine Department this (Thursday) morning to get a first hand briefing on the latest developments at the maritime front.

Met on arrival by the Director of Marine, Mr Ian Dale, and Deputy Director of Marine, Mr S Y Tsui, Mr Tsang held a meeting with the senior directorate officers of the department and toured the Vessel Traffic Centre located at the Shun Tak Centre in Sheung Wan.

He noted that port activities contributed 16 per cent to the territory's gross domestic product and directly or indirectly provided more than 350,000 jobs for the working force in Hong Kong.

He was impressed by the department's initiatives in marine traffic management which have contributed much to provide a safe port environment for both international and local shipping.

In 1994, the port had 74,000 ocean going ship movements, 200 per cent increase over the 23,800 movements recorded in 1984. The current forecast indicated that by 2001 this figure will have reached 105,400, a 42 per cent increase on last year's levels.

Mr Tsang noted that the Marine Department had recently re-aligned fairways and anchorages to allow for the growth in marine traffic and had just signed an \$11 million contract for consultancy that will when completed in December 1996, provide the department with a water area planning management tool for use well into the next century.

He was informed that all available water space in the western harbour and beyond has been designated for specific uses associated with services to commercial shipping such as anchorages, fairways, mooring areas and typhoon shelters.

These areas are subject to a high degree of management control to ensure the high level of safety standards are maintained, while maximising utilisation of facilities and efficient movement of vessels.

He also noted that the central and eastern harbour had long ago ceased to play a major role in cargo movement. The eastern waters of Hong Kong, with its many islands remain a popular and safe marine playground, where commercial activities do not conflict with pleasure boating.

On reclamation, Mr Tsang was told when all reclamation was completed, a wide, well defined and easily managed channel would be created, where the main fairway would be the same width as before and crossing vessels would have a clear and unobtrusive view of those using the fairway, thus enhancing safety.

After all reclamation was completed, the narrowest part of the central harbour would be 860 metres, doubled the width of the water space in Lei Yu Mun which has always been only 400 metres wide.

Mr Tsang was glad that the Marine Department has an ongoing programme of upgrading its equipment and implementing new initiatives to improve traffic management and control to ensure port operation is safe and efficient.

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HK team to attend UN Committee Against Torture hearing

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A four-member Hong Kong Government team led by Principal Crown Counsel, Mr Stephen Wong, will attend a United Nations (UN) hearing in Geneva on November 17, as part of the British delegation, on the territory's initial report under the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

During the hearing, the UN Committee Against Torture will examine the report submitted by the United Kingdom Government to the United Nations in March this year.

The report, which was tabled at the Legislative Council and made public in April, covers the legislative, administrative, judicial and other measures that have been taken by the Hong Kong Government to prevent any acts of torture, as defined in Article 1 of the Convention.

The Convention was ratified by the United Kingdom Government in 1988 and was extended to Hong Kong in December 1992.

The Hong Kong team will assist the British delegation in answering questions on the implementation of the Convention in the territory.

The other three members of the Hong Kong team are Senior Crown Counsel, Mr Peter Wong; Principal Assistant Secretary for Security, Mr Jack Chan; and Assistant Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr John Dean.

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Volume and price movements of external trade in August

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In the first eight months of 1995, the volume of re-exports increased by 16% over the same period last year, while the volume of domestic exports increased by 4.8%, according to the statistics released today (Thursday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

Taking re-exports and domestic exports together, the volume of total exports increased by 14%. Meanwhile, imports increased by 17% in volume.

The growth in the volume of trade is derived from the growth in trade values with the effect of price changes being discounted.

As regards price changes over the same period of comparison, the prices of re-exports and domestic exports increased by 3.9% and 2.5% respectively. Import prices increased by 5.9%. Price changes are reflected by changes in unit value indices, which are compiled based on average unit values or, for certain commodities, based on specific price data.

The terms of trade index, defined as the ratio of total export price index to import price index, decreased by 2.3% in the first eight months of 1995 over the same period last year.

Comparing August 1995 with August 1994, the volume of re-exports increased by 12%, while that of domestic exports decreased by 5.1%. Taken together, the volume of total exports increased by 8.7%. Meanwhile, the volume of imports grew by 14%.

Over the same period of comparison, the prices of re-exports and domestic exports increased by 4.2% and 2.9% respectively. Import prices increased by 5.6%.

The changes in the value, unit value and volume of re-exports by end-use category are shown in Table 1.

Comparing August 1995 with August 1994, the volume of re-exports of all end-use categories recorded increases of various magnitudes: fuels (+70%), capital goods (+33%), foodstuffs (+17%), raw materials and semi-manufactures (+14%), and consumer goods (+4.5%).

Over the same period of comparison, increases in the prices of re-exports were noted of most of the end-use categories: raw materials and semi-manufactures (+9.7%), consumer goods (+2.7%), foodstuffs (+1.9%), and capital goods (+0.6%). On the other hand, the re-export price of fuels decreased by 6.4%.

The changes in the value, unit value and volume of domestic exports by principal commodity group are shown in Table 2.

Comparing August 1995 with August 1994, commodity groups which recorded increases in volume of domestic exports included radios of all kinds (+115%) and travel goods, handbags and similar articles (+22%).

On the other hand, the volume of domestic exports of footwear and textile fabrics decreased by 69% and 22% respectively.

Commodity groups which recorded increases in domestic export prices included textile yarn and thread (+8.7%) and electronic components (+6.5%).

The changes in the value, unit value and volume of imports by end-use category are shown in Table 3.

The import volume of foodstuffs increased by 5.4% in August 1995 compared with August 1994.

Significant increases in the import volume were noted of wheat and flour; and meat and meat preparations. However, decreases in the import volume were noted of tea and coffee; and animals of the bovine species, live.

Over the same period of comparison, the import volume of consumer goods increased by 2.7%.

Significant increases in import volume were recorded in household-type electrical appliances and watches. However, decreases in the import volume were noted of tobacco manufactures and miscellaneous made-up articles of textile materials.

The import volume of raw materials and semi-manufactures increased by 14% in August 1995 compared with August 1994.

Significant increases in import volume were noted of thermionic, cold cathode or photo-cathode valves and tubes, diodes, transistors etc and parts thereof; and base metal other than iron and steel. However, the import volume of silk fabrics; and yarn of wool and mixtures declined.

Imports of fuels increased significantly, by 164% in volume in August 1995 compared with August 1994.

As regards capital goods, the import volume increased by 29% in August 1995 over August 1994.

Increases were recorded in the import volume of all capital goods. Those with notable increases included electrical machinery and office machines.

Comparing August 1995 with August 1994, the import prices of most of the end-use categories increased: raw materials and semi-manufactures (+9.8%), foodstuffs (+4.5%), consumer goods (+3.7%), and capital goods (+3.4%). On the other hand, the import price of fuels decreased by 3.8%.

Details of the above statistics are published in the August 1995 issue of the "Hong Kong Trade Index Numbers".

The report will be on sale around November 11 at \$14 per copy at either the Government Publications Centre on the ground floor, Low Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway; or the Publications Section of the Census and Statistics Department on the 19th Floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai.

Enquiries regarding regular subscription to this report may be directed to the Publications (Sales) Office of the Information Services Department at 28th floor, Siu On Centre, 188 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong, Tel: 2598 8194, and enquiries on trade indices to the Census and Statistics Department, Tel: 2582 4918.

Table 1 : Changes in re-exports by end-use category

End-use category	Comparing AUG 1995 with AUG 1994			Comparing JAN-AUG 1995 with JAN-AUG 1994		
	% changes			% changes		
	Value	Unit Value	Volume	Value	Unit Value	Volume
Foodstuffs	18.8	1.9	17.1	21.0	2.2	20.2
Consumer goods	7.0	2.7	4.5	10.5	2.3	8.5
Raw materials and semi-manufactures	24.6	9.7	13.7	31.8	9.3	20.6
Fuels	60.9	-6.4	69.6	42.2	2.4	38.8
Capital goods	26.8	0.6	32.7	25.6	0.4	29.4
ALL COMMODITIES	15.2	4.2	12.0	19.4	3.9	16.0

Table 2 : Changes in domestic exports by principal commodity group

Commodity group	Comparing AUG 1995 with AUG 1994			Comparing JAN-AUG 1995 with JAN-AUG 1994		
	% changes			% changes		
	Value	Unit Value	Volume	Value	Unit Value	Volume
Clothing	-10.0	2.0	-11.1	4.3	1.5	3.1
Textile fabrics	-17.7	3.6	-22.1	-4.3	4.5	-8.9
Textile yarn and thread	-11.2	8.7	-18.7	-6.1	3.4	-9.8
Textile made-ups and related articles	2.9	4.5	-3.8	16.9	11.2	3.8
Radios of all kinds	135.6	4.3	115.2	15.3	1.4	19.1
Electronic components	12.8	6.5	7.6	23.4	4.4	20.5
Footwear	-65.4	2.3	-69.0	-57.3	3.7	-60.2
Metal manufactures	0.6	4.8	-5.8	6.7	2.7	3.9
Metal ores and scrap	25.5	5.8	21.0	41.3	6.3	33.6
Watches and clocks	5.4	1.2	3.6	10.8	2.2	7.2
Travel goods, handbags and similar articles	25.0	2.5	21.6	-0.1	-1.7	2.7
Domestic electrical appliances	5.4	3.3	4.4	-6.4	1.2	-6.9
ALL COMMODITIES	-2.7	2.9	-5.1	7.4	2.5	4.8

Table 3 : Changes in imports by end-use category

End-use category	Comparing AUG 1995 with AUG 1994			Comparing JAN-AUG 1995 with JAN-AUG 1994		
	% changes			% changes		
	Value	Unit Value	Volume	Value	Unit Value	Volume
Foodstuffs	9.8	4.5	5.4	18.7	4.8	13.3
Consumer goods	6.5	3.7	2.7	12.2	4.1	8.3
Raw materials and semi-manufactures	24.4	9.8	13.8	31.0	9.2	19.9
Fuels	154.1	-3.8	163.6	16.6	0.3	18.4
Capital goods	33.6	3.4	29.4	35.0	4.6	29.8
ALL COMMODITIES	19.6	5.6	14.4	23.2	5.9	16.5

End/Thursday, November 9, 1995

Carnival to promote oral health

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Families and teachers will be able to learn more about oral health in a fun way by joining the "Brighter Smiles for the New Generation" Healthy Teeth Carnival 1995 to be held at the Special Exhibition Hall of Hong Kong Science Museum from November 11 to 16 (Saturday to Thursday).

Organised by the Oral Health Education Unit of the Department of Health, the six-day carnival is part of the promotional activities of the Pre-school Oral Health Education Programme.

A spokesman for the department said today (Thursday) the carnival was aimed at promoting oral health awareness in the community and, in particular, encouraging the children of tender age to establish good oral care habits. Admission to the carnival is free. There will be a variety of specially-designed stall games and computer games which offer participants both fun and knowledge on oral health.

The carnival will also feature a variety show, singing contest, and quizzes in which souvenirs will be given away.

On display at the venue will be winning entries of the Oral Health Teaching Kit Design Competition and exhibition boards on oral health.

Apart from pre-arranged student group visits, the carnival will be open to the public during the following hours:

November 11 (Saturday)	12 noon - 7.30 pm
November 12 (Sunday)	10.30 am - 7.30 pm
November 13 - 16 (Monday - Thursday)	4.30 pm - 7.30 pm

End/Thursday, November 9, 1995

Regional workshop on traditional medicine

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A regional workshop on traditional medicine organised by the Department of Health with the co-sponsorship of the World Health Organisation (WHO) will be held next week at the Kowloon Shangri-La Hotel.

The first of its kind to be held in Hong Kong and the Western Pacific region, the three-day workshop will run from November 13 to November 15.

Taking part in the workshop will be representatives of WHO's Western Pacific Region, experts on traditional medicine from China, Japan, Korea, Laos, Macau, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam and local academics, government medical officers and traditional medicine practitioners.

The workshop will examine the use of traditional medicine in the Western Pacific region and discuss matters relating to the practice of traditional medicine, policy and administrative issues as well as scientific research and development.

A spokesman for the Department of Health said the workshop would offer an opportunity for the participants to exchange experience and information on the field of traditional medicine.

The Regional Director of Regional Office for the Western Pacific, WHO, Dr S T Han, will officiate at the opening ceremony.

Other officiating guests include the Secretary for Health and Welfare, Mrs Katherine Fok; Chairman of Preparatory Committee on Chinese Medicine, Dr Daniel Tse, and the Director of Health, Dr Margaret Chan.

End/Thursday, November 9, 1995

Applicants invited to take part in qualification scheme

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The Education Department is inviting applicants to participate in the fourth Non-graduate Teacher Qualifications Assessment (NGTQA) to determine whether they possess the academic and professional knowledge and skills to teach in local primary schools.

Application forms for the 1996 cycle will be distributed from next Wednesday (November 15) to December 14.

Under the NGTQA Scheme, suitable applicants who have obtained their qualifications and training outside Hong Kong would be assessed if their academic standard and professional knowledge and skills are equivalent to those of the non-graduate teachers trained locally.

The third cycle of the Scheme was completed in August and the pass rate was 58 per cent.

To be eligible for admission to the assessment, a candidate must:

- * produce valid graduation certificate as documentary evidence of having satisfactorily completed a post-secondary full-time course of not less than three years, or equivalent, in an educational institution outside Hong Kong;
- * be of good character as testified by two referees; and
- * be eligible to stay in Hong Kong and not be subject to any restriction on employment imposed by the Immigration Department, Hong Kong.

The assessment comprises three parts:

Part I (General Education)

Candidates are assessed on their standard of knowledge in the subjects they will teach. Eight subjects are offered - Chinese, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies (including Health Education), Music, Physical Education and Art and Craft. Each candidate will have to select two subjects in Part I;

Part II (Medium of Instruction)

This part assesses candidates' ability to communicate effectively as primary school teachers. Two media of instruction are offered - Chinese and English. All candidates are required to take Chinese as a Medium of Instruction, and those who do not take English as a Medium of Instruction in this part must also take a test on English language Proficiency; and

Part III (Professional Training)

This part will be open only to those candidates who can produce evidence of having successfully completed a formal teacher education course in the relevant subjects outside Hong Kong.

Candidates who failed in only one subject in the previous assessment(s) may apply to resit the examination on that subject in accordance with the regulations stipulated in the Handbook for Applicants.

Candidates who failed in more than one subject (except for the English Language Proficiency Test) will be required to take all again, if they apply this year.

The fee for taking Part I and II of the assessment is \$2,200. Candidates taking Part III as well would be required to pay an additional \$615. The fee for resitting one subject is \$605.

Applications must be made in the prescribed forms. Copies of the application form, Handbook for Applications and Examination Syllabus will be available for collection starting from next Wednesday at the following offices:

- * Non-graduate Teacher Qualifications Assessment Section, Room 1138A, 11th floor, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai;
- * Yau Tsim District Education Office, seventh floor, Kowloon Government Offices, 405 Nathan road, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon; and
- * Sha Tin District Education Office, third floor, Citylink Plaza, 1 Shatin Station Circuit, Sha Tin.

Applicants should return the completed application forms in person to the above offices between November 22 to December 14 inclusive.

Further information may be obtained by calling the NGTQA office on 2892 6216-7 or the Education Department Automatic Telephone Enquiry Service on 2891 0088.

End/Thursday, November 9, 1995

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

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	\$ million	Time (hours)	Cumulative change (\$million)
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Opening balance in the account	1,945	0930	+330
Closing balance in the account	1,794	1000	+330
Change attributable to :		1100	+330
Money market activity	+329	1200	+330
LAF today	-480	1500	+330
		1600	+329

LAF rate 4.25% bid/6.25% offer TWI 122.4 *+0.0* 9.11.95

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	5.21	2 years	2708	6.06	100.76	5.67
1 month	5.35	3 years	3810	6.15	100.55	6.03
3 months	5.51	5 years	5009	6.95	101.68	6.65
6 months	5.54	5 years	M501	7.30	100.74	7.25
12 months	5.56					

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - \$9,381 million

Closed November 9, 1995

End/Thursday, November 9, 1995