DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES
GARDEN ROAD, 5th–8th FLOORS, MURRAY BUILDING,
HONG KONG. TEL.: 2842 8777

Wednesday, October 16, 1996

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Companies Registry's annual report tabled in LegCo

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The Companies Registry has produced a surplus of $9.9 million for the financial year ended March 31, according to its annual report for 1995-96 tabled in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday) by the acting Secretary for Financial Services, Mrs Lessie Wei.

"The retained earnings of $6.9 million after a dividend payment of $3 million to the Government will be used to develop and improve the various services provided to customers," the Registrar of Companies, Mr Gordon Jones, said.

In terms of service delivery, the performance targets set for the year were in most cases exceeded. As a result, customers enjoyed a better standard of service.

The public areas of the Registry's Queensway Government Offices premises have been extensively refurbished. With improvements to the facilities, customers doing business at the Registry now experience a more comfortable and welcoming atmosphere.

Over the past year, the Registry has launched the sale of the company names and document indices in the form of a CD-ROM and a fax ordering service for supplying company records on microfiche.

"This is the first step to allow customers to have remote access to the Registry's public records.

"The Registry is developing a full database of vital company information with a view to providing a full remote-access service to customers in near future," said Mr Jones.

Proposals have been made to de-regulate all the statutory forms under the Companies Ordinance and replace the most commonly used forms with new bilingual, more user-friendly forms.

It is hoped that the new forms can be introduced, along with proposals to permit the filing of documents in either Chinese or English by late 1996 or early 1997.

The report is the Registry's third since it became a trading fund in August 1993.

The Companies Registry's main functions are to incorporate and strike-off companies, receive and maintain information required to be submitted by companies and other organisations in Hong Kong, and to make that information available to the public.

It also plays an enforcement role to ensure compliance with the relevant parts of the various Ordinances that it administers.

End

Parents urged not to leave children alone at home

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The Social Welfare Department today (Wednesday) repeatedly reminds parents not to leave their young children unattended at home to avoid any accidents or tragedies.

"The latest incident in which a five-year-old boy sustained serious burns in a fire in Lei Muk Shue Estate flat last night is really a sad story," a department spokesman said.

The boy is being treated in the Intensive Care Ward of Yan Chai Hospital and his condition is still critical.

"It is advisable for parents to seek help from their neighbours or relatives to look after their children temporarily if they have some urgent appointments at such time of the day," he said.

Members of the public who need help in taking care of their children for a short while during day time can also make use of the occasional child care service. They may call the department's hotline 2343 2255 or the Child Care Centre Advisory Inspectorate at 2836 3114 for enquiries.

"At present, 186 child care centres are providing a total of 573 occasional child care places to assist needy parents," he said, adding that parents having any child care problems could also seek help from the 65 family services centres throughout the territory.

End

31 new building plans approved in August

* * * * *

The Buildings Department has approved 31 building plans in August - three for Hong Kong Island, eight for Kowloon and 20 for the New Territories.

The approved plans include nine for apartment and apartment/commercial developments, five for commercial developments, five for industrial developments, and 12 for community services developments.

Consent was given for work to start on 28 building projects, which involve 44,432 square metres of usable domestic floor area and 30,945 square metres of usable non-domestic floor area.

During the same period, the Department also issued 23 Occupation Permits - nine for Hong Kong Island, seven for Kowloon and seven for the New Territories.

Of the buildings certified for occupation, the usable floor areas for domestic and non-domestic uses are 10,860 square metres and 118,967 square metres respectively.

The declared cost of new buildings completed in the month totalled about $2,117 million.

In addition, 21 demolition consents involving 40 buildings and structures were issued.

The department's Control and Enforcement Division received 748 complaints of unauthorised building works, and issued 166 removal orders on unauthorised works.

End

Three lots of land to let

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The Lands Department is inviting tenders for the short-term tenancies of three pieces of government land on Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and in the New Territories.

The first lot, located adjacent to 345 Tai Hang Road, has an area of about 180 square metres, and is for use as a commercial garden and plant nursery.

The tenancy is for three years, renewable quarterly.

Covering an area of 4,870 square metres, the second lot is located at Cha Kwo Ling Road, Kwun Tong. It is earmarked for use as a fee-paying public car park.

The tenancy is for 18 months, renewable quarterly.

The third lot is situated in Area 19, Luen Wo Hui, Fanling. With an area of about 11,700 square metres, the site is for use as a fee-paying public car park.

The tenancy is for nine months, renewable quarterly.

The closing date for submission of tenders is noon on November 1.

Tender forms, tender notices and conditions can be obtained from the Lands Department, 14th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, and the district lands offices of Kowloon and District Lands Office/North.

Tender plans can also be inspected at these offices.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

* * * * *

	$ million	Time (hours)	Cumulative change ($million)
Opening balance in the account	2,055	0930	+204
Closing balance in the account	2,229	1000	+204
Change attributable to:		1100	+204
Money market activity	+204	1200	+206
LAF today	-30	1500	+206
		1600	+204

LAF rate 4.00% bid/6.00% offer TWI 125.0 *+0.2* 16.10.96

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes/MTRC				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	4.80	2 years	2808	6.00	100.23	5.95
1 month	4.90	3 years	3910	6.80	99.86	6.43
3 months	5.07	5 years	5109	7.32	101.86	6.98
6 months	5.17	7 years	7308	7.24	100.09	7.35
12 months	5.41	5 years	M503	7.35	100.77	7.28

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - $19,129 million

Closed October 16, 1996

End

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SUPPLEMENT

Wednesday, October 16, 1996

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Implementation of improvements to prison rules delayed

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Following is the speech by the Secretary for Security, Mr Peter Lai, at a motion debate on the Prison (Amendment) Rules 1996 in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Mr President,

The proposed amendments to the Prison Rules were conceived after a thorough examination of the Prison Rules and existing practices. The new rules represent a significant improvement to the existing arrangements. As we have emphasised in our discussions with the Subcommittee, we recommend these improvements to the Honourable Members, having regard to two principles. The first principle is that these amendments serve to ensure consistency of the Prison Rules with the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance.

The second principle is that these amendments are modelled on the prison legislation in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States, which have proved to be feasible and acceptable. We are satisfied that these improvements would work well in the penal system in Hong Kong, as demonstrated by similar rules in penal systems in other developed countries.

From the outset, we have made genuine efforts to put forward a package of reasonable and workable amendments, and we have kept an open mind to suggestions from the Honourable Members. Before the amendments were submitted to the Executive Council for approval, we consulted Honourable Members on various occasions, including the Legislative Council Panel on Information Policy and the Legislative Council Panel on Security. These discussions have proved to be very useful in helping us to refine our proposals along the way. We are grateful for the Honourable Members' views and have, as far as possible, incorporated them into our proposals.

The amendments were laid on the table of this Council on July 10, 1996, in accordance with established legislative procedures. We were aware of this Council's workload and the intervening summer recess, so we set the commencement date of the amendments at November 1, 1996, four months after the amendments were tabled in this Council. In all good faith, we believed that this timetable should have given Honourable Members time to consider the amendments.

Looking back on the progress of discussion at the Subcommittee stage, I can appreciate Honourable Members' feelings about the time constraint in studying the tabled amendments before the deadline for moving their own amendments. Nevertheless, the Administration has done its best to address the Subcommittee's questions, has attended three meetings in less than one week's time, and has provided two detailed written replies with a number of proposals to deal with the Subcommittee's concerns.

We regret that notwithstanding our efforts to seek common ground, the Subcommittee nonetheless still seek a motion to repeal the amendments. The result of this motion would delay the implementation of the improvements to existing Prison Rules, at the expense of inmates in correctional institutions in Hong Kong. But we will nonetheless aim to reintroduce the Rules, amended as necessary in discussion with the Subcommittee, as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr President.

End

Commercial development above piers at Central reclamation

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Following is a question by the Hon Zachary Wong Wai-yin and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport, Mr Gordon Siu, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

It is learnt that the Hong Kong and Yaumati Ferry Company Ltd (HYF) and the Government are still unable to reach an agreement on the regrant premium payable for the development of superstructures on the Company's piers in Central, thus causing delay in finalising the development project. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the progress of its negotiations with HYF;

(b) whether the authorities have set a deadline for the negotiations; and

(c) of the contingency measures the Government has, if HYF decides to scrap the above development project in the absence of an agreement with the Government on the regrant premium, resulting in HYF not being able to realise its pledge of setting aside a sum in excess of $600m for improving ferry services?

Reply :

Mr President,

In December 1995, the Director of Lands proposed to Hongkong and Yaumati Ferry Company Ltd (HYF) the basic terms and conditions (including the land premium) for commercial development above Piers No. 4 to 7 at Central Reclamation. Upon receipt of HYF's written response on some of the basic terms and conditions in March 1996, the Director of Lands initiated negotiations with HYF, which are continuing. As regards the issue of land premium, he received a written response from HYF in late September 1996. He is now considering the response and will further discuss the issue with HYF.

The Director of Lands has not set a deadline for the negotiations, but he hopes to conclude the negotiations successfully as soon as possible.

Although the basic terms and conditions have not been agreed, HYF has already honoured part of its pledge and implemented some of the ferry service improvement items required under the development package. These include-

(i) the purchase of one catamaran in 1994, enabling additional sailings between Tuen Mun and Central since February 1995;

(ii) the addition of a double-deck pontoon at Tsing Yi Pier since 1995, facilitating boarding and alighting;

(iii) the improvements of the ticket office and queuing facilities at Tsing Yi Pier; and

(iv) the installation of anti-pollution devices on vessels to reduce air pollution.

As negotiations are under way, it would not be helpful or appropriate to speculate on the outcome of the negotiations. However, it is the Government's objective to ensure the provision of a proper and efficient ferry service for the travelling public.

End

Sex education in schools

* * * * *

Following is a question by the Hon Ip Kwok-him and a reply by the Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Joseph W P Wong, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Questions:

The findings of a survey reveal that 60% of the schools in the territory are not able to offer comprehensive sex education courses due to a shortage of teachers with training in sex education and a lack of the required resources. In view of this, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the progress in providing training courses on sex education for teachers, and the number of teachers who have enrolled in such courses; and

(b) in view of young people's more open attitude towards sex in recent years, what measures the Education Department has put in place to encourage schools to make sex education more readily available in schools in order that students can have a proper understanding of sex?

Reply:

Mr President,

(a) To train more teachers on sex education, the Education Department has provided the following in-service teacher training courses on sex education in the last three school years from 1993 to 1996:

* five courses each of three days for 214 secondary school teachers; and

* two courses each of one day for 128 primary school teachers.

The Education Department plans to offer two 3-day courses for secondary school teachers and two 2-day courses for primary school teachers in 1996/97. The target enrolment for each course is 60. If there is an increase in demand, the enrolment will be increased to 75 per course and more courses will be offered.

The Education Department also sponsors sex education courses for teachers conducted by the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong. 342 secondary school teachers and 156 primary school teachers were trained through these courses in the last three school years.

The Education Department and the Family Planning Association of Hong Kong have scheduled 9 sex education courses this school year to train an additional 285 secondary and 200 primary school teachers respectively. More courses will be conducted as necessary.

In addition, a variety of seminars and workshops on specific sex education topics such as life skills training and AIDS are provided from time to time. In the past three school years, a total of 1,322 teachers attended these seminars and workshops.

(b) The Education Department has been actively promoting sex education in schools by:

* integrating sex education elements in secondary school subject syllabuses such as Social Studies, Liberal Studies, Religious/Ethical Education, Biology, Human Biology, Integrated Science and Home Economics; and primary school subjects such as General Studies, Health Education and Social Studies;

* advising and promoting sex education during school visits by subject inspectors;

* providing teaching packages on topics such as AIDS and Sex and Mass Media, and Education Television programmes on sex education to schools;

* providing advisory and supporting services to sex education teachers through the two Sex Education Resource Centres; and

* encouraging schools to avail themselves of leaflets, booklets and audio-visual materials on sex education produced by the Central Health Education Unit of the Department of Health.

In addition to the above measures, a working group has been set up under the Curriculum Development Institute in the Education Department comprising medical doctors, social workers, school heads and teachers, and a representative from the Home School Co-operation Committee. The working group will formulate a new set of sex education guidelines for schools and recommend measures to further promote sex education in schools. The new guidelines and other recommendations of the working group will be released for consultation in March 1997.

End

Redevelopment projects in Tsuen Wan and Kennedy Town

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Following is a question by the Hon Albert Chan and a written reply by the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands, Mr Bowen Leung, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

The redevelopment projects in the "seven streets" in Tsuen Wan and the "five streets" in Kennedy Town have been delayed for several times, and this has troubled the residents of these two areas for a number of years. In view of this, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the reasons for the prolonged delay in implementing the two redevelopment projects;

(b) when it expects to be able to reach agreement with the Land Development Corporation on these two redevelopment projects; and

(c) when the redevelopment projects are expected to commence work and when they will be completed?

Answer:

Mr President,

(a) The Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) obtained planning permission from the Town Planning Board in 1992 and 1993 for implementing the master layout plans on the redevelopment of a Comprehensive Development Area in Kennedy Town and Tsuen Wan respectively. HKHS subsequently found that if the demands for compensation and rehousing by the owners and residents were to be fully met, the projects would not be financially viable. HKHS then put forward a number of proposals for discussion with the Government on how the projects could be taken forward. Earlier this year, the Government invited the Land Development Corporation (LDC) to study, on a "no commitment" basis, the feasibility of taking over the projects from HKHS. We are discussing with HKHS and LDC an initial proposal put forward by the latter.

(b) We are giving active consideration to the proposals prepared by LDC and HKHS and hope to work out a feasible way forward on their implementation before the end of this year.

(c) Subject to working out a feasible way forward on the implementation of the projects, LDC will prepare detailed proposals for approval before proceeding to acquire properties. The timing for the commencement and completion of redevelopment works will depend on the progress LDC is able to make on property acquisition.

End

Waste recovery measures well on track

* * * * *

Following is a question by the Hon Ambrose Lau and a written reply by the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands, Mr Bowen Leung, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

It is learned that the Government has so far not implemented any measures to sort refuse at the time of collection, and this has resulted in refuse which may be recycled (such as paper) being mixed with other refuse. In view of this, will the Government inform this Council whether:

(a) it will formulate any policy on refuse collection to promote the awareness of environmental protection;

(b) it will consider taking measures to separate paper from other refuse at the time of refuse collection so as to facilitate the recycling of waster paper; if so, how soon such measures can be implemented; if not, why not; and

(c) it will consider providing waste paper collection boxes in a greater number of streets to facilitate disposal of waste paper by the public; if not, why not?

Answer:

Mr President,

(a) The Government's overall objective of waste management is to reduce waste at source, to promote reuse and recycling and to ensure that what remains is disposed of in an environmentally appropriate and cost-effective manner. A consultancy study commissioned by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has recently recommended a number of waste reduction initiatives, including separation of recyclable materials at source. We have consulted interested parties on these initiatives to enable us to formulate a draft Waste Reduction Plan for further consultation with the public early next year.

(b) To facilitate the separation of paper from other refuse a series of measures have been taken; these include extensive publicity programmes and campaigns, Announcements of Public Interest on television, posters and pamphlets. The Environmental Campaign Committee has also published pamphlets on waste paper recycling. In addition, a number of particular measures have been taken to encourage separation of recyclable waste at source -

(i) EPD has introduced a hotline service (Tel No. 2755 2750) to advise the public on the setting up of waste collection schemes to recover recyclable materials, including paper.

(ii) EPD has prepared and distributed a pamphlet containing details on how to organise a waste paper separation and collection scheme in residential buildings and office premises.

(iii) Waste paper recovery programmes are being carried out in over 50 public housing estates and over a thousand private establishments, including schools, commercial offices, banks, hotels and utility companies.

(iv) Since December 1992, the Urban Council has launched a waste paper recycling scheme. A number of waste paper recycling bins are placed in convenient locations such as MTR exits in Central, Wan Chai and Yau Tsim Mong districts to collect waste paper from the public. The Regional Council has placed similar bins in Sai Kung.

(v) Green Managers in government departments and branches have facilitated collecting waste paper in Government offices. The quantity of waste paper collected increased by 11%, and paper consumption decreased by 22%, in 1995 over 1994.

(c) We will, in consultation with the Municipal Councils, consider providing waste paper collection boxes in a greater number of streets.

End

Provision of public transport services to new airport

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Following is a question by the Hon Howard Young and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport, Mr Gordon Siu, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council of its plan for the provision of public transport services to and from the Chek Lap Kok airport which cater especially for the staff of the airlines and related companies working at the airport; and the estimated number of these staff that have been taken into account in drawing up the plan?

Mr President,

In June 1995 the Transport Department commissioned a consultancy study to develop a strategy for the provision of public transport services to the new airport and Lantau. The consultants recommended the provision of a wide range of public transport services to serve the new airport at Chek Lap Kok (CLK), including the Airport Railway, airbus, conventional bus, high-speed ferry, taxi and green minibus. These recommendations were the subject of an extensive public consultation exercise which was completed in April 1996. Having considered the views from various bodies, additional bus routes have been included in the public transport network. The final network which embodies these changes is shown in the Annex.

In the planning of public transport services to serve the new airport, we have taken into account the need to provide public transport services in 1997 when workers and staff need to travel to the new airport at CLK for preparatory arrangements. We have assumed a gradual build-up of employment at CLK from about 4 000 jobs in October 1997 to around 46 000 jobs on opening of the new airport. Initially five bus routes comprising two external routes, two shuttle routes and one overnight route will be operated in mid 1997, increasing in phases to 25 bus services upon opening of the new airport in 1998. We will monitor closely the situation and introduce adjustments on the basis of the travel pattern and passenger requirements.

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Annex

Public Transport Network for the New Airport and Tung Chung New Town in 1997 and 1998

AIRPORT RAILWAY

The Airport Railway (AR) consists of the Airport Express Line (AEL) and the Lantau Line (LAL). The AEL will serve air passengers while the LAL will provide a conventional MTR service to Lantau. The AEL trains will be operated between Central and the new airport, and serve intermediate stations at Kowloon and Tsing Yi. The LAL trains will be operated between Central and Tung Chung, and serve intermediate stations at Kowloon, Tai Kok Tsui, Lai King and Tsing Yi.

BUSES (Service with * to commence in mid-1997)

Airbus Services

6 routes

- Causeway Bay (Moreton Terrace) to Ground Transport Centre
- Sai Wan Ho Ferry Pier to Ground Transportation Centre
- Kowloon KCR Station to Ground Transportation Centre
- Lam Tin MTR Station to Ground Transportation Centre
- Tsuen Wan (Discovery Park) to Ground Transportation Centre
- Sha Tin (Yuen Chau Kok) to Ground Transportation Centre

External Services

7 routes

- Tai Kok Tsui AR Station to Tung Chung AR Station *
- Kowloon City Ferry Pier to Chek Lap Kok Ferry Pier *
- Tsuen Wan (Discovery Park) to Tung Chung AR Station
- Kwai Fong MTR Station to Chek Lap Kok Ferry Pier
- Tuen Mun Town Centre to Ground Transportation Centre

- Tin Shui Wai Town Centre to Ground Transportation Centre
- Tai Po Central to Ground Transportation Centre

Shuttle Services

8 routes

- Tung Chung AR Station to Air Passenger Terminal (via Cargo Terminal) (Circular)*
- Tung Chung AR station to Aircraft Maintenance Area *
- Chek Lap Kok Ferry Pier to Air Passenger Terminal (Circular)
- Chek Lap Kok Ferry Pier to Aircraft Maintenance Area
- Tung Chung AR Station to Air Passenger Terminal (via Tung Chung Ferry Pier) (Circular)
- Tung Chung AR Station to Cargo Terminal & Aircraft Catering Area (Circular)
- Tung Chung AR Station to Aircraft Catering Area (via Cathay Headquarters) (Circular)
- Tung Chung AR Station to Chek Lap Kok Ferry Pier/Ground Transportation Centre

Overnight Services

4 routes

- Causeway Bay (Moreton Terrace) to Ground Transportation Centre
- Mong Kok KCR Station to Ground Transportation Centre
- Star Ferry to Ground Transportation Centre
- Tsuen Wan (Discovery Park) to Ground Transportation Centre

South Lantau Services

4 routes

- Mui Wo to Tung Chung AR Station
- Ngong Ping to Tung Chung AR Station
- Tai O to Tung Chung AR Station
- Mui Wo to Ground Transportation Centre

Airport Railway Feeder Services

Feeder bus services would be operated to serve the AR stations in the urban area on commissioning of the AR.

TAXI SERVICES

All the existing types of taxis would have access to the Ground Transportation Centre adjoining the Air Passenger Terminal.

FERRY SERVICES

A licensed high-speed ferry service between Chek Lap Kok and Tuen Mun would be introduced subject to availability of pier facilities.

GREEN MINIBUS SERVICES

Green minibuses services would be operated to serve the AR stations in the urban area on commissioning of the AR.

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End

Utility Management System for road opening works

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Following is a question by the Hon Samuel Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Works, Mr Kwong Hon-sang, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

It is learnt that a sum of $30 million has been approved for the development of the Utility Management System (UMS) by the Highways Department. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether:

(a) the UMS will conform to the best practices available today in terms of its overall suitability and effectiveness in minimising disruptions to the public caused by road openings;

(b) the UMS will accept geographical information in digital form (i.e. electronic maps) provided directly from the utilities;

(c) the UMS will provide direct access to the Geographical Information System (GIS) database used by the utilities so as to improve planning and co-ordination of road opening projects; and

(d) the UMS will facilitate electronic data interchange (EDI) among the Highways Department and the utilities, so that emergency road opening projects can be carried out with the benefit of having all the available data concerning the road opening sites in question?

Answer:

Mr President,

My answers to the respective parts of the question are as follows:

(a) The Utility Management System (UMS), being developed by Information Technology Services Department for Highways Department, aims to improve the planning, co-ordination and control of road opening works. It will incorporate advanced and proven information technology to provide an system which, when implemented, will enhance the effectiveness of co-ordinating and controlling road opening works and improve the efficiency of administering the Excavation Permit (EP) system. This will help both Government departments and utility undertakers and will further reduce the disruptions to the public caused by road openings.

(b) The utility undertakers will have to provide their road opening plans by fax to Highways Department where the plans will be digitised into the UMS. The fax is chosen because it can be used by both utility undertakers having digital mapping facilities and those who operate only on paper records. Government is also developing an interface system which can receive digital maps directly from the utility undertakers and intends to make the system available at the time the UMS becomes operational.

(c) Any utility undertaker can submit its own road opening information into the UMS and retrieve consolidated road opening information of other utility undertakers from the UMS through the interface system mentioned in (b) above. It can also retrieve other geographical information such as the various district boundaries and road openings restriction zones. Direct access to this information through the system will improve the planning and co-ordination of their road opening projects.

(d) The UMS will not provide the Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) function since it is outside the scope of the present system development. The implementation of EDI for utility records involves complicated administrative, financial, legal and technical considerations which need to be agreed by all parties concerned. A lengthy lead time and more resources will be required to study its feasibility. In order not to delay the implementation of the UMS, the EDI function has to be implemented separately under the Computerised Utility Record System (CURS) for which funds are being sought by Highways Department to carry out an initial business study.

End

Education for Chinese immigrant children

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Following is a question by the Hon Henry Tang Ying-yen, and a reply by the Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Joseph W P Wong, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Questions:

Regarding the schooling of the children of new arrivals from China, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) since the Education Department started, from April this year, distributing forms to new arrivals from China at the Lo Wu control point to assist them in finding school places for their children, how many forms have been distributed so far, the percentage of the completed forms returned and the effectiveness of the measure in arranging for school places;

(b) whether the ED will consider publicising the names of those schools which have persistently refused to admit such children without justifiable reasons, or taking other actions to impose sanction against such schools; and

(c) whether consideration will be given to conducting a systematic study on the schooling needs of the children of new arrivals from China (which should include the number, age and educational standard of such children arriving in the next five years as well as the school places and related support services they need) so as to make better use of the available educational resources?

Reply:

Mr President,

(a) Since April 1996, the Education Department has made available information leaflets on educational services in simplified Chinese characters with reply slips for collection at the Lo Wu checkpoint and district offices. These leaflets are designed specifically for use by parents of Chinese immigrant children requiring assistance from the Education Department in school placement and other support services.

So far, over 25,000 leaflets were distributed. However, the best indicator of the demand for assistance from parents is the actual number of reply slips received by the Education Department.

Up to the end of September 1996, the Education Department received 1,164 reply slips. Based on the information provided, the Education Department has approached these parents and provided school placement assistance for 3,000 children.

(b) The Director of Education has authority to place a pupil in a Government school to fill a vacant place. She can also exercise her authority under the Code of Aid to do so in respect of an aided school. So far, she has not found it necessary to invoke her authority for placement of immigrant children from China. This is because according to the record of the Education Department, these children are placed into schools by district education offices within 21 days on average.

The Education Department will continue to monitor the situation closely. If there is evidence that a school with vacant places has persistently refused to admit immigrant children from China, the Director of Education will not hesitate to direct admission of these children into the school, or to impose other sanctions.

(c) The Education Department has been monitoring the enrolment of children newly arrived from China since 1979. Demographic information such as age, sex, residence, distribution over districts, academic ability and level entered has formed the basis of reliable projections on where they usually live and what their general education needs are. On the basis, strategies on the best use of available resources to meet demand have been developed. Our assessment at this stage is that apart from the five primary schools we have committed to build by 1997-98, we need in addition 14 secondary and five primary schools respectively by 2001-02.

We will continue to keep the provision of school places and our educational services under regular review to ensure that sufficient places are provided to meet demand and that our support programmes meet the needs of these children.

End

Measures adopted to protect Chinese white dolphins

* * * * *

Following is a question by the Hon Emily Lau and a written reply by the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands, Mr Bowen Leung, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Regarding the recent press reports about the deaths of Chinese white dolphins, will the Administration inform this Council:

(a) of the number of white dolphin carcasses found in the past six months and whether it knows of the causes of death of the white dolphins;

(b) whether any studies have been conducted to ascertain if the dolphins' deaths is related to the polluted waters and the infrastructural projects being carried out in the proximity of the dolphins' habitat; and

(c) what measures will be adopted by the relevant government departments to prevent more white dolphins from dying?

Answer:

Mr President,

(a) In the past six months, there have been 10 confirmed strandings of the Indo Pacific hump-back dolphin, commonly known as Chinese white dolphin, in Hong Kong. Of these, nine were examined by Agriculture and Fisheries Department (AFD). The cause of death could only be determined for one. This was a fresh male subadult, which showed signs of having been caught and drowned in a fishing net. The remaining eight corpses were badly decayed and their cause of death could not be determined.

Past data show that there is usually a slight increase in the number of dolphin strandings during summer months which coincides with the calving season. The cause of death may possibly be a natural phenomenon of a usually higher mortality among young animals. However, further studies are necessary to test this hypothesis.

(b) There is no evidence to associate dolphin mortality with infrastructural developments. Environmental contaminant studies aiming to establish any causal relationship between water quality and dolphin mortality are in progress. AFD has appointed a cetacean expert to undertake a two-year study on the dolphins. He is collecting blubber, liver and kidney samples from all strandings for various analyses, including organopollutants. When laboratory results from these samples become available in a few months' time, more information relating to the cause of dolphin strandings may be available.

(c) We will establish a marine park around Sha Chau and Lung Kwu Chau where the Indo Pacific hump-back dolphins are mostly found. A Marine Mammal Conservation Working Group, comprising marine biologists, members of environmental groups and fishermen's groups as well as government staff, has been set up to prepare for the establishment and management of the marine park. There will be a vessel speed limit of 10 knots within the marine park. Trawling will be prohibited whilst sustainable fishing activities will be closely monitored and controlled through a permit system. Furthermore, a 500 metre exclusion zone for vessels around the Chek Lap Kok airport platform will offer additional areas of protection for the dolphins.

As for water pollution, we have established a chemical waste treatment plant and are constructing a sewage collection and treatment network to reduce the pollution load generated from within the territory. Other sewerage improvements include new and upgrading of sewage treatment works along north Lantau waters.

A three-year study is being undertaken by the Swire Institute of Marine Science of the University of Hong Kong to collect baseline information about the Indo Pacific hump-back dolphin, AFD has also commissioned a study in mid-1996 on the biology, population and distribution of the dolphins, which will help develop a conservation strategy for the species.

End

Security facilities in public housing improved

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Following is a question by the Hon Sin Chung-kai and a written reply by the Secretary for Housing, Mr Dominic Wong, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council:

Regarding the programme for the improvement of security facilities in public housing estates, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the respective numbers of public housing estates that have already been provided with security facilities and those which have not been provided with such facilities;

(b) of the number of crimes which have occurred in each of the public housing estates that have been provided with system A security facilities (which include security gates, close circuit television inside lifts as well as at the main entrance, doorphones and 24-hour security guards) and the number of crimes which have occurred in each of the public housing estates provided with system B security facilities (which include close circuit television inside lifts and night patrol guards from 8:00 pm to 8:00 am), since the installation of the security facilities; and

(c) whether the Housing Authority will consider upgrading system B security facilities in public housing estates to system A security facilities; if so, when it will be implemented; if not, why not?

Answer:

Mr President,

We plan to complete installation of security facilities in all public housing blocks by 1997, other than those to be redeveloped shortly or without lifts. To this end, we have identified a total of 940 rental blocks to be provided with security devices in phases. As at September 1996, we have improved 328 blocks in 38 estates: 89 with System A and 239 with System B. Works in the other targeted estates are in progress. To further enhance security in public housing estates, we are implementing a programme to improve lighting in these blocks, where necessary. We expect to complete the bulk of this programme in 1997.

Since so far, we have completed installation of security improvement facilities in one-third of the targeted estates and we have yet to fully assess the effectiveness of the two systems. The need to further upgrade System B to System A will be considered after the Housing Department has completed the security improvement programme and conducted an overall review of effectiveness.

We cannot correlate the number of crimes in different public housing estates with the effectiveness of individual security improvement systems as the crime rates available comprise crimes of all kinds and crimes which take place inside and outside rental blocks in housing estates.

End

Provision of Internet services in schools

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Following is a question by the Hon Leung Yiu-chung and a reply by the Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Joseph W P Wong, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Questions:

The Hongkong Telecom IMS has announced that it will enter into an agreement with the Education Department to provide free NETVIGATOR accounts to public sector secondary schools in the territory. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council :

(a) of the terms and implementation details of such an agreement; and

(b) whether the Education Department will enter into similar agreements with other providers of Internet services?

Reply:

Mr President,

In order to enhance the knowledge and skills of our secondary students in information technology, the Education Department will assist all secondary schools to access the Internet from the 1996-97 school year.

With regard to part (a) of the question, the Education Department has not entered into agreement with any of the Internet Service Providers. The Education Department only serves as a facilitator to co-ordinate and disseminate information on the offers available and provide teacher education programmes on how to use Internet for education purposes. Aided and private schools have full discretion to choose any offer from Internet Service Providers. Government schools will use the same provider as the one to be chosen by the Education Department.

So far, the Education Department has received offers from three Internet Service Providers, namely Hongkong Telecom IMS, the Hong Kong Star Internet Limited and the chili.net Limited, to provide free Internet accounts to all secondary schools. The offers basically comprise provision of one to two free Internet accounts, free or limited hours of connection, necessary software, hardware, training sessions for teachers on how to use Internet, hot-line support services and subsequent maintenance. To assist the Education Department in its advisory and training services to teachers, the Internet Service Providers will also offer a free Internet account to the department.

The Education Department will be issuing a school circular at the end of October to announce these offers together with a set of guidelines on the proper use of Internet in schools. The Education Department will closely monitor progress of this project.

As regards part (b) of the question, other Internet Service Providers, if interested, are welcome to provide similar free Internet services to schools. The Education Department will notify schools when such new offers are received.

End

Improper road opening accounted for watermain bursts

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Following is a question by the Hon Fred Li and a written reply by the Secretary for Works, Mr Kwong Hon-sang, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

According to the report on the survey of water-main bursts recently published by the Office of the Commissioner for Administrative Complaints, there were a total over 6800 such cases in the territory in the past six years, 28% of which involved water-mains which were directly damaged because of the negligence of road works contractors. In 1995/96 alone, the number of cases involving water-main bursts has gone up sharply by 19% as compared with the average number of such cases in the preceding five financial years. In this connection, will the Administration inform this Council :

(a) of the reasons for the significant increase in the number of water-main burst cases in 1995/96;

(b) of the current procedures for approving and issuing road-opening permits; and whether, before issuing such permits, adequate measures are taken to advise road works contractors of the exact locations of underground water-mains; if so, of the reasons why nearly 30% of water-main burst cases in the past six years were caused by road works;

(c) whether consideration will be given to amending the relevant legislation with a view to imposing heavier penalties for causing damage to water-mains so as to increase the deterrent effect, as well as requiring road works contractors to pay a deposit in advance in order to facilitate the authorities concerned in recovering the costs for repairing the damaged water-mains; if not, why not?

Answer

Mr President,

My answers to the respective parts of the question are as follows:

(a) One of the main reasons for the increase in number of watermain burst cases in 1995/96 is attributed to the rapid increase in construction activities arising from a large number of major infrastructural and redevelopment projects. Related activities involving road openings for utility services installations and connections are greatly increased as a result of implementing these projects. These road opening activities induce various direct and indirect disturbances to watermains under the road causing some of them to burst.

(b) In accordance with the Crown Land Ordinance (Cap. 28), any party who needs to make an excavation into a public road is required to obtain an Excavation Permit (EP) from Highways Department. A road opening proposal is to be submitted to Highways Department in advance of the application for the EP, to ensure proper co-ordination among all relevant utility undertakers and Government departments.

The EP is issued with a set of conditions which require the Permittee, among other things, to circulate the road opening proposal to all parties concerned, including Water Supplies Department, to obtain relevant plans and information of existing services that may be affected. This circulation has to be done at least 7 days before commencing the road opening works.

Bearing in mind that the actual location of utility services may deviate from that indicated on the plans, the Permittee is also required to carry out suitable investigations, including, where possible, hand-dug trial pits, to ascertain the exact utility locations before commencing the road opening works. This is a standard requirement of the EP on all road opening works.

Despite these precautions, watermain bursts directly attributable to road opening activities still account for almost 30% of watermain burst cases in the past 6 years. The main reasons are:

(1) Lack of or inadequate hand-dug trial pit investigation by the Permittee to accurately locate the watermains.

(2) Lack of or inadequate protective measures provided in the course of excavation or utility installations, resulting in the overloading of the watermain or excessive settlement of the supporting ground. This can be aggravated by heavy rainfall when the trench is open.

(3) In general, inadequate supervision by contractors of their workers and excavation plant operators, despite having necessary information on the watermains and instructions on how to protect them from damage.

(c) In order to increase the deterrent effect, we are considering suitable amendments to the legislation and to imposing heavier penalties on those who cause damage to watermains, including an increase in the fines from $5,000 to $25,000.

The Administration, however, has reservations on the suggestion that road opening contractors pay a cash deposit in advance in order to facilitate the authority concerned in recovering the repair costs arising from watermain bursts. We will have to consider the views of the construction industry and, internally, of relevant departments to determine its viability and the staff resource implications. The deposits will have to be substantial if enough to cover the possible remedial work and the cost is likely to be passed to the consumers, as will the (relatively small) financing of such deposits.

End

Measures to reduce waiting time for 999 calls to get through

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Following is a question by the Hon Zachary Wong Wai-yin and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Peter Lai, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the number of Police Communications Officers responsible for answering "999" emergency calls ("999" calls) at the Police Command and Control Centre, together with the number of "999" lines in each of the police regions;

(b) of the average time taken for a "999" call to get through in each police region at present;

(c) of the number of complaints received by the Police in each of the past three years regarding "999" calls not getting through;

(d) whether there are measures in place to reduce the waiting time for a "999" call to get through; and

(e) whether the existing "999" service is capable of handling calls made in Putonghua; if not, what measures will be taken by the Government to improve the situation?

Reply:

Mr President,

(a) In total, nine Senior Police Communications Officers (SPCO) and 63 Police Communications Officers (PCO) are deployed to answer "999" calls round the clock at three Regional Command and Control Centres (RCCCs), namely, Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories. There are currently 52 "999" lines over the territory distributed as follows:

Hong Kong Island RCCC	16
Kowloon RCCC	17
New Territories RCCC	19

(b) On average "999" calls are answered in 2.4 seconds in Hong Kong Island, 4.0 seconds in Kowloon and 3.7 seconds in New Territories.

(c) The figures of complaints for the last three years are:

1996 (to date)	2
1995	1
1994	3

It is understood that people seldom file formal complaints regarding waiting time for a "999" call to get through. They usually do it at District Fight Crime Committee meetings or through the media for which the Police do not keep statistics.

(d) The Police have taken the following measures to reduce the waiting time for 999 calls to get through -

(i) launching a public education campaign to promote the proper use of "999";

(ii) planning the introduction of a Calling Number Display System to help locate callers automatically and thus save time in taking their particulars. In addition, it will deter people from making nuisance calls;

(iii) 6 PCO posts have been created in August 1996 for "999" manning;

(iv) reduction of the length of recorded message.

(e) 81% of SPCOs and 37% of PCOs have received training in Putonghua. All will receive training in handling Putonghua calls eventually. In the meantime, at least one Putonghua speaking officer, either SPCO or PCO, will be present at each RCCC at any given time.

End

Public transport smart card scheme

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Following is a question by the Hon Howard Young and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport, Mr Gordon Siu, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council of the recent developments regarding the participation of public transport operators in the smart card scheme?

Reply:

Mr President,

In 1994, five public transport operators formed a company, Creative Star Limited, to develop a common contactless smart card system for use by the travelling public. Operators participating in the scheme are the Mass Transit Railway Corporation, the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation, Kowloon Motor Bus, Citybus and Hongkong & Yaumati Ferry.

The use of a common smart card for public transport necessitates the introduction of a new fare collection system for the transport operators. This includes the development and supply of a central computer system to process the daily transactions and act as a central clearing house, and the use of compatible computer systems by the individual operators.

Over 5,000 items of smart card processing equipment will be installed. They include machines for loading and re-loading value to the smart cards, adaptation of automatic fare collection gates at stations and ferry piers, processors at LRT platforms, and fare collection equipment on buses. The development of the initial stock of smart cards is complete and delivery has commenced. The development of the hardware and software for data processing is in good progress. Subject to satisfactory performance testing, the system is expected to be open for public use by mid 1997.

Initially, the routes accepting smart cards will include all MTR lines, the KCR domestic line, the Light Rail Transit and its feeder buses, cross harbour routes provided by KMB and Citybus, and outlying islands and new town services provided by HYF. Creative Star Ltd is encouraging a number of other public transport operators to join the scheme.

End

Conditions for using facilities at UGC-funded institutions

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Following is a question by the Hon Henry Tang Ying-yen, and a reply by the Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Joseph W P Wong, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council whether facilities such as libraries, research data banks and study rooms in government-funded tertiary institutions are currently made available for use by working people pursuing part-time studies, if so, what the opening hours of these facilities and their conditions of use are?

Reply:

Depending on the type of facilities and the demand for use, facilities in government-funded tertiary institutions are generally open to working people pursuing part-time studies in courses solely or jointly run by these institutions or their continuing and professional education or extra-mural departments with other local/overseas institutions. These government-funded tertiary institutions include the 7 University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions, the Hong Kong Institute of Education, the 2 Technical Colleges of the Vocational Training Council and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Facilities in the UGC-funded institutions are also open to working people who are enrolled on courses provided by other local/overseas educational establishments or professional organisations.

In considering whether to open certain types of facilities to working people pursuing part-time studies, or other members of the public in general, the tertiary institutions take into account the purpose of the use, the nature of the activity and the status of the person or organisation applying for use. Priority is given to academic and bona fide research activities. The intended use must also not have an adverse effect on the normal teaching, learning and research activities of the staff and students in the institutions.

Libraries and Research Databanks

For facilities such as libraries and research databanks, well-established arrangements already exist whereby certain members of the public, not only working people pursuing part-time studies, may be allowed to make use of such facilities of the tertiary institutions. These include, among others, members of Government and public bodies, quasi-government bodies and non-profit making organisations.

Students and staff of any UGC-funded institution, subject to certain rules, may make use of the library facilities of another UGC-funded institution. Graduates, alumni and in some cases, members of the public who satisfy certain requirements set by the tertiary institutions may apply for library cards, borrowers' cards, readers' tickets or other types of registration documents to make use of the facilities. Fees may be charged for such use. Registered users of public libraries run by the Government can have access to library materials in the UGC-funded institutions and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts through the existing inter-library loan service by channelling their requests through their own libraries.

The opening hours of the libraries in the tertiary institutions vary, but generally they are open between 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on weekdays, and between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Some libraries are also open on Sunday afternoons from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. For certain reference materials, it may be possible to access on-line through computer and telecommunications systems round the clock from remote locations.

Study Rooms

Given their limited capacity, study rooms in the tertiary institutions are generally not open to the public.

Other Facilities

(a) Laboratories

Some tertiary institutions allow the use of laboratories by working people pursuing part-time studies, provided that they can prove they have a genuine need to use the laboratories for testing and other academic purposes. Priority of use will, of course, be given to students on full-time courses. Generally, only applications by organisations or groups of students would be entertained. Fees may be charged.

(b) Lecture Theatres and Seminar Rooms

Some tertiary institutions allow use of their lecture theatres and seminar rooms by working people who are pursuing part-time studies, or members of other external organisations for the purposes of conferences or seminars. Applications are considered on a case-by-case basis. Fees may be charged.

(c) Sports and Amenities Facilities

Sports facilities may be open on a case-by-case basis upon request or under special arrangements in order not to deprive full-time students of their normal use. Some institutions allow alumni, graduates, guests of students or those affiliated to the institution to make use of the facilities. Student hostels are generally closed to the public except during summer vacation when some institutions rent out hostel places for conferences or seminars run by the institutions themselves or by external organisations.

End

Public housing estates falling objects incidents

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Following is a question by the Hon Fred Li and a written reply by the Secretary for Housing, Mr Dominic Wong, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Recently, a series of incidents involving objects falling from a height have occurred in public housing estates, some of which have resulted in injuries to pedestrians. It is learnt that such injuries are partly attributable to a lack of covered pavements in public housing estates. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) of the total number of incidents involving falling objects which have occurred in public housing estates in the past three years, and the locations identified as black spots for such incidents;

(b) how the Housing Department handles such incidents which occur in public housing estates;

(c) whether the Housing Department will consider making the provision of covered pavements a basic facility in public housing estates; if not, why not; and what specific measures will be taken to protect pedestrians in public housing estates from being hit by falling objects; and

(d) whether the Housing Department will promote public education campaigns or adopt other measures in its efforts to prevent incidents involving falling objects; if so, what the specific plans are; if not, why not?

Answer:

Mr President,

In the past three years, there were 38 reported incidents of injuries caused by falling objects in public housing estates. The problem was more obvious in Tseung Kwan O and Tuen Mun.

The Housing Department endeavoured to identify the offenders and warned them in less serious cases. Serious cases were reported to the police for investigation and prosecution as appropriate.

Provision of covered walkways can help to protect pedestrians from falling objects. In new public housing estates, covered walkways link domestic blocks with all strategic points such as bus terminals, schools and commercial centres. In older estates, covered walkways are provided as an improvement item where feasible.

The fundamental solution to the problem requires a change in residents' attitude. Residents are reminded of the importance of preventing objects from falling outside their flats. "Falling objects from height" is one of the main themes in a territory-wide public education campaign launched by the Housing Department in public housing estates. Through posters, notices, estate newsletters, roving exhibitions and the media, residents are reminded of the danger to other people, and of their own liability arising from such irresponsible behaviour.

End

Employees on overseas assignments protection

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Following is a question by the Hon Leung Yiu-chung and a reply by the Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Joseph W P Wong, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it knows of the respective numbers of local employees on overseas assignments who have sustained injuries or died while at work and not at work over the past three years;

(b) whether local employees on overseas assignments who have sustained injury while not at work are protected by the relevant legislation of the territory; if not, through what channels such employees can obtain compensation; and;

(c) whether the Government will consider making it a statutory requirement for employers to take out additional insurance for their employees on overseas assignments who meet with accidents while not at work?

Reply:

(a) The number of work-related injury cases outside Hong Kong in the past three years which were reported to the Labour Department is as follows:

Year	Injury Cases	Fatal Cases	Total
1993	(detailed breakdown not available)		734
1994	650	40	690
1995	648	34	682

We have no statistics on injury cases involving local employees while they were outside Hong Kong which are not related to work.

(b) The Employees' Compensation Ordinance (Cap. 282) provides for the payment of compensation to an employee who is injured in an accident arising out of and in the course of his employment. But there are provisions under which certain accidents are deemed, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, to be arising out of and in the course of employment. They include accidents which happen when the employee is travelling from or to the place of work by means of transport provided by the employer, and accidents which happen when the employee is travelling for the purposes of, and in connection with, his employment between Hong Kong and any place outside Hong Kong or between any place outside Hong Kong and any other such place.

(c) The Government's policy on employees' compensation is to ensure that an employer is liable to compensate his/her employees for injuries they have sustained as a direct consequence of their work, instead of other activities not related to work. Therefore, we do not consider it appropriate to make it a statutory requirement that employers should take out additional compulsory employees' compensation insurance to cover non-work-related injuries sustained by employees who are on overseas assignments. Employers are, nevertheless, free to consider providing such insurance cover in their employment contracts with employees.

End

Disciplined services Overtime work arrangements appropriate

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Following is a question by the Hon Christine Loh and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Peter Lai, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Will the Administration inform this Council:

(a) by a breakdown in tabulated form, of the conditioned hours of work as well as the arrangements for compensating overtime work undertaken by officers in various ranks in the disciplined services; and

(b) of the reasons for any differences in the conditioned hours of work and arrangements for compensating overtime work in the disciplined services, and whether a review will be undertaken with a view to removing such differences?

Reply:

(a) Table showing the conditioned hours of work as well as the arrangements for compensating overtime work undertaken by officers in various ranks in the disciplined services is attached at Annex.

Overtime work may be undertaken only when it is unavoidable and should be kept to the absolute minimum compatible with operational requirements. Apart from exceptional circumstances arising from unforeseen events, overtime must be authorised in advance by a Head of Department or an officer nominated for this purpose by the Head of Department personally.

Compensation for overtime work in the disciplined services should normally take the form of time-off in lieu. If it is impracticable to grant time off within one month of the date on which the overtime is worked, a Disciplined Services Overtime Allowance (DSOA) may be paid to all rank and file staff, junior members of officer grades and exceptionally, some senior officers in specific case when the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service has given approval for them to receive such an allowance. An officer may, however, opt for time-off in lieu at a later date instead of DSOA, subject to the exigencies of the service.

(b) The conditioned hours for members of the disciplined services are determined by the operational needs of the disciplined services departments, in relation to the responsibilities, complement and the actual manpower situation in a particular grade. Factors which are taken into account when conditioned hours are considered include shift pattern, the nature of the work, working conditions and the level of stress officers may experience on the job. As the operational requirements of the various disciplined services differ, it is clearly not feasible to set uniform conditioned hours for all the services. Any changes in the conditioned hours will have pay implications.

The arrangement for compensating officers for their overtime worked as described in (a) above apply to all disciplined services. We consider the current conditioned hours and compensation for overtime work arrangements in the various disciplined services departments to be appropriate. They will be reviewed as and when circumstances dictate. We currently have no plan to amend conditioned hours in the disciplined services.

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Department	Rank :	Conditioned hours of work	Arrangements for compensating overtime work
Customs & Excise	Assistant Superintendent Senior Inspector Inspector Chief Customs Officer Senior Customs Officer Customs Officer	51 hours per week	As a first priority, C&E officers will be given time-off in lieu to compensate their overtime work. If this is not practicable due to manpower constraint or operational reasons, they will be allowed to claim the Disciplined Services Overtime Allowance (DSOA). At present, the following C&E officers are eligible for the allowance - (a) 6 Assistant Superintendents performing drug investigation and anti-smuggling duties (with exceptional approval given by SCS); and (b) officers in the rank of Senior Inspector and below.
Royal Hong Kong Police	All ranks	51 hours per week	Overtime work undertaken by the following ranks is compensated by time-off in lieu , or where this is not practicable, by DSOA - Chief Inspector of Police Senior Inspector of Police Inspector of Police Senior Station Sergeant Station Sergeant Senior Police Constable Police Constable

Department	Rank :	Conditioned hours of work	Arrangements for compensating overtime work
Immigration Department	Director Deputy Director Assistant Director Senior Principal Immigration Officer Principal Immigration Officer Assistant Principal Immigration Officer Chief Immigration Officer	44 hours per week	These officers are at senior supervisory or managerial levels. They are expected to work some overtime as part of their normal duties. Their salaries have been set at a level to reflect this factor. They are therefore not eligible for overtime compensation.
	Senior Immigration Officer Immigration Officer Assistant Immigration Officer Chief Immigration Assistant Senior Immigration Assistant Immigration Assistant	44 hours per week	Overtime work would normally be compensated by time-off in lieu. This category of officers are eligible for DSOA.
Correctional Services Department	Directorate	88 hours in 2-week cycle	nil
	Chief Superintendent	49 hours a week	nil
	Senior Superintendent Superintendent	49 hours a week	Time-off in lieu
	Chief Officer Principal Officer Officer Assistant Officer I Assistant Officer II Technical Instructor Instructor	49 hours a week	Time-off in lieu and/or DSOA

Department	Rank :	Conditioned hours of work	Arrangements for compensating overtime work
Government Flying Service	Controller Chief Pilot Senior Pilot Pilot I Chief Aircraft Engineer Senior Aircraft Engineer Aircraft Engineer Senior Air Crewman Officer Air Crewman Officer	44 hours per week	No compensation. Senior officers are not eligible for overtime allowance nor the grant of time-off in lieu.
	Pilot II Chief Aircraft Technician Senior Aircraft Technician Aircraft Technician Senior Air Crewman Air Crewman	44 hours per week	Granting of time-off in lieu, or payment of DSOA.
	Cadet Pilot	44 hours per week	Officers under training are not eligible for DSOA. Cadet Pilots who are required to attend for duty beyond their conditioned hours of work in connection with their training are given time-off in lieu.

Department	Rank :	Conditioned hours of work	Arrangements for compensating overtime work
Fire Services Department	Director Deputy Director Chief Fire Officer Deputy Chief Fire Officer Senior Division Officer Division Officer Assistant Division Officer	Continuous duty with off call hour	Nil
	Senior Station Officer (Control) Station Officer (Control)	48 hours per week	DSOA will be made payable to members who have performed duties in excess of their conditioned hours. However, arrangements for time-off in lieu should, above all, be made wherever possible.
	Senior Station Officer (Operational) Station Officer (Operational)	54 hours per week	
	Senior Fireman (Control) Principal Fireman (Control)	48 hours per week	
	Principal Fireman (Operational) Senior Fireman (Operational) Fireman (Operational)	54 hours per week	
	Senior Ambulance Officer Ambulance Officer	44 hours per week	
	Principal Ambulanceman Senior Ambulanceman Ambulanceman	48 hours per week	

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End

Measures to relieve nuisances caused by Tsuen Wan Abattoir

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Following is a question by the Hon Sin Chung-kai and a written reply by the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands, Mr Bowen Leung, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

It was mentioned in a letter of 19 July 1996 from the Planning, Environment and Lands Branch that the Administration hoped to implement certain practical measures to ensure that the Tsuen Wan Abattoir would not generate environmental problems. As the residents living in the vicinity of the Tsuen Wan Abattoir, in particular residents of the Riviera Gardens, are still suffering from the nuisances caused by the bad smell and grunting of pigs emanating from the Abattoir and pigs-carrying vehicles, will the Government inform this Council whether:

(a) the facilities in the Tsuen Wan Abattoir have been improved to bring the sanitary standard of the abattoir to that set for the Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse which will be built soon;

(b) it will consider improving the traffic arrangements in the vicinity of the Tsuen Wan Abattoir so as to avoid pigs-carrying vehicles passing through the residential area?

Answer:

Mr President,

(a) Tsuen Wan Slaughterhouse is a private-sector project built in 1979. It is licensed under the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance, Cap. 132. Its facilities and operation comply with the licensing conditions and relevant public health requirements. Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse is a government project being built now. It is not practical nor economically viable to improve the Tsuen Wan facilities in line with the standard for the Sheung Shui Slaughterhouse, unless the premises were demolished, redesigned and rebuilt. It would be up to the operator of the Tsuen Wan Slaughterhouse to decide whether it would be feasible to do so. However, in order to address the residents' concern and upon the advice of government, the Tsuen Wan Slaughterhouse has implemented measures to further reduce the odour and noise generated from its operation. These include more frequent hosing down of the pig unloading area and the lairage area, repairing broken windows facing Riviera Gardens and closing windows during slaughtering hours. These measures have already brought about significant improvements to the area. Furthermore, a working group with representatives from Tsuen Wan District Office and relevant government departments, Tsuen Wan Slaughterhouse management, District Board members and representatives of Riviera Garden was formed in July 1996 to identify and monitor practical ways of reducing and containing noise and odour nuisances emanating from the Slaughterhouse. At the working group meeting on 23 August 1996, the Slaughterhouse management agreed to consider further increasing the frequency of manual hosing down and employ a consultant to explore the feasibility of using odour neutraliser. The Working Group will meet again later this month to review the effectiveness of the mitigation measures.

(b) The operator of Tsuen Wan Slaughterhouse has obtained the agreement of the pig delivering lorry drivers not to pass through Riviera Gardens via Wing Shun Street. To ensure this is done, Transport Department has prohibited the south-bound traffic at Wing Shun Street from turning right into the slaughterhouse.

End

Tampering of taximeters

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Following is a question by the Hon Choy Kan-pui and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport, Mr Gordon Siu, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

In regard to cases involving the tampering of taximeters, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether there is an upward trend in the number of such cases in the past three years;

(b) of the maximum and minimum penalties imposed by the court for such an offence in the same period; and

(c) what measures are in place to ensure that taxi passengers would not be cheated?

Mr President,

The number of taxi drivers prosecuted by the Police for tampering with taximeters was 11 in 1994, four in 1995, and 15 in the first nine months of 1996.

In the four most serious cases, three have already been heard by the courts. One offender was prosecuted for false accounting, one for attempting to obtain property by deception, and one for going equipped for stealing. Each of these offenders was fined $10,000. The fourth case is still under investigation by the Police.

In the other cases, offenders were prosecuted for using a taximeter with a broken seal. Of the cases already heard by the courts, the fines imposed ranged from $500 to $2,000.

The Police have given high priority to combating offences involving tampering with the taximeter and other general taximeter offences. From January to September 1996, the Police have mounted 510 operations and made 1 273 arrests. This compares with 626 operations and 1 268 arrests for the whole of 1995.

Taximeters are required by law to be submitted to the Transport Department every six months to be tested, stamped and sealed. Since October 1992, all new taxis have been required by Transport Department to install a new type of taximeter which has anti-tampering devices to protect the electronic circuit. So far, half of the taxi fleet are already fitted with the new taximeter. We will continue to discuss with the taxi trade and encourage taxi operators to speed up the pace of conversion.

Also, regulations are being drawn up requiring taxi drivers to issue receipts to passengers on demand. We aim to introduce the new regulations in early 1997 and to have full implementation by 1998.

A number of measures have been introduced to promote honesty among taxi drivers. The mandatory display of driver identity plates encourages drivers to exercise self-discipline. The maximum penalty for overcharging has been increased to $10,000. Information booklets on taxi services have been published to set out the rights and obligations of both taxi drivers and passengers.

End

Services to help new arrivals from China

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Following is a question by the Hon Ip Kwok-him and a written reply by the Secretary for Health and Welfare, Mrs Katherine Fok, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

New arrivals from China face a lot of problems after arriving in the territory. At present, many voluntary agencies (VAs) provide various services to help new arrivals integrate into the community. However, it is difficult for the VAs to further develop these services because of limited resources and such services cannot be provided to more new arrivals. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether there are any plans to allocate more resources to the VAs to further develop such services; if so, what the specific plans are; if not, why not; and

(b) in view of the current situation in which many VAs are allocated funds by the Government to provide their services on an annual basis, which makes it difficult for them to make long-term plans for providing services for new arrivals from China, what measures does the Government have to rectify the situation?

Reply:

(a) Many voluntary agencies or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are used by Government to provide services designed to address problems faced by new arrivals. In addition, new arrivals are, of course, entitled to use the full range of social services for example, education, employment services, medical and health services and social welfare services, available to all other members of the public in Hong Kong. As regards specialised services, the Education Department subvents NGOs to provide special induction and extension programmes for the children of new arrivals. The Home Affairs Department has sought assistance from local organisations in organising orientation and language programmes at District level. The Social Welfare Department subvents the International Social Service (ISS) to provide a range of post-migration services. These include enquiry and information services, orientation programmes, social groups, short-term counselling and casework services, referral services for those in need of further assistance, and language courses.

In view of the increasing influx of new arrivals, it is clear that these specialised services will need to be expanded as necessary to cope with demand. For example, the subvention to the ISS has been doubled this year to provide for a major expansion of their services for new arrivals. Subject to the availability of resources, the Government departments concerned will enhance their efforts in assisting new arrivals next year. Their plans in this regard can be announced only once funding for them has been secured in the budget estimates for 1997-98.

(b) NGOs should face no particular difficulties in the long term planning of their services simply because funding for them is allocated annually. Once Government has agreed to subvent an NGO service, it is highly unlikely to withdraw such support at short notice and thus long term planning for its development should be possible. It should be noted that the recurrent funding for Government services is also allocated annually but this does not prevent long term planning for such services.

End