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Transcript of Governor's meet-the-media session

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The following is a transcript of the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten's media session after his visit to Tsuen Wan District today (Thursday):

Governor: Good afternoon. I enjoy making another official visit to Tsuen Wan. I of course made several other visits to Tsuen Wan over the last few weeks. It's my third or fourth visit in about a month and I have been discussing with the District Board some of the local problems they have, particularly comprehensive development of some of the older neighbourhoods, the impact of traffic on Tsuen Wan and other similar matters. And we'll be looking forward to co-operating with the District Board in tackling those problems.

Question: Do you think that Beijing is overly reckless in its...exercise off the coast of Taiwan? What are our reactions on that?

Governor: I don't think that it is appropriate for me to comment in detail on an issue like that. It's safe to say that obviously, like everyone else in Hong Kong, I very much hope that any problems and difficulties in the region can be sorted out speedily and peacefully. I think that's the feeling that everybody has here in Hong Kong.

Question: Mr Patten, is Britain trying to further distant itself from Hong Kong by abolishing the sub-committee on Hong Kong affairs in the cabinet?

Governor: No, anybody who knew the faintest thing about British politics or the way that British civil service operates would know that that was a ludicrous suggestion. What's actually happened is that all the sub-committees of the policy committee that looks after foreign affairs and defence have been amalgamated into the main committee. It doesn't make any difference whatsoever. No difference at all to the way that Hong Kong business is conducted. I will still be asked to return whenever the Overseas Policy and Defence Committee discusses Hong Kong, so will our ambassador in Peking. And I repeat, it amounts to a rationalisation of the committee structure rather than a down grading. All, repeat, all the sub-committees of Overseas Policy and Defence Committee have been

Question: But why abolishing it at this moment causes so much concern among the public?

Governor: It doesn't cause too much concern about the public unless you get the wrong end of the stick. And what I am telling you is what the right end of the stick is.

Question: In the Morning Post there is this report that while the UNHCR's Asia Office said that the Hong Kong's boat people have zero per cent chance to be all repatriated to Vietnam before 1997, before the change of sovereignty, what do you think of that?

Governor: We are obviously working as hard as we can to ensure that all the Vietnamese migrants are returned by that date. What I think the UNHCR spokesman was saying was that because of recent statements by some American Congressmen, it's more difficult to encourage the Vietnamese migrants to go back to Vietnam. He said, I think, that the Vietnam which those Congressmen are describing is a Vietnam that no longer exists. He also pointed out, I think, that there isn't the remotest chance of those Vietnamese migrants being allowed to go to California or wherever else it is that they want to settle. The sensible thing for them to do is to go back to Vietnam sooner rather than later. He was quite right to say that those moves in the American Congress have made it more difficult for us to achieve our objective. But we'll still work to try to do so.

Question: Mr Patten, ... official I believe said that there was a possibility that the Vietnamese could be transferred to re-education camps in China after 1997? Can you give the Vietnamese the reassurance that would not happen?

Governor: I've got no reason to think that will happen. But any reassurance should come from Chinese officials. I didn't make the speculative assumption nor have I got any responsibility for statements made about the position after 1997. But, the reassurance should come from Chinese officials.

Question: The political panel of the PWC suggested that the provisional legislature should be established next year. Would this be discussed in the meeting between the two foreign ministers in October?

Governor: I haven't got the faintest idea. I will however repeat and underline what the Chief Secretary said yesterday. There is no need whatsoever for a provisional legislature. The people of Hong Kong will be electing a perfectly good legislature in a clean, fair and open way this September and our judgment is that legislature should last until 1999 and any other arrangement will be confusing for the people of Hong Kong and disruptive and may well cause considerable doubts in the minds of the international community about the future here in Hong Kong. So as far as we're concerned, the legislature elected in September this year should be allowed to complete its term. I am sure it will be an effective legislative body.

Question: What do you think are the chances of some of the Vietnamese Refugees leaving behind by the time of handover and what will happen to them?

Governor: I very much hope that they will all return by the time of the handover and that is our objective. Coming back to the question that was asked earlier I am sure that if that didn't happen - but it's a hypothetical question - I don't want to take away in any way from our objective of returning them all. If this was to happen, I am sure that the SAR Government would continue to handle the situation fairly but firmly as we have done.

Question: Mr Patten, will you please give some comment on the to be past Legco and what's your expectation on the coming new Legco?

Governor: I think that the present Legco, the majority of whose members have been elected for the first time has done an effective job over the last four years. We've worked, I think, constructively with the Legislative Council despite the reported attentions we've managed to get most of our major business through and if you compare the record this Legislative Council with the record with other legislatures around the world, you will see that it's done an effective job and a constructive job as well. I hope we will be able to have an equally good relationship with the new legislature, all of whose members will be elected. I see no reason why we shouldn't be able to do so. I think that obviously a wholly elected legislative body will increase the accountability of government. But I believed that we'll also be able to ensure that government remains effective, remains in a position to give a lead to the whole community.

Question: What are your comments on the report handed to you by Andrew So earlier this week on the Buildings Department?

Governor: We'll be studying that report. COMAC does an extremely important job. COMAC is the channel by which citizens may clear their grievances and that therefore anything that comes from COMAC we should take extremely seriously. I made a visit to COMAC a few week ago and was able to see the effectiveness of their work for myself.

Question: What's your reaction to the welcoming party that greeted you as you came up the escalator? Is there anything that you can do for these people?

Governor: The Housing Authority as you know have a programme of modernisation and refurbishment to some of our older estates, estates which like public housing estates elsewhere, having to deal with some of the problems of the early development of concrete technology in particular the spalling associated I think in many cases with the use of salt water rather than normal water when the estates were being built - there are a number of reasons for that, not all of them entirely defensible. I think that the Housing Authority are well aware as we are and particular concerns expressed in some estates are doing every thing possible to bring forward the modernisation and the updating of those estates as fast as they can.

Question: Mr Patten, some people suggest that you should shift your work to Anson Chan. What do you feel about this? Because ... actually the role of the British Government is fading.

Governor: I feel what I have been answering similar questions for the last two-and-a-half years and when about 18 months ago I first said that the closer we got to 1997 the more I would want to bring forward local officials and delegate more to them. When I was saying that 18 months ago, you were saying, "who is he kidding? Why should he want to do that. He'll never do that." But I have. It's happening . It's entirely right. Local officials will be here after 1997 but alas unless there is some... alas I shan't be here. So it's entirely right to bring them forward. They are extremely good. We've got a first class team. We've localised our administration very rapidly but sensibly in the last three years and that this administration is well able to look after all the interests of Hong Kong. I can assure you even delegating more the governor is going to remain very busy between now and June 30, 1997. As you will see, as you follow him from one destination to another.

End/Thursday, July 20, 1995

Public consultation on urban renewal

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The Government today (Thursday) announced for public consultation a package of proposals designed to tackle problems posed by urban renewal, taking account of the needs of the people affected and the wider needs of the community for a better environment.

Releasing the consultation document at a press conference, the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands, Mr Bowen Leung, said there was a need to establish fresh policies, programmes and institutional arrangements in order to deal with the problems of urban decay in the remainder of the decade and beyond.

Mr Leung said the Government had reviewed current policy to identify ways of addressing the problems of site assembly, relocation of residents and business affected, and financial viability, as well as expediting urban renewal. The review has identified a package of proposals, which include:

- * improving the role of the Land Development Corporation (LDC) so that in addition to its own projects, it could act as a facilitator of projects with significant planning gains.

- * granting sites at concessionary premium to the Hong Kong Housing Society, and LDC if situation requires, for building flats to be used for rehousing people affected by projects undertaken by the LDC.
- * trying out a linked-site approach in LDC projects, under which a redevelopment site which is not viable on its own for various reasons is linked with another site which is viable, so that urban renewal schemes can benefit from cross-subsidy.
- * improving ex-gratia allowances for business and tenants to be relocated.
- * injecting more land for rehousing, subject to the agreement of the Land Commission.

Mr Leung said the proposals outlined were aimed at facilitating urban renewal into the next century in order to improve the urban environment, enhance planning and the provision of infrastructure, thin out development densities where necessary while making better use of underdeveloped land and to improve both the quantity and standard of housing.

"They are designed to make the best use of both Government and private sector resources and to be sufficiently flexible to provide a range of mechanisms for application to different projects with differing needs and circumstances.

"Above all, the proposals are designed to be as fair as possible and to balance the interests of the community as a whole with those of people directly affected by urban renewal projects," Mr Leung said.

"We will be consulting the Legislative Council, District Boards, the Town Planning Board and interested bodies on our ideas. We also welcome opinion from members of the public."

The consultation period will last till October 15. Copies of the consultation document will be available from District Offices beginning July 24.

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Support for slope safety initiatives welcomed

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The Secretary for Works, Mr James Blake, commenting on the report issued yesterday by the Select Committee on the Kwun Lung Lau Landslip, today (Thursday) welcomed the committee's support for the slope safety initiatives which have been introduced by the Government in recent years. These initiatives have brought about a substantial decrease in fatalities arising from slope-related incidents.

He said the recommendations concerning slope safety followed closely the Government's own proposals to step up landslip prevention, as published in the "Report on the Slope Safety Review" in February.

"In particular, we have reviewed the risk categorisation system used by the Geotechnical Engineering Office (GEO)," said Mr Blake, "and we have already issued explanatory notes to the public which clearly define the meaning of the terms used."

With regard to the report's criticism on the GEO for relying on old drawing to verify information on the Kwun Lung Lau retaining wall, Mr Blake pointed out that this wall had stood for almost 100 years.

"The method used in the Stage I Study to assess the wall and slope had been considered by Professor Morgenstern, who found assessment and the associated study acceptable. The Select Committee does not disagree with Professor Morgenstern's view," he said.

Mr Blake added that when the estate was built, the retaining wall was not part of the building works to be approved by the Building Authority.

"We are committed to the acceleration of the landslip preventive measures programmes and to other measures aimed at improving slope safety," he said.

"We will study further the Select Committee's detailed recommendations and will continue to report to the Legislative Council at least once every six months on progress with implementing improvements.

"We shall also step up our efforts to promote public awareness of slope safety and maintenance responsibilities," said Mr Blake.

The acting Secretary for Security, Mr Ken Woodhouse, also welcomed the report and said the Security Branch would be studying its conclusions and recommendations very carefully.

He said the Security Branch would be conducting a comprehensive review on the Government's emergency communications channels to see how these might be improved to reflect the recommendations made by the Select Committee.

"We accept the Select Committee's conclusion that Government's overall emergency response systems generally, and Government Secretariat Emergency Co-ordination Centre's (GSECC) specifically, should be clarified and strengthened, and we will define GSECC's co-ordinating role more clearly," Mr Woodhouse said.

He pointed out that the actual operational decisions during an emergency were handled by the emergency services - the Police and Fire Services - and by other departments working through established emergency control centres.

During flooding, landslips and other weather situations, these will include the Works Group of Departments working through their emergency control rooms, as well as district offices, Social Welfare Department and other relief agencies using their own well-established systems.

Significant improvements have already been made to the GSECC since July last year. Many of these improvements have been completed and others are now being finalised.

"The main improvements include the opening of a new, up-graded and more functional GSECC facility in February this year.

"The Hong Kong Disaster Plan, which serves as a guidance document on how government departments will respond in an emergency, was published in November last year," Mr Woodhouse said.

In addition, he said, a comprehensive series of training exercises had been established for GSECC personnel. Further exercises will be intended not only to train up new personnel but also to provide refresher training for existing team members.

"Also, improved channels of liaison have been established between GSECC and the Works Group of Departments. The Works Branch Liaison Officer has a central, dedicated workstation in GSECC. He will act as an expert link to ensure that Works Group of Departments will be informed, through the correct channels, of the overall situation in an emergency, so that they may plan the best possible response," Mr Woodhouse said.

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Renewal of China's MFN Status

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The acting Secretary for Trade and Industry, Mrs Regina Ip, welcomed the US House of Representatives' approval of the motion to "table" the resolution of disapproval for the renewal of China's Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status this year.

Under US Congressional rules, the "tabling" of the disapproval resolution will have the effect of shelving it, that is to say, no further action on it will be taken in the House of Representatives.

"We are very pleased with this powerful re-affirmation of support in the House of Representatives for the renewal of China's MFN status. The decision taken by the House of Representatives clearly reflects growing understanding in the US that the renewal of China's MFN status is good for the US; good for China; and good for the rest of the world; and that trade should not be mixed from non-trade issues.

"As China and the US are our largest trading partners, we are naturally delighted that China's MFN status in the coming year is assured. This will provide a very useful basis for our businessmen to continue to plan their businesses with China," she said.

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Appointment of Law Draftsman

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The Attorney General, Mr Jeremy Mathews, today (Thursday) announced the promotion of Mr Tony Yuen-ho Yen to Law Officer with effect from July 6, 1995. He is to fill the post of Law Draftsman.

Mr Yen has been acting in the post since September last year following the appointment of Mr James Findlay, QC, the former Law Draftsman, as High Court Judge.

Mr Yen, 47, who is Hong Kong's first local Law Draftsman, was admitted as a solicitor in Hong Kong in 1983. He first joined the civil service in 1967, and was transferred from the Legal Aid Department to the Legal Department in 1986. Mr Yen is an expert in the drafting of laws in Chinese and has taken a leading role in the preparation of the laws of Hong Kong in Chinese.

Mr Yen is married with two children.

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Regulations to protect insurance policy holders

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The Government today (Thursday) announced regulations to protect the interests of insurance policy holders and to ensure that Hong Kong conforms with international practices in the supervision of long term insurance business.

The Insurance Companies (Margin of Solvency) Regulation 1995 and the Insurance Companies (Determination of Long Term Liabilities) Regulation 1995, which will be published in the Gazette tomorrow (Friday), lay down the detailed requirements for an enhanced solvency margin for classes A to F and I of long term insurance business and the principles for the valuation of the liabilities of long term business respectively.

The spokesman explained that the solvency margin for long term business had remained unchanged at \$2 million since the enactment of the Insurance Companies Ordinance in 1983.

"There is therefore an urgent need to bring the solvency margin to a level bearing a direct relationship to the size and nature of the long term business carried on by an insurer."

He said the purpose of setting up the solvency margin was to provide an early warning system to identify weaknesses in the financial strength of insurers.

The overriding criterion is that the mechanism can provide sufficient buffer to enable early remedial action to be taken before an insurer becomes insolvent.

The new solvency margin requirement prescribed by the Insurance Companies (Margin of Solvency) Regulation 1995 is generally a sum of two components.

The first component is a percentage, generally 4 per cent, of the policy reserves which cover provisions for future contractual liabilities. The second component is a percentage, generally 0.3 per cent, of the capital at risk, which is the sum assured net of the amount of the policy reserves.

In the valuation of liabilities of long term insurance business, a policy reserve is placed on each policy or group of policies.

In virtually all overseas insurance regulatory regimes, there are statutory bases for calculating policy reserves. However, in Hong Kong, there are no such bases other than the general reference to the principle of prudence.

The Insurance Companies (Determination of Long Term Liabilities) Regulation 1995 which codifies sound actuarial principles will provide a guide to the actuaries in their calculation of the liabilities of the insurers.

"The provisions of the two Regulations are basically similar to those contained in the relevant sections of the Insurance Companies Regulations 1994 of the UK for life insurance business with minor modifications," the spokesman said.

"As Hong Kong's legislative framework on insurance business is largely modelled upon the UK system, it is considered that the UK standard, which is well tried out and of international standing, is the most suitable for adoption by Hong Kong," he added.

There will be a transitional period of three years to phase in the new solvency margin for insurers to allow more time for them fully comply with requirements. Individual insurers who are unable to meet the full solvency margin within the transitional period are required to submit, for the Insurance Authority's approval, a plan or a short term financial scheme to rectify the position.

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Value of manufacturers' orders-on-hand in May 1995

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The value of manufacturers' orders-on-hand for local production in May 1995 increased by 8% over a year earlier, according to the provisional results of a monthly survey released today (Thursday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

Comparing May 1995 with May 1994, a significant increase in the value of outstanding orders was recorded in the electronic products industry (+28%).

Increases in the value of orders were also recorded in the electrical products industry (+17%), the printing and publishing industry (+13%) and the wearing apparel industry (+3%).

On the other hand, a significant decrease in the value of orders was registered in the plastic products industry (-20%). Decreases in the value of orders were also recorded in the fabricated metal products industry (-14%) and the textiles industry (-12%).

Compared with April 1995, and bearing in mind that this comparison may be affected by seasonal factors, the value of manufacturers' orders-on-hand in May 1995 increased by 3%.

The Monthly Survey of Orders-on-hand covers a sample of some 300 manufacturing firms engaging 50 or more workers.

Manufacturers' orders-on-hand refer to orders and parts of orders received earlier by manufacturers for local production which remain unfilled as at the end of the reference month. Orders received by traders not engaged in production are included if such orders are further placed to manufacturers for production locally.

However, orders placed to manufacturing firms for production in China and other places outside Hong Kong are not included in this series of orders-on-hand statistics.

A spokesman for the department pointed out that caution should be exercised in interpreting the manufacturers' orders-on-hand figures in a single month. Instead, the trend movement of the series as displayed over a wider span of time points should be looked at.

The survey report for May 1995, at \$6 a copy, is now available for sale at the Government Publications Centre, Queensway Government Offices, ground floor, Low Block, Queensway, and at the Census and Statistics Department Publications Unit, 19th Floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai.

Enquiries about the survey results may be made to the Industrial Production Statistics Section of the Census and Statistics Department on tel 2805 6441.

The following table shows the year-on-year percentage changes in the value of orders-on-hand in different manufacturing industries.

Percentage changes in the value of
orders-on-hand in

	April 1995 over April 1994 (Revised)	May 1995 over May 1994 (Provisional)
All industries covered in the survey	+4	+8
. Wearing apparel	+3	+3
. Textiles	-21	-12
. Electronic products	+28	+28
. Electrical products	+15	+17
. Fabricated metal products	-31	-14
. Plastic products	-12	-20
. Printing and publishing	+3	+13

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Construction output statistics for 1st quarter of 1995

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The gross value of construction work performed, in nominal terms by main contractors, including general and special trade contractors, amounted to \$22.8 billion in the first quarter of 1995, and was 5.5% higher than a year earlier, according to the results of the Quarterly Survey of Construction Output released today (Thursday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

Compared with the fourth quarter of 1994, the gross value of construction work performed by main contractors in the first quarter of 1995 decreased by 3.2%.

Provisional estimate of the gross value of construction work performed, measured at constant (1990) market prices in the first quarter of 1995 was 0.8% lower than in the first quarter of 1994.

The gross value of construction work performed at private sector sites in the first quarter of 1995 totalled \$8.8 billion, and was 0.6% lower than in the first quarter of 1994. Over the same period, the gross value of construction work performed at constant (1990) market prices dropped by 5.2%. This was partly related to the completion of a number of major private sector projects.

On the other hand, the gross value of construction work performed at public sector sites, at \$7.9 billion, remained on a strong up trend. It showed an increase of 17.3% over the first quarter of 1994, reflecting the further intensification of work on the major infrastructural projects. The corresponding increase when measured at constant (1990) market prices was 13.5%.

The gross value of construction work performed by general contractors at locations other than construction sites was \$4.0 billion, which was 1.9% lower than in the first quarter of 1994. When measured at constant (1990) market prices, the corresponding decrease was 11.4%. The types of work covered included minor new construction and renovation work at erected buildings and structures.

The gross value of construction activities performed by special trade contractors at locations other than construction sites, comprising mainly electrical and mechanical fitting work, totalled \$2.2 billion, and was 8.5% higher than in the first quarter of 1994. When measured at constant (1990) market prices, the gross value of construction work performed by these contractors was 2.8% lower than in the first quarter of 1994.

Analysed by end-use, residential building projects (including commercial/residential (composite) buildings) continued to account for the greatest portion of the gross value of construction work performed at construction sites. The gross value of construction work performed for these projects was \$4.8 billion, representing a decrease of 3.2% under the first quarter of 1994.

Transport projects remained the second largest category of construction site work. The gross value of construction work performed for these projects was \$4.5 billion. This was 3.9% lower than in the first quarter of 1994.

Commercial building projects constituted the third largest category of construction site work. The gross value of construction work performed for these projects totalled \$2.3 billion, which was 23.6% higher than in the first quarter of 1994.

The gross values of construction work at constant (1990) market prices are derived by deflating the nominal values with appropriate price indices to the price level of 1990.

Owing to the widespread sub-contracting practices in the construction industry, a construction establishment can be a main contractor for one contract and a sub-contractor for another contract at the same time. The gross value of construction work performed by main contractors, including both general and special trade contractors, covers only those projects in which the construction establishment takes the role of a main contractor, but not projects in which it takes only the role of a sub-contractor. However, sub-contractors' contribution to projects should have been included in the gross value of construction work performed by main contractors for whom they worked.

More detailed statistics on construction output are given in the "Report on the Quarterly Survey of Construction Output, 1st Quarter 1995". The report is now on sale at \$11 a copy at the Government Publications Centre, Queensway Government Offices, Low Block, ground floor, or at the Census and Statistics Department Publications Section, Wanchai Tower, 19th floor, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai. Regular subscription may also be arranged.

Enquiries about the survey may be directed to the Building, Construction and Real Estate Statistics Section of the Census and Statistics Department on 2805 6426.

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Activities to commemorate 50th anniversary of liberation

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A series of commemorating activities will begin at the end of next month to mark the 50th anniversary of the Liberation of Hong Kong.

Announcing the programme of events at a press conference today (Thursday), Principal Assistant Secretary for Security Mr Raymond Wong said: "The commemorating activities, which will begin on August 28, comprise a series of solemn events aimed at expressing gratitude to those who have contributed to Hong Kong during the Second World War."

These include a commemoration parade, a wreath-laying ceremony, remembrance services, a battlefield tour and visits to military cemeteries. More than 400 veterans are expected to attend various activities.

"The programme will end on September 2 with disbandment parades in Wan Chai and Gallipoli Lines to mark the disbandment of the Royal Hong Kong Regiment (Volunteers) after 140 years of distinguished service to Hong Kong," Mr Wong said.

Also present at today's conference were Colonel Howard Bentley-Marchant, Deputy Chief of Staff, HQ British Forces; Lieutenant Colonel Kestrel Simson, Commanding Officer, Royal HK Regiment (The Volunteers); Lieutenant Commander Bob Wilson, Project Officer of the Anniversary Programmes; and Mr Arthur Gomes, Chairman of the Hong Kong Prisoner of War Association.

"The 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War is of special significance to people all over the world. Programmes of thanksgiving and remembrance to mark the end of the war have taken place in many countries of the world.

"The Government felt that this important anniversary should be suitably commemorated in order to pay tribute to the sacrifice and courage of the people of the territory during the war," Mr Wong said.

To commemorate these important events, a joint Hong Kong Government - Garrison steering committee was established last year to plan and co-ordinate various commemorating activities.

A budget of \$740,000 has been allocated for the programme to provide for transportation and refreshment for the veterans. The amount of the budget is sufficient to cover essential expenditure of the activities planned, without being excessive.

"We believe that the programme is suitable and it is entirely appropriate that Hong Kong should pay tribute to all those who have passed through a dreadful period in the history of Hong Kong. We believe that the people of Hong Kong will see it as proper expression of respect and gratitude for the events of 1945," Mr Wong said.

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Governor visits Tsuen Wan

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The Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, was given a warm welcome by staff and residents when he visited the Yuen Yuen Institute Care and Attention Home for the Aged today (Thursday).

The visit was first on the itinerary of Mr Patten's tour of Tsuen Wan to keep himself abreast of the latest developments in the district.

He then proceeded to Yan Chai Hospital to officially open the newly furnished Paediatric floor and tour the Day Surgery Centre.

The centre, opened in February, was the Hospital Authority's first fully integrated Day Surgery Centre. It has a waiting room, an anaesthetic room, an operating theatre, a recovery room, day wards and a play area.

The Governor showed particular interest in the waiting room and recovery room which had been decorated and furnished to give it a comfortable domestic setting to help ease the fear and anxiety of patients waiting for and recovering from minor surgeries.

Afterwards, Mr Patten went on a walkabout in Tak Wah Park, a classical Chinese garden which featured a stoneboat, "pai lau", chess garden, cascade and fish ponds. While touring a popular shopping arcade nearby, the Governor was greeted by residents and shoppers.

Before concluding his visit, Mr Patten met with district board members and local personalities at a reception.

The Governor was accompanied by the Director of Home Affairs, Mr Joseph W P Wong, and the Tsuen Wan District Officer, Mr Thomas Chow.

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Grading of beach water quality

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (Thursday) announced the latest grading of Hong Kong's beaches, based on the bacteriological water quality.

The purpose of the grading system is to inform swimmers and the general public about the state of bacteriological pollution at various beaches.

The grading will be announced biweekly during the bathing season to coincide with the frequency at which beach waters are usually sampled.

The grading is based on the most recent data obtained by EPD in its routine monitoring programme.

It gives an estimate on the risk of contracting some minor skin or gastrointestinal illnesses resulted from swimming at a beach with some degree of pollution.

The estimate is based on a large scale epidemiological study carried out in Hong Kong in the past bathing seasons.

The grading of some beaches fluctuates during the summer. In most cases, this represents a natural fluctuation in the bacteriological quality of bathing waters as rain and tides bring more or less pollution to the beaches.

Beaches with highly developed hinterlands are likely to be more polluted than the grades suggested during and after heavy rain.

Principal Environmental Protection Officer Dr Daniel Lau said: "Bathers should avoid swimming at such beaches for two to three days after a storm, or even longer if the weather remains overcast, shorter if there is strong sunshine."

However, the biweekly grades give a general picture of the most recent water quality at bathing beaches at the time of reporting and form the best available forecast for the immediate future.

The system for grading beach water quality is as follows:

Grade "1" indicates that the water quality is good. The E coli count is no more than 24 per 100 millilitres at each beach so graded, and the expected risk of minor illness to swimmers is undetectable.

Grade "2" indicates that the water quality is fair. The E coli count is no more than 180 per 100 millilitres at each beach so graded, and the expected health risk is no more than 10 cases of minor illness per 1,000 swimmers.

Grade "3" indicates that the water quality is poor. The E coli count is no more than 610 per 100 millilitres at each beach so graded, and the expected health risk is no more than 15 cases of minor illness per 1,000 swimmers.

Grade "4" indicates that the water quality is very poor. The E coli count is more than 610 per 100 millilitres at each beach so graded, and the expected health risk is more than 15 cases of minor illness per 1,000 swimmers.

The decision whether or not to close a beach to swimmers is based on a judgement of what degree of pollution is acceptable.

Normally, the closure of a beach would only be considered by the Urban or Regional Council if a grade "4" occurred repeatedly, so that the average health risk over the bathing season exceeded 15 cases per 1,000 swimmers.

At present four gazetted beaches, namely Anglers', Castle Peak, Old Cafeteria, and Rocky Bay, are closed to swimmers. The decision to close the beaches has been made by the Regional and Urban Councils on the basis of beach water quality monitoring data for 1994. The public are advised not to swim at these beaches. They are identified by an "X" in the following list.

The grades of the bacteriological water quality of various beaches in Hong Kong today are listed below :

Beach	Previous Grading (as at 6.7.95)	Present Grading (as at 20.7.95)
<u>Hong Kong South</u>		
Big Wave Bay	2	2
Chung Hom Kok	1	1
Deep Water Bay	1	2
Hairpin	1	1
Middle Bay	2	2
Repulse Bay	1	1
Shek O	2	2
South Bay	1	1
St. Stephen's	1	1
Turtle Cove	2	2
Stanley Main	3	2
Rocky Bay	X	X
To Tei Wan*	1	1

Tuen Mun District

Golden Beach	2	2
Old Cafeteria	X	X
New Cafeteria	2	3
Castle Peak	X	X
Kadoorie	2	3
Butterfly	3	3

Sai Kung District

Campers	1	1
Clear Water Bay 1st Beach	2	2
Clear Water Bay 2nd Beach	2	2
Hap Mun Bay	1	1
Kiu Tsui	1	1
Pak Sha Chau	1	1
Silverstrand	3	3
Trio (Hebe Haven)	1	1

Islands District

Cheung Sha Upper	1	1
Cheung Sha Lower	3	3
Discovery Bay*	2	2
Hung Shing Yeh	1	1
Kwun Yam Wan	2	2
Tong Fuk	1	1
Lo So Shing	1	1
Pui O	2	2
Silvermine Bay	3	4
Tung Wan, Cheung Chau	2	2
Tung O*	1	2

Tsuen Wan District

Anglers'	X	X
Approach	4	4
Casam	3	4
Gemini	3	3
Hoi Mei Wan	3	3
Lido	3	4
Ting Kau	4	4
Tung Wan, Ma Wan	2	2

Note: "X" The beach has been closed for swimming purposes.
* Non-gazetted beaches.

The following beaches have changed grading on this occasion:

Stanley Main from "3" to "2"; Deep Water Bay and Tung O from "1" to "2"; New Cafeteria and Kadoorie from "2" to "3"; and Sivermine Bay, Casam and Lido from "3" to "4".

The changes are within the normal range of fluctuation of the bacteriological water quality of these beaches. The general deterioration of beach water quality is probably due to the recent heavy rainfall which have caused the pollutants in the beach hinterland to be flushed into the sea water.

Attention News Editors :

For further enquiries, please contact Dr Daniel Lau, Principal Environmental Protection Officer of EPD, on 2835 1216.

End/Thursday, July 20, 1995

"Environment HK 95" released

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"Environment Hong Kong 1995", a publication reporting on various aspects of pollution prevention and control work carried out by the Government, is launched by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (Thursday).

"For the benefit of the general public, much of the information is presented in the form of feature articles, which are written in a simple and easily readable manner," a spokesman for the department said.

Topics covered in the feature articles range from apparently prosaic matters such as the results of surveys of the types and amounts of solid wastes produced each day in Hong Kong to the rather more racy topic of the effect of pollution on the sex life of snails and the contentious issue of noise from open-air concerts.

"Those who are concerned about Hong Kong's water quality will be interested to read an article on how the Environmental Protection Department uses computer models to minimise the adverse effects of reclamations on water quality and on the great debate on how best to clean up Victoria Harbour.

"For people who want to know something about what is being done to address those local environmental problems that affect their day to day life, such as industrial effluents flowing down side alleys and over footpaths in Kwai Chung and Tsuen Wan or the stink caused by livestock waste in the River Indus and other New Territories waterways, there are articles on the work carried out by the EPD's Local Control Offices," the spokesman said.

Reference material for those who are interested in the more technical aspects of environmental work, is grouped together in the "Green Pages" at the back of the report.

Here readers will find information on existing and planned legislation on the control of air and water pollution, noise and wastes and environmental assessment, as well as data on the state of the environment in Hong Kong, lists of booklets, leaflets and reports on environmental matters issued by the Government, statistics on complaints and enforcement activities and so on.

The "Green Pages" include also a section on the major milestones in the development of environmental protection in Hong Kong going back to the enactment of a Clean Air Ordinance in 1959.

Milestones for 1994 include the declaration of Phase I of Victoria Harbour Water Control Zone, the introduction of tougher controls on construction noise, on the quality of automotive diesel fuel and on the design of diesel engines themselves, the commissioning of the South East New Territories landfill and the Shatin Refuse Transfer Station, and many others.

At \$74 a copy, the English version of "Environment Hong Kong 1995" is now available at the Government Publications Centre on ground floor, Low Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong.

End/Thursday, July 20, 1995

4,700 registered with teacher recruitment office

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Over 4,700 prospective teachers have registered with the Education Department's Teacher Recruitment Information Office (TRIO) since it comes into operation in March.

A spokesman for the Education Department said: "They include 2,700 degree holders, 1,200 graduates from the Hong Kong Institute of Education and 500 diploma holders from approved post-secondary colleges.

"As part of the educational improvement package announced in the Governor's Policy Addresses in 1992 and 1993, a total of 700 additional teaching posts will be introduced this September.

"This, together with the number of vacancies arising from natural wastage, offers a lot of opportunities for potential teachers to join the profession," the spokesman said.

He called on school authorities to contact TRIO officers who would then provide them with a list of applicants satisfying their requirements.

The school can approach the candidates and make their own interview arrangements.

The spokesman said those who have sent in their application forms last year but still wish to find a teaching appointment this year should re-apply.

For those who have obtained employment through other channels after registration with TRIO should inform the office as soon as possible so to update the candidate list.

TRIO will continue to distribute application forms at its office at Room 706, seventh floor, Kowloon Government Offices, 405 Nathan Road, Kowloon, 19 District Education Offices and Public Enquiry Service Centres of the Home Affairs Department throughout the territory.

Applicants may also obtain the application forms via facsimile machine by dialling the department's 24-hour automatic telephone enquiry service 2891 0088.

End/Thursday, July 20, 1995

Souvenir cover on Post Office Trading Fund

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The acting Postmaster General, Miss Nancy Law, today (Thursday) announced that a souvenir cover will be issued on August 1 to commemorate the establishment of the Post Office Trading Fund.

The souvenir cover, at \$1 each, will be on sale at all post office on the same day when a hand back service will also be provided to official and privately made covers bearing indications of the event.

Trading Fund is a new accounting framework to enable the Post Office to operate on a self-financing basis. For return it has to assume a higher degree of financial accountability and management responsibility. The resolution to establish the Fund on August 1 was passed by the Legislative Council yesterday (Wednesday).

"The move to trading fund status will allow the Post Office greater flexibility to improve existing services, introduce new services and enhance productivity," said Miss Law.

"Under trading fund operation," Miss Law added, "the Post Office will remain committed to meeting Hong Kong's postal needs and fulfilling Hong Kong's international postal obligations by providing reliable, efficient and universal postal services at reasonable and affordable prices."

End/Thursday, July 20, 1995

Fourteen youth volunteers selected for overseas tour

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Fourteen winners of the 1995-96 Overseas Exchange Award for Outstanding Youth Volunteers will depart for Singapore and Malaysia at the end of this month on an exchange tour.

Mr Chan Ping-wah, chairman of the Organising Committee of this scheme, which is jointly organised by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Hong Kong Council of Social Services (HKCSS), said today (Thursday) that a total of 217 nomination entries of outstanding youth volunteers were received this year. They covered secondary schools, welfare agencies and tertiary institutes.

He said the scheme was aimed at commending outstanding youth volunteers for their contribution to the society and the panel of adjudicators was impressed by the 14 winners' selfless commitment to serving the needy.

"We introduced an Overseas Exchange Programme for Outstanding Youth Volunteers two years ago to show due recognition to young people who undertake volunteering services as a means of expressing their concerns towards the community.

"The exchange tour will further enable them to share their experiences with their overseas counterparts so that they may serve the community better in future," he said.

Mr Chan said volunteer work was also conducive to an individual's personal development.

"Through participation in meaningful community services, such as visiting old people, making friends with probationers and organising activities for the disabled, young people can widen their horizons and sharpen leadership skills," he said.

Mr Chan noted that SWD had been organising the Opportunities for Youth Scheme for 20 years and youth groups were provided with grants to plan and implement projects which were of benefit to the community.

"One hundred and thirty one youth groups whose applications are successful for 1995-96 have been notified and funded in June," he said.

Suitable volunteers are enlisted to complement the effort of probationers in social rehabilitation under the Volunteer Scheme for Probationers introduced by SWD since 1976, he added.

An award presentation ceremony of the 1995-96 Overseas Exchange Award for Outstanding Youth Volunteers will be held on Saturday (July 22) to give due recognition to the outstanding youth volunteers concerned.

The chairman of the Commission on Youth, Mr Eric Li, and the Assistant Director (Youth and Rehabilitation) of the SWD, Mr Anthony Chan, will officiate at the ceremony.

Attention News Editor:

You are invited to cover the award presentation ceremony of the Overseas Exchange Award for Outstanding Youth Volunteers 1995-96 to be held at 3 pm on Saturday (July 22) at the Congregation Hall of Hong Kong Scout Centre, 11th floor, No 8 Austin Road, Kowloon.

Information officers of the department will be on hand to assist.

End/Thursday, July 20, 1995

Music Camp finale concert

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A finale concert will be held next Tuesday (July 25) at the Sha Tin Town Hall Auditorium to mark the end of the 1995 Hong Kong Youth Music Camp.

The concert will feature performances by the Youth Choir, Chinese Orchestra and Symphony Orchestra of the camp. They will play pieces including "Blest Pair of Sirens", "Spring in Cui Hu", "The Good News of Beijing Spread to the Border", "Yue Fei" and "Shostakovitch's Symphony No. 9."

The 1995 Hong Kong Youth Music Camp is now being held at the Regional Council's Sai Kung Outdoor Recreation Centre until July 25.

Organised by the Music Office of the Recreation and Culture Branch and sponsored by the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club, the music camp has become an annual major event since 1980 to provide intensive music training to young musicians. More than 400 musically talented youngsters are participating in the camp which involves a string orchestra, two Chinese orchestras, a symphony orchestra, a youth choir and a band.

All campers receive instruction and guidance from guest musicians from Hong Kong, the United States and China.

They also receive a variety of training by taking part in orchestral and sectional rehearsals, master classes and demonstration concerts.

Tickets for the finale concert, priced at \$30 and \$50, are now available at all URB TIX outlets.

Half price tickets are offered to full-time students and senior citizens.

Enquiries can be made at 2802 0657.

End/Thursday, July 20, 1995

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

	<u>\$ million</u>	<u>Time (hours)</u>	<u>Cumulative change (\$million)</u>
Opening balance in the account	1,901	0930	+404
Closing balance in the account	2,004	1000	+404
Change attributable to :		1100	+400
Money market activity	+398	1200	+398
LAF today	-295	1500	+398
		1600	+398

LAF rate 4.25% bid/6.25% offer TWI 119.0 *+0.0* 20.7.95

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	5.30	2 years	2705	6.40	100.83	5.99
1 month	5.42	3 years	3804	6.90	101.54	6.38
3 months	5.48	5 years	5006	6.60	98.43	7.10
6 months	5.57	5 years	M501	7.90	101.90	7.56
12 months	5.65					

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - \$17,923 million

Closed July 20, 1995

End/Thursday, July 20, 1995