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Transcript of Governor's question & answer session in LegCo

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The following is a transcript of the question-and-answer session by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, in the Legislative Council meeting today (Thursday):

Mr Allen Lee (through interpreter): Now in March this year there was a summit convened by him on drugs. Now up to the present moment what measures have been taken to combat the issue of drugs? In housing estates I observed a scattering of syringes and in the housing estates youngsters sometimes inhale thinners. I don't see concrete action being taken. Now in the community I think we would like to know what concrete measures will be taken by the Government.

Governor: I'm grateful to the Honourable gentleman for that question. He'll recall that at the summit that I called in March, we set out at the end of discussion an action programme for the Government and we have just reported on the first quarter of implementation of that programme. It covered a number of issues from preventive education and law enforcement to the importance of more research and the importance of enhancing the work of rehabilitation and treatment, which we do in the community. But in addition we also followed-up the over 40 points that were raised by those who attended the summit and we've just given our reaction to those points and to ACAM's comments on them and we'll continue to report quarterly to all those who attended our summit, and to the community as a whole, on the measures which the Government is taking to implement both our original action programme and the ideas that were put forward at the summit.

Perhaps I can say two additional things. First of all the reason and the Honourable Member has alluded to this, the reason for us giving this programme such priority was the alarming rise in figures of drug abuse, particularly as far as the under 21's are concerned. In the period from 1989 to 1994 the percentage increase of drug abusers in that age group was over 229%. I'm pleased that the latest figures that we've had show for the first time a fall in the number of newly reported drug abusers.

The first quarter figures for this year compared with the first quarter last year show a drop of just under 30% but that is not a reason for complacency. It may prove as we get more figures during the year that that was a blip rather than the beginning of a new trend. So I don't think there is any reason at all for us to stop giving these programmes the support and attention which they deserve.

The second point I want to make concerns an idea which has been advanced I know by a number of Legislators and was advanced at the summit to which I referred. That is the proposal that we should establish a fund for combating drug abuse and that we should put into it the money, the proceeds of drug trafficking which are confiscated in successful convictions. I think there are some arguments against that proposition which have been put from time to time. Particularly, of course, the uncertainty of that source as a main source of funding. But the proposal that we should establish a special fund for tackling drug abuse is one that we're taking very seriously in the Administration and we intend to put some proposals to this Council and to the community in the Autumn. But, I repeat, we'll continue to report on the implementation of both our action programme and on our reaction to the large number of proposals which were put to us during the summit itself.

Mr Allen Lee (through interpreter): A quick follow-up. Mr President, in the housing estates now I observe that many youngsters blatantly take drugs and they inject drugs into the body so syringes are scattered here and there. I asked the residents what action should be taken against the problem. I was told that during the evening time not a lot of policemen can be observed touring or inspecting the area. The residents are, of course, fearful of the youngsters. They would rather turn a blind eye to the youngsters but the problem is getting more and more serious. So action, concrete action must be taken. The residents feel that a police presence is not enough and the residents themselves are fearful of the youngsters but then police coverage is not good enough and in fact we have such phenomena in the housing estates the Government must address the issue. The residents are of the view that police manpower is not adequate and therefore the youngsters are blatantly committing the offences. So is that the real picture?

Governor: The police were of course involved in the summit in March, and they've been involved in all our discussions on implementing our action programme. They recognise the importance of working with the community, with the Fight Crime Committees and with schools and colleges in combating drug abuse and I can assure the Honourable Member that they give this considerable priority. They have indeed over the last year enjoyed some remarkable successes in the seizure of drugs but I think we all recognise the importance, as the Honourable Member mentioned, of adequate police presence on the streets and in the estates. I've witnessed some of the consequences of the phenomenon to which the Honourable Member refers on visits to some housing estates. The stairwells which are used for the exchange of drugs, the places on the windows where drugs and money are left and are exchanged. The syringes which are found in the morning when other children are going to school. Those are all signs of the drug abuse which we wish to fight vigorously and of course an active police presence, as well as better measures to educate young people about the dangers of drugs are an essential part of a successful programme.

Mr Henry Tang: My question concerns the rule of law. I think we all agree, Hong Kong today has a very high standard of rule of law and I cannot agree more that it is our top priority. In fact, if I paraphrase what the Chief Secretary had said, it is our core policy to maintain the rule of law up to and beyond 1997. Can you, Governor, explain or elaborate, what do you intend to do between now and 1997 that will further strengthen the rule of law, other than what we are already doing today? In other words, what additional measures do you intend to put into place that will assure us of this rule of law, or strengthen the rule of law that we already have?

Governor: I hope the Honourable Member will be patient if I set out some of the things that we wish to do, at length. And in the light of recent discussions in this Chamber, and in the spirit which I agreed with the Honourable Member Mr Cheng on the way in, that this session should have as its motto "Peace and Love", I will be gentle and as calm as possible in setting out the Government's programme.

But I say first of all, that the most important thing that we can do - that we can do with this Council - to secure the rule of law in Hong Kong, is, at the end of this month to place on the statute book the legislation on the Court of Final Appeal, which was, I guess, the trigger for yesterday's debate. And perhaps I can just say, ever so gently, a word about that (albeit in the absence of one or two of the main participants in the debate) it is conceivable (I make the point in parenthesis) that the reason why they keep on getting the agreement we reached with China so wrong, that the reason why they keep on saying things about the Court of Final Appeal Bill which are so damagingly wrong, is that they are so rarely in the Chamber to actually discuss the issue with the Governor when he turns up to talk about it.

I think that we suffer in Hong Kong from an epidemic of what we call at home, Craddockitis, and it is something which affects not just dyspeptic retired ambassadors, it clearly goes wider than that. And there are a number of ingredients to the disease, a number of symptoms. There is a belief that one has a monopoly of virtue, a belief that one has a monopoly of wisdom about what is right for Hong Kong, a belief that one has a monopoly of concern about the things which have made Hong Kong so special, and a belief that unless everybody else agrees with you and follows your own analysis, that, as far as Hong Kong is concerned, is the end of the road. Hong Kong is doomed unless people always agree with you. Those are some of the symptoms of this epidemic.

I just say in that spirit of peace and love and reconciliation, which I mentioned earlier, to those who hold that particular view, that they might occasionally ask themselves this, when they are considering the Court of Final Appeal and the agreement that we reached with China: Does the Chief Justice not believe in the rule of law? The Chief Justice supports the agreement and the Bill. What about the Chief Secretary and the Financial Secretary, and the Attorney and the Solicitor General, and the Director of Public Prosecutions? Do they not support the rule of law in Hong Kong? What about eminent Silks on my Executive Council - like Denis Chang and Andrew Li? What about the Law Society? What about the Chamber of Commerce? What about the International Chambers of Commerce? What about the Australian, American, Canadian, Japanese and South Korean Governments, all our major trading partners, who support the agreement on the Court of Final Appeal? Do they not believe in the rule of law?

I really think that people should sometimes, perhaps, consider a little more coolly whether they are really always, always right. And maybe they should consider that before they are wall to wall on CNN telling the rest of the world that Hong Kong is finished in 1997. There is the world of difference between pointing to possible dangers in the future, asking for reassurances about them, trying to prevent those dangers galloping round the corner - a world of difference between that, which is what the Administration has been trying to do, and saying that the rule of law after 1997 is a dead duck. Because if people start believing that, then the consequences for Hong Kong's prosperity, the consequences for the jobs of ordinary men and women here in Hong Kong, those consequences are very severe indeed.

So the first thing this Administration is going to try to do, as hard as we try to do anything, as hard as we tried to get into place last year fair provisions for elections in Hong Kong, what this Administration is going to try to do very hard is to secure the passage of that Bill on to the statute book because I think if we were to fail in that, it would be extremely bad for Hong Kong and extremely damaging for the rule of law.

Secondly, - the Honourable gentleman is very patient - I'll be swifter and even more loving - secondly, and I believe that this is important too, we must make sure that the administration of justice is in as good order as possible. That's why we want to see more courts operating, that's why we want to see more judges on the bench, that's why we want to see more resources put into adequate provision of Chinese language facilities in our courts, that's why we want to see us dealing with the backlog of cases more rapidly in the future.

Thirdly, we have to try to ensure, with China, that we complete the programme of localisation and adaptation of laws. And I can come back to that point in a moment. We're doing pretty well with localisation of laws. The main problem on adaptation of laws focuses on what officials call the modalities of adaptation, rather than the overall process. We've got to finish the review of legislation which we've begun, to ensure that our laws are all in line with the Bill of Rights. And we have, continually, to ensure that our Police, who are by I think general estimate, the finest Police Force in Asia, we have to ensure that our Police continue to be properly resourced and to get all the support from the community which they deserve.

Thanks, not least to the efforts of our Police, our crime figures in Hong Kong have been extremely good over the years. Better, according to Interpol comparisons, as I have said before, than those for example in Singapore. And our figures for violent crime have been continuing to fall. So those are some of the things I believe that we have to do in order to secure the rule of law here in Hong Kong, the rule of law which is one of the principal reasons for the success and decency of this community.

Mr Henry Tang: Mr President, I was rather anxious to raise my hand because this is the last chance I will have to ask you a question. I think, obviously, you have referred to an epidemic of Craddockitis, and in normal society, any kind of epidemic must be eradicated. What do you intend to do to eradicate Craddockitis?

Governor: I intend to consider to shed geniality and light on every argument in which I am involved, and to continue to rebut firmly but I hope courteously, arguments which I believe to be profoundly ill conceived, profoundly ill judged and profoundly against the interests of this extraordinary community.

Mr Edward Ho: Mr President, Governor, according to some recent reports, in the coming few years there could be a number of senior Government civil servants retiring thus creating a vacuum at the top of departments. And according to those reports the Government may have to resort to engaging people outside of the civil service, coming in to take up these posts.

Governor, my question really is directed to the situation in professional departments. Are there, first of all, I don't believe that there has been enough opportunities for professionals working in those departments to be able to rise to the very top, that is to head departments, to become policy secretaries and so forth. So my question is whether there is any policy to increase the opportunities for these people and also to give them training in management so that, you know they are not just considered to be architects, engineers, surveyors but that they can actually become people in the top management, as heads of departments, as policy secretaries rather than to enlist people from outside and thus hurting the morale of the people who have been working in the departments for years and years? Thank you.

Governor: It's an important question. I would just say before coming to the main points that the Honourable Member makes, that I can think of a recent example of somebody coming in from outside to head a largely professional part of Government who has done an outstanding job. And I think the Honourable Member and I both share the same regard for the Secretary in question. And under his leadership we've actually seen very good professionals brought on to take over from him in due course.

The Secretary for the Civil Service was giving evidence this morning to the relevant LegCo panel and I'm sure answered this question more eloquently and knowledgeably than I will do, but there are two points that I want to focus on.

First of all, yes, there may be civil servants leaving the Administration over the next couple of years. In two years' time there'll be a Governor leaving the Administration too. But so far, I think it's fair to say that while we understand the possible dangers, some of the language which has been used about departures has been extremely extravagant, when you actually look at what's been happening in individual departments and across the civil service as a whole. Wastage from the civil service over the last 12 month period was running at just over 5 per cent, though admittedly in directorate posts the wastage was about 11 per cent. Also true to note that a large number of those in the directorate are in what I think is called the "retirement zone" and could find themselves in a year or two's time facing difficult personal choices about what was most in their financial interest. So, we're not unaware of the problems that we could face and other organisations face, particularly the professional staff.

We have been trying, the second point I wanted to make, we have been trying to address this particular issue with our training programmes and the Honourable Gentleman, the Secretary for the Civil Service was addressing that particular issue this morning, training right across the board. We've reviewed our overall training policy and we've also put a lot more resources, not least in terms of personal interest, into training to try to ensure that our professionals are in the position which the Honourable gentleman quite properly said they should be in, in which they can take charge of departments and show general management skills. For that purpose a number of them have had the advantage of management courses abroad as well as management courses in Hong Kong. So we'll continue to put emphasis on training and hope that we can avoid the problem which the Honourable gentleman mentioned.

Of course, the most important thing for us to do of all is to ensure that the morale of the civil service remains as high as possible before and after 1997, so that as many of our excellent civil servants as possible remain in the public service doing as good a job in the future as they do today.

Mr K K Fung (through interpreter): Thank you Mr President. A question for the Governor. With regard to the CNA and airport financing issues, there have been agreements between the two governments and the CS, Mrs Chan, went to Beijing to meet with senior Chinese officials. Hong Kong people are now more optimistic with regard to transitional issues. They think that transitional issues, for example with regard to CT9 and localisation of law, all these issues can be solved. But politicians in Hong Kong in particular feel that there is an issue which is not on the agenda for discussion yet. Now my question is related to that. In the future, with regard to the smooth transition of the three tiers of Government, will that be taken up for discussion now or at a later stage, so that through a certain approach you will talk to the Chinese authorities with regard to the smooth transition of the three tiers of Government?

Governor: We talked for 17 rounds about our attempt to secure a smooth transition for the three tiers of Government in 1993 and alas despite the concessions and accommodations offered by the Administration, concessions and accommodations which I'm sure wouldn't have commanded universal assent in this Chamber, despite that, we weren't able to secure an agreement at the end of the day.

What's the situation now? The situation is one in which we've had the first two rounds of elections to District Boards and Municipal Councils which have been elected for the first time by direct election. All their members directly elected and we had, virtually all their members directly elected, thank you. And we've had for the first time, and we've had for these first virtual direct elections, we've had a record number of candidates and a record voter turnout. 60 per cent higher as I recall in the District Boards than the previous elections and I think 40 per cent in the Municipal Council elections higher than the time before. Now we have the Legislative Council elections coming over the horizon in September in which a number of Honourable Members will be engaged. I'm sure those elections will be as successful as the District Board and Municipal Council elections. We've now got, I think a record percentage of voters registered, around 65 per cent in the geographical constituencies and in the functional constituencies there'll be about 15 times as many people eligible to vote as was the case last time, well over a million. So I'm sure those elections will be successful and we'll have as a result a broadly elected Legislative Council, freely and fairly elected which should of course be able to continue with some appropriate mechanism to take account of Chinese sovereignty in 1997 until 1999.

That for me offers every opportunity of a smooth transition. I haven't in the past, didn't yesterday, don't today, won't in the future regard the steady process of democratisation in Hong Kong and its effect on this Chamber as in any way a threat to the stability or prosperity of Hong Kong. Rather the reverse. And I hope that after their experience of fighting the Legislative Council elections in September, following their experience of fighting the elections for the District Boards and Municipal Councils that some of the candidates most normally associated with PRC criticisms of what we've been doing in Hong Kong will come to share our view that there's nothing to be frightened of in a decently elected Legislative Council in Hong Kong.

So I think that the best way of securing a smooth transition is to make sure those elections in the autumn take place as efficiently and smoothly as possible and then for the Legislative Council to go on behaving over the next years as constructively as it's I'm sure usually tried to behave in the last four years.

Mr K K Fung (through interpreter): Can I follow up please? Now I think the Governor is aware of this. Last year NPC of China passed a resolution that is in 1997 the three tiers of the political structure would be dismantled. Now Mr Governor, with regard to your potential negotiations with China in future, now will you take up the issue of smooth transition of the three tiers of Government through whatever form? Will you put that on the agenda?

Governor: Well as far as we're concerned it's always on the agenda, but it's not the Government of Hong Kong which is threatening a smooth transition. We've put in place arrangements which are entirely in line with the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law. We think they're arrangements, which are in Hong Kong's interests. We think they're arrangements which I guess September will demonstrate, have the broad support of people here in Hong Kong and I see no reason to disrupt or dismantle those arrangements. Among the many things I'm not responsible for in the world, one of them is the NPC. I see absolutely no reason at all why anyone should regard it as necessary in 1997 to dismantle the Legislative Council which the people of Hong Kong will have elected in 1995. But I mean, I don't want to be provocative, that's my situation, always has been, always will be.

Mr Szeto Wah (through interpreter): There was mention of a certain epidemic by a certain person and he said that that kind of epidemic should be stamped out. Another disease, or another epidemic crossed my mind. That had a lot to do with damage done to the Rule of Law. In the courts there are many more people suffering from amnesia. Outside the courts many politicians suffer from this kind of disease. They forget what they uttered in the past. How are we to cure this kind of disease please?

Governor: Well, one way of curing it is for politicians to be reminded of what they've said in the past. If one politician who was eloquent yesterday was here today I would've reminded him of what he said about acts of state in 1988, but when I was a Member of the House of Commons at Westminster there were two, not rules but two pieces of etiquette that one normally followed. The first was if you'd taken a vigorous part in a debate, you turned up subsequently to hear the reply and the second was that if somebody wasn't present you didn't criticise them too vigorously. So I'll at least follow my part of the bargain in commenting on the Honourable Member's answer on politicians amnesia.

There's something else which politicians occasionally do. Again I recall when I first became a Member of Parliament there was a man who used to stand outside the tube station at Westminster bearing a sandwich board saying the world is going to end next year. Now I regarded that always as a manifestation of freedom of speech but I didn't regard it as being a prediction which was likely to come true and indeed when I left the House of Commons 14 years later, he was still there and the world still hadn't ended. I don't think that sort of gloomster soundbite approach to politics is very helpful. I don't think it's very helpful to Hong Kong though it does fill up the airwaves, I agree. But amnesia, I repeat, is I think best treated by remembering what one has said in the past. You, of course, sensibly sometimes have to adjust your position. Times change and that sometimes requires one to change with the times and to explain why you've done so.

Mr Szeto Wah (through interpreter): Mr Governor, you said we have to remind those who are suffering from amnesia of what they have said. What do you think you have to remind me of what I have said in the past do you think Governor?

Governor: I wasn't referring to the Honourable Member who is here and I recall much that the Honourable Member has said, not least about parrots, with interest and occasionally, when he's being at his most witty, amusement as well. I can assure the Honourable Member that I wasn't accusing him of having forgotten something he'd said in the past. I'm sure he never does that having been a distinguished head teacher in the past.

Dr Conrad Lam (through interpreter): Mr Governor, I'm sure that the Governor and myself have the same conviction that the Government officials sitting on your right have been making a tremendous contribution to Hong Kong and many people hope that they would be able to continue to serve the people of Hong Kong after 1997. Perhaps Mr Patten might have heard the saying that 'a new broom will sweep the whole thing clean'. These officials have been working for you for so long and there are officials who would like to continue to serve the people of Hong Kong after 1997. What have you done to help them achieve these aspirations on their part? In the coming two years what are you going to do to help them achieve this particular aspiration to serve the people of Hong Kong?

Governor: I certainly wouldn't wish to describe my senior colleagues and officials as brooms or brushes, particularly since I think in Hong Kong's recent political history brushes have some unfortunate connotations but I take the Honourable Member's point that we should be seeking to secure for the civil service the maximum opportunities for future service for as many people as possible who wish to continue to work for Hong Kong.

I think there are a number of things we can do. First of all, we can give our officials the maximum opportunity of learning more and at first hand about the PRC and PRC officials, the officials with whom they'll be working and co-operating hand in hand in the future. That's why we started the Qing Hua course which I proposed in 1992 to Director Lu and so far I think 170 of our officials have taken advantage of those courses and we'll be running more courses at Qing Hua University in the future and I'd like to pay credit to the University and to all those who've been involved in the courses for the extremely imaginative and effective courses which they've been running.

We've also got to make sure that our Civil Service have all the language skills which they'll require to work with Chinese colleagues in the future. We want a Civil Service which is biliterate and trilingual. So we've been putting more resources into, in particular, Putonghua courses, into Chinese writing courses and into Cantonese training for some of our expatriate civil servants. Those points are important.

But we also want to try to ensure that Chinese officials have the maximum knowledge compatible with the integrity of our civil service and with the importance of retaining the morale of our civil service. We want to ensure that Chinese officials have the maximum understanding of the way the Hong Kong Government works and the maximum understanding of the personalities and aptitudes and abilities and curricula vitae of all those who make the Hong Kong Administration work so smoothly and we're happy to help in building bridges in that direction as well between Chinese officials and the Hong Kong Administration.

So, I think it's a two-way process. Introducing our officials more to China and Chinese administrators and doing the reverse as well. I'm sure that without being in any way arrogant, that given Hong Kong's record of good, clean, decent, effective public administration, that process of getting to know one another will be one which is much welcomed by Chinese officials and is a process from which I'm sure they will learn as much as we do.

Dr Conrad Lam (through interpreter): Mr President, Mr Governor, I'm sure that you understand that the senior Government officials are coming under tremendous pressure, mainly because of the objection from China to the measures taken by Mr Chris Patten. Will Mr Patten be doing anything in future to help the Government officials to reduce the pressure? For example, will the Governor be lowering his profile in the Government hierarchy? Say, for instance, in the next Legislative year, will you be asking the Chief Secretary to sit up there to answer Members' questions?

Governor: I think the Chief Secretary has enough to fill her 24 hour day without taking on additional responsibilities, but what the Honourable Member will know I've been saying for at least 18 months, is that the closer we got to 1997, the more I would wish to delegate responsibilities and authority to my senior officials and the more I would want to bring them on and involve them, not only in the decision-making of Hong Kong but in the presentation of the Administration's policies to the public of Hong Kong. That not only makes sense in general management terms but it clearly makes sense given the reality of 1997. After 1997, unless there is some miracle of which I'm not yet acquainted, after 1997, I won't be here but most of my senior officials will be and it's important that they and politicians in Hong Kong are involved more and more in the Administration of the territory. That is a sensible way for the Governor to behave and it's the way in which the Governor intends to behave.

Can I just add one other point. I regard my colleagues in the Administration as working for Hong Kong. I think they work in the best interests of Hong Kong now and will work in the best interests of Hong Kong after 1997, and I don't think that they will or should feel any schizophrenia because of 1997 and the transition and the change of sovereignty. They're working and working extremely effectively for the people of Hong Kong, that's the way it is today and that's the way I'm sure it will be after the transition.

Mr Peter Wong: Thank you Mr President. Mr Governor, as Governor of Hong Kong and if today happens to be your birthday and you're given three wishes, what will those three wishes be?

Governor: A British Ambassador in Washington was once asked a similar question at Christmastime, asked what he would most like, and gave a reply, and heard on the radio the next morning that the French Ambassador had been asked what he would most like and said, "World peace"; that the Soviet Ambassador had been asked what he would most like and he'd said, "An end to civil wars"; and the British Ambassador had been asked what he would most like and replied, "A box of crystallised fruits".

What I would most like is, first of all, for Hong Kong and the people of Hong Kong to be trusted by the future sovereign to play the part in the continuing opening up of China, the successful transformation of the Chinese economy and Chinese society, in the way in which I think the people of Hong Kong want to be given the chance of playing that role. I do think it is important that leaders in the PRC should recognise how committed the majority of people are in Hong Kong to a successful transition in 1997. But they do want, I think, to feel that they are trusted and not because of the values and decency which they cherish regarded as in any way a threat.

Secondly, I would hope in particular that the rule of law which has been one of the main reasons for Hong Kong's success, could survive, as I am sure it will, intact after 1997, and that our experiences in Hong Kong of the rule of law would perhaps help those Chinese officials who have been talking with considerable interest about the development of legal structures in China.

And thirdly, I would - I hope the Honourable Member will excuse a personal remark - I would very much hope that I would be able to come back to Hong Kong after 1997, though perhaps not for a little while, and see a community as successful and prosperous and decent, thriving, giving an example to the region and the world, as much as is the case today. And I don't like crystallised fruit.

Dr Tang Siu-tong (through interpreter): Thank you Mr President. Mr Governor, some time ago Mr Lu Ping and Qian Qichen met the CS, Mrs Chan. Now, Mr Governor, you are the big boss of the Hong Kong civil service, what is your feeling about that? And when do you anticipate that you will be meeting these senior Chinese officials because if you meet with them it will help boost the morale in the civil service?

Governor: I don't feel like a big boss, nor yet like a big brother, but I am, as the Honourable Member said, responsible for the Administration of Hong Kong and work in that endeavour hand in glove with an extremely talented and committed group of senior officials. I hope as many of them as possible will have the opportunity over the coming months, over the coming two years, of meeting Director Lu and his senior officials, and that the meetings that the Chief Secretary had in which she was treated with the exquisite courtesy which she thoroughly deserved, will be followed by meetings with others in Hong Kong.

There were certain understandings and agreements about the regularity of meetings between the Director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office and the Governor of Hong Kong which, alas, have been departed from over the last two-and-a-half years.

All I will say is that I would be happy - I would be delighted - to meet Director Lu or any of his colleagues whenever they wished.

I notice that one political party in Hong Kong, the DAB, has recently suggested that it would be a good idea if the Director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office and the Governor met. It's not always the case that the DAB and I see eye to eye. I try my best. On this occasion, I totally agree with them that it would be desirable. And regardless of whether or not we were able to agree everything on whatever agenda was before us, I think it would have a considerable impact on confidence in Hong Kong and on the morale of the civil service.

So I live in gentle hope. But so long as that is not possible, then others will have to undertake those meetings and I am sure that they will carry a message from the Hong Kong Government with eloquence and spirit and will always be able to show their dedication to the interests of Hong Kong. Hong Kong people running Hong Kong after 1997 won't include the last British Governor.

Dr Tang Siu-tong: Mr Governor, let me follow up. The two Foreign Secretaries or Ministers will be meeting in the autumn. Will you have an opportunity of meeting with Mr Lu Ping or Mr Qian Qichen after the summer meeting of the two Foreign Secretaries?

Governor: I think that very much depends on Chinese officials. I'd be delighted to meet them before that summit or after that meeting but it really depends on them. It is an important meeting, important because there is a new British Foreign Secretary and I am sure that he will want to take that early opportunity of getting to know Vice-Premier Qian Qichen. There are still a number of important issues that we have to resolve. There is still too much of a log-jam in the Joint Liaison Group, despite the successes of this summer, so there will be plenty for them to talk about in areas like air service agreements, adaptation of laws, nationality issues, the civil service transition, and so on. A lot for them to discuss and I am sure that they will have - whether or not they can always agree - as congenial and civilised a discourse as Mr Hurd and Vice-Premier Qian Qichen always used to have.

Mr Andrew Wong (through interpreter): Mr President, public opinion recently has been saying that the Government (Governor) is in the hot-seat. Some say that he is sitting on the bench, not playing on the field. Of course, when he adopts a high profile, he may be sitting on a hard-backed chair, but when he takes a low profile he is sitting on a soft-chair. Now Mr President, and Mr Governor and also the Secretary-General, I think that we all observe that he is sitting on a soft-chair today. Of course, that is thanks to the President and the Secretary-General. On my request, a more comfortable chair has been provided to the Governor, as we can all observe today.

Now Mr Governor, having taken a seat on this comfortable chair, do you feel that indeed you are having a more comfortable time?

Governor: ... say to the Honourable Member in a spirit of self-deprecation, that because of my build, the material in which the chair is made isn't normally of the greatest importance to me. But I am grateful to the Honourable Member for making what would anyway have been reasonably comfortable, even more comfortable. This may be the hot-seat, it may even be, from time to time, the back-seat, but I can assure the Honourable Member that his taste in chairs has ensured that it is a comfortable seat.

Mr Andrew Wong: Mr President, let me follow up. Please do not be a taxi driver - that may have consequences - when we talk about chairs we are talking about roles. But as a Governor or as a Chief Executive, well, there are two roles; for example, like the Singaporean Premier or the Queen;. Well, I think you should be compared to the Queen. And Mrs Anson Chan is the CEO. But it seems that in future, if Mrs Anson Chan takes up the post of the Chief Executive, she will be taking your seat and then those under her will be her subordinates. And then, we cannot really expect to have a responsible government.

That being so, now for these two years before the transition, I would like to make the following proposal. Not that I query your competence. Not that I have doubts about your sincerity or your integrity. Rather, I think that you should be fading out in the next two years. That should be the proper approach. In that case, you may feel more comfortable in your seat, and then you will reign but will not be ruling. That is a better role for you, in my opinion. So, Mr Governor, can you give me a response?

Governor: While it is true that I am not entirely beyond ambition, I should say to the Honourable gentleman that my ambitions don't include the establishment of a new royal line. In all our recent experience, it rains quite enough in Hong Kong without me reigning too.

As I said before, I think it is wholly appropriate for the Governor, given the localisation of the public service and given the development of our representative institutions like this Council, I think it is entirely appropriate for the Governor, the closer we get to 1997, to delegate more and to ensure that more decisions are taken by those Hong Kong people who will be running Hong Kong after 1997.

But, that doesn't mean that there won't be difficult decisions for the Governor to make, that there won't be occasions when the Governor has to act as a buffer or a lightning-conductor in order to make it possible for other people to do their jobs, that it won't be necessary from time to time for the Governor to draw a line in the sand and say how far the Administration is prepared to go and where it isn't prepared to go. I think that is a role which I sketched out for myself publicly at least 18 months ago, though some people were rather surprised when I did so.

I am fortunate in having a sufficiently talented team of senior officials to enable me to delegate more with complete confidence in the ability of my colleagues to carry out and implement their decisions. So with reservations - and declining from the Honourable Gentleman the offer, not this time of a comfortable chair but of a throne - with reservations, I sympathise with much of what the Honourable Gentleman has said.

Dr K C Lam: Mr President, I wish to change the subject to the third topic listed for today, that is the fight against drugs. In this area there is general agreement that the key to the fundamental solution lies in adequate preventive education. The bulk of this work in Hong Kong is done by non-government organisations and the main difficulty encountered by these organisations is the perpetual lack of funds. Because of this, organisations are losing staff fast, as they are unable to offer long term contracts. And the main reason for this difficulty seems to be that funds for non-government organisation work against drugs are allotted as a low priority item in the Security Branch. And my question is, what does Government plan to do to boost funding for preventive education against drugs? Will it, for example, agree to setting up a trust fund to generate a predictable, dependable source of financial resource for this purpose?

Governor: I'm sure that the Honourable Gentleman who knows so much about this subject, would concede that it is not only Security Branch which is the donor of funds for work in the preventive education field. There are also, of course, resources from other parts of Government, from the Education Department, from Social Welfare Department and so on.

But nevertheless, I have a good deal of sympathy with the main thrust of his question and that is why, as I indicated earlier, we are during the discussions on public spending this summer, looking with some urgency at the arguments for the establishment of a trust fund to deal with drug abuse, funding, among other things, educational programmes, and I hope that we will have some announcements to make about that after the summer break - if there is for all the Members of the Council a summer break - certainly in the autumn we will make a clear announcement about that and I hope it will satisfy the Honourable Gentleman.

Government to follow up anti-drugs proposals

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The Government released today (Thursday) a 42-point action plan to follow-up the Report of the Action Committee Against Narcotics (ACAN) Special Action Group.

The 42 initiatives comprise nine on law enforcement, 20 on preventive education, six on treatment and rehabilitation, and seven on research. They were drawn up by government branches and departments to carry forward the ACAN recommendations submitted to the Governor in early June.

The ACAN Special Action Group has made recommendations on the 92 proposals put forward by participants at the drugs summit. As noted in the ACAN report, many of the proposals called for action that was already in hand or was included in the 26-point Forward Action Plan. Other proposals put forward new initiatives which ACAN recommended action by Government. The Government will be following up these recommendations in the 42-point action plan.

The Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, said today: "We now have an enormous programme of work before us, and will be pursuing it vigorously.

"We are looking positively at the proposal for an anti-drug fund, in the context of our overall review of public spending this summer. We should be in a position to make some more concrete proposals by autumn on the funding of drug programmes."

The measures in the follow-up action plan include:

- * launching a pilot scheme to develop and implement school-based drug education courses in the 1995-96 school year;
- * implementing a pilot scheme for setting up a 24-hour enquiry line for parents and students;
- * seconding educators to the Life Education Activity Programme;
- * producing a special feature documentary to educate the general public on the drug problem; and
- * providing over 300 additional training places in 1995-96 for social workers.

These measures will build on the \$30 million 26-point package announced by the Governor at the end of the summit in March.

End/Thursday, July 13, 1995

Funds sought for air cargo complex fitting-out works

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The Government plans to seek funding approval from the Finance Committee later this month for fitting-out of government facilities within the Air Cargo Complex at the new airport at Chek Lap Kok.

Funds of \$64.6 million (in money of the day) are being sought to cover fitting-out works for five government departments: the Agricultural and Fisheries Department, the Customs and Excise Department, the Department of Health, the Immigration Department and the Census and Statistics Department.

A discussion paper on the proposed funding request was issued today (Thursday) to members of the Legislative Council Public Works Sub-Committee.

A government spokesman said the Finance Committee had so far approved a total of \$5,474.4 million to enable the implementation of a number of government works at the new airport.

"The \$64.6 million being sought was the balance of the total estimated cost of \$5,539 million for government facilities at the new airport," he said.

On June 30, the British and Chinese sides of the Airport Committee reached agreement on the terms of the two franchise agreements to be entered into by the future Airport Authority with Hong Kong Air Cargo Terminals Limited and Asia Airfreight Terminal Company Limited for the provision of air cargo services at the new airport.

"The Authority expects to execute the two agreements very shortly, following which the franchisees will be ready to embark on their construction programmes for the Air Cargo Complex to tie in with the expected opening of the new airport in April 1998.

"According to the franchisees' programmes, they will need to finalise the detailed design of the Air Cargo Complex, together with its fitting-out works, in the coming months. Our current assessment is that entrustment of the fitting-out of government facilities within the Air Cargo Complex to the franchisees would be more cost-effective and more beneficial from the programme point of view.

"We therefore need to have members' approval for the present funding request so that we may be in a position to entrust the fitting-out works to the franchisees and make commitments for the works as soon as the future Airport Authority reaches final agreement with the franchisees in the next few weeks," he said.

The funding request will be discussed at a meeting of the Public Works Sub-Committee on July 18 (Tuesday) before the Finance Committee later this month.

End/Thursday, July 13, 1995

MTR ticket to publicise AIDS awareness messages

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The Committee on Education and Publicity on AIDS (CEPAIDS) will launch a package of MTR stored value ticket advertisement next Monday (July 17).

The MTR ticket advertisement, which is one of the main publicity items produced for this year's AIDS Awareness Campaign, aims to urge the public to show more concern to AIDS patients and to think about AIDS in a more positive approach.

Speaking at a launching ceremony today (Thursday) at the Central MTR Station, the Chairman of CEPAIDS, Ms Carlye Tsui, pointed out that one of the objectives for this year's AIDS Awareness Campaign was to dispel the public's misconceptions about AIDS patients and HIV carriers.

"To fulfil this objective, the Committee has adopted a new strategy and planned a wide range of activities to reinforce the message to all sectors of the community. The launching of the MTR stored value ticket advertisement is one of the publicity media used," Ms Tsui said.

The design of the advertisement features a red ribbon which is an international symbol of care for the AIDS patients. It also carries a slogan "Show Your Concern, Think About AIDS".

The MTR tickets printed with the advertisement will begin circulation from next Monday (July 17) in all MTR stations. It is expected that over 1.5 million people will get the advertising message in the coming 10 months.

End/Thursday, July 13, 1995

Exhibition to promote employment of disabled

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The Labour Department's Selective Placement Division (SPD) will start an exhibition tomorrow (Friday) in Tsim Sha Tsui to enhance public understanding of the working abilities of the disabled.

The exhibition will last for three days and will include video shows and the display of 18 boards introducing the work disabled employees are performing, the free placement service to the disabled and free recruitment service to employers being offered by the SPD.

"During the exhibition, employers who wish to recruit disabled workers can give details of their vacancies to our staff on-the-spot while disabled job-seekers can also register at the counter," Labour Officer (Selective Placement), Mr Byron Ng, said today (Thursday).

"Our staff will arrange interviews for both parties afterwards," he added.

The exhibition will be open from 10 am to 6 pm from tomorrow until Sunday (July 16) at the Western Gallery B, New World Centre, 20 Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui.

End/Thursday, July 13, 1995

Retirement schemes registration deadline

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The Registrar of Occupational Retirement Schemes today (Thursday) appealed to Hong Kong employers who operate a retirement scheme to take immediate action and register their schemes.

The registration deadline will expire on October 15 and employers who continue to operate unregistered retirement schemes after the deadline may face prosecution, heavy fines and imprisonment.

To appeal for scheme registration, the Office of the Registrar of Occupational Retirement Schemes (ORS Office) plans to launch a final series of intensive promotion programmes in the coming three months.

According to the Occupational Retirement Schemes Ordinance which was enacted on October 15, 1993, employers operating voluntary retirement schemes for their employees are required to register their schemes with the ORS Office within a two-year period. The registration deadline will expire on October 15.

Registrar of Occupational Retirement Schemes, Mrs Pamela Tan, called for employers to take immediate action and get prepared for registration.

She said: "Registering retirement scheme is good for employers and employees, and it is required by law. As the deadline is fast approaching and time is running out, registering retirement schemes should be one of the top priorities for employers.

"The application procedure is not complicated but employers may need time to prepare the required documents, such as a solicitor's statement and an auditor's statement in support of the application.

"In this respect, employers will have to co-ordinate closely with their scheme administrators, auditors and solicitors in the preparation of these documents. So act now."

She continued: "Employers may be prosecuted and face penalty of up to \$500,000 fine and two years imprisonment should they operate an unregistered scheme after October 15, 1995. The Office will not be extending the deadline."

In order to remind employers of timely scheme registration, the ORS Office is going to introduce a series of advertising programmes at the final stage promotion. A new television commercial will be screened next week highlighting the importance of immediate scheme registration.

In addition, the Office will also launch other marketing initiatives in the coming months, such as radio announcement of public interest, advertising campaign at Mass Transit railway stations and trains, and newly designed posters at high traffic locations to urge employers to take prompt actions.

The ORS Office also runs a 24-hour hotline 2867 4642 to answer public enquiries.

The Occupational Retirement Schemes Ordinance has been enacted since October 15, 1993. The purpose of the Ordinance is to set up a registration system ensuring that all private occupational retirement schemes are properly regulated and that retirement benefits will be paid when they fall due.

It stipulates major safeguards to enhance the security of such schemes, including the separation of scheme assets from employer assets, adequate funding of the schemes, regular independent audits and actuarial reviews, disclosure of information to scheme members, independent trusteeship and restrictions on "self" investments.

Note to Editors:

For further information, please contact Charles Lankester, Grace Sek or Cynthia Ma of Shandwich Hong Kong Limited on 2867 4642.

End/Thursday, July 13, 1995

Lantau taxi to charge new fares

Fares for Lantau taxi will be revised tomorrow (Friday).

The flagfall for the first two kilometres will be \$10 and subsequent charges will be revised to \$1 for every 0.2 kilometre travelled. Waiting time charge for every one minute will be \$1.

The surcharges for baggage, animal or bird carried and for every hiring arranged through telephone booking will remain unchanged.

A spokesman for the Transport Department reminded taxi owners that the taxi fare table to be displayed inside a taxi should show the new fare scale starting from the effective date of the fare increase. He added that pending the conversion of taximeters, taxis may charge the revised fares starting tomorrow by displaying a conversion table showing the revised scales.

End/Thursday, July 13, 1995

Reminder on deadline for returning survey questionnaires

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The Census and Statistics Department today (Thursday) reminded sampled establishments in the following surveys in respect of 1994 to return survey questionnaires :

- * Annual Survey of Industrial Production;
- * Annual Survey of Wholesale, Retail and Import and Export Trades, Restaurants and Hotels;
- * Annual Survey of Building, Construction and Real Estate Sectors;
- * Annual Survey of Transport and Related Services; and
- * Annual Survey of Storage, Communication, Financing, Insurance and Business Services.

These surveys are conducted annually by the department to collect up-to-date statistical data for evaluating the contribution of various economic activities to Hong Kong's gross domestic product and for ascertaining their cost structure, operating characteristics and output/sales levels. The survey results are useful to both the government and the private sector in formulating policies and making decisions.

Questionnaires were mailed in April and May to about 25,000 establishments sampled for the 1994 surveys. The establishments concerned are legally required to return the completed questionnaires to the department by July 31.

The Commissioner for Census and Statistics, Mr Frederick HO, today appealed to the managements of all sampled establishments to fulfil their legal and social responsibilities by returning promptly the completed questionnaires and co-operating with officers of the department in the course of the surveys. Those who fail to do so may be committing an offence.

Each questionnaire of these annual economic surveys has been so designed that respondents can complete it by themselves. If necessary, officers of the Census and Statistics Department, who carry a Government Identity Card and a certificate for conducting the respective surveys, will visit the establishments concerned to assist them in completing the questionnaires.

Mr Ho pointed out that audited accounts are not essential for the supply of income and expenditure data required by the surveys. The Census and Statistics Department accepts figures based on preliminary accounts or estimates which are correct to the best of the respondents' knowledge at the time of submission of the questionnaire, if audited accounts are not yet available.

He also stressed that information relating to individual establishments would be treated in strict confidence under the Census and Statistics Ordinance. Only aggregate information that does not reveal details of individual establishments will be released.

End/Thursday, July 13

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

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	\$ million	Time (hours)	Cumulative change (\$million)
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Opening balance in the account	2,222	0930	+84
Closing balance in the account	2,281	1000	+84
Change attributable to :		1100	+95
Money market activity	+99	1200	+99
LAF today	-40	1500	+99
		1600	+99

LAF rate 4.25% bid/6.25% offer TWI 119.1 *+0.0* 13.7.95

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	5.48	2 years	2705	6.40	101.28	5.73
1 month	5.43	3 years	3804	6.90	102.41	6.03
3 months	5.42	5 years	5006	6.60	100.11	6.68
6 months	5.45	5 years	M501	7.90	103.61	7.13
12 months	5.49					

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - \$14,725 million

Closed July 13, 1995

End/Thursday, July 13, 1995