



## DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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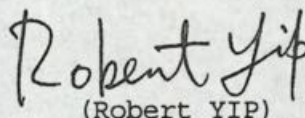
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It is the policy of this department that we should aim at running a paperless office in the long run, but if you have difficulties in the new arrangements, please contact the undersigned at 2842 8738.

  
(Robert YIP)

for Director of Information Services

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Wednesday, April 16, 1997

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Governor's transcript

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Following is the transcript of the media session by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, after officiating at the topping-out ceremony of the Hong Kong Institute of Education in Tai Po this (Wednesday) afternoon:

Governor: Good afternoon. I am delighted to have been here for the topping-out ceremony at the institute. It is going to be a very important part of our efforts in the future to continue to raise the quality of education by further enhancing the vital profession of teaching. It is a tremendous project and I am delighted that those responsible for it have managed to do so much so quickly.

Question: Governor, what kind of assistance does the government think is reasonable to offer the incoming government to facilitate the passage of right of abode ... at the time of the handover?

Governor: Well let me lay out for you the whole story. I think we should have been able to reach an agreement on right of abode last autumn; there were very few issues of substance dividing us. The only real problem which came up again and again was the Chinese insistence that right of abode legislation should be considered and approved by the provisional legislature. They were saying that at the same time that Mr Qian Qichen was asserting that there could only be one legislative council before 30 June.

We made a number of suggestions. We first of all suggested that we would put legislation agreed with the Chinese to the present Legislative Council. Then we suggested that we should put some legislation to the existing Legislative Council and the rest should be put to the Legislative Council of the SAR after 30 June. That wasn't acceptable either.

The last proposal that we put was the suggestion that we would prepare and draft a White Bill. I suggested that we should agree the drafting instructions with the Chief Executive (designate's) office, that we should agree the terms of the Bill with the Chief Executive (designate's) office, that we should then draw up the Bill ourselves and put a White Bill forward which the whole community could see and discuss and then on 1 July the legislative body of the SAR Government could consider it.

That proposition was put through the JLG. It was further put to senior Chinese officials in Peking. Then just under a fortnight ago, the Friday before last, I put that proposal to the Chief Executive (designate).

It seemed to us to be a sensible way of giving the community the certainty it requires without running into all the problems which will undoubtedly be associated with any attempt to legislate in the provisional legislature on these matters before 30 June.

Now, we have made it clear again and again that even though it would be perhaps ideal if we could legislate today, that there is no administrative or legal necessity for doing so. Our clear legal advice, the advice which we have from the Immigration Department, is that we don't absolutely need to legislate until July, that it is perfectly possible for the Immigration Department to do all that they need to do before then, but that Hong Kong would need legislation in place in the early weeks of the SAR Government.

We have equally clear legal and administrative advice that if the provisional legislature tries to do this job before 30 June, it is inevitably going to raise legal question-marks about our immigration policy and our right of abode after 1 July.

Now you all know that this is an area in which there are countless legal challenges in court. It would be grossly irresponsible of us to do anything which could magnify, which could increase the number of those challenges after 1 July. I am not making that up, that is the legal advice that we have. So why is it, why is it that Chinese officials and the SAR Government-in-waiting can't accept our practical proposal for a White Bill on the understanding that the provisional legislature doesn't try to deal with it before 1 July?

The issue, you know, as far as some people are concerned, has nothing to do with right of abode but everything to do with their attempts to give the provisional legislature some legitimacy or credibility, the legitimacy and credibility which it doesn't have today and which it won't have before 30 June, whatever the situation is after that.

So once again I appeal to Chinese officials and to the SAR Government-in-waiting to react positively to our proposal for a White Bill, with the undertaking that the provisional legislature won't attempt to deal with it. That is a way in which everybody can get what they should want, which is the opportunity for the community to look carefully at what is proposed and for the community to be certain about right of abode and immigration policy for the future.

Now I couldn't have set it out in more detail or, I hope, more clearly than that. That is our position. Our position is not going to change. We offer a White Bill provided we get that undertaking, but we are not going to do any more than that.

If Chinese officials don't accept that proposal, then what we will try to do is to make sure that by 30 June, there is a Blue Bill which the SAR Government can deal with after 1 July.

Now I hope I have made that clear. I didn't want an argument about this, the government didn't want an argument about this. We have been working for months to try to get a solution. Unfortunately, I think there are some people who are more concerned about the provisional legislature than they are about right of abode. Okay? Any other subjects?

Question: Mr Patten, our other question is that the Chinese Foreign Ministry has accused Mr Martin Lee of trying to invite foreign forces to meddle in Hong Kong's affairs, and that he's tried to blacken Hong Kong's name. And also his vision ... that of financial interests of people who wish to come to Hong Kong. How do you react to these sort of comments?

Governor: Well that is just abusive propaganda, it doesn't amount to any description of reality. I'd like to say something about the invitations Mr Lee has actually made. As you know, we had invited the Secretary of State in Washington, Madeleine Albright, to attend the handover ceremony. I am delighted that Mr Lee was able to give her that invitation as well in the name of his party, the largest and most popular party in Hong Kong. I am delighted he was able to say - which is true - that everybody in Hong Kong wants Madeleine Albright to come to the handover, and I am of course absolutely delighted that Madeleine Albright has said that she will come as a mark of the United States' continuing affection for and interest in Hong Kong. So the first thing that I want to say is that I am very pleased that Mr Lee spoke as he did when he met Madeleine Albright.

Secondly, as you all know, in the United States as in Hong Kong, Mr Lee has very considerable credibility as the leader of the largest political party in Hong Kong, as the politician who has received the most support in Hong Kong. He also has considerable credibility because many Americans readily identify with the values that he expresses, and with his concern for freedom and democracy.

So I think we should all be very grateful to Mr Lee that using that position he has spoken out so forcefully for the renewal of MFN. His remarks on the subject are taken very seriously by members of the House of Representatives, by senators and by the administration. They will have listened to him, I think, with very great seriousness and I am delighted that he spoke with all his authority as he did.

So I would like to express my gratitude to him. I'm sure that leaders of the business community in Hong Kong would also like to express their gratitude to Mr Lee for speaking out on an issue which is so important to Hong Kong's economic well-being and prosperity. In calling for the renewal of MFN he spoke well for Hong Kong and I am very pleased about that. Thank you very much.

End

FS's transcript

\* \* \* \* \*

Following is a transcript of the media session given by the Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang, after attending the debate on the second reading of the Appropriation Bill 1997 at the Legislative Council this afternoon (Wednesday):

Question: Mr Tsang, what is your reaction... to the vote ...?

FS: Well I am pretty happy about the passage of the Appropriation Bill this year. This is rather a peculiar year, and rather a peculiar budget as well, that we have been able to achieve almost the impossible of producing a budget covering 12 months and eventually commanding the support of the Legislative Council as a whole. This afternoon, I addressed three particular issues, about land supply for housing, about CSSA for the elderly and some other issues. But as far as regards CSSA for the elderly, we hope that we are able to establish a rational basis for a revision, my colleagues and I would certainly try our very best to find the resources for any justifiable increase in the coming year.

Question: ... indicative of what you can do with the size of the reserve ....?

FS: It is indicative of the Financial Secretary.

Question: .....the growth and projection of next year's is even higher than we had in the last. You had 23 votes against you largely on social welfare spending. Do you expect in the next budget you are going to have more pressure to give in to increase spending in social welfare?

FS: Well the administration had been prepared for more and more pressure year after year anyway. So it is not entirely unanticipated. The fact of the matter is, it is our responsible administration that we had been doing our very best to meet community's wishes, even the wishes of political parties, and I had demonstrated today that for the Democratic Party who had not voted for me on this occasion, we had indeed complied with their wishes for more than 80 per cent. That's the fact. Just refer to their own bulletin. So I think the co-operative spirit is always there, we're ever responding. So as long as it is the community's wish that we should attach importance to the CSSA for the elderly, we would do likewise. Well, thank you very much indeed.

End

Response to questions on Right of Abode

\* \* \* \* \*

In response to press enquiries on whether the Government would publish a White Bill on right of abode now, a Government spokesman today (Wednesday) explained that the White Bill proposal was made in an attempt to resolve the differences between the two sides.

"We have made it clear to the Chinese side that the proposal comprises two elements : that a White Bill would be published by end May/early June, and that the Chinese side would take no action to begin any legislative process before July 1, 1997.

"As the Chinese side could not accept this proposal and insisted on beginning the legislative process before July 1, we would not be publishing a White Bill. Instead, we will publish a Blue Bill on June 30, 1997 so that, on or shortly after July 1, the SAR Government will have a detailed and comprehensive bill to put to the SAR legislature of the day to process.

"Our White Bill proposal remains on the table and we hope the Chinese side would reconsider their position," the spokesman said.

Noting that there were views that the Government should pass a bill to the CE(des)'s Office to help the CE overcome the problem of manpower shortage, the spokesman clarified that no bill White or Blue on right of abode issues has been drafted yet. But the Government will now start to draft a Blue Bill, so that it will be ready for publication on June 30.

The spokesman added that the Hong Kong Government would not do anything to undermine the fact that up to June 30 the existing Legislative Council is the sole body with a legislative function in Hong Kong.

"We would not do anything to facilitate the commencement of legislative procedures by the provisional legislature," he said.

The spokesman said that for the PL to legislate before July 1, 1997 would attract legal challenge in this litigious field.

"The SAR Government may well have to face a larger number of lawsuits, many of which will contest the SAR Government's decisions on the ground that the legality/validity of the legislation on which the decisions are based is in doubt," he said.

The Government also hopes that the Chinese side will put aside the difference on how to legislate on Right of Abode issues, and continue discussion of the few remaining substantive issues. Satisfactory resolution of these issues will facilitate the drafting of a complete bill.

Commenting on the view that it was undesirable to have a legal vacuum on right of abode on July 1, the spokesman explained that the absence of domestic legislation for a short period after July 1 would not pose any problem.

"The Basic Law, which will come into force on July 1, will provide the legal basis on which the Director of Immigration can make decisions on right of abode matters. As long as the domestic legislation can come into effect within a short period, any subsequent appeal against or challenge to those decisions can then be determined on the basis of the domestic legislation then in place," he said.

"This is certainly less ideal than having the domestic legislation enacted by July 1. But it is preferable to enacting a piece of legislation the validity of which will be subject to legal challenge," he added.

End

#### Land Sales Programme - April to June 1997

\* \* \* \* \*

The Principal Government Land Agent, Mr Nigel Burley, announced today (Wednesday) that following the Land Commission's agreement to the Land Disposal Programme submitted by the Administration, the Government's Land Sales Programme for the period from April to June 1997 would consist of seven sites covering 9.26 hectares.

The breakdown of the sites is as follows:

	<u>Use</u>	<u>Sites</u>	<u>Area(ha)</u>
(1)	Commercial and Residential	1	0.74
(2)	Residential (low density)	2	5.52
(3)	Industrial	1	0.32
(4)	Private Sector Participation Scheme (PSPS)	2	2.52
(5)	Petrol Filling Station	1	0.16

Four sites will be sold in May and June. They are:

By Auction

Sale Date	Lot No.	Location	Use	Area(sq.m.)
3.6.97 (Concert Hall, HK Cultural Centre)	KIL No.11055	Wan Hoi St, Hung Hom Reclamation	Residential	7,402
	RBL 11381	Wong Ma Kok Rd, Stanley	Residential	53,000
	Lot 244 in DD 331 Lantau	Cheung Fu St, Cheung Sha, Lantau.	Residential	2,240

By Cash Tender

Closing Date	Lot No.	Location	Use	Area (sq.m.)
16.5.97	YLTL No. 461	Tung Tau Industrial Estate	Vehicle Repair Workshop & Industrial/ Godown	3,200

Mr Burley said that about 1,200 residential flats would be produced from the three scheduled for auction in June.

End

Sino-British Land Commission

\* \* \* \* \*

The thirty-fourth meeting of the Sino-British Land Commission was held on 16 April 1997. The two sides agreed that the Land Disposal Programme for the period from 1 April 1997 to 30 June 1997 should amount to 98.76 hectares. The programme comprises 8.15 hectares for commercial, residential and industrial development; 4.45 hectares for Private Sector Participation Scheme, Hong Kong Housing Society development and Village Housing; 1.42 hectares for public utilities, educational, welfare, religious, recreational and other uses; and 84.74 hectares as special requirements.

End

Safety measures for Lantau Link fireworks display

\* \* \* \* \*

The Police, Transport and Marine Departments will jointly implement a series of traffic arrangements on April 27 (Sunday) to ensure public safety when a fireworks display will be held as part of the Lantau Link opening ceremony.

Speaking at a joint press conference today (Wednesday) to announce the special arrangements, the Director of the New Airport Projects Co-ordination Office, Mr Billy Lam, said the fireworks display was being organised as part of an opening ceremony to commemorate the completion of the Airport Core Programme's transport corridor.

"The Lantau Link, formed by two spectacular bridges, the Tsing Ma Bridge and the Kap Shui Mun Bridge, has become a major landmark in Hong Kong.

"The opening of the link is an historic event for Hong Kong and its completion ahead of time and below budget is an achievement that we can all take pride in," said Mr Lam.

He said: "A fireworks display with the magnificent Tsing Ma bridge silhouetted in the background would provide a great opportunity to celebrate this historic occasion and to send a positive message to the world about Hong Kong and our ability to deliver on large infrastructure projects.

"Such a message will enhance Hong Kong's status as a service centre for infrastructural development," said Mr Lam.

The fireworks, sponsored by Sun Hung Kai Properties Ltd, would be discharged at 8 pm from three barges moored in the Ma Wan Channel and will last for about 20 minutes. As part of the display there will be a waterfall fireworks, lasting for about 45 seconds.

The former British Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Baroness Thatcher and the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten will officiate at the ceremony.

More than 2,400 people were expected to take part, either as guests or participants in the various events being planned.

These events include a parade by community groups from 18 districts and a flotilla of boats of all types to represent the local marine community.

In addition, there will be a fly-past staged by the Royal Air Force and the Government Flying Service.

The ceremony will also feature a drive through the Lantau Link with Baroness Thatcher and the Governor leading a motorcade that will drive across the two bridges.

In terms of public viewing of the display, Mr Lam said that unfortunately there were not many areas in the territory which would offer a good view of the fireworks display.

The main viewing point for members of the public would be along Castle Peak Road between Hoi On Road and Siu Lam.

"However, Castle Peak Road is a narrow, winding road which cannot accommodate large crowds and vehicular traffic at the same time," he said.

He said the terrain of this road would limit spectators to a maximum of 300,000 and once the Police consider it operationally essential to do so, people still turning up would be advised not to enter the pedestrianized section of Castle Peak Road.

To ensure public safety, an inter-departmental working group comprising, among others, representatives from the Police, Transport Department, Home Affairs Department, the Marine Department, and NAPCO have been meeting over the past few months to work out detailed crowd control, traffic and public transportation arrangements.

The group's preliminary proposal on crowd control and transport arrangements were then put to district board members in Yuen Long, Tsuen Wan, Tuen Mun, Kwai Tsing and Islands as well as the Airport Consultative Committee, and the Transport Panel of the Legislative Council.

In the light of their comments, revised arrangements with a number of improvements have been adopted, Mr Lam said.

"In working out the revised arrangements, the Government, in particular the Transport Department and the Police, has made every effort to ensure public safety, to minimise inconvenience to local residents arising from the traffic diversion and road closure and to provide efficient public transport services for crowd dispersal," said Mr Lam.

He said the Government had also drawn on the experience of the Tuen Mun New Year fireworks display.

"However, we urge those who plan to watch the fireworks from Castle Peak Road to co-operate fully with the Police throughout the event and in the crowd dispersal exercise.

"I also appeal to local residents who are affected by the road closures to bear with us and help make the ceremony a joyful and festive occasion for the whole community," said Mr Lam.

He said members of the public will have the opportunity to watch the ceremony and the fireworks display on television as it will be covered live on the Chinese channels.

"However, I wish to remind those who choose to view the fireworks display from Castle Peak Road that if large crowds turn up, and notwithstanding the special traffic arrangements and our best endeavour, it may take some time before they can return home after the display. I would urge members of the public to please be patient if this occurs," said Mr Lam.

End

Inquiry into collision of vessels ordered

\* \* \* \* \*

The Director of Marine, Mr Ian Dale, today (Wednesday) ordered a Local Marine Inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the collision between a catamaran and a passenger ferry off Tuen Mun yesterday (Tuesday).

In accordance with the powers granted under section 58 of the Shipping and Port Control Ordinance (Cap. 313), the Director of Marine appointed Mr Li Yiu-kwong, Surveyor of Ships (Nautical), to be the Investigating Officer.

A Chinese-registered catamaran, the Hai Yang, and a Hong Kong registered-passenger ferry, the Man Boon, were involved in a collision in the vicinity of the Brothers around 9.05 am yesterday.

The Investigating Officer, Mr Li Yiu-kwong, is anxious to meet passengers and crew members on board the two vessels and other independent witnesses to the incident.

They are advised to contact Mr Li on 2852 4943 or fax their contacts on 2545 0556.

End

Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Bill

\* \* \* \* \*

The Government will soon propose a Bill to enable Hong Kong to strengthen cooperation with third countries in the investigation and prosecution of criminal offences including proceedings relating to confiscating the proceeds of crime.

Introducing the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Bill, a Government spokesman said today (Wednesday) that the Bill would provide the appropriate legal framework to implement Hong Kong's new bilateral agreements on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, and enable Hong Kong to respond to a full range of requests for assistance comprehended by these agreements.

The scope of assistance covered by the Bill includes:

- \* taking of evidence;
- \* searching for and seizing items which are relevant to criminal matters;
- \* producing documentary evidence relevant to criminal matters;
- \* transferring persons (including prisoners) to other jurisdictions to provide assistance (for example, by giving evidence);
- \* confiscating the proceeds of crime;
- \* serving documents.

The Bill sets out a number of exceptions to providing assistance. They include the exclusion in relation to political offences and political prejudice, double jeopardy and double criminality.

"The double jeopardy exception will exclude a request which relates to the prosecution of a person for an offence in respect of which the person has been convicted, acquitted or pardoned in Hong Kong.

"The double criminality requirement will exclude cases where the criminal conduct in question would not have constituted an offence in Hong Kong if it had occurred there.

"These exceptions are found in the legislation and agreements of other countries and are designed to safeguard the rights of the persons involved in criminal proceedings," the spokesman said.

"It is important that the Bill should be enacted as soon as possible so as to demonstrate Hong Kong's determination to combat international crime by strengthening cooperation in matters of criminal justice and international law enforcement," he added.

The Chinese side confirmed their agreement to the Bill at JLG XXXIX last month.

The Bill will be gazetted on Friday (April 18) and is expected to be introduced into the Legislative Council on April 23 this year.

End

Bill to protect HK in serious oil pollution damage cases

\* \* \* \* \*

The Government will introduce the Merchant Shipping (Liability and Compensation for Oil Pollution) (Amendment) Bill 1997 to protect Hong Kong and owners of Hong Kong registered ships, a spokesman for Marine Department said today (Wednesday).

The Bill gives effects to the amendments made under the two 1992 Protocols which entered into force internationally on May 30 last year.

In January 1997, the Chinese side of the Joint Liaison Group agreed that the two 1992 protocols should be extended to Hong Kong and that they should continue to apply to the HK Special Administrative Region after June 30 this year.

The spokesman said that liability and compensation for oil pollution damage caused in the territory, including territorial sea of Contracting States by sea-going ships were governed by two International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Conventions.

These two Conventions are the International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage, 1969 (the 1969 Liability Convention) and the International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage, 1971 (the 1971 Fund Convention).

In 1992, IMO adopted two Protocols to amend the 1969 Liability Convention and the 1971 Fund Convention which takes effect world-wide in mid-1996.

The spokesman further noted that shipowners in Hong Kong were much concerned about a possible reciprocal foreign court judgement from a country which was not a party to the Liability Convention which might give a judgement awarding compensation for oil pollution damage for an amount greatly in excess of the liability limit of a shipowner under the Liability Convention.

"We therefore take this opportunity to include a new provision to limit the damage from a reciprocal judgement claim to a level in accordance with the limit under the Liability Convention, notwithstanding that the damages awarded by a court in a country which is not a party to the Convention are in excess of that limit," the spokesman said.

The spokesman further outlined the main provisions of the Amendment Bill, noting that it amended various definitions according to the 1992 Protocols and includes new definitions to terms such as incident, Monetary Authority, oil, relevant threat of contamination and the 1992 Protocols.

"A new subsection is added to stipulate that the owner of the ship involved will be liable for compensation for the cost of preventive measures taken to deal with a threat of contamination and any further loss or damage caused by those preventive measures.

"An addition of a new provision is also made to provide for a limitation on the enforcement of judgements by a court in a country that is not a party of the Liability Convention," he added.

The Bill further provides for the conversion of special drawing rights into Hong Kong dollars as well as the method for instituting proceedings in respect of the Fund.

Further provision of the Bill features an amendment which gives effect to the new aggregate limit of compensation with the amount of compensation actually paid under the Liability Convention i.e. 135 million special drawing rights (SDR).

Finally, the Bill also amends a clause so that the owner of a ship who incurs a liability for compensation may limit that liability in accordance with the new limits.

"With the new and improved provisions on compensation for pollution damage and the cost of preventive measures, Hong Kong would be better protected in the event of serious oil pollution incidents," the spokesman noted.

The Merchant Shipping (Liability and Compensation for Oil Pollution) (Amendment) Bill 1997 will be gazetted on April 18 and be tabled at the Legislative Council for first and second readings on April 30.

End

#### Licence of Commercial Radio to be amended

\* \* \* \* \*

The Executive Council has decided to amend the sound broadcasting licence of Hong Kong Commercial Broadcasting Company Limited (Commercial Radio) to reflect changes proposed by the Broadcasting Authority following its mid-term review.

At the same time, an amendment to the licence of Metro Broadcast Corporation Limited (Metro Broadcast) was endorsed to remove the Broadcasting Authority's power to prohibit the broadcast of certain programmes, advertisements and materials. This is to reflect the repeal of section 13C(3)(a) of the Telecommunication Ordinance last year.

A spokesman for the Broadcasting, Culture and Sport Branch said today (Wednesday): "The renewed licence reflects the recommendations made by the Broadcasting Authority in the context of the mid-term review of Commercial Radio's licence. Amongst other things, a new clause on free competition and a new requirement for full cost-recovery licence fees to be paid are included.

"The free competition clause aims at facilitating free competition by prohibiting the licensee from entering into any arrangement or agreement which will have the effect of restricting competition by other persons in relation to the establishment or operation of a broadcasting or telecommunications service."

In line with the Government's general charging policy, Commercial Radio will have to pay full cost-recovery licence fee later this year when Metro Broadcast is also required to do so. The assessed full cost for administering Commercial Radio's licence in 1997/98 is around \$3.4 million.

To alleviate the effect of an immediate introduction, the full cost fee will be phased in over five years. In other words, for the first twelve months after introduction of the fee, Commercial Radio will only have to pay 20% of the full cost, i.e. around \$0.68 million.

The amended licence of Commercial Radio will run from April 25, 1997 until it expires on August 25, 2001.

End

#### Local farmers learn more about premium vegetable production

\* \* \* \* \*

Local farmers are expected to learn more about the cultivation of premium vegetables in a technical seminar held at Tai Lung Experimental Station in Sheung Shui today (Wednesday).

The seminar on "Premium Vegetable Production" focused on squash, a newly introduced exotic species suitable for local production.

An agricultural officer of the Agriculture and Fisheries Department (AFD) Ms Wendy Ko pointed out that squash was a vegetable with high nutrition and would become a popular choice for healthy diets.

"It is expected that the introduction of squash would be welcomed by farmers and the market as it suits local cultivation environment, as well as the taste of local residents," said Ms Ko.

"It also provides another choice for farmers in vegetable production."

At today's seminar, participants learned to use environmentally friendly measures in pest and disease control of gourds, such as the preparation of poison baits to control melon fly.

The seminar also included lectures given by AFD officers, slide show and field demonstration.

The function was jointly organised by AFD and the Federation of Vegetable Marketing Co-operative Societies Ltd., as part of the department's regular programmes to transfer technical know-how to local farmers.

Further enquiries on issues relating to crop cultivation and pest management can be directed to AFD's Horticulture Section (2679 4294) or Plant Protection Section (2679 4354).

End



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*Robert Yip*

(Robert YIP)

for Director of Information Services

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FS's speech concluding the debate on the 1997-98 Budget

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Following is a speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang, concluding the debate on the second reading of the Appropriation Bill 1997 at the Legislative Council this afternoon (Wednesday):

Mr President,

Introduction

First of all, I would like to thank Honourable Members for their thoughtful comments on my Budget. Your criticism and your support are both of interest and value to me. Constructive criticism challenges our thinking in the Administration. It keeps us alert, stops us from becoming complacent. It gives us a fresh perspective. And because we are a responsible and responsive Administration, it can lead to change. Your support is useful, not only because it will result in votes for the Appropriation Bill, but also because it shows where we have got our proposals right. Members will note that we have fielded five speakers including myself. This is because we wish, like Members, to focus on the key issues.

During the last two days many words have been used to describe the Budget - "positive and upbeat", "conservative", "prudent", "confidence-boosting", "disappointing", "too rigid", "stingy" and even "boring". None of these, given the different constituencies involved, came as a surprise to me, except perhaps the epithet of "boring". After all, it has inspired 54 members to sometimes quite passionate debate for a total of over ten hours!

More specifically, Members have called for us to do more for the elderly, to do more for education and for housing. But they have also supported the new tax allowances, tax bands' restructuring, and the new initiatives to help business. I am grateful for this support.

The community has also made clear its views. Through newspapers, call-in programmes and feedback to District Board members and District Officers. Again, there is a mixed response.

But overall, both in this chamber and in the community, there is I believe a mature understanding of the constraints we faced in drawing up our proposals. As I said in my Budget Speech, this is a very special year for Hong Kong. And it calls for a special Budget, a prudent Budget, a Budget that would bridge the transition.

My colleagues have answered Members' questions on our expenditure proposals in detail during the Special Finance Committee meetings at the end of last month. And this afternoon they have responded to the main areas of criticism.

I will not repeat their points. I would like to touch briefly on three issues: housing, CSSA and our reserves. The Secretary for Housing and the Secretary for Health and Welfare have already explained just how much we are doing in the first two areas. I want to make a few more general points.

### Housing

First, on housing. As a result of our recent measures, it appears that already there are fewer speculators in the property market. This is good news. But I accept that Government has a duty to continue its efforts. We need to help people to buy their own homes. Not, as I explained in my Budget Speech, through general tax concessions. We must target our help and the community's resources on those who need such assistance. The best way, and in the long term the only sure way, is to balance better the equation of supply and demand. By continuing to build more subsidised housing and by providing more land. I am personally committed to tackling this problem. And I look forward to working with my colleagues in my special task force to come up with new initiatives to do so. Our terms of reference are as follows -

- to set overall programmes in supplying land for housing development so that planning, land acquisition, land formation, development of transport and other infrastructure can be prioritised and co-ordinated;
- to consider ways and means to remove constraints in, and to expedite, the approval process and to take quick decisions where there are competing priorities;
- to exploit opportunities for developing the land held by developers for housing purposes and to explore innovative proposals in providing the housing-related infrastructure; and
- to ensure land available for public and private housing is fully and quickly developed into housing units.

### Comprehensive Social Security Assistance

Next, Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA). The Secretary for Health and Welfare has described the impressive improvements we have made in the social welfare field in general and on CSSA in particular. As I said in my Budget Speech, we have increased our expenditure on welfare by 88 per cent in real terms over the past five years. The rate of increase in welfare spending in this Budget exceeds again by a wide margin the rates of increase allowed for all other major government spending programmes. This is a good track record. It shows that we have consistently put priority on caring for those in our community who need support. I am sure we will continue to do so, so long as this reflects the wish of our community.

In this debate, Members have focused on CSSA payments for the elderly. We agree that this is an important issue. We have listened carefully to the arguments put forward to increase the standard rate, and will weigh them up carefully in the 1997 RAE that will shape the 1998 Budget. Next month, my colleagues and I will start our consultation exercise on spending priorities. This will give the whole community the opportunity to make their views known and to look at all proposals, including those on CSSA for the elderly, together. The timing of the consultation and the two studies on the elderly mentioned by Secretary for Health and Welfare, to be completed this summer, fit together well. One study is on the financial position of elderly CSSA recipients. The other is on the needs of the elderly for services and support. So, our decisions will have a rational basis. So that a caring idea from the heart will be pursued and decided upon rationally in the head. We are listening and our minds are open.

Some Members have demanded an immediate increase of \$300 per month. I would like to make two points in reply. First, while cash is clearly important, so too are the nursing homes, social support networks, day care centres, home help, and healthcare that we provide. There needs to be a balance between financial help and direct services. We gave priority to cash assistance in the 1996 Budget. It was entirely reasonable for us this time round to put the emphasis on direct services.

Second, we have to ask ourselves what is it that allows Hong Kong to increase government spending in real terms year after year when many other countries in the world are cutting back. The answer is we have a sensible system based on discipline. Because we keep our discipline, our system works. It continues to keep our economy growing, it continues to create the new wealth that allows us to spend more. Some Members have suggested that we could get round the system by setting up a specific fund to help the elderly. But such a capital fund should only be used for genuinely one-off items. If a fund is used instead for recurrent purposes, such as making regular cash payments, this circumvents our guidelines and smacks of creative accounting. No responsible Financial Secretary could agree to such a proposal. This would be a breach of discipline. Short term popularity would have been bought at the expense of long term prosperity. It is too high a price to pay.

In this regard, we should concentrate on what we can do in the coming year. This means, most of all, establishing a rational basis for any increase in CSSA. Once that is done we should work further to find the savings for financing the increase in the course of this year or next. Some may see this determination to adhere to our "golden rule" as inflexible or rigid. But as I have said, keeping to the "golden rule" is one of the reasons Hong Kong has been able to lay a nestful of "golden eggs": our economic success, our low taxes, our steady increase in public spending and our fiscal reserves.

### Fiscal Reserves

This brings me to the final point I want to make. Many members have suggested that our reserves have reached a level which is more than adequate to meet our needs.

Let me repeat what I said a year ago. This is not the time to weaken the security afforded by our fiscal reserves. This year, much more than any other, the need to maintain the stability of our financial systems must override all other considerations. Maintaining confidence, both locally and overseas, in the soundness of our financial systems is of paramount importance in the remaining months before the birth of the SARG and as we move into the new era.

Let me also put the size of our fiscal reserves into proper perspective. After taking account of the revised estimate of the surplus for 1996-97, our fiscal reserves at 31 March 1997 are \$163 billion. This is equivalent to 87% of our total expenditure in 1996-97. Five years ago, the corresponding figure was 107% and fifteen years ago, it was 81%. One could argue that in relative terms, our fiscal reserves are no larger today than has been the case in the past.

But what makes today's situation very different is the prospect that from 1 July 1997 the SARG will have access to the balance which has been accumulated since 1985 in the Land Fund. This will effectively double the size of the reserves overnight. By 31 March 1998 - not now but next year - our forecast total reserves of \$359 billion will be equivalent to 177% of our expenditure in the year. I agree, this is a massive sum.

If the fiscal reserves have played a vital role in preserving the stability of our economy in the period leading to the establishment of the Special Administrative Region, then the challenge we will face is how to use these reserves to the best for the benefit of our community in the next millennium, without inviting back double-digit inflation.

I agree wholeheartedly with those Members who have pointed out that our robust and healthy finances reflect the contribution over the years by our community. It is right that it should receive a return for its past endeavours.

The appropriate level of reserves in the longer term and how best to use those we have already accumulated are issues which my colleagues and I are already looking at. We will continue to listen to Members' suggestions on this important issue. But this is a debate for another day after we have successfully sailed through the transition.

### Conclusion

I would like to end by saying something about the Budget process. I see it as a continuous one. One in which the Administration consults this Council and the community, first on spending ideas and later on revenue proposals. We then draw up our package responding to requests as best we can. So the Budget that emerges each year is a shared responsibility. As guardian of the public purse, I cannot hope to please all the people all the time. But in my Budget, I do aim to please as many as I can when I can. For example, I am pleased to say our dialogue led to us responding positively to the vast majority of the Democratic Party's requests this year - as is shown in their latest bulletin. This dialogue is a fine tradition which we should cherish in the years ahead. And the dialogue is about to begin again.

This year the Budget had a unique role to play. It was right that it should be prudent and conservative. The debate on it is only partly about our few differences. It is mainly about what we have achieved together in the many more items of expenditure and tax cuts that Members' proposed and we included in the Budget. It is mainly about coming together to agree the way forward for our community. We have come together. We have reached a broad consensus on the way forward. Together we stand ready to face this historic time of change. Thank you.

End

Import and Export (Registration) (Amendment) Regulation 1997

\* \* \* \* \*

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Trade and Industry, Miss Denise Yue, in moving the motion 'that the Import and Export (Registration) (Amendment) Regulation 1997, made by the Governor in Council on 18 March 1997, be approved' in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Mr President,

I move the second motion which has been printed on the Order Paper namely 'that the Import and Export (Registration) (Amendment) Regulation 1997, made by the Governor in Council on 18 March 1997, be approved'.

The purpose of this motion is to revise the declaration charges payable to the Government upon lodgements of trade declarations.

It is now possible for traders to lodge trade declarations using the Community Electronic Trading Service provided by Tradelink and our aim is to make this the only method of lodging trade declarations in three years' time. In addition to paying Tradelink for using its service, levies in the form of declaration charges are also payable to the Government. If such declaration charges remain unchanged, the use of the Community Electronic Trading Service will not be attractive for the business community because it will result in a higher overall charge. Apart from the phased withdrawal of the existing facilities for collecting trade declarations, we need a financial package to encourage the business community to stop using paper forms and switch over to a paperless method of conducting business.

Under the Import and Export (Registration) (Amendment) Regulation 1997, the existing set of charges will be replaced by two. Declaration charges for paperless lodgements will enjoy lower rates of charges. As far as possible, the combined Government and Tradelink charges will be less or no more than the current charge. Declaration charges for paper lodgements will be increased. This is necessary as a disincentive for the continuation of paper lodgements. Without such a disincentive, the financial package will not be effective.

Mr President, I beg to move.

End

Import and Export (Registration) (Amendment) Regulation 1995

\* \* \* \* \*

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Trade and Industry, Miss Denise Yue, in moving the motion 'that section 5 of the Import and Export (Registration) (Amendment) Regulation 1995, made by the Governor in Council on 21 November 1995, be approved' in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Mr President,

I move the motion which has been printed on the Order Paper namely 'that section 5 of the Import and Export (Registration) (Amendment) Regulation 1995, made by the Governor in Council on 21 November 1995, be approved'.

The purpose of this motion is to include a new method for traders using the Community Electronic Trading Service provided by Tradelink to pay declaration charges to the Government.

At present, trade declarations may be lodged either in person or by post. The corresponding declaration charges should be paid in cash or by cheque at the time of lodging the declaration.

It is now possible for traders to lodge trade declarations using the Community Electronic Trading Service, a paperless method of conducting business. Those traders using this service will need to have another method of paying the Government.

Tradelink and Government have agreed that Tradelink will, on behalf of its customers, pay the Government the declaration charges for all declarations lodged using its service and then recover such sums from the relevant customers through its normal billing system.

Section 5 of the Import and Export (Registration) (Amendment) Regulation 1995 is amended to retain both the existing payment methods and to add the new payment method as agreed to by Government and Tradelink.

Mr President, I beg to move.

End

Motion to increase the award for bereavement

\* \* \* \* \*

Following is the speech by the Attorney General, Mr Jeremy Mathews, on the Hon Albert Ho's motion to increase the award for bereavement in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Mr President,

The Administration supports this motion. I would like to thank the Hon Albert Ho for taking the initiative to move it.

An award for bereavement offers some financial consolation, some financial services to the dependants of someone tragically killed in an accident. When the award was first introduced in 1986, it was fixed at \$40,000. In May 1991, I moved a resolution which resulted in an increase in the amount to \$70,000, in order to reflect inflation.

The current motion does more than reflect the rate of inflation since 1991. An inflation adjustment would bring the amount up to about \$112,000. However, the Hon Albert Ho has argued that the award should be further increased to meet the changing social and economic conditions of Hong Kong.

The Administration would not normally propose an amendment in respect of the administration of justice that has policy implications without consulting the two branches of the legal profession, the Judiciary and other interested parties. Since this motion has policy implications, I have therefore consulted those bodies and parties. I am pleased to say that there was general support for this motion.

Assuming that this motion is passed to-day, it will be necessary to ensure that the amount of the award continues to be adjusted to reflect inflation. I am happy therefore to confirm that it is my intention to review the amount of the award for bereavement every two years.

Mr President, as I said a moment ago, the Administration supports this motion.

End

Measure to prevent fires due to power leakage adequate

\* \* \* \* \*

Following are a question by the Hon Choy Kan-pui and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Peter Lai, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the total number of fires related to power leakage in the past three years; and whether such fires were caused by power leakage in electrical appliances or power cords or as a result of short circuits; and
- (b) whether the existing legislation provides sufficient control measures to prevent the outbreak of fires due to power leakage?

Reply:

- (a) The total number of fires recorded by FSD in the past 3 years which are believed to be originated from electrical fault are 1667, 1608 and 1628 for 1994, 1995 and 1996 respectively. EMSD has investigated 23 of the major incidents which were suspected to be electrical in origin. Fifteen of these incidents were suspected to be due to faulty electrical installations while the other 8 were due to faulty electrical appliances (including power cords).
- (b) The Electricity Ordinance (Cap. 406) and its subsidiary legislation provide control measures regarding electrical safety, which include:
  - i) a requirement that a fixed electrical installation shall, after completion (including any work completed after repair, alteration or addition) and before it is energised for use, be inspected, tested and certified by a registered electrical worker and contractor to confirm that the requirements of the Ordinance have been met;
  - ii) existing fixed electrical installations located in specified types of premises have to be periodically (yearly or 5-yearly) inspected, tested and certified by registered electrical workers and contractors; and

- iii) provision to empower the Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services to disconnect any unsafe electrical installation when there is imminent risk of an electrical accident.

These measures are considered to be adequate to prevent the outbreak of fires due to power leakage.

End

Language benchmark pilot exercise

\* \* \* \* \*

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

Question:

Regarding the Secretary for Education and Manpower's recent proposal to require primary and secondary school teachers to participate in the language benchmark pilot exercise, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the date of introducing the above language benchmark pilot exercise and the specific details of the pilot exercise;
- (b) of the following information regarding specialised language training of school teachers:
  - (i) the respective numbers of Chinese language teachers in primary and secondary schools who have received specialised language training;
  - (ii) the respective numbers of Chinese language teachers in primary and secondary schools who have not received specialised language training;
  - (iii) the respective number of English language teachers in primary and secondary schools who have received specialised language training;

- (iv) the respective numbers of English language teachers in primary and secondary schools who have not received specialised language training; and
- (c) whether the Government will provide training for teachers who fail the benchmark assessment test so as to enable them to attain the required standard?

Reply:

Mr President,

- (a) We plan to conduct a pilot language benchmark exercise in 1997/98. The pilot exercise will involve about 1,200 teachers in the following three categories for whom tentative benchmarks have already been developed:

- teachers of English in lower secondary levels;
- primary school teachers using Chinese as the medium of instruction; and
- primary school teachers of Putonghua.

"Benchmark" refers to minimum acceptable language proficiency standard for effective teaching of various subjects, including language subjects.

The aim of the pilot exercise is to finalise the tentative benchmarks developed, assess re-training needs, consider if certain exemption criteria should be established and to work out a detailed plan for full implementation.

Teachers participating in the pilot exercise will go through an assessment, which will include written and oral language proficiency examinations as well as classroom language observation. In view of the time required to develop the oral and written examination papers, we aim to conduct the pilot written and oral examinations in the second quarter of 1998. The classroom language observation will start earlier, in the first quarter of 1998, and will be completed by the third quarter of the same year.

The pilot benchmark exercise arises from the Education Commission Report No. 6 (ECR 6) which recommended that language benchmark qualifications should be specified for all new and serving primary and secondary teachers, including language teachers, so as to address the problem of declining language standards of our students. This is one amongst a host of measures which ECR 6 recommended to solve the language ability problem. The Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ) was tasked to develop the benchmarks. With the help of language consultants and after one year's study, ACTEQ has drawn up tentative benchmarks for finalisation in the coming pilot exercise.

ACTEQ will co-ordinate the pilot benchmarking exercise. The Hong Kong Examinations Authority will administer the written and oral examinations while the Education Department will be responsible for conducting the classroom language observation.

In order to ensure that the finalised benchmarks will be representative and appropriate, the 1,200 teachers will be randomly selected from different types of schools, with different qualifications and lengths of teaching experience.

To allow teachers to have early knowledge of the standards required and what would be included in the benchmark assessment, syllabuses and specimen tasks will be published well in advance.

Subject to the results of the pilot and any exemption criteria subsequently developed, new and serving teachers will be required to reach the benchmarks. We plan to implement the language benchmarks, once finalised, for new teachers as soon as possible, and in 1999 at the earliest. As for serving teachers, ECR 6 recommended that they might be allowed 10 years to reach the benchmarks. ACTEQ will, based on the results of the pilot and re-training needs, advise on this.

- (b) According to the results of the 1996 Teacher Survey conducted by the Education Department, the statistics of Chinese and English language teachers with and without subject training are as follows:
  - (i) The numbers of Chinese Language teachers who are subject-trained at primary and secondary levels are 9848 (i.e. 87.3%) and 3884 (i.e. 79.2%) respectively.

- (ii) The numbers of Chinese Language teachers who are non-subject-trained at primary and secondary levels are 1438 (i.e. 12.7%) and 1023 (i.e. 20.8%) respectively.
  - (iii) The numbers of English Language teachers who are subject-trained at primary and secondary levels are 3798 (i.e. 44.4%) and 2922 (i.e. 54.4%) respectively.
  - (iv) The numbers of English Language teachers who are non-subject-trained at primary and secondary levels are 4754 (i.e. 55.6%) and 2451 (i.e. 45.6%) respectively.
- (c) One of the main purposes of the pilot exercise is to assess re-training needs. Ample re-training opportunities will be provided to enable teachers to upgrade their language standards. Other than those who require re-training after the assessment, we are considering giving teachers the option of taking the training course before they go through the benchmark assessment. This is in line with the primary objective of the benchmarking exercise, which is to ensure that our teachers will be fully competent in the teaching of languages or in using them as a medium of instruction. Pending the results of the pilot exercise, ACTEQ will advise and the Education Department will work out the arrangements for re-training.

End

#### Review of Social Security Allowance

\* \* \* \* \*

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Law Chi-kwong and a written reply by the Secretary for Health and Welfare, Mrs Katherine Fok, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

As the Government is undertaking a review of the Social Security Allowance (SSA) scheme, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the purpose and scope of the review;

- (b) of the time schedule of the review;
- (c) of the composition of the review group, and whether service users (such as the elderly and people with a disability) are represented on the review group; and
- (d) given the concern over a proposal to introduce means-testing to the SSA scheme, of the position the Government takes on the proposal and whether the issue will be addressed by the review group?

Reply:

Mr President,

- (a) The current Social Security Allowance (SSA) Scheme has been in operation since 1993. It is timely to conduct a review on the objectives and the operation of the Scheme to ensure its cost-effectiveness.
- (b) Given the social significance of the SSA Scheme, the review must be thorough and circumspect. Although it is premature to speculate, we aim nevertheless to complete the review in 1997-98.
- (c) An inter-departmental Steering Group comprising representatives from the Health and Wealth Branch, the Finance Branch, the Social Welfare Department and the Census & Statistics Department and chaired by the Director of Social Welfare which conducted the CSSA Review has started to review the SSA Scheme - the other prominent feature of the existing social security system. The Steering Group will take into account the needs of various service users (including the elderly and people with a disability). The Administration has also undertaken to consult Members of this Council and other interested parties on the review's recommendations before any decision on changes is made.
- (d) The review will cover all aspects of the Scheme including eligibility. Our concern is to ensure that vulnerable elderly and people with a disability are getting assistance in the best possible way. It would not be appropriate to speculate on the review's recommendations before its completion.

End

Real wage index

\*\*\*\*\*

Following is a question by the Hon Cheng Yiu-tong and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services, Mr Rafael Hui, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council whether it has collected any data on the real wage index of employees by industry group -

- (a) if so, please list the respective percentage changes in the real wage index of the following monthly income groups in September 1996 as compared to the corresponding figures in the month of September in 1993, 1994 and 1995:
- (i) \$4,999 and below,
  - (ii) \$5,000 - 6,999,
  - (iii) \$7,000 - 8,999,
  - (iv) \$9,000 - 14,999,
  - (v) \$15,000 - 19,999,
  - (vi) \$20,000 - 29,999,
  - (vii) \$30,000 or above;
- (b) if not, why not; and whether it will consider collecting such data and publishing them on a regular basis?

Reply:

- (a) The Census and Statistics Department compiles and publishes, on a half-yearly basis, wage indices for occupations up to the supervisory level, and on an annual basis, salary indices for the managerial and professional occupations, covering a number of selected sectors and industries.

Statistics on changes in the real wage indices by major sector and by broad occupation group up to the supervisory level from September 1993 to September 1996, along with the corresponding average wage levels in September 1996, are appended in Table 1. Statistics on changes in the real salary indices for managerial and professional occupations by major sector from June 1993 to June 1996, along with the corresponding overall salary levels for this category of employees, are appended in Table 2. Some further breakdowns of these statistics by industry are available from the Department and can be furnished upon request.

- (b) There are however no available statistics on wage changes broken down by income range of employees in specific sectors or industry groups. To collate such statistics would most likely require tallying from the wage levels of individual employees in the company payroll. The practical difficulty is that company payroll records are commonly arranged by job categories or occupation hierarchies, rather than by income ranges of the employees. Requiring employers to provide such information would create an undue additional reporting burden.

In conducting statistical surveys, the Census and Statistics Department has to strike a reasonable balance between the production of more statistics the value of which may become increasingly marginal, and the reporting burden on respondents. In this instance, the existing breakdown on wage changes are considered to be ample and appropriate.

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Table 1 : Changes in Wage Levels in Real Terms for Workers up to Supervisory Level as Measured by Real Wage Indices by Occupation Group, September 1993 - September 1996

(A) Manufacturing sector

Occupation group	Average monthly wage (HK\$)	Year-on-year change in real wage index(%)			
	Sep 1996	Sep 1993	Sep 1994	Sep 1995	Sep 1996
All selected occupations	8,851	1.9	-0.4	-2.9	2.2
<i>of which :</i>					
Supervisory & technical workers	13,784	3.9	3.6	-1.7	2.9
Clerical & secretarial workers	9,657	3.4	1.7	-1.3	1.4
Craftsmen	11,000	1.6	-2.3	-1.5	2.3
Operatives	7,046	1.1	-2.1	-4.5	2.2
Service workers	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Miscellaneous non-production workers	6,864	0.9	0.2	-2.4	1.8

(B) Wholesale, Retail and Import/Export Trades, Restaurants and Hotels sector

Occupation group	Average monthly wage (HK\$)	Year-on-year change in real wage index(%)			
All selected occupations	10,804	2.2	1.3	-1.4	-0.1
<i>of which :</i>					
Supervisory & technical workers	14,369	2.1	2.0	-0.7	1.1
Clerical & secretarial workers	10,046	2.3	0.7	0.4	1.0
Craftsmen	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Operatives	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Service workers	9,523	2.5	0.9	-3.4	-2.6
Miscellaneous non-production workers	7,845	1.4	1.0	-3.1	-1.7

(C) Transport Services sector

Occupation group	Average monthly wage (HK\$)	Year-on-year change in real wage index(%)			
All selected occupations	12,077	2.7	1.9	-1.9	1.7
<i>of which :</i>					
Supervisory & technical workers	17,104	0.8	5.0	0.3	2.7
Clerical & secretarial workers	10,633	0.9	6.0	-1.3	2.6
Craftsmen	12,350	5.7	-2.5	-4.3	0.2
Operatives	10,504	0.1	-2.4	-1.0	4.2
Service workers	6,164	-4.5	15.1	2.5	-4.7
Miscellaneous non-production workers	8,745	6.6	-0.5	#	5.1

Table 1 (cont'd) : Changes in Wage Levels in Real Terms for Workers up to Supervisory Level as Measured by Real Wage Indices by Occupation Group, September 1993 - September 1996

(D) Financing, Insurance, Real Estate and Business Services sector

Occupation group	Average monthly wage (HK\$)	Year-on-year change in real wage index(%)			
	Sep 1996	Sep 1993	Sep 1994	Sep 1995	Sep 1996
All selected occupations	10,271	4.0	0.3	-0.5	3.0
<i>of which :</i>					
Supervisory & technical workers	16,512	3.7	-1.5	0.6	6.0
Clerical & secretarial workers	11,149	2.7	3.6	-0.4	2.3
Craftsmen	10,400	1.6	-5.3	1.5	1.5
Operatives	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Service workers	6,428	2.8	-1.6	-11.0	4.7
Miscellaneous non-production workers	7,108	8.1	-0.7	3.5	-5.5

(E) Personal Services sector

Occupation group	Average monthly wage (HK\$)	Year-on-year change in real wage index(%)			
		Sep 1993	Sep 1994	Sep 1995	Sep 1996
All selected occupations	6,069	2.3	2.7	-0.7	0.9
<i>of which :</i>					
Supervisory & technical workers	10,924	0.3	2.8	3.5	1.1
Clerical & secretarial workers	10,292	7.3	-4.0	6.2	4.9
Craftsmen	11,776	3.3	-4.0	1.3	2.1
Operatives	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Service workers	4,887	0.4	3.7	-4.6	-0.1
Miscellaneous non-production workers	4,956	2.8	5.3	-3.4	0.2

Notes : N.A. Not Applicable.  
# Less than 0.05%.

Source : Labour Earnings Survey, Census and Statistics Department.

**Table 2 : Changes in Salary Levels in Real Terms for Managerial and Professional Employees as Measured by Real Salary Index (A), June 1993 - June 1996**

	Average monthly salary (HK\$)	Year-on-year change in real salary index (A) (%)			
		Jun 1993	Jun 1994	Jun 1995	Jun 1996
<b>Economic sector</b>					
Manufacturing, Electricity and Gas Sector	40,737	-4.3	-2.0	-1.0	0.2
Wholesale, Retail and Import/Export Trades Sector	30,846	-1.7	0.6	1.3	1.7
Transport, Storage and Communications Sector	37,442	2.3	0.1	-0.6	1.8
Financing Institutions and Insurance Sector	34,528	3.1	-0.3	0.6	0.1
Building and Construction and Related Trades Sector	43,903	1.4	2.0	3.1	1.6

Notes : The Salary Index (A) is compiled by comparing the average salary rates of individual occupations in June of the reference year with those in June of the preceding year. The Salary Index (B) measures the changes in the salary rates for only those employees who remained in the same occupation and in the same company in both the reference year and the preceding year. It therefore only accounts for changes due to general increment, meritorious increase and gain in seniority. The Salary Index (A) is a more comprehensive measure of changes in salary rates.

The figures cover the middle-level managerial and professional employees only. Top management employees are excluded owing to difficulty in collecting accurate salary data from them.

Source : Annual Survey of Salaries and Employee Benefits - Managerial and Professional Employees, Census and Statistics Department.

End

Construction of CT9

\* \* \* \* \*

Following is a question by the Hon Samuel Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Economic Services, Mr Stephen Ip, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council of the latest progress regarding the construction of Container Terminal No. 9 on Tsing Yi Island and the scheduled date of completion of the project?

Reply:

Mr President,

We are negotiating with the developers on the detailed land grant conditions for Container Terminal No. 9 (CT9). The negotiations are expected to be completed and the site handed over to the developers for construction work to begin by the end of this year. Allowing about 24 months for the construction of the terminal, the first berth of CT9 is expected to come into operation by the end of 1999, followed by other berths at six-month intervals. The timing is in line with the current forecast requirement dates for the berths of CT9 under the Port Cargo Forecasts endorsed by the Port Development Board.

End

Land Fund

\* \* \* \* \*

Following is a question by the Hon Eric Li and a written reply by the Secretary for the Treasury, Mr K C Kwong, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

As the Government records revenues derived from land sales on a cash accounting basis, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the amount of revenues derived from land sales in 1996-97 which will be recorded in the accounts of the following fiscal year; and
- (b) whether consideration will be given to adopting an accrual accounting system for recording revenues, so as to reflect accurately the revenues received in each fiscal year?

Reply:

- (a) The amount of revenue from land sales in 1996-97 which will be accounted for in Hong Kong Government's consolidated accounts in 1997-98 is estimated to be \$7.3 billion. The time-lag in the crediting of land revenue into Hong Kong Government's consolidated accounts is due to the need to allow time for the proper sharing of the proceeds from land sales with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government Land Fund in accordance with Annex III to the Sino-British Joint Declaration.
- (b) We currently adopt a cash basis of accounting. Revenue and expenditure are recorded when cash is actually received or paid. While this meets the primary objective of Government's financial reporting, which is to demonstrate that the spending of public funds is for the purposes and within the limits approved by the legislature, we recognise the potential benefits of an accrual accounting system in terms of providing more comprehensive information on Government's financial position and facilitating resource management. In the light of the findings of a 1994 study on the subject and subsequent efforts in producing accrual-based departmental resource accounts for a number of departments, we will continue to explore the wider use of accrual-based accounts and then determine whether we need to make changes to the basis of Government accounting. However, to record land revenue on an accrual basis when all other revenue and expenditure items are accounted for on a cash basis would result in a hybrid system. This would not be a good accounting practice and may result in misleading information.

End

Holders of recognizance form not eligible for HKID card

\* \* \* \* \*

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

Question:

Regarding the issue of temporary permits (commonly known as "going-out passes") - which allow holders of such permits to move about in the territory - to certain illegal immigrants or visitors who have been granted extension of stay, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the procedures for the issue of "going-out passes" and the ranks of public officers who are authorised to issue such passes;
- (b) of the criteria for issuing "going-out passes";
- (c) whether the number of "going-out passes" issued during the first quarter of this year shows an upward trend in comparison with those issued in the corresponding period over the past two years; and
- (d) whether holders of "going-out passes" are eligible for the Hong Kong Identity Card if they remain in the territory after 1st July this year?

Reply:

Mr President,

- (a) Our policy is to repatriate all illegal immigrants and overstayers immediately unless there are justifiable grounds (see (b) below). Under such circumstances, the person will normally be released on recognizance under Section 36(1) of the Immigration Ordinance in lieu of detention under the authority of a Chief Immigration Officer. They are required to provide a surety of HK2,000 from a close relative resident in Hong Kong and report to the Recognizance Office every two to four weeks. These recognizance forms are commonly known as "out-going passes". They are issued to illegal immigrants and overstayers in specific circumstances and are not applicable to visitors who have been granted extension of stay. Extension of stay endorsements are made on the applicants' travel documents.
- (b) Recognizance will only be considered when the following criteria are met -

- (i) there are strong compassionate grounds, e.g. non-release will result in long period of detention pending processing of their cases; and
  - (ii) there is no likelihood of abscondment.
- (c) There has been an upward trend in the number of persons granted recognizance in the first three months this year because of the recent increase in the number of surrendered illegal immigrant children and Two-way Permit overstayers.

Statistics of recognizance granted since 1995 are as follows :-

	TWP overstayers		Illegal immigrants		Total	
1995	92	(15)	3383	(584)	3475	(599)
1996	808	(88)	3736	(590)	4544	(678)
1997 (Jan-Mar)		(383)		(1996)		(2379)

( ) denotes the number of persons granted recognizance from January to March in the respective year.

The trend is being closely monitored. Both the Hong Kong and the Chinese authorities have undertaken to make publicity to quell the rumour of amnesty for illegal immigrants. Security forces on both sides have also stepped up their border patrol to prevent illegal immigration.

- (d) The recognizance form does not confer any permission for the holder to stay in Hong Kong. It is only a prescribed form issued to an illegal immigrant or overstayer who has been granted recognizance temporarily as an alternative to detention while the case is being processed. It sets out certain conditions for the holder to comply with, such as the amount of money or number of sureties to be provided; and the time and frequency of reporting to the Immigration Department. The holder's status as an illegal immigrant or overstayer remains unchanged and once the person's presence in Hong Kong is no longer required, removal will be effected at the earliest opportunity. Holders of recognizance forms are not eligible for a Hong Kong Identity Card even if they remain in the territory after 1st July 1997.

Feasibility study on retrofitting noise mitigation measures on existing roads

\* \* \* \* \*

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

Question:

In May last year, I wrote a letter to the Planning, Environment and Lands Branch concerning the abatement of road traffic noise, and I was subsequently advised in writing by the Branch that the Environmental Protection Department had commissioned a territory-wide consultancy study to assess the feasibility of implementing remedial road traffic noise mitigation measures. As the study has now been completed, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the roads listed by the consultancy firm as requiring the implementation of noise mitigation works, and of the expected commencement dates of such works;
- (b) as it is learnt that the consultancy firm has recommended in its report that noise mitigation works should be carried out in three stages, of the expected commencement dates of the works in the second stage covering Tuen Mun Road and Cheung Pei Shan Road; and
- (c) when the measures on the abatement of road traffic noise currently in force will be reviewed?

Reply:

Mr President,

First of all, I would like to clarify the scope and objectives of the consultancy study which is the subject of this question. The consultancy study is on the feasibility of retrofitting noise mitigation measures on existing roads. It comprises two parts. The first is a desk-top review based on available traffic data and physical constraints such as space and fire fighting requirements in order to assess the practicability of installing noise barriers or enclosures on the noisy roads. It was completed in December 1995. Of some 740 road sections reviewed, 16 have been selected for detailed engineering investigations. The second part of the study focuses on these 16 road sections and aims to establish technical feasibility in terms of safety, public disturbance, maintenance, cost requirements and effectiveness. It commenced in October 1996 and is scheduled for completion in mid 1998. With regard to the specific questions raised -

- (a) The list of road sections identified for more detailed engineering investigations is shown as below. An implementation timetable will be drawn up subject to the outcome of the study.

Road Sections Identified for Detailed Engineering Investigations

1. Island Eastern Corridor — Tai Koo Shing
  2. Tung Tau Tsuen Road
  3. Che Kung Miu Road
  4. Tai Chung Kiu Road
  5. Ma On Shan Road
  6. Ting Kok Road
  7. Po Lam Road
  8. Fung Shue Wo Road
  9. Tuen Mun Road — Tsuen Wan
  10. Tuen Mun Road — Tsing Lung Tau
  11. Tuen Mun Road — Sam Shing Hui
  12. Castle Peak Road — Hung Shui Kiu
  13. Castle Peak Road — Ping Shan
  14. Hiram's Highway
  15. Cheung Pei Shan Road
  16. Junk Bay Road — Kwun Tong
- (b) The first part of the study only made preliminary recommendation to the Administration. The consultant is now proceeding with the second part to assess the engineering feasibility of implementing noise mitigation measures on the 16 selected road sections, including Tuen Mun Road and Cheung Pei Shan Road. The actual implementation timetable would be drawn up in the light of the findings.
- (c) We will review the policy to deal with traffic noise from existing roads on the basis of the findings of the study.

End

Speed limit imposed on Route 3 and Route 9

\* \* \* \* \*

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

Question:

As Route 3 and Route 9 are the only two arteries connecting Tsing Yi Island with the new airport at Chek Lap Kok and the rest of the territory, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the comparison in terms of the higher traffic volume handled and speed limit imposed on Route 3/Route 9 and other major highways in the territory;
- (b) of the traffic volume on Route 3 and Route 9 since they have become operational; and
- (c) whether the Government will consider relaxing the present speed limit imposed on other major highways in the territory to bring it in line with that imposed on Route 3 and Route 9, so as to avoid the occurrence of a "bottlenecks" on those highways as a result of traffic coming in from the direction of the new airport and the North Lantau Expressway; if not, why not?

Reply:

Mr President,

- (a) The speed limits imposed on Route 3/Route 9 and other major highways and their capacities are shown in the Annex;
- (b) As regards Route 3, the West Kowloon Expressway and the Kwai Chung Viaduct were open to traffic in February 1997. The peak hour traffic volume is about 1,200 vehicles/ hour one way on both highways. The rest of Route 3 and Route 9 are not yet open to traffic.

- (c) When setting speed limits for roads in Hong Kong, the Administration has regard primarily to safety and takes into consideration a number of factors including
- (i) the length of the route;
  - (ii) topography and geometric design of the route; and
  - (iii) road surface characteristics.

It is on this principle that the speed limits of the roads connecting Route 3/ Route 9 have been determined. It should be noted that permitting higher vehicle speed would not necessarily increase road capacity as a longer distance between vehicles is required for safe braking.

Routes 3 and 9 join Tuen Mun Road at the northern end and the Western Harbour Crossing and the road network on Hong Kong Island at the south. Because of the topography, design and safety, the speed limits on Tuen Mun Road and on Hong Kong Island cannot be increased.

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**Annex**

	No. of Lanes in one direction	Maximum Traffic Capacity (vehicles/hour/direction)	Speed limits (km/hour)
<b>Route 3</b>			
- Western Harbour Crossing (to be opened in late April 1997)	3	5 400	70
- West Kowloon Expressway (opened in February 1997) - Rambler Channel Bridge (to be opened in May 1997) - Cheung Ching Tunnel (to be opened in May 1997) - Approach Road to North West Tsing Yi Interchange (to be opened in May 1997) - Ting Kau Bridge (to be opened in early 1998)	3	5 400	80
- Kwai Chung Viaduct (opened in February 1997)	4	7 200	80
<b>Route 9</b>			
- Lantau Link - North Lantau Expressway  (to be opened in May 1997)	3	5 400	100
<b>Other Highways</b>	3	5 400	80/100
Tolo Highway			
Island Eastern Corridor	3	5 400	70
Tuen Mun Road	3	4 600*	70

\* Lower capacity due to sharp road bends and steep gradients.

Number of triad-related crimes remains stable

\* \* \* \* \*

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

Question:

It is reported that the recent fire at a karaoke bar killing 17 persons was suspected to have been caused by arson committed by triad members. In view of this, will the Government inform this Council whether:

- (a) it has any policy of vigorously combating triad activities; if so, what the details are; and
- (b) it has carried out any study to ascertain if there is a widespread public perception that triad activities are prevalent and likely to become worse in the future; if so, what the outcome of the study is?

Reply:

Mr President,

- (a) The Government has always accorded a high priority in combating triad activities by adopting a three-pronged approach, viz, dedicated Police units, supported by necessary legislation and a well formulated publicity strategy.

Dedicated Police Units

The Police have established dedicated units to take proactive action against triad activities. In 1994, the Organised Crime and Triad Group were split into two bureaux, namely, the Organized Crime and Triad Bureau and Criminal Intelligence Bureau, to deal with triad activities more effectively. In addition, both Narcotics Bureau and Commercial Crime Bureau take special interest in triad activities within their areas of responsibility. Apart from that, each Police Region has its own Anti-Triad Unit and each District has its own Anti-Triad Squad.

The manpower of these units has been significantly increased over the years. In 1995/96, 400 Police officer posts were created for front-line operational duties, of which 45 were specifically assigned to anti-triad duties. In 1996/97, over 350 posts were created for front-line operational duties, of which 232 were devoted to anti-triad duties at regional and district levels.

#### Supporting Legislation

To ensure that there are adequate legislative powers to tackle the triad problem, the Organised and Serious Crimes Ordinance (OSCO) was fully implemented in 1995 to enhance the Police ability to investigate organised and serious crimes, including triad offences. The Ordinance makes provisions for special investigative powers, confiscation of proceeds of certain crimes including money laundering for certain offences. By the end of March 1997, the Police had made 24 applications to the courts for enhanced sentences and were successful in 11 of them involving 19 persons. The enhanced sentences ranged from an increase of one-third to two-thirds of the usual sentence. The total amount of proceeds of crime confiscated is more than \$5.8 million.

In 1996, we introduced the Witness Protection Bill into this Council to enhance the effectiveness of the existing Witness Protection Programme and to establish a system for the change of identity of high-risk witnesses. If enacted, we believe that this will further encourage members of the public to come forward to give evidence, particularly in triad related cases.

#### Publicity Strategy

The Police need cooperation and support from members of the public in combating triad activities. To this end, the Police maintain on-going publicity and close liaison with the public. The Police Public Relations Branch plays a key role in this area by formulating a series of anti-triad publicity, including the screening of announcement of public interest on television, advertising billboards and the production of information leaflets. The Crime Prevention Bureau also liaises closely with shops and firms to encourage them to report triad activities.

- (b) We have not carried out any study to ascertain public perception in relation to triads. Contrary to some impression that triad activities are prevalent, the ratio of triad involvement in overall crimes in the past five years has remained relatively stable at about 5%. Indeed, the measures in part (a) have yielded encouraging results in combating triad activities. In 1996, there were a number of very successful anti-triad operations, for example, nine of the territory's largest loansharking were smashed. The number of triad-related crimes, including blackmail, intimidation, wounding and serious assault and unlawful societies offences dropped by 21% when compared with 1995. To tackle the perception problem, we will continue with our publicity efforts to allay public concern in this area through every opportunity, such as regular reports on crime situation to the Fight Crime Committee, District Boards, District Fight Crime Committees and the media as well as close liaison with members of the public by our Police Public Relations Officers at the district level.

End

#### Study on female drug addiction problem

\* \* \* \* \*

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

Question:

It is learnt that the Government-commissioned study on the female drug addiction problem conducted by the Department of Psychology of the Chinese University of Hong Kong was completed in the latter part of last year. Will the Government inform this Council of:

- (a) the findings and recommendations of the above study and how the Government will implement those recommendations;
- (b) the number of female drug abusers in the territory in each of the past three years, and whether these figures indicate a rising trend in the number of female drug abusers; and

- (c) the treatment and rehabilitation facilities provided for female drug abusers and the effectiveness of such facilities?

Reply:

Mr President,

- (a) The study on young female drug abusers was commissioned by the Action Committee Against Narcotics in 1995 and was completed in December 1996. It seeks to identify the circumstances leading to drug abuse among young females and the implications for preventive and treatment programmes.

The circumstances leading to drug abuse, or so called "risk factors", include positive attitude towards drugs, tendency for sensation seeking, susceptibility to peer group pressure, family disharmony, and exposure to peer and family drug users. On the other hand, women's sense of self-efficacy, family cohesion, and the presence of social support are identified as "protective factors" that may buffer against drug abuse behaviour.

The findings also suggest that the effects of risk and protective factors on female drug abuse are mediated by women's psychological state. In particular, life satisfaction augments the buffering effect of protective factors in reducing drug abuse behaviour, whereas the presence of psychological distress enhances the effect of risk factors in increasing the vulnerability to drug abuse.

The study recommends a multi-component approach to the prevention and treatment of female drug abuse. On the prevention side, the approach suggests that -

- (i) public education activities and media campaigns be launched to address the female drug abuse problem;
- (ii) women who are at risk of drug abuse be encouraged to take part in alternative activities and to develop healthy hobbies; and
- (iii) family life education programmes which emphasize harmony, cohesion and support among family members be organized as a buffer against the risk of drug abuse.

As far as treatment is concerned, the study recommends that -

- (i) drug treatment programmes for female drug abusers should be flexible in its duration and format to allow for individual needs;
- (ii) apart from modifying drug abuse behaviour, women's psychological health should be attended to in the treatment process as the presence of psychological distress may compromise their response to the treatment programme;
- (iii) programmes for female drug abusers' parents, spouses and support providers be available to help them to become effective change agents and support providers; and
- (iv) in view of the fact that the average relapse time for female drug abusers is about 6 months, the existing aftercare services for female drug abusers should be strengthened to include various skills training, job placement assistance and establishment of mutual support groups among female drug abusers and their family members to facilitate their re-integration into the community.

The Government endorses fully the study's recommendations. On preventive education, a TV API featuring female drug abuse problem has been produced and will be broadcast in the coming months. Joint programmes will also be organized with district School Liaison Committees to strengthen parent-child relationship. The Beat Drugs Fund further provides an additional source of funding to finance preventive education programmes for women at risk and other related anti-drug programmes. Concerning the treatment of female drug abusers, recommendations of the study have already been incorporated into the existing services provided by Government and voluntary agencies for treatment of female drug abusers. Follow-up discussions will continue to be held on the effective methods of strengthening and improving on the existing programmes.

- (b) There is an upward trend in the total number of female drug abusers reported to the Central Registry of Drug Abuse during the years 1994-96, as follows -

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total number of drug abusers</u>	<u>Number of female drug abusers</u>	<u>% of total</u>
1994	20,327	2,183	10.7%
1995	19,343	2,321	12.0%
1996	19,626	2,417	12.3%

- (c) Drug addiction is a chronic relapsing medical condition affected by complex socio-psychological factors. We have a long-standing policy of adopting a multi-modality approach in the provision of drug treatment and rehabilitation services. Specific treatment facilities for female drug abusers include a compulsory treatment programme in the Chi Ma Wan Drug Addiction Treatment Centre operated by the Correctional Services Department, and a subvented voluntary in-patient treatment and rehabilitation programme in the Sister Aquinas Memorial Women's Treatment Centre run by the Society for the Aid and Rehabilitation of Drug Addicts (SARDA). Apart from these, there are six non-subvented agencies, including Christian treatment agencies, providing drug treatment, aftercare and/or halfway house services for female drug abusers.

On the effectiveness of treatment and rehabilitation services for female drug abusers, in 1996, 74.8% of the total number of female drug abusers who completed the one-year compulsory supervision following their discharge from Drug Addiction Treatment Centre had neither relapsed into drug abuse nor been convicted of any crime during the supervision period. In the same year, for those female patients who completed SARDA's two-year programme of treatment, rehabilitation and aftercare, 69.2% remained drug-free during the programme period. Such figures are higher than those for male drug abusers. Meanwhile, the effectiveness of these treatment programmes is being further looked into through a three-year research study to review the objectives and outcomes of various drug treatment modalities in Hong Kong. The study will be completed by the end of 1998.

As for the voluntary drug treatment programmes run by non-subvented agencies, an evaluation study on the effectiveness of their services is now being conducted by an independent institute. The study will be completed by the end of this year.

End

Data on epileptic patients

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Following is a question by Dr the Hon Huang Chen-ya and a written reply by the Secretary for Health and Welfare, Mrs Katherine Fok, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Does the Government know of:

- (a) the total number of epileptic patients who attended the out-patient departments of public hospitals in the past year;
- (b) the total number of patients who underwent epileptic surgery in the past year;
- (c) the total number of epileptic patients discharged from public hospitals, as well as the number of these discharged patients who were in unstable condition after discharge and had frequent seizures, in the past year; and
- (d) the current estimated number of patients who need to undergo epileptic surgery?

Reply:

- (a) As the Hospital Authority's (HA's) present automated recording system categorises out-patients according to specialties, and not diseases, the HA does not have readily available information on the number of epileptic patients attending the out-patient departments of public hospitals in the past year.
- (b) In 1996/97, 43 patients received surgical treatment for epilepsy in HA's hospitals.
- (c) During the period July 1995 to June 1996, which is the latest information available for a full year, 3803 patients were admitted into HA's hospitals for treatment of epilepsy. Out of these 3803 patients, 237 had four or more episodes of hospitalization during this period.
- (d) Epileptic surgery was only recently introduced as a pilot scheme to deal with poorly controlled epilepsy patients potentially amenable to surgical therapy. The number of patients who need to undergo epileptic surgery will be assessed based on the outcome of the current pilot programme, which is still under evaluation.

End

Zero increase for postage rate proposed

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Following is a question by the Hon Anthony Cheung Bing-leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Economic Services, Mr Stephen Ip, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

The issue of special stamps by the Post Office has resulted in a substantial increase in the revenue of the Post Office. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the total number of special stamp sets issued by the Post Office over the past three years, together with the quantity of each set issued and the net revenue generated from the sale of each set;
- (b) whether the Post Office will consider reducing the rate of postage increase in future or not increasing the postage this year; and
- (c) how the Government ensures that the extra revenue from the sale of special stamps will be put to effective use so as to enhance the cost-effectiveness of the Post Office Trading Fund?

Reply:

Mr President,

The Post Office has issued five sets of commemorative stamps each year from 1994 to 1996 and one set of commemorative stamps in 1997 to date. The Post Office has also issued several sheetlets each year. It issued more sheetlets in 1996-97, mostly related to the HONG KONG '97 Stamp Exhibition. Details of the quantity of commemorative stamps and sheetlets sold and the total revenue generated (including handling charges etc.) are at Annex. The Post Office does not keep separate records of the sale of commemorative stamps after the first day of issue.

The recent surge in demand for philatelic products from the Post Office has generated additional revenue for the Post Office Trading Fund. After taking this factor into account together with the financial position of this trading fund and its projected revenue in the next few years, the Post Office proposes not to revise postage rates this year. It is, however, considering ways to improve the local postage rate structure.

The Post Office is considering options on how to make the best use of its operating surplus to enhance the cost-effectiveness of postal services to the public.

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## First Day Sales of Commemorative Stamps and Related Philatelic Products

Annex

<u>Commemorative Stamp Issue</u>	<u>Date of Issue</u>	<u>Souvenir Sheets Sold</u>	<u>Mint Stamps Sold</u>	<u>Total Revenue HK\$</u>	<u>Denomination of Mint Stamps</u>	<u>Related Philatelic Products</u>
<b>1994</b>						
Year of the Dog	27.01.94	936,000	3,955,000	21,800,000	\$1.00, \$1.90, \$2.40, \$5.00	
A Stamp is Born	18.02.94	1,108,000		8,000,000		\$5 Definitive Sheets
150th Anniversary of Police	04.05.94		7,879,000	22,000,000	\$1.00, \$1.20, \$1.90, \$2.00, \$2.40, \$5.00	
Traditional Chinese Festivals	08.06.94		4,375,000	11,300,000	\$1.00, \$1.90, \$2.40, \$5.00	
CCPA Pre-Congress Stamp Sheetlets	18.08.94	732,000		7,600,000		\$10 Definitive Sheets
Commonwealth Games	25.08.94		3,881,000	10,700,000	\$1.00, \$1.90, \$2.40, \$5.00	
Hong Kong Corals	17.11.94	872,000	4,069,000	19,900,000	\$1.00, \$1.90, \$2.40, \$5.00	
<b>1995</b>						
Year of the Pig	17.01.95	916,000	4,439,000	23,300,000	\$1.00, \$1.90, \$2.40, \$5.00	
Hong Kong International Sporting Events	22.03.95		4,046,000	11,000,000	\$1.00, \$1.90, \$2.40, \$5.00	
Hong Kong Rural Heritage	24.05.95		4,968,000	13,300,000	\$1.00, \$1.90, \$2.40, \$5.00	
Royal Hong Kong Regiment	10.08.95		4,085,000	11,600,000	\$1.20, \$2.10, \$2.60, \$5.00	
Singapore '95 \$10 Definitive Stamp Sheetlets	01.09.95	545,000		5,700,000		\$10 Definitive Sheets
Classics No. 6 \$10 Definitive Stamp Sheetlets	09.10.95	621,000		6,500,000		\$10 Definitive Sheets
Hong Kong Movie Stars	15.11.95		6,071,000	17,200,000	\$1.20, \$2.10, \$2.60, \$5.00	

## First Day Sales of Commemorative Stamps and Related Philatelic Products

End

<u>Commemorative Stamp Issue</u>	<u>Date of Issue</u>	<u>Souvenir Sheets Sold</u>	<u>Mint Stamps Sold</u>	<u>Total Revenue HK\$</u>	<u>Denomination of Mint Stamps</u>	<u>Related Philatelic Products</u>
<b>1996</b>						
Year of the Rat	31.01.96	898,000	5,587,000	28,100,000	\$1.20, \$2.10, \$2.60, \$5.00	
Hong Kong '97 \$10 Definitive Stamp Sheetlets No. 1	23.02.96	810,000		8,500,000		\$10 Definitive Sheets
1996 Olympic Games	20.03.96	929,000	4,820,000	26,100,000	\$1.20, \$2.10, \$2.60, \$5.00	
Hong Kong '97 \$10 Definitive Stamp Sheetlets No. 2	18.05.96	1,446,000		15,000,000		\$10 Definitive Sheets
Archaeological Finds of Hong Kong	26.06.96		4,938,000	14,400,000	\$1.20, \$2.10, \$2.60, \$5.00	
Opening of 1996 Summer Olympic Games	19.07.96	1,197,000	4,407,000	25,800,000	\$1.20, \$2.10, \$2.60, \$5.00	
Hong Kong Mountains	24.09.96		6,150,000	18,500,000	\$1.30, \$2.50, \$3.10, \$5.00	
Hong Kong '97 \$10 Definitive Stamp Sheetlets No. 3	16.10.96	1,828,000		18,900,000		\$10 Definitive Sheets
Olympic Games \$10 Definitive Stamp Sheetlets No. 11	29.10.96	2,702,000		28,400,000		\$10 Definitive Sheets
Hong Kong Urban Heritage	20.11.96		9,786,000	30,600,000	\$1.30, \$2.50, \$3.10, \$5.00	
Serving the Community	04.12.96	3,358,000		19,400,000		\$5 Definitive Sheets
<b>1997 (January-March)</b>						
Hong Kong 1997 New Definitive Stamps	26.01.97	2,874,000 - Low Value 1,362,000 - High Value		228,800,000	10 ¢, 20 ¢, 50 ¢, \$1.00, \$1.20, \$1.30, \$1.40, \$1.80, \$2.00, \$2.10, \$2.50, \$3.10, \$5.00, \$10.00, \$20.00, \$50.00	High and Low Value Souvenir Sheets
Hong Kong '97 \$10 Definitive Stamp Sheetlets No. 4	12.02.97	3,861,000		40,200,000		\$10 Definitive Sheets
Classics No. 7, 8 & 9 Definitive Stamp Sheetlets	14.02.97	3,315,000		168,300,000	\$45.00 set of three sheets	Definitive Sheets
Hong Kong '97 \$10 Definitive Stamp Sheetlets No. 5	16.02.97	4,161,000		43,300,000		\$10 Definitive Sheets
Year of the Ox	27.02.97	7,975,000	19,729,000	185,300,000	\$1.30, \$2.50, \$3.10, \$5.00	

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Figures on unemployment due to dismissal or redundancy

\* \* \* \* \*

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

Question:

The information provided by the Government indicates that since 1995, the main reasons for unemployment among those who had worked before were due to dismissal or redundancy. Amongst those people who became unemployed in the third quarter of last year, 59.4% were dismissed or made redundant, which was much higher than the figure of 30.7% in the same period in 1991. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council of the following:

- (a) whether it has collected any information relating to items (i) to (iv) below; if so, please provide the following information in the past three years:
    - (i) the breakdown of the number of unemployed persons who were dismissed or made redundant by "sex and previous employment by trade classification", "age and previous employment by trade classification", "sex and previous occupation" and "age and previous occupation";
    - (ii) the numbers of persons, amongst the unemployed who were dismissed or made redundant, who had taken part in courses under the Employees Retraining Scheme or received Comprehensive Social Security Assistance payments respectively;
    - (iii) the numbers of persons, amongst the unemployed who were dismissed or made redundant, who were engaged in the same trade for less than one year, one to less than four years, four to less than six years, and six years and above respectively;
- the policies put in place by the Government to assist unemployed persons who were dismissed or made redundant to obtain re-employment, and the number of such persons who have been re-employed;

if not, what the reasons are; and whether the Government will consider collecting such information and publishing it on a regular basis; and

- (b) whether it will consider requiring employers to inform the Labour Department when employees are dismissed or made redundant, so that the Labour Department can assist the displaced employees in obtaining re-employment; if not, why not?

Reply:

Mr President,

- (a)(i) The different breakdown of the number of unemployed persons who became unemployed because of dismissal or lay-off for the past three years are set out in Tables 1-4 at Annex:

- Unemployed persons with the mode of leaving last job being 'dismissed or laid off', by previous industry (detailed group) and sex (Table 1);
- Unemployed persons with the mode of leaving last job being dismissed or laid off, by previous industry (detailed group) and age (Table 2);
- Unemployed persons with the mode of leaving last job being dismissed or laid off, by previous occupation and sex (Table 3); and
- Unemployed persons with the mode of leaving last job being dismissed or laid off, by previous occupation and age (Table 4).

- (a)(ii) In the past three years (i.e. 94/95, 95/96 and 96/97), a total of 65,110 persons had participated in the various full-time retraining courses offered by the Employees Retraining Board. Those retrainees who were unemployed were accorded priority in enrolment for retraining courses.

The Employees Retraining Board (ERB) keeps no separate statistics on the number of retrainees who became unemployed as a result of retrenchment or lay-off, as these retrainees were eligible to apply for retraining courses on the same basis and enjoy the same priority as with any other unemployed persons. The ERB will consider whether it is useful to collect and publish these statistics on a regular basis.

We do not keep statistics on the number of unemployed persons who had been dismissed or laid off, and who are receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA). This is because the CSSA Scheme seeks to provide assistance to financially vulnerable members of our community to meet their basic needs, regardless of sex, age, family status and background.

(a)(iii) A breakdown of the unemployed who were dismissed or laid off by length of service is not available. This is because respondents to Government's household survey usually have difficulty recalling the number of years he/she has worked in the same industry. As such, collecting the required information will impose an undue additional burden on respondents. The accuracy of the data collected may also be doubtful. For these reasons, the Government has no plan to collect such data.

(a)(iv) In tackling the unemployment problem, the Government's objective is to help all unemployed workers including those who were dismissed or laid off to re-enter the labour market mainly through the provision of employment services and appropriate training in the skills required of the labour market.

Since April 1995, the Labour Department has been providing unemployed persons with personalised employment service through the Job Matching Programme (JMP). Unemployed job-seekers joining this programme are provided with in-depth counselling, guidance and active job-matching service. Where appropriate, the Department will also refer unemployed job-seekers to tailor-made retraining programmes provided by the ERB. Since its inception in April 1995 to 31 March 1997, the JMP has registered 15,048 unemployed job-seekers and secured 11,427 job offers for them, representing a success rate of over 70%.

The ERB provides suitable retraining courses for unemployed and displaced workers so as to facilitate them to re-enter the job market. Many training bodies also provide placement service for those trainees who wish to seek employment upon completion of training. Since its inception in late 1992, ERB has provided a total of 174,553 retraining places for over 90,000 persons through its 58 training bodies at 133 training centres. The ERB estimates that around 70% of those who completed full-time retraining programmes could subsequently obtain employment.

We are also providing a comprehensive system of technical education and vocational training through the Vocational Training Council (VTC), Clothing Industry Training Authority and the Construction Industry Training Authority. The training courses so provided aim at enabling both the unemployed and employed persons to acquire new skills to enter the labour market or to upgrade their skills in order to avoid being displaced in the labour market.

During the past three years, the VTC had provided training for 94,000 full-time and 90,700 part-time students. As an active provider of ERB courses, the Clothing Industry Training Authority has provided training to about 2,300 unemployed/displaced workers during the same period. Meanwhile, the Construction Industry Training Authority has been providing a range of full-time short courses which are specially designed for workers who have been displaced as a result of economic restructuring. Some 2,920 workers were trained in these courses in the past three years.

- (b) We do not consider it appropriate nor necessary to make it compulsory for employers to inform the Labour Department when employees are dismissed or laid off for the sake of providing employment service for the affected workers, for the following reasons:
  - (i) The Labour Department has in place a set of administrative measures to gather information about potential large-scale dismissals or retrenchments. These measures, which include maintaining close contacts with trade unions and employers concerned, have proved to be very effective in enabling the Department to offer timely employment services to affected workers.
  - (ii) The Labour Department's Outreaching Placement Service (OPS) responds speedily to any major retrenchments by providing on-the-spot registration and immediate/priority job-matching and other employment-related services to retrenched workers. Since its inception on June 1995, the Department has provided this service for 12,926 workers in 118 retrenchment exercises.

- (iii) Making it a mandatory requirement for employers to notify the Labour Department of their retrenchment plans will unnecessarily compel them to disclose their commercial decisions. Moreover, employers may wish to make alternative employment arrangements for the affected workers themselves, whilst the employees may wish to seek re-employment through other avenues.
- (iv) It would impose an undue burden on small employers employing less than 20 persons who constitute 94% of the employers in Hong Kong.
- (v) The Labour Department has been making continual efforts in publicising its employment services for unemployed job-seekers. Through its liaison work, it has also been encouraging employers to inform the Department of any major dismissal.

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**Table 1 Unemployed persons with the mode of leaving last job being dismissed or laid off by previous industry (detailed group) and sex**

表一 按以前從事的行業(詳細組別)及性別劃分的遭解僱或遣散的失業人數

Previous industry (Detailed group) 以前從事的行業(詳細組別)	1994 Sex 性別			1995 Sex 性別			1996 Sex 性別		
	Male 男	Female 女	Total 總計	Male 男	Female 女	Total 總計	Male 男	Female 女	Total 總計
<b>Manufacturing</b> 製造業	<b>5 600</b>	<b>3 100</b>	<b>8 700</b>	<b>10 100</b>	<b>6 700</b>	<b>16 700</b>	<b>9 500</b>	<b>4 700</b>	<b>14 100</b>
Food and beverage 食品及飲品製造業	300	100	300	100	*	100	200	100	300
Clothing and footwear 服裝及鞋類製品業	2 800	2 100	4 900	4 700	4 300	9 000	3 900	2 700	6 600
Paper and printing 紙品製造及印刷業	300	*	300	1 100	300	1 400	1 300	100	1 400
Other manufacturing industries 其他產品製造業	2 200	900	3 100	4 200	2 100	6 200	4 100	1 800	5 900
<b>Construction</b> 建造業	<b>4 600</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>4 700</b>	<b>11 100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>11 200</b>	<b>9 200</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>9 300</b>
Foundation and superstructure 地基及上蓋工程	2 800	100	2 800	5 600	100	5 700	5 400	100	5 500
Decoration and maintenance 裝修及保養工程	1 800	*	1 900	5 600	0	5 600	3 800	*	3 800

Table 1 (Cont'd.) Unemployed persons with the mode of leaving last job being dismissed or laid off by previous industry (detailed group) and sex

表一 (續) 按以前從事的行業(詳細組別)及性別劃分的遭解僱或遣散的失業人數

Previous industry (Detailed group) 以前從事的行業(詳細組別)	1994 Sex 性別			1995 Sex 性別			1996 Sex 性別		
	Male 男	Female 女	Total 總計	Male 男	Female 女	Total 總計	Male 男	Female 女	Total 總計
Wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels 批發、零售、進出口貿易、飲食及酒店業	3 300	1 800	5 100	6 900	4 000	10 800	8 900	4 100	13 000
Wholesale/retail 批發/零售業	900	800	1 700	1 800	1 400	3 200	3 000	1 900	4 900
Import/export trades 進出口貿易業	800	400	1 200	700	900	1 600	1 500	1 000	2 500
Restaurants/hotels 飲食/酒店業	1 600	600	2 200	4 400	1 600	6 000	4 400	1 200	5 600
Transport, storage and communication 運輸、倉庫及通訊業	1 600	200	1 900	3 300	300	3 600	4 400	400	4 800
Transport 運輸業	1 400	200	1 600	3 100	200	3 300	4 100	300	4 400
Storage 倉庫業	100	0	100	100	0	100	100	*	200
Communication 通訊業	100	*	100	100	100	200	200	100	200

Table 1 (Cont'd.) Unemployed persons with the mode of leaving last job being dismissed or laid off by previous industry (detailed group) and sex

表一 (續) 按以前從事的行業(詳細組別)及性別劃分的遭解僱或遣散的失業人數

Previous industry (Detailed group) 以前從事的行業(詳細組別)	1994 Sex 性別			1995 Sex 性別			1996 Sex 性別		
	Male 男	Female 女	Total 總計	Male 男	Female 女	Total 總計	Male 男	Female 女	Total 總計
Financing, insurance, real estate and business services 金融、保險、地產及商用服務業	300	200	600	1 000	400	1 400	1 600	500	2 200
Financing 金融業	100	100	100	200	100	300	400	200	600
Insurance 保險業	*	0	*	100	0	100	*	*	*
Real estate and business services 地產及商用服務業	200	100	400	700	300	1 000	1 200	300	1 500
Community, social and personal services 社區、社會及個人服務業	1 000	300	1 200	2 000	1 200	3 200	2 200	1 000	3 200
Public administration 公共行政	*	0	*	200	100	300	300	100	300
Education, medical and other health and welfare services 教育、醫療、其他保健及福利服務業	100	*	100	200	400	600	300	500	800
Other services 其他服務行業	800	200	1 100	1 500	700	2 200	1 600	500	2 100
Others 其他	200	0	200	100	0	100	*	*	*
Total 總計	16 600	5 700	22 300	34 500	12 700	47 200	35 700	10 900	46 700

Notes : \* Less than 50.

\* 少於50。

Owing to rounding, there may be a slight discrepancy between the sum of individual items and the total as shown in the table.

由於進位關係，統計表內個別項目的數字加起來可能與總數略有出入。

Since all estimates in the table are subject to sampling error, a zero figure may mean a non-zero figure of a small magnitude.

由於統計表內的估計有抽樣誤差，寫作零的數字，可能是一個小數值的數字，而並非是零。

Table 2 Unemployed persons with the mode of leaving last job being dismissed or laid off by previous industry (detailed group) and age

表二 按以前從事的行業(詳細組別)及年齡劃分的遭解僱或遣散的失業人數

Previous industry (Detailed group) 以前從事的行業(詳細組別)	1994 Age group 年齡組別				1995 Age group 年齡組別				1996 Age group 年齡組別			
	15 - 29	30 - 49	≥ 50	Total 總計	15 - 29	30 - 49	≥ 50	Total 總計	15 - 29	30 - 49	≥ 50	Total 總計
<b>Manufacturing</b> 製造業	1 300	5 200	2 200	8 700	2 600	10 700	3 500	16 700	2 700	8 700	2 800	14 100
Food and beverage 食品及飲品製造業	100	100	100	300	0	100	0	100	100	100	100	300
Clothing and footwear 服裝及鞋類製品業	600	3 000	1 400	4 900	1 000	6 200	1 700	9 000	700	4 300	1 600	6 600
Paper and printing 紙品製造及印刷業	100	100	200	300	400	800	200	1 400	600	600	100	1 400
Other manufacturing industries 其他產品製造業	400	2 100	600	3 100	1 200	3 600	1 500	6 200	1 200	3 600	1 000	5 900
<b>Construction</b> 建造業	1 300	2 100	1 300	4 700	2 200	6 500	2 600	11 200	2 400	4 700	2 200	9 300
Foundation and superstructure 地基及上蓋工程	800	1 300	800	2 800	600	3 600	1 400	5 700	1 500	2 600	1 500	5 500
Decoration and maintenance 裝修及保養工程	600	800	500	1 900	1 500	2 900	1 200	5 600	900	2 200	700	3 800

Table 2 (Cont'd.) Unemployed persons with the mode of leaving last job being dismissed or laid off by previous industry (detailed group) and age

表二 (續) 按以前從事的行業(詳細組別)及年齡劃分的遭解僱或遣散的失業人數

Previous industry (Detailed group) 以前從事的行業(詳細組別)	1994 Age group 年齡組別				1995 Age group 年齡組別				1996 Age group 年齡組別			
	15 - 29	30 - 49	≥ 50	Total 總計	15 - 29	30 - 49	≥ 50	Total 總計	15 - 29	30 - 49	≥ 50	Total 總計
Wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels 批發、零售、進出口貿易、飲食及酒店業	1 800	2 700	600	5 100	3 100	5 700	2 000	10 800	4 900	6 400	1 800	13 000
Wholesale/retail 批發/零售業	800	800	200	1 700	1 000	1 600	600	3 200	2 200	2 100	500	4 900
Import/export trades 進出口貿易業	400	700	100	1 200	700	700	200	1 600	1 100	1 200	200	2 500
Restaurants/hotels 飲食/酒店業	600	1 200	300	2 200	1 300	3 400	1 300	6 000	1 500	3 100	1 000	5 600
Transport, storage and communication 運輸、倉庫及通訊業	800	800	300	1 900	1 300	1 900	500	3 600	1 800	2 200	700	4 800
Transport 運輸業	700	700	200	1 600	1 100	1 700	500	3 300	1 600	2 100	700	4 400
Storage 倉庫業	*	0	100	100	*	*	*	100	100	100	*	200
Communication 通訊業	100	100	0	100	100	100	0	200	200	100	0	200

Table 2 (Cont'd.) Unemployed persons with the mode of leaving last job being dismissed or laid off by previous industry (detailed group) and age

表二 (續) 按以前從事的行業(詳細組別)及年齡劃分的遭解僱或遣散的失業人數

Previous industry (Detailed group) 以前從事的行業(詳細組別)	1994 Age group 年齡組別				1995 Age group 年齡組別				1996 Age group 年齡組別			
	15 - 29	30 - 49	≥ 50	Total 總計	15 - 29	30 - 49	≥ 50	Total 總計	15 - 29	30 - 49	≥ 50	Total 總計
	Financing, insurance, real estate and business services 金融、保險、地產及商用服務業	200	300	100	600	700	500	300	1 400	800	1 100	300
Financing 金融業	100	0	0	100	200	100	0	300	200	400	*	600
Insurance 保險業	0	*	0	*	100	*	0	100	*	0	0	*
Real estate and business services 地產及商用服務業	100	200	100	400	400	400	300	1 000	600	700	200	1 500
Community, social and personal services 社區、社會及個人服務業	400	400	400	1 200	1 300	1 500	300	3 200	1 200	1 500	500	3 200
Public administration 公共行政	0	0	*	*	100	200	*	300	100	200	100	300
Education, medical and other health and welfare services 教育、醫療、其他保健及福利服務業	100	0	*	100	300	300	100	600	200	400	100	800
Other services 其他服務行業	400	400	300	1 100	1 000	1 100	200	2 200	900	900	300	2 100
Others 其他	0	200	*	200	0	100	100	100	0	0	*	*
Total 總計	5 900	11 600	4 900	22 300	11 100	26 800	9 200	47 200	13 700	24 600	8 400	46 700

Notes: \* Less than 50.

\* 少於50。

Owing to rounding, there may be a slight discrepancy between the sum of individual items and the total as shown in the table.  
由於進位關係，統計表內個別項目的數字加起來可能與總數略有出入。

Since all estimates in the table are subject to sampling error, a zero figure may mean a non-zero figure of a small magnitude.  
由於統計表內的估值有抽樣誤差，寫作零的數字，可能是一個小數值的數字，而並非是零。

**Table 3 Unemployed persons with the mode of leaving last job being dismissed or laid off by previous occupation and sex**

**表三 按以前從事的職業及性別劃分的遭解僱或遣散的失業人數**

Previous occupation 以前從事的職業	1994			1995			1996		
	Sex 性別			Sex 性別			Sex 性別		
	Male 男	Female 女	Total 總計	Male 男	Female 女	Total 總計	Male 男	Female 女	Total 總計
Managers and administrators, professionals, and associate professionals 經理及行政級人員、 專業人員、及輔助專業人員	1 500	300	1 800	3 700	900	4 600	4 700	700	5 400
Clerks 文員	700	1 200	1 900	1 500	2 800	4 400	1 800	3 100	4 900
Service workers and shop sales workers 服務工作及商店銷售人員	1 800	900	2 700	4 900	2 000	6 800	5 800	2 500	8 300
Craft and related workers 工藝及有關人員	5 500	200	5 700	12 900	500	13 400	11 200	400	11 500
Plant and machine operators and assemblers 機台及機器操作員及裝配員	3 200	2 500	5 700	4 200	4 000	8 200	5 000	3 000	8 000
Elementary occupations 非技術工人	3 800	700	4 500	7 300	2 400	9 700	7 100	1 300	8 500
Others 其他	*	0	*	100	0	100	*	*	*
Total 總計	16 600	5 700	22 300	34 500	12 700	47 200	35 700	10 900	46 700

Notes : \* Less than 50.

\* 少於50。

Owing to rounding, there may be a slight discrepancy between the sum of individual items and the total as shown in the table.

由於進位關係，統計表內個別項目的數字加起來可能與總數略有出入。

Since all estimates in the table are subject to sampling error, a zero figure may mean a non-zero figure of a small magnitude.

由於統計表內的估值有抽樣誤差，寫作零的數字，可能是一個小數值的數字，而並非是零。

Table 4 Unemployed persons with the mode of leaving last job being dismissed or laid off by previous occupation and age  
 表四 按以前從事的職業及年齡劃分的遭解僱或遣散的失業人數

Previous occupation 以前從事的職業	1994				1995				1996			
	Age group 年齡組別			Total 總計	Age group 年齡組別			Total 總計	Age group 年齡組別			Total 總計
	15 - 29	30 - 49	≥ 50		15 - 29	30 - 49	≥ 50		15 - 29	30 - 49	≥ 50	
Managers and administrators, professionals, and associate professionals 經理及行政級人員、 專業人員、及輔助專業人員	500	1 100	200	1 800	1 200	2 600	800	4 600	1 400	3 400	700	5 400
Clerks 文員	900	900	100	1 900	2 300	1 600	500	4 400	2 800	1 600	500	4 900
Service workers and shop sales workers 服務工作及商店銷售人員	1 200	1 100	400	2 700	2 000	3 700	1 100	6 800	3 200	4 000	1 100	8 300
Craft and related workers 工藝及有關人員	1 500	2 600	1 600	5 700	2 900	7 500	3 000	13 400	2 900	6 300	2 300	11 500
Plant and machine operators and assemblers 機台及機器操作員及裝配員	1 000	3 700	1 000	5 700	1 200	5 700	1 400	8 200	1 600	5 000	1 400	8 000
Elementary occupations 非技術工人	800	2 100	1 500	4 500	1 500	5 700	2 400	9 700	1 800	4 300	2 300	8 500
Others 其他	0	*	0	*	0	0	100	100	0	0	*	*
Total 總計	5 900	11 600	4 900	22 300	11 100	26 800	9 200	47 200	13 700	24 600	8 400	46 700

Notes: \* Less than 50.

• 少於50。

Owing to rounding, there may be a slight discrepancy between the sum of individual items and the total as shown in the table.  
 由於進位關係，統計表內個別項目的數字加起來可能與總數略有出入。

Since all estimates in the table are subject to sampling error, a zero figure may mean a non-zero figure of a small magnitude.  
 由於統計表內的估值有抽樣誤差，寫作零的數字，可能是一個小數值的數字，而並非是零。

Improvement measure for safe transport of vehicles

\* \* \* \* \*

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

Question:

On 24 February this year, an explosion occurred in a container truck which was carrying motorcycles at the time, and it is learnt that there is at present no legislation prohibiting container trucks carrying motorcycles. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the controls which the Fire Services Department, the Transport Department and the Marine Department have under the existing legislation in regard to the carrying of dangerous goods by container trucks, and the details of such controls; and
- (b) whether, in the wake of the above accident, these departments will consider amending the existing legislation concerned, so as to bring in new control measures to prevent the occurrence of similar accidents; if so, of the expected implementation date of these new measures?

Reply:

- (a) The Dangerous Goods (General) Regulations, Cap. 295, provides control on the conveyance of Cat.2 (compressed gas except LPG) and Cat.5 (substances giving off inflammable vapour) dangerous goods. No person shall use any mechanically propelled vehicle for the conveyance by road of these goods in containers unless the use of such vehicle has been approved by the Director of Fire Services. The Director of Fire Services also needs to be satisfied that these dangerous goods are carried in a tank wagon of an approved size, type and construction, and is equipped for the carriage, loading and discharge of such goods.

Under the Road Traffic (Traffic Control) Regulations, Cap. 374, Transport Department has published the Code of Practice for the Loading of Vehicles which deals with the safe loading/mounting of goods on vehicles. The Code of Practice has a reminder on the need to seek the Director of Fire Services' approval on the transport of dangerous goods.

Marine Department do not have control on transportation by container trucks on land.

- (b) Following the accident, Fire Services Department, Transport Department and Marine Department held discussions to examine possible improvement measure to handle similar problems in future. Transport Department would formulate and add advisory guidelines in the Code of Practice for the safe transport of vehicles. It will advise that the fuel tanks of all vehicles and motor cycles must be drained before they are packed and carried by vehicles. They would also issue, in two months' time, a summary pamphlet on Safe Loading of Vehicles with an advisory paragraph on safe transport of vehicles. Fire Services Department will also arrange meetings with people involved in the trade to ensure that they are well aware of the fire safety precautions that should be taken.

End

#### Bank loans

\* \* \* \* \*

Following is a question by the Hon Huang Chen-ya, and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services, Mr Rafael Hui, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council of the average and largest percentages, in terms of number and amount, of the following categories of loans out of all loans granted by the banks in the territory, as well as the standard deviation of percentages, in each quarter of the past year:

- (a) personal property mortgage loans;
- (b) company residential property mortgage loans;
- (c) commercial property mortgage loans;
- (d) borrowings by property developers; and
- (e) other property related loans?

Reply:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) collects information from authorized institutions under the Banking Ordinance about loans and advances in terms of total amount outstanding on a quarterly basis. Statistics related to individual transactions are not kept by the HKMA. The relevant information in respect of property-related lending by authorized institutions in 1996 is set out in the attached table.

**Property-related lending in Hong Kong by authorized institutions in 1996**  
(in HK\$ million)

As at end of	Personal property mortgage loans (Note 1)	Company residential property mortgage loans (Note 2)	Commercial property mortgage loans (Note 3)	Borrowings by property developers (Note 4)	Other property-related loans (Note 5)	Total loans and advances for use in Hong Kong
1st Quarter	362,893	56,341	77,076	94,760	34,871	1,445,529
% of total loans	(25.1%)	(3.9%)	(5.33%)	(6.56%)	(2.41%)	
2nd Quarter	382,085	62,631	80,332	97,711	36,086	1,518,367
% of total loans	(25.16%)	(4.12%)	(5.29%)	(6.44%)	(2.38%)	
3rd Quarter	396,535	69,381	82,273	100,802	38,125	1,559,551
% of total loans	(25.43%)	(4.45%)	(5.28%)	(6.46%)	(2.44%)	
4th Quarter	420,748	78,030	87,134	106,074	42,998	1,635,337
% of total loans	(25.73%)	(4.77%)	(5.33%)	(6.49%)	(2.63%)	
Highest percentage	25.73%	4.77%	5.33%	6.56%	2.63%	
Average percentage	25.36%	4.31%	5.31%	6.49%	2.47%	-
Standard Deviation	0.25%	0.33%	0.02%	0.04%	0.10%	-

Notes:

(1) Personal property mortgage loans refer to residential mortgage loans to private individuals and include those for the purchase of flats in Home Ownership Scheme and Private Sector Participation Scheme.

(2) Company residential property mortgage loans refer to loans to companies to finance investment in residential properties.

(3) Commercial property mortgage loans refer to loans to companies to finance investment in commercial properties. Loans to finance the acquisition of properties for a borrower's own use are not included under this category and are classified separately according to the principal activities of that borrower.

(4) Borrowings by property developers refer to loans to finance property development for various types of activities, including those for building and construction.

(5) Other property-related loans refer to loans to finance investment in industrial properties and other cases where a loan cannot be readily classified by type of properties, e.g. where a loan is extended to a property developer not specifically tied to a particular project or where the borrower is involved in more than one sector.

End

Urban renewal in progress

\* \* \* \* \*

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

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) on the progress in the implementation of the proposals set out in the policy statement on "Urban Renewal in Hong Kong";
- (b) whether an agreement has been reached with the Land Development Corporation (LDC) to the effect that the LDC in future may, without having to seek approval from the Executive Council, invoke the Crown Lands Resumption Ordinance to resume land required for urban renewal projects; and
- (c) when an agreement can be reached with the LDC regarding the setting up of an Urban Renewal Authority?

Reply:

Mr President,

- (a) Good progress has been made in implementing the proposals set out in the policy statement on "Urban Renewal in Hong Kong". We have already set up dedicated urban renewal teams in the Planning, Environment and Lands Branch and Planning Department and proposed a Building Safety Inspection Scheme to ensure proper building maintenance. We will be granting land at reduced premium to the Hong Kong Housing Society for the construction of rehousing units for the Land Development Corporation (LDC). We are finalizing arrangements for introducing the linked site approach by which a profitable site is granted to cross-subsidize a financially non-viable redevelopment project. An inter-departmental working group has also been set up to study and to make recommendations on the establishment of an Urban Renewal Authority (URA) and the creation of a rehabilitation fund to assist owners of domestic units to renovate or upgrade their buildings.

- (b) There is no such agreement. It has always been our intention that approval for land resumption will rest with the Executive Council.
- (c) As mentioned in (a), an inter-departmental working group is studying the proposal to set up a URA. The subject is highly complex and it will take the working group probably another six months to examine the various issues in detail.

End

"Theft by finding" may be liable to imprisonment

\* \* \* \* \*

Following are a question by the Hon Law Cheung-kwok and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr Peter Lai, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council of:

- (a) the number of reported cases of loss of wallets, and the number of such cases in which the lost wallets were recovered, in each of the past three years;
- (b) the number of persons convicted of "theft by finding", as well as the average penalty imposed on these offenders, in each of the past three years; and
- (c) the measures taken by the Government to publicise the message that "theft by finding" is an offence under the law?

Reply:

Mr President,

- (a) The Police keep statistics on cases according to the nature of offences. They do not keep separate statistics on the number of reported cases of loss of wallets, which is not an offence.

- (c) Instead of publicising the sole message that "theft by finding" is an offence under the law, the Administration have incorporated this in the overall context of publicising the values of "honesty and integrity" by -
- i) distributing booklets and teaching kits on responsible citizenship as part of the civic education programme;
  - ii) establishing honesty, principled morality and common good as the core values of the Guidelines on Civic Education in Schools;
  - iii) incorporating the values of honesty and integrity into the subjects of Chinese Language, General Studies and Religious Education from primary to senior secondary levels; and
  - iv) stressing the importance of law abiding behaviours and the consequences of committing criminal offences in the Police's anti-crime publicity.

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**Number of Persons Convicted  
for "Theft by Finding" and the Penalties Imposed**

<b>Penalties</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>
<b>Immediate Imprisonment</b>			
Less than 3 months	30	66	42
3 months - less than 6 months	24	32	9
6 months - less than 9 months	6	12	4
9 months - less than 1 year	3	3	1
1 year - less than 3 years	6	2	2
Sub-total	69	115	58
<b>Fine</b>			
Less than \$1,000	76	66	41
\$1,000 - less than \$4,000	103	77	57
\$4,000 - less than \$7,000	6	6	7
\$7,000 - less than \$10,000	1	0	0
Sub-total	186	149	105
<b>Training Centre</b>	2	0	1
<b>Detention Centre</b>	1	2	0
<b>Drug Addiction Treatment Centre</b>	14	15	14
<b>Probation Order</b>	11	12	6
<b>Community Service Order</b>	1	1	4
<b>Detention Order</b>	0	1	0
<b>Suspended Imprisonment</b>	31	18	16
<b>Bound Over/Conditional Discharge</b>	19	10	4
<b>Caution/Absolute Discharge</b>	5	3	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>208</b>

End

Assessment of medical manpower

\* \* \* \* \*

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

Question:

It is learnt that the Hospital Authority's budget for 1997/98 includes a provision for providing additional 669 beds in public hospitals. However, it is learnt that the President of the Public Doctors' Association has stated that the establishment of medical personnel in public hospitals should be increased by a further 10% to alleviate the chronic shortage of medical staff, instead of providing more hospital beds. In this connection, does the Government know whether the Hospital Authority:

- (a) has assessed the staffing level of medical personnel in each of the public hospitals before drawing up the budget; and
- (b) will allocate additional provision for the recruitment of more medical personnel?

Reply:

The provision of sufficient manpower including doctors, nurses and allied health professionals is crucial to the delivery of quality care services and the Hospital Authority (HA) has carefully assessed the staffing levels and requirements in each public hospital before drawing up its annual plan and allocating resources to different institutions.

The assessment includes a review of the current and projected workload, skill-mix between different professionals, advancement in medical developments, productivity improvements and changes in patients' requirements.

Whenever new beds are commissioned, a package of resources including manpower, drugs and other related provisions is provided to the hospital concerned. Accordingly, extra provision has been included in the 1997/98 Draft Estimates for the recruitment of additional medical personnel to cater for new beds.

End

Visit programmes arranged by the Government

\* \* \* \* \*

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Law Cheung-kwok and a written reply by the acting Secretary for Home Affairs, Mrs Stella Hung, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council -

- (a) of the number of overseas visitors who came to visit the territory in each of the past three years by arrangement of and under the sponsorship of the Hong Kong Government, together with a breakdown of these visitors by nationality;
- (b) of the policy objective and effectiveness of the above sponsored visits; and
- (c) whether the current policy objective of inviting politicians or other people from mainland China and Taiwan to visit the territory is the same as the policy objective mentioned in the answer to (b) above; if not, why not?

Reply:

Mr President,

- (a) The total number of overseas visitors to HK whose programmes were arranged and sponsored by the Hong Kong Government (mainly by the Government Information Services Department) over the past three years is as follows -

Type of visit	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97
1. Fully-sponsored <sup>1</sup>	83	96	138
2. Partially-sponsored <sup>2</sup>	31	53	47
3. Programme-only <sup>3</sup>	594	581	782

These visitors came from different parts of the world, as follows -

<b>Number of visitors</b>									
<b>Area</b>	<b>1994/95</b>			<b>1995/96</b>			<b>1996/97</b>		
	Full sponsorship	Partial sponsorship	Programme only	Full sponsorship	Partial sponsorship	Programme only	Full sponsorship	Partial sponsorship	Programme only
Continental Europe	31	1	66	24	2	136	45	3	227
United Kingdom	17	12	51	15	11	35	34	17	45
United States of America	4	3	363	5	33	213	4	0	391
Canada	1	11	26	2	0	54	4	0	4
People's Republic of China <sup>#</sup>	24	-	-	42	3	3	29	7	13
GATT/WTO	1	3	0	1	2	0	1	1	6
Japan	1	0	17	3	0	71	4	19	42
Australia/New Zealand	0	0	24	2	1	11	5	0	13
Other regions*	4	1	47	2	1	58	12	0	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>782</b>

Notes :

1. Fully-sponsored visits : Those for which the visitor has been invited to Hong Kong by the Government and for which all expenditure relating to airfares, hotel accommodation, meals and land transport is met by the Government.
2. Partially-sponsored visits : Those for which the VIP, visiting Hong Kong for his own purposes, has been invited to extend his visit by a few days in order to undertake a Government programme. Hotel accommodation, meals and land transport are paid for by the Government.
3. Programme-only visits : Those for which there is minimal Government expenditure. Government simply arranges a programme of visits and meetings for the visitor.

\* Other regions include Belarus, Brazil, Congo, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Indonesia, Israel, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russian Federation, Singapore, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam, APEC and the United Nations.

# Visitors from the Mainland were sponsored to come to Hong Kong under the following programmes -

- (i) the Sponsored Visitors' Programme organised by the Government Information Services Department;
- (ii) the high-level sponsored visits arranged by the Constitutional Affairs Branch; and
- (iii) the legal study visits organised by the Legal Department.

- (b) & (c) The policy objective of the various sponsored visit programmes arranged by the Hong Kong Government is to provide an opportunity for important overseas visitors to gain first-hand knowledge of Hong Kong including a better understanding of how the Hong Kong Government works.

The Sponsored Visitors' Programme organised by the Information Services Department enables visitors from all over the world to be informed of the opportunities that Hong Kong offers so that they can perceive Hong Kong in a proper and positive manner. Targeted visitors include politicians, parliamentarians, business people, journalists, academics, officials and other important opinion formers from countries with strong ties, particularly economic, with Hong Kong. This Programme was extended to include Mainland officials in June 1995 thereby providing an additional channel for communicating with our Mainland counterparts.

In addition, the Constitutional Affairs Branch organises some high-level sponsored visits on a reciprocal basis to allow very senior officials of Hong Kong and the Mainland to gain a better understanding of each other's administrative system. The Legal Department also arranges legal study visits with the Mainland on a reciprocal basis to enhance the mutual understanding of the two sides' legal systems.

These sponsored visit programmes have proved to be effective. While there is no precise science in monitoring whether the sponsored visits achieve the intended purposes, feedback obtained from various sources including our overseas offices and our officers who have met with the visitors indicates that many visitors use their newly-acquired knowledge of Hong Kong. They have helped to promote a better understanding between Hong Kong and the rest of the world including the Mainland.

Taiwan is not covered in the above sponsored visit programmes.

End