



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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HONG KONG. TEL.: 2842 8777

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Statement by the Governor

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Following is a statement by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, on the selection of the first Special Administrative Region Chief Executive today (Wednesday):

Along with my colleagues in the Hong Kong Government, I welcome the selection of Mr Tung Chee-hwa as the first Special Administrative Region Chief Executive.

The job of the first Chief Executive is enormously challenging and carries great responsibility. Mr Tung will be playing a central role in the establishment of the Special Administrative Region and the Special Administrative Region Government. He will be charting the course for Hong Kong as it enters a new era. And he will be at the helm of what is at once an economic powerhouse and a dynamic, sophisticated metropolis.

The community will be looking to the Chief Executive to provide strong leadership with vision, integrity and determination; to defend Hong Kong's interests and the autonomy guaranteed to it under the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law; and to preserve the cornerstone of Hong Kong's success - the rule of law, a level playing field for business, the protection of individual rights and freedoms in an open and accountable society, and a first class economic infrastructure.

I wish Mr Tung every success in his endeavour and I have congratulated him personally. The Government is committed to providing all necessary assistance to Mr Tung to help him in his preparations for assuming the office of Chief Executive on July 1, 1997. We stand ready to discuss with Mr Tung the level and type of assistance he may require.

End

Transcript of the Governor's media session

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The following is the transcript of the media session by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, after presiding at the Hong Kong Baptist University Commencement this (Wednesday) afternoon:

Governor: As you know I've put out a statement about the selection this morning of Mr C H Tung as the Chief Executive designate of the Government of the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong. I would like to send my warmest wishes to Mr Tung and Betty and his family. I've sent him a personal letter and I spoke to him on the telephone this afternoon to express my good wishes and to underline what I was saying on the radio last Sunday that the Government will look forward to co-operating with him. We are both, of course, agreed that I am responsible for the administration of Hong Kong until June 30, next year and after that he is responsible. And I will not during the course of next months seek to interfere in any way in matters which are properly his responsibility as the Chief Executive after the July 1 next year. We all know that he has a difficult and challenging job ahead of him, but in my judgement he will have the good wishes of the community, the hopes and aspirations of the community will go with him. And I am sure many people's prayers will be with him as well.

Governing Hong Kong is not a straight forward or easy job. I guess that only Mr C H Tung and I, over the next few years, will know just how tough it can be from time to time. But I am sure that he will do the job well, standing-up for Hong Kong's autonomy which is of course essential. I am sure the whole community will also hope that he will stand-up for Hong Kong's rule of law and stand-up as well for all those things which have made Hong Kong so successful over the last few years. When the Special Administrative Region Government comes into being, it will find that it is taking on responsibility for one of the most successful cities in the world. There are very strong foundations on which Mr Tung and his team will be able to build and I am sure that they will wish to do so. But today is a proud one for Mr Tung and it's a proud one for his family. And all of us, I think would want to congratulate him and congratulate his wife and congratulate his family on what is a very special day for them.

Question: So, when will you meet Mr Tung?

Governor: Well, I spoke to him on the telephone about that. We'll obviously meet once he's got the formalities of the next few days out of the way.

Question: So, do you think he is a credible Chief Executive?

Governor: He is the Chief Executive who's been chosen by the Selection Committee. He was a member of my Executive Council for four years. I had to work very hard in 1992 to persuade him to put a foot outside business and to join my Executive Council. And he was a hard working and committed member of my Executive Council.

Question: But he is a supporter of the Provisional Legislature.

Governor: That is an issue on which we disagree.

Question: What will be the concrete measures of co-operating with Mr Tung?

Governor: Well, I am quite often interest in - how many times I'm asked the same question. And you mustn't accuse me of being unreasonably if I give the same answer. I actually set out in some detail my thoughts on co-operating with the Chief Executive in the "Letter to Hong Kong" that I wrote last Sunday. You know perfectly well that it would be totally unreasonably of me to set out in public before I've met Mr Tung, exactly what we think should form our manual of co-operation. He will have his views about the support that he wants. We have of course got some ideas about personnel about office accommodation and so on. But I don't want to set out all that in public before I have a chance of discussing it with Mr Tung. I am sure everybody in the community will believe that's the right way to behave.

Question: But when can this assistance be given to Mr Tung?

Governor: As soon as we've had a chance of talking about what he wants. But I mean some assistance, I am sure, that we'll be helping to ensure that Mr Tung is able to move around speedily and safely.

Question: This morning outside the Convention Centre, do you think the Police have reacted.....?

Governor: I think that every one in this community knows that people have strong views about political issues, they are entitled to express those views within the law. But if they overstep the bounds of what the law says, then the Police have to act and I think that it's important that people do try to express their views in a way which is underwritten by the law which is acceptable in legal terms. I just like to add this : in the last few years, despite the enormous scale of the issue which Hong Kong has been facing and debating, Hong Kong has been a very peaceful and stable place. It's been a place in which political debate has been conducted in a pretty moderate way. We haven't had much in a way political violence, demonstrations have been carried out, I think remarkably peacefully. I hope that moderation, I hope that stability will continue in the future as they've continued in the past. Of course, Governments have a responsibility to try to work to ensure that there is a peaceful and stable and moderate political climate. The government has to contribute to that as well as those who feel passionately about political issues, contributing to it as well. But I want Hong Kong, if at all possible to go on having a reputation around the world for being a decent, moderate stable place.

Question: Mr Tung.....about the provisional legislature.....?

Governor: Mr Tung knows what the position is on the provisional legislature. The whole community knows what the position is on the provisional legislature. It's no point in you trying to manufacture new arguments out of that. There is an argument which exists. You know perfectly well we've set out our view on the provisional legislature, the British Government has set out its view on the provisional legislature, the American Government has made its position clear on the provisional legislature. Other governments around the world have made their positions clear on the provisional legislature. We are not going to change our mind, but I very much hope that where there are possibilities of disagreement we can minimise those disagreements rather than maximise them. It is inevitably a consequence of dealing with these sensitive issues at press conferences like this. Sometimes arguments get maximised. It is not in Hong Kong's interest that we try to make this disagreement more substantial than it is. But I can assure you that the Hong Kong Government and the British Government are not going to change their minds on this issue.

Question: About the preparation.....?

Governor: I hope not because Mr Tung knows what the position is just as every body else in the community knows what the position is. I think I am entitled to say this much to you. For four years and a bit, you've asked me questions at press conferences like this and I told you what the situation is, I have told you what I wanted to do and I have gone ahead and done it. I think I have established in four and a half years if nothing else that the Government does what we say we will do. We have made our position abundantly plain on the provisional legislature and it is not going to change. But let me add this, long before people were talking about the provisional legislature, there exists in the Joint Declaration Article 30 under which the Chinese Government are pledged to co-operate with the British Government which is the sovereign power in Hong Kong until the 30 of June 1997. I suggest that you ask some of these questions about co-operation to the Hong Kong Macau Affairs Office and the Xinhua News Agency. Thank you very much indeed and nice to talk to you again.

End

Transcript of remarks by the Chief Secretary

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The following is the transcript of a media session given by the Chief Secretary, Mrs Anson Chan, at the CGO this (Wednesday) afternoon :

Chief Secretary: I think today is a very important and very happy day for Hong Kong and speaking personally and on behalf of the entire civil service, I would like to extend our warmest congratulations to Mr C. H. Tung on his being elected as the SAR Government's first Chief Executive designate. I have known Mr Tung for many years now. He is a person of great ability and integrity. I believe that he will devote his entire resources and his energy to Hong Kong, and that he will do his very best for the community here. On our part, my colleagues and I very much hope that after July 1997, we will be able to work together with him for the interest of Hong Kong. Before this period, as the Governor has already said, we will of course be giving every possible help to Mr Tung in order that he can prepare for the assumption of his office.

End

Transcript of remarks by the Financial Secretary

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Following is a transcript of the remarks made by the Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang, to reporters at the Central Government Offices this (Wednesday) afternoon:

FS: Together with my colleagues, we have the warmest congratulations on the selection of Mr Tung. We know him well, we admire his ability and integrity. He will certainly have the co-operation of myself and my colleagues in ensuring a smooth transition across 1997. I am pretty confident they will be able to deliver that for the community of Hong Kong.

Q: Have you congratulated him yet?

FS: No, I haven't. I haven't. I am sure it will take place at some stage. I am sure he has a lot of things to do and lot of things in his mind. And he would certainly wish to come to talk to the civil servants when he is ready.

Q: What do you think ...?

FS: What would? Sorry,. I can't hear that ...?

Q: What effect it seems to have ...?

FS: I think he seems to have command wide community support and that's what the civil service wants, in that whoever becoming our Chief Executive should have wide community support and his personal integrity is well know. So I think he will be a very popular person in the civil service. Thank you very much.

End

The way forward for three Priority Railway Projects

* * * * *

The Secretary for Transport, Mr Gordon Siu today (Wednesday) announced that the domestic passenger line of the Western Corridor Railway (WCR) would be built first and the cross border and freight lines at a later date.

He also pointed out that the MTR Tseung Kwan O Extension (TKE) should be constructed to provide the much needed transport services by residents in the new town.

At the same time, the MTR Quarry Bay Congestion Relief Works would be implemented as a matter of urgency, Mr Siu added.

The Secretary for Transport said that the Governor in Council endorsed the way forward for the two projects after considering the Government consultants' findings.

He explained that KCRC's proposal for the WCR would provide three services: a Port Rail Line (freight rail), a cross border passenger service and a domestic passenger service linking West Kowloon to Tuen Mun.

"We recognize that there is an urgent need for a domestic passenger rail link from Kowloon to Northwest New Territories (NWNT).

"However, we are still some way away from reaching any definitive conclusions on the development and timing of the new rail border crossing at Lok Ma Chau/Huanggang and the freight rail, and will need more time to study this.

"With these considerations in mind, we concluded that the domestic passenger line from West Kowloon via Tsuen Wan, Kam Tin, Yuen Long and Tin Shui Wai to Tuen Mun should be built first (Phase I), leaving the cross border passenger and freight services(Phase II) to a later date after further study," said Mr Gordon Siu.

"We anticipate that construction of Phase I could begin in mid 1998 and on the basis that land resumption , clearance and phased handing over of sites would proceed in parallel with construction, the project might be completed by end-2002 to Yuen Long and by September 2003 to Tuen Mun.

"The project cost as estimated by our consultants would be in the region of \$50 billion and the KCRC would require direct government support of some \$24 billion. These figures will need to be further refined as KCRC proceed with their technical studies.

Mr Siu also said that construction of the domestic passenger line first would reduce the land resumption and clearance requirements by some 40 percent compared with those in the original plan. It was now estimated that about 230 hectares of land would be required. Land resumption cost would be reduced from about \$5.4 billion to \$3.5 billion.

As regards TKE, Mr Siu said that the MTR extension would run from Po Lam via Hang Hau, Tseung Kwan O, Tiu Keng Ling, Yau Tong and the Eastern Harbour Crossing to Quarry Bay, while the existing Kwun Tong Line (KTL) would interchange with the TKE at Yau Tong and Tiu Keng Leng.

He said that there was an urgent need on safety and operational grounds to extend the KTL beyond Quarry Bay to relieve congestion at the Quarry Bay Station - Quarry Bay Congestion Relief Works (QBR), irrespective of whether the TKE was built.

"There is a need to extend the MTR to the Tseung Kwan O to provide a public mass transit system between the new town and the urban area.

"Our consultants have considered MTRC's proposal acceptable on operational grounds, though the mode of operation and technical details will need to be further refined at the detailed design stage.

"MTRC would therefore proceed with the detailed planning and design of the TKE. We aim to commence construction of the TKE in early 1999 for completion by mid 2002.

"On safety and operational grounds, MTRC should also proceed with the QBR as soon as possible," said Mr Siu.

He pointed out that MTRC estimated the cost of the TKE, based on an opening date of mid 2002, to be \$25 billion. Estimated construction cost of the QBR, based on a completion date of December 2000, was \$4.2 billion.

The MTRC had proposed to finance the two projects by themselves without financial support from Government, Mr Siu added.

He emphasized that both the WCR and the TKE were much needed to support the continued social and economic development in the territory.

"In the coming year, we will finalize with both KCRC and MTRC the detailed project scope, financing and implementation programme for the two projects.

"We will proceed with all necessary preparations leading to the drawing up of project agreements with the two Corporations for approval in 1998," said Mr Siu.

"We will be informing the Legislative Council, the Transport Advisory Committee and the relevant District Boards of our plans for the two projects in the coming weeks," he added.

Mr Siu also said that the Governor in Council had approved the Railways Bill which was scheduled for introduction into the Legislative Council on December 18, 1996.

The Bill contains provisions for the preparation and publication of railway schemes and plans, objections, payment of compensation to persons whose interests are affected, reclamation of land, resumption of land or strata, creation of temporary and permanent easements and wayleaves.

The Railways Bill is an enabling legislation to facilitate land resumption and compensation procedures for the construction of railways in general and is modeled mainly on the Roads (Works, Use and Compensation) Ordinance.

"Enactment of the Bill does not signify any commitment to implement individual railway projects. As and when we come to a decision to build any railway project, necessary approvals will need to be obtained, and a project agreement has to be entered into with the prospective builder," said Mr Siu.

End

New KCRC Chairman and Chief Executive appointed

The Governor has appointed Mr Yeung Kai-yin as the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) for a period of three years with effect from December 24, 1996.

Mr Yeung is well known to both Government and the private sector. He was a former senior civil servant who held a number of important positions including Secretary for the Treasury and Secretary for Transport. He left the Civil Service in 1993 to become an Executive Director of Sino Land. His combined administrative, financial and corporate experience would be valuable in leading the KCRC in the years ahead.

The current Chairman and Chief Executive of the KCRC, Mr Kevin Hyde, was appointed in 1990. In August 1996, he gave notice that he would not seek another term at the expiry of his second contract on December 23.

An executive search agency was engaged in September to conduct a recruitment exercise. Advertisements were placed in a number of major local and overseas publications. A selection panel chaired by the Chief Secretary unanimously recommended that Mr Yeung Kai-yin should be appointed.

Over the past six years, Mr Hyde has given the Corporation a clear sense of direction and commitment. During his tenure, the Corporation has made significant progress in customer service, safety, reliability, training and development.

End

Comments on Crimes (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 1996

In response to press enquiries on some comments made yesterday (December 10) on the Crimes (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 1996, a Government spokesman said today (Wednesday) that there is no question whatsoever of the Hong Kong Government usurping the legislative authority of the future Special Administrative Region Government by introducing the amendment bill.

"Under the current system, no legislative council can restrict the freedom of action of a future legislature," he said.

"If for any reason the future legislature wants to change the law in any way, they are not precluded from doing so," he added.

"But of course they must explain to the public why the change is necessary."

He believes that at the end of the day, what will be enacted by the Legislative Council, which is a fully elected legislature, will be a law acceptable to the majority of the people in Hong Kong.

"I see no reason why such a law should be overturned by a future legislature if that legislature is equally responsive to the majority view of the people of Hong Kong," he said.

"Article 23 of the Basic Law stipulates that there will be offences of subversion and secession and the Basic Law will come into effect on July 1, 1997.

"A lot of people in Hong Kong do want to know what exactly amounts to the offences. If we do not try to define the offences before then, they will be quite worried that after that day, there are such offences but it is not clear on the statute book of Hong Kong exactly what the offences will be."

End

No change on recognition of HKCI

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In response to media enquiries, a Government spokesman said today (Wednesday) that the Government understood that there was no change on the recognition of the Hong Kong Certificate of Identity (HKCI) by the Indonesian Government.

Press reports said some holders of the HKCI who had obtained visit visas issued by the local Indonesian Consulate were refused entry into Indonesia over the past few days.

The spokesman confirmed that the Hong Kong Government had not received any notice from the Indonesian Government on this matter.

"All holders of HKCI are permanent residents of Hong Kong. They are fully returnable to Hong Kong even if their document has expired," he said.

"Unexpired HKCI can be used after June 30, 1997, as agreed between the British and Chinese Governments in 1986."

The Hong Kong Government will continue to clarify the incidents reported in the press with the Indonesian Government.

In the meantime, Hong Kong residents who hold HKCI and wish to visit Indonesia are advised to double-check with the local Indonesian Consulate on the validity of their visas.

End

DBs help shape gov't policies with communities' aspirations

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The views and advice of District Board (DB) members on district and territory-wide issues play a crucial part in enabling the Government to shape its policies in accordance with the aspirations of local communities, the Director of Home Affairs, Mrs Shelley Lau, said today (Wednesday).

Speaking at the luncheon meeting of the Rotary Club of Kowloon West, Mrs Lau said the DBs, set up under the District Administration Scheme introduced in 1981, had become the largest consultative body in Hong Kong over the past 15 years.

"Currently there are 18 fully elected DBs with 373 members working tirelessly for their respective constituents," Mrs Lau said.

"The DBs are the basic source of strength and vitality of community building in the districts, and the drive and enthusiasm shown by the DBs have led to much good work being done under the District Administration."

Mrs Lau noted that the DBs got themselves involved with community building in one way or another apart from organising or sponsoring community activities. These included the promotion of tourism in the districts, the signing by 18 DB chairmen of the AIDS Charter and the support to the anti-discrimination initiative to help the disabled integrate into the community.

Mrs Lau also cited examples of how DBs affect the work of the department. She said since December 1994, the department has been responsible for the \$1.6 billion Rural Planning and Improvement Strategy (RPIS) projects.

"With our strong connections and close relationship with the rural communities, we will have, by the end of this financial year, taken forward close to half a billion dollars worth of projects including bridges, roads, footpaths and piers since 1994/95.

"As these projects are small - costing less than \$15 million each - they may never have been built, or would have had to wait their turn behind the higher priority major infrastructure projects without the RPIS and the co-operation between the DBs, Heung Yee Kuk and the Government," she said.

On building management, Mrs Lau said the department had been very active in promoting effective building management and was committed to assisting owners in the formation of owners' corporations (OCs) to enable them to address building management problems.

"There are currently more than 4,600 OCs in the territory and I expect there will be close to 5,000 by the beginning of 1998. Through a variety of seminars, exhibitions, training courses, handbooks, leaflets and videos, the department is assisting building owners to help themselves by ensuring their buildings are cleaner, safer and better managed.

"We are also working closely with the University of Hong Kong to ensure that our staff are given the necessary training to enable them to offer timely practical and accurate advice to building owners on how to look after their properties."

She added that a central unit to collect information and collate experiences in building management had been set up as reference for the staff so that they might deal with problems more effectively.

End

DB contributes to prosperity of Yau Tsim Mong: DHA

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The prosperity of Yau Tsim Mong district was proof of district boards' effective input in district administration, the Director of Home Affairs, Mrs Shelley Lau, said this tonight (Wednesday).

Officiating at the opening ceremony for the Yau Tsim Mong District Festival 1996/97, Mrs Lau complimented the Yau Tsim Mong District Board for keeping close contacts with various Government departments and reflecting residents' views on Government policies to help create a better living environment.

Mrs Lau noted that the district board had been a faithful practitioner of the district festival's theme - "building a better Yau Tsim Mong and share the prosperity".

Organised by the Yau Tsim Mong District Festival 1996/97 Organising Committee and sponsored by the Yau Tsim Mong District Board and the Urban Council, the district festival will last until January 31.

It will feature more than 60 activities, including Christmas and New Year lighting and parties, carnivals, Chinese operas, Chinese painting and calligraphy exhibition, football contests, photo competition, outings and day camp.

Mrs Lau hoped that all organising parties would uphold the Government's "serving the community" spirit in working for the welfare and prosperity of the district.

The opening ceremony was followed by a variety show with performances by famous singers and fireworks displays.

Also present at the ceremony were the Yau Tsim Mong District Officer, Mr Bart Ireland and the Chairman of the Yau Tsim Mong District Board, Mr Chow Chun-fai.

End

Advice on preparing vegetables

* * * * *

Members of the public are today (Wednesday) urged to wash and blanch vegetables thoroughly before cooking and to avoid making soup with vegetables.

The appeal was made by the Assistant Director of Health, Dr Leung Pak-yin, following reports of one confirmed case and three suspected cases of food poisoning related to pesticide contaminated vegetables in the past two days.

The four cases affected 10 persons in four families. All were related to consumption of Garland Chrysanthemum.

Dr Leung said the Department of Health had stepped up checking and sampling at Man Kam To Food Control Office and retail outlets.

These food poisoning cases were the first few cases related to vegetables contamination reported to the Department recently. Before that, there were only two confirmed food poisoning cases related to pesticide contaminated vegetables in 1996, both of them occurred in January.

To reduce food poisoning by pesticide contaminated vegetables, members of the public are advised to take the following precautionary measures:

- * do not patronise unlicensed hawkers;
- * do not buy vegetables with an obvious strange smell;
- * wash well before cooking;
- * dip vegetables into clean water for one hour to allow pesticide to leach out;
- * blanch in boiling water and pour away the water used for blanching as it may contain dissolved pesticides; and
- * cook thoroughly before consumption.

End

Two lots sold for \$821 million at land auction

* * * * *

Two lots of government land were sold for a total of \$821 million at a public land auction held by the Lands Department this (Wednesday) afternoon.

The first lot, located at Electric Road in North Point, was sold to Best Origin Limited at \$760 million, with bidding opened at \$480 million.

It has an area of about 1,222.6 square metres for non-industrial purposes, excluding godown, warehouse, hotel, service apartment, petrol filling station and private residential use.

The developer has to complete a gross floor area of not less than 11,000 square metres on or before December 31, 2000.

The second lot situated at the junction of Tseuk Luk Street and Hong Keung Street in San Po Kong was bought by Profit Source Properties Limited at \$61 million, with bidding opened at \$38 million.

With an area of about 222 square metres, the lot has to be developed into a gross floor area of not less than 999 square metres on or before December 31, 1999.

The lowest three floors of the building to be developed should be used for non-industrial purposes excluding godown, hotel, service apartment and petrol filling station. The remaining floors will be for private residential use.

Held in the Concert Hall of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Tsim Sha Tsui, the auction was conducted by Government Land Agent, Mr Nigel Burley.

End

Weather of November

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November 1996 was warmer than normal. The mean minimum temperature of 21.1 degrees was the highest for November. The mean temperature and mean maximum temperature of 23 and 25.3 degrees were the second and seventh highest for the month respectively.

With less frequent continental cold air affecting the area, the monthly mean sea-level pressure of 1,015.8 hectopascals was the sixth lowest for November.

The month recorded only 3.5 millimetres of rainfall against a normal of 35.1 millimetres but the accumulated rainfall since January 1 of 2,249.1 millimetres was still three per cent above the normal for the same period.

The first day of the month was fine and sunny. The maximum temperature of 29.8 degrees recorded that afternoon was the highest for the month.

A cold front reached the south China coastal area on November 2. Easterly winds strengthened and there were some light rain patches during the night. Two scaffoldings collapsed in strong winds in Tsz Wan Shan Estate and Tsim Sha Tsui on November 3. Winds subsided on November 4 and the weather turned sunny. Fine weather prevailed during the next few days.

Northerly winds took over from November 9 and it became cloudy on November 11. Light rain patches affected the territory the next couple of days. With winter monsoon intensifying over China coupled with the effect of Tropical Depression Ernie over the northern part of the South China Sea, local winds started to strengthen from the east on the evening of November 13. The sky cleared on November 14 but clouds returned the next day and there were light rain patches on November 16.

A dry northerly surge of the winter monsoon reached the south China coastal area on November 17. Winds were strong offshore on November 17 and 18. Several cases of hill fire were reported. The minimum temperature recorded on the morning of November 18, 16.3 degrees, was the lowest for the month.

While conditions remained quite dry, winds gradually turned to the east on November 20. Easterly winds and generally fine and dry weather prevailed from November 21 until November 29.

A cold front crossed the south China coast on the afternoon of November 29 bringing drier and cooler northerly winds to the territory on the last day of the month.

Five tropical cyclones occurred in the western North Pacific and the South China Sea in the month. Details of the issuance/hoisting and cancellation/lowering of various warnings/signals in the month are summarised in Table 1. Monthly meteorological figures and departures from normal of November are tabulated in Table 2.

Table 1 Warnings and Signals in November 1996

<u>Warnings/Signals</u>	<u>Effective date and time</u>
<u>Strong Monsoon Signals</u>	2 Nov 1420 - 4 Nov 1030 14 Nov 0130 - 14 Nov 0530 17 Nov 1930 - 18 Nov 1135
<u>Fire Danger Warnings</u>	
Yellow	2 Nov 0645 - 2 Nov 1800
Yellow	3 Nov 0830 - 3 Nov 1800
Yellow	9 Nov 0600 - 11 Nov 0600
Yellow	17 Nov 0600 - 17 Nov 1720
Red	17 Nov 1720 - 22 Nov 0600
Red	22 Nov 1035 - 23 Nov 0600
Yellow	23 Nov 0600 - 24 Nov 1800
Yellow	30 Nov 0600 - 1 Dec 0545

Table 2 Figures and Departures from Normal - November 1996

Total Bright Sunshine	171.3 hours; 10.2 hours below normal
Mean Daily Global Solar Radiation	12.74 MJ/SQM; 0.65 MJ/SQM below normal
Total Rainfall	3.5 mm; 31.6 mm below normal
Mean Cloud Amount	63%; 10% above normal
Mean Relative Humidity	69%; normal
Mean Daily Maximum Temperature	25.3 Degrees Celsius; 1.1 Degrees Celsius above normal
Mean Air Temperature	23 Degrees Celsius; 1.6 Degrees Celsius above normal
Mean Daily Minimum Temperature	21.1 Degrees Celsius; 1.9 Degrees Celsius above normal
Mean Dew Point	16.8 Degrees Celsius; 1.6 Degrees Celsius above normal
Total Evaporation	105.5 mm; 23.6 mm below normal

Remarks: All measurements were made at the Royal Observatory except sunshine, solar radiation and evaporation which were recorded at King's Park.

End

Transfer of VMs from High Island Detention Centre today

* * * * *

A group of about 110 Vietnamese migrants (VMs) in High Island Detention Centre (HIDC) will be transferred from the Centre's South and North Camps to its Security Unit today (Wednesday) in preparation for their return to Vietnam under the Orderly Repatriation Programme.

They will join another group of about 140 VMs, who have voluntarily presented themselves for transfer to HIDC's Security Unit yesterday (Tuesday), for pre-flight documentation and medical checks prior to their repatriation on December 17.

The transfer will be observed by independent monitors.

End

Monitors' report submitted to Chief Secretary

* * * * *

The monitors appointed to observe the transfer of Vietnamese migrants selected for the Orderly Repatriation Programme from the High Island Detention Centre's North and South camps to its Security Unit today (Wednesday) have submitted their report to the Chief Secretary.

The four monitors comprised two non-official Justices of the Peace, Mr Michael Chan Hung-kee and Mr Justein Wong Chun ; and representatives from two non-government organisations, Ms Harriet Sewell from Christian Action and Mr Thierry Taveaux from Medecins Sans Frontieres.

End

* VMs transferred in preparation for repatriation

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A total of 110 Vietnamese migrants (VMs) at High Island Detention Centre (HIDC) were this (Wednesday) morning transferred to the Security Unit of the Centre in preparation for their return to Vietnam under the Orderly Repatriation Programme.

The VMs began packing their belongings early this morning in preparation for the transfer and by about 9.50 am all VMs were accounted for and processed.

The group, together with another 140 VMs who presented themselves voluntarily for transfer yesterday (Tuesday), will be processed for pre-flight documentation and medical checks prior to their repatriation on December 17.

End

1996 edition of HK Annual Digest of Statistics published

The 1996 edition of the Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics, published by the Census and Statistics Department, is now on sale.

The report contains statistics on a wide range of topics including population; births and deaths; labour; external trade and inward investment; industrial production; distributive trades; food supplies; transport services; building and construction; communications and tourism; public accounts; money and finance; prices; housing; education; medical and health; social welfare; law and order; culture, entertainment and recreation; the environment; climate and geography; and national accounts.

There are altogether 269 tables in 18 sections. Most of the data are presented for seven years, spanning over a period of ten years.

The report is on sale at \$50 per copy at the Government Publications Centre located at Queensway Government Offices, Low Block, ground floor, 66 Queensway. It can also be purchased at the Publications Unit of the Census and Statistics Department, 19th floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong.

For enquiries about the contents of the report, please call 2582 4068 or 2582 4256.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority Interbank liquidity

Aggregate time balance of settlement accounts

Opening aggregate balance	2097 mn	0930 hr	19928 mn
Closing aggregate balance	804 mn	1000 hr	20442 mn
Change attributable to :		1100 hr	26977 mn
Money market activity	-5028 mn	1200 hr	32603 mn
Laf reversal	+3743 mn	1500 hr	36228 mn
Laf today	-8 mn	1600 hr	41458 mn

LAF RATE 4.00% BID/6.00% OFFER TWI 124.9 *-0.1* 11.12.96

Hong kong monetary authority

EF bills		EF notes/MTRC notes				
Terms	Yield	Terms	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	3.89	2 years	2811	5.72	100.25	5.66
1 month	4.19	3 years	3910	6.28	100.83	6.04
3 months	4.58	5 years	5109	7.32	103.19	6.63
6 months	4.84	7 years	7311	6.80	99.65	6.98
12 months	5.15	10 years	1610	7.37	102.10	7.19
		5 years	M503	7.35	101.92	6.98

Total turnover of ef bills and notes - \$30,489 mn

Closed December 11, 1996

End



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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GARDEN ROAD, 5th-8th FLOORS, MURRAY BUILDING,
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SUPPLEMENT

Wednesday, December 11, 1996

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Speech by Secretary for Housing on rent control (first resolution)

* * * * *

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Housing, Mr Dominic Wong, in response to the motion debate on the first resolution on Landlord and Tenant (Consolidation) Ordinance moved by the Hon James To in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Mr President,

The motion moved by the Honourable James To, if passed, will be a retrograde step and a major setback in the final process of abolishing rent control for pre-war residential premises. I wish to highlight some of the bad effects of this resolution, if passed, and, in so doing, correct a few misconceptions.

The existing rent control provisions were introduced for pre-war residential premises in 1947 as short-term measures to counter the unusually high rent increases at a time when there was an acute shortage of rented accommodation in Hong Kong. But the reasons for this measure have disappeared in recent years. Private, or in general, housing stock in Hong Kong has increased manifolds and market rents have also stabilised. Rent increases average about 7.5% a year in the past five years and 5% per year for the past three years. Hence, in June 1993, this Council passed an amendment to the Ordinance to abolish rent control three years later, and that is, on 31 December this year. Average rent now ranges from 80% to 90% of the market level. It is surprising therefore that some Members of this Council are now trying to overturn the Council's previous decision, and to put the clock back by extending rent control for another two years for a small group of residents.

Rent control is against our free market economy policy, and is a hidden subsidy to tenants at the expense of landlords. Rent control is introduced only on exceptional grounds, those grounds that I have already outlined. The effect of rent control is that even those tenants who can afford to pay more for better housing hold on to the controlled premises so as to take advantage of the low rent. On the other hand, as some Members have mentioned, landlords are deprived of the right to charge market rent, and this is not fair to them. Hence, they are reluctant to spend money on maintaining and refurbishing the buildings. The outcome is building deterioration, slums and social immobility. In the end, they will neither benefit the tenants nor landlords.

Mr President, I think we must not mix up rent control with social welfare subsidy, which is means-tested. Rent control is not a means-tested scheme, and is not devised to help the poor. It is applied regardless of tenants' financial position. In another word, the poor and the rich all get it. Those in genuine financial hardship should turn to the Comprehensive Social Security Scheme which gives rent allowance of up to \$4,600 a month for those in need. Where is the argument for rent protection of a small group of residents whose financial position is similar to the rest of the community?

Some Members argue that rent control should be extended for two years because of the shortage of public rental housing in Hong Kong. I'm afraid this is not a good argument, because only a small proportion, or roughly 24% of protected tenants in Hong Kong have actually applied for public rental housing. The rest are families who are either not eligible for public rental housing or simply prefer the existing low rent accommodation.

Again, some Members have suggested that a rent subsidy should be given to eligible tenants on the Housing Authority's Waiting List for public rental housing. I must point out that public housing is not a social welfare provision. Those in need of public housing should wait for their turn. If people really face financial hardship, as I have said they may apply for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and receive the appropriate amount of rent assistance.

Well, most of the extra amount of rent which an affected tenant will have to pay upon de-control of rent, if compare with a situation if rent control continues, will likely to be small.

In dollar terms, our estimates of the additional increases are \$15 a month for cocklofts, \$47 for bedspaces, \$93 for bedrooms and about \$570 a month for those people who rent the whole flat. This is a figure which assumes that landlords will increase rent to the full market level but this may not be the case. But in many cases, the projected increases are still generally affordable. It is, therefore, difficult to claim hardship against de-control.

Some people have again misunderstood that upon de-control landlords can immediately charge market rent. It is not true, there are transitional provisions already in the Ordinance which will cushions tenants from the impact of de-control for another two years from the dates when their rents were last increased.

I think that some Members have again missed another important point. Even after de-control, all former tenants will continue to enjoy security of tenure. Landlords while still cannot charge exorbitant rents and if the two parties cannot agree on the level of rent, they may apply to the Lands Tribunal for adjudication. This mechanism in itself effectively protects tenants from being asked to pay unreasonably high rents. There is no need, therefore, to extend rent control arrangement.

In conclusion, Mr President, rent control was introduced as a temporary measure many years ago to deal with a particular situation of a serious shortage of rented accommodation and the unreasonably high rents. I have already explained that this situation has completely changed now in Hong Kong and the grounds for extending rent control no longer exist. I appeal to Members to keep and remember the basic principles, and should not be guided by populist and generally hasten sentiment.

With these remarks, Mr President, I urge Honourable Members to vote against the resolution.

End

Speech by Secretary for Housing on rent control (second resolution)

* * * * *

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Housing, Mr Dominic Wong, in response to the motion debate on the second resolution on Landlord and Tenant (Consolidation) Ordinance moved by the Hon James To in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Mr President,

I have already pointed out in my first speech some of bad effects of extending rent control and some of the misconceptions supporting an extension. I have to repeat that this resolution, together with the last, are unjustified. This second resolution, in particular, seeks to reduce the permitted rent increases now provided in the law to what was allowed two years ago. This is clearly a retrograde step and a major setback in the whole process of de-control.

I have to reiterate that this second resolution, which seeks to lower rent increase levels, will widen the gap between controlled rent and market rent, and will therefore be financially more painful for affected tenants when the extended period comes to an end two years later.

Mr President, I do not wish to repeat all other arguments I would like to urge Honourable Members to vote against the second resolution and not to be guided by popular sentiment.

End

Securities and Futures Commission (Amendment)(No.3) Bill

* * * * *

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Financial Services, Mr Rafael Hui, in moving the second reading of the Securities and Futures Commission (Amendment)(No.3) Bill in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Mr President, I move that the Securities and Futures Commission (Amendment) (No.3) Bill 1996 be read a second time.

The Bill seeks to provide statutory protection to auditors of listed companies who report in good faith to the Securities and Futures Commission (Commission) or the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong (Stock Exchange) any suspected fraud or misconduct discovered in their capacity as auditors. The Bill does not seek to impose any duty on an auditor to communicate any such information or opinion to the Commission or the Stock Exchange, nor does the Bill seek to confer any power on the Commission or the Stock Exchange to require an auditor to communicate such information or opinion to either of them. The Bill does not have any regulatory objective. No additional regulation will be introduced. Without the statutory protection, auditors making reports could face possible civil liabilities for breach of auditor-client confidentiality.

Under section 61 of the Banking Ordinance (Cap. 155), section 53D of the Insurance Companies Ordinance (Cap. 41), section 89A of the Securities Ordinance (Cap. 333) and section 51A of the Commodities Trading Ordinance (Cap. 250), an auditor is granted statutory protection and immunity when reporting in good faith to the appropriate regulatory authority reasonable suspicion of fraud or wrongdoing which he comes across in his capacity as an auditor of a company in the regulated sector. Our aim is to introduce amendments to the law which mirrors these provisions to enable auditors of listed companies to report reasonable suspicions to the Commission or the Stock Exchange. However, whereas auditors of companies in the regulated sectors are required to report suspicions of fraud to the authorities under certain circumstances, we are not seeking the same treatment for auditors of listed companies. There will be no mandatory requirements to report.

The Bill is the result of very long consultation between Government, the regulators and the Hong Kong Society of Accountants (HKSA). We are grateful to the various parties for their advice, and in particular for their participation in a Working Group set up in May this year to study how best to refine our proposal, and to try to address the concerns and reservations on the part of those who did not support the proposed legislation. The Working Group comprises representatives from HKSA, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, the Institute of Directors, the Hong Kong Institute of Company Secretaries and the Law Society of Hong Kong, the Commission, the Stock Exchange, the Commercial Crime Bureau of the Police, the ICAC, the Attorney General's Chambers and Financial Services Branch.

As a result, we have now taken on board some of HKSA's suggestions and have introduced a number of changes to the Bill. I would mention perhaps just two. One is the inclusion of a commencement clause. The idea is to allow sufficient time to enable professional guidelines to be drawn up before the Bill comes into operation. This may be contrasted with the regulated sectors, where the statutory protection provision became effective immediately after the law was passed and that guidelines were only developed afterwards. Another suggestion we have taken on board is in relation to the definition of "associated company". We have now effectively adopted HKSA's definition, based on the equity method of accounting.

Mr President, the Bill of course is not a single, complete solution to corporate fraud, but we have never set out to do so in one single amendment bill. Rather, we believe that the Bill is one more step towards the goal of combating corporate fraud in an on-going, continuing, and incremental process towards better corporate governance.

Thank you, Mr President.

End

Whaling Industry (Regulation) Bill

* * * * *

The following is the speech by the Secretary for Economic Services, Mr Stephen Ip, in moving the third reading of the Whaling Industry (Regulation) Bill in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Mr President,

The Whaling Industry (Regulation) Bill has passed through the Committee without amendment. I move that this Bill be read the third time and do pass.

End

ID card holders' eligibility for public-funded services

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

Question:

At present, people living in the territory hold Hong Kong Permanent Identity Cards or Hong Kong Identity Cards. Will the Government inform this Council whether there are:

- (a) any other categories of Identity Cards that are related to the residential status of the holder; and
- (b) any differences in eligibility for publicly funded services such as public housing, medical and health, education and social welfare between different categories of identity card holders.

Reply:

Mr President,

- (a) In addition to the Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card and the Hong Kong Identity Card, there is a third type of identity card which is issued to consuls, consular staff, their spouses and dependent children of the age of 11 years and above. The Consular Corps Identity Card is issued under the provisions of the Registration of Persons Ordinance, Cap. 177. It is different in form from the Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card and the Hong Kong Identity Card.
- (b) The eligibility in respect of the four types of public-funded services is as follows:-

Public Housing

Holders of Hong Kong Permanent Identity Cards may apply for public rental housing (PRH) and subsidised home ownership flats provided they satisfy the 7 year residence rule and other eligibility criteria relating to income and property ownership. Those who have not yet fulfilled the residence rule but satisfy other eligibility criteria may apply and be placed on the Waiting List for public rental housing. They will be allocated flats only when they have fulfilled the residence rule and when their turn comes.

Holders of Hong Kong Identity Cards with permission to stay unconditionally may apply for public rental housing, provided they satisfy the 7 year residence rule and other eligibility criteria relating to income and property ownership. Those who have not yet fulfilled the residence rule but satisfy other eligibility criteria may apply and be placed on the Waiting List. They will be allocated flats only when they have fulfilled the residence rule and when their turn comes.

As regards the purchase of subsidised home ownership flats, holders of Hong Kong Identity Cards are excluded.

Exception applies if the holder is a member of a household, the majority of whom are permanent residents of Hong Kong. In this case, he may join other household members in the allocation of a public rental flat, or he may join the others in the purchase of a subsidised home ownership flat in the usual way.

Holders of Hong Kong Identity Cards with conditional stay (such as persons on employment contract or overseas students) are not eligible for both types of public housing.

Medical and Health Services & Welfare Services

Holders of all categories of Hong Kong Identity Cards are entitled to receive the same public healthcare and welfare services, subject to their satisfying the eligibility criteria for different types of services.

Furthermore, assistance available under schemes to provide financial assistance to victims of road traffic accidents, crimes of violence or of natural and other disasters, is granted to the victims, including visitors, who are legally in Hong Kong.

Education

Children holding a Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card or a Hong Kong Identity Card which does not bear the symbol "C" (for conditional stay) are eligible for admission to public sector schools. Children holding a Hong Kong Identity Card which bears the symbol "C" are also eligible for admission to public sector schools, provided that they have a valid travel document confirming that they are not subject to any condition of stay other than a limit of stay, and that the limit of stay has not expired.

End

Subvention for non-government organisations

* * * * *

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Yuen-han and a reply by the Secretary for Health and Welfare, Mrs Katherine Fok, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

It is learnt that the Government currently does not provide housing allowance to employees of subvented welfare agencies, but individual agencies can use the financial resources at their disposal to provide housing allowance to their employees. This has given rise to public concern about the spending of funds in subvented welfare agencies. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) Whether the Government has considered extending the housing benefits for civil servants to employees of subvented welfare agencies; if not, why not;
- (b) the number of subvented welfare agencies which provide housing allowance to their employees, together with the name of the agencies concerned, the number of employees receiving the allowance and the amount of allowance received by each employee; and the sources from which individual agencies have obtained financial resources to provide housing allowances to their employees; and
- (c) whether the Government agrees that subvented welfare agencies can use charitable donations to provide housing allowance to their employees; if so, of the mechanism put in place to monitor the expenses on the provision of housing allowance to employees by such agencies:

Reply:

Mr President,

At present, the Administration subvents 174 non-government organisations (NGOs) to provide various social welfare services. The amount of subvention is sufficient to cover staff salaries (including provident fund), and specified administrative expenses.

NGOs are independent organisations outside the Government structure. Apart from subvented services, many of them run other non-subvented projects for the community, through their own sources of funds. NGOs have autonomy in determining the remuneration package which enable them to employ and retain personnel that they consider best suit for their organisations.

Against the above, my replies to the question are as follow:

- (a) Under the current system, the amount of subvention on staff cost is based on the level of staff salaries. However, Management Board of NGOs can decide whether or not to use their own sources of funding to pay their staff other terms and conditions, including whether they can enjoy housing benefits. The Administration does not intervene on this matter.
- (b) Government subvention to NGOs in the welfare sector does not include housing allowance to their staff. If Government funds were found to be used by NGOs for such purpose during audit inspection, the NGO concerned will be demanded to reimburse the full sum to the Administration. The Administration does not monitor NGOs' use of their own resources for payment of housing allowance to their staff. There is no requirement for NGOs to report the use of their own resources. We therefore have no information to this part of the question.
- (c) The Administration mainly monitors the use subvention by NGOs. Where NGOs raise their own funds, it would be a matter for the Management Boards of NGOs to be accountable to their donors for the appropriate and prudent use of donations, through publishing their annual audited accounts in their report for the information of their donors and the general public. The Administration does not impose a mechanism to monitor NGOs using its own funds to provide housing allowance to employees by NGOs.

End

Infant mortality rate among best in the world

* * * * *

Following is a question by the Hon Leung Yiu-chung and a reply by the Secretary for Health and Welfare, Mrs Katherine Fok, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

In her reply to a question raised at the Sitting on 20 November this year concerning cases involving babies lapsing into a "vegetative" state as a result of birth asphyxia, the Secretary for Health and Welfare stated that no such cases were reported by public hospitals in the past three years, and that advice would only be given to the patients by clinicians in public hospitals after the patients concerned had given consent to the delivery method to be adopted. In this connection, is the Government aware of:

- (a) in the light of the public statement made by the management of the Princess Margaret Hospital on 26 November this year that the hospital's childbirth records and statistics confirmed that there were cases of birth asphyxia in the past three years and that some of the affected babies had subsequently died, there is a difference between the Hospital's statement and the Secretary for Health and Welfare's reply; the number of babies born in public hospitals who have lapsed into a "vegetative" state because of birth asphyxia and have remained in such a state since birth or have died over the past three years, and the causes leading to the occurrence of birth asphyxia to the babies concerned;
- (b) how the Hospital Authority (HA) ensures that clinicians in public hospitals will only give advice to patients after the patients concerned have given consent to the delivery method to be adopted;
- (c) whether the HA will consider requiring the clinician-in-charge to be ultimately responsible for the work of the medical staff of obstetric units in public hospitals in attending to women in labour and carrying out related medical procedures or treatment; and
- (d) whether any mechanism is in place to monitor the operation of, and the system adopted in, obstetric units in public hospitals; and whether a comprehensive review of the operation of these units will be undertaken?

Reply:

Mr President,

- (a) In order to clarify any misunderstanding the Honourable Member may have about my reply to him on 20 November 1996, allow me, Mr President, to recapitulate. In my reply, I explained that the term "vegetative stage" is often used to describe patients with sustained, complete loss of cognition while other autonomic functions such as sleeping and breathing remain relatively intact. This condition can follow acute, severe brain damage. I also explained that although birth asphyxia remains a major cause of brain damage leading to various degrees of mental disability, my understanding is that it is extremely rare for such cases to result in babies lapsing into what clinicians describe as "vegetative state", and no such cases had been reported by public hospitals in the past three years.

The public statement issued by Princess Margaret Hospital referred to two new-borns who suffered severe brain damage as a result of birth asphyxia but had not lapsed into a "vegetative state" as described. The cases are now being investigated by three independent experts.

My reply on 20 November 1996 and the statement issued by Princess Margaret Hospital were responding to requests for different information, and thus are not at variance with each other. My reply today to the Honourable Member's question on the number of babies born in public hospitals who have lapsed into a "vegetative state" because of birth asphyxia and remained in such a state since birth or have died over the past three years is still the same, that is no such cases have been reported by public hospitals in the past three years. But if the Honourable Member is seeking information on the number of deaths of infants between birth and under one year old whose principal cause of death was birth asphyxia in all hospitals in the past three years, the answer is 26, 21 and 13 in 1993, 1994 and 1995 respectively.

Premature labour, multiple birth, prolapsed umbilical cord, severe maternal bleeding, and maternal hypertension are factors which may lead to high risk deliveries including birth asphyxia. Furthermore, congenital abnormalities is also a common cause of complications during the delivery process.

- (b) The HA advocates natural delivery as the preferred way of child birth, recognising that caesarean section carries higher potential risks. If in the best interest of the patient based on prevailing clinical indications caesarean section is recommended, the patient will be advised and her consent has to be obtained.
- (c) The clinician-in-charge is responsible for supervising the provision of service in the obstetric units in public hospitals. In fact, all medical, nursing and allied health staff in the clinical team share a common goal of delivering the best possible quality of patient care. Furthermore, as professionals, they are accountable to the respective professional bodies such as the Medical Council, the Nursing Board and the Midwives Board for their conduct.

- (d) The Hospital Authority has developed a framework to ensure professional standards of practice in public hospitals. Within this overall framework, mechanisms of professional accountability, such as clinical guidelines, protocols and procedures as well as regular monitoring, review and evaluation of patient cases and treatment in quality assurance programmes are in place. These mechanisms are applied across all public hospitals in all specialities, including obstetrics. The quality of obstetric service in Hong Kong is reflected in our infant mortality rate of about 4.5 per 1,000 live-births in recent years, a figure which is among the best in the world.

End

Opening of Route 3 Expressway will not be affected

* * * * *

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

Question:

It is learnt that on 11 November this year the Environmental Impact Assessment Subcommittee under the Advisory Council on the Environment has discussed the option put forward by the Route 3 Consortium for the disposal of additional excavated materials. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the Subcommittee's views and suggestions on the option put forward by the Consortium;
- (b) of the number of other feasible options being studied by the Government and the up-to-date progress of such studies; and
- (c) whether the scheduled completion date of Route 3 will be affected as a result of the above problem?

Answer:

Mr President,

Slope cutting works was required for forming the Route 3 - Country Park Section. It was found that some of the slopes had to be cut flatter than the designed gradient to achieve stability. The resulting additional spoil requires additional effort and time for removal from the site. As a contingency measure to ensure that all the surplus spoil can be removed in good time, the contractor proposed to dispose of the spoil by filling up a valley adjacent to the site if later found necessary.

(a) The Environmental Assessment Sub-Group of the Advisory Council on the Environment (ACE) was not supportive of utilising a natural wooded valley adjacent to the Route 3 project to accommodate the additional spoil. They required the contractor to explore in greater detail all other options before they were prepared to give the proposal any further consideration.

(b) The Contractor for this Build, Operate and Transfer project employed by the Franchisee is studying the following alternative solutions :

(i) Improving the efficiency and performance of the conveyor system.

This would involve 24 hour operation of the conveyor, and a reduction in the number of hours dedicated to preventive maintenance. It also entails carrying out mitigation measures to protect local residents from noise. Increased conveyor output has already recently been observed but the contractor is concerned that reduced preventive maintenance could result in more frequent conveyor breakdowns in the future and eventually a loss in productivity.

(ii) Removing the excess spoil by road

This will entail adding more traffic to Castle Peak Road during off peak hours. A traffic impact assessment is being conducted by the contractor and will be discussed and agreed with relevant Government Departments before any such scheme is implemented.

- (c) At present, the contractor does not expect that the removal of additional spoil would affect the opening of the Route 3 Expressway in July 1998. The proposals he is now considering are prudent contingency measures just in case that the present disposal arrangement would not be able to take care of the additional spoil without causing serious delay.

End

Control on overhanging signboards

* * * * *

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

Question:

It is reported that in the recent catastrophic blaze that broke out in Garley Building, the neon signs and signboards erected on the external walls of the building and the vehicles parked nearby have caused obstruction to both rescue and fire-fighting operations. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether:

- (a) it will introduce regulations to regulate the dimension of signboards, the distance between signboards and other related issues; and whether such regulations will restrict the number of signboards and their dimensions in each building according to the floor area of the building and the width of the adjoining streets;
- (b) it will introduce a licensing system to tackle the problem of an increasing number of large signboards;
- (c) there is any plan to carry out inspections of the streets in the territory in the near future, with a view to identifying those streets having similar potential hazards; and
- (d) it will set up an inter-departmental task force responsible for the inspection, on a long term basis, of signboards erected on buildings and facilities in the ground floor and in the adjoining streets (including legal parking spaces), so as to ensure that no obstruction is caused to the operation of fire engines; if so, what the details are?

Answer:

Mr President,

- (a) as I explained in this Council on 31 January this year, there are a number of legislative and administrative measures to control the erection of overhanging signboards outside buildings. The primary concern of the Government as regards these signboards is public safety. The policy is to ensure that signboards which could pose a threat to public safety (including whether they obstruct rescue or fire-fighting operations) are removed either by the owners themselves or, if necessary, by the Buildings Department. The size of a signboard, including its positioning, and its physical condition are factors to be taken into account;
- (b) in 1994, we carefully considered the possibility of introducing a licensing system for overhanging signboards, and concluded that such a system would be resource intensive and costly and would not offer any significant advantage over the existing enforcement arrangements. This conclusion is still valid;
- (c) at present, the Buildings Department focuses its efforts on removing signboards that are dangerous or liable to become dangerous, on a district-by-district basis and upon receipt of complaints. Moreover, if the Fire Services Department identifies any signs that obstruct their rescue and fire fighting operations during fire incidents/incidental drills at site, they will report to the Buildings Department for their removal. As regards the risk of vehicles parked on the roads, legal car parking spaces are designated at locations which do not obstruct fire rescue and fighting operations. We will consider whether the existing arrangements need to be improved; and
- (d) we would undertake a review of the existing arrangements and the issue of whether an inter-departmental task force should be set up to carry out street inspections on a long term basis will form part of our consideration.

End

Reimbursement of rates and rent for kindergartens

* * * * *

Following is a question by the Hon Cheung Man-kwong 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 applications from non-profit-making kindergartens for reimbursement of rates and rent, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the criteria adopted for determining whether such applications should be approved;
- (b) the number of kindergartens whose applications for reimbursement of rates and rent were rejected in the past two years, together with the amount of reimbursement requested by each of the kindergartens concerned; and whether the authority concerned has explained clearly the reasons for rejecting these kindergartens; and
- (c) whether the Government will consider improving the existing system for processing such applications, such as introducing a point reckoner or waiting list system to enable the kindergartens to know when their applications will be accepted?

Reply:

Mr President,

- (a) All non-profit making schools including kindergartens are entitled to reimbursement of rates subject to their being granted exemption as charitable bodies by the Commissioner of Inland Revenue under Section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance.

As for rent reimbursement, the criteria for assessing applications are:

- i) the demand for kindergarten places in the district on the basis of the Hong Kong Planning Standards & Guidelines;
- ii) compliance with the Education Ordinance and Regulations;
- iii) operating standards in both management and professional aspects; and
- iv) reasonable rate of rent per pupil per annum.

- (b) All applications for rates reimbursement are approved once the applicants produce proof of exemption under Section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance.

In the past two school years, there were 34 new applications for rent reimbursement. Ten cases were unsuccessful. Reasons for rejection were clearly explained to individual kindergartens. The respective amounts of reimbursement requested in these cases are listed in the Annex.

- (c) Under the existing system, applicants meeting all the criteria in (a) above are given rent reimbursement. Unsuccessful kindergartens may apply again after they have taken appropriate measures in accordance with the advice of the Education Department as appropriate. As the present system is operating satisfactorily, we do not intend to introduce a point reckoner or waiting list system at this stage. The scheme is reviewed from time to time for improvement.

Unsuccessful cases	Amount of Monthly Rent Applied for
	1994/95 school year
1.	\$6,000
2.	\$10,000
3.	\$16,000
4.	\$70,000

Unsuccessful cases	Amount of Monthly Rent Applied for
	1995/96 school year
1.	\$20,000
2.	\$25,000
3.	\$32,000
4.	\$58,720
5.	\$60,000
6.	\$115,000

End

Listing Rules of The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited

* * * * *

Following is a question by the Hon Eric Li Ka-cheung and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services, Mr Rafael Hui, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

Under Clause 8.17 of the Listing Rules of the Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited, all listed companies are required to have a named secretary who is either a professional accountant, lawyer or Chartered Secretary who has the requisite knowledge and experience in discharging the complex statutory and regulatory functions of the post. Will the Government inform this Council whether it will request the Stock Exchange and the Securities and Futures Commission to consider introducing regulations requiring all listed companies to engage professional accountants at the senior management level with designated responsibilities for overseeing the accounting and financial reporting functions of listed companies, including:

- (a) ensuring that the increasingly complex financial reporting requirements under both the Listing Rules and the generally accepted accounting principles are complied with;
- (b) ensuring that information of a high quality is provided; and
- (c) accessing the audit committee of listed companies;

if so, what the details are; if not, why not?

Reply:

The Stock Exchange of Hong Kong Limited (SEHK) has studied earlier this year a similar proposal in a report of the Working Group on Corporate Governance set up by the Hong Kong Society of Accountants. The proposal is one amongst many in the report and would require all listed companies to appoint a chief finance officer who is a professional accountant to the board of directors. The SEHK has concluded that there is no immediate need to implement the proposal because -

- (a) under the Companies Ordinance, every company is required to cause to be kept proper books of account as are necessary to give a true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs. It is the directors' responsibility to ensure that the financial statements give a true and fair view and that competent and sufficient personnel or other resources are devoted for this purpose; and

- (b) under the Companies Ordinance and the SEHK Listing Rules, every listed company must appoint independent professional accountants as auditors who must verify, in accordance with auditing standards, whether the financial statements of the company are in compliance with accounting standards and give a true and fair view. Therefore, the audit requirement has already provided a check on a company's compliance with the accounting standards.

In addition, the SEHK has also reviewed the listing rules of many other exchanges for similar requirements and has learnt that these exchanges also do not have any mandatory requirement for the appointment of an accountant as finance officer of a listed company.

The Administration is of the view that from a public interest angle, it is the external audit requirement (and the separation of duties) which would assure the quality of financial statements prepared by the company, rather than the qualification of the persons responsible for the finance function within the company. Having regard to this and against the background of the SEHK's study mentioned above, the Administration has no plans at this stage to request the SEHK and the Securities and Futures Commission to consider introducing regulations requiring all listed companies to engage professional accountants at the senior management level.

Finally, the SEHK Listing Rules do not require that the secretary of a listed company must be either a professional accountant, lawyer or Chartered Secretary. Instead, it also allows the secretary to be an individual who, by virtue of his academic or professional qualification or relevant experience, is, in the opinion of the SEHK, capable of discharging the functions. There is at present also no requirement for a listed company to have an audit committee.

End

Drivers are encouraged to switch off engines while waiting

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Following is a question by the Hon John Tse 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 whether it has considered introducing legislation requiring motorists to switch off the engines of vehicles while waiting so as to reduce vehicle emissions, thus causing less air pollution; if not, why not?

Reply:

Mr President,

We are considering the practicability of legislation to require motorists to switch off the engines of their vehicles during waiting time. To this end we are gathering information about regulatory controls elsewhere and shall examine the likely impact of such control measures on the operating practice of various transport modes. In the meantime, we are also planning to launch a publicity campaign to encourage drivers to switch off their vehicles while waiting.

End

Issue of ID cards to non-BDTCs

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Following is a question by the Hon Henry Tang Ying-yen 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 whether any non-British Dependent Territories citizen with less than seven years' residency in the territory was issued with a Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card in the past; if so, what the reasons for this were, and the number of cases in which Hong Kong Permanent Identity Cards were issued to such persons in each of the past 5 years?

Reply:

Mr President,

Hong Kong Permanent Identity Cards are issued to persons who have the right of abode in Hong Kong. The categories of persons who are Hong Kong permanent residents are defined in Schedule 1 to the Immigration Ordinance, Cap. 115.

Category 3 in Schedule 1 comprises Commonwealth citizens who immediately before 1 January 1983 was a British subject married or had been married to, or was a child of, a person who immediately before 1 January 1983 was :-

- (i) a British subject who was born in Hong Kong;
- (ii) a British subject by naturalisation in Hong Kong; or

- (iii) a British subject by registration in Hong Kong under section 7(2) of the British Nationality Act 1948.

These persons may not be able to acquire the Hong Kong British Dependent Territories citizen status under the current British Nationality Act which entered in force on 1 January 1983 but they are Hong Kong permanent residents as defined in Schedule 1. Thus they are issued with Hong Kong Permanent Identity Cards regardless of how long they have resided in Hong Kong.

The number of Hong Kong Permanent Identity Cards issued in each of the past five years is as follows:-

1992	421,571
1993	458,979
1994	500,961
1995	503,702
1996 (January-October)	517,607

The Immigration Department does not keep a separate record of the number of Hong Kong Permanent Identity Cards issued to Hong Kong permanent residents who are non-British Dependent Territories citizens and who have resided in Hong Kong for less than seven years.

End

Ex-gratia allowance for Lam Tin shop tenants

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

Question:

A group of Lam Tin Estate Grade B shop tenants affected by the Housing Authority (HA)'s Comprehensive Redevelopment Programme have recently lodged a complaint with the Office of the Commissioner for Administrative Complaints to express their discontent with the method of calculating the ex-gratia payment adopted by the Housing Department (HD). The shop tenants pointed out that the tenancy cards signed between the former Resettlement Department (RD) and the tenants did not specify the areas of the shops premises concerned, and that the area of the shop premises specified in the Light Refreshment Restaurant Licences issued to these shop tenants by the Urban Council was determined by reference to the floor area of the shop premises in accordance with the Food Business (Urban Council) By-laws (Cap. 132). However, when calculating the ex-gratia payment for these shop tenants, the HD has not included the area of the frontal section of the shop premises. According to the HD, this was because rent had not been charged in respect of the area of the frontal section of the shop premises in the past. In this connection, is the Government aware of:

- (a) the reasons for the HA not issuing another type of tenancy cards to the shop tenants to clarify the floor area and the grading of the shops when the HA took over the public housing estates from the former RD;
- (b) whether the HD keeps copies of the business licences or related documents obtained by the shop tenants, so that the floor area of the shop premises can be obtained from such documents;
- (c) the reasons for the HD and the Urban Council having different criteria for determining the size of the same shop premises, and which of the sizes determined should be regarded as accurate if a discrepancy occurs;
- (d) the justification for not charging rents in respect of the frontal section of the shop premises in the past, and whether rates have been charged in respect of the frontal section of these shop premises; and
- (e) the number of appeal cases lodged by Grade B shop tenants who were dissatisfied with the method of calculation of the ex-gratia payment since the implementation of the Comprehensive Redevelopment Programme in 1988, and the outcome of such appeals?

Answer:

Mr President,

After the merger of the former Resettlement Department (RD) with the Housing Authority in 1973, there was a proposal to replace the tenancy cards used by the RD by a new form of tenancy agreement. The proposal was dropped owing to strong protests from tenants to maintain the status quo.

2. It has been the practice of the Housing Department in calculating the area of shops in Group B estates not to include the frontal section. As a result, rent is charged only on the lettable area of the shop, and ex-gratia allowance is also calculated on the same basis.
3. Government Departments and independent organisations are responsible for drawing up their own operational guidelines, and for implementing them through appropriate statutory and administrative arrangements. Thus separate rules, regulations and statutory requirements may be adopted. It is therefore not meaningful to say that a particular method of determining the size of shop premises is more "accurate" than another method.

4. The Housing Department does not keep copies of business licences or related documents issued by other Departments.
5. The Rating and Valuation Department charges rates for the use of the frontal section of a shop as rates are normally based on the actual area of occupation.
6. Since the Comprehensive Redevelopment Programme began in 1988, no shop tenant has appealed against the Housing Department's method of calculating ex-gratia allowances, particularly as the allowance is not a statutory form of compensation.

End

Workload statistics of community psychiatric nurses

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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:

Is the Government aware:

- (a) the current numbers of psychiatric outpatients and community psychiatric nurses respectively in each of the hospital clusters of the Hospital Authority (HA);
- (b) the average daily number of cases handled by each community psychiatric nurse in public hospitals, together with a breakdown of the categories of such cases; and
- (c) whether the HA will provide more resources so as to improve the psychiatric service in public hospitals; if so, what the details are?

Reply:

Since workload statistics are kept by the Hospital Authority on the basis of attendance rate rather than number of patients, a breakdown showing the total number of psychiatric out-patient attendance and community psychiatric nurses in each of the hospital clusters is provided below -

Hospital Cluster	Psychiatric Out-patient Attendance in 1996-97	No of Community Psychiatric Nurses
Hong Kong East	33,853	6
Hong Kong West	37,522	4
Kowloon East	24,090	4.5
Kowloon Central	34,603	20*
Kowloon West	750	
New Territories South	111,784	11*
New Territories North	56,679	
New Territories East	21,088	

* Community psychiatric nurses share the caseload within these hospital clusters.

The average daily number of home visits made by each community psychiatric nurse was 2.4 in 1995/96. The frequency of home visits will tend to vary according to individual circumstances but in general, each patient will be visited once every three to four weeks. Apart from home visits, community psychiatric nurses also provide direct assistance or advice to patients, their families and other community carers through telephone consultation. About 80% of the patients involved are suffering from schizophrenia, while the other 20% are related to depression, anxiety neurosis and substance abuse. Home visits may sometimes be carried out jointly by two community psychiatric nurses to provide quality management, particularly for initial visits, crises intervention or patients with relapsing symptoms, and to reduce potential risks associated with remote locations.

The Hospital Authority has identified the need to improve medical services for psychiatric patients as a priority area. To this end, new initiatives are being considered in its annual plan for 1997/98 to enhance community psychiatric service, to develop psychiatric rehabilitation service and forensic psychiatric service, to improve psychiatric coverage to general hospitals as well as to establish comprehensive child and adolescent psychiatric services.

End

Legal aid cases handled by private sector lawyers

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Following is a question by Dr the Hon David Li Kwok-po and a written reply by the Chief Secretary, Mrs Anson Chan, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question: It is learnt that the Legal Aid Department will issue formal warnings to lawyers practising in the private sector who do not handle legal aid cases in a professional manner. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) how the Legal Aid Department determines whether or not a lawyer in the private sector handles legal aid cases in a professional manner;
- (b) of the proportion of legal aid cases assigned to lawyers in the private sector to the total number of legal aid cases in each of the past three years;
- (c) of the total expenditure on fees paid to lawyers in the private sector handling legal aid cases in each of the past three years; and
- (d) of the number of complaints received by the Legal Aid Department regarding the professional misconduct of private sector lawyers in each of the past three years; and of the findings of the investigation into these complaints?

Reply:

Mr President,

- (a) Lawyers in the private sector handling legal aid cases are expected to observe the rules governing their conduct as set out in the codes of conduct issued by the professional legal bodies and in the relevant legislation, and to exercise professional skill, care and diligence in the discharge of their duties and obligations towards their clients. All cases assigned out to lawyers in the private sector are monitored by the Legal Aid Department and the lawyers concerned also have to make regular reports to the Department.
- (b) In the past three years, about 75% of civil legal aid cases were assigned to lawyers in private practice. The details are as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1994	79%
1995	70%
1996 (January - October)	75%

As regards criminal legal aid cases in the same period, on average 37% of such cases were assigned out to solicitors in the private sector to act as instructing solicitors. The details are as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1994	36%
1995	41%
1996 (January - October)	37%

In the past three years, on average 83% of criminal cases were also assigned to barristers in the private sector to act as advocates in Courts. The details are as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
1994	70%
1995	91%
1996 (January - October)	87%

- (c) In the past three years, on average about \$210 million a year has been spent on legal costs on cases assigned to lawyers in the private sector. The details are as follows:

<u>Financial Year</u>	<u>Legal costs</u>
1993/94	\$180.8 million
1994/95	\$212.5 million
1995/96	\$238.3 million

- (d) Hitherto, the Legal Aid Department has not kept statistics on the number or the nature of complaints against assigned lawyers. However, no assigned lawyer has been removed from the Legal Aid Panel for professional misconduct. The Legal Aid Department now intends to keep and analyse such information systematically as part of its computerization programme. This plan is currently being considered in the context of the Feasibility Study of the Legal Aid Department's Information Systems Strategy.

End

Management responsibility of MACs in HOS estates

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Following is a question by the Hon Miss Lau Wai-hing, Emily and a written reply by the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Michael Suen, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

It is learnt that any person (including a Legislative Councillor) or organisation wishing to deliver printed materials into the letter boxes of residents in Home Ownership Scheme estates, or to mount publicity boards in these estates, has to obtain the prior consent of the mutual aid committees (MACs) of the estates concerned. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether these MACs, which are non-statutory bodies, have the right to prevent Legislative Councillors from distributing printed materials such as their work reports to the residents in these estates?

Reply:

MACs are residents' organisations formed by owners and tenants of the same buildings. They have responsibility, among other things, for the proper management of the buildings concerned.

There are no provisions in the law and in the MACs' constitutions for MACs to restrain distribution to residents of information material from Legislative Council members or, for that matter, from any other persons and organisations. However, MACs may do so at the request of the owners and tenants of the building or if they had consulted and obtained prior authorisation from them.

End

Compilation of the Hang Seng London Reference Index

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

Question:

Does the Government know:

- (a) which organisation is responsible for compiling the Hang Seng London Reference Index (the Index) which reflects the price movements of Hong Kong stocks traded in London;
- (b) whether the authority concerned will consider asking the organisation concerned to publish daily the movement of the Index and transaction details of Hong Kong stocks traded in London for public reference; if not, why not; and
- (c) whether the authority concerned has considered the possibility of the Index being exploited as a tool for market manipulation?

Answer:

- (a) The Hang Seng London Reference Index (the Index) is compiled by the HSI Services Limited (the company), a subsidiary of the Hang Seng Bank Limited, which is also the publisher of the Hang Seng Index.
- (b) Neither the Administration nor the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) have plans to ask the company to publish daily the movement of the Index and transaction details of Hong Kong stocks traded in London, not only because the SFC has no regulatory authority over the company, but also because many other service providers are already publishing a variety of transaction information including the ones mentioned in the question.
- (c) A financial index, such as the Hang Seng London Reference Index, primarily reflects the performance of its constituent stocks in a particular market and would have no greater influence over the market than the trading activities of its constituent stocks. There are a variety of factors affecting the performance of Hong Kong stocks and the level of related indices, including the state of our economy and the world's leading economies, movements in interest rates, and trading activities of Hong Kong stocks in other overseas markets. The possibility of the Index being exploited as a tool for market manipulation is no higher than that inherent in the actual trading of its constituent stocks.

End

Cook duties at police stations

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Following are a question by Dr 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:

- (a) of the number of police officers deployed to work as cooks in police stations, and the average monthly salary of these officers;
- (b) of the qualifications for the post of cook in police stations and whether, in the recruitment advertisement for police officers mention is made that police officers may be deployed to work as cook in police stations; and
- (c) whether the posts of cook in police stations can be filled by non-police officers; if not, why not?

Reply:

Mr President,

- (a) There are a total of 139 police officers consisting of 2 Station Sergeants, 14 Sergeants and 123 Police Constables working as cooks. Their mid-point monthly salary for 1996/97 are \$27,415 for Station Sergeants, \$22,010 for Sergeants, and \$15,980 for Police Constables.
- (b) It is not mentioned in the recruitment advertisement that police officers recruited may be deployed to work as cooks. Cooking skill is not an entry requirement for police officers.
- (c) The Police plan to civilianise or contract out catering services including cook duties at all Police stations in phases. However, a number of Police cooks will be retained to perform catering services for Field Patrol Detachment units which operate on a 24 hour basis and inside restricted areas as well as to provide emergency catering services in internal security situations.

Housing Society provides flats for public housing

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

Question :

Does the Government know:

- (a) of the total number of rental flats provided by the Hong Kong Housing Society (the Society) to the Hong Kong Housing Authority for allocation to the applicants on the Public Housing Waiting List in the past five years;
- (b) whether the Society will continue to make rental flats available for rehousing people affected by the Urban Renewal Scheme; if so, how the Society will determine the number of such flats; and
- (c) whether the Society will reduce the number of rental flats to be produced in its development plan for the next five years; if so, what the reasons are and whether this will aggravate the problem of an inadequate supply of public rental flats?

Answer:

Mr President,

In the past five years (1991-92 to 1995-96), the Hong Kong Housing Society provided about 3,100 rental flats for allocation to applicants on the Waiting List maintained by the Housing Authority.

2. In the next five years (1996-97 to 2000-01), the Hong Kong Housing Society will build 3,200 rental flats, with 2,000 earmarked for rehousing people affected by urban renewal projects of the Land Development Corporation.

3. Subject to the provision of suitable land by the Government, the Hong Kong Housing Society will continue to produce rental flats. The combined production of public rental flats planned by the Housing Authority and the Housing Society over the six-year period up to March 2001 will enable us to meet the target of producing 141,000 public rental flats.

End

Provision of public transport facilities of the new airport

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

Question:

Will the Government inform this Council whether it has drawn up plans regarding the provision of public transport facilities during the period between the opening of the new airport at Chek Lap Kok in April 1998 and the commissioning of the Airport Railway in June 1998?

Reply

Mr President,

The consultants for the Transport Study for the New Airport have put forward a number of proposals regarding the provision of public transport facilities if the new airport were opened in advance of the commissioning of the Airport Railway. However, the Mass Transit Railway Corporation has a good track record of completing projects ahead of schedule and within budget. It is liaising with the Airport Authority with a view to, if necessary, accelerating the works of the Airport Railway to match the opening of the new airport. We will closely monitor progress on the Airport Railway project and acceleration measures and will continue to keep the need for contingency public transport plans under review.

End

Hospital Authority Head Office staff

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Following is a question by the Hon Mr Michael Ho and a written reply by the Secretary for Health and Welfare, Mrs Katherine Fok, in the Legislative Council today (Wednesday):

Question:

The Hospital Authority (HA)'s plan to reduce the number of staff in various ranks in the HA Head Office has been implemented for several years. Is the Government aware of:

- (a) the respective numbers of directorate staff (equivalent to level 1 or above of the Directorate pay scale in the Civil Service) and non-directorate staff in the HA Head Office in each of the four financial years from 1992/93 to 1995/96; and
- (b) the target of the reduction in the establishment of the HA Head office, and the date when this target will be achieved?

Reply:

A breakdown showing the number of directorate staff and non-directorate staff in the HA Head Office in the past four years is provided below -

Year	Number of Staff (as at September)		Total
	Directorate	Non-directorate	
1993	31	509	540
1994	34	490	524
1995	34	453	487
1996	32	420	452

HA's target is to reduce the total number of staff in the Head office to 400 by the first quarter of 1998.

End