



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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/Green light



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Governor's public meeting

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The following is a transcript of the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten's public meeting held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre today (Friday):

Governor: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. I think I am a bit of an anti-climax after that music - if you're expecting Rocky to arrive. As long as it wasn't the theme tune for Mission Impossible.

As you know, after my policy address each year I have held public meetings and done phone-in programmes and so on, as well as answering questions in the Legislative Council, so that people in Hong Kong from every walk of life can have the opportunity of asking me questions about the government's programme, telling me where we are going wrong, telling me what more you'd like to do.

We have produced, this week, about as much information as you would find in the Encyclopaedia Britannica. We have produced not only my policy speech in the Legislative Council but also the progress report in which we try to set out how much we have done to achieve the agenda which I spelt out four years ago, and we set out some of our commitments for developing policy in the coming year.

Now we think in the government that it is not a bad record. We've cut crime, cut taxes, managed to keep our economy strong, expanded many of our welfare programmes, cut inflation, cut unemployment from the peak of last year. But we recognise and recognise very clearly, that you should never be complacent in government, that the only motto you should have is to try to do better, and that there are a lot of things which you think we should be doing more efficiently or we should be doing in greater numbers.

It is of course the case this year that I can't spell out the sort of agenda which the Chief Executive of the Special Administrative Region will set for himself or herself. It would be entirely wrong of me to try to do that but I do obviously have some views about what I hope will keep Hong Kong strong and successful in the coming years, and we might explore some of those during this evening's question and answer.

Now perhaps I can just mention one or two ground rules. Things go a bit faster these days with this simultaneous interpretation but nevertheless, we've got a limited time - we've got about an hour, an hour and a bit - and we want to try to get in as many questions as possible during that period. So the first thing I would like everybody to agree with me about is that questions should be short and people should ask questions rather than to make long statements about their views on the world. Now does everybody agree we have short questions? Yes? All right, I take that as enthusiastic endorsement.

So we have short questions and all you need to do when I've called you - I will try to call two or three people at a time and if you come up to whichever is the nearest microphone - and you may have to wait while a couple of other people get in their questions - but if you come up, I will call you sort of one at a time, and I will try to take each question as it arises.

The one other thing I should say in advance is that we have got just about the best interpreters in Hong Kong trying to make sense of what I say, and I have to admit that apparently I am very difficult to translate, so they are doing an extremely good job and I think before they even do it we should give them a round of applause.

All right, now just over an hour and it is for you to ask the questions and for me to try to answer them. Now can I have a show of hands. Can we have one in the front row, can we have then the gentleman in the green striped shirt there.

Question (in Cantonese): Mr Governor, as a disabled person, I must express gratitude to you in particular, because in the past four years you have done a lot for the disabled in terms of transport facilities and employment. But also in this year's policy address you have made special mention and you have urged the Chief Executive Designate in future to give equal opportunities to the disabled, so I would like to thank you in particular for that.

Now I have a simple suggestion to make. I hope in the coming year when we have the bauhinia or the peony flowers, I hope you will make special arrangements for the disabled to visit the Government House. I am not asking for a privilege, just that we do need special arrangements otherwise we won't be able to enjoy those flowers at Government House. And I hope this arrangement would not be extended only to the disabled just like that, I just want people in Hong Kong to realise that when there are special arrangements for the disabled, other people would be inconvenienced as well.

So I hope next time when you open up Government House it won't be just on Sundays; what about opening up on Fridays and Saturdays as well so that more people will be able to enjoy the flowers in Government House. Of course for the disabled, perhaps you could make arrangements for them to visit on Friday, and then on Saturday and Sunday more other people could visit Government House and this way we will be able to achieve equal opportunities for all.

Governor: First of all can I say something about your initial remarks about programmes for people with disabilities. We have started, but there is still a long way to go, as anybody with a disability knows. I think that it should be one of our aims in this community to give a lead in Asia for providing people with a disability with the best possible opportunities to live a full life and make a full contribution to the rest of the community. We have made legislative changes: the discrimination legislation. We have made practical proposals for improving the facilities for people with disabilities. We have - and I think it has been particularly important - we have, I think, managed to encourage the transport operators to improve facilities for the disabled. I think that in some respects we have had least success, though we have made some progress, in providing more employment opportunities for those people with a disability.

You find, interestingly, that one employer in a sector has a very good record and other employers have terrible records. The government has to do more as well, so there is plenty more for us to do and I very much hope that you will all go on lobbying as effectively and courteously and vigorously as you have over the last few years.

Now your specific proposal. We have tried to open up Government House for more people so that more people can come in and see it. It is used pretty well once a week now for outside charities. And we have - which have been very successful - regular performances by our outstanding Conservatoire in Hong Kong, the Academy of Performing Arts, who give public concerts which anybody can come to.

In addition, for many years, when the azaleas are at their best, when the garden is looking at its most beautiful, the garden has been opened for a day to members of the public. What we were proposing to do in 1997, as it is not quite like other years, is to open for a whole week-end so we can have two days for people to come in. But in view of your interesting proposal, I will see whether we can open for an extra afternoon or day so that people with a disability can have a chance of looking around without maybe the jostle and the queuing which would be involved otherwise.

There is just one difficulty with it: while we can provide ramps for stairs in the house, the main view, the best view of the azaleas, is on that long range of steps going all the way down, and I think we would find it difficult to provide wheelchair access all the way down, but we could certainly provide it at the bottom and at the top. So we will look at that and let you know and let the newspapers know when we are going to do it, and get in touch with all the voluntary organisations who would be interested.

Question (in Chinese): Mr Governor, now I very much hoped that on employees retraining programme you would add in new elements. That is progressive interest loan fund to replace some of the CSSA payments so that for the unemployed they would get actual support and relief?

Governor: I think that's an extremely interesting proposal. A very interesting suggestion and of course one can think of welfare services systems, training systems elsewhere in the world which do precisely that. It's sometimes a subject of controversy, but I think it's a useful bridge to get people back into work.

Can I say this in addition. We have carried out a review of our overall training programmes and the VTC, as you may know, is responsible for training about 100,000 people every year, either part-time or full-time, and we're looking as well at the work of the retraining board. We haven't completed that review yet, but as soon as we have completed it we'll go out to consultation as we are doing with the review on the training council. And in the course of that review I'll give you this undertaking that we'll look specifically at the proposal which you've put forward. Indeed if you'd like to leave your name with one of my colleagues in the Administration on the way out, we'll make sure that somebody talks to you in greater detail about your proposal so that in the review we can give it the attention which it deserves.

One other point. Training and retraining are a vital part of Hong Kong's future economic prospects. I think that increasingly a community's prosperity is going to be determined by the skill level and knowledge level in the country and we've got to move fast to make sure that we always improve and modernise our own training and retraining.

Question: Mr Patten, sir, I know that your mind must be focused on the next nine months in Hong Kong, but I would be very interested to ask you how your service in Hong Kong may have affected or influenced your own political outlook or your own philosophical outlook and what new ideas will you be taking back to UK with you in nine months' time?

Governor: Read my book! There was a crazy thing in a newspaper the other day which said that I was going to take six months leave from January 1997, in order to write a book. Well I might write a book one day, but it'll be after June 1997, rather than before.

To be serious and brief. There are three or four things which I will take away from Hong Kong with me which I think are extremely relevant to British and European politics.

The first is that part of Hong Kong's vitality is that people in Hong Kong still believe in progress. They still believe that you can make things better by your own efforts, week by week, month by month, year by year. People in Hong Kong don't, to borrow a rather crude English word, don't whinge. Over the years people have had plenty that they could whinge about but they've actually got on with life and created this astonishing success story and I think the first lesson I take back is that in Europe and perhaps the same is true in parts of North America, we should whinge less and get on with things rather more.

Secondly, while I think that there is still plenty of scope in Hong Kong for us to develop our welfare programmes and there will be people in this audience who will have 101 ideas of what we could do in addition to what we're doing already. I think I will go back from Hong Kong with a very strong view that public spending should form a smaller proportion of a community's income and the taxes should be lower if you want to encourage greater economic growth and greater economic dynamism.

When I started to say things like that in speeches outside Hong Kong some people thought it was rather controversial. I notice that it seems to be becoming a rather conventional piece of wisdom these days.

Thirdly, I take from Hong Kong the very clear view that it's possible to be an open community, it's possible to be an international-minded community while retaining a sense of identity and that's a point which perhaps has particular relevance to the debate in the United Kingdom about Britain's role in the European community.

So those will be three lessons, among others, that I'll take back with me. Oh, and there's one other and that is that there is a very close relationship in politics between principle and public administration.

Question (in Chinese): Mr Governor, now we are against changing public housing to HOS. We have a concerned group. We don't think public housing is a burden to tax payers, we have paid tax. Now you say 60 per cent of the people should own their own homes, so how do you arrive at the 60 per cent proportion? Do you want to make money by providing HOS? And also, for redeveloped public housing, now you make us move to older public housing because you want to redevelop public housing, so how are you looking after the interests of the lower sector?

Governor: In Hong Kong, at the moment, we put large numbers of resources into our public housing programmes, into housing as a whole and we have done for some years. But we still have housing problems. We have a situation in which, very often, you can find better-off people paying a lower proportion of their household income living in Housing Authority accommodation, while others are waiting five, six, seven years in less good, private rented accommodation, sometimes poorer, sometimes paying a higher proportion of their household income. And I think for everybody that raises substantial questions about whether we're running our housing programmes in the most effective and socially equitable way.

We also have in Hong Kong, I think, a real problem because despite the fact that people have been getting better-off, despite the fact that people have been earning more, it's still very difficult for some people who want to become home owners to afford the cost of home ownership.

Now those, I think, are the two biggest problems facing our housing administrators in the next few years. I am absolutely convinced that we need a good, substantial public rental housing programme in Hong Kong. I'm also convinced that that should provide as much as possible for those in need, for those who are elderly and need special accommodation, for other special groups and that we also need to give more help for people who want to own their own home.

Now at the moment we've got a housing programme which will provide about 140,000 public rental flats between now and the year 2001, over the next five years and a housing programme which will provide about 175,000 subsidised flats for ownership over the same period. That is, for a community this size, a pretty big programme, but it's still clearly not enough to meet the demands which I've already mentioned.

If I can say a word about the specific problem you mentioned, that is some housing blocks being redeveloped and moving from public rental to HOS. In those cases we are trying to ensure that those whose flats are being redeveloped are given new accommodation in, broadly speaking, the same district. We do have a huge programme of redevelopment of older property. I think I'm right in saying there are over 200 older blocks which are being redeveloped at the moment at considerable expense. I think we want to keep that programme going forward and we have to take account in that programme, not only of the needs of people who want to rent but of the needs of people who want to buy.

Finally, we're about to complete our long-term housing strategy review, which will be published in the next few weeks and what that will provide is the focus for a real debate in the community about where this community wants the housing priorities to be in the next few years. Every housing group will have a chance of contributing to that debate, every non-governmental organisation, as well as everyone else who's involved in housing in any way. So I hope you'll contribute, your group will contribute the sort of arguments that you've been putting this evening. Nothing's more important for a family's well-being, nothing's more important for a community's stability than good housing, so it's vitally important that we get the results of the housing strategy review right and I'm sure that my successor will be dealing with the consequences of that review over the next five or ten years.

Question: Mr Patten, let me first of all express my gratitude and appreciation to you, Mrs Patten and other members of the Patten family for representing Hong Kong with civility, dignity and good humour, Now after the compliments, criticism.

Okay, the question I am about to put to you concerns consumer protection which I think is woefully inadequate in Hong Kong. In your recent visits to Hong Kong areas have you noticed something very strange, very curious, going on? Do you notice these box-like protruding window-frames on the new housing developments? Do you know why they are there? They are there because the protruding area, the window-sills, now count as so-called living-areas, so that often when you buy into a flat you get less than 70 per cent of living-space, of useable space. Hong Kong consumers are asked to pay for this kind of what I consider rapacious commercial greed. I think Prince Charles would have something to say about the architecture too. It is stylistically uniform and uniformly ugly.

So in the next nine months of your governance please do something about it. You know the ridiculous situation is some of the old buildings have been recalculated to now become larger areas, principally because we do not have a net area in Hong Kong, we all use gross areas and this has made home-ownership so much more difficulty that you were talking about. It is now beyond the reach of most consumers in Hong Kong and I wish you would do something about it and please do not go gently into the good night.

Governor: Thank you. There is a group of elderly citizens just leaving. If they would like to leave behind - I might have accepted a petition already - but if they have got a petition or letter that they would like to leave behind for me, perhaps one of the stewards could collect it.

Well, it shows what a contentious issue housing is. I have certainly noticed the phenomenon you described. I have certainly noticed when I visited housing blocks myself the tendency nowadays to bring what used to be the terrace, the balcony, into the flat area. And I will ensure that your views on design are conveyed both to those who are undertaking the housing strategy review and to the Housing Authority as well. It is obviously a feature which affects both home ownership schemes and the Housing Authority public rental flats as well.

You are right about the importance of good housing design to quality of life. And you are right too about the importance of design in our housing strategy. I hope we can get things better. And Prince Charles does have views on the subject.

Question: Mr Governor, I have two questions for you. First of all about the general waiting-list. Now in your policy address a few years ago you said you would reduce the waiting time so that before 1997 those who are on the waiting-list could be offered public housing but in this year's policy address you have lengthened the waiting time again. So for HOS and for those on the general waiting-list could you work in tandem on both projects and speed them both up, because we are from the lower strata of the community, we do have difficulties with housing. So is it possible that we apply for both PRH and HOS at the same time; could that policy be made?

And also, for new immigrants - my second question - many of them are here and they bring their children with them. Now if they go to school, like kindergarten or primary, they have no difficulties but for those aged 13, 14 or 16, now they are unable to come to Hong Kong to be reunited with their parents because of schooling problems. So can I suggest that perhaps you work with the Chinese side. Now the parents are in Hong Kong now and then they have children aged 13 or 14 in China without anybody to look after them. So, Mr Governor, could you do something for the new immigrants because this is the major concern of the new immigrants, they are concerned that their children are left in China with no one to look after them? So, Mr Governor, could you pay attention to that problem please?

Governor: On the first question, our objective in the housing strategy so far has been to reduce the waiting-list from seven years to five years. It is still, in all conscience - I was just saying that we have been trying to reduce the waiting-list from seven to five years. I think we have got to about six-and-a-half. The objective is to get down to five by the end of the present planning period in 2001 but it is still a considerable time and it is why I said that we needed to look at some of our housing priorities because we are plainly not doing as well as we would like.

In some individual sectors we have managed to do better than that I think. We have been developing our programmes for rehousing the single-elderly. We made a commitment in 1993 that every single-elderly person on the housing waiting-list would be rehoused by 1997. There were 4,000 of them on the waiting-list when we made that commitment and we have so far rehoused about 3,500 so we have moved individual groups rather more rapidly than perhaps for the community as a whole. But we must obviously give the issue the priority which you say it deserves.

Secondly, new immigrants from China. Under the Basic Law there are of course many people at present living in China who will have the right of abode here in Hong Kong and rather than land the SAR Government with a substantial immigration problem in 1997 with a large number of people suddenly coming into Hong Kong, what we have tried to do is to increase the numbers over the last couple of years so there won't be a sudden influx in 1997. We have increased the number allowed in each day to 150 which means that about 55,000 are coming in every year. It does produce additional problems for the Housing Department, for the Education Department and so on, but nevertheless I think that the problems would be much more severe if we would just have let them pile up in 1997.

What we have been doing with all new immigrants from China is first of all giving them a booklet which explains to them how to try to get things done in Hong Kong: how you get your children educated, how you set about applying for the waiting-list for housing and how you go to the doctor if you are feeling ill. It gives them all that sort of practical information and that we try to give to people as soon as they arrive.

We have also been providing remedial help in schools for those for example with language difficulties who don't have good Cantonese or English, so that we can make it easier for them to integrate into our schooling system. And we are providing extra resources elsewhere for education because it is obviously one of the bigger problems.

I very much hope that by developing our programmes in that way we can give new immigrants from China the opportunity of contributing as fully and constructively to our community as previous immigrants from China have done. We must learn from some of the mistakes that perhaps we learnt in the past but we will certainly be developing our programmes as I have described and hope that we can deal with all those who have got the right to come and live in Hong Kong as rapidly as possible, without of course allowing people to jump queues in a way which would be regarded as unfair by people who have been waiting for a social service in Hong Kong for some time.

Question (in Chinese): (on estate management and election)

Governor: Well, as you've had all those previous opportunities, perhaps we could stop there, all right. Because you've asked quite a long question.

Question (in Chinese): I still have a few more things to say. Because about the Diaoyu Islands dispute.

Governor: One more, but we have an agreement that we we'd all have short questions.

Question (in Chinese): Yes, it would be the final question. Now Diaoyu Tai is actually the state guest house for China, I think this is a shame. For those who stay at the Diaoyu Tai guest house I think that they should feel that they are in occupied territory, they should feel that they have been living in occupied territory, that they have been raped by Japan. Now finally I would like to pay tribute to Mr David Chan, I would also wish you good health and thank you God.

Governor: Well, you seem to get quite a lot in that question and I hope that none of it was libellous.

First of all, the point you made about estate management, I'd like to look into that in some detail. There are, of course, owners rights in relation to estate management companies and you talked in particular about the problem of caretakers and security. I must say that we legislated a couple of years ago on caretakers, on age for example, because there were so many concerns being expressed to us about some inadequate caretakers. I'm sure most caretakers do an absolutely splendid job but there were some complaints about inadequacies in the system and there was quite a lot of pressure, not least in the Legislative Council, for us to legislate on the subject. But I'll look at your overall question about the relationship between the owners and an estate and the estate management company.

Incidentally, in the Housing Authority they're taking some quite radical measures to try to improve estate management and they will shortly be issuing a charter which will set out for tenants both what their rights are and in addition, what their obligations are, because I think a good and well managed estate needs people to recognise their obligations as well as their rights.

Secondly, you asked me whether there would be meetings like this in the future. I don't know whether there will be meetings exactly like this. Perhaps it's a question which members of the selection committee will, in due course, put to those who are candidates for the job of Chief Executive designate. I don't know, but what I do know is this sort of public interest in the way Hong Kong is governed, the way your money is spent, the way priorities are set in public programmes for you, this sort of interest isn't going to go away. It's part of the maturing of Hong Kong, as a caring, compassionate, responsible society and so I'm sure that at some stage in the future they'll be meetings like this.

Thirdly, you mentioned the Diaoyu Islands and the dispute. I'm sure everybody in this meeting this evening would want to offer our condolences to Mr Chan's family on his tragic death. I think his funeral is taking place this weekend.

I would just like to add one point. I know how very strongly many people feel about this particular issue and I know that there are some who feel very strongly about it who are intending to set off by boat this weekend for the islands. I do hope that they will take the very greatest care. I do hope that they will do everything possible not to put themselves or others in any physical danger, however strongly they feel about the issue in question.

And can I add one point, which I think is an indication of the responsibility and decency of this community. I know people feel strongly about the issue but with the exception of two incidents, which I think have been widely deplored by the media in Hong Kong and by the community as a whole, I think people have distinguished between their views on this dispute and their views on the contribution which the Japanese community makes to Hong Kong and which individual Japanese tourists and business people and so on make in Hong Kong. I don't think anybody in Hong Kong has an argument with individual Japanese members of our community or individual Japanese visitors. And I was pleased that there were some people handing out leaflets to Japanese tourists at the airport and making that point very explicitly. This is a decent and open society and we want it to stay that way.

Question (in Chinese): Mr Governor, thank you. I came from a THA. In the 1993 Policy Address you announced that by the end of 1996, there would be the completion of clearance of pre-1984 THA. I would like to thank you for that. So far there are four left to be dealt with.

So I have two questions. Firstly, Mr Governor, are you aware that there are still four THA's pending clearance? Do you know how many eligible tenants are living there?

And secondly, Mr Governor, I'd like to know whether you have directed your staff that in order to live up to your pledge something be done? Now the Housing Department has not yet made property settlement for these people and before they did that they actually terminated the tenancy unilaterally. They instructed the residents and tenants to live on their own or they would mobilise the police to evict them. I'm talking about residents from these four THA's, so that they could live up to the pledge you've made. I've got with me letter issued to THA tenants, issued by your subordinates of the Housing Department. Now this is the termination of tenancy notice and threatening letters that I've received. So Mr Governor, I hope you would be made aware of this problem.

Governor: Right. Can I answer the question about THA's. I made two commitments in 1992 and 1993, on temporary housing areas and I would like to have gone further. The two commitments I made was that first of all we would give everyone in 1993, who was living in a temporary housing area an offer of accommodation elsewhere in permanent housing before 1997, and secondly we said that we would get rid of, demolish, all the older temporary housing areas, the ones built before 1984, by 1996/97. On the first point, making people at least one offer of re-housing, we've offered I think about 85 per cent of the 61/62,000 people who were in temporary housing areas at that time, we've made about 85 per cent an offer of re-housing and we will hope to complete the job by the end of 1997. We can't, of course, force people to take the offers that are made, but equally we can't make an indefinite number of offers. I've been to one or two THA's where sometimes people have turned down five, six, seven, eight offers of re-housing and that does make it more difficult to clear the THA as rapidly as we would like.

Secondly, I am aware of the fact that there are four THA's left. Four of the older ones. It's still our intention to clear them all by the end of 1996/97. It's an important issue this. Previously the clearance programme of THA's didn't take any account of the age of the temporary housing area. What happened was that we cleared according to the Housing Authority's development needs. I thought that was wrong because obviously the older THA's provided much less reasonable accommodation. So we have been clearing all the older ones and the whole 14 will have gone by 1996/97. By the end of 1997, whereas there were 55 temporary housing areas in 1992, there will be just 12 left. I wish, and this is the point I started with, I wish that we could get rid of all of the temporary housing areas. Unfortunately, because we've got, as I mentioned earlier, still a large number of immigrants coming into Hong Kong, that hasn't been possible but I very much hope that the SAR Government will be able to complete the job by about the year 2000.

Question (in Chinese): I would like to thank you for allowing me to express my views for all these years. Now of course my views are in the interests of Hong Kong people. Mr Patten, I hope in the coming 200 odd days you will pay attention to the problem of unemployment in Hong Kong because of imported workers, a lot of people are now unemployed. Now the present Government's policy is that when anything happens you should always look after the local people first before you look after others. It's like if you win the Mark Six ticket, of course you will first of all take care of your own children before you look after your relatives. Now we have a high unemployment rate in Hong Kong. People are unemployed here but they can't turn to crime, they can't have unemployment relief, assistance. So I think the Government should not just look after the interests of employers. Employers have all the money they wish, they could pay more to get local workers. They shouldn't mind paying that much. Now just because they want to save money, so they are using cheap labour, that's why they're importing labour and at the end of the day Hong Kong people suffer because they are unemployed. Even if they do not turn to crime they will still add to the burden of tax payers. Hong Kong people do like to work. They attach much importance to their work. So in the next 200 odd days before you leave Mr Governor, I hope you'll pay attention to the workers in Hong Kong. You must work for the welfare of workers here. So that's why I'm speaking in the interests of Hong Kong people. What I said, I hope is in the interest of Hong Kong people. I wonder if you think I'm right or not?

Governor: I think they do! In the last nine or ten months we've fortunately seen unemployment, which had peaked, I think, at 3.6 per cent last November, come down to about 2.8 per cent. So unemployment has been coming down and by international standards is pretty low. Indeed by European or North American standards is very low. But that's not very much comfort if you're actually unemployed. For anyone who's unemployed the figure is 100 per cent and we need to help everybody who's unemployed back into a job as rapidly as possible.

We have, you OK? OK, I've just been saying that unemployment has been coming down from last year but if you're unemployed it's still not much comfort.

We've been trying to help in a number of ways. First of all, we've been trying to develop the programmes and the services provided by our employment department. The local employment services provided by the department have found about 12,000 jobs for people in the first six months of this year, matching people to vacancies and we've got a particular programme run by the local employment services called the Job Matching Programme which people apply to join and about 80 per cent of those who are registered with the Job Matching Programme, that's 80 per cent of the 4,000, found jobs in the first six months of the year. So we are, I think, developing more sensitive and more effective ways of getting people back to work because while there are 90,000 people unemployed in Hong Kong, there are probably 50 or 60,000 registered vacancies. So one wants to try to get the people into the vacancies as rapidly as possible.

We're also, as I mentioned earlier, reviewing our whole training and retraining effort, so that we can try to give people who may've lost one job because of industrial or technological change, for example in the textile industry or in printing, to develop a skill which they can use elsewhere.

And finally, we've tried to find a consensus between employers and labour as far as job importation is concerned. We've introduced a new supplementary labour scheme which is administered in effect by both employers and unions and I think whilst there have been some teething problems with it, and while there are some employers who think that we shouldn't have any restrictions, I think it's a scheme which by and large commands a broad measure of consent among employers representatives and union representatives.

So I hope in those sort of ways we've helped deal with the problem but overall the best way in which Hong Kong can produce more jobs, and we produce on average about 2.5 per cent more jobs every year, the best way we can do that is making sure that our economy remains as competitive as possible.

Question: Mr Governor, I represent a group of squatter residents. Now before March '96 - or rather you pledged in '92 that by March '96 all squatter-huts on Crown Land would be cleared. But now we are at the end of '96 - now we live in Diamond Hill, there are some 6,000 of us - still we have heard nothing, no news at all. In this policy address you said that by the end of March there were already arrangements but we have not heard any news about the clearance at all. Now we have been living in those huts for some three decades; they are dilapidated but none of us dare to refurbish them because of the pending clearance. So I hope you will live up to your pledge, I hope that you will be able to complete this task before you leave Hong Kong.

Governor: Well, as I think you know, I have visited Diamond Hill --

Question: Diamond Hill and Tai Ham Village.

Governor: Yes, I have visited there so I know the area that you are describing. I am just reminding myself that I think that we pledged, in 1992, to offer rehousing to all urban squatters who were on government land by March 1996. We have offered, I think, about 33,000 squatters rehousing but I will look at the particular issue that you raised as far as Diamond Hill is concerned. If you would like, I will come and have a look and meet you there. But I will certainly have a look at it myself with my Housing Department and see what the problem is.

Question: I would like to thank you for giving me this chance to speak. I have three simple questions for you. Now very often people make an analogy to say that the Motherland is our biological mother and then Britain is our adopted mother. And many of us in fact are very afraid that when our biological mother abuses us, then we turn to the adopted mother to stay a while, of course you won't welcome us, you won't welcome us to stay for a long time in any case. But when the biological mother beats the son, we just want to go over to your place for a visit just to let things calm down. Would you then accept us? Because if they just want to stay away a few days, let things calm down and then it will be all right. But if you don't even live up to the obligation, then in 50 years time you say you will have obligations for Hong Kong but if you can't even do that then you are not actually living up to that obligation.

The second question: Hong Kong is a clean community now, we have integrity, and I am worried that in future there could be corruption. So for the ICAC, is it possible that you give them more powers? Or what about for the independence of the judiciary, could that be enhanced as well? That will protect those in the lower strata as well as the businessmen. Because we don't want to see corruption; that is a major trauma for society. A place could become corrupt and it wouldn't be desirable.

So, Mr Governor, finally I would like to thank you for being so democratic in Hong Kong, for showing us what democracy is. I wouldn't know in the past that I could actually speak to someone so high up face to face like this. We never had anything like a question-time before. I hope after 1997 we will still have that. And also, Mr Governor, you went on to a radio phone-in programme and it shows that you are very approachable and you care about us, and we really thank you for that. Now in the past I could only look up to see the nostril of senior officials but now when you come here we could actually talk to you, we could shake hands with you, so we really appreciate that.

So, Mr Governor, in things like performance pledges you also make us feel very good because I think now civil servants are much more courteous and more efficient as well, especially for the Transport Department in Queensway, their efficiency has been much enhanced. I really like to thank you and them.

And finally, last question. Mr Governor, now you have started a democratic trend in Hong Kong. Of course you would like to know whether we could eventually have universal suffrage in Hong Kong and if that is the case, would you come to Hong Kong and help in the election and help canvassing for instance? Or if you go back to Britain and join the election for the Prime Ministership I promise, as I said, I would help you in that campaign.

Governor: Thank you very much indeed. First of all your analogy. I am sure that senior Chinese leaders wish to win the hearts and minds of people in Hong Kong as well as just accomplish the handover of sovereignty in 1997. They could not, in my judgment, have any other objective. 1997 is an immensely important and patriotic moment in Chinese history. I understand that for many people they see it inevitably as a wiping clean of the slate on which some of the things done by the European imperial powers in China in the 19th century is written. So it is an important time for Chinese leaders and I am sure that they will want to manage Hong Kong so successfully, or rather to allow Hong Kong to manage itself so successfully, that people will regard the handover in 1997 as the beginning of an even more successful and happy chapter in Hong Kong's story. That is my sincere hope.

I know that many people believe that Britain should have provided everyone in Hong Kong with a full British passport which would have enabled them to have the right of abode in the UK if things didn't go as well as they would have liked. I have myself argued that case in Britain and in Hong Kong, and Lord Wilson before me argued that case. We have been criticised in Britain and we have been criticised by Chinese officials for doing so. We have, I think, managed - and it was particularly to the credit of Lord Wilson that he managed this - to provide more passports for people from Hong Kong and we have got the British Government, recently, to behave, I think, sensibly and honourably over questions like visa-free access for people from Hong Kong. I am sorry that we haven't accomplished more but I very much hope that the fact that we haven't accomplished more won't ever be a cause for greater condemnation because I hope that things will go well here in Hong Kong.

Secondly, of course we have to continue to give the fight against corruption a very high priority. I think the whole community supports the ICAC who do an excellent job. I guess it is the only anti-corruption body in the world which is the subject of a popular television programme. They do an outstanding job. They have shown great integrity over the years. And all of us know - all of us know - that the moment we lower our guard, the moment we start on that slippery slope to cronyism and corruption again, Hong Kong's success story will start to have big question-marks raised against it.

Thirdly I would like to pay a tribute to the changes which the civil service has carried through in the last few years. I think we have become a more open and accountable government. I think that we have now, as a result, got an even better civil service. We've got the performance pledges, the customer liaison groups, we've got a strengthened Commissioner of Administration and so on. I think all those changes have meant that Hong Kong has an excellent public service which is serving the community as well as the community deserves.

It is important to remember that you pay for government, you pay for the civil service, so we have got the responsibility of making sure that we deliver a decent quality of service for your money.

It is a great privilege for anybody to be able to work in the civil service for their community. We have got marvellous people working in public service which is now, as you know - while it has quite a few expatriates in it - it is now, as you know, at the top levels almost entirely local. I only have one colleague who is not a local Hong Konger, so it is a Chinese administration running a Chinese city and doing it, I think, extremely well.

And lastly, it is of course possible under the Basic Law to move to a position where there is, for example, election of all 60 seats directly in the Legislative Council. That is a matter which is going to be determined by the people of Hong Kong in 2007 and the years after that. I very much hope that I see the day when that happens and I will count it greatly to the credit of China and to the credit of people in Hong Kong who have fought bravely for Hong Kong and argued bravely for Hong Kong when it does happen.

I was thinking when I came into the hall tonight that this was probably the last public meeting that I would hold in Hong Kong and conceivably the last public meeting that I would have anywhere. But in view of your comments, I will have to think about the subject again because if I ever hold any public meetings in the UK I'd of course very much like you on the team.

Question (in Chinese): You said in your policy address that all the THAs would be cleared by 1997, but you have gone back on your pledge. So are you deceiving the public of Hong Kong? You say you have to retain the THAs so that there would be housing for new immigrants but I would say new immigrants actually are not eligible for THAs. They actually live in squatter-huts but then squatter-huts would be cleared as well. So you said you want to keep the THAs for new immigrants. I think you are just trying to use that as an excuse because there is delay in the clearance programme of THAs. So, I would like to take this opportunity to ask you, Mr Governor, about this problem.

And also, now on Employees Retraining Programme. I have joined that for over a year and during that time I have also approached the Labour Department for assistance but then I have not been successful. I hope there could be assistance.

Governor: If you leave one of my officials your name and address, we will get in touch with the Employment Department and see whether we can provide more service to you, see if we can help you in any way get into employment. We are pretty successful at getting people who have been through the Employees Retraining Board into jobs but we will in your case -- Perhaps somebody sitting next to you could just tell you afterwards what I have said.

Secondly on THAs - I don't want to go all through the answer that I gave earlier - we didn't actually promise in 1992-93 to get rid of all THAs, though I would have like to have done so. The two promises that we made then, we have kept: on offers of rehousing and on getting rid of the older THAs. And we will, by the end of 1997, have got rid of 43 out of 55. I very much hope that we can get rid of the others as quickly as possible. And I can promise you there is a problem with recent immigrants. The last THA I went to I met three families who were recent immigrant families and I think you will find, if you go round a lot of THAs yourself, that there are quite a lot of people there who are recent immigrants.

We do of course have plans to improve the quality of the remaining THAs and we are trying to provide temporary accommodation in some of our older rental blocks, giving them a bit of refurbishment and using them for those who are in interim housing. I hope that will mean that there is a bit of an improvement in the quality of interim housing which I wholly accept does not provide a long term decent solution for the families who live in those areas.

Now last, and you will have to be very brief, otherwise I will have to go - my supper is getting cold.

Question (in Chinese): Thank you, Mr Governor, for allowing me to speak for just five minutes.

Governor: No, no, no, not five minutes. It is one brief question, not five minutes. One brief question, otherwise I will just have to go.

Question (in Chinese): (personal comments on the Governor)

Governor: Okay.

End

Hong Kong's future is our future: CS

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The civil service has both the commitment and the resolve to make a success of Hong Kong's future, the Chief Secretary, Mrs Anson Chan, said at a business luncheon today (Friday).

"I think it is clear to all of us in the civil service that the preservation of our way of life, the maintenance of Hong Kong's promised autonomy and securing our future success is very much a matter for us, the people of Hong Kong," she said.

"For us, Hong Kong is our home, and Hong Kong's future is our future."

She said the civil service had demonstrated its professionalism and commitment in four important ways:

- * First, referring to the Progress Report published on September 30, Mrs Chan said she was proud to lead a civil service whose very high standards of professionalism and dedication had achieved a 93 per cent success rate in implementing the outstanding policy commitments.
- * Second, Mrs Chan said the announcement last Wednesday (October 2) of 410 new policy commitments, the highest ever, would help to improve the quality of life for the whole community.
- * Third, Mrs Chan said Britain, Hong Kong and China had concluded 660 agreements since 1984 and that these agreements, many of them detailed and technical, were a solid foundation for a successful transition.
- * Fourth, Mrs Chan described the preparations underway in the civil service to assist the Chief Executive (Designate). She said the Government was intended to provide effective and comprehensive assistance to the Chief Executive (Designate) from day one.

Mrs Chan emphasised that the civil service was still raising its standards and improving its services.

"I believe this is why the community continues to appreciate the professionalism and commitment of the Civil Service," said Mrs Chan.

End

Confidence in resolving transitional immigration issues

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The following press release is embargoed until 2000 hours today (Friday). The full text of the Secretary for Security's speech, which will be faxed later, is also embargoed until that time.

The Secretary for Security, Mr Peter Lai, today (Friday) expressed confidence in resolving the transitional immigration issues now under discussion with the Chinese side.

Discussions are continuing to clarify details concerning right of abode in the HKSAR (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region), on the production and issue of the SAR passport and on how to take forward negotiations with third countries on visa-free access for SAR passport holders.

"I hope we will be able to reach agreement rapidly, so that we can then embark on the exercise to set out all the detailed arrangements in clear and legal terms, to give confidence to those whose position are affected," he said.

Addressing a meeting jointly hosted by five Lions Clubs in Zone VI of District 303 Lions Club International Hong Kong and Macau, Mr Lai spoke on the policy areas of the Security Branch which are of particular concern to the community.

Noting that there are a lot of misunderstandings and concerns about the very complicated issue of right of abode, Mr Lai said that discussions were continuing with the Chinese side to clarify various details.

While the general principles on right of abode in the HKSAR are set out in Article 24 of the Basic Law, he said that in addition, the Chinese side had set out their official thinking in more detail in published documents, namely the Resolution passed by the NPC Standing Committee on the application of the Chinese Nationality Law in the HKSAR (May 15, 1996) and the "Views on the applications of Article 24 of the Basic Law in the HKSAR" adopted by the Preparatory Committee (August 10, 1996).

Mr Lai said that for the bulk of Hong Kong's population (including BN(O) passport holders), who did not have a second nationality, their position was secure since, by agreement with China, they had been accorded a right of abode in Hong Kong by an amendment to the Immigration Ordinance in 1986/87, and they could continue to enjoy this right thereafter.

For the small number, mainly the "ethnic minorities", who have no right of abode anywhere else in the world, Mr Lai said that their position was again secured by virtue of Article 24(2)(6) of the Basic Law.

The area where uncertainty still lies is in respect of the about half a million "non-Chinese nationals" who have a right of abode somewhere else. They include the so-called "returning emigrants", as well as the "genuine expatriates" who are long-established residents of Hong Kong.

Mr Lai said that the reason why the position of this category of people was uncertain was because their qualification for right of abode, as defined in the Basic Law, involved a combination of nationality and residence criteria.

"The residential criterion is governed, under Article 24(2)(4) of the Basic Law, by two factors: whether you have ordinarily resided in Hong Kong continuously for seven years; and whether, in the words of the Basic Law, you have taken Hong Kong as your place of permanent residence," he said.

While how to fulfil the first qualification is now reasonably clear, Mr Lai noted that the second qualification had attracted a great deal of confusion and concern and that even now there was some uncertainty as to how in practice this qualification would be applied.

"How these criteria will be applied is under discussion with the Chinese side. Our aim is to ensure that those who qualify for a right of abode can get it in as simple and easily understandable a manner as possible. I hope we will be able to clarify this soon," he said.

Turning to the SAR passport, Mr Lai said that discussions were continuing with the Chinese side over the detailed implementation of the agreement reached earlier this year on the production and issue of the SAR passport.

Under the agreement, the SAR passport will be issued only to permanent Hong Kong residents who are Chinese nationals and the Immigration Department of Hong Kong will have sole responsibility to approve the issue of the passport.

"The SAR passport is of a highly secure design and will be produced under strict control conditions in Hong Kong. After the new SAR passport specimen was introduced to third countries earlier this year, and the strict control procedures explained to them, no country is known to reject the SAR passport as an internationally accepted travel document.

"We are confident that we will be able to issue the new SAR passport in July 1997," he said.

In the meantime, Britain, Singapore and Western Samoa have announced publicly that SAR passport holders would enjoy the same visa-free access arrangements as BN(O) passport holders while Canada has agreed to give visa-free access to SAR passport holders in principle.

USA, Australia and New Zealand are inclined to treat the SAR passport no less favourably than the BN(O) passport. Japan has also said that it would treat the SAR passport differently from Chinese passports. No country has so far said that they would give less favourable treatment for the SAR passport than the BN(O) passport.

On the law and order situation, the Secretary pointed out that Hong Kong remained one of the safest metropolitan areas of the world, with a crime rate broadly comparable over the years to that of Singapore, and considerably lower than that in London, New York, or Tokyo.

The crime rate is also declining. During the first eight months of this year, as compared to the same period last year, Hong Kong's overall crime rate dropped by 13.7 per cent, the total number of reported crimes decreased by 11.5 per cent, and the total number of violent crimes dropped by 11.6 per cent.

On crimes committed by illegal immigrants (IIs), the situation was not as serious as some sensational reports resulting from a number of high profile cases would have it, he added.

"Indeed, in the first six months of this year, when compared to the same period last year, the number of IIs involved in robbery decreased by 8.4 per cent, those involved in burglary decreased by 13.5 per cent, and those involved in possession of offensive weapons decreased by 11.5 per cent.

"Also, the number of IIs involved in all crimes decreased from 2,519 in 1993 to 2,213 in 1995. In the first six months of 1996, the number of IIs arrested for crimes was 748, a decrease of 37 per cent when compared to the same period in 1995."

To deal with II criminals, Mr Lai said that Police had stepped up patrols in likely hiding places, and had set up a Mapping Team to comb the hillsides for II hideouts in country parks and remote areas.

The Secretary outlined a series of pro-active actions taken by the Government over the last few years in combating crime. These include :

- * An increase in Police front-line operational strength. For example, 1,550 additional policemen were put into front-line duties since 1994/95 and this trend is expected to continue ;
- * The strengthening of Police crime-fighting units, by (a) reorganising the then Organised Crime and Triad Group into an Organised Crime and Triad Bureau, and a separate Criminal Intelligence Bureau ; (b) strengthening the Narcotics Bureau for better intelligence ; and (c) strengthening Regional and District Anti-Triad Units to carry out more anti-triads operations ;
- * The modernisation of Police equipment to make them more efficient, including improvements to computer systems and communications equipment, better fire-arms and bullet-proof vests, and a new generation of Marine Police fleet ;
- * Legislative and administrative improvements, including the enactment of the Organised and Serious Crimes Ordinance, establishment of a witness protection programme, introduction of new legislations on change of identity of high-risk witnesses and tighter control of arms and ammunitions ; and
- * Improved co-operation and liaison with Chinese public security organs to deal with cross-border criminal activities.

Mr Lai added that in parallel with continuing efforts to improve the capability of the Police Force, the authorities were also embarking on a strategy to maintain the confidence and trust of the community in the Force.

"We aim to do so by strengthening the role of the Independent Police Complaints Council in monitoring and reviewing investigations into complaints against the Police, and improving the transparency and capability of Police investigations into such complaints.

"We are also fostering a service culture in the Police Force and developing a Force Anti-corruption Strategy aimed at ensuring a clean and corruption-free Police Force," he said.

On the VM issue, Mr Lai pointed out that over 9,000 VMs had been repatriated to Vietnam so far this year, as compared to 2,600 in the whole of last year. As of today, there are about 12,000 VMs in Hong Kong while the authorities are returning them to Vietnam at the rate of between 1,300 to 1,400 a month.

"From October onwards, we will progressively step up the pace of the Orderly Repatriation Programme, from the current rate of 600 to 700 per month to about 1,000 per month.

"We hope that there would be a corresponding increase in the rate of voluntary repatriation. If we are able to maintain this momentum, we should be able to clear the camps by July 1, 1997," he said.

However, difficulties still lie ahead, Mr Lai said. "We will continue to need the co-operation of the Vietnamese Government in clearing the 4,000 VMs not yet cleared for return to Vietnam, and to crack down on illegal new arrivals.

"The United Kingdom Government are, once again, assisting us to negotiate with the Vietnamese Government for ways to speed up clearances.

"We still need the UNHCR to continue their assistance programmes for Vietnamese in Hong Kong, including playing a full part in the Voluntary Repatriation Programme.

"We still need the understanding of the local community, to enable us to complete this humanitarian undertaking. We will need the assistance of the international community, in resettling the 1,300 screened-in refugees who are still in Hong Kong," he said.

"These represent our immediate challenge, and one which the Government are determined to face up to with vigour," he added.

End

Need to monitor child-related legislation acknowledged

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The Government has acknowledged the need to continue to monitor and improve child-related legislation and services but is of the view that the current framework serves Hong Kong well, Crown Solicitor, Mr Ian Wingfield, told the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva.

Mr Wingfield, leader of the Hong Kong Government team forming part of the British delegation, was responding a suggestion by a member of the Committee that an independent monitoring body should be set up to oversee the implementation of child policies.

The Committee, in a two-day hearing ended on Thursday (October 3, Geneva time) has examined Hong Kong's initial report submitted under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In reply to a question on human rights education, Mr Wingfield said topics on this issue had been incorporated into the school curriculum for students at both the secondary and primary level in Hong Kong.

He said topics relating to human rights were carried in such humanities subjects as social studies and economics and public affairs.

Also on education, a Committee member has expressed interest in how teachers could prepare themselves and the students for the changeover of sovereignty in 1997.

Mr Wingfield said to prepare teachers for the changes, the Education Department had been working with teacher education institutions and educational bodies in promoting the Basic Law in schools and the study of contemporary China in subjects like history, Chinese history and geography.

"At the same time, the department also organises education programmes for serving teachers to promote their knowledge of China through the teaching of relevant themes and topics in the primary and secondary curriculum," he said.

As to a question on education for disabled children and their access to school facilities, Mr Wingfield said the policy was for children with a disability to study in ordinary schools as far as possible and that with the enactment of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance, the right of people with a disability to have proper access to building was protected.

Some members have expressed concern over the problem of child abuse in Hong Kong.

Responding, Mr Wingfield said the Public Education Sub-committee on Child Abuse, comprising social work and education professionals, had launched a major publicity campaign to encourage early reporting of child abuse cases in 1995 and another one focusing on prevention of child sexual abuse in 1996.

As to a suggestion about a comprehensive review of legislation concerning the rights of the child, he said Legislation had been reviewed before the Convention was extended to Hong Kong, which resulted in the enactment of the Parent and Child Ordinance but that the process of review was a continuous one.

The issue of adolescent suicide was also raised by members.

In response, Mr. Wingfield said both the Government and subvented non-governmental organisations were providing counselling for adolescents in the form of a hot line service, school social work, out-reaching social work, and children and youth centres.

Committee members have asked a variety of questions relating to all sections of the initial report. The topics included breast-feeding, schooling and other services for Vietnamese children and illegal immigrant children.

At the end of the session, the Committee's chairperson, Mrs Akila Belembaogo, and other members praised Hong Kong for submitting an informative report detailing the situation of the rights of the child in the territory.

The delegation was also complimented for giving very useful information in replies to members' questions.

In members' individual conclusions, there was a suggestion that a monitoring body be set up to oversee the implementation of the Convention with particular regard to the best interest of the child.

Two members also suggested that the United Kingdom Government should be invited to make an immediate written response to the Committee's concluding observations after they were issued.

The concluding observations of the hearing are expected to be published in a month's time.

End

Arbitration (Amendment) Bill gazetted

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The Arbitration (Amendment) Bill 1996, which intends to extend the powers of arbitral tribunals in respect for the conduct of arbitration proceedings, was gazetted today (Friday).

The Bill also proposes to bring certain provisions of the existing ordinance relating to domestic arbitrations in line with those relating to international arbitrations, and vice versa.

A spokesman for the Legal Department said today that the Bill would help enhance the status of Hong Kong as a leading centre for arbitration in the region.

"To meet with growing competition from other arbitration centres such as Singapore and Sydney, the Administration considers that it is necessary to keep our law up-to-date and efficient and the existing Arbitration Ordinance should be amended to remove the anomalies and problems identified," he said.

The new key proposals featured in the Bill are as follows:

- (a) the circumstances in which arbitration agreements are to be regarded as being in writing (and thus within the Ordinance) are extended, and include cases where an agreement to arbitrate is not signed by the parties, as is often the case in a Bill of Lading;
- (b) in conducting arbitration proceedings, an arbitral tribunal must act fairly and impartially between the parties;
- (c) an arbitral tribunal will have certain powers in the conduct of arbitration proceedings, such as to order that security for costs be provided by the parties, or to grant an interim injunction restraining a party from disposing of certain property;
- (d) where parties to an arbitration agreement commence proceeding in the High Court, the court may exercise certain powers in respect of the proceedings. These powers include the power to make an order directing an amount in dispute to be secured. The court may decline to exercise its power if the matter is being dealt with by an arbitral tribunal or if it finds that it would be more appropriate for the matter to be dealt with by an arbitral tribunal;
- (e) an arbitral tribunal may, after hearing from the parties, make an order to extend the time limit for a party to commence arbitration proceedings if it is just to do so. It may also dismiss a claim if a claimant has unreasonably delayed in bringing the claim;
- (f) an arbitral tribunal may order compound interest to be paid by a party so as to properly compensate the party who has been wrongly kept out of the payment;
- (g) for the avoidance of doubt or eventual disputes, it is provided that parties to the proceedings shall be jointly and severally liable to pay the reasonable fees and expenses of arbitral tribunal;

- (h) an arbitral tribunal may limit the amount of costs recoverable in arbitration proceedings provided that sufficient advance notice has been given to the parties;
- (i) an arbitral tribunal will not be liable in law for an act or omission of its own or that of its employees or agents except in the case of dishonesty. A person who appointed an arbitral tribunal or carried out administrative functions in connection with arbitration proceedings should enjoy similar immunity;
- (j) the functions of the High Court relating to the appointment of an arbitrator (e.g. where the parties fail to agree on an appointment), whether under a domestic or an international arbitration agreement, will be transferred to HKIAC;
- (k) HKIAC is empowered to make rules relating to the performance of its functions, but the rules must be approved by the Chief Justice;
- (l) for proceedings under international arbitration agreements, HKIAC will have the power to determine the number of arbitrators to be appointed in the absence of agreement;
- (m) in most circumstances, if a party to a domestic arbitration agreement (as well as a party to an international arbitration agreement) commences any legal proceeding in the High Court, the court will be required, on the application of the other party to the proceedings, to refer the matter to arbitration if the court is satisfied that the matter is the subject of an arbitration agreement; and
- (n) an arbitral tribunal dealing with a dispute arising under a domestic arbitration agreement shall rule on its own jurisdiction (as in the case of an international arbitration), including ruling on any objections with respect to the existence or validity of the arbitration agreement.

The Bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council on October 9.

End

First HKMA overseas office open today in New York

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The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) opens its first overseas office today (Thursday, New York time). The opening ceremony was officiated by the Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang.

The representative office in New York will enable HKMA to develop relationship with the international financial community on a global scale round the clock.

The New York office will carry out three main functions:

- * monitor the foreign exchange and US fixed income markets in the New York time zone;
- * liaise with the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, other US regulatory authorities and the Exchange Fund's external managers; and
- * monitor US economic trends and to represent HKMA at official functions and events in the US, including briefings on Hong Kong's monetary and banking systems.

At the opening ceremony, the Chief Executive of HKMA, Mr Joseph Yam said: "This office will enable us to ensure that our fingers are kept on the pulse of the market to facilitate the professional performance of our function as a full-fledged monetary authority.

"It will also enable us to manage our substantial reserves prudently and profitably and enable those with an interest in the monetary and financial scene of Hong Kong to keep closely in touch with us."

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr Tsang said HKMA had already established close ties with other central banking institutions over the years.

"We are taking active steps to strengthen our linkages with other financial centres," he said.

"The bilateral repo agreements signed by five central banks in Hong Kong in November 1995, followed by similar agreements signed between other central banks in the region, were a historic landmark in Asian monetary co-operation.

"The establishment of the representative office is a clear indication of our commitment to further strengthen these ties in the years to come."

The office is headed by Chief Representative, Mr T Y Chan, formerly Head of Direct Investment Division of HKMA. It is located at Suite 2704, 27th floor, 450 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10022, Tel (212) 486 8738, fax (212) 486 7280.

End

Language education and research committee appointed

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The Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Joseph W P Wong, today (Friday) announced that the Governor has appointed the Chairman and 19 members to the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR).

The appointments are for two years from October 1.

The Chairman of the Committee is Dr Daniel Tse Chi-wai and the 19 members are:

Mrs Amy Chan Cheng Yi-yim
Dr Chan Wing-ming
Mr Chong Yun-cheung
Dr Gregory James
Mr Michael Kwee Chong-kok
Mrs Lau Pong Elim
Mr Philip Edward Leetch
Miss Margaret Ng
Professor Andrew Terence Leonard Parkin
Mr Brian Hamilton Renwick
Dr Daniel So Wing-cheung
Mr Michael Sze Cho-cheung
Mrs Tai Lam Sau-mui
Mr Michael Tien Puk-sun
Mr Tsang Yok-sing
Dr Amy Tsui Bik-may
Mr Tung Chiao
Mr Kwan Ting-fai
Mr Joshua C K Law

SCOLAR is set up following the recommendation of the Education Commission Report No 6.

It is tasked with the responsibility to conduct researches into the language education needs of Hong Kong, to develop policies designed to meet those needs, and to monitor and evaluate the language in education policies.

Following are the biographical notes of the Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Dr Daniel Tse is the President and Vice-chancellor of the Hong Kong Baptist University. He is a former member of the Executive and Legislative councils and is currently the Chairmen of the Bilingual Laws Advisory Committee and the Preparatory Committee on Chinese Medicine.

Mrs Amy Chan Cheng Yi-yim is the Executive Director of the Hong Kong Tourist Association. She is a member of the Advisory Committee on Travel Agents.

Dr Chan Wing-ming is the Head of Department of Chinese Language and Literature in the Hong Kong Baptist University.

Mr Chong Yun-cheung is the Vice Principal of the Hong Kong and Kowloon Chiu Chow Public Association Ma Chung Sum Secondary School. He is a member of the Sixth Form Chinese Subject Committee of the Hong Kong Examinations Authority.

Dr Gregory James is the Director of the Language Centre of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. He is a member of the Research Grant Council's Humanities, Social Sciences and Business Studies Panel.

Mr Michael Kwee Chong-kok is the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Prudential Asset Management Asia Ltd. He is a member of the Economic Advisory Committee.

Mrs Lau Pong Elim, JP, is the Headmistress of Diocesan Girls' School. She was a member of the former Language Fund Advisory Committee, and is currently a member of the Hong Kong Examinations Authority and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council.

Mr Philip Edward Leetch is the Assistant Principal of Sheng Kung Hui Tang Shiu Kin Secondary School. He is a member of the English Literature Subject Committee of the Curriculum Development Council. He is also a member of the Sixth Form Use of English Subject Committee, and the Chairman of the HKCE English Literature Subject Committee of the Hong Kong Examinations Authority.

Miss Margaret Ng is a barrister. She is the Legislative Council member of the Legal Constituency and a member of the Bilingual Laws Advisory Committee.

Professor Andrew Terence Leonard Parkin is the Graduate Division Head in the Department of English and Fellow and Trustee of Shaw College at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Mr Brian Hamilton Renwick is a consultant in human resource management. He is also a consultant to the Employers' Federation of Hong Kong.

Dr Daniel So Wing-cheung is an Associate Professor in the Department of Chinese and Bilingual Studies of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. He was a member of the former Language Fund Advisory Committee.

Mr Michael Sze Cho-cheung, CBE, ISO, JP, is the Executive Director of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council. He was formerly the Secretary for the Civil Service with the Hong Kong Government.

Mrs Tai Lam Sau-mui is the Headmistress of Creative Primary School and Kindergarten. She was a member of the former Language Fund Advisory Committee.

Mr Michael Tien Puk-sun is the Chairman of the G2000 Group. He is a member of the Education Commission, Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications, and the Hong Kong Productivity Council. He was also a member of the former Language Fund Advisory Committee.

Mr Tsang Yok-sing is the Principal of Pui Kiu Middle School. He is the Chairman of the Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong and a member of the Preparatory Committee for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. He is the Vice President of Hong Kong Private Schools Association.

Dr Amy Tsui Bik-may is the Professor of the Department of Curriculum Studies in the University of Hong Kong. She is also the Director of the Teachers of English Language Education Centre.

Mr Tung Chiao is the Chinese Language Advisor of the Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong and a writer.

Mr Kwan Ting-fai, JP, is Deputy Director of Education; and Mr Joshua C K Law, JP, Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower are ex-officio members.

Mr Wong pointed out that membership of the Committee comprises language experts, academics, front-line educators, representatives from the business community, in particular the service industry, professionals including those with a media background and government officials.

"The balanced mix of professions and expertise of members will enable the Committee to have access to views and advice of those who fully understand the language problems and requirements of Hong Kong," he said.

"The setting up of SCOLAR will provide an institutional framework for formulating and implementing language in education policy in a coherent and systematic manner.

"It will help address an important concern to the community, especially the business and the education sectors over the declining language proficiency."

End

Trailers inspection period to be further shortened

* * * * *

The mandatory safety inspection of trailers will be further advanced by three more years as from December this year, Transport Department's Senior Engineer/Motor Vehicle, Mr John Blay, said today (Friday).

"To improve the safety of trailers in use on the road, all trailers manufactured in 1989 or earlier will need to pass a roadworthiness examination before relicensing on or after December 1, 1996," he said.

This is the second time since last April to require the trailer inspection period to be shortened and hence makes the accumulated inspection time shortened by six years during 1996.

The arrangement is made possible by putting more resources to the vehicle examination team and extending the inspection time to 9 pm on weekdays, and 4 pm on Saturdays.

"This means trailers which have been used on the road for seven years would have to go through the safety inspection instead of 10 years after April's change or of 13 years before April," Mr Blay said.

The present law requires trailers manufactured in or before 1986 for examination before relicensing.

Notice of the new requirement was published in today's Government Gazette.

"All mechanical parts of a trailer including its braking system, tyres, lights etc. will be inspected thoroughly during the examination.

"The advancement of inspection period will enhance the safety and maintenance conditions of trailers in Hong Kong," Mr Blay added.

The certificate of roadworthiness obtained shall only be valid for relicensing within four months immediately from the date of issue.

The examination will be carried out at the department's Kowloon Bay Vehicle Examination Centre, 2 Cheung Yip Street, Kowloon Bay, Kowloon. The examination fee is \$530.

Enquiries should be made to the Kowloon Bay Vehicle Examination Centre on 2759 7573.

End

Draft North-east Lantau Port Outline Zoning Plan approved

* * * * *

The Governor-in-Council has approved the North-east Lantau Port Outline Zoning Plan.

The North-east Lantau Port area has been identified as a primary area for the expansion of Hong Kong's port facilities, a spokesman for the Town Planning Board said today (Friday).

"The approved plan will provide a statutory land use framework to control development and redevelopment within the North-east Lantau Port area so as to facilitate the port development including Container Terminals 10 to 13 and other port-related uses," the spokesman said.

The approved plan (No. S/I-NELP/3) is available for public inspection during normal office hours at:

- * Planning Department
16th floor, Murray Building
Garden Road
Central
Hong Kong;
- * Sai Kung and Islands District Planning Office
10th floor, Leighton Centre
77 Leighton Road
Causeway Bay
Hong Kong;
- * Islands District Office
20th floor, Harbour Building
38 Pier Road
Central
Hong Kong;
- * Islands District Office, Mui Wo Sub-office
ground floor, Mui Wo Government Offices
2 Ngan Kwong Wan Road
Mui Wo
Lantau Island; and
- * Tsuen Wan District Office
first floor, Tsuen Wan Station Multi-storey
Car Park Building
174-208 Castle Peak Road
Tsuen Wan
New Territories.

Copies of the plan are available for sale at the Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department, 14th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, Hong Kong and the Map Publications Centre (Kowloon), ground floor, 382 Nathan Road, Kowloon.

End

Wan Chai development scheme plan approved

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The Governor-in-Council has approved the Land Development Corporation (LDC) Wan Chai Road/Tai Yuen Street Development Scheme Plan, a spokesman for the Town Planning Board said today (Friday).

"The approved Wan Chai Road/Tai Yuen Street Development Scheme Plan provides a statutory planning framework to guide the LDC in redeveloping an area of about 0.85 hectares in Wan Chai which is bounded by Tai Yuen Street, Queen's Road East, the Ruttonjee Hospital and Cross Street, including portions of Stone Nullah Lane and Wan Chai Road."

At present, the area mainly features four to eight-storey residential buildings with retail uses and metal shops on the ground floor. Over half of the existing buildings were constructed before 1966. A number of on-street hawkers are currently trading along Cross Street and Tai Yuen Street.

The LDC's development scheme will comprise residential and commercial developments within which government/institution/community facilities including an Urban Council Market, a public toilet and a day nursery will be provided. A podium open space will also be provided to serve the future residents within the development.

To enable a comprehensive layout for the area, a portion of Stone Nullah Lane will be closed.

Existing Tai Yuen Street, Wan Chai Road and the junction of Queen's Road East and Wan Chai Road will be widened to improve traffic flow in the area.

Off-street car parking spaces and loading/unloading bays will also be provided within the development.

With the approval of the plan, LDC will commence implementation of the scheme which is expected to complete by 2002.

The approved plan (No. S/H5/LDC1/2) is now available for public inspection during normal office hours at:

- * Planning Department
16th floor, Murray Building
Garden Road
Hong Kong;

- * Hong Kong District Planning Office
11th floor Leighton Centre
77 Leighton Road
Causeway Bay
Hong Kong; and

- * Wan Chai District Office
ground floor
2 O'Brien Road
Wan Chai
Hong Kong.

Copies of the plan are available for sale at the Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department, 14th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, Hong Kong and the Map Publication Centre (Kowloon), ground floor, 382 Nathan Road, Kowloon.

End

Construction works in Tuen Mun tenders invited

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The Territory Development Department is inviting tenders for the construction of a footbridge, roads and drains in Area 52 in Tuen Mun near the Lingnan College.

A spokesman for the department said today (Friday) that this was part of a continuing programme for the development of Tuen Mun new town.

Works involve the construction of a 55-metre long footbridge, two stormwater box culverts of about 600 metres in length, access roads and associated drainage and utility works.

Construction will commence in December for completion in 25 months.

Details of the tender invitation are contained in a notice published in the Government Gazette today.

Tender forms and further particulars can be obtained from the office of the Consulting Engineers, Messrs Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick (Hong Kong) Limited, 38th floor, Metroplaza Tower 1, 223 Hing Fong Road, Kwai Fong, New Territories.

Tenders must be clearly marked and addressed to the Chairman of the Central Tender Board. They must be placed in the Government Secretariat tender box at the lift lobby, lower ground floor, Central Government Office (East Wing), Lower Albert Road, Hong Kong before noon November 1.

Late tenders will not be accepted.

End

Green light for Shun Tat Street improvement works

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The Governor-in-Council has authorised improvement works to be carried out at Shun Tat Street in Tuen Mun as described in the Government Gazette published on July 21 and 28 last year, with minor modification.

The modification involves the provision of a left turning lane on Shun Tat Street onto Castle Peak Road; whereas both right and left turning lanes would be provided in the original proposed works.

An authorisation notice was published in the Government Gazette today (Friday).

The proposed works include:

- * widening of Shun Tat Street to about 10.3 metres with 2-metre wide footpaths on both sides of the road;
- * provision of a turning area for vehicles at the end of Shun Tat Street next to the existing underpass; and
- * ancillary works.

The road works will improve traffic condition and ensure unimpeded access to the proposed North West New Territories Refuse Transfer Station at a site of about 15,000 square metres at the end of Shun Tat Street.

Works are scheduled to commence in late 1997 for completion by early 1999.

End

Five companies selected as new rice stockholders

* * * * *

The Trade Department today (Friday) selected five companies for registration as new rice stockholders under the Government's Rice Control Scheme.

These five companies are Tinson Trading Company Limited, Tai Loong Hong Marine Products Limited, Hong Kong Manufacturing Company Limited, Tai Lam Provincial Food Products Limited, and Liu Chong Hing Investment Limited.

The selection by ballot was conducted by the acting Director-General of Trade, Mrs Rebecca Lai, who drew lots to pick the five from among 64 eligible applicants.

A total of 80 applications were received during the application period between August 2 and September 20. Among them, 64 applicants meet all the registration criteria and are eligible for registration.

Mrs Lai said since the number of eligible applicants exceeded the minimum number of rice stockholders which the Trade Department intended to register, the Department therefore decided to select five for registration as new stockholders and to allocate each with eight units.

Import of rice in Hong Kong is subject to control. Under the Rice Control Scheme, the quantity of rice imported into Hong Kong per quarter for local consumption is subject to a quota which is divided into 1,000 units, each representing 90 tonnes of rice.

With the five new rice stockholders, there will be 50 registered rice stockholders operating in Hong Kong.

"The Government is glad to see that there are more rice stockholders joining the trade. This will enhance competition in the rice trade, and we believe that this would be beneficial to consumers in the long run," Mrs Lai said.

The five newly registered rice stockholders will begin importing rice in the first quarter of next year.

End

Medical Council examination results

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In response to press enquiry on the result of the first Universal Licensing Examination announced by HKMC yesterday (Thursday), a spokesman for HKMC said today (Friday) that: "Out of the 154 candidates attending the Part I examination, 122 are from China.

"Others (32) are from countries such as Canada, the Philippines and the United States.

"None of them are holding the former recognised Commonwealth diploma which would entitle them to be registered directly with the Medical Council before September 1, 1996."

End

Nominations to be invited for LAB Election

* * * * *

The Labour Department will next week invite nominations from registered employee unions for representatives to stand for an election to the Labour Advisory Board (LAB) for a new term of office.

"The current term of the LAB will expire on December 31 this year. The department will send letters to all registered employee unions on October 8 (Tuesday) inviting them to nominate candidates for the election of five employee representatives to the Board in its next tenure," a spokesman for the department said today (Friday).

"The election will be held at 3 pm on November 30 (Saturday) in the Hall of Haking Wong Technical Institute at 702 Lai Chi Kok Road, Cheung Sha Wan, Kowloon," he said.

The spokesman pointed out that all employee unions registered under the Trade Unions Ordinance on or before October 8 are eligible to make nominations. Each union may nominate up to five candidates.

Registered employee unions are also eligible to register as electors and appoint authorised representatives to attend the election, he added.

Nominations of employee representatives, registration of employee unions as electors and appointment of authorised representatives should be made in specified forms which should reach the Labour Department by 5.30 pm on November 4.

The LAB is a tripartite consultative body which advises the Commissioner for Labour on labour matters including legislation and the application of International Labour Convention and Recommendations.

It comprises 12 members, six each on employees' and employers' sides, with the Commissioner for Labour or her deputy as the ex-officio chairman.

On the employers' side, five seats will be filled by a nominated representative each from the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, the Employers' Federation of Hong Kong, the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, the Chinese Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong and the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce.

"Letters will also be sent on October 8 to these five major employer associations to call for nominations of employer representatives for the coming term of office," the spokesman said.

The remaining employer and employee representatives will be appointed directly by the Government.

End

CMB workers urged to exercise restraint

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Workers of China Motor Bus (CMB) are urged to exercise restraint on their demand for an improved wage package.

The call was made by a spokesman for the Transport Department after a meeting tonight (Friday) between CMB management and its workers.

The spokesman said: "Although this is a labour issue, Transport Department is closely monitoring its development. The Labour Department has also offered to mediate.

"We support any reasonable demand from workers. At the same time, we must also consider the public interest as any substantial increase in operating costs would have a bearing on fares.

"CMB workers have always behaved rationally and responsibly in their negotiations with the management over the pay issue. We hope the staff and management sides would resolve their differences over the negotiation table this time."

End

Courtesy campaign launched at immigration control points

* * * * *

A spokesperson of the Immigration Department announced today (Friday) the launching of a courtesy campaign to be conducted between October 7 and 13 at all immigration control points.

"It is aimed at promoting staff awareness to deliver a courteous and efficient service to the community at large. It is also intended to help promote the Hong Kong tourism," the spokesperson said.

The campaign will be conducted by voting. Travellers can cast their votes on officers of commendable performance simply by filling in their own names and travel document/Hong Kong identity card numbers on the ballot boxes placed behind the immigration counters at all control points.

Appropriate publicity will be made at all immigration control points during the period seeking votes from travellers.

For enquiries, members of the public may call 2824 6111 or fax 2877 7711.

End

Two elected to education conduct council

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The Education Department today (Friday) announced that Mr Ho Kwok-suen of North Point Government Primary AM School and Ms Ho Yun-ling of Hong Kong Shu Yan School have been elected to the Council on Professional Conduct in Education.

They will fill the seats for the Government Primary Schools Category and the Private Primary Schools Category respectively.

Mr Ho received 10,807 votes in the by-election yesterday while Ms Ho received 7,380 votes.

A total of 16,117 teachers and school heads in 694 primary schools cast their votes. The voter turnout was 95 per cent.

The Assistant Director of Education (Services), Mr David Pun, was most satisfied with the voter turnout.

Mr Pun said that during the by-election, the Education Department's district staff visited 142 primary schools to monitor voting. Three cases of irregularities were spotted and the cases immediately brought to the attention of the school heads concerned for rectification.

Earlier, Mr Au Yeung Chi of Hong Kong Teachers' Association, was returned uncontested to fill the Teachers' Unions seat.

Mr Pun said that the two seats for the Kindergartens and the Government Secondary Schools categories respectively, for which no nominations were accepted for the by-election, will be left vacant through the end of the present term on April 30, 1998.

End

British servicemen will not be used for football security - Garrison statement

* * * * *

The British Hong Kong Garrison states categorically that, contrary to the Reuters (Hong Kong) report issued earlier today, British soldiers will not be deployed for security duties at a football match due to be played between Japanese and Hong Kong clubs in the Hong Kong Stadium later this month.

The comments of a Wembley International (Hong Kong) spokeswoman quoted in the report are without foundation. Wembley has invited 20 off-duty servicemen, acting in a private capacity, to act as stewards to check tickets and show people to their seats. There is no question of them being employed on security duties.

This company has in the past employed off-duty British servicemen at the Hong Kong Stadium as stewards, but always on the strict understanding that they will not be used for security duties. There has been no change to this policy. It is understood that security duties of the type described in the Reuters report are performed by other personnel and organisations employed by Wembley International and by the Royal Hong Kong Police.

British servicemen are not available for use by private commercial organisations such as Wembley International for security purposes.

End

Chief Justice to attend CSD Beating Retreat

The Chief Justice, Sir Ti Liang Yang, will be the Guest of Honour at the Correctional Services Department's Beating Retreat 1996 to be held at the Queen Elizabeth Stadium tomorrow (Saturday) evening.

The highlight of the event will be a one-and-a-half hour musical programme featuring a lion dance and marching bands performed by boy scouts and girl guides who are inmates of various CSD institutions for young offenders.

In collaboration with the Scout Association of Hong Kong, the CSD introduced scouting into the training centres in 1986 and it is through scout training and activities that young offenders learn to acquire self-reliance, self-discipline, self-confidence and sense of responsibility -- qualities they need to turn over a new leaf.

The 221st Hong Kong Group was established in July 1986 for the inmates of Lai King Training Centre and Cape Collision Correctional Institution with 78 inmates from the two training centres joining the Group voluntarily. Nineteen CSD staff were appointed Scout Leaders.

Today, some 250 scout members from the two training centres receive scout training under the leadership of 35 CSD staff. In the past 10 years, a total of 1,485 inmates had joined the Group.

End

New firing practice timetable for October

Firing practice will take place at the Ha Tsuen/Castle Peak Range on nine days this month. The public is advised not to enter the area when red flags are hoisted.

Following are the dates and times for the firing practice:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>
October 7 (Monday)	8.30 am - 5 pm
October 8 (Tuesday)	8.30 am - 5 pm
October 10 (Thursday)	8.30 am - 5 pm
October 15 (Tuesday)	8.30 am - 5 pm
October 16 (Wednesday)	8.30 am - 4.30 pm
October 17 (Thursday)	8.30 am - 11.59 pm
October 18 (Friday)	8.30 am - 4.30 pm
October 23 (Wednesday)	8.30 am - 5 pm
October 24 (Thursday)	8.30 am - 5 pm

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

	<u>\$ million</u>	<u>Time (hours)</u>	<u>Cumulative change (\$million)</u>
Opening balance in the account	2,128	0930	+28
Closing balance in the account	2,199	1000	+28
Change attributable to:		1100	+28
Money market activity	+31	1200	+31
LAF today	+40	1500	+31
		1600	+31

LAF rate 4.00% bid/6.00% offer TWI 124.8 *-0.1* 4.10.96

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes/MTRC				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	4.87	2 years	2808	6.00	100.02	6.07
1 month	4.99	3 years	3907	6.80	101.11	6.46
3 months	5.16	5 years	5109	7.32	101.49	7.08
6 months	5.27	7 years	7308	7.24	99.72	7.42
12 months	5.57	5 years	M503	7.35	100.49	7.36

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - \$8,065 million

Closed October 4, 1996

End