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Transcript of Governor's question-and-answer session

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Following is the transcript of the question-and-answer session given by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, after the luncheon held by the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce this (Thursday) afternoon:

Question: (inaudible) ... could you possibly give some indication that the government would review this scheme sometime before the labour market becomes far too tight?

Governor: Yes, we will review the scheme with you and the unions and the LAB when we get to the 2,000 figure as we have said before. Can I just say a couple of words about unemployment and a word or two about importation of labour - and risk the consequences of candour in what I say.

Hong Kong goes on year after year increasing the number of jobs on offer by about 2.5 per cent to three per cent every year. The problems we have had on the unemployment front in the last year or two have not been a consequence of macro-economic policy, have not been a consequence of a failure to go on increasing the number of jobs available, the problem has been that the number of people looking for jobs has increased. And last year it increased very substantially, largely because of the number of legal immigrants from China arriving of working age, and because of the number of emigrants from Hong Kong returning from Canada, Australia and elsewhere to resume a career and business in Hong Kong after establishing right of abode elsewhere.

This year the fall in unemployment from last year's peak of 3.6 per cent to 2.8 per cent isn't, though I'd like to pretend otherwise, the result of some brilliant stroke of macro-economic policy. The reason for the fall is that once again the number of jobs we are creating and the number of people looking for work have fallen back more or less into line, so the unemployment figure itself has fallen.

The second thing that I'd like to say is that against that background we do have to try to make our labour market work more efficiently, which is why we have been trying to develop our local employment services - with some success, they have placed about 12,000 people in jobs this year - our job-matching programme, and it is why at the moment we are reviewing our training and retraining programmes so that they serve you and business far more successfully than they perhaps have in the past, despite the efforts of all those involved in the training and retraining sectors.

The other point that I want to make is this. For a community which believes in free trade in everything else and a free market in everything else, I do think it is curious that the importation of labour and skills creates so much controversy. But it does, and that has a number of reasons. One of the reasons is that unions think that existing schemes are abused by employers. Now I know that that doesn't happen most of the time but I'm afraid we did see on the airport, earlier this year, the allegations made by the unions turned out to be largely true.

The other thing which unions worry about is the use of imported labour to undercut wage bargaining. So I think it is important in trying to introduce more calm and rationality into the discussion, to address those particular issues that are raised by the unions. And one we can tackle by getting rid of abuses, the other I hope we can start to tackle by raising the skill level in our workforce and by investing more in more relevant training and retraining.

Having said all of which, if you look around the region, if you look at some other OECD countries and compare their immigration and work permit regimes with ours, we would come very near the liberal end of the spectrum in practice. But nevertheless, there are anxieties expressed this year by employers, just as there were anxieties expressed last year by employees, and I very much hope that we can proceed as far as possible on a basis of consensus in dealing with this issue because it is one which could otherwise cause the risks of social disharmony.

Question: Are there any conditions under which you would work with the Provisional Legislature?

Governor: No. That's the short answer. Might I just add one point. I don't need to express my views, the British Foreign Secretary's views, about the establishment of a provisional legislature in July 1997. You know what our views are on that and they are not going to change. What none of us can understand is why anybody should think that a provisional legislature is required before July 1, 1997.

Anson, when she went up to see Director Lu in the Spring, took a very full paper which was subsequently circulated to the members of the Preparatory Committee, in which we set out in detail why a provisional legislature before June 30 wasn't required. And I think we thought we were having some effect with that argument because in The Hague in April, Vice Premier Qian Qichen said there could only be one Legislative Council between now and June 30 and that any provisional legislature would only assume its functions after June 30. Nevertheless, one or two things have been said recently which have suggested that the situation might be other than that.

I'll tell you one very important reason why it is not sensible to go ahead with that idea - not anything to do with the risk of confusion and the source of discontent before June 30. I'm thinking of the problems that it will cause for the SAR Government because it will mean that the SAR Government will begin with large legal questions being asked about all sorts of aspects of its management and administration.

If you talk about appointments in a provisional legislature before June 30, 1997, you will find that they are vulnerable to legal challenge, under the Basic Law, after June 30, 1997. If you try to pass legislation or discuss legislation before June 30, 1997, you will find that that is vulnerable to legal challenge after June 30.

So I hope that some people - to borrow a phrase - will think again about that. I don't think it would be helpful or in Hong Kong's interests and the only arguments, I guess, that are put forward for it are political rather than legal. But the simple answer to your question was the first one I gave.

Question: Mr Governor, I have been asked by the Chamber to ask you another very difficult political question but fortunately they have given me the option to ask you a personal question which I prefer today. I hope you allow me to continue our annual dialogue about the right of abode for expatriates in Hong Kong.

I talked about it with Lord Wilson five years ago, I've talked to you about it several times, I have talked to the Foreign Secretary about this, I have talked, the same as Anson, with Lu Ping about this, and I talked this morning before I came here with one of the directors of the Immigration Department who again confirmed to me, after five years - and I read for you, if I may:

[Reads]

"According to the existing Immigration Regulations foreigners cannot obtain permanent resident status unless they naturalise themselves into a British National Overseas."

If the British Hong Kong Government is not going to change this Ordinance, foreigners in Hong Kong are not able to obtain a Hong Kong permanent ID Card before July 1, 1997.

Governor: Could you tell me what you are quoting from?

Question: I quote from a question that I put forward to Mr Lu Ping in May of this year. I am not the spokesman for Mr Lu Ping but I have quoted this, this morning, to the Immigration Department who say that they are still discussing these points - for almost five years now - and still have not been able to come up with an answer. Could you give us, please, an answer?

Governor: I will tell you two answers, one of which you may find more helpful than the other. The question of holding a BDTC or in future a BNO passport and right of abode are different questions, and many people will have right of abode in Hong Kong who don't hold a British passport. So I don't quite understand the overlap between those two concepts but maybe I am misunderstanding something very basic and I will certainly have a look at the words you were reading out.

The second and more sweeping point is how soon can we get an agreed and definitive statement on right of abode which can satisfy all those who are concerned about the subject, both in Hong Kong and outside Hong Kong. We know what the concerns are. When I am in Canada, when Anson was in Australia the other week, people were expressing concerns and they were expressing the concern that they would have to come back to Hong Kong before June 30 - before that cut-off point - in order to establish their right of abode.

We have had letters from English public schools, from headmasters, saying all the Hong Kong parents have told them this is going to be essential so could their children leave early next summer term.

Well, in our understanding, in our negotiations with Chinese officials, that is not the case. The situation is more sophisticated than that.

We have been trying to conclude these discussions satisfactorily for some time. We are, I hope, getting close to an agreement on at least the main points but there will still be some issues which I fear we won't be able to reach agreement on. We are pressing for another meeting of experts in the next ten days or so. It matters to you and it matters to us as well. There are questions of adjustments in the law and so on which have to be looked at. So I can assure you that we will continue to press for an agreement and for further meetings with Chinese officials, and I hope we can hammer something out very quickly. And I'm sorry that it's taken so long. But I don't think that anybody can point a finger at Hong Kong civil servants and say they haven't been working hard enough on the issue. We have been trying very hard on the issue but alas, I think it probably, for Chinese officials, raises genuine difficulties about Chinese Nationality Law.

End

Transcript of CS's media session

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Following is the transcript of the remarks (English) made to the media by the Chief Secretary, Mrs Anson Chan, after visiting the Environmental Protection Department this (Thursday) afternoon:

CS: I wanted to say that what happened at the Japanese Consulate General's office yesterday is a very unfortunate incident. I'm sure that the whole community and certainly the media feel that this sort of incident should not happen. Of course every citizen in Hong Kong has freedom of expression, freedom of action. But this action and any expression must comply with local law. We will not tolerate any future breaches of the law.

The police will conduct a thorough investigation of what happened yesterday and we must wait for the police report to be completed before deciding whether further action is required.

I do urge all citizens to ... I understand the depth of feeling about the Diaoyu Tai incident, but I hope everyone will express their views or will take action that fully complies with the law, that they will maintain calm and express their views in a peaceful manner.

From this point of view, I notice that those who were involved in yesterday's incident have apologised for their behaviour and have furthermore said that in future any activities in respect of the Diaoyu Tai dispute will be conducted in a peaceful, calm and non-confrontational manner. And I very much welcome that.

Question: Even if they have apologised, if the police found out they have broken the law ...?

CS: I don't want to pre-empt the findings of the investigation. The police will clearly conduct their investigation and complete it as soon as possible and we would have to wait and study that investigation report.

Question: ... the security has been stepped up, can you explain what ...?

CS: The Police have stepped up the posting of personnel at the Japanese Consulate General's office to prevent a recurrence of this incident. But I do stress again, we will not tolerate any breaches of the law. And I hope that everybody will comply with the law.

End

HAB commitments highlighted

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The Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Michael Suen, asserted today (Thursday) that the Government is committed to ensuring that appropriate and timely preparations are made to facilitate the staging of the Handover Ceremony next year.

In a presentation to the Legislative Council's Home Affairs Panel on the policy commitments for the coming year, Mr Suen said the Co-ordination Office for the Handover Ceremony has been laying the ground work for the ceremony and related events.

"The Joint Liaison Group has just reached agreement on the Handover Ceremony. Detailed arrangements will continue to be discussed by both sides.

"However, on the basis of preliminary planning we have undertaken in the past months, the major expenditure items will consist of the establishment of a Press and Broadcasting Centre to facilitate media coverage of the Handover Ceremony; preparing the Handover Ceremony venue for the occasion; receiving and accommodating "foreign dignitaries"; and provision for a programme of community events to complement the Handover Ceremony and to facilitate wider community involvement," Mr Suen said.

"We will be submitting detailed estimates to the Finance Committee for approval," he said, adding that the total cost will be fairly moderate.

Turning to the issue of new arrivals from China, Mr Suen reiterated that the Government's ultimate objective was to ensure that they can integrate smoothly and quickly into the community and contribute to Hong Kong's long-term success.

"To this end, we have established a Steering Committee, chaired by the Director of Home Affairs, as a forum for liaison and exchange of information among the relevant policy branches and departments. The Steering Committee's work is complemented by a similar inter-departmental committee in each of the 18 District Offices."

An information handbook in simplified Chinese characters listing the services relevant to new arrivals and the means to access them has also been produced while surveys are being conducted regularly to establish their profile to better understand their needs and difficulties.

"In the months ahead, we will focus our action on giving greater publicity to the services available to new arrivals such as preparing a second edition of the Service Handbook with enriched information, re-targeting services to districts where more new arrivals live, enhancing co-ordination among all parties providing services to new arrivals and encouraging community participation among new arrivals," Mr Suen added.

On building management, Mr Suen stressed that the Government was committed to encouraging the formation of Owners' Corporations (OCs) and Mutual Aid Committees as part of an ongoing effort to promote public participation in community affairs.

"The Government attaches great importance to the promotion of effective building management for private multi-storey buildings. In this regard, the Building Management Ordinance provides a legal framework for owners to manage their buildings and to facilitate the formation of OCs. About 4,600 have been formed to date, a majority of which with assistance from our District Offices," Mr Suen noted.

He also highlighted some new initiatives of the Home Affairs Department (HAD) in assisting owners and residents to manage their buildings effectively.

The HAD has recently stepped up training for its front-line staff who handle building management matters. Experience-sharing sessions and formal workshops are held regularly, and legal courses are offered to staff in collaboration with the University of Hong Kong.

Furthermore, a subject officer with considerable experience in building management has been designated at each District Office to handle building management cases, to maintain frequent contact with the Headquarters and to assist with training and experience sharing.

A Central Information Unit was also set up at the HAD Headquarters to collect information on past cases with building management problems. The information is analysed, collated and relayed to staff for their reference in dealing with any new problem cases.

Appearing before the LegCo Information Policy Panel, Mr Suen reiterated the administration's determination to provide better access to Government information and that one of the means is to use the Internet to help disseminate government information and communicate with the public. This would further enhance the development of an open and accountable government in Hong Kong.

He said that at the end of September this year, four branches and 28 departments and 12 government-related organisations have set up their own home pages under the Government Information Centre which receives some 40,000 visitors a month.

"The goal is for the whole of the Government to come on the Internet in 1997. To achieve this, an Internet Resources Centre (IRC) will be established in the Information Services Department to provide assistance to branches and departments who wish to set up their home pages but are constrained by resources, time or lack of expertise.

"The IRC will also assist branches and departments to make qualitative improvements to existing home pages and to fully utilise the potential of this important new medium of communication."

Prior to this, Mr Suen said a Code on Access to Information has been extended progressively throughout the Government. To date, 82 out of 90 branches and departments had subscribed to the Code. Its extension to the rest of the government machinery would be completed in 1996.

He also pointed out that the Code was underpinned by a complaints channel through the independent Commissioner for Administrative Complaints (COMAC), who would be empowered to investigate Code-related complaints against the Police and ICAC under an amendment Bill to the COMAC Ordinance.

Describing freedom of expression as one of the most important rights protected and guaranteed in the Bill of Rights, the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law, Mr Suen affirmed the Government's commitment to maintaining an "environment in Hong Kong in which a free and active press can operate under the minimum of regulation which does not fetter freedom of expression or editorial independence."

He declared that it was vitally important that the media continued to exercise this freedom without self-censorship.

"We have reviewed the Laws of Hong Kong to remove provisions which impose an unjustified restriction on press freedom and freedom of expression. As a result of the review, 32 provisions in 15 ordinances have been amended or repealed. A further four provisions in two ordinances are being considered by the Legislative Council," Mr Suen said.

End

CS sees environmental protection works

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The Chief Secretary, Mrs Anson Chan, today (Thursday) visited the Environmental Protection Department to meet its staff and see different operations of their works.

Accompanied by the Director of Environmental Protection, Mr Robert Law, Mrs Chan was briefed on various environmental programmes and facilities covering air, water, waste and environmental planning and assessment.

She toured the Visitors Centre to see different displays, including environmental education activities, waste disposal facilities and a touch-screen environmental information system. The Centre has been open to group visits since June 1994.

Mrs Chan also visited the air services laboratories. She was told how air quality data were gathered and transmitted through a network and how the daily air pollution index was compiled.

She was briefed on a quality assurance and accreditation programme for the department's air monitoring network.

Mrs Chan called on a water science laboratory where she was given an overview of the department's water quality monitoring programme for beaches, marine and river waters. The monitoring data provides basis for pollution control work.

During her tour, she saw a demonstration of a remote-controlled submersible, which takes video pictures of the sea-bed as a means of providing first-hand information about the impacts of dredging and dumping.

Before concluding her visit, Mrs Chan met staff representatives of the Departmental Consultative Committee.

End

New franchises for public bus services on North Lantau

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The Secretary for Transport, Mr Gordon Siu, today (Thursday) said he welcomed the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group agreement on the grant of franchises for public bus services on North Lantau and the new airport.

"The Governor-in-Council had approved in principle the terms of franchises for the operation of 25 bus routes to serve the new developments in Tung Chung and the new airport.

"The Sino-British Joint Liaison Group reached a common view on the grant of the new franchises this morning," he said.

"Approval by the Executive Council of a formal grant of the franchises will be sought in the near future and details will then be announced," he added.

End

Hong Kong signs new air services agreement with Italy

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An Air Services Agreement (ASA) was signed in Rome today (Wednesday, Rome time) between the Government of Hong Kong and the Government of the Italian Republic.

The Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang, signed the agreement on behalf of the Government of Hong Kong while Mr Claudio Burlando, Minister of Transport and Navigation, signed on behalf of the Government of the Italian Republic.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Mr Tsang said that the new agreement would provide a firm legal and regulatory framework for the continued development of air services between Hong Kong and Italy up to and beyond 1997.

Mr Tsang also noted that the Hong Kong/Italy ASA was the fourteenth air services agreement signed by Hong Kong. He further reiterated Hong Kong Government's commitment to maintaining Hong Kong's status as a centre of international and regional aviation.

Cathay Pacific and Alitalia together operate nine return services per week between Hong Kong and Italy, offering a total capacity of about 2,300 seats and 220 tonnes of cargo in each direction.

Hong Kong has also signed air services agreements with the Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada, Brunei, France, New Zealand, Malaysia, Brazil, Sri Lanka, Australia, Germany, Korea and Singapore.

End

CMB conciliation meeting

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A Chief Labour Officer of the Labour Department, Mrs Chan Mak Kit-ling, conducted a conciliation meeting between the management and staff representatives of the China Motor Bus (CMB) Company at the company's Chai Wan office this (Thursday) afternoon to discuss the question of retirement benefits.

The conciliation meeting was arranged by Mrs Chan who was appointed as the Special Conciliation Officer by the Commissioner for Labour, Miss Jacqueline Willis, on October 7 under the Labour Relations Ordinance to mediate the trade dispute between the bus company and its employees.

Mrs Chan said after the two-hour meeting ended at about 7.25 pm that good progress had been made during the meeting.

"Both parties agreed to continue their discussions on improving employees' retirement benefits," she said.

"The staff side indicated that they would actively consider suspending their planned industrial action," she added.

The Special Conciliation Officer commented that today's meeting was conducted in a harmonious and sincere atmosphere and both parties were co-operative.

She said the management and staff representatives agreed to attend a conciliation meeting again on or before October 18 (Friday) as they needed more time to study the retirement benefit issue.

End

Technical talks in Hanoi on Vietnamese migrants

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Technical talks were held today (Thursday) between officials of the Hong Kong and Vietnamese Governments to discuss ways of accelerating the repatriation of the remaining Vietnamese migrant (VM) population in the territory, a Government spokesman said.

The British Embassy in Hanoi and UNHCR were also represented at the meeting.

The spokesman said that officials noted the increased pace of repatriation this year. Over 9,000 VMs had returned home so far in 1996 as compared to about 2,600 in the whole of 1995.

"The meeting explored various options for expediting the clearance of the 4,000 VMs who had not yet been accepted back by Hanoi.

"It was agreed that further exchanges should take place on this issue," he said.

The Vietnamese authorities gave unequivocal assurances of co-operation in stemming the flow of illegal emigration to Hong Kong and in accelerating the clearance for return of those who had recently arrived in the territory. They also agreed to a streamlining of procedures relating to the deportation of VMs who commit crimes in Hong Kong.

This was the fourth technical meeting of this kind. Commenting on the talks, the Refugee Coordinator, Mr Brian Bresnihan, said that he was pleased with the outcome.

"The repatriation of VMs from Hong Kong is difficult for both sides. We have received enormous co-operation from the Vietnamese authorities over the years in resolving this problem.

"The talks today brought us one step nearer the end of this long drawn out saga," he said.

End

Government committed to promoting sports excellence

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Hong Kong's notable successes in international sporting events have inspired the Government to work even harder to promote sports excellence in the territory, the Secretary for Broadcasting, Culture and Sport, Mr Chau Tak-hay, said today (Thursday).

The outstanding achievements had reflected the often unnoticed efforts of bodies such as the Amateur Sports Federation and Olympic Committee, the Sports Development Board, the Sports Institute and individual sports associations, he said.

Presenting the policy commitments of the Branch at the Recreation and Culture Panel of the Legislative Council, Mr Chau said the immediate task was to prepare young sportsmen and sportswomen for the East Asian Games in May 1997 and to continue to develop rising athletes to compete at the highest international standards.

"To this end, we shall be assisting the Sports Development Board to implement its five-year plan, as well as continuing to promote the Hong Kong Athletes Fund," he said.

Mr Chau told the Panel that the Government had increased subvention to the Outward Bound School to enable under-privileged youngsters to participate in courses it organised.

Turning to heritage, Mr Chau pledged to continue to work closely with the Antiquities Advisory Board on establishing new heritage trails in Central and Western and Kam Tin districts, and in protecting buildings and sites of historic importance by declaring them as historical monuments.

On the arts side, the Arts Development Council is organising a major international conference on the role of arts in education in March next year.

The Government has also provided the Academy for Performing Arts with \$162 million this year to increase the number of full-time places to 700.

As regards broadcasting, Mr Chau said during the next few months, the Branch would work with the Broadcasting Authority to devise codes of practice for advertising on pay TV, and for programming and advertising on Video-on-demand (VOD) programme service.

"We intend to introduce legislation on the regulatory framework for VOD programme services next month, with the aim of offering two licences initially, and more in due course," he said.

End

Suspected plague case on Green Island

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In response to media enquiry on a suspected plague case in Green Island today (Thursday), a spokesman for the Department of Health said the man was sent to the Queen Mary Hospital as a precautionary measure to confirm initial diagnosis that it is not plague.

Further examination at the hospital had supported this initial diagnosis that it is unlikely to be plague.

End

Exhibition on TDS Review in Causeway Bay

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Members of the public will have a chance to know more about the proposed development strategies for Hong Kong up to 2011 by visiting an exhibition which will start tomorrow (Friday) at the Times Square in Causeway Bay.

The exhibition, focusing on the Territorial Development Strategy (TDS) Review, is part of a publicity programme to encourage members of the public to express their views on how the future development needs of Hong Kong can be met.

A total of 10 exhibitions will be held this month at eight shopping centres and two Mass Transit Railway stations.

The exhibition at the Times Square will last for seven days until October 17 (Thursday). It will be open daily between 10 am and 8 pm.

By browsing among the 32 panels displayed with photographs, maps and charts, visitors will have a better understanding of the various development options recommended by the TDS Review.

They can also see impressive models featuring major future developments in Hong Kong as well as a bilingual documentary video. Copies of a leaflet on the review will be distributed free of charge.

Members of the public can also visit another TDS Review exhibition which is being held at Butterfly Estate Commercial Centre in Tuen Mun until October 15 (Tuesday).

From October 16 (Wednesday) to 22 (Tuesday), the exhibition will be moved to Tai Wo Shopping Mall in Tai Po.

End

Employment and vacancy statistics for June released

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According to the figures released today (Thursday) by the Census and Statistics Department, employment in all major service sectors increased in June 1996 compared with June 1995. Meanwhile, employment in the manufacturing sector remained on a downtrend, whereas employment at construction sites registered a significant year-on-year increase over the same period.

As labour supply became relatively more abundant, vacancies in the manufacturing sector and in most of the major service sectors surveyed continued to record year-on-year decreases of different magnitudes in June 1996. Vacancies at construction sites also fell. Nevertheless, there were still around 47,500 vacancies in June 1996 for all major sectors surveyed taken together, as compared to 48 900 vacancies recorded in March 1996.

In terms of the number of persons engaged, the wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels sector was the largest, employing 1,031,600 persons in June 1996. This was followed by the financing, insurance, real estate and business services sector, with an employment of 386,900; the manufacturing sector, 336,700; the community, social and personal services sector, 310,100; and the transport, storage and communications sector, 176,300. Also, there were 72,600 manual workers at construction sites.

In terms of percentage changes, employment at construction sites (for manual workers only) continued to show a notable year-on-year increase, by 13.4% in June 1996. This was followed by employment in the transport, storage and communications sector, rising by 6%; the community, social and personal services sector, by 4.9%; the financing, insurance, real estate and business services sector, by 3.5%; and the wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels sector, by 0.7%. On the other hand, employment in the manufacturing sector fell further, by 15.4%. The respective employment figures are shown in greater detail in Table 1.

As regards the vacancy situation in individual sectors, the wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels sector had the largest number of vacancies, at a level of 19,980 in June 1996. This was followed by the financing, insurance, real estate and business services sector, with 8,970 vacancies; the community, social and personal services sector, 8,320 vacancies; the manufacturing sector, 5,860 vacancies; and the transport, storage and communications sector, 2,870 vacancies. Also, there were 1,520 vacancies for manual workers at construction sites. Except for the community, social and personal services sector which registered a year-on-year increase of 3.6% in the number of vacancies in June 1996, vacancies in other sectors surveyed and at construction sites all dropped by varying extent in June 1996 when compared with a year earlier. Job vacancy figures are shown in greater detail in Table 2.

Of the total of some 47,500 vacancies (other than those in the Civil Service) recorded in June 1996, the majority fell into four major occupation groups, viz. associate professionals; clerks; service workers and shop sales workers; and elementary occupations. They together accounted for about three-quarters of the total number of vacancies in all the major sectors surveyed.

Beginning from the reference month of June 1996, year-on-year comparison of vacancies by major occupation group is available. In terms of percentage changes, vacancies in the major occupation group managers and administrators increased by 38.1% in June 1996 over June 1995; professionals, by 16.5%; and service workers and shop sales workers, by 9.1%. On the other hand, vacancies in the major occupation group craft and related workers decreased by 27.6%. This was followed by plant and machine operators and assemblers, by 21.2%; clerks, by 15.3%; associate professionals, by 12.1%; and elementary occupations, by 7.7%. Vacancy figures broken down by major occupation group are shown in Table 3.

The above statistics for June 1996 were derived from the Quarterly Survey of Employment and Vacancies, the Supplementary Survey of Job Vacancies and the Quarterly Employment Survey of Construction Sites conducted by the Department. In the former two surveys, some economic activities (e.g. those where self-employment are predominant, such as taxi operators, hawkers and freelance authors) are not covered and hence the respective employment and vacancy figures relate only to those selected industries included in the surveys. In the latter survey on the construction sites, employment and vacancy figures relate to manual workers only.

Detailed breakdowns of the statistics are available from the Quarterly Report of Employment, Vacancies and Payroll Statistics, June 1996 and the Quarterly Report of Employment and Vacancies at Construction Sites, June 1996.

They will be available at HK\$48 per copy and HK\$19 per copy (both exclusive of postage) respectively at the Government Publications Centre, Queensway Government Offices, Low Block, ground floor, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong and at the Publications Unit of the Census and Statistics Department on the 19th floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong.

Table 1 : Employment figures and percentage changes by selected major sector

<u>Selected major sector</u>	<u>Persons engaged (employment)</u>			<u>Percentage change</u>	
	<u>Jun. 95</u>	<u>Mar. 96</u>	<u>Jun. 96</u>	<u>Jun. 96 over Jun. 95</u>	<u>Jun. 96 over Mar. 96</u>
Manufacturing	397 800	351 500	336 700	-15.4	-4.2
Construction sites (manual workers only)	64 000	68 800	72 600	+13.4	+5.6
Wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels	1 024 600	1 027 000	1 031 600	+0.7	+0.4
Transport, storage and communications	166 300	175 200	176 300	+6.0	+0.6
Financing, insurance, real estate and business services	373 900	378 800	386 900	+3.5	+2.2
Community, social and personal services	295 600	302 800	310 100	+4.9	+2.4

Table 2 : Vacancy figures and percentage changes by selected major sector

<u>Selected major sector</u>	<u>Number of vacancies</u>			<u>Percentage change</u>	
	<u>Jun. 95</u>	<u>Mar. 96</u>	<u>Jun. 96</u>	<u>Jun. 96 over Jun. 95</u>	<u>Jun. 96 over Mar. 96</u>
Manufacturing	7 640	5 930	5 860	-23.2	-1.1
Construction sites (vacancies for manual workers only)	3 460	940	1 520	-56.2	+61.5
Wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels	20 060	21 790	19 980	-0.4	-8.3
Transport, storage and communications	3 220	3 450	2 870	-10.9	-16.8
Financing, insurance, real estate and business services	9 160	9 060	8 970	-2.1	-1.0
Community, social and personal services	8 030	7 720	8 320	+3.6	+7.8

Table 3 : Vacancy figures and percentage changes by major occupation group

<u>Major occupation group</u>	<u>Number of vacancies</u>			<u>Percentage change</u>	
	<u>Jun. 95</u>	<u>Mar. 96</u>	<u>Jun. 96</u>	<u>Jun. 96 over Jun. 95</u>	<u>Jun. 96 over Mar. 96</u>
Managers and administrators	880	1 160	1 220	+38.1	+5.2
Professionals	2 790	3 480	3 250	+16.5	-6.4
Associate professionals	8 480	8 510	7 450	-12.1	-12.5
Clerks	11 950	11 630	10 120	-15.3	-13.0
Service workers and shop sales workers	10 120	11 210	11 040	+9.1	-1.5
Craft and related workers	5 190	2 590	3 760	-27.6	+45.0
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	4 690	3 630	3 700	-21.2	+1.9
Elementary occupations	7 590	6 690	7 000	-7.7	+4.6

End

Grading of beach water quality

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The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (Thursday) announced the latest gradings of Hong Kong's beaches, based on the bacteriological water quality, for the 1996 swimming season.

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

The grading, based on the most recent E coli data obtained by EPD in its routine monitoring programme, is announced biweekly during the bathing season to coincide with the frequency at which beach waters are usually sampled.

As with last year, the grading also includes an estimate of the risk of suffering some minor skin or gastrointestinal complaints as a result of swimming at a beach which has some degree of pollution.

The estimate is based on a large body of statistical information gathered in Hong Kong in recent bathing seasons.

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

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

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

"Bathers should avoid such beaches for two or three days after a storm, longer if the weather remains overcast or less if there is strong sunshine," Principal Environmental Protection Officer, Mr Patrick Lei, said.

The system for grading beach water quality is as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

At present five gazetted beaches, namely Anglers', Approach, Castle Peak, Rocky Bay and Ting Kau, are closed to swimmers, while Old Cafeteria is re-opened.

The decision to open or close the beaches has been made by the Regional and Urban Councils on the basis of beach water quality monitoring data for 1995. The public are advised not to swim at the closed beaches.

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

Beach	Previous Grading (as at 26.9.96)	Present Grading (as at 10.10.96)
<u>Hong Kong South</u>		
Big Wave Bay (S)	2	2
Chung Hom Kok (S)	1	2
Deep Water Bay (S)	2	2
Hairpin (S)	2	1
Middle Bay (S)	2	1
Repulse Bay (S)	2	2
Shek O (S)	3	2
South Bay (S)	1	1
St Stephen's (S)	1	1
Turtle Cove (S)	2	2
Stanley Main (S)	2	2

Tuen Mun District

Golden Beach	3	4
Old Cafeteria	3	4
New Cafeteria	4	4
Kadoorie (S)	3	3
Butterfly (S)	3	3

Sai Kung District

Clear Water Bay 1st Beach (S)	2	2
Clear Water Bay 2nd Beach (S)	2	2
Hap Mun Bay (S)	1	1
Kiu Tsui (S)	1	1
Silverstrand (S)	2	3
Trio (Hebe Haven) (S)	2	2

Islands District

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

Tsuen Wan District

Casam (S)	4	3
Gemini	3	3
Hoi Mei Wan	3	3
Lido (S)	4	3
Tung Wan, Ma Wan	2	2

Note: * Non-gazetted beaches.

(S) The beach has a shark-prevention net installed.

The following beaches have changed grading on this occasion:

Hairpin, Middle Bay and Tung Wan, Cheung Chau from "2" to "1"; Shek O from "3" to "2"; Silvermine Bay, Casam and Lido from "4" to "3"; Chung Hom Kok and Pui O from "1" to "2"; Silverstrand from "2" to "3"; Old Cafeteria and Golden Beach from "3" to "4".

The changes are within the normal range of fluctuation of the bacteriological water quality of these beaches.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

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	<u>\$ million</u>	<u>Time (hours)</u>	<u>Cumulative change (\$million)</u>
Opening balance in the account	2,130	0930	+30
Closing balance in the account	2,212	1000	+30
Change attributable to:		1100	+30
Money market activity	+12	1200	+27
LAF today	+70	1500	+12
		1600	+12

LAF rate 4.00% bid/6.00% offer TWI 124.8 *+0.1* 10.10.96

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes/MTRC				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	4.84	2 years	2808	6.00	100.11	6.02
1 month	4.95	3 years	3907	6.80	101.23	6.41
3 months	5.14	5 years	5109	7.32	101.67	7.03
6 months	5.22	7 years	7308	7.24	99.91	7.39
12 months	5.49	5 years	M503	7.35	100.67	7.31

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - \$9,391 million

Closed October 10, 1996

End