

OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Friday, 27 October 2006

The Council met at Nine o'clock

MEMBERS PRESENT:

THE PRESIDENT

THE HONOURABLE MRS RITA FAN HSU LAI-TAI, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JAMES TIEN PEI-CHUN, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT HO CHUN-YAN

THE HONOURABLE LEE CHEUK-YAN

THE HONOURABLE MARTIN LEE CHU-MING, S.C., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE DAVID LI KWOK-PO, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE FRED LI WAH-MING, J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE LUI MING-WAH, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MARGARET NG

THE HONOURABLE MRS SELINA CHOW LIANG SHUK-YEE, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JAMES TO KUN-SUN

THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG MAN-KWONG

THE HONOURABLE CHAN YUEN-HAN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE BERNARD CHAN, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN KAM-LAM, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS SOPHIE LEUNG LAU YAU-FUN, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LEUNG YIU-CHUNG

THE HONOURABLE SIN CHUNG-KAI, J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE PHILIP WONG YU-HONG, G.B.S.

THE HONOURABLE WONG YUNG-KAN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JASPER TSANG YOK-SING, G.B.S., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE YEUNG SUM

THE HONOURABLE LAU CHIN-SHEK, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU KONG-WAH, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU WONG-FAT, G.B.M., G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MIRIAM LAU KIN-YEE, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE EMILY LAU WAI-HING, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHOY SO-YUK, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW CHENG KAR-FOO

THE HONOURABLE TIMOTHY FOK TSUN-TING, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE TAM YIU-CHUNG, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ABRAHAM SHEK LAI-HIM, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LI FUNG-YING, B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE TOMMY CHEUNG YU-YAN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT CHAN WAI-YIP

THE HONOURABLE FREDERICK FUNG KIN-KEE, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE AUDREY EU YUET-MEE, S.C., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE VINCENT FANG KANG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE WONG KWOK-HING, M.H.

THE HONOURABLE LEE WING-TAT

THE HONOURABLE LI KWOK-YING, M.H., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE JOSEPH LEE KOK-LONG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE DANIEL LAM WAI-KEUNG, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JEFFREY LAM KIN-FUNG, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW LEUNG KWAN-YUEN, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALAN LEONG KAH-KIT, S.C.

THE HONOURABLE LEUNG KWOK-HUNG

DR THE HONOURABLE KWOK KA-KI

DR THE HONOURABLE FERNANDO CHEUNG CHIU-HUNG

THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG HOK-MING, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE WONG TING-KWONG, B.B.S.

THE HONOURABLE RONNY TONG KA-WAH, S.C.

THE HONOURABLE CHIM PUI-CHUNG

THE HONOURABLE PATRICK LAU SAU-SHING, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT JINGHAN CHENG

THE HONOURABLE KWONG CHI-KIN

THE HONOURABLE TAM HEUNG-MAN

MEMBERS ABSENT:

IR DR THE HONOURABLE RAYMOND HO CHUNG-TAI, S.B.S.,
S.B.ST.J., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE HOWARD YOUNG, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MA LIK, G.B.S., J.P.

PUBLIC OFFICERS ATTENDING:

THE HONOURABLE RAFAEL HUI SI-YAN, G.B.S., J.P.
THE CHIEF SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATION

THE HONOURABLE HENRY TANG YING-YEN, G.B.S., J.P.
THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY

THE HONOURABLE WONG YAN-LUNG, S.C., J.P.
THE SECRETARY FOR JUSTICE

THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL SUEN MING-YEUNG, G.B.S., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR HOUSING, PLANNING AND LANDS

PROF THE HONOURABLE ARTHUR LI KWOK-CHEUNG, G.B.S., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER

THE HONOURABLE JOSEPH WONG WING-PING, G.B.S., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY

DR THE HONOURABLE PATRICK HO CHI-PING, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS

THE HONOURABLE STEPHEN IP SHU-KWAN, G.B.S., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND LABOUR

DR THE HONOURABLE SARAH LIAO SAU-TUNG, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND WORKS

THE HONOURABLE FREDERICK MA SI-HANG, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY

THE HONOURABLE STEPHEN LAM SUI-LUNG, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

DR THE HONOURABLE YORK CHOW YAT-NGOK, S.B.S., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR HEALTH, WELFARE AND FOOD

THE HONOURABLE DENISE YUE CHUNG-YEE, G.B.S., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE

PROF LAU SIU-KAI, J.P.
HEAD, CENTRAL POLICY UNIT

CLERKS IN ATTENDANCE:

MR RICKY FUNG CHOI-CHEUNG, J.P., SECRETARY GENERAL

MRS VIVIAN KAM NG LAI-MAN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Clerk, please ring the bell.

(After the summoning bell had been rung, a number of Members entered the Chamber)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): A quorum is now present. *(Laughter)*

Council now resumes to continue with the fourth debate session. Two designated public officers will speak in this session. They have up to 45 minutes in total for their speeches, but the first officer to speak may not speak for more than 30 minutes.

MEMBERS' MOTIONS

MOTION OF THANKS

Continuation of debate on motion which was moved on 25 October 2006

SECRETARY FOR HOUSING, PLANNING AND LANDS (in Cantonese): President, in the policy agenda this year, the Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau has introduced four new initiatives and 12 ongoing initiatives.

First, I wish to talk about properties and land supply. Our policy objective is to ensure adequate land supply to meet the overall demand in society. In the Application List for the new year published in March 2006, 45 sites are provided, including 33 for residential purposes and 12 for commercial purposes. It is estimated that the total number of flats that can be built on the residential sites is 14 000. Up to now, two sites have been sold, another two have been successfully triggered and the auction will be held in end November.

Apart from the supply of land from the Applications List for the construction of flats, railway properties in fact constitute another important source of residential flats. We are concerned about the construction and completion time of the residential projects of the two railway corporations and believe that they should tie in with the demand in the market. In order to ensure that the future residential developments of the two railway corporations can be

launched in an orderly manner according to the demand in the market, the Government will continue to liaise with the two railway corporations to co-ordinate the pace and timing of tendering. This co-ordination mechanism will also apply to the development projects of the Urban Renewal Authority (URA).

In addition, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HA) has over 16 000 unsold Home Ownership Scheme flats. The HA will begin to put these flats on sale in an orderly manner from 2007 onwards as scheduled. In order to enhance the transparency of the market, we have started to make pre-sale preparations and announced the sale arrangements and timetable, so that families interested in home ownership and the market can be fully prepared mentally. We will draw up the details of the phase one sale in 2007 including the number of units, eligibility and the prices later this year and announce them before the end of this year.

On building maintenance, we will continue to co-operate closely with the Hong Kong Housing Society (HS) and the URA to assist property owners in repairing and maintaining their flats properly. The various schemes introduced by the HS and the URA to assist property owners have been well received by the general public. Since the launch of the Building Management and Maintenance Scheme by the HS in February 2005, financial and technical assistance has been provided to more than 1 400 buildings. The building rehabilitation programme of the URA has also provided assistance to more than 250 buildings.

Meanwhile, the Buildings Department will continue to step up law-enforcement actions on building safety. The Department will also co-operate with the Home Affairs Department and continue to promote a culture of maintaining and managing buildings properly through public education and publicity.

In order to devise a long-term solution to the problem of buildings in disrepair, we have conducted two rounds of public consultation for purposes of formulating a feasible programme acceptable to the general public. From the results of the consultations, the Government can see that there is actually a consensus in society that supports the introduction of a mandatory building inspection scheme as a practical and effective solution. The public also supports the introduction of a mandatory and regular window inspection scheme to ensure building safety.

In order to complement the introduction of these mandatory schemes, we will strengthen the provision of appropriate financial and technical support to property owners in need and assist them in fulfilling their responsibility of maintaining buildings properly.

We are now carefully considering the details of implementation for these two mandatory schemes, bearing in mind the public opinions collected as well as the specific arrangements for implementing the schemes. We will take on board the views of the public as far as possible, so long as public safety and the original policy intent are not compromised, in order to improve the schemes.

After carrying out analyses and collating the opinions, we will announce the results of the second phase of consultation and the details of the schemes, as well as explaining to the public in detail the next step in the Government's work. Provided that there is strong public support, we will begin to make preparations for the relevant legislation with a view to implementing the schemes as soon as possible.

On planning, in order to strengthen the connection between Hong Kong and eastern Guangdong Province and neighbouring provinces, we will discuss with the Shenzhen Municipal Government the development of the Eastern Corridor, that is, the Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Control Point and conduct a joint study. This study will explore the need, function and benefits of the Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Control Point at a macro and strategic level. The joint study is expected to commence in the fourth quarter of this year and will be completed in the third quarter of 2007. Meanwhile, we will also commission a consultancy separately to examine the relevant planning, environmental and engineering issues of the new cross-boundary control point, including its connecting roads and land requirements within Hong Kong's territory. We aim to complete the planning study by early 2008.

Next, I wish to talk about public housing. Last year, following the successful listing of The Link REIT and the decision on the judicial review relating to the rent review, bearing in mind the need of residents for a comfortable living environment, the HA immediately introduced a series of improvement measures designed to keep abreast of the times and founded on clear legal grounds and sound finance. They include the implementation of the Comprehensive Structural Investigation Programme for ageing public housing blocks, the allocation of \$6.3 billion in the next five years to the Total

Maintenance Scheme and assigning In-flat Inspection Ambassadors to make appointments for inspection, checking and maintenance. In addition, we will install lifts in three old blocks in Choi Hung Estate; convert underutilized car parks in Tin Shui Wai into youth and community centres to strengthen the services and support provided to residents in the district; enhance the services and facilities for the visually-impaired, including the provision of tactile guide paths and the installation of "voice synthesizers" in lifts. This host of improvements in housing estates will cater to the practical needs of residents in public housing estates.

To complement the government policy of supporting and consolidating the family as the core, we will endeavour to study how we can further encourage small families to live with elderly people through the public housing allocation policy. The Families with Elderly Persons Priority Scheme and Special Scheme for Families with Elderly Persons will continue to be implemented to foster the cohesion of families and create mutually caring families.

In the coming year, one of our major task is to establish a reasonable and practicable rent adjustment mechanism based on tenants' affordability. From March to June this year, we consulted various sectors extensively on the initial results of the Review of Domestic Rent Policy. The results of public consultation indicate that society generally supports the establishment of a new rent adjustment mechanism based on clear and objective criteria. The majority view is also inclined towards adopting a rent adjustment mechanism based on tenants' income. The Ad Hoc Committee responsible for the review will submit its proposals to the HA for approval by the end of this year after carefully considering public opinions, including those voiced by Members and other members of the public. If the HA endorses the proposals, we hope that a bill can be tabled to the Legislative Council in the first quarter of next year, so that the new rent adjustment mechanism can be implemented as soon as possible.

The public housing programme in Hong Kong has provided comfortable homes to hundreds of thousands of low-income families. With the high-speed development of the Hong Kong economy in the past two to three decades, apart from raising the quality of life of the public, public housing has also promoted social mobility. Furthermore, it is also an important pillar of social stability.

Nowadays, the HA has provided about 680 000 public housing units and catered to the housing needs of about 30% of the population in Hong Kong.

Together with over 300 000 Home Ownership Scheme flats, about half of the population in Hong Kong live in subsidized public housing. Although Hong Kong society is increasingly affluent, the demand of grass-roots families for public housing is still very great. At present, there are still over 100 500 applications on the Waiting List and the HA receives over 3 000 new applications each month.

It is necessary for the HA to have ample public housing units to meet the demand, in order to fulfil its policy pledge that the average waiting time is three years. In the next five years, there will be 70 000 newly completed units. Apart from building new public housing, we will also combat the abuse of public housing resources through various measures such as withdrawing subsidies for families with better means which do not have to live in public housing, so as to make more public housing units available to families with the greatest need. In view of the present supply and circulation of units, we are confident that it will be possible to meet the demand in the next five years and maintain the average waiting time at about three years.

As regards the land supply for public housing after five years, there are a number of variables. Although the Government has reserved sites in various districts for public housing development, people in these districts often hold different views on the use of these sites. They generally hope that more community facilities will be available and that the density of development can be lowered. Some views hold that the sites made available after the demolition of old housing estates are often premium sites in the urban area which should be used for private developments and there is no need to retain them for the redevelopment of public housing. However, some other views hold that the Government is too inclined towards developing public housing in the more remote new towns. Not only does doing so impose a heavy burden in the form of transport fares on the families living in public housing, serious social and family problems have also arisen as a result of inadequate community facilities or support services.

As we all know, land is scarce but the population is large in Hong Kong, so land supply is relatively very tight. We fully appreciate the demands of the public on the provision of more community facilities in their districts and we also fully understand their concerns about living density and the local population profile. We are now liaising and discussing actively with the District Councils concerned in the hope that through composite development, their demands can be addressed on the one hand, and adequate public housing units can be built in a

timely manner on the other. Moreover, it is also hoped that this approach will provide more green open spaces as well as cultural and recreational facilities to improve the quality of life of local residents. In this process, we anticipate considerable resistance, so we are concerned about whether some public housing development projects can be implemented as scheduled.

We understand the importance of using valuable land resources appropriately. In determining the land use of each site, it is necessary to take into account needs in relation to the overall development of society. Therefore, we will balance the demands of various sectors carefully and comprehensively, in the hope that the most reasonable and beneficial decision can be made. In the coming months, the HA will conduct a study on the strategy for sustainable development of public housing, assess the need in society for public housing carefully and identify the best way to meet the demand. We hope that the information can be processed and the initial observations summarized as soon as possible, so as to hold more in-depth discussions with Members.

Finally, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to Members for their support and valuable views on the work of the Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau in the past. Looking ahead, we have to continue to secure Members' support in order to implement a number of policy initiatives and carry out the relevant legislative exercises, including those relating to the mandatory building inspection scheme and the implementation of the rent adjustment mechanism. I hope that on the basis of mutual co-operation and pragmatism, I can join hands with Members in implementing the foregoing series of policy initiatives closely related to the livelihood of the public as soon as possible.

Thank you, President.

SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND WORKS

(in Cantonese): Madam President, I am grateful to the more than 22 Members who spoke and offered their valuable views on the work relating to environmental protection and transportation yesterday. They have raised issues of concern to various sectors and I wish to further explain to Members some basic principles and our strategy.

A lot of people think that the Government lacks a comprehensive strategy on environmental protection, however, I do not agree with this. In fact, our

strategy has always been to adhere steadfastly to a well-thought-out direction and long-term planning. The strategy on environmental protection consists of four elements.

First, we adopt forward-looking policies to set clear targets, taking into full consideration the need to strike a balance between protecting the environment and the needs of socio-economic development, while harnessing technological advancement and employing financial means to accelerate their attainment. This element is in fact multi-faceted. Since the early 1990s, we have been discussing economic development and environmental protection actively and the importance of environmental protection to economic and social development, as all of us have had first-hand experience of the contradictions between the economy and environmental protection arising from time to time. Many countries have also experienced the undesirable consequences of unco-ordinated developments and as a result, the concept of sustainable development came into being and gained worldwide acceptance. In the last conference held in Johannesburg, it was clearly spelt out that if these three elements were to be smoothly realized, the co-operation among three sides, namely, the public, corporations and the government is requirement.

On environmental protection, in the past 10-odd years, I have read a lot of research papers which say that when the *per capita* product in a society reaches a certain level, the environmental awareness of its people will then increase. It can be seen clearly that the present situation in Hong Kong is that the concern and demands of the public in this regard have increased significantly. However, this may not be the same at other places or in our neighbouring cities. The United States is a case in point. There are a lot of differences in the developmental needs between Southern California and Mexico, just as there are also such differences between us and Guangdong Province. Therefore, we must put in place a set of strategies to cope with this problem and hope that co-operation, technology transfer and experience sharing can speed up the progress and development of society as a whole. At the same time, we have to explain to the local people what clear targets have been set in development and co-operation and that these targets are practicable. These are the clear requirements that we have set down.

Secondly, we have to strive to establish the "polluter pays" principle to internalize the social costs of environmental protection and to offer incentives for

the people to pollute less. Internality is very important because at the stage of externality, everyone will only pay lip-service and will not put things into practice. As the saying goes, "let things drift if they do not affect one personally". This is a tested principle which is highly practicable, and it is also highly effective. Therefore, we will strive to implement the "polluter pays" principle. Hong Kong can be regarded as very backward in this regard. This principle has been put into practice in many cities on the Mainland but we have failed to do so in many areas.

Thirdly, when the market fails to find a solution on its own, the Government will intervene. Where appropriate, we will resort to legislative options. From the speeches of many Members, I learn that Members have a good understanding of this issue. Many Members advocate enacting mandatory legislation at an early date, but some Members are concerned about the feasibility of enacting legislation, the level of acceptance in society and whether various problems in enforcement can be solved. In this regard, I believe both Members and the Government are richly experienced. In a pluralistic society like Hong Kong, it is necessary for us to go through a process of thorough consultation and public participation, then ensure that this is practicable and proven by means of technology and management. I will talk about this further in terms of water, land and air later on.

Fourthly and lastly, we promote community participation by heightening public awareness. I think many Members have agreed in their comments that financial incentives have to be complemented by civic education because it is necessary for the public to reach a consensus before many environmental projects can be taken forward. In this regard, the Action Blue Sky Campaign is in fact a major project. We have to raise and promote the public awareness of environmental stewardship — it is very difficult to translate this term into Chinese. Who do we care so much about the environment? Because we are in fact its steward and often, environmental pollution is created by human beings. The Government can only regulate what has happened, however, it is necessary for each of us to assume responsibility in finding ways to alleviate the impact on the environment.

Firstly, I am going to talk about our policy on improving air quality. We have talked about this many times, so I do not wish to repeat the initiatives that have been mentioned many times. These initiatives have already been set out clearly on the Internet. The most important thing of great concern to everyone

is the Regional Air Quality Management Plan. At present, we have devised the Regional Air Quality Management Plan for the Pearl River Delta Region together with Guangdong Province and it was implemented in 2003. The Environmental Protection Department maintains close co-operation with our Bureau at every level. It is not true that we hold meetings only once a year, rather, our colleagues are doing their utmost to co-operate with the Guangdong Environmental Protection Bureau all the time.

Recently, we have noticed that the haze problem in Hong Kong has become very serious. We studied satellite images and found that this layer of haze stretched from the Sea of Japan in the North to Shanghai in the South and from the South to the West up to Hainan Island. What actually are the causes? I have also made enquiries with the Hong Kong Observatory and they are now carrying out studies and surveys. This phenomenon in the past few weeks shows that the affected area is far larger than imagined and the entire Asia, including Southeast Asia and Northern Asia, is affected. Therefore, it is necessary for us to have patience in every co-operative programme. We are not saying that we have to drag our feet in dealing with this matter, however, the targets to be achieved by 2010 as set down by us are already very proactive and aggressive because if we look at other cities, such programmes may require 20 or 30 years. The rate of reduction is also very aggressive and we will also review the list of emissions frequently. Of course, we can see that as the economy of Guangdong Province develops, it is inevitable that the quantity of its emissions will also increase. Regarding how corresponding emission reduction measures should be taken in response to these increases, we will continue to adopt new technologies, for example, to require power plants to switch to natural gas and introduce measures relating to flue gas desulphurization, to keep tightening the emission standards for motor vehicles, and so on. All these are positive measures.

Concerning the reduction of emissions by power plants, active measures will be pursued on both sides of the boundary. Switching to natural gas in electricity generation is a very effective measure, however, in the transition, we will still make use of coal-fired power plants and oil-fired power plants, so it is necessary to study how emissions can be reduced in this area. As I have said, with regard to reducing vehicle emissions, we have to follow certain emission standards closely. The Chief Executive has also proposed two new measures in his policy address, one of which is to provide grants amounting to \$3.2 billion to expedite the replacement of pre-Euro and Euro I commercial

diesel vehicles, which number about 74 000 in total. This measure is taken because we know that although emission reduction measures such as the installation of catalytic converters on these vehicles, compared with Euro IV models, the emissions from these vehicles are still very high. Insofar as these commercial diesel vehicles are concerned, it is necessary for us to provide incentives to encourage vehicle owners to replace their vehicles more quickly.

Secondly, we will encourage the use of environmentally-friendly vehicles through a concession in first registration tax. This is the second largest group of polluters after power plants. In the process of reducing emissions, of course, there are priorities and the biggest polluters are power plants. We will have a series of measures to deal with this, including the introduction of new clauses in the operating agreements, as proposed by the Chief Executive in his policy address last year. These tasks are now in progress.

In respect of motor vehicles, the heavy vehicles and diesel vehicles among them account for some 18% of respirable suspended particulates (RSP) and 10% of the total nitrogen oxide pollution in Hong Kong, therefore, we have to reduce them. Concerning public transport, a lot of people query why the problems relating to buses are not dealt with as buses are also diesel vehicles. Buses of pre-Euro or Euro I standards account for one third of the total fleet and they have been fitted with catalytic converters. Generally speaking, the RSP discharged by buses accounts for less than 2%. In addition, some Members are concerned that the introduction of such clauses in the franchises may affect bus fares, however, the work relating to the franchises and the mechanism that allows for both fares increases and reductions was completed last year, so I am only telling Members that they have already been implemented.

In addition, we are also developing renewable energy comprehensively. Regarding greening, there is also a master plan to step up greening in the urban area. We have persistently stepped up the greening of suburbs and we will carry it out whenever there is the opportunity, be it on both sides of highways or in any setting. Therefore, I hope members of the public will understand that we have been carrying out a lot of greening systematically. I also hope that Members will support our future greening programmes because after the completion of planning, we will apply for funding from the Legislative Council soon afterwards to implement the greening programmes for various districts in the urban area. At present, such programmes are being implemented in Tsim Sha Tsui and Central. Many people say that they do not believe that there are

so many green areas in Hong Kong. If Members want to make enquiries, I can provide the relevant figures easily. In the past three years, it is true that we have planted 7.3 million trees and if they are counted together with other species such as creepers and grass on slopes, over 40 million units were planted. Therefore, I hope that Members will all note the green areas in Hong Kong and support this programme because it can really make a difference in this densely populated place.

Concerning the amelioration of air pollution, I do not wish to repeat and repeat everything. In fact, during 1997 to 2004, the Legislative Council also greatly supported measures designed to reduce air pollution. As a result, taxis have switched to using liquefied petroleum gas and so have some of the minibuses. Recently, we have also imposed caps on emissions from power plants. Between 1997 and 2004, we could see some progress but it was particularly marked in 2002 and 2003. I am pleased to see that after imposing emission caps, the number of days in which pollution exceeded the objectives fell from 87 days in 2004 to 49 days in 2005. Of course, Members may not agree with these standards and may consider them too lax, and that even if the standards are not exceeded, it does not necessarily mean that the situation is good. Of course, this is controvertible, however, Members have to compare an orange with an orange in order to see whether progress has really been made or whether there has been retrogression.

As regards air quality objectives, we know that the World Health Organization (WHO) has issued a guideline which is very stringent because the WHO considers this matter from the perspective of public health, that is, it is only by complying with this guideline that our health will not be affected, not that air quality exceeding the objectives will lead to acute attacks, that is, members of the public will be affected by such sudden surge in air pollution. It has to do with long term and optimal health. Of course, this is desirable. For people living in a society or in this world, they certainly desire the best health possible, however, the global objectives are also set with reference to the situation in highly developed societies. We have also conducted some preliminary studies by assuming that the WHO set the objectives with reference to Geneva, however, the situation there cannot meet the objectives either. Therefore, the people there have to spend some time dealing with this problem, but their task will be easier than ours. We have to consider more carefully how this air quality guideline can be adopted as the air quality objectives for Hong Kong and the WHO has also proposed medium-term and long-term objectives

because it is aware that many places cannot meet the objectives immediately. If stringent objectives that can never be attained are set, this will be meaningless and this is not how the Government acts. Therefore, we have to study how a long-term air quality management strategy can be formulated so that we can move towards this guideline step by step and the air quality in Hong Kong in the long term can be as good to health as possible.

In the process of the review, we have to consider the various sources of pollution and how to control them. Often, this is not just a matter of money. As many Members know, public participation is necessary and everyone has to strive to reduce emissions. The process of formulating a long-term air quality management programme will really take 18 months. We also have to conduct a lot of simulations on air conditions to determine whether air quality can really be improved after the emission reduction measures are implemented.

Regarding switching off vehicle engines while waiting, I am glad to hear that Members generally support this arrangement, in particular, that the goods vehicle trade also supports it. As Ms Miriam LAU said, in summer, doing so will really be very hot for them, but we will continue to consult the passenger transport trades. Today, everyone can learn from the newspapers that there are some reactions, so we must go through a process so that people can have the opportunity to raise queries. I believe that if this measure is implemented after a consensus has been reached, the relevant measure will be even more effective.

In addition, this year, we also have to introduce legislation to the Legislative Council for enactment, for example, a new regulation to impose limits on the content of volatile organic compounds in paints, printing inks and selected consumer products, which we will begin to implement in stages before the end of next year.

On improving air quality, we will do this through the Action Blue Sky Campaign. In fact, we have secured the support of many schools, organizations and business chambers in joining hands with us. The most important area is of course energy conservation. I am pleased that the Legislative Council has also responded to this call and it has even practised it very actively. The other day, when I came here for a meeting, I was reminded repeatedly to switch off the lights and it was said that not doing so would be punished. I am grateful to Members for their strong support and it can be seen that the vigilance of society in this regard has indeed increased significantly. I believe that if we begin with

children, the effects will be more direct and they will be even more receptive. As regards adults, since they have to change their habits, we have to proceed step by step. Everyone has to make contribution and many drops of water will make an ocean. Only in this way can air quality be substantially improved. It is necessary for us to adopt a long-term and sustained approach. Members can go home and have a look. Compared with a decade ago, the number of electrical appliances in our homes has increased many times. Recently, I have also made a list. Therefore, all of us can consider beginning with energy conservation and seek opportunities to do so. In fact, doing so is not a great hassle as some more troublesome matters may follow this.

In addition, concerning water, I wish to say that despite the controversies lasting many years, the method of sewage treatment in Hong Kong is still very backward. As a world city visited by so many people each year and since members of the public think that they are also members of the civil society, why is our sewage treatment method so very backward? In the 1990s, I also took part in the discussion on the oceanic outfall proposal, which is now called the Harbour Area Treatment Scheme (HATS). For more than a decade, I have also taken part in many sewage treatment projects in various parts of the world and am aware that each place has its own characteristics. There are countless ways of sewage treatment, for example, biological treatment, chemical treatment and biochemical treatment. To a layman, which method he will accept will depend on the claim that he subscribes to. In fact, all technologies have pros and cons. If we want to look for the disadvantages, there will always be some and it may not be possible to state the advantages clearly. However, the Stonecutters Island Sewage Treatment Works built in phase one of the HATS, which was formerly known as the Strategic Sewage Disposal Scheme, is in fact capable of treating 140 million tonnes of sewage coming from the shores of Kowloon each day.

We have adopted the chemical treatment method. Firstly, we have proved that the effectiveness of chemical treatment is very high and sewage can be treated to a very high discharge standard and the cost is comparatively speaking very low. This process can kill 80% of the bacteria even though not all bacteria can be killed. For the Hong Kong environment, we consider it unnecessary to kill the remaining 20%. Three Members said in their speeches that it was undesirable to use chlorine, that it is a bad substance that pollutes the environment. In fact, as I have said, there are always advantages and disadvantages. Chlorine has a simple antiseptic effect and it is used in many

hospitals and even in other areas. Even the water that we drink is sterilized with chlorine. In sewage treatment, of course, using chlorine has its limitations but solutions are also available. In its process of oxidation, chlorine must remain in a waste water tank for oxidation to take effect. After oxidation, chlorine will break down into chloride, which is a component of salt. If the residence time is insufficient and the effluent enters the ocean ecology, our rivers will be affected and this is of course undesirable. Moreover, it is also necessary to be very careful when handling chlorine as it is toxic. However, should we then conclude that chlorine cannot be used as a means of sterilization in modern sewage treatment? I believe that Members, after reading all the literature, will know that the answer is surely in the negative.

Members often talk about the use of ultra-violet light but this also has its pros and cons. Simply put, we all know that ultra-violet light is antiseptic but it can also affect the mutation of organisms and cause all sorts of genetic changes. Ultra-violet light can have such an effect. Prolonged exposure to the sun will cause cancer but this is just a simplified way of expression and of course, the two cannot be equated. In addition, using ultra-violet light will require a lot of electricity; the efficiency is very low but electricity consumption is very high. However, in some circumstances, it is necessary to adopt this method, for example, when it is not possible to store chlorine. It is also not possible to use chlorine if the residence time is inadequate. However, there are instances in which it can be used, particularly in view of the fact that the content of chloride in the sea is already very high, so a lot of experts recommend that chlorine be used in cases involving the sea but one must be more careful in cases in which rivers are involved. When Members ask the Government questions, they ask the Government to think more. I agree very much with this, however, we cannot maintain that something is good or something is bad on hearing the one-sided views of some experts. In fact, it is a matter of balance and there is nothing that is completely harmless. Mr LEUNG also mentioned biological treatment. However, major problems are also associated with biological treatment because enormous land is required and what biological treatment means is to promote the growth of bacteria so that the bacteria will consume the organic matters. However, in the end, it is still necessary to destroy these organisms and antiseptic treatment is required all the same. Therefore, it is not true that biological treatment is simpler and chemical treatment is more backward. In fact, in the scientific literature on water quality control, chemical treatment is highly commended and several authoritative experts also think that it is very useful in treating urban effluent, while being good for the ocean.

Finally, on solid waste, we will definitely launch a product responsibility scheme as soon as possible. We already have a Policy Framework for the Management of Municipal Solid Waste which provides an outline for the next decade and this is exactly our long-term policy planning. As regards the product responsibility scheme, originally, we wanted to follow the examples of Australia and other advanced cities by enacting an umbrella ordinance only. After the legislation is put in place, products will be included one by one after consulting the relevant trades. The facts show that in other countries, once such a piece of legislation has been put in place, all parties will hasten to do something of their accord. After announcing our plan in this regard, a voluntary scheme operated by the industry for rechargeable batteries has been introduced. Therefore, I hope Members will support the legislation because, with it, the business sector will exercise self-discipline. Thank you, Members.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): The fourth debate session ends. We now proceed to the fifth debate session. The policy areas for this debate session are "food safety and environmental hygiene, health services and welfare services".

MR TOMMY CHEUNG (in Cantonese): Madam President, the policy address this year has said little about the catering industry. In regard to the recently established Centre for Food Safety, it has not laid down a detailed policy blueprint. The Administration should know that public demand on food safety and hygiene is getting higher. The public and I have great expectations for the Centre for Food Safety, especially in regard to monitoring foods at source.

In the past, the Administration would usually take the easy way out by imposing excessive legal liabilities of food safety on the level of food retail and food establishments. As a result, it resulted in overkill and greatly damaged the catering industry. In fact, imposing legislative regulation at the retail level before the work of monitoring foods at source is improved is unable to safeguard food safety for the public thoroughly.

I am glad to hear that the Administration is now setting up a comprehensive food chain management system, which is to put the concept of monitoring "From Feed to Table" into practice. I hope that the Administration can really carry this out, improve the thinking of putting too much emphasis on

the dining table level as in the past, and reduce wastage of resources, so that the public can be genuinely protected.

As far as I understand it, the food monitoring workload of the Administration is growing heavier. Exactly because of this, the Administration should deploy its resources more properly. For instance, the Administration should perfect the existing method of risk assessment. It should conduct risk assessment on each and every food establishment, and then reduce the frequency of inspecting those food establishments with good records and lower risk, so that it can spare more Health Inspectors to step up monitoring of foods at source.

Besides, at present, apart from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the Labour Department also sends its staff to inspect food establishments, while the Buildings Department, Lands Department and Fire Services Department also engage in the inspections, which can be fairly annoying indeed. Furthermore, this will seriously undermine the business environment of Hong Kong. Thus, it is necessary to solve this problem as soon as possible.

For more than once, I have said that the catering industry would not deliberately poison the public, and they are just unaware of certain facts. The Administration should learn from overseas experience, such that when Health Inspectors are arranged to inspect food establishments, they should give in-depth advice to the staff on how to improve operation according to the specific situations. Compared with the stereotyped programme for health managers and supervisors organized by the Administration for the industry but which only lasts for a few hours, this will be more effective. I can recall that when the Secretary responded to my question last year, he said that this proposal was desirable. However, we have yet to see any substantial move from the Administration to date.

I do not know whether Members can still remember that in the report issued by the World Bank in September this year, it was said that the time and procedures of licence issuance in Hong Kong offered room for improvement. In regard to the licensing system, the food business licence is the target of frequent criticisms. Besides, compared with the systems in Japan and Singapore, the system in Hong Kong is backward and rigid. While the application procedures are time-consuming, the application also has to go through many departments. As a result, it takes a very long time before an application is approved.

According to my understanding, the Business Facilitation Unit under the Financial Secretary has been positively studying on how best this process can be improved and streamlined. I hope that other departments concerned can also co-operate so that the improvement measure can be implemented as soon as possible.

I believe that only if the resources can be used properly, the food business licensing system streamlined and the inspections reduced, the cost of licence issuance will naturally be lowered. If that goal is attained, the Administration should also consider reducing the food business licence fees. This will assure compliance with the principle of charging at cost.

I have pointed out many times that when formulating policies relating to the catering industry, the Administration should not focus too much on hygiene and health, as this will mistakenly ruin the prospects of the industry. The various departments should co-operate with each other and apply three-dimensional thinking, positively working towards the target of removing all the restrictions to facilitate business operation and stimulate the economy.

I am very delighted that the Administration has accepted the proposal of the industry that while implementing the legislation on smoking ban, a roughly two-year timeframe would be allowed to study the feasibility of introducing smoking rooms. However, Secretary, the study result is still unknown. A pressing task now is that we must study as soon as possible how to streamline the application procedures concerning alfresco cafes and relaxing the licensing conditions, so as to support the industry in retaining patronage, thus cushioning the impact of the anti-smoking legislation on the industry.

The reason for my urging the Administration this way is that last year, a few colleagues and I went to Norway and Ireland for a site visit. When we studied the measures and effectiveness of their ban on smoking, people in the catering industry of both places also warned that the business of restaurants and bars upstairs and inside shopping malls would greatly suffer. However, it is fortunate that since Norway has ample space and very wide streets, the government supports the industry by allowing the restaurants to have more outdoor seats. And smoking, of course, is allowed in the outdoor corner. In Ireland, as another example, all the bars there are at grade. They can easily add a few hundred outdoor seats to facilitate the smokers, thus cushioning the impact on their business.

Nevertheless, in Hong Kong, an application for an alfresco cafe is subject to numerous restrictions and complicated procedures, which involve as many as seven departments. As a result, the number of applications has been continuously decreasing, from 194 applications in 2002 to 50 applications last year. Over nearly four years in the past, the total number of applications is 403. However, only 35% of the applications have been approved, many of which have to be processed for half to one year. This makes the industry very frustrated indeed.

Recently, my office has received many phone calls from the industry. Since most of their customers are smokers, they are worried that after the smoking ban legislation has come into effect on 1 January next year, their business will be greatly affected. However, as they are bound by the tenancy, they cannot close their business. In the end, it is highly probable that they will be forced to operate a losing business.

For this reason, I urge the Administration to appreciate the difficulties of the food establishments, streamline the application procedures and relax the application conditions for alfresco cafes. From the experience of Norway, we can see that after the implementation of a total ban on smoking, alfresco cafes can offer some room for the industry in Hong Kong to ease its difficulties.

In regard to the establishment of a central slaughtering and processing plant of live poultry in Sheung Shui by the Administration, I am a little worried. It is because this processing plant is located in North District, which is only a river away from Shenzhen. How can it compete with the live poultry slaughtering plants in Shenzhen which operate at a very low cost?

The only condition that can help the proposed central slaughtering and processing plant of live poultry survive without wasting taxpayers' money is to make sure that the processing plant has two production lines. In the first production line, the freshly slaughtered chickens will be processed into chilled chickens with hygiene guarantee. The second line is the production of fresh and up to hygiene standard warm-meat chickens or chickens at room temperature, to be supplied to the food establishments all over the territory. Otherwise, the proposed live poultry slaughtering plant will be doomed to failure.

Therefore, the Administration should positively study the practical technical problems: How to speedily transport the freshly slaughtered

warm-meat chickens or chickens at room temperature from one or more live poultry slaughtering and processing plants to the food establishments in various districts of the territory, as well as to assure that the meat quality is still fresh and compliant with the hygiene standard, so that people in Hong Kong can still enjoy fresh chickens, while Hong Kong's reputation of being the gourmet paradise will not be tarnished. If only this can be done, Secretary, you could then bring the issue of central slaughtering to the table for discussion.

The voluntary surrender of licence scheme for live poultry retailers has already come to an end. However, to those 500-odd live poultry stall operators who refuse to accept this unreasonable compensation scheme and are still operating, how is the Administration going to deal with them?

Over the past few years, the Administration has been driving them out of business with some shriveling measures. For instance, during the outbreak of avian flu in Guangdong Province, even though it had nothing to do with the mainland registered farms which supplied live poultry to Hong Kong, the Secretary still forbid these farms meeting strict sanitary standards to import live poultry without providing assistance to the industry at the same time. As a result, the operation of the industry was forced to come to a halt immediately, and the workers concerned had no means to live. This happened a few times in one year. And tens of thousands of workers employed in the operation chain of the live poultry industry, whether in wholesaling, or those selling, slaughtering or delivering chickens, all lived in constant fear of unemployment. Nevertheless, in this respect, the Secretary had also made an improvement by shortening the period of suspension. However, while the Secretary had provided loans to the fishermen concerned during the fishing moratorium, why could the Administration not, during the ban on import of live chickens, at least support chicken farmers or chicken retailers with the same means?

I reiterate that the Administration should set up an emergency assistance fund to provide loans at low interest rates to those in the industry affected by government policies, and to provide rental assistance during the ban on import of live poultry, with a view to assisting the industry to tide over the hardships.

If the Administration thinks that the transportation and slaughtering of chickens in the urban area is a major hidden risk of spreading avian flu, it should formally put forward a mandatory surrender of licence scheme with reasonable and comprehensive compensations, so that the workers concerned can switch to other trades as soon as possible.

The scheme concerned should take care of tens of thousands of workers in the live poultry industry, including licence holders of live poultry stalls, employees and transportation workers, not one less.

This should not be compared with the voluntary surrender of licence scheme implemented earlier. Take the example of transportation workers, according to the past voluntary surrender of licence scheme, each vehicle used to transport chickens could only get an *ex gratia* payment of \$50,000. But this is basically not enough to transform a vehicle for transporting chickens into a higher-cost vehicle with cold storage facility. This is absolutely not a reasonable compensation arrangement.

Since the Administration forces them to forsake their lifelong occupation, the amount of compensation should be raised according to this principle. I sincerely ask the Administration to appreciate the needs of the industry, not to turn a deaf ear to but to listen to their aspirations.

Besides, I would also like to express some ideas of the Liberal Party on the policy address in regard to social welfare policies.

Under the situation where there are finite resources but infinite demands, we may have to review the existing development strategy of social welfare, so that the finite resources can be utilized more effectively, thus rendering sustainable development of society possible.

Besides, I also agree that if Hong Kong is to build a harmonious community, we have to strengthen mutual aid among neighbours in monitoring and preventing domestic violence, and let parents take up some responsibilities of parenting. Therefore, in the policy address, the Government says that the core of social policy will continue to be supporting families, strengthening families and promoting the well-being of family members. This merits our support. I am not going to elaborate here, as Mrs Sophie LEUNG, who is more experienced in women affairs, has already expressed her relevant views on behalf of the Liberal Party.

Next, I would like to talk about encouraging the employment of recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA). In regard to the review of the disregarded earnings of low-income CSSA recipients proposed by the

Social Welfare Department (SWD), the Liberal Party expresses our welcome. We support raising the level of disregarded earnings so that there are more incentives to encourage more CSSA recipients to look for some higher-pay jobs, in the hope that they can gradually leave the CSSA net and reach the target of becoming self-reliant.

Talking about self-reliance, we also would like to mention in passing the Intensive Employment Assistance Projects (IEAPs) which aim to encourage employment of able-bodied CSSA recipients. In terms of effectiveness, the IEAPs are far from successful. According to the statistics from the SWD, as at April last year, a total of 15 449 people had joined the IEAPs. Among them, 12 236 people were CSSA recipients. In this group, 3 990 people successfully obtained employment, including 1 080 people who successfully left the CSSA net and 2 910 people who became low-income CSSA recipients. In other words, the number of people who could formally leave the CSSA net is less than 10% of the IEAP participants. It is obvious that the rate of success of the IEAPs is yet to improve.

In fact, there are at present around 540 000 CSSA recipients in Hong Kong. Among them, about 150 000 are able-bodied with working capacity. If they rely on CSSA for their living on a long-term basis and do not try to look for jobs, they will only become more detached from society. In the end, they will completely lose their working capacity and have to rely more heavily on CSSA for their living. A vicious cycle will then be formed and society also has to shoulder a heavy welfare expenditure for this.

Thus, the Liberal Party opines that the Government should further study and draw up different employment options tailor-made for CSSA recipients, so that those CSSA recipients with capacity can go out to work. As the New Dawn Project introduced by the SWD in April this year aimed to assist employment of those single parents receiving CSSA and whose youngest children are aged between 12 and 14, it will provide the most up-to-date information to these parents and help them adapt to re-entering the labour market.

Similarly, not a few parents have to give up employment for the sake of taking care of their young children. However, when they want to look for employment again, they find themselves divorced from society. Under the pressure of living, they are forced to apply for CSSA. The Government can

strengthen support to child care services and employment counselling services, so that those parents of CSSA households with working capacity can go out to work and rely less on the CSSA payment. Some day, they may even be able to be employed again.

Besides, in paragraph 49 of the policy address, the Government admits that in individual new towns, such as Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung, community facilities are inadequate. The Government also undertakes that in the coming five years, it will spend \$11.1 billion to complete 70-odd leisure and cultural service projects left behind by the former Municipal Councils, including the addition of libraries, swimming pools, ball courts and employment centres. It will give priority to 25 such projects. The Liberal Party welcomes this. In our opinion, with the addition of community facilities, the residents of those districts can become healthier both physically and mentally. Besides, this can help them build up normal social relations and thus reduce the pressure on social services. This will be conducive to building up a harmonious society.

I so submit, Madam President.

MR WONG YUNG-KAN (in Cantonese): Madam President, the title of the policy address delivered by Mr Donald TSANG, the Chief Executive, this year is "Proactive Pragmatic Always People First". To the agriculture and fisheries industry, these slogans sounded most sarcastic. In the past year, as the SAR Government had implemented in the industry a number of initiatives that were not in the least practical or pragmatic, people in the trade had to suffer in striving for survival. Since the promulgation of the policy address, there have been voices in society criticizing the new measures implemented by the Chief Executive of trying to garner support from various sectors to pave the way for his re-election. However, I have to point out solemnly here that our industry is not going to benefit from any of these measures proposed in the policy address this year.

Let me go straight to the point, to the agriculture and fisheries industry, far from taking people first, Mr TSANG has forgotten all about us. Since the reunification nine years ago, there have been a number of unrests in society, however, people in the agriculture and fisheries industry gave full support to the SAR Government on every occasion, so as to ensure social stability.

I would like to talk about the situation of the agriculture industry first. In the past two years, the Government has consecutively implemented voluntary schemes in the chicken and pig farming industries, encouraging farmers to surrender their licences by buying back their investments in facilities and livestock with public money. A number of farmers have taken part in the schemes. On the face of it, these schemes are appropriate and are therefore well received by farmers. As a matter of fact, this is the Government's tactic in closing up the local livestock and poultry farming industry by employing the carrot and stick at the same time. The general farmer community including those who joined the schemes were of the view that they were left no options. It is because during the past two decades, the harsh and rigid legislation imposed by the Government has made them difficult to survive. On the other hand, after the licence surrender scheme was implemented, the Government threatened to impose more stringent restrictions on farms continuing with their operation. In the face of the Government's threats, what else could they do? In my opinion, to those farmers who wish to go on operating, the Government should endeavour to enhance their farms in terms of hygiene, scientific research and technology, so that they can pursue better development.

These farmers, on receiving the compensation by surrendering their licences, were left with only a little money after repaying their loans. The money was definitely not enough to support them, not to mention to feed their family members. As they were reluctant to leave the trade, they put forward an idea of building up farms on the Mainland and turning to breed live poultry and pigs there. It was proposed that, based on the registration number of their Hong Kong licence, each farm would be allowed to ship back a certain number of their products for sale here in Hong Kong. The idea won the full support of some mainland municipalities, such as the Shaoguan and Meizhou Municipal Governments. The concept would result in a win-win situation for both sides in terms of agricultural development. However, a number of technical problems had to be resolved first, especially the quota and quarantine issues arising from the inward sale of products. They required close co-operation between the two sides, including soliciting support from the relevant Central Authorities. The Shaoguan Municipal Government attached great importance to this matter, and their Secretary and Mayor visited Hong Kong several times to hold discussions with us. They were afraid that we might leave them for other parties. However, when we looked at the SAR Government, we could see no proactive action. Though our Government had written to the Central Authorities and discussions were held between our Secretary and the relevant authorities, when I

went to Guangzhou with a fellow farmer in June this year to talk about the issue with the relevant department, only an Assistant Permanent Secretary was deployed by the SAR Government to accompany us. It must be noted that under the "one country, two systems" principle, if we do not take the initiative to make any request, neither the municipal government nor the Central Authorities is in a position of giving us any help. While the Chief Executive and the Secretary took a business trip with other sectors to the Western part of China, it did appear that the SAR Government favoured one more than another. When CEPA was launched two years ago, we did see that opportunities in agriculture were given up by the SAR Government. In the recent forum held in Boao, Hainan Province, the agriculture industries in both Taiwan and the Mainland put forward a number of development plans. Why could our SAR Government not consider doing something for our trade?

For those farmers who insisted on staying here in Hong Kong, they would also lead a hard life. Apart from stating clearly that more stringent regulation would be imposed, the Government would also subject the trade to challenges by implementing central slaughtering. Electing to listen to views expressed by some microbiologists and doctors, the Government is determined to take forward the plan of building a central slaughtering plant for live poultry. As the residents of Sheung Shui strongly opposed to building the plant in Sheung Shui, the Government then changed the siting to Man Kam To. This is indeed impractical and a waste of resources. By the implementation of central slaughtering, it implies that only ice-cold poultry, that is, chilled chickens will be available in the market in future. If consumers in Hong Kong can only be provided with chilled chicken, why not provide them with those imported from the Mainland? Besides, the site chosen is too close to the Mainland. I wonder if the Government has done any calculation at all. To slaughter a chicken and chill here, the total cost would be around \$30, while at present, the cost of a chilled chicken imported from the Mainland and shipped to our supermarket is only \$19.9 each. How are we going to compete with them? What is the best way? Are we going to purchase live chickens produced by our farmers at an even lower price for slaughtering? Will the Government provide subsidies?

This year, I went on a study tour to Singapore with our colleagues. We could see that though chilled chickens were available in Singapore, the Government prohibited import of chilled chickens from other countries. Only live poultry designated by the Government can be slaughtered locally. No importation of chilled chickens is allowed, with the only exception of frozen

chickens. As such, should the Government not look at the issue? If we cannot compete with others in terms of cost, how are we going to compete in the market? Should the Government not consider the issue from another angle?

For the fishing industry, we all know that the fishery resources in South China Sea this year are being depleted faster than usual. I hope the SAR Government can look into the causes jointly with the mainland authorities. We all know that, as compared with 2000, the fuel cost has risen from \$200 to over \$800 each barrel in last year. The rising production cost has made the fishing trade difficult to survive.

Madam President, I have mentioned a number of times in this Council the issue of restructuring the fishing trade by putting forward the proposals of developing off-shore fishing and leisure fisheries, hoping to arouse the attention of both the community and the Government, so as to formulate policies early. The motions were carried either with or without amendments by this Council on every occasion. The findings of a consultancy study commissioned by the Government a few years ago also revealed that the development of off-shore fishing was feasible. While the Government responded favourably on each occasion, no resource was committed to this.

I was extremely disappointed by the non-interference or even strangling attitude adopted by our first Secretary for the Environment and Food towards the developments of off-shore fishing and agriculture. Until now, I still wonder if the Secretary would know that, if my proposal of enabling our fishing boats to sail to the Indian Ocean in three years' time or providing them with loans were accepted then, there would be Hong Kong fishing boats sailing in the Indian Ocean by now. At present, as the door to the Indian Ocean is closed, we can no longer go there, and all that we can rely on is the Mainland. We should have the opportunity for development; however, due to the mistake of some officials, the entire industry had to face a sorry plight. Who should be held responsible for that? I can tell you that they are some ignorant officials who have no vision.

When we look at the situation of Hong Kong, after repeated pleas by the trade, an additional sum of \$250 million was finally set aside as a loan fund by the Government not long ago. The loan had to be repaid and was meant for helping off-shore development only. However, as the threshold for application was too high, fishermen are unable to secure the necessary collateral for the loan. Thus, they see no hope for restructuring. In the face of more stringent regulation imposed by the administration of international fisheries, it would be

much more difficult for our local vessels to operate in the Indian Ocean or other places. Yet, it does not mean that development is impossible, I believe that they should still stand a chance if the Government can support them to set up business on the Mainland.

Madam President, leisure fisheries is a new business making use of our existing fisheries facilities, tools and fishing zones, added with some elements of sightseeing, catering and humanities. As our coastal ecology, cultural heritage and mode of production are unique in nature, it would be suitable for us to provide older and inward fishermen with opportunities of restructuring and re-employment given the depleting marine resources. It would, at the same time, contribute to the development of local community economy. To accomplish all this, we need the requisite ancillary facilities provided by the Government, such as improving our typhoon shelters and fisherman wharfs, allowing fishing boats to convert to vessels suitable for sightseeing and fishing, as well as providing fishermen with the skills and loans. This item is of course included in the \$250 million loan fund, but unfortunately, after years of discussion, the Government has yet to reach a consensus with fishermen on the issue of sampan.

I would like to point out here that the Government has done a good job in developing piers for excursion vessels in recent years. However, some colleagues still wrote to the Government, complaining about the building work being too good, including the Sha Tau I saw on Kat O Island yesterday. However, even the Audit Commission queried why they were so beautifully built. I hope our colleagues can set their vision farther, that is, we should always do better in improving our eco-tourism and environment.

Madam President, on the issue of aquaculture, in order to protect the interest of large consortia, the Government adopted a lax attitude in regulating mud disposal arising from dredging works in coastal areas. As a result, fish culture zones nearby would be destroyed by mud washed into the sea together with rainwater or tide. In the past three years, fish culture zones in Ma Wan and Sap Long were affected by the Penny's Bay Project, while that in Leung Shuen Wan was affected by the expansion project of the golf course and the Po Toi O zone by the reurfing of the Clearwater Bay Golf Club. Mariculturists had suffered tremendous loss. But the party involved refused to shoulder the responsibilities on every occasion. In the absence of an effective regulatory mechanism on the part of the Government, including requiring them to take stringent precautionary measures, under the existing compensation arrangement,

the party involved can always get away by resorting to the so-called scientific data, subjecting mariculturists to great loss. The Government should change the present unfair system to do mariculturists justice.

Madam President, in order to urge the Government to implement Article 119 of the Basic Law, so as to formulate sustainable policies for the agriculture and fisheries industry, I have asked the Chief Executive on a number of occasions to establish a development committee comprising representatives and experts in the trade to co-ordinate the matter. Earlier on, I learned from Dr York CHOW that the Government had decided to set up a fisheries development committee under the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau. Although the committee would only focus on fisheries, it was still a step forward. I felt it should be something good, and members of the trade also shared my feeling. However, I have heard lately that, instead of directly under the Bureau, the committee is going to be set up under the Department. It made me feel a little disappointed. I had no intention to deny the contribution made by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD), it has done a lot for fishermen on the business level. However, should the formulation of policies of a rather significant nature not be more appropriately placed under the charge of the Bureau? Should the Government review the matter and put the matter under the ambit of the Bureau? I think the Government should re-examine the issue. I am worried that if we have a new Secretary or Director — I believe the Madam President also knows that, earlier on, the Government undertook to set aside a sum of \$20 million as a loan fund for development in fisheries. The arrangement of loan applications was basically agreed by the former Director. However, when the new Director took office, everything had to be rearranged and nothing has been done so far. Up till now, no loan has ever been granted and the fishermen still have to wait until the end of this year before they can know if any loan would be available. As a matter of fact, a number of applications are still awaiting the decision of that Director. The fishermen are waiting for the loans to go off-shore. They do not engage in in-shore fishing, but off-shore fishing.

The winner of the Nobel Peace Prize this year is Muhammad Yunus, a Bangladesh economist. He is indeed a great teacher of the Bangladesh farmers for he established a farmer bank to lend money to poor farmers who could not afford any security, so that they could set up their own business and make a living, thus extricating themselves from poverty. We have in fact a teacher like Yunus in our industry. She is Mrs YAU, the Permanent Secretary of the Health

Welfare and Food Bureau who assists Dr CHOW in formulating policies for the agriculture and fisheries industry. We hope that our Mrs YAU can do the same as Yunus does in Bangladesh, working hard to help people in our trade to fight poverty. We of course do not want her to copy Yunus of Bangladesh by giving out small loans, but instead the spirit of encouraging farmers to set up their own business.

I also wish to talk about my observations on the Mainland. I believe the President knows very well about the "San Nong" (agriculture, rural areas and farmers) Policy from the National People's Congress meetings. In the Mainland, farmers are put in the front place. However, in Hong Kong, we do not know where to put our fishermen and farmers. I hope the Policy Bureau can find out why the Mainland can attach so much importance to the agriculture and fisheries industry while we are not doing the same here.

Madam President, in his last policy address in this term, Mr TSANG did not intend to do anything for the agriculture and fisheries industry. We are most disappointed about this. I can only expect to hear some good news for the trade from our next Chief Executive when I listen to the last policy address to be delivered during my term.

I would also like to talk about the issue of food safety as proposed in the policy address. The DAB's proposal of setting up a Centre for Food Safety was included in the policy address last year. We had high hope for the Centre, but unfortunately, it turned out not quite the case for we have seen little improvement in our food safety work. A number of failure cases further exposed the loopholes in food safety surveillance.

For instance, this is now the season for hairy crabs. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) did tests on hairy crabs put on sale in the local market earlier on, saying that the findings were satisfactory. When everyone thinks that it is safe to consume hairy crabs, reports published recently in Taiwan revealed that several batches of hairy crabs imported from the Mainland contained nitrofurans, a kind of carcinogens. When the media pushed the FEHD for comments, the spokesman just resorted to the test results earlier on. When asked whether any nitrofurans was found in the tests, the Department's response was that they did not conduct any such test, and the public were dumbfounded. We still remember that the same thing did happen when malachite green was found in freshwater fish.

Madam President, the two incidents were not coincidence. It revealed that our regulatory work in food safety lacks direction. First of all, we do not have a complete set of standards on food safety. The existing safety standards are copied from the Codex and standards of other advanced countries in Europe and the United States. Yet, we have neither a mechanism for updating these standards, nor appropriate benchmarks tailor-made for our food consumption culture. The malachite green incident last year and the nitrofurans in mainland hairy crabs found in Taiwan were prominent examples. According to our existing food safety standards, these chemicals are prohibited in meat but not in aquaculture products. I hope the Government can conduct as soon as practicable more tests in this regard and I wonder how much of this kind of toxic food has been eaten by our people because of such loopholes. Earlier on, I talked to some officials of the food safety authority in Guangdong Province about the safety of salted fish or even chilled fish imported from the Mainland. I hope the Government can step up inspections in this area, instead of just relying on a piece of safety certificate. I hope the Government can do a better job in reassuring the public of the safety of our food.

At present, food safety supervision is completely alienated from the development of our agriculture and fisheries industry. As we all know, people in Hong Kong love to consume fresh food. The most effective way of ensuring food safety is monitoring them at source. Unfortunately, as far as aquatic products are concerned, our Centre for Food Safety is still under the supervision of the FEHD. As our agriculture and fisheries industry has long been suppressed by the Government, our officials know nothing about the developments in our trades, not to mention the latest international prohibitions on chemicals to be used on cultured products. I wish to point out to colleagues that the international community has already taken heed of the use of nitrofurans. In 2003, nitrofurans were banned in aquatic products in Taiwan. It was also banned from using in the Mainland in March this year. Other Western countries have also imposed such a ban. In Hong Kong, as the media revealed that some unlawful mariculturists in the Mainland were still using this banned chemical, the aquatic products imported to Hong Kong might not be safe. After checking some records, I found out that Mr TAM Yiu-chung, my DAB comrade did remind the Government of noting the loophole and taking follow-up action at a meeting of the Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene Panel held in April this year. However, after half a year, the Government has neither taken any action, nor added this item into its tests.

Madam President, I am not sure whether officials responsible for food safety are only too careless or they are simply ignorant to the operation of the

trade. The only thing I know is over 90% of our food is imported. If there is no updated mechanism for our standards on food safety to keep abreast of trade developments, the sole reliance on health certificates will make our job on food safety increasingly difficult and liable to more loopholes. For this reason, the Government must review the existing organization framework to allow more people involved in the production process to take part in the supervision work, so as to enhance the efficiency of the entire system. At the same time, I hope that the food safety committee composed of experts from various fields can focus on the toxic substances in our food standard and put forward recommendations.

As for environmental hygiene, we all know, ovitraps have been deliberately tampered with lately. The ovitrap index is an important factor of consideration in formulating anti-mosquito work programmes. It is indeed a serious problem for such indicators to be interfered with no known reasons. Some held that the forgery of ovitrap index was meant to achieve departmental target on time, and the same did happen before on the issue of seizing illegal hawkers. We do not query the FEHD's resolve in improving our environmental hygiene and cityscape, and it is totally understandable for the Department to set down objectives. However, if it is found out that the Department is shunning responsibilities by making use of loopholes in supervision, it will not be tolerated by the public. No matter whether the criticism on the FEHD is right, should there be any serious dereliction of duty, the Department must seriously review its supervisory mechanism, especially when it has contracted out most of its work. The public will have a higher demand on the quality of work contracted out by the Department. We hope the Government can take a good look at the management of the FEHD, so that it would no longer be criticized for any undesirable practices. On the other hand, the Department should also review the work culture of its staff, and to provide them with appropriate training, making known to them the Department's objectives and commitment, with a view to fostering a better work attitude.

Madam President, on aquaculture, I have a few points to add here. Some people say that aquaculture is a twilight industry in Hong Kong. In August this year, I led a delegation to visit Taiwan and the Mainland. We found that Taiwan had adopted some new approaches. As the mortality of fish fry is extremely high, the fisheries industry in Taiwan is studying the feasibility of injecting vaccine into the parent fish. In the past, inoculation was only performed on the fish fry. We can see that Taiwan has developed to such a stage. When we look at the SAR Government, there is no laboratory or research centre to make recommendations on the way forward in respect of the

agriculture and fisheries industry. Therefore, I hope the Government can do more in this regard.

A few days ago, we told the AFCD that some groups were planning to collaborate with Taiwan and the Mainland in identifying suitable sites in Hong Kong, such as Kat O Island, for fish fry fertilization. Our purpose is to sell part of the fertilized fry to fishermen, and to breed some of them in the ocean, so as to strike a balance in our marine ecosystem. I hope the Secretary and his colleagues can support this proposal. Apart from seeking to implement this proposal, we have also held discussions with companies which have engaged in works projects in the seabed, such as the Towngas, the HEC, the CLP, and so on, on their corporate responsibility. As these companies have carried out projects in the seabed, they should shoulder certain responsibilities, such as financing some groups in developing fisheries technology and research. Although I will not request the involvement of the Secretary and the Government, I hope they can give us some assistance in getting the job done.

Madam President, I so submit.

MR BERNARD CHAN: Madam President, the Chief Executive has made it a priority to support the family. Problems within families are the cause of many of our bigger social problems. These problems cause misery for many individuals. And they also damage the whole community, through educational failure, crime and domestic violence, which have a heavy cost for us all.

In practice, policies to strengthen the family are not glamorous. They are not exciting. They do not get much recognition.

I believe the Chief Executive deserves support for his proposal to consider setting up a Family Commission. Welfare agencies have complained in the past that government policies are not always consistent. Some official policies have unintended results.

For example, from the Government's point of view, some social welfare expenditure might be a good investment because it reduces crime and violence. Therefore it saves our spending on prisons and hospitals. On the other hand, some welfare programmes might increase dependency on the Government and increase costs.

From the point of view of welfare agencies and families, government policies can overlap, or they can conflict. They can provide the wrong incentives or offer the wrong sort of solution to the problems.

It is easy to say there should be better co-ordination. In practice, joining up policies and programmes across different bureaux and departments could be a challenge. And it would not be glamorous or exciting. But it could lead to some major improvements in the quality of family policies, and therefore in the well-being of the whole community.

But I do hear concern from people working closely within the existing Youth Commission, Elderly Commission or Women's Commission that their work will be marginalized. I suppose the creation of the Family Commission is to co-ordinate the overall strategic planning and we can still continue to have sub-committee that focuses on specific issues related to the youth, elderly or women. I hope the Bureau can work out a way to incorporate the talent of the many existing people in the newly created Family Commission. We need all the resources pull together to address the demand of this ever-changing need of our community.

Lastly, I am a bit disappointed that there is no mentioning of the way forward of the health care financing in this policy address. I am sure there is no easy answer to it. And I also believe no matter what the outcome is, we would need to address the problem sooner than later. With our ageing population and the escalation of the advanced medical cost, our community need to be realistic and pragmatic. No matter what financing model our Government adopts, I am sure we will be asked to contribute more, whether it is in the form of direct taxation, mandatory saving contribution or pool insurance scheme. None of these methods is popular but we must not fool the community that we can simply ignore it. Thank you.

DR YEUNG SUM (in Cantonese): Madam President, health care financing is indeed a pressing issue. I hope the Secretary can put forth within his term a health care financing package to allow more time for public discussion.

The Harvard Report published in 1998 aroused a whole host of discussions. However, because of the negative public response, the Government has put it on the shelf. I believe the Secretary has been working

hard on the issue because he said in the previous meeting that the health care financing package had reached its final stage and hoped that it could soon be introduced for public consultation. The Democratic Party tends to support a public sector insurance scheme in relation to financing. As to how it can dovetail with the private sector system, I hold that this can be further explored on a technical level. For the overall direction, I wish to state the views of the Democratic Party.

In view of the ever-increasing demand for and burden on health care services, it will be difficult to maintain a fair, reasonable and quality health care system under the existing low tax regime. I believe the Secretary is well aware of our views on this.

On the social welfare front, the Government has greatly emphasized family support, which is commendable and worth our support. However, I wish to highlight two points. In fact, society nowadays holds a significantly different notion on the traditional family concept. In formulating family policies, the mapping out of a definition on family for Hong Kong, which is acceptable to all, is in itself a demanding issue. Madam President, family harmony or family support cannot be achieved by the Secretary alone; it entails the support of various parties and policies. Let us take housing as an example. If the majority of the public housing available now or to be constructed in future is situated in remote areas where the residents have relatively low income, the latter will have to spend considerable time on daily transportation and will then have to leave home early in the morning and arrive home late at night. We can well imagine how little time they can have for their families. If they belong to the relatively higher income group, they can elect to live in the urban areas with a better transport network and they will thus have more time for family life. It is therefore paramount for the housing policy to dovetail with the family policy. We cannot say that low-income earners must live in remote areas because this will undermine their family life.

Second, town planning. Because of insufficient town planning in remote areas, even if these areas have numerous housing estates, the community facilities are far lagging behind. This is apparently a loophole in planning. Recently, the Chief Executive has finally made an undertaking to allocate considerable resources to improving these remote areas such as Tin Shui Wai. Experience should be drawn from this.

Third, labour policy. If there is no regulation on minimum wage and maximum working hours, the poor will have to work till they burn out and professional drivers will doze off while driving. Not only will this put their lives at risk, but also put the lives of the general public at risk. Therefore, if we wish to have family harmony, there must be a labour policy. For instance, legislation should be introduced on minimum wage and maximum working hours. All of these are very important.

The Government has affirmed the importance of providing family support, but by Secretary Dr York CHOW alone, little can be achieved. Many social policies need to play a part, together with an appropriate education policy which can help lift people out of poverty and enhance social mobility. Therefore, to sum up, other policies also need to dovetail with it..... (*The buzzer sounded*)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Your speaking time is up.

DR YEUNG SUM (in Cantonese): Thank you, Madam President.

MR LI KWOK-YING (in Cantonese): Madam President, before the health care financing package is announced, and with the policy address mentioning nothing on it, the Government has suddenly mooted the concept of medical care voucher. Despite the Secretary explaining that the medical care voucher is not one of the items in the health care financing package and that it serves only as an adjustment to the distribution of resources, I hold that behind the implementation of medical care vouchers, there lies a deeper meaning to the reform of the health care service system. At present, Hong Kong still operates a dual-track system which offers public sector and private sector health care services. The public sector system provides the general populace with a health care safety net, which carries a welfare-for-all flavour, at affordable charges, and its funding mainly comes from government subsidy. Meanwhile, the private-sector system offers quality services tailored to the better-off.

The medical care voucher *per se* is in fact a realization of the "money follows the patients" notion for it returns the right of choice to the patients. Let us first disregard the issues of whether the patients, in the absence of effective assistance and regulation by a third party in the health care market, have

sufficient knowledge and information to make an informed choice, and of how to appropriately distribute the resources to meet the changing public demand for health care services. The concept of "money follows the patients" itself serves the function of bridging the public and private sector health care systems, similar to the concept of Competitive Integrated Health Care advocated in the Harvard Report. If medical care vouchers are introduced, the line between the public and private sector systems will be blurred; and the funding for the public sector system will no longer be coming directly from the Government, but from patients who use medical care vouchers for service payment. At the end of the day, in order to fight for funding, the charges of public hospitals will be forced on a hike and the existing low-fee regime can no longer be maintained. In other words, there will not be a public-private differentiation in Hong Kong anymore.

If I have not misunderstood the idea behind the medical care voucher perceived by the Government, the system is more than an adjustment to resource allocation, it is a revolutionary change to the Hong Kong health care system. Stemming from it will be a series of questions such as whether special duties — like taking care of underprivileged patients, training health care personnel, and so on — borne by the public health care system now will be affected. Of course, the Secretary can temporarily wave off our further questions by saying that the idea is still at its preliminary stage, but such a significant change, which carries far-reaching effects on the well-being of the people and sustainable development of the entire health care system, requires thorough understanding and sufficient discussion by the public and the health care sector. The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) thus hopes that the Government can explicitly tell us before it announces the health care financing report, its views on the future health care system of Hong Kong, and conduct a full-scale consultation.

Madam President, one of the more concrete measures on medical and health policy stated in the policy address this year is to explore the feasibility of setting up medical centres of excellence to entrench and develop Hong Kong's position as an outstanding professional medical treatment centre in the region. In recent years, it has become increasingly convenient for mainland residents to come to Hong Kong. This has indeed supplied the private health care service providers, which have been in a quagmire, with a large and brand new source of patrons. In particular under the mainland family planning policy, numerous pregnant women from the Mainland have come to Hong Kong to deliver their babies and thus pushed up the demand for private obstetric services in Hong

Kong. Individual private hospitals are now actively expanding their scale of operation and recruiting talents in public hospitals so as to expand their service. The DAB welcomes the active step taken by the Government to examine the ways for promoting the health care industry of Hong Kong, but caution is required in considering and finding where the focus of development should lie, which should be in line with the existing health care policy.

The health care industry involves several complicated professional disciplines such as medical services, the pharmaceutical industry, the development of medical appliances as well as health care and rehabilitation services. Medical services alone involve lots of different disciplines. Thus, a focus of development should be identified from the outset. Singapore has succeeded in developing its health care industry because it focused its energy on providing quality check-up services in the very beginning and then moved on to other disciplines after a reputation had been established. Thus, we should draw from Singapore's experience, and thorough discussions should be held between the Government and the industry to identify the focus of development so that our health care industry can develop at a steady pace.

Moreover, the development of externally oriented health care services should also tie in with our existing health care policy. Hong Kong has all along upheld a dual-track system which offers public and private health care services. In order to alleviate the pressure on the public sector system, in recent years, the Government has been promoting public-private health care collaboration programme, through which patients who have the means are diverted to seek private health care services. However, with the opening up of our private health care market to the neighbouring areas, the demand has increased dramatically. The software and hardware facilities in private hospitals are unable to keep up with it and the supply of private hospital services is falling short of the demand, and thus we have seen a dramatic increase in charges in recent years. At present, I have already heard of the middle-class claiming that they have been forced back into the public health care network because the charges of private hospitals have deterred them from patronizing their services. In other words, the development of externally-oriented health care services may affect the hard-won result achieved over the years by public-private health care collaboration. It is therefore paramount that in developing Hong Kong into the medical treatment centre in the region, the health care professionals and hardware facilities must be able to keep up with it, so as not to jeopardize the local citizens.

Moreover, in order to bring our edge in health care services into full play, appropriate promotion can help build Hong Kong as a brand name for high quality health care services, and it can also enable service users to get hold of useful information to make suitable choices. Of course, irresponsible, exaggerated and deceitful advertisement claims must be clamped down, but the existing Undesirable Medical Advertisements Ordinance (UMAO) is a product of the 1950s. Despite the numerous amendments already made, it is still questionable whether the existing mode of regulation can cope with the trend of health care service development to achieve a win-win situation of development and safeguarding the public. This has already raised the concern of some members of the sector. Indeed, it warrants a serious consideration of the necessity to review the UMAO if the Government truly wants to develop the health care industry.

Moreover, the enforcement standard of the UMAO is also open to lots of criticism, and some even suspect that the Department of Health has been targeting at certain media in its enforcement actions. The Government certainly would not act so recklessly, but the current system does not have a voluntary pre-assessment mechanism for advertisements, and the guidelines and yardstick for law enforcement are unclear. The system of warning letter is unable to make the media know which wording has violated the law and the prosecution procedures lack transparency. Many members of the industry and the media have thus violated the law inadvertently. Moreover, the Administration used to only conduct sampling inspections on the advertisements, plus the fact that certain media really accounted for a higher proportion of the warning letters issued, the public are thus predisposed to suspect that the Government has not acted fairly in law enforcement and in inspecting the advertisements. We hold that if the Government wants to put the public's mind at ease, it must step up its vigour in enforcement. Other than reviewing its existing prosecution criteria, it has to conduct a comprehensive and impartial inspection of the advertisements in all media as well as adding footnotes in the warning letters indicating the part which is liable to breach the law so that the industry can amend their advertisements. More importantly, the Government should establish a formal channel so that its views on the UMAO can be communicated to the industry and the media direct, whereas the latter can have a means to get a better grasp of the requirements of the UMAO. The Administration can also consider establishing a voluntary assessment mechanism for the industry to submit their advertisements for pre-assessment on a voluntary basis, so as to minimize the chances of inadvertent violation of the UMAO.

Madam President, I wish now to talk about the internal problems faced by the Hospital Authority (HA) at present. Last week, the HA announced its settlement package for doctors who have worked overtime, and it was accepted by over 80% of the doctors. This is indeed welcoming news to the management of the HA and the Government, but will the sky clear up between the HA and its employees after this? I believe the HA management still needs to work hard on improving the working conditions of its employees and be sincere in living up to its promise of reducing the working hours so as to render a genuine improvement in their relationship.

In addition, the University of Hong Kong has successfully persuaded Prof FAN Sheung-tat to stay, which indeed is a piece of good news to the public health care system. However, not only have the persistent wastage of senior-to-medium rank doctors of the HA and the successive departures of experienced clinical physicians recently widened the succession gap in the HA, but also affected the training and succession of the entire health care profession. The HA and the Government should not sit by and watch the problem aggravate. Instead, it must improve the existing management system to provide better promotion prospects for medium-rank doctors and reduce their unnecessary administrative duties so that they can concentrate on their medical care and training-related work. Meanwhile, the HA can consider seeking external help by recruiting experienced doctors on a part-time basis to carry out training, so as to solve the acute shortage of talents.

Last but not least, I wish to remind the Government again that although the ordinance authorizing Chinese medicine practitioners to issue sick leave certificates has recently passed through the Legislative Council, which is a big stride forward in the development of registered Chinese medicine practitioners, 3 000-odd listed Chinese medicine practitioners are still unable to get registered. The Government undertook at that time that it would explore ways to facilitate their transition from listing to registration. I hope the Government will bear this in mind and not to let the listed Chinese medicine practitioners become the neglected group.

I so submit. Thank you, Madam President.

MR RONNY TONG (in Cantonese): President, the most regrettable thing about the Chief Executive's policy address is that it was silent on the poverty alleviation policy. Despite the economy has recuperated, the poverty problem

in Hong Kong has seen no improvement. Similarly, to our great disappointment, the Commission on Poverty (CoP) established two years ago has yet to come up with concrete and effective measures to ease the plight of the poor in Hong Kong. Some members of the CoP even publicly expressed their concern that the CoP may be disbanded after tabling its report next year. Despite this, the policy address of the Government has, to our surprise, not addressed these problems at all. We cannot help but feel that the Chief Executive has already put the work of helping the poor out of his mind. Not only should the Chief Executive be mindful of the issue of poverty, but also of the problem of district-based poverty in Hong Kong. In fact, I did ask the Chief Executive on this during the Question and Answer Session after the policy address, but his answer gave me the impression that he seemed to hold that the problem of poverty and revival of the economy at district level can be addressed by simply opening one or two more Labour Department offices. This is indeed most disappointing.

Insofar as the poverty alleviation policy is concerned, many Members have mentioned that we should tackle the issue at different fronts such as education, health care, housing, the economy, labour, welfare, and so on; while the two major goals should be to eliminate inter-generational poverty and facilitate social mobility, as well as improving the livelihood of the underprivileged and helping the vulnerable groups to integrate into society.

The Government has proposed the system of education vouchers. Much to our amusement, some went as far as saying that it is a poverty alleviation measure. Even with a comprehensive education voucher system, it cannot improve the quality of education. The most pressing work needed to be done is to provide sufficient opportunities for underprivileged students to receive quality education. To do this, we need a number of concrete mechanisms, the first of which is to enable students with potential to study in quality schools in other districts; second, to provide students with basic assistance such as allowances for eye-glasses, books, transport, computers and related support services. However, to our disappointment, these support measures have been cut one after the other since 2003 and have yet to be restored. And third, a comprehensively review should be conducted of the university grant and scholarship scheme so as to ensure that capable students will not be denied access to tertiary education.

In terms of improving the livelihood of the grassroots, we should work on the fronts of opportunity, empowerment and security. On the security front, we

certainly need to consider reforming the social security system. At present, there are 500 000 workers in Hong Kong earning less than \$6,000 a month. The existing system cannot provide them with a secured retirement. Considering also the ageing population, how are we going to tackle this deteriorating problem? Relying on Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) as the only safety net is hardly enough to sustain the burden. The Government is duty-bound to nip this problem in the bud by a long-term solution.

Regarding the universal retirement protection scheme, we have extensively debated it in the Legislative Council. Hong Kong lacks a universal social security system. As for pension, we only have the mandatory provident fund, but its scope and level of protection are insufficient. We do not have any insurance scheme for unemployment either. The unemployed will have to rely on CSSA. Elementary workers are thus unable to secure sufficient protection and savings to provide for their twilight years after retirement. The Government should conduct a comprehensive review of the effectiveness of all of its social security policies and look into the setting up of a universal contributory social insurance system, so that in the long run, different vulnerable groups can have sufficient support and an opportunity to rid poverty. This should be the most significant goal of the Government.

In respect of increasing the rate of disregarded earnings under CSSA, we have also debated on it for a number of times in the Legislative Council and its feasibility has already be substantiated by statistics. It is a proposal which has won a general consensus. Unfortunately, to date, the Government has still seemingly turned a deaf ear and a blind eye to this consensus.

Another important direction that merits consideration by the Government is the promotion of public education. Social rejection very often is a major factor leading to poverty. Educating the public on a cultural level and minimizing social rejection and discrimination by means of legislation can not only nurture a more harmonious society, but also facilitate the poverty alleviation work.

The Government and the Equal Opportunities Commission should introduce an equal opportunities bill to extend the scope of protection to provide against age discrimination and discrimination of new immigrants, ethnic

minorities and CSSA recipients, so that these vulnerable groups can be provided with an equal opportunity to and security of employment. Recently, I, together with several academics, have launched a continued research on poverty. In respect of poverty and social discrimination in remote areas, we have focused our attention this year on women in poverty. Preliminary statistics indicate that the most intense discrimination faced by women is of age discrimination which has driven hundreds of thousands of middle-aged women into an impasse of non-full-time jobs and low wages.

Meanwhile, minimizing the negative labelling effect of CSSA and promoting inclusion among people should also warrant the attention of the Government. The Government has named the welfare recipients as people who cannot help themselves and "lazybones". Such labels have instigated internal dissension within society and social rejection, thus making it even more difficult for families receiving CSSA to integrate into society. Social rejection also expedites the disintegration of families and communities, hindering certain communities from establishing and maintaining normal interpersonal relationships. Therefore, minimizing social rejection is crucial to solving the poverty problem of marginalized communities. Only when there is a CSSA system without a labelling effect can the safety net plays its function to the fullest.

The Government should step up civic education, promote a pluralistic and inclusive social climate and eliminate social rejection of different marginalized communities, so that these communities can be given a fair share of opportunities, resources, interpersonal relationships and rights on the socio-cultural and political fronts; and that the communities being discriminated against can be given fair treatment. Only by so doing can it prevent specific or vulnerable communities from being trapped in social rejection and poverty forever, and prevent the situation from extending to their next generation.

Various aspects, including government statistics, indicate that the poverty problem in Hong Kong exhibits a regional difference. Take Northwest and North New Territories as an example, their remote locations, sparse job opportunities and sluggish economy, together with such problems as long travelling time and expensive transport expenses have aggravated the poverty problem. The Government proposed last year measures to alleviate some of the problems, one of which was providing transport subsidy to people living in certain trial districts, but we have yet to see any improvement to the current

situation or statistics. We hope the Government can step up the measures in this respect to better improve the situation of these communities.

Housing is also an important issue in Hong Kong. The valuable experience accumulated in Hong Kong proves that an effective application of the housing policy can alleviate the poverty problem. In the '50s, '60s and '70s, numerous grass-roots citizens managed to improve their living conditions through public housing, and to recuperate and multiply. As a result of this, social development was facilitated and wealth created in Hong Kong.

Apart from expenses on food, housing accounts for the largest household expenditure of the marginalized communities, with those marginalized families living in rented private premises carrying the heaviest burden. While striking a balance between the development of public and private housing, the Government should expedite and increase the supply of public rental housing, so that the grass-roots and marginalized communities can reduce their burden in housing expenditure.

We also hope that the Housing Authority can increase the income threshold of the applicants of public rental housing. The existing threshold has deprived grass-roots citizens on the brink of falling into poverty of the eligibility to apply for public housing. Increasing the income threshold for public housing application can allow more grass-roots citizens to recuperate through the public housing programme.

President, having gone this far, I have to turn to the issue of minimum wage. After hearing colleagues from the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions (FTU) and the Democratic Party speak on this topic yesterday, I was caught in feelings for we are after all fighting for the same thing. The fight for minimum wage may not meet as many hurdles as that for universal suffrage, but it is by no means barrier free. I do not hope that.....

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr TONG. I may allow you to mention briefly other issues, but the debate session today is not related to minimum wage.

MR RONNY TONG (in Cantonese): President, I hold that minimum wage is an issue related to social welfare.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Then, you had better say something related to social welfare, or I will have the impression that you have strayed from the topic.

MR RONNY TONG (in Cantonese): President, that is why I talk about minimum wage now. I do not regard minimum wage as entirely an economic issue and I thus wish to state here that.....

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): It is not because it is an economic issue, but because labour issues have already been discussed in another debate session.

MR RONNY TONG (in Cantonese): But I hold that this is also a social issue.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): You should talk about social issues then.

MR RONNY TONG (in Cantonese): I only wish to say that — President, with your indulgence — I am finishing this part. I hold that Honourable colleagues should strive to fight for minimum wage. I hope Members from the FTU will not be frustrated by the war of words.

President, the Chief Executive has proposed in relation to minimum wage a Wage Protection Movement (the Movement) in the policy address. He stated that achieving wage protection through non-legislative means is the most pragmatic approach at this stage. We should be aware that the Movement covers two sectors only, but we can note from the statistics that there are as many as 500 000 low-income workers earning less than \$6,000 a month. In other words, the figure far exceeds the number of employees in the cleansing and guarding services sectors. Hundreds of thousands of elementary workers earning an income far below the average is a problem that has far-reaching implications on society as whole. Indeed, the Government cannot and should not always resort to the stalling tactic. Moreover, a research jointly conducted by a non-government organization and a university on this topic indicates that about 60% of the public and small and medium enterprise operators is in favour of setting a minimum wage. Although this is not an overwhelming majority, the Government should recognize that there is considerable consensus in society on the issue of minimum wage.

President, among the 168 countries in the world, over 100 have already implemented minimum wage, and there is not any ground supporting that minimum wage will have a negative impact on society and the economy. I hope the Government can spend more time on this issue rather than always just referring to discussions. It should not adopt a stalling attitude because working poverty is a serious problem in Hong Kong and it has a great bearing on the stability of Hong Kong as a whole, and also society.

Needless to say, the Government, while promoting economic development, should also attend to the social problems I have just mentioned. If there are many people in Hong Kong who cannot even secure three meals a day, how could we have a harmonious society?

Therefore, I wish the Chief Executive..... *(The buzzer sounded)*

Thank you, President.

DR KWOK KA-KI (in Cantonese): Madam President, I was a little shocked when the Chief Executive delivered this year's policy address which he claimed to be the shortest ever, for while he mentioned many different policies, not a word was said on the health care policy about which we are very concerned. I was also wronged by the Chief Executive, for he said that I had not read his policy agenda. In page 33 and 34 of the policy agenda, there are 12 related measures, but they are just ongoing health care policies of the Government with no novelty.

The Secretary may feel as disappointed as members of the public. I do not know whether the Secretary have nursed many grievances or not, because the Government actually asserted in November last year when it launched the first stage of review of the financing package that it would produce the second part of the financing package for public scrutiny by or before April this year. The Government also stated when it proposed the Goods and Services Tax (GST) that it anticipated GST could help solve problems emerging in Hong Kong, including health care problems. Certainly though, it has not undertaken in any way to use GST to facilitate health care development or to help solve the health care financing problem in Hong Kong. This Council has also thoroughly debated this. It seems that neither Members, the Government nor the public have been convinced by the idea that GST can help the Government in achieving anything related to health care financing.

I met with several groups of doctors lately. One of them is the front-line doctors of the Hospital Authority (HA) and another is the front-line doctors of the Department of Health. They are caught in a dilemma. In the HA, they work for long hours and lack sufficient time for further study or training. However, they can foresee that their prospect is bleak after their contract is completed. Despite the fact that the HA has recently increased the number of permanent positions, I perceive and am aware that many doctors are reluctant to continue their service in the HA because of the current situation. They, however, are well aware that their prospects on leaving the HA would not be any brighter because the path to private health care service will not be free of obstacles either. Nowadays, 95% of the hospital services are still provided by the Government, and many doctors in private practice are exploited by unfair conditions of medical syndicates. Recently, there have been litigations in relation to work hours and rest days. Although ultimately 87% of the front-line doctors have accepted the settling package, I hold that the Government and the HA should not be complacent because this problem is not resolved indeed. A settlement on the litigation or the compensation does not mean that the issue has been clearly settled. Every day when these front-line doctors return to work, they are under enormous pressure. Such unbearable workload has prevented them from pursuing training or taking care of their families. I do not know how long these doctors still have to struggle under this system, but we can see that a succession gap that we worry about has already appeared. If the situation of the doctors persists, how are we going to have qualified doctors to provide service in the public health care system continually?

The massive exodus of doctors from Queen Mary Hospital recently only showed the tip of the iceberg. High technology and forward-looking health care services need good policies, that is, just as the Secretary has mentioned, the four pillars have to be maintained. They include the application of advanced technology, treating patients who need urgent medical care, providing accident and emergency services, and training. Yet after examining the present situation, how much can we actually achieve? Only very little. Many patients, cancer patients in particular, are still deprived of sufficient and appropriate medication for their treatment, whereas other lower-risk patients, such as those with diabetes mellitus or hypertension, are provided with lots of subsidies by the Government. This, however, cannot help patients in the greatest need.

Recently, the number of doctors in Hong Kong has reached 11 000, but the spirit and morale of doctors in public sector institutions or private practice alike

is dropping incessantly. Some say that the Government has put a lot of effort in entrenching Hong Kong's position as a tourist city. What you have heard is, in fact, a beautiful misunderstanding. Mainland pregnant women coming to Hong Kong to deliver their babies is mainly a case of population policy. Many of them come here to avoid the one-child policy in the Mainland, while many others come here to obtain the right of abode. This has nothing to do with whether there is health tourism in Hong Kong. Both private and public hospitals have been affected by the massive influx of pregnant women from the Mainland, so have some local patients who are deprived of medical care as a result. Some time ago I visited a private hospital which could not even afford to admit stroke and heart disease patients because it was swamped with pregnant women pending labour who refused to leave after admitted into the hospital. These situations are not conducive to the development of the private health care sector. CEPA also lacks solid actions, for the Chief Executive or the Government does not even have a simple measure on health tourism, not to mention measures on visit visa or on more land grants for private hospitals.

Moreover, not much has been said, since the establishment of the HA, on such areas as mental health and health care services for the disadvantaged groups. Health care policies, unlike welfare or education policies, have unfortunately received much less attention. In particular, when compared with the funding for education, our provision is indeed far less. If we think that the problems can be solved by sweeping them under the carpet, I believe they will only inflict greater pain on us and more impacts on doctors and patients when we lift the carpet and reveal what is underneath it one day. Because of this, we express disappointment at this year's policy address and thus we cannot support the Motion of Thanks.

I so submit. Thank you, Madam President.

DR FERNANDO CHEUNG (in Cantonese): This year's policy address has not proposed any measures for the alleviation of poverty. Worse still, it says not even a word on this issue. The emphasis of this year is "cherishing the family". What has been proposed in pursuance of this notion? In fact, basically, no matter in the policy address delivered by the Chief Executive, or the policy agenda or pamphlets attached which contain a lot of details, the contents are just a repeat of what have already been launched. The only new idea is to consider the establishment of the Family Commission. Frankly speaking, if the setting

up of the Family Commission will promote family-friendly policies and really look after the needs of families in Hong Kong, it will be a good thing. However, President, I am worried that this may not be the case.

As in a Question and Answer Session held some time ago, the Chief Executive unexpectedly proposed the five-day week. I think this is the Chief Executive's typical response to some social problems. The Chief Executive proposed the five-day week as a response to the community-wide problem of long working hours which has imposed tremendous pressure on the breadwinners of families generally. The situation has worsened to such an extent that it has become unhealthy. However, President, the Chief Executive needs not pay any price for such an initiative because the workloads of civil servants will not be reduced. The five-day week policy will not reduce the workloads of civil servants. Neither has he proposed any increase in manpower. There is no corresponding measure to tie in with the five-day week policy so as to ensure that the employees need not take extra work home. Instead, they have to squeeze all the work into five days. So, from the standpoint of the Chief Executive, such an initiative is almost cost-free. But it is pleasing to our ears. According to some hearsay, the civil servants have also accepted the five-day week proposal. Of course, who will not accept the arrangements for cherishing the family? This is tantamount to saying that "a mother is a woman" which is natural and logical. To chant slogans is easy and costs nothing. But what concrete measures have actually been adopted? And what has been done for alleviation of poverty?

I am worried that the Family Commission will operate in the same manner as other commissions in the sense that it will neither touch upon any policy nor try to strike a balance between the real contradictions. Costs will be incurred for redeployment of resources, so will the implementation of family-friendly policies. Both the business sector and the Government have to pay a price and throw in resources. Words alone will not do. Let us take a look at Singapore. We always say that we have to follow the example of Singapore. In Singapore, there is a similar advisory committee, which, however, touches upon policies and promotes family-friendly policies, provides specific guidelines requiring enterprises to implement flexible working hours, provides child care services, employee training programmes and subsidies. These are the responsibilities of the employers and the Government. Moreover, funds should be set up in order to provide support so that the employers and employees can carry out such activities.

What is the grand blueprint of the Family Commission? According to some hearsay, President, the idea is to disband some existing committees, such as the Women's Commission, Commission on Youth, Commission on Poverty and another commission. These four commissions will be merged and subordinated under the Family Commission. If so, the result is actually a loss instead of a gain because while we have a new Family Commission, the other four will become its subordinates. In that case, it will be very simple. Apart from the families, there is nothing in the world and everybody is a family member. The Family Commission will deal with all sorts of problems. Regarding the outcome of our efforts in fighting for the setting up of other commissions, such as a commission on children's rights or a commission on domestic violence, I do not think we need say any more.

Under the notion of cherishing the family, what have we actually done for the needy families, apart from chanting slogans? When a family faces problems, what should we do? Let us take a look at domestic violence. As we all know, domestic violence has become more and more serious. We can almost read news reports about domestic violence in the press every day. The Government has proposed the setting up of a Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Centre (MCISC). President, I think one does not need to be a professional to see the serious shortcomings of the existing policy. How was such policy formulated? It is due to our continuous efforts to urge the Government to take over the Rainlily, an organization which provides one-stop services to victims of sexual violence. The Rainlily, which has been operating for five years with funding from the Jockey Club, is a very successful pilot scheme. We hoped the Government could take it over and the Government had also indicated a very positive response. But that was a previous situation. Today, however, the Government has shown a reluctance to do so. Upon our strong request, the Government has eventually proposed to set up the MCISC.

According to the Government, it has decided to set up the MCISC, which will include a refuge centre, in Tin Shui Wai because it is the worst-hit district. However, anyone with some common sense will know that the location of such a refuge centre should not be disclosed. President, it is because when there is a crisis, the victim will have to leave the district so that the batterer cannot find the victim in the interest of personal safety. However, the Government has disclosed the location. It added that the centre would deal with all sorts of cases, such as sexual violence, domestic violence, elderly abuse, child abuse, and so on, whatever it is.

However, after years of development with advancement in techniques and theories, we in the social and welfare sector will not mix all sorts of cases together. Rather, different cases will be separated and dealt with by specialists. We will not allow the batterers any opportunity to stay in the same place with the victims. The Government sometimes said that the MCISC would be a "time-out" facility and sometimes said that it would be a refuge centre. Our sector has developed to such a stage that it is a far cry from such a situation. Victims of sexual violence will badly need one-stop legal, medical, social welfare and counselling services. All these services should be provided at the same location. Although we have gained experience in these aspects, the Government refuses to listen to us. On the contrary, it has set up something neither fish nor fowl.

Regarding the needs of other members of a family, such as the hardships encountered by the elderly, cases abound. We will appreciate the difficulties faced by the elderly by paying a visit to the elderly centres. I need not mention the dire situation of the scavengers. I hope the government officials can really pay a visit to the elderly centres where they will find that some elderly people are sitting at the corner as mute as fish. If you ask the centre's officer-in-charge, you will know that in each centre, there are some elderly people who are not accepted by their families. Although they live with their families, they are neglected and treated coldly to such an extent that it is as serious as being abused.

However, what can the elderly do when facing such difficulties? If they are advised to apply for Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA), they cannot do so because under the CSSA system, the application should be made on a family basis. If the elderly wish to apply for CSSA on an individual basis, their children are required to sign a document certifying that they will not support their parents. The document is commonly known as "bad son statement". If the elderly are required to tell their children to admit that they are bad, it will be very hard for the elderly. However, up to now, the Government has still adopted such a system.

Concerning people with disabilities, I would like to tell a story about a classmate of my daughter. Recently he has graduated from a school for the severely mentally handicapped and is now 18 years old. He is seriously ill but no one knows what his illness is. It is a rare illness. With a stiff body, he has to lie in bed. According to an assessment, he has to stay in a convalescent home because he needs extensive care every day. But what is the result? As he has

turned 18, he has to leave the school hostel and go home. He has been waiting for admission to an institution since 15 years of age in the hope that he can be taken care of. But today, he has to leave the school, having been notified that he has to wait for another 30 months.

President, when a disabled person who, after assessment, needs to be taken care of in a convalescent home, has to wait for another 30 months, what kind of community services can be provided to him? The answer is: A one-hour physiotherapy per week and that is all. Can we think of any community services that can be provided? How can we help the vulnerable members of the needy families? The Government always claims that it cherishes the family, but it is paying lip-service instead of implementing pragmatic measures. Today, I, as a Legislative Council Member, see that the classmate of my daughter is facing such a big difficulty — of course, there are many people on the waiting list in front of her classmate who, therefore, has to wait for more than two years — I have urged the Social Welfare Department and Secretary Dr York CHOW to offer help, but I am still at my wits' end. The families of my daughter's classmate told me in tears that their children were looked after by an Indonesian maid because the parents, who had to work, could only take care of them in spare time. So, the family is under enormous stress.

This is not an individual example. President, we are now talking about thousands of people who are waiting for admission into institutions for the disabled and more than 20 000 elderly who are waiting for places in homes for the aged. We in the Chamber of the Legislative Council have discussed these issues for many times in the hope that the Government can make some plans. If the Government has not formulated any plan — even though plans have been formulated, institutions under planning can only be completed in five years — I hope the Government can start planning now. Caught in such tremendous difficulties, these families are badly in need of help. What will the Government do to help them? Can community support achieve the purpose if institutional care is not provided? The longest waiting time for Integrated Home Care Services is more than two years.

Today's social service is totally unable to meet the demand. However, we still claim that we cherish the family. Regarding the community support for the disabled, our government officials will certainly say that how much resources will be thrown in and how many people will be served. According to my estimation, in respect of social support for the disabled, the service they can get monthly on average is one hour per person. Yes, just one hour.

Concerning those people with disabilities who are not seriously ill and employable, what can we do to help them? We hope to implement an employment quota system for them, or an indicator system rather. But the Government is unwilling to take action. The Legislative Council has thrice passed a motion on providing transport allowance for these people and the motion on a quota system once. But so far no action has been taken by the Government.

President, I have hired an ex-epileptic to take up a part-time post in my office. The difficulty faced by this ex-epileptic is that he cannot find a job in the open market and feels that he is a burden to his family. More than once, he told me that he felt very sorry for his family because his parents had suffered a lot in taking care of him and he had thought of committing suicide. He is grateful to us for our kindness because we have offered him such a part-time job which has restored his confidence. However, this is an opportunity that can be offered to one or two people. We are talking about thousands of people who are disabled but capable to work. Why does the Government not adopt any policy and system? Why is assistance still provided on individual project basis? Why is it impossible to adopt a wide spectrum of policies to promote social enterprises or a corporate culture under which the employers are more prepared to employ the disabled?

Concerning the social welfare blueprint as a whole, we have discussed it for many years. I hope the SAR Government will not regard the previous policy formulation process..... Let us turn to those green papers or white papers in the old days. Even though these terms are no longer used, we still have policy formulation, a discussion process, long-term vision and plans. Such a policy development mechanism should be returned to us in the social welfare sector.

This situation cannot go on like this. Every year, we do not know what will happen in the next. I would like to urge the Government to make some planning. As there are so many people waiting for institutional care in future, what will the Government do to cope? Every year, there are so many people waiting for our social services, what will the Government do to take care of them? The answer is: The Government does not have any plans at all. Finally, the Secretary does not want to attend this meeting and thus a junior official has been designated to speak on his behalf that they will do their best. What sort of social welfare and governance is this? If the Government really cherishes the family and wishes to help the disadvantaged, it will not shirk its

responsibilities and just chant empty slogans. This is totally unrealistic. In fact, it has become more "cunning" and may even curb the existing consultation channels. It seems that the Commission on Poverty will fold up in June next year and merge with the Family Commission to become a so-called integrated commission. Given such a spirit of governance, how can we make the people optimistic?

The Chief Executive is also aware that under globalization and economic transformation, many grassroots cannot gain any benefit. Their living will not change as a result of economic growth. However, the Chief Executive said that the optimists would see the opportunity in each difficulty while the pessimists would only see the difficulty in each opportunity. Although the Chief Executive said that he is an optimist, in my eyes, he seems to be a pragmatist instead. Pragmatism means "trimming the sails to the winds" by uttering some high-sounding words which are then packaged as beautiful targets. In fact, he needs not pay any price at all and his purpose is to win applause only.

This year, the only new idea that is close to our aspiration is the education voucher for early childhood education. To put it simply, full subsidization will solve the problem. Why does the Government not subsidize early childhood education on a full scale? The Government insists on separating the policies in this aspect. One of the most important factors which has been ignored, President, is the education for children aged between zero and three. There are actually many families that need this. During the process of merger between nurseries and kindergartens, the crèches which admit children aged between zero to three will be the loser because their subsidies from the Government will decrease. In the merger process, the families badly in need of support have in fact received less assistance. Recently, some sponsoring bodies specializing in running crèches told me that their intake had plummeted and the education voucher system would not help them at all.

Finally, President, I would like to point out that the policy address has done nothing in respect of poverty alleviation and caring for the disadvantaged. Thank you, President.

MR ALBERT HO (in Cantonese): Madam President, the Chief Executive stated that the challenges of building a harmonious society are that low-skilled workers are facing increasing economic hardship, the wealth gap in society keeps widening and social mobility begins to stall. This view is absolutely correct, and we fully agree with it.

However, it is most disappointing that he has only highlighted the problems without providing any strategies to solve them or any related philosophy and values. Despite being an affluent society, Hong Kong has an extensive and serious poverty problem, which has aroused the attention of the United Nations. This is a shame.

While we have a poverty problem, we also have a serious problem of disparity between the rich and the poor. I can tell the Secretary that this is not merely a social problem, but also a critical and dangerous political problem. If it is not addressed properly, I could hardly be convinced of how long-term stability or a good law and order situation could be maintained in society. How could we tell others that Hong Kong is a desirable place for resettlement? Right next to the rich there may be people living on the brink of or below the poverty line.

Madam President, many argue that all it takes to solve this problem is to maintain good economic growth, because when the pie has grown bigger, everyone can get a share of it. However, in the absence of appropriate social strategies, including a caring and just policy as mentioned by the Chief Executive himself, to encourage us to embrace each other, I could hardly see how this problem can be solved. Because when the policies are tilted to one side, rendering the majority of the profits reaped during times of economic growth channelled into the pockets of the minority, how could these problems be solved?

Madam President, each and every person living in Hong Kong is, in fact, aware of the problems mentioned by me just now. While we see many people living in extreme extravagance and magnificent luxury flats, many new immigrants or poverty-stricken people are living in cubicles; and many old people, who are not able to obtain CSSA because of the numerous requirements of the social policies, have to resort to picking used and unwanted articles. This is a hard fact.

Madam President, exactly because of this reason, whenever the SAR Government submits its report to the United Nations Committee of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (the Committee), it is subjected to a lot of questions. The Committee has repeatedly called on the SAR Government to review the eligibility criteria of CSSA, establish a universal retirement protection scheme, delineate a poverty line and reasonably increase public health care expenditure. In fact, every signatory should actively respond to and implement the explicit recommendations made by

the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. This is a legal as well as moral responsibility. However, it is most regrettable that, to date, the Government has adopted a stalling tactic or even an attitude of resistance to many of these recommendations.

Madam President, at this moment I strongly urge the Government to consider the impacts on the poor when it formulates policies in future. Such assessment is necessary. It must also assess whether the policies will widen the wealth gap. On this premise, we have every reason to request the Government not to increase health care charges before a comprehensive health care financing scheme is available, and not to increase charges which affect people's livelihood without comprehensive and effective measures to address the poverty problem.

Moreover, the Government is also duty-bound to facilitate public utilities to reasonably adjust their charges, in particular transport fares or even public housing rents. The present level of public housing rents is unreasonable. It has violated the principle of statutory ratio of the Housing Ordinance when the latter was enacted. Many public utility charges, including transport fares, have not been adjusted in tandem with deflation for many years.

Madam President, regarding residents in remote districts including areas in Tin Shui Wai, Tuen Mun and Tung Chung, many colleagues have expounded on their difficulties in finding jobs. They held that transport subsidies should be provided to these people especially job seekers. Unfortunately, to date, we have only heard thunder but no rain, for no concrete proposals have been made by the Government. We are dissatisfied with this.

One final point, we think that the Government should respond to the aspirations of the community by providing a blueprint on a long-term welfare policy. This is of paramount importance. The Government should complement this by enacting a fair competition law and legislation on a reasonable limit on work hours, and so on.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Your speaking time is up. Please sit down.

MR TAM YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): President, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) moved a motion on

"Promoting family-friendly policies" in July this year requesting the Government to set up a Family Commission, introduce a family impact assessment system, strengthen family and parenting education, offer funding for pre-primary education across the board, create a family-friendly environment in workplace in public and private organizations, and enhance support to families in crisis. These requests are answered by the Chief Executive in the policy address with specific undertakings. The notion of "cherishing the family" proposed by the Chief Executive is consistent with the beliefs of the DAB.

In the opinion of the DAB, if we attach importance to the family, we should, first of all, introduce a family impact assessment system for assessing the impact of the existing social policies, legislation and measures on families, in order to make relevant improvements. Before implementing any public policies, the Government should also study and assess the impact of these new measures on families in order to ensure that the policies can strengthen the family functions and avoid alienation and segregation among family members. Although there is no explicit undertaking in this policy address, I know that the Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food is supportive of the introduction of a family impact assessment system. Secretary Dr York CHOW, in his article published in a number of newspapers last week, mentioned that the Family Commission set up in future would assess policies from the "family-oriented" perspective and conduct family impact assessment before implementing any policy. We welcome the proactive attitude of the Government.

The existing social policies formulated by the Government have failed to fully consider the impact on family development, thus resulting in alienation among family members. Take the public rental housing (PRH) policy as an example. The allocation of flats, transfer and building design are the factors which compel adult children to live separately from their elderly parents. Another example is that the Housing Authority has been criticized for its policy of disallowing adult children to be registered as members of the households. So, even though the children want to live with their parents in order to take care of them, the government policy does not encourage them to do so. In carrying out town planning for redevelopment or development of new towns, the authorities have often overlooked the need for mutual care between young families and their parents living in old districts. They are far apart from each other, though they are living in the same city. Their gap is further widened as family members see each other less often because of exorbitant transport expenses.

The DAB considers that the family, as the foundation of a society, is also an important system maintaining the survival and stability of a society. If the family functions can be brought into effective play, they will be conducive to building family cohesion and the healthy growth of the children. This will help to nurture responsible citizens for society, conducive to the stable development of society as a whole. On the other hand, if the members of a family can then foster mutual care, support and understanding, each member can gain spiritual satisfaction, including dignity, a sense of responsibility and security. So, the Government should enhance preventive policies and measures, strengthen support for families in crisis and solve their actual difficulties. All sectors in society should also promote family-friendly policies in order to build a city of harmonious communities and families.

On the basis of these concepts, the DAB considers that the Government should step up its efforts in nine areas in the future:

1. At the district level, a comprehensive survey should be conducted to understand the demographic nature and characteristics of each district and identify what family support services can meet the needs of the residents. The Government must allocate sufficient resources to each district and set up a monitoring mechanism at the district level so that families in crisis can be identified at the earliest opportunity and given assistance to avoid the happening of family tragedies.
2. To strengthen family education at the school level, provide support to various activities organized by the Parent Teacher Associations in order to promote a healthy and harmonious family life.
3. To promote understanding between couples, provide counselling and organize seminars in order to enhance understanding and harmonious relations between couples.
4. To promote healthy reading programmes, strengthen monitoring on obscene newspapers, weeklies and magazines in order to prevent such publications from invading the families and help parents to protect their children and teenagers from the harm of pornographic materials on the Internet.

5. To provide support to parents, so as to help them guide their children in cultivating a healthy habit of using computer and playing electronic games.
6. To set up and promote premarital counselling services in order to help new families face their new life.
7. To set up and promote prenatal counselling services for young couples who wish to raise children.
8. To promote parent-child activities in the community in order to help parents make the best use of their time to get along with their children.
9. To place more emphasis on assisting the new arrivals to adapt to the life in Hong Kong, strengthen the relevant support measures in order to prevent domestic violence.

Family harmony and mutual support among family members are a universal value. Hong Kong people have all along attached great importance to families. However, according to a survey conducted by the DAB in mid-2006, although 33% of the interviewees hope that they can have a harmonious family, they think it is very difficult to build a harmonious family. In other words, many people recognize the value of family, but there is a big difference between their notion and the reality. What are the factors that have led to such a situation? If the Government, while advocating the notion of cherishing the family, does not face up to the hindrance in the objective social environment and try to remove such hindrance, what it advocates will always remain to be slogans that are not practicable.

In order to make a breakthrough in such a difficult situation, a desirable policy direction for the Government is to proactively create a family-friendly workplace, including encouraging and supporting public and private organizations to provide staff with child care services and implement flexible working hours. Furthermore, the Government should step up its promotion among employers of the implementation of five-day work week to ensure a longer rest period for employees. The Government should also make a greater effort in introducing the paternity leave promoted by Mr WONG Kwok-hing, so

that working fathers can have more time to take care of their wives and children. Of course, the legislation on minimum wage to enable each family to lead a life of dignity is an essential and urgent task. We earnestly hope that the Government can attach importance to families and improve various public policies with a people-oriented attitude to improve the people's livelihood and quality of life.

In this year's policy address, the Government has proposed the education voucher system for early childhood education. In my opinion, such a new model of subsidization can be extended to the social welfare and medical fronts. Now I would like to propose how the voucher system can be adopted to help families in poverty and improve the quality of homes for the aged.

The Government has proposed to review the old age allowance system in order to strengthen the support for the elderly in poverty since 2003. But there has been no concrete planning to date. The problem of the existing old age allowance and CSSA system is that the "fruit grant" alone is insufficient to support their living and the criteria for elderly persons applying for CSSA are too stringent. So, in order to help the elderly in poverty, the Government should adopt new measures, on top of the "fruit grant" and CSSA. In my opinion, the Government may consider assisting the elderly in poverty to pay necessary expenses in the form of vouchers, in addition to granting cash allowances. It should also provide rental subsidy and medical allowance to them. In doing so, assistance can be provided to the elderly in need and effective deployment of financial resources can be ensured.

In the past two years, the resources allocated for institutions and community care services by the Government have seen no sustained increases. I have often been requested to offer assistance to the elderly so that they can be allocated residential care places early. As the problem of ageing population is worsening, resources invested in elderly services by the Government should be changed both in terms of scale and methods.

In respect of residential care services for the elderly, CSSA is already provided to the recipients in the form of vouchers. If we take a look at the homes for the aged run by the private sector, we will notice that banners with words reading "applying CSSA on your behalf" are posted in various institutions in order to solicit business. The elderly can choose to stay in an institution and then pay the expenses with CSSA. This is the manifestation of the concept of

"money follows the patient". However, in view of the poor service quality of some homes in the private sector, the concept of "money follows the patient" may not necessarily enhance the service level of the sector as a whole. The most crucial determinant is the size of the fund. The cost of each bedspace in institutions subsidized by the Government is more than 150% of the allowance obtained by the elderly in private homes through CSSA. It is basically very difficult to improve the service level of private homes which will adjust their service quality according to the costs. Recently, I have received a complaint from a member of the public about the private home in which his family member is residing being seriously understaffed at night. Moreover, apart from the maintenance fees, extra expenses are charged on various pretexts. As a result, on top of the \$4,000-odd maintenance fees which are paid through CSSA, he has to pay \$2,000-odd more by himself. But the service quality is inferior to that in subsidized institutions.

At present, there are 72 000 places in homes for the aged in the territory. But only 29% of them are subsidized by the Government and 5% are run by non-profit-making institutions. The remaining 47 000 places are all run by the private sector. Through the subsidizing policy which aims at improving the quality of bought places, the Government can only ensure the quality of 6 200-odd places. But in fact, a lot of public money has been drained into such private institutions through CSSA. So, the Government should formulate a comprehensive "subsidizing voucher" system expeditiously and enhance the monitoring on the quality of private homes through such system with a view to upgrading their quality to the desired standard. The Government should also adopt corresponding financial measures to encourage and assist the privately-run homes to convert into non-profit-making institutions in order to upgrade their quality as a whole.

When providing elderly services, the Government should consider the matter from the users' perspective. Otherwise, it will be doing a disservice out of good intentions. Recently the telephone appointment service has been implemented in the Government's general out-patient clinics in the New Territories so that the elderly need not queue up before dawn. But the telephone system is so complicated that even young people cannot handle it. As a result, the elderly are unable to make appointments. The news that our District Council members' offices could make telephone appointments for them has immediately attracted a long line of elderly people in front of their doors. Secondly, the Government's out-patient clinics totally lack flexibility. After

setting up the telephone appointment service, the system of issuing chits for consultation is no longer allowed. Even if the elderlies have arrived at the clinics, they are denied service. The DAB hopes that the Government can simplify the telephone appointment service on the one hand and consider restoring the system of issuing chits on the other so that the elderly can get the service they need.

Regarding the services of the Elderly Health Centres (EHCs), there is a similar problem of resource shortage. The setting up the EHCs should provide convenience to the elderly, but the service quota is very small. An elderly woman told me that she had been informed by an EHC that she had to wait for four years before being admitted. In Yuen Long, there are as many as 60 000 elderly covered by one EHC. If resources allocated for new services by the Government is insufficient, it will lead to grievances.

Regarding the alleviation of poverty, the DAB has all along advocated that the Government should implement measures on a district basis and provide overall co-ordination. However, regarding the Government's work in Tin Shui Wai, it obviously leaves a lot to be desired. In view of the remote location of Tin Shui Wai, convenient transportation is very important in helping the residents to seek employment outside the district and improve their lot. However, recently, the Light Rail Transit has ignored the residents' strong objection and cancelled Route 761. The 40 000 residents living in the two housing estates in Tin Shui Wai North have to spend an extra five to 10 minutes on interchange. It seems to be a very minor incident, but the social effect is indeed very negative. While claiming that it will exert an effort in alleviation of poverty, the Government is ready to sacrifice the interests of the disadvantaged. The residents thus have a very strong feeling of being abandoned. The Government's connivance at the public organizations acting in an arbitrary way without making any intervention or co-ordination will only aggravate the sadness of the community.

The public utility companies do not have a sense of social responsibility that they are supposed to have. Such phenomena are obvious in other aspects. In the New Territories, many public housing estates are not provided with basic banking and telecommunications services which are closely related to the daily life of the residents. Many companies have refused to set up retail outlets in these districts for the sake of maximizing profits despite causing a lot of inconveniences to the people.

If the Government is unable to request privately-run organizations to set up sufficient retail outlets through licensing, it cannot turn a blind eye to the failure of the market. So, the Government should consider active intervention so that public organizations such as Hongkong Post can provide such services in the districts concerned. It should also encourage self-help and mutual assistance among the people. I hope the Government will not just make empty talk.

The Government is obliged to build such community networks and provide support to the basic services relating to people's livelihood. Only in doing so can the ability of the grass-roots people to deal with individual and family difficulties be enhanced and will the poverty eradication efforts of the Government stand any chances of success.

Thank you, President.

DR JOSEPH LEE (in Cantonese): Madam President, I am greatly disappointed that the Government has failed to put forth a clear and definite policy direction for the health of the elderly and the policy of "ageing in the community".

Primary health services for the elderly and "ageing in the community" have always been the highlights of the policy on people's livelihood. The conditions of private residential care homes for the elderly (RCHEs) and, their varied standards of service, lack of effective monitoring and transparency have long been a cause of criticism. Last year, a series of incidents involving elderly abuse and administering wrong medicines have occurred one after another in RCHEs. The elderly people and their families seem to have no alternative but to continue to tolerate these exorbitant services even though their quality is alarming. As part of the community, both elderly people and children are in need of care. At present, elderly care services and early childhood teaching face the same problems of varied standards of service and poor monitoring. Plagued by the problems for years, the former are even caught in dire straits. Furthermore, they are confronted with the problem of manpower shortage resulting from a wrong estimation of health care manpower. Unfortunately, the elderly have not received the same treatment as what has been proposed for early childhood education in the policy address.

I have earlier proposed in the Question and Answer Session that the Government should apply the concept of early childhood education voucher to primary care services for the elderly by offering medical vouchers to elderly

people aged above 65 to receive basic health care for their eyes and teeth, because of the absence of comprehensive planning for the provision of primary care services for the elderly. Despite the offer of regular eye tests for the elderly, eye disease treatment and specialist out-patient clinic referral, EHCs face a serious shortage of quotas, and so the waiting period may take four years. Meanwhile, the waiting for eye tests provided in the specialist out-patient clinics of public hospitals has also long been criticized. For instance, the waiting period for a cataract examination may take years. As regards dental service, although 11 dental clinics have been set up under the Department of Health (DH), the clinics merely provide the elderly with emergency dental service and treatment, whereas care and prevention services, such as regular dental checks, for the elderly are unavailable.

The merit of the said "medical voucher scheme" as a way of subsidy is that the Government can encourage the elderly to wait for and participate in, on a regular basis, the relevant service to achieve "early intervention", one of the objectives of preventive health examination. Should the concept of the "education voucher system" be applied so that "the money follows the elderly", or if subsidy is provided in the form of medical voucher, the awareness of primary care among the elderly can be enhanced and more choices be offered in the short term. At the same time, the introduction of quality services and more reasonable medical charges will bring competition in the market providing primary care services for the elderly as a simple solution to relieving the burden on public services. In the long run, an all-win situation will be created for the elderly, the Government and the sector as well. We may use this as a pilot scheme for trial implementation and then adopt the principle of "the money follows the elderly" to reform the services provided by RCHEs. The experience gained from the reform can then be used as reference in ameliorating the long-standing problem with the quality of private RCHEs.

As the details of how subsidy can be offered to the elderly by way of medical voucher have been mentioned by me on other occasions, I will not discuss them in detail here. One of the benefits of the medical voucher is that the "tangible coupon" can popularize health care for the teeth and health of the elderly and in parallel, arouse concern for the basic and inevitable health problems faced by the elderly. Early prevention is definitely better than treatment and can relieve the burden of the present health care system as well.

However, the Government needs not complicate such a simple concept by linking it to such a major topic as health care financing. The saying that the

medical voucher is a relatively thorny issue in health care financing has not only blurred the focus, but also deviated from the original intent of proposing a medical voucher for the provision of primary care services for the elderly. We do not hope to see this primary care scheme for the elderly, specially designed to benefit all the elderly people aged above 65, to be entangled in an endless health care reform, for the discussion on financing will then be delayed again and again and end up with no concrete result. Not only is this approach going too far, it is also irrational and impractical.

Madam President, as regards the policy of strengthening "ageing in the community", I propose that the Government should launch an empowerment programme for elderly people and retirees to literally empower the elderly people to make decisions on their own in organizing and preparing activities to enable them to play a leading role in their own social activities after retirement, thus ridding them of the role and identity of a relatively passive and non-beneficial elderly person and instead, develop a liaison network for the elderly and establish a healthy, active elderly community. To complement the policy of "ageing in the community", the Government must reinforce the role and functions of the community integrated services teams to assist elderly people and carers of the elderly in implementing the programme in the community. All these are fundamental to the development of "healthy ageing" and "ageing in the community". A similar question has indeed been passed unanimously in a motion debate held last year. The concept *per se* is also consistent with the concept of encouraging "citizens to participate in community health".

I hope the Government can pay more attention to the health of the elderly and care for the elderly. These issues must not be neglected just because they are not mentioned in the policy address.

Madam President, next I would like to express our concern and put forth our proposals on the family-friendly policy as follows.

We greatly welcome the policy address indicating that the Government attaches great importance to the family-friendly policy. Given the Government's commitment to its policy, our expectation is very high. Although we do not hope that the Government will, as stated by Dr Fernando CHEUNG, disband other useful committees altogether in setting up the Family Commission, we still hope to see and welcome the expeditious establishment and formal operation of the Commission in pursuance of this policy, which is

targeted at expanded families, and support nucleus families in performing their functions of self-care and mutual assistance. Furthermore, in districts seriously hit by family problems, such as Tin Shui Wai North, the Government should re-examine the community's need for hardware facilities and expedite the provision of additional infrastructure to provide support for families affected by seriously imbalanced community planning.

Actually, the domestic violence problem in vulnerable communities is the most pressing problem to be addressed by the family-friendly policy in the short term. In the long run, the Government has to prevent domestic violence and intensification of internal conflicts within families. In order to perfect the family-friendly policy and make it sustainable, the Government must expand its primary health care services to put the concepts of community support and family health into implementation. Hence, I propose that the Government should strengthen mental health community service and develop family care community service to ensure that individuals and nucleus families are capable of building a healthy life for themselves.

The merit of mental health community service and family care community service is two-fold: First, preventive health care measures can be taken to intervene early in health problems and family mental health problems to reduce the incidence of complex illnesses, thereby relieving individuals and families of their caring burden; second, support is given to individuals and nucleus families to develop healthy living habits and attention paid to the mental health of family members so that they can be educated to implement the concept of a preventive healthy life.

Madam President, with the growing complexity of family ecological health problems caused by such factors as cross-boundary marriage and domestic violence resulting from age gaps, early intervention is obviously a cost-effective solution. Early intervention, as an extension of the concept of preventive health, is also seen by the policy address as an entry approach to ameliorate domestic violence problems. Mental health community service and family care community service serve as the best support for early intervention in family problems. With professional health assessment capability and experience, mental health community nurses and family care community nurses can assess, identify and engage in early intervention to prevent such problems as domestic violence, child abuse, elderly abuse, and so on, and assist in such work as family planning, "ageing in the community" and family health education. For

instance, incidents of sexual violence in family involve the psychological, physical and family problems of the victims and their family members. To prevent the occurrence of such incidents, professional psychiatric nurses have to administer preventive intervention treatment. Besides, as family care community nurses are in a position to foster a closer and longer-term relationship with the community, they can foster relatively full communication with a family and gauge and grasp every detail of the health and living of it. Compared with family doctors, mental health community nurses and family care community nurses are in a better position to conduct accurate assessments of individual families and their psychological prototypes, and identify the problems of individual members and the family as a whole. For instance, through tracking individual cases, mental health community nurses can conduct strategic physical and psychological assessment of a family member on the basis of the history of another family member who has hereditary disease or is a mental patient, with a view to detecting as early as possible the relevant risk factors, engaging in appropriate health care intervention and even providing suitable referral so as to reduce the health risk of other family members, explore vertically into family problems and assist them in preventing and resolving domestic violence and abuse problems arising from physical, emotional and mental stress.

The merit of family care community nurses is that they can grasp the problems instantly, timely and thoroughly on detecting symptoms of health or psychological problems among family members. Through their intervention, family care community nurses can provide professional advice to help individual family members resolve the conflicts and challenges encountered at each and every stage and go through each transformation stage successfully, observe the psychological development, growth and changes experienced by families as a whole, and enable families to take care of themselves and develop healthily, as well as upgrading their ability to do so. Actually, family health care services also entail handling of crises and confusions arising during the transitional period, handling of chronically-ill children, support for families which have lost their children, support for families with children experiencing learning difficulty, family visits to vulnerable families, and family care for elderly people, thus embracing, in a horizontal manner, all the methods for handling possible family problems at every stage of life.

In short, family care community nurses and mental health community nurses are provided to complement the importance of family medicine in the community. Both mental health and family care community services can

achieve the goal of achieving holistic physical and psychological well-being at the grass-roots level of the community to enable people to watch and take care of one another and make early intervention possible. On the other hand, both psychiatric nurses and family nurses play a key role in fostering a healthy community because they can assess and prevent family crises and educate every family member to develop healthily.

Next, Madam President, I would attempt to express my concern from the angle of other health care areas. Healthy family should actually start from upgrading the health of the families of new-born babies. Hence, fully promoting breast feeding and introducing paternity leave is the first step towards a health empowerment policy assisting prospective parents in fostering a healthy family.

Paternity leave has been implemented in most European countries, with the longest statutory paternity leave lasting a month. In Asia, male employees in the Philippines and male civil servants in Malaysia and Taiwan are entitled to paternity leave as part of their social benefits. As paternity leave can effectively help reduce the chances of prenatal and postnatal depression experienced by pregnant women, it can be taken as a kind of support from various sectors of the community for local birth, family development and parents in repaying employees with a healthy life. If paternity leave can be materialized, parents can make better preparations for a healthy family and cope with the health needs of babies and mothers as well as families during the initial period.

Madam President, a healthy diet has a decisive influence on the growth and long-term health maintenance of babies, from their birth to different stages of their lives. Babies can benefit most from breast feeding as breast milk contains rich immunity and nutrients. Studies have shown that breast-feeding can lower the mortality rates of children and new-born babies. Through breast-feeding, the relationship between mothers and babies can become even closer too. Promoting and popularizing breast-feeding also provides the most important and earliest opportunity for the health development of babies and the health development of their later periods. Furthermore, promoting and popularizing breast-feeding can bring the healthy diet culture forward to the infancy stage. Mothers can also strengthen their functions for they can then make the best choice for the health of their babies. In 2004, the average breast-feeding rates of mothers giving birth in different hospitals in Hong Kong ranged from 42% to 97%, with an annual growth rate of a mere 0.7%.

According to some latest reports, the DH and shopping arcades have not provided adequate breast-feeding facilities and publicity is poor. I therefore propose that the Government should formulate comprehensive breast-feeding policies to train relevant health care personnel to promote breast feeding and impart upon parents the knowledge and skills of breast feeding to make working mothers understand that breast-feeding is not a burden, but a process and a perfect opportunity for establishing parent-child relations. Furthermore, support should be provided to mothers to boost their determination and confidence in continuing to breast-feed their babies till they are two years old.

Madam President, my proposed health policy blueprint is concerned mainly with holistic health and, through primary health care services and education, seeks to assist communities and individuals to practise the concept of health and life nourishment from the infancy to elderly stage. In this respect, primary health care support is especially important. Hence, I hope the Chief Executive can, on the basis of upholding public health, pay attention to the problems of health and the prolonged shortage of community health services personnel.

Lastly, I implore the Government to expeditiously introduce the consultation document on health care financing for public discussion in the hope of identifying a better and more appropriate solution to the difficulties encountered in health care financing. Madam President, I so submit.

DR PHILIP WONG (in Cantonese): Madam President, in the debate two days ago, I expressed my wish that the SAR Government could seriously consider and make clear plans for the long-term development of Hong Kong in order to tackle early various possible obstacles and risks in the future. Here I would like to talk briefly on some of my views.

The essence of my views points to the fact that the roots of some of the obstacles and risks that the Hong Kong SAR may face now and in the future were actually planted by the British Hong Kong Administration, including the issues of medical benefits and land, and so on.

Madam President, regarding the issue of medical benefits that we are discussing today, I must highlight the point is that the British Hong Kong Government and some of its health care policies have left behind a heavy burden

on the SAR Government. For instance, even though they are not Hong Kong citizens, all visitors to Hong Kong have the right to medical benefits enjoyable by Hong Kong citizens once they have arrived in the territory; in case of illness, they can seek medical service at a public or government subvented hospital or clinic for a very low fee or even no fee on many occasions. This is a very rare case in the entire world (including western countries such as the United States). In the United States, a medical fee is levied even on emergency cases, and patients are admitted only if they can produce a medical insurance card.

Owing to some irresponsible policies on medical benefits from that period, an ageing population and prevalence of chronic illnesses, medical and health care demands increase rapidly. As a result, public medical expenses are expanding continuously and the financial burden on the Government is growing heavier than ever. The entire medical system is facing problems such as excess demand and funding problems, and so on. With the low tax rate and narrow tax base of this society, it is impossible to issue a blank cheque for medical benefits which are costly and open to abuse.

In fact, the problems left behind by the British Hong Kong Administration are not confined to medical benefits. Similar problems exist in the real estate sector. At that time, the British Hong Kong Government enjoyed colonial monopoly on land and adopted the policy of high land prices. Its positive and negative impacts are conspicuous and its potential risk is by no means negligible as well.

As we all know, land resources are rare and scarce in Hong Kong and its population is ever-growing. After years of development, the reserve of land available for development in Hong Kong is diminishing. The main income source of the Government has always been linked with real estate. The amount of land sold and the performance of the real estate market have a direct bearing on the balance of governmental finances. However, the supply of lots in Hong Kong has already become tighter by the day. In recent years, with a view to conserving the harbour, large-scale hill-cuttings and reclamations have ceased. In the interest of effective development and appropriate use of land in Hong Kong and assurance of healthy development of the real estate market, I hope different sectors of society, developers' associations and relevant government departments can pragmatically and seriously conduct re-examinations and studies, seek consensus, and correctly determine the long-term development strategies.

The policy address has made no mention of all these issues which were left behind by the British Hong Kong Administration, which could possibly turn into crises. I think the Government and different sectors of society should communicate more, jointly reflect on these issues and strengthen their awareness of crisis, adversity and adjustment. I also hope that the Government can drum up the courage, fit the remedy to the case and put forward specific and effective measures, including consideration of amending relevant existing laws. Resolving all of these issues with determination is the only key to consolidating Hong Kong's edge and enhancing our competitiveness.

Madam President, I so submit.

MS EMILY LAU (in Cantonese): President, I would like to speak on the issue of domestic violence. I notice that in June 2006, the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Hong Kong obtained funding from the Social Welfare Department to conduct a survey. On the issue of domestic violence incidents, they discovered that only one victim out of every 100 would seek assistance. This is very horrifying, but the number of domestic violence incidents is really very high. President, as you are also aware, yet another domestic violence incident happened today. The problem is therefore very serious.

President, you know that this August, the United Nations Women's Convention Committee (the Committee) convened a hearing in New York on 10 August. I went to New York with many who are concerned about women's rights, with Dr Fernando CHEUNG, Mr Albert HO and others also in company. Many organizations relayed to the United Nations their opinions on the issue of domestic violence. President, after listening to these representations, the United Nations announced on 25 August its so-called concluding remarks. What did it say? President, of course it first praised the Government's efforts in protecting women against violence and its adoption of the principle of zero tolerance on domestic violence. However, the Committee expressed concern about the low prosecution rate of domestic violence in the Hong Kong SAR. The Committee urged the Government to enhance its policy by all means so as to tackle all forms of violence inflicted on women, including domestic violence. The Committee also urged the Government to facilitate women's access to the judicial system in seeking justice, including an assurance on effective responses to all complaints and proactive investigations, and also improvement on gender sensitivity training for judicial and law enforcement officials, medical personnel

and social workers in dealing with violence incidents against women. The Committee encouraged the Government to re-establish a rape crisis centre in Hong Kong so that the victims in sexual violence cases can receive special care service and counselling under the protection of anonymity. The Committee suggested that the SAR allocate sufficient resources to combat all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, and provide details on the distribution of the estimated expenses in the report to be submitted to the United Nations at the next hearing. President, these are the suggestions by the United Nations.

I am aware that the Panel on Welfare Services of the Legislative Council held a meeting in July and opposed the establishment of the Multi-purpose Crisis Intervention and Support Centre as proposed by the Government. Dr Fernando CHEUNG has spoken on this point just now. Many community groups hope for a 24-hour specialist service to be established. They said that it would have to be served by at least 13 professional social workers, secure professional support from the police and health authorities, and operate on a 24-hour basis. The annual funding required would be \$12 million only. The Secretary has always insisted on doing things that other advise him otherwise. I think that if the Secretary really cares about the rights of the socially disadvantaged groups, then I hope that he can really make a positive response to the things which the United Nations has requested him to do, so that the issue of domestic violence would not trouble so many of us in Hong Kong..... *(The buzzer sounded)* Thank you, President.

MR FRED LI (in Cantonese): Madam President, let me start with an introductory remark. A number of key issues relating to people's livelihood will be discussed in the fifth debate session today. However, I find that only one Bureau Secretary is present at the moment. This reflects that the Bureau is much too colossal and has too much work to do. The Democratic Party has proposed to Mr TSANG in this policy debate that the Policy Bureau should be split up. Otherwise, it is simply impossible for Secretary Dr York CHOW to accomplish his tasks, for his situation is like a housewife having to cook five dishes at one time with only three stoves working. This is absolutely abnormal.

Back to the subject, the Secretary should know that I will concentrate on food safety and matters of concern to me today. It is a pity that, in addition to the shortness of the policy address, I have not seen Mr TSANG mention any

vision on policies relating to food safety and environmental hygiene. Neither can any new policy initiative be found in the policy agenda. I find that some policies which should have been implemented a long time ago are still being delayed. Owing to strong opposition from industry practitioners, there has been a serious delay even in policies beneficial to the public and their health. Whether for the election or for canvassing votes, those policies are likely to be procrastinated further.

For instance, the policy experiencing the longest delay is the one led by Mr TSANG himself. When he chaired Team Clean three years ago, he advocated a categorization system for food premises and food factories. In paragraph 4.34 of a report published by Team Clean in August 2003, he proposed to bring forward the implementation of an Open Categorization Scheme to July 2004 and to publish the resultant hygiene gradings in January 2005. Under the Scheme, the hygiene conditions of all food premises will be graded in accordance with the results of a Score-Based Inspection System. Food premises will be required to post a hygiene grading sign on their premises. We in the Democratic Party were in full support of the proposal.

However, not a single word about the progress of the Categorization Scheme was mentioned in a progress report on Team Clean submitted by the Government to the Panel on Home Affairs of the Legislative Council in May 2005. Is this another example demonstrating that things should be deemed not in existence if they are not mentioned anymore? Nothing has changed with the passage of three years. Mr Donald TSANG made every effort in drumming up publicity when he was Chairman of Team Clean, but nothing has been accomplished. Why? Even the report published by Audit Commission in October last year mentioned its support for the continuation of efforts to upgrade hygiene standards.

Overseas experience suggests that the implementation of similar systems can bring more income to the food industry and bring down hospital admission figures. This approach has even been adopted for the anti-smoking legislation and advocated with great fanfare. Granting fewer food safety and food poisoning incidents, hospitals will not be required to put so much resources to coping with so many crises.

I believe Members will still recall the wide concern caused by the "poon choi" poisoning incident this past Lunar New Year. Mr Wallace LAU,

Principal Assistant Secretary of the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau once indicated in an open forum that the Government was studying the feasibility of implementing a categorization system for food premises/food factories for effective monitoring of food quality, and the proposal was expected to be submitted to this Council for scrutiny in the first half of this year — it is now overdue. We have already come to the second half of this year. The community has apparently forgotten the "poon choi" poisoning incident, and the Government has apparently forgotten its commitment too. The policy agenda has made no mention of this initiative. Will this policy be procrastinated again? I hope the Secretary can respond to this point later.

In connection with a food poisoning incident caused by the consumption of raw oysters recently, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department issued a press release naming a raw oyster supplier suspected of causing a number of food poisoning incidents. In a high-profile response, the supplier not only held a press conference but also issued a solicitor's letter. Unfortunately, no evidence whatsoever has been found, for no causal agent has been detected in the 22 oyster samples tested.

This incident has once again reminded us of the importance of setting up a mandatory food recall system. In the event that some major food safety incidents occur, a large number of food agents and retail outlets will be involved. Should the Government rely solely on voluntary recall, I am afraid the problem cannot be properly resolved if unco-operative wholesalers and retailers are involved. The establishment of a mandatory food recall system is therefore very significant to public interest indeed.

In the past, the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau considered it essential to establish such a system and put forth this view in the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene of this Council. However, nothing concrete has been achieved so far, and no progress has been seen too.

Actually, such an idea was already put forward by the Democratic Party in the era of the former Municipal Councils as early as a decade ago. Unfortunately, the Government merely gave a verbal consent and stated that further actions had to be taken to consult the industry and enact legislation. However, the ultimate method of implementation is still not in sight. Even if it starts working today, it might still take six years before results can be seen. Members should have noted that the process has indeed been exceedingly long.

We are of the opinion that too much time has been devoted to safeguarding food safety and the health of Hong Kong people.

Not only the Open Categorization Scheme for food premises and the food recall system have been delayed. After the dissolution of the two former Municipal Councils in 2000, some unresolved issues were left to be tackled by the Government. Now, seven years have lapsed. Let me cite some examples to illustrate my point. The Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene of this Council proposed in July 2002 that a comprehensive review of the design and operation of wet public markets should be conducted to improve the environment and hygiene condition of the markets. Nevertheless, what the Architectural Services Department has accomplished to date are just some basic improvements. We have not seen any review of matters of concern to us, such as the rent policy and operation situation, the need for some markets to close and some markets to undergo massive expansion, and so on. President, seven years have already passed.

From the information I have collected, the policy on liquor licensing has to be reviewed too. Yet, the Government is very often seen to be dragging its feet. Last year, the malachite green incident threw our city into chaos, and we did not realize until then that live fish was not food. As live fish was not defined as food in Hong Kong law, the import of live fish was completely not supervised and seriously flawed. After the incident, the Government undertook that aquatic products and live fish would be regulated as food, and comprehensive legislation would be enacted. Now that more than a year has passed, but when we review the Legislative Programme this year, we find that this item is not included there. How much longer do we still have to wait? The Government is still dragging its feet on many problems it has already seen and noticed, even though Members have made complementary efforts by refraining from arguing with the Government and giving their support. One, two, three, four years — seven years have passed. We are really extremely disappointed. Does Secretary Dr York CHOW not see these problems?

Back to the vegetable we consume every day. Despite the import of hundreds of tons of vegetable every day, its origin is not governed by law. As for the pesticide residue standards, the Codex standards are being followed, but the standards are not law. Although the Codex standards are adopted for inspection of vegetable, legislation has not been enacted, as in the case of meat, stating that exceeding the residue limits imposed on 37 substances shall be

considered illegal. There is no law governing vegetable and fruits. While the Government often encourages the people to consume more vegetable, we are still lagging behind many countries worldwide in terms of monitoring the origin of our vegetable and regulation of the pesticides used on vegetable. How tragic it is! The Secretary can respond to each of these matters. He can point it out if I am wrong. These are the food safety problems I have noticed in this Council through all these years.

Secretary, I have just returned from Australia, and I have a mixed feeling. Australia is not as advanced as Hong Kong in many aspects. Its public transport is way behind that of Hong Kong. I have learnt many painful lessons when travelling on its trains. However, I have personally visited many of its supermarkets for shopping. All the packaged food sold in supermarkets is attached with nutrition labels giving details on calories, cholesterol, salt, and so on. Even barbecued food wrapped with cling film to be brought home, including marinated beef steak, seafood, meat, and even meat skewers, is labelled with the amount of calories in it. Every detail is clearly given. Secretary, as a doctor, can you tell us what we should look at when choosing food as we have chronically ill patients, diabetics, people suffering from hypertension, and people with high cholesterol levels (I might be one of them) among us? What are we looking at? There is still no legislation in Hong Kong requiring packaged food to carry the most basic nutrient labelling. We still have to wait. Although I know we have to wait, but how long should we still have to wait? For how many years have we lagged behind other countries? Although we have surpassed Canada and Australia in GDP for a long time, we are way behind them in protection of food safety.

I also had the experience of driving to farms to buy strawberries as strawberries were in season. I noticed a laminated sheet of paper on the street-side stalls operated by farmers selling packaged strawberries. When I took a look at it, I found that it was a certificate issued by the local health authorities certifying that the pesticides used on the strawberries being sold were up to standard, and the date of issue was also given on the certificate. It was really surprisingly that farmers selling their home-grown strawberries could have obtained a health certificate. As a consumer, I could at least buy with peace of mind the strawberries grown by farmers operating street-side stalls. I notice that other countries are very concerned about their food safety, but what about our SAR Government? In connection with the many topics listed by me just now, what has the Government done? I do not hope that I have to rise again and

tell the Secretary that many things remain unchanged, come the policy debate next year. I will be terribly sad. I have no intention to scold anyone. I merely wish to tell the Secretary that I hope he can properly perform his task on food safety and take care of the people's health as long as he is still in this post. As a professional doctor, the Secretary has to take this even more seriously. I so submit.

MR FREDERICK FUNG (in Cantonese): President, I also wish to raise an issue in relation to institutional reform. In fact, noting that in the fifth session today, Secretary Dr York CHOW alone is in charge of three major policy areas in Hong Kong, he really has a plate much too full. He manages one third of the total expenditure of all government departments. The Hong Kong Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood has all along suggested that labour-related issues in particular, which are currently handled by the Secretary and belong to the welfare portfolio, should be taken out and handed over to the department that deals with labour matters. Such issues include unemployment CSSA and job-related vocational training. The arrangement of work will be greatly facilitated if this part of the portfolio is handed over to the Director of Bureau responsible for labour matters.

President, the second issue I wish to raise is poverty alleviation, which my speech today will dwell in great lengths. However, it is unfortunate that none of the debate sessions today deals with poverty alleviation. In the government framework, poverty alleviation initiatives are now dealt with by a department that has no solid powers at all, and is co-ordinated by Mr Henry TANG whose bureau has four Directors of Bureaux. Today, however, Mr Henry TANG has not come and only Secretary Dr York CHOW is present. After enquiring with the Secretariat staff concerned, I was informed that it was most appropriate to discuss the issue in this session. Therefore, I can only speak in this session. In fact, I could have spoken in the session on labour, or the session on housing, or even the session on education.

The Chief Executive delivered his policy address in this Chamber two weeks ago, and during the Question and Answer Session held on the following day, he answered me, without turning over the pages, that poverty alleviation initiatives could be found in page 30 of the policy agenda. However, the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme set out in page 30 is a district-based poverty alleviation project organized by the Home

Affairs Department, which costs \$30 million only. Do Members think that the implementation of a district-based poverty alleviation project costing only \$30 million is tantamount to having done a good job in alleviating poverty? I doubt it. The District Partnership Programme and social enterprises are actually only part of the entire poverty alleviation policy. What is more important is how the Government views the poverty problem and what policy thinking is behind poverty alleviation.

Although "building a caring and just society" is used as one of the Chief Executive's policy objectives, in view of the serious wealth gap problem in Hong Kong society, I really do not see any social policies that manifest "caring and just". Anti-poverty economist Muhammad YUNUS, the fresh Nobel Peace Laureate of this year who provides micro-credit to the poor in Bangladesh, has said, "Since peace and economics are inseparable, there will not be peace so long as there is poverty."

Wealth disparity has led to social division and increasing social conflicts. If the Government is sincere in building a harmonious society, it should first examine if the existing system has created poverty, that is, whether or not the process of policy formulation has aggravated the poverty problem. The root of the problem should be identified in the first place, before it can be resolved. There is no need to leave an unfinished business in the last paragraph of the policy address for the third-term SAR Government. A government that truly cares about the poor will certainly not propose the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax when income disparity is widening, thus aggravating the already very serious wealth gap problem.

The polarization of wealth does not appear in Hong Kong today all of a sudden. The relocation of the manufacturing industry northwards and the economic restructuring in the '80s resulted in a loss of low-skilled jobs. The unemployment rate of low-skilled workers rose to 6.1% in May this year, with most of them being low-skilled workers in the construction industry where the unemployment rate stood at 14.7%, whereas the high-skilled sector has nearly reached "full employment" with its unemployment rate having dropped to 2%. This reflects that the existing labour market is on a polarizing trend.

In the policy address, the Chief Executive opined that globalization will bring new opportunities. However, changes in the mode of production coupled with the information technology-driven new economic model have likewise

resulted in the polarization of social strata. Furthermore, the claim by the Government that the policy of positive non-intervention has been abandoned is merely a joke as it has all along intervened on a selective basis. On the face of it, the economy relies on the market mechanism, but the economic policy is actually tilted towards the business sector, where the disadvantaged groups are deprived of equal opportunities of development. And yet, the Government has turned a blind eye to this situation on the pretext of free market, and thus failed to achieve equitable distribution of social resources. "Building a caring and just society" is only a slogan for procrastination.

The latest poverty indicator shows that there are 1.03 million poor people in Hong Kong; in other words, there is one poor person in every seven persons, and the figure is "astonishing". In spite of the economic upturn in recent years, there is still no sign of improvement in the poverty situation. Child CSSA recipients aged zero to five have risen from 18 000 in 2001 to 25 000 in 2005, which represents an increase of nearly 40%. This shows that the Government has not deployed sufficient resources to the elimination of inter-generational poverty, and the continuous aggravation of the problem will only make the future efforts in poverty alleviation achieve half the result with twice the input.

On the other hand, CSSA recipients aged 15 to 21 have increased from 26 000 to 46 000, nearly doubled in only five years. The current unemployment rate of youngsters is as high as 8.6%, which is 72 000 people. It is therefore equally urgent to implement measures to resolve the unemployment problem of youngsters.

Also, the district poverty problem is yet to be resolved. The poverty situation in such districts as Kwai Tsing, Yuen Long, Tuen Mun and the outlying islands including Tung Chung has not improved in tandem with the economic upturn. In fact, many local organizations and the District Councils concerned have suggested a number of creative and practicable anti-poverty proposals for the Government to consider, but they were not given weight. Neither was the proposal made by the Legislative Council Subcommittee to Study the Subject of Combating Poverty to the Government, especially the proposed provision of travel support to low-income people living in remote areas whereby a trial scheme was undertaken early this year to be launched within this year. As district poverty is worsening, the authorities should speed up the progress and expeditiously discuss the poverty problem with local organizations and the District Councils concerned on the deployment of more resources to ameliorate district poverty.

(THE PRESIDENT'S DEPUTY, MS MIRIAM LAU, took the Chair)

Just as I have pointed out earlier on, the costs of daily necessities, including beverages and meat, have increased one after another, and there is already an average increase of 10% in prices by food premises. Clothing, food, accommodation and transport are, in fact, daily necessities. For the poor families, expenses on accommodation, public utilities and transport cannot be further reduced, and no more cuts can be made in this only possible respect. Despite recent reports on a possible 3% increase on average in the salaries of workers this year, grass-roots workers have not been able to share the fruit of economic recovery. While there is no increase in wages, daily expenses have been rising incessantly. What measures have been put in place by the authorities to ease the plight of the poor families? Insofar as those 1.03 million poor people are concerned, the policy address is definitely not "people-oriented".

Furthermore, in respect of "accommodation", the Government is obliged to provide the poor with housing security. The original purpose of providing public housing is to provide homes to the grassroots. However, as a result of the slow pace of housing construction so far, the annual production has dropped from the peak of 80 000-odd units in the past to only 10 000 units in recent years. It is worried that the waiting time for public housing will exceed three years, and notwithstanding the increasingly stringent requirements on applications for public housing, the number of Waiting List applicants has recently increased from 80 000-odd to more than 100 000. This reflects that the demand for public housing is still very strong at the grass-roots level. It is therefore imperative for the Government to speed up the production of housing units to ensure that the poor can be allocated housing units as early as possible.

In fact, the Commission on Poverty (CoP) set up by the Government last year should be able to co-ordinate the formulation and implementation of the poverty alleviation policy in Hong Kong, as well as to serve as an organization with substantive powers and wide social recognition. Unfortunately, it does not have the substantive power to adjust the policy direction of the Administration. What the CoP has done was merely the launch of some piecemeal trial schemes, failing to truly solve the problem of wealth disparity. What is more, there are only three months left in the CoP's term. Even if its term can be extended for a couple of months, I worry that there will still be no permanent body with substantive powers to take forward poverty alleviation in the future.

Deputy President, poverty alleviation cannot be achieved overnight. The Government must drum up the resolve and set goals, make measurable undertakings in respect of poverty elimination, change the community's negative mindset about poverty, take on board the views of people from all walks of life, and develop social partnerships and not blindly pursue economic growth, by making use of government policies. Rather, it should be truly "people-oriented" and regard poverty alleviation as an important element of social inclusion with a view to actually building up a harmonious society. I believe Secretary Dr York CHOW is also aware of the United Kingdom's experience of taking forward poverty alleviation, just like what we are doing. And yet, while promoting poverty alleviation, we have refused to draw a poverty line. So, what is the definition of poverty? There are benchmarks for poverty in other places, so do we. Yet, our benchmark is for reference only, which is similar to the figure obtained by an academic institute upon completion of a study. For example, we said earlier that tens of thousands of children aged zero to five are currently living in poor families, what should we do to address and deal with this problem? If this is the case in the United Kingdom, the answer will be very obvious as a decision will be made on the number of years required to reduce the number of these poor children by half. Will a similar undertaking be made by our Government? And if, say, there are 210 000 low-income households with an income less than half of the median, how many years will it take to reduce this figure by 10%, 20% or 30%? Will the Secretary make such an undertaking? Why do Western countries have the determination to combat poverty in spite of their less favourable economic situation or lower GDP as compared with Hong Kong, while the latter does not? What will the CoP do to deal with social welfare and harmony?

Deputy President, I also wish to talk about the Family Commission proposed to be set up by the Government in the policy address. Insofar as the Family Commission is concerned, I am very worried that it will just be another CoP, which has no substantive powers at all. If it is headed by the Financial Secretary or the Secretary, I will be even more worried because the Secretary is already overloaded with work. If the Family Commission is again added to his portfolio, I wonder how he can cope. From my personal point of view, the Family Commission does not only deal with welfare matters. Let me cite some simple examples. The Commission may also deal with housing matters. For example, the existing housing policy actually discourages family members to live together under one roof and forces the elderly members to move out. The housing policy only deals with public housing, and there is no mention of private

housing. For private buildings in some old areas, say, Sham Shui Po, Tai Kok Tsui, old Hung Hom, old Kwun Tong, old Wan Chai, the Western District, and so on, no community facilities are available in these old communities. Public housing estates may be better in the sense that the residents there can enjoy a stroll or chat with their families downstairs after meals, or walk around in the park there, whereas private buildings do not have such facilities. Should private buildings not be provided with such facilities? If not, what should be done in relation to the overall planning design? Furthermore, the Family Commission may also deal with education matters. Why are child care and kindergartens in particular among the prevailing education issues not included as formal education? Since the child care service has a direct impact on women who have to work full-time or part-time, women will find it difficult to look for jobs without a proper child care policy.

Not to mention labour. The absence of minimum wage protection has created nearly 20 000 households with a monthly income of less than \$4,000. How can a person spare thoughts for the care of his children and parents when even the basic needs of clothing and food cannot be met?

It is not necessary to talk about welfare as this is what the Secretary is best at doing. Besides, there is the problem of domestic violence. Insofar as health care issues are concerned, they include paternity leave, the system of family medicine and women's health programmes as mentioned by Dr Joseph LEE earlier.

If I have to name more, there are still plenty on the list. Secretary, what can be done? Are you going to deal with them all by yourself? This will make me feel very worried. It is impossible for you to deal with these issues as many of them do not belong to your policy portfolio, which is already much too heavy. I think that in order to seriously formulate a good family policy in Hong Kong, the work concerned should be taken up by a Secretary of Department, the best choice being the Chief Secretary for Administration, whereby the Family Commission will serve as an influential decision-making body with substantive powers. It will consist of various Directors of Bureaux and representatives from all walks of life, and should be vested with substantive powers. Otherwise, the Family Commission will simply become another body of the same level and status as the CoP, which will only implement small-scale piecemeal plans continuously. With a provision of only \$30 million to \$50 million, the Government claimed that it had taken forward poverty alleviation or

elimination, and whenever this issue was brought up for discussion, it would silence the voices with those piecemeal plans. Nevertheless, the reality cannot be altered, and as Honourable Members, members of the CoP and the Government can see from the poverty indicator provided by the CoP, the efforts made have failed to alleviate poverty, and what is more, the situation is worsening. I hope that the Family Commission will not meet the same fate, and I also hope that both the Chief Executive and the Secretary do not wish to see this either. If the Family Commission is really set up, please take it seriously and give it substantive powers. Otherwise, it is better not to set it up at all. Thank you, Deputy President.

MRS SOPHIE LEUNG (in Cantonese): Deputy President, in this session we discuss welfare issues. I would like to put forward some proposals and ideas on welfare work from the angle of ethics and mutual support and assistance. Yesterday, a veteran member of the media sent me an e-mail, and I think he is very innovative. He said, "Is Hong Kong experiencing the so-called 'mid-life crisis'?" Certainly, he was talking about economic problems, but I think that his view is most original. Perhaps this can be further explored if we look at social development from this angle. Why do I say so? If we look at it from the angle of a mid-life crisis, how should this mid-life crisis be dealt with? The discussion on the so-called "awakening" in the academia or in sociological studies now is about how to bring a complete revamp of direction, values, positioning, and so on. There is also the view that the more successful a person is, the greater the sense of loss he feels and hence, the more vulnerable he is to a mid-life crisis.

If we apply this to the situation of Hong Kong — Indeed, over the past 30 to 40 years, Hong Kong has been considered by the whole world as very successful and so, in 1997 when there was the issue of reunification, Hong Kong captured attention from all parts of the world. If we have achieved such phenomenal success and if we apply the same theory, will we feel a greater sense of loss? So, we may as well apply this theory in discussing what we are going through now when everyone seems to be at a loss and in a state of sheer helplessness, and when our discussion in whichever aspect seems to be aimless and we do not know what to do, and we simply shift the responsibility to another side or to the Government, thinking only to pass the buck to other people. It seems quite suitable to construe this phenomenon with this mid-life crisis mindset.

If this is really what we are going through now, should we be awakened too? If we look at it in the context of social welfare, what should we do in the future to walk out of this predicament? If we look at it with a new positioning, what exactly were the problems that we faced in the past and in what areas are we facing problems now? All this is worthy of our consideration.

For example, population ageing, which we have always talked about recently, is a problem before us now. The population in Hong Kong is ageing at a much faster pace than many other advanced countries and places. For instance, the impact of technological advancement is identical all over the world, and this is also a sign of the change of the century. Another example is the social worker sector. Everyone is talking about the fatigue of social workers whose workload has exceeded the capacity of the existing pool of workers. This is also the case in Hong Kong. From this perspective, we really need to look at the entire issue with an awakening, or an awakened, sober mind.

To come up with a completely new positioning, we may need to explore our direction in a number of areas. First, is it necessary for us to develop a new perception of our long-established service objective? It seems we have long upheld the objective that when a family runs into troubles or when the parents have failed to do their part in some areas, we would, in no time, come forth to tackle the problem by, say, deploying social workers to take follow-up actions or thinking that society should assume more responsibilities, or building more hospitals when there is a shortage of medical care services and if the situation is not improved, building more convalescent homes and elderly homes, and we have always been advocating the provision of more facilities. In this regard, do we need to come up with a new positioning? Should we compete with organizations capable of supporting themselves in the provision of services? I think we really have to think about this from these angles.

After the Second World War, the British Government realized that they had made a big mistake. At that time, the British Government considered that the students were under-nourished and so, they announced that all students would be provided with one more glass of milk every afternoon in all schools, hoping that this could make up for the under-nourishment of students. This, however, made the family think that since milk was provided to their children in schools, the very thin slice of meat or the small bit of nutrition that could be provided by the family might then be given to another member of the family, or the student would then be given a smaller share of the nutritious food provided at home.

As a result, no enhancement was seen in students' nutrition. Finally, Britain awakened to the fact that when the responsibility was taken up by the Government, the more support the Government provided, the more likely the organization would take the attitude that since the Government has already taken up more responsibilities, they would take care of other people instead. In this connection, I think we must consider whether we could be wrong to work in this direction.

On the other hand, in the course of service delivery, or delivery of social service (the Liberal Party has said this many times), I hope that what we will provide is not like something heavily padded with thick layers of cotton quilts, because once a welfare recipient falls into this net of service, he would never wish to get out of it. We all like to sleep on soft mattresses, and not many people would wish to sleep on a plank bed nowadays. As everyone likes mattresses, the best mattresses should be those which are more likely to make people get out of it on their own initiative. Only this is the right way of service delivery. Therefore, I hope that the Secretary can initiate more discussions on the service objective, because from what I have heard in this Chamber today, I think many colleagues are still going after the old mode of service delivery.

The second area that I would like to talk about is the promotion of self-help and mutual help, or a lever-typed or springboard-typed *modus operandi*? The case is similar to promoting self-help and mutual help in social enterprises. How should we promote this *modus operandi* among enterprises? We should pool the collective wisdom of the community. Once there is this *modus operandi*, it should be advocated, encouraged and promoted, so that more people will follow suit and more people will adopt it, because I think this direction is not yet a clear way forward in the community. Perhaps I will elaborate this point a bit further later on, because I have always been seeking community wisdom, and I hope that development can be achieved in this aspect.

Third, whether at the level of individuals or organizations, I think we must make the utmost effort to promote positive thinking, in order to be equipped for competition in the 21st century, for our competitiveness has dropped to a very low level. I have listened to the speech made by Mr Frederick FUNG earlier. He said that the unemployment rate in high value-added and high technology industries had dropped to 2%. This is true, but for jobs that do not require a high level of skills, that is, the so-called manual labour or handicraft work, or jobs with a low value, the unemployment rate will only rise higher and higher.

This precisely indicates that positive thinking, resilience against adversities and readiness for lifelong learning have not yet taken root in the community. Nor have they taken root in the minds of the people.

I remember an example which is most ironic, and Deputy President, I would like to share it with you. It was discussed in a high profile on television. At that time, training was provided in full gear and many domestic helpers had been trained. Some domestic helpers complained that they had never done any ironing at home, that they had not done the laundry — they said that ironing was unnecessary, as they could simply take out the clothes from the washing machine and their children would put them on and go to work. Now that they had become domestic helpers and they were required to do ironing. They said that they certainly could not do ironing very well, but their bosses would take them to task. As for the vacuum cleaner, they said that they had never used such heavy-duty vacuum cleaner and that they did not do Hoovering at home as they would only sweep the floor. Now that they had to use a vacuum cleaner and when they broke it, they were reprimanded and complained against. However, I think the community is not even willing to open their eyes just a bit wider to see what environment we are living in now. There are so many shopping malls around us and almost in every shopping mall there is a demonstration of how to operate an iron with an automatic water-spraying function. Why do they not just take a look at it? I do not believe that they have never been to a shopping mall.

I also wish to share with you, Deputy President, and Members another example about a lady who is not young at all. I think she is older than me, and I met her in a large company. She never wears any make-up, but she very much likes to look at cosmetics and she keeps asking questions about them such as: What is this used for? This shows her eagerness to learn. I think there are some very subtle differences between them. I think the elderly should be prepared to cope with the changes in the 21st century, and they must have a thirst for knowledge in the face of many of these changes. This is precisely the point that I wish to make: How should we motivate the people? There are so many non-government organizations and for women organizations alone, there are already some 300 of them. I always ask them: "Can you take the lead to motivate every member or person in your organization, so that they can gain more understanding, ask more questions and foster a greater desire for knowledge with regard to what is happening around them?" I believe this will enable the people to cope with everything in life better, and they would not just

say, "I do not know how to do it. Please teach me how to do it. I do not know how to do it and please teach me. I cannot do it and please help me.". I think we must get rid of this mindset.

Deputy President, I would like to cite some examples of community involvement and wisdom. An example is after-school care service which I have mentioned many times. This can be provided by way of child care co-operative societies, and some organizations have already been doing this. Should we extensively step up publicity in this regard? However, it seems that colleagues do not have a keen interest in learning more about this. I have recently come to know an organization made up of a small group of people with aspirations and commitment. It is composed of retirees and people from community societies or organizations. This organization is called "Roads", and in giving it this name, they wish to put across the message that we must walk our roads, rather than asking other people to walk them for us. One must walk the roads by himself. That is why they named the organization "Roads". They have recently organized for the so-called "non-engaged youth" a workshop on the way of thinking, hoping to tell these young people who cannot find a job that it does not matter if they do not perform well academically as long as they have an enterprising factor or spirit in them; they are also taught what concentration or focusing means, and then they are earnestly advised to change their mindset and to go for a positive life; they are taught to tell themselves that they must walk this road, that they must create this road, that nobody can help them and they should not expect society to have the duty to take care of them. It is only with this perspective that they can succeed.

This workshop has just started its first class last week, and everyone feels very encouraging. They are band three students who are the poorest of the poor performers in schools, but I feel that they stand a very high chance of success. I hope that the Government can provide more support to them. We are not talking about helping the poor. But if we do not adopt this approach to address the problem faced by these young people, and if we only just hold them in our arms and give them more "candies", it would only turn out that all their teeth would be decayed and they would know nothing at the end of the day. I hope that we can adopt this attitude in providing assistance to the disadvantaged.

Deputy President, there is one more aspect that I wish to talk about. It has now been three years since the introduction of the Capacity Building Mileage Programme (CBMP) in which I have some involvement. Our objective then

was to make up for the inadequacies of the retraining scheme on which we have spent a huge sum of money. How does the CBMP provide motivation to people's life? The key is to encourage them to have aspirations in life, and to develop a positive mind and a sense of humour towards life. Every year when I attend their graduation ceremony and see the 300 to 400 trainees in the hall, I can feel that their happiness is some very true, genuine feelings from their heart. They said, "We have never ever felt so happy.". This is purely a revelation of a positive frame of mind. I think more funding should be provided in this regard.

Finally, Deputy President, I wish to talk about the importance of being caring and supportive. I have put forward proposals to the Panel on Welfare Services in this regard. For people like us who are engaged in social work, we should always work from the heart, instead of doing charity work purely as an administrative procedure. Yesterday, I mentioned a book written by Ms GU Mei, and it did strike a chord in me when I read a particular paragraph of it, because with just a little bit of pure loving care from her, Ms Josephine SIAO Fong-fong was led through the difficulties in her life and it also enabled her to positively face up to all the troubles and problems of mortals. She has since created many rainbows for herself, and also for other people. Now that she has lived the best part of her life and looking back, she feels that what has touched her heart most deeply was that little bit of pure loving care that Ms GU Mei had tendered to her in Taiwan in the early days when they were striving for their goals together. Ms Josephine SIAO Fong-fong was only 12 at that time.

I think we should all be inspired by this story in that we should always show a little bit of loving care to other people. All you need to do is to change your vicious tongue, your indifference and your cold eyes into some loving care and it could touch the heart of another person for his lifetime, inspiring him to strive for improvement and develop a positive mind. I would like to make this point as my opinion on the future development of social welfare today, so that each and every one of us here, especially every one of those with a high social status, will awaken to the need to show more care and support. Thank you, Deputy President.

MR PATRICK LAU (in Cantonese): Deputy President, good community planning is vital to keeping Hong Kong's environment clean. Japan's achievement in community planning has been outstanding, and it is worthy reference for us. Let me cite smoking as the simplest example. In order to protect the public from being affected by second-hand smoke while upholding the

freedom of smokers, we may begin from community building to minimize the conflict between the two. More importantly, the environment of the community must be kept clean to avoid clean air from being polluted by second-hand smoke. With the introduction of anti-smoking legislation, there will definitely be more people smoking in the streets.

Let us take a look at Japan. We can see that every street in Japan is equipped with a ventilation system specially designed for smokers. We can also find something like a refuse bin in the streets or squares of the country, and they are actually ventilation facilities. Pedestrians can stop before these ventilation bins and exhale second-hand smoke into the bins. The smoke will immediately be extracted or flushed. As a result, the smoke will not spread everywhere in the streets and the air can be kept clean, thus minimizing the impact of second-hand smoke on environmental hygiene, and giving people the impression of a clean city.

It is very important for the Government to come up with forward-looking policies in order to keep Hong Kong's community environment clean. Therefore, I hold that the Government should strive to work with the District Councils to complete all the unfinished community facilities and, based on the family concept, encourage women to work in the local community to facilitate them in taking care of their children who are still studying as well as the elderly living in the community. By building a family-friendly community, everyone can go to restaurants, shopping and exercising in the local community.

As regards welfare affairs, I have stated before that the Government should, in examining the issue of legislating for a minimum wages, jointly review the social security system in general to avoid conflicts between policies. Here I would like to say a few words on the existing Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) policy. As the economy has already turned for the better, I think the Government should bring the CSSA amounts back to the levels prior to the reduction to provide needy families with proper support. In particular, the old, the vulnerable, and the disabled are most in need of social security. The Government should ensure that they are given adequate support to prevent them from feeling abandoned by the community so that the goal of social harmony can be achieved.

On the other hand, the Government must review the CSSA system while examining in parallel its population and immigration policies to be

complemented by policy initiatives emphasizing the importance of community planning. The best community planning should actually gauge the mobility and changes of the community population more closely. In order to achieve self-sufficiency within the community, residents should be able to work and meet their needs for the basic necessities of life in the local community to avoid transportation problems arising from travelling long distances. Therefore, through sound community planning, the Government should create job opportunities such as lawn mowing, flower watering, street cleansing, provision of home maintenance services for the old and the vulnerable, operation of co-operatives, and so on, in the community. These jobs can give CSSA recipients who are capable of working opportunities to participate in serving the community and enhance their self-esteem while reducing the burden on social welfare expenditure. I so submit. Thank you, Deputy President.

MS MARGARET NG (in Cantonese): Deputy President, I wish to talk about animal abuse on behalf of the Civic Party because a lot of people in the Civic Party love animals. Regarding making amendments to the bill on the prevention of animal abuse this time, many have written to the Civic Party to present their opinions.

Deputy President, the amendments to the bill on the prevention of animal abuse are proposed by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD). Actually, the FEHD is closely related to hygiene. Animal abuse in Hong Kong is in fact very serious, and the Government has underestimated the issue. During the scrutiny of the bill, many organizations have pointed this out. Of course, many people would not like to note those ugly scenes, thus resulting in inadequate strength and policy to tackle the matter. Therefore, we have raised a lot of opinions on the bill. Nevertheless, the most important point relates to penalties, which the Department is reluctant to consider. We are aware that this bill has increased the penalties but it is far from enough. What is particularly important is that the authorities only treat animal abuse as something ordinary and trivial, thereby considering that raising the penalties already suffices. However, what I want to say is the issue must be addressed squarely. At present, animal abuse is not simply placing chickens and ducks in cages which are too small. Some animals are subject to very serious abuse. Thus, the authorities should separate the issue into two levels: for ordinary animal abuse, ordinary penalties should be imposed; but if the cases are particularly serious or are repeated offences, tougher penalties should apply.

Of particular importance is that the authorities should have a comprehensive review of legislation pertaining to animal abuse because when we enacted the ordinance on the prevention of animal abuse, we were in no way targeting the present situation. What is animal abuse? Under what circumstances should penalties be imposed? What are the penalties? What criminal offences are there? All these warrant a comprehensive review. However, the FEHD seems to have adopted an attitude of coping with the voices now for the time being. Nevertheless, Deputy President, regarding animal abuse, there is at least an ordinance to amend but, when it comes to the handling of animal carcasses which is equally serious, there is no regulation whatsoever.

At present, many pet owners are unwilling to dispose of the carcasses of their pets. They just abandon them in the landfills. Actually, this is not a proper way of disposal. Therefore, some services for the disposal of animal carcasses have emerged, including cremation, and the animal carcasses are deemed disposed of upon cremation. These services are in fact very popular but there is no regulation at all at the moment. How do they dispose of these animal carcasses by cremation? Many people have no idea. We have received a lot of complaints from the public, saying that some people burn the animal carcasses in incinerators in factories in Tai Kok Tsui. Such actions would generate some obnoxious odour, and people in the vicinity would feel that the odour has brought about adverse effects. Actually, apart from odour, such cremation also emits smoke which will also affect health. Thus, the Secretary should address this problem as such activities will be on the rise.

However, those people who lodged their complaints with us told us that filing their complaints with the Government was to no avail. The Government considers that cremation has to do with the air, and since there are toxins in the air, it should be tackled by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD), but the EPD disregards it as the EPD only handles huge incinerators, and small incinerators in industrial buildings have nothing to do with it.

What about the firemen? Since people are burning things in the factory buildings, should enquiries be made with the Fire Services Department (FSD)? However, the FSD also disregarded it because when firemen arrived at the scene between nine to five o'clock, they saw no one burning anything. What about the District Lands Office? Is it improper to cremate animal carcasses in factory buildings? Nevertheless, the District Lands Office also said that when officers arrived, they had not discovered anything. However, these two departments

made their inspections between 9 am and 5 pm, and if they saw nothing during that period, they would not follow up.

What about the FEHD? It turns out that animal abuse may be related to it. As regards the disposal of animal carcasses, since the animals are dead, they have nothing to do with the Department because the FEHD mainly handles human corpses. This is what the FEHD has to deal with. For animal carcasses, Ms Audrey EU told me that the FEHD would not disregard them but would only pick them up and dispose of them in the landfills. Regarding this way of disposing of animal carcasses, there are of course a lot of demerits. I have mentioned them earlier.

Therefore, on this issue, the departments are simply shirking responsibilities, turning a blind eye to some existing problems. In fact, we have touched on this in the various sessions of our debate on this policy address. Mr Frederick FUNG also said earlier that family matters are not addressed by just one or two departments, but regardless of which department is responsible, they should not dodge issues. This is particularly so when it concerns animals. I think the Secretary should come up with a sound solution. We consider that not only animals have rights, but the way society handles and treats pets is also important.

Deputy President, I would also like to talk about domestic violence. Actually, it is not enough to pass the ball to the Secretary because domestic violence involves many departments. Several Members made this point earlier, so I need not repeat here. I just want to say that in this regard, I am particularly concerned about the bill on the prevention of domestic violence. I notice that in this Legislative Session, there is an intention to amend this relevant law, but to what extent can we guarantee that the task can be accomplished within this year? This is still not clear. We asked the same question in the panel but again, there was no clear answer. Even if it will proceed this year, according to what we have seen, the scope for amendment is very narrow, failing to include the family. In the last Legislative Session, the Secretary answered many questions on elderly abuse. Should abuse of elderly — of course, elderly is not tantamount to parents, parents are not necessarily very old, some will not be much older than me — also belong to domestic violence? Many a man in the street will say that they are part of a family, therefore, abuse of parents and abuse of senior parents should belong to domestic violence. In that case, in the Government's view, why should parents not be included in this bill? With the scope being so narrow, we really hope that the Government will relax it a bit. When we

engage in co-operation with organizations, they too consider it very difficult. How can they accept that such amendments by the authorities are taken to mean that amendments have been made? So, we should definitely take a look at this. However, I am all the more concerned about one thing, that is, no matter how the Government amends it, a piece of legislation is just a provision. Unless people can apply it, it will not be of much help to them even if it has been passed into law by the Government.

What is the merit of an ordinance on the prevention of domestic violence? The merit is that applications can be made for an injunction through a very simple civil procedure. Then, first, preventive measures can be taken. Even if something has happened, there can be ways to take action to protect the victims. Nonetheless, even such simple action has to be taken through the Court. To the ordinary people, the Court is something that should be avoided by all means, and they really do not know what they should do. So, the first step is streamlining. Having done that, the second step is to make it easier for the victims to get help, make it easier for them to use such legal procedures. It is only then that a perfect job has been done. The Administration has not mentioned much in this regard. It just said that the victims could apply for legal aid.

We all know that application for legal aid is very slow, and a slow remedy cannot meet an urgency. Thus, how can we co-ordinate with the Legal Aid Department so that those in need can actually get prompt assistance? I know the authorities have enquired with the Department which said that there could be some express procedures at times. Yes, there are such procedures on paper but in fact, can the people really enjoy such services? Moreover, from the experience of many overseas countries, we can see that if the procedures are very simple, even if there are no lawyers to provide legal assistance, the victims themselves can appear in the Court and get the assistance they need, or just get ordinary social services, for example, getting someone to fill in forms for them, explain to them what procedures are involved, bring them to the places concerned. In fact, such services are already adequate and can make it easier for the ordinary affected parties to get legal services, that is, protecting themselves through legal channels. The Secretary should consider these, instead of just paying lip-service and considering the job done.

Moreover, organizations concerned with domestic violence also very much emphasize human rights. Be it overall social policy — or welfare policy — for a few decades since the colonial era, we have been insisting that the family

should be taken as the unit. Generally speaking, this is not wrong because the family is really society's unit, but when conflicts emerge between an individual and his family, and his family is the source of oppression, we cannot say that he must stick with that family. If a family is not treating a woman well, sorry, all we can do is to ask the woman's family to continue to treat her well. There must be harmony in the family, and the Government will not intervene. However, nowadays, women feel that they have to look at this from another angle. As a woman, she has her own rights, so the authorities ultimately have to protect her personal rights. She cannot be made to sacrifice because the family is the most important unit. I believe the Secretary will agree on this. But how can this concept be realized? This is the question. Sometimes, we cannot over-segregate, saying that human rights matters fall into the ambit of the Home Affairs Bureau, not a welfare issue. It would be best for us not to see it that way. If we surely want bliss and harmony in the family, we should consider how such things can be realized practically.

Deputy President, in terms of value and principle, I believe the Secretary will not disagree with most of what I have said today. The question remains how they can be put into practice. I so submit.

MR ANDREW CHENG (in Cantonese): Deputy President, I will speak on the health care aspect on behalf of the Democratic Party.

The health care policy affects people's life, health and livelihood, and it is a policy area that has the greatest impact on the public. However, this policy address which claims to make "Always People First" is silent on the health care policy and services. Also, it has totally evaded the proposal on health care financing and the reform of the health care system which will overhaul the overall health care system. Thus, it really fails to live up to its claim of "Always People First".

As there is a lack of resources for the public health care system, waiting time is exceptionally long. Take psychiatric service as an example. The median waiting time for specialist out-patient service increased from three weeks in 2000-2001 to five weeks in 2004-2005, and the median waiting time for new surgery cases increased from 11 weeks in 2003 to 16 weeks in 2005. The median territory-wide is four months. Deputy President, is a waiting time of four months too long?

With an ageing population, patients suffering from cataract, hypertension and diabetes are on the rise and they are getting younger and younger, so the demand for service has thus increased. Under the current health care system, the Hospital Authority is providing Hong Kong people with 80% to 90% of medical services. With an appropriation of just \$27 billion, it is impossible to cope. Even though a reform of health care financing may trigger contentions, in order to address the existing problems of the health care system and to spare a number of elderly and patients the pain of not getting treatment, this is a subject which has to be faced after all. As the Secretary said, at present, the health care system is in the initial stage of a cancer, the earlier it gets treatment, the better the effect, and the more treatment protocols to choose from. The longer it procrastinates, the fewer the choices and the higher the price.

In the last few years, when the financing proposal was reviewed, the authorities would raise the charges for various medical services. Being a complicated issue, public consultation on and implementation of health care financing take time. If the authorities repeatedly delay the introduction of the proposal in order to ease the pressing issue of inadequate medical services, the Government will at any time after the Chief Executive election in March next year, again resort to increasing charges. Not only will this increase the burden of patients, but also, since our long-standing medical policy has been changed in the absence of a thorough study, and the scope of subsidization has been narrowed to those patients who are unable to pay their medical expenses, patients may be driven to the private health care system, resulting finally in an American-style medical system which is inefficient and unfair. We are most worried that this may complicate the sickness of the health care system, making the prescription of right medication all the more difficult. We also hope that the Secretary can take an honest look at our present demand in respect of health care financing.

On the issue of health care financing, we are gravely worried that, with the Chief Executive Election before us, no matter how seriously ill the health care system is, it has to give way and be put aside. Apparently, before March next year, it is difficult for the Secretary's health care financing reform proposal to be brought to the fore. The situation is the same as the sudden change in stance of the Secretary during the debate on the resumption of the Second Reading of the anti-smoking bill. He said there was still room to study the proposal of setting up smoking rooms, but the actual reason was to minimize obstacles which may have to be faced by the Chief Executive during election. While on the one hand

we are increasing medical charges because we are complaining that we are poor, on the other, money is spent on second-hand smoke which affects the public and smoking rooms which are against our public health policy. We really have to ask the Secretary: Is this not going too far?

The Secretary is a doctor. I believe in his mind, he must have some plans and objectives for medical care policy and health care financing. I still have some respect for the Secretary's past. However, I wish the Secretary could understand that his boss (that is, the Chief Executive) will only be committed to this small circle of 800 — only these 800 people. In respect of public interests and health care financing, the Secretary surely knows better than the Chief Executive. Despite this, can he influence our Chief Executive? Here, in the Legislative Council, as a representative of the Democratic Party, I wish to extend unlimited support to the Secretary on this issue. Nevertheless, how big an effect can this support get in return? I hope the Secretary can understand that under a bad system, a good guy will be forced to do foul (though this is not my wish). *(The buzzer sounded)*

DEPUTY PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Speaking time is up.

MR ANDREW CHENG (in Cantonese): Deputy President, I so submit.

MR VINCENT FANG (in Cantonese): Deputy President, in this session, being the official responsible for the three most controversial issues in Hong Kong, Secretary Dr York CHOW really has very hard times. However, his Policy Bureau certainly does have an unshirkable responsibility to build Hong Kong into a just and caring society. So, though a bit hard, it worths it still.

The policy address has, however, discussed in great length family harmony, and there is no mention of food safety and health affairs. I wonder if this is attributed to the remarks made by the Government that the health care expenditure is expected to increase significantly as a result of the serious population ageing problem in the future, whereby the Government can ill afford to pay without introducing a Goods and Services Tax (GST). And since GST has met with strong opposition from the majority public, nothing more can be said in this regard.

Although I oppose GST, it does not mean that I do not care about the future needs of Hong Kong's health care expenditure. Having served as a member of the Hospital Authority (HA) for six years, I know that it has made great efforts to control internal spending and examine the approaches of public-private partnership in health care services and health care financing, through which the problem of rising health care expenditure brought about by the longer life expectancy of human beings as a result of advances in medicine will be resolved.

While promoting GST, the Financial Secretary advised that the annual health care expenditure will increase from the current \$30-odd billion to \$80-odd billion in 2023 (that is, 17 years later). Here, may I ask the Secretary whether the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau and the HA have really drawn up such a long-term budget for Hong Kong's future medical spending? If so, is it possible to disclose the relevant information to us?

As stated in the Consultation Paper on "Building a Healthy Tomorrow" released by the Bureau last year, provided that the existing medical service delivery model remains unchanged, for every \$100 of revenue received by the Government, more than half will be spent on health care by 2033. And yet, did the findings indicate the amount of financial provision allocated for health care if the recommendations contained therein are implemented?

The Liberal Party and I have all along supported the implementation of health care financing options with a sufficient safety net, with a view to relieving the financial burden of the Government in this respect and raising the standard of our medical services, which is also supported by the Legislative Council and the majority general public. As advised by the Secretary earlier on, a consultation on health care financing will be carried out in the second quarter of next year. It is hoped that this consultation will not last for as long as nine months!

While the progress of introducing health care financing has been slow, the implementation of central slaughtering of live poultry is very expeditious as the Bureau has advised that the Poultry Slaughtering Plant Bill will be introduced within the current Legislative Session. I believe the Secretary will certainly say that the Government has considered, after the outbreak of avian flu in 1997, replacing the existing mode of selling live poultry with central slaughtering. However, if it is required by law that all live poultry must be sent to the central

slaughtering plant in the future, may I ask what if the response to the tender exercise of central slaughtering is unsatisfactory, for instance, only one or no consortium bidding for it? Will the proposal be implemented anyway, or will it be undertaken by the Government in the end?

Deputy President, the Government often strangles the survival of many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from the moral high ground of public health, instead of taking proactive actions to help the SMEs and members of the trade to find a way out. Take the example of central slaughtering, members of the trade said that they would join hands to bid if regional slaughtering was implemented. The Bureau, however, responded that central slaughtering was highly automatic with a very different method of slaughter, so the existing live poultry operators simply do not have the necessary ability or skills of operation.

I was gravely disappointed with the Bureau's response. What actually is meant by transformation or trade switch? Hong Kong people and the SMEs have been renowned for their great adaptability and flexibility, it is therefore hoped that the Bureau will reconsider the proposed central slaughtering before introducing the legislation into the Legislative Council.

Although members of the trade found the amount of compensation payable to them for the phasing out of local pig farms acceptable, but their business have to suspend anyway. Since local pig farms currently account for one fifth of the total market share, why do we not help the local pig farmers to continue their operation in the Mainland so as to supply the local market with live pigs continuously?

During the Liberal Party's visit to Beijing last month, I proposed to the Ministry of Commerce that the current market shares of local pig farms be given to Hong Kong operators who are interested to invest in pig farms in the Mainland. The Ministry of Commerce has requested further information on this for follow-up. I hope that the Bureau and other relevant government departments will enhance communication with the Mainland in this respect, with a view to providing the affected trade with an opportunity for continued operation. On the other hand, the licence surrender policy implemented for the live poultry and live pigs farming trades has also failed to cater adequately for the needs of such affected trades as the transport operators, who act as the middlemen, the local pork buyers, fodder traders, and so on. I hope that the Secretary will look again into their concerns.

Whenever there are negative reports about food products, the industry concerned will be dealt a heavy blow. Take the malachite green incident that happened last year as an example, the business of freshwater fish traders remained poor during these few months and it took them nearly half a year to recover 70% to 80% of their business. However, some relatively weak traders have already been driven out of business. Furthermore, the import of live chickens will be suspended when there is any suspected outbreak of avian flu, thereby leaving no live chickens for sale on the market.

Therefore, traders of vegetable, fruit, fish, meat and chicken do hope that the Bureau will duly perform its role as the gatekeeper at source. Apart from the introduction of an approved supplier scheme, various control points should also enhance their efforts in intercepting food products being imported into Hong Kong from the Mainland without official authorization.

The Secretary advised that it is very difficult to exercise control at source because there are too many control points between the Mainland and Hong Kong. However, with established customs clearance procedures for goods, I hope that the Bureau will consider the feasibility of electronic submission of cargo manifests in conjunction with other government departments, say, the Customs and Excise Department, in order to step up surveillance.

Insofar as minimizing the loss of various trades is concerned, just as I said in this Council long time ago, it is hoped that an emergency fund can be set up by the Bureau to provide assistance to the trades in case problems arise in the food industry. At that time, the Secretary responded by asking "where does money come from". I certainly do not wish to see money coming from GST. This Council held an adjournment debate on this topic in July last year, which suggested that if the business of any trade is affected by the Government's policy, for example, no fish is being sold as a result of the malachite green incident, no chicken is being sold as a result of a suspected outbreak of avian flu, or a massive recall of food products found to be poisonous, the fund will provide assistance to the affected trades by, say, waiving the rentals for the period when business was suspended, or providing low-interest loans and retraining subsidies.

I know that some members of the trade have yet to pay for the outstanding fish stall rentals for the period when the import of fish was suspended. They have requested me time and again to relay their concerns to the Secretary and seek waiver of rentals because, though heavy losses were suffered during the

suspension of business, such expenses as staff salaries were still paid. Here, I would like to relay again the industry concerns to the Secretary, and it is hoped that further consideration will be given.

I so submit. Thank you, Deputy President.

MR LEUNG KWOK-HUNG (in Cantonese): I know that my speech last time made someone pray. Speaking of prayers, I do not know whether that person prayed for me, or just for himself.

However, there is an alternative — buying indulgences. Before the French Revolution, many people would, after doing something bad, purchase an indulgence in order to remit their sins. The Pope would grant an indulgence on which wrongful deeds could be recorded. Why do I talk about all this? It is not so much because I hold any strong grudges. I just think that instead of saying any prayers, the person should seek remission of his sin. Of course, it is not so good either for one to remit one's sin by obtaining an indulgence. It is of course very important that a modern government, one which claims to uphold "governance for the people", should do some self-examination or even say a prayer when faced with criticisms. And, it is even a virtue to pray for them.

(THE PRESIDENT resumed the Chair)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung, I must remind you that this is not the time for any discussions on indulgences or prayers. I note that you were absent for the past two days. You are present only today. I must tell you that the policy area of this debate session is "food safety and environmental hygiene, health and welfare".

MR LEUNG KWOK-HUNG (in Cantonese): I see. My mentioning of indulgences will lead me to a discussion on social welfare.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): In that case, please proceed to social welfare as quickly as possible.

MR LEUNG KWOK-HUNG (in Cantonese): Actually, we do not need to behave like people in the ancient times who would buy an indulgence to remit their sins after doing something bad. A government is duty-bound to ensure that the citizens or people under its rule can be free from starvation and fear. Social welfare, as a product of the modern age, is an important segment that realizes the rights of the masses in society, namely equality and the right to equal opportunities of development.

Is there any mention of all this in the Chief Executive's policy address. I do not think there is any. I have read the policy address very carefully indeed. Although I am not interested in it at all, I have still gone through it. But I cannot see any mention of all this, and the only thing I can see is a \$30 million scheme to help the poor. The amount is just \$30 million, and there are 1.04 million poor people in Hong Kong. There will just be \$30 for each, which is not even enough for them to buy a Mark Six Lottery ticket. How can such a policy address answer the needs of society? One of the most outdated concepts about social welfare is alms-giving — not aiding the poor but simply alms-giving.

I therefore think that Secretary Dr York CHOW, who is responsible for the social welfare part of the policy address, has indeed turned in a blank answer sheet. It is especially interesting to note that since the Government treated assistance for the poor as a herbal patch, it has been acting like a herbalist, hoisting a cloth banner with these words: "Panacea for Poverty". What has it administered as remedies? Nothing. Many elderly people in my constituency have complained to me that there are inadequate health care services for them, but they are not yet old enough to apply for the "fruit grant", so they do not know what to do. Some elderly people do not want to rely on the Government, and the "fruit grant" is not enough to support their living. Is the Government really unaware of all this? Is it really unaware that many people have advanced the idea of an "old age pension"? This is no new topic at all. There were already many debates on it as early as the time of Chris PATTEN, and mandatory provident fund schemes were introduced at the end. However, mandatory provident fund schemes are unable to solve the problems faced by the elderly. Why? It is because elderly people do not have any jobs. Other people, such as women, also do not have any jobs. These days, all of us are saying that women must be respected. Mother's Day and the International Women's Day on 8 March, in particular, are widely celebrated. People all over the world claim that women are respected.

I have said many times that women constitute half of the world's population. One of my favourite poets once remarked, "Without mothers' breasts, there will be nothing in this world." His words are of course a bit of an artistic overstatement. The real message is that if there are no women to reproduce and raise their offspring, the world as we know it cannot possibly continue to exist.

People who oppose the establishment of an "old age pension scheme" or who do not treat the idea seriously are in fact refusing to look after all the women who have worked so hard to raise their children. It is because they do not take into account the fact that these women have all been working hard for society, though they do not have a job or work for any capitalists. If these women choose to look after the children of others, they may be counted in as part of the workforce. Do Members not agree that this is very cruel? When people cannot find any jobs and thus cannot support their mothers, what can they do?

I have recently taken part in many activities for the introduction of an "old age pension". Secretary Dr York CHOW, have you ever received all those information? Have you ever made any replies? Float parades have been organized by many civil organizations to publicize the new system. Have you ever reported to your leader or supervisor that a situation has occurred? Actually, it should all be like shopping in the "Ladies' Street". Even though one does not want to buy anything, one should still take a look and do some bargaining. That way, one can make others happy.

No, others have told him that that will not work. And, what has he been saying these days? He has been saying that the situation will be very serious if elderly people do not have any money for medical treatment in the future. For this reason, Financial Secretary Henry TANG has joined all the discussions — this is actually outside his portfolio. The Secretary should be responsible for this policy area. Has the Secretary told him that there is not enough money? Just now, when I asked the Secretary whether he had obtained a copy of that report, he could not give a sure answer. Financial Secretary Henry TANG once asked us, "Where will all the money come from?" I have also heard this question before. Many elderly people have also asked me the same question. They must see the doctor and travel around, so they wonder where all the money will come from. They must pay separate fees for drugs, so they wonder where all the money will come from. They really do not know where all the money will come from.

However, our top-ranking government official instead questioned us where all the money would come from if we did not agree to the introduction of a sales tax. He claimed that without any money, it would be impossible to offer any treatment to patients. This sounded like a casual remark, but he did not realize the consequences. What was his implied message? He was in fact asking, "If people do not pay any sales tax to the Government, how can it help the elderly? How can it establish any 'old age pension'? How can it provide any health care services?" This is downright deception. Had he not made all these remarks in this Chamber, I would have asked Mr Ronny TONG, "Are these remarks some kind of intimidation? Blackmail? He is in fact saying that beware of the consequences if you do not give him what he wants." Such remarks cannot be accepted. It is downright political deception. It is certainly not against any law to say so, though.

In front of so many people and in this very Chamber of ours, he dared to say something like that to us. He was actually telling all of us who supported the establishment of an "old age pension" and the provision of comprehensive elderly welfare to "shut up". Nothing like this would have happened if they had not asked for the introduction of a Goods and Services Tax (GST). Secretary, I know that you are not as high-ranking as Financial Secretary Henry TANG, but you need not be afraid. We will back you up, so you can just speak honestly. Is this really the case? Have you ever told Financial Secretary Henry TANG that you really cannot make it? Do you think you are his subordinate? Have you ever told him that since Hong Kong does not have any money, you dare not put forward a budget of \$300 billion? Have you ever done so? If no, where has Financial Secretary Henry TANG obtained such statistics? You are the only ones who can stop the introduction of GST. The well-being of elderly people will all depend on you people. I must advise anyone who does not oppose the introduction of GST to beware, in very much the same way as I told Mr Donald TSANG to beware the other day — but no one laughs today.

Therefore, in my speech, I must clarify one point. What is your attitude towards these two major problems? As a professional, as a Bureau Director, you must realize that you are not accountable to Financial Secretary Henry TANG (though he is one rank higher than you). You are accountable to the person who is one rank higher than Financial Secretary Henry TANG — Donald TSANG. I very much hope that today, you can tell all Members why an "old age pension" will not be considered and why nothing about health care financing has been mentioned since the publication of the Harvard Report. No one is

trying to bar you from introducing health care financing. And, even a "mandatory health care fund" was once mentioned (certainly not by the incumbent Secretary, though). The idea is to require every person to contribute 1% of his income. Married men whose wives are not working must contribute a further 1%. That way, health care services can be provided. But all this has been put aside. Actually, the matter is very simple. The whole problem actually lies with Mr TUNG Chee-hwa — Mrs FAN, I have not deviated from the question. Others have developed their health care services with a view to inducing foreigners to patronize their services. The fundamentals of our health care system are very solid. We often claim that our health care services are one of the best in Asia, and we certainly do not compare any less favourably with Singapore. If there is really a need to do so, we may develop our health care services into an industry. We may thus make some money or build a platform. That way, we may earn some money through the provision of services. Have you ever thought about this? This is not my idea. I heard the idea from an old man in a bistro cafe. The old man kept on criticizing Mr TUNG Chee-hwa at that time, and after a while, he started to chide Mr Donald TSANG. Seeing this, I said to him, "Don't criticize him any more. Let me criticize him in the meetings of the Legislative Council. You are just wasting your energy now." Hence, I have made these remarks today.

The old man asked, "Are the two Chief Executives all fools? Even in Cuba, this is already in full swing. Cuba is a very poor country, and I hear that it is suffering immensely as a result of American sanction. But it is also doing so, isn't it?" We in this Chamber also feel very miserable, for we have to shoulder a very heavy burden. A government must be able to handle complicated matters with great ease. Mr LAU Kong-wah frequently talks about the Prince of Wales Hospital in great detail. Actually, Mr LAU Kong-wah can quickly join your Policy Bureau. For example, he may be seconded for two months. That way, he will be able to set up a platform for providing better health care services to Hong Kong people and all those willing to pay. Then, our services can be further developed. Secretary Dr York CHOW, I really want to ask you via the President whether you have ever thought about this. Do you still want to wait?

I also heard the old man say, "He said that he would certainly do so." I asked him why he thought so. He replied, "He hasn't asked whether LI Ka-shing will do it. If LI Ka-shing says yes, all things can then be finalized." I immediately understood everything and was suddenly enlightened. Has the

Government asked all consortia whether they are interested, whether they will develop a medical city? But, of course, please not give us another Cyberport and property development project. Have you done so? You must give an answer. Does he think that this is still the time of closed-door politics?

Therefore, the path you advocate for health care services will lead you nowhere. Many people also say that the path I have taken will lead me nowhere. But I would instead say that the path you are taking will lead you nowhere. You have not given any thoughts to it, right? Why have you not done so? Why should you do some thinking? It is because people must use their brains, and as a government official, you must not do your job simply by sitting at your desk. The key lies in our Government lacking the courage to use its reserves of a thousand billion dollars to make one thing happen. It always asks others whether they will do it. Small and medium enterprises naturally will not do it, neither will those who are a bit richer than others. Am I correct? They must of course ask LI Ka-shing whether he will do it. But he simply replies, "Let me think about it first." It is because his CK Life Sciences is not doing quite so well. Buddy, you must not deceive Hong Kong people. Are you going to do it anyway? Are you going to wait until Guangzhou has done it? Or, are you going to wait until Shanghai has also done it? Never mind, however, because Mr CHEN Liangyu has already fallen.

You must not behave like this. You frequently ask us where all the money will come from. I have told you that there will be plenty of money as long as there is no collusion between the Government and business, as long as Hong Kong people are not made to wait indefinitely, as long as they are not required to wait until LI Ka-shing decides to participate in the financing after making arrangements for his stocks and shares. Or, perhaps, just let me tell you something to enable you to claim the credit. You may ask several consortia to do it together, so as to avoid any further disputes. This is the first point.

The second point concerns poverty. Many people have told me, "'Long Hair', my home village is very poor, but we do not need any help from you." Secretary Dr York CHOW, I know that you often have meals at Yung Kee Restaurant in Central. Someone has told me this. Have you ever been to this restaurant? I am talking about the one in Wellington Street. Around eleven o'clock every night, several elderly persons will rush to the pavement opposite Yung Kee. Who gets there first will be able to collect all the empty cans. How do I know this? One day, after a meeting, as I went out into the street after eating a bowl of wun ton noodle, I met these elderly people. So, I asked

them why they were sweating all over. They told me, "Mr LEUNG, we must collect all those empty cans." I said, "Why? There are empty cans all around. You can get as many as you like." They replied, "No, you are wrong. If we are late to get here, there will be nothing left."

Buddy, there is honestly no need for me to take you to any local communities. Even in the most prosperous areas, there is such an activity — the scavenging of cartons. Let me tell you that this is a true story. They all walked uphill along Wellington Street. One of them pointed at a distant location, saying that it was her home. I guessed it was on the far end of Wellington Street. I then said to her, "Old lady, the job is too taxing for you. You should stop scavenging." She told me that she would not go scavenging in Wan Chai because the costs were much too high to go there so late at night. Even such an old lady was aware of this, that is, the concept of opportunity costs. I asked her how much she could get by scavenging every evening. She replied that it could be \$9 at most, or even \$5.

Under our very system, the kind of poverty we want to eradicate can be found right on the busy street outside that "canteen" for the upper-middle classes. Therefore, you can no longer claim that you are not aware of any poverty situation. Why? In a modern society, you can no longer hide in a private world like an ancient emperor who had a harem of concubines. Buddy, you must go out every day. Do not tell me that Donald TSANG will not go out. He too will eat at "Ah Yat Abalone Restaurant". The same phenomenon can also be found outside this restaurant. Every time when I walk past that ditch — by the way, the places around it are very filthy — I will see many scavengers. Do not tell me that you are not aware of this. Therefore, the problem is that instead of trying to solve the problem, you ask us where all the money will come from. I now give you the answer. The money has to come from the one thousand billion dollars collected from all Hong Kong people. You may make deductions here and there and resort to different ways of computation, but I must still talk about this one thousand billion dollars. This sum of money is collected from Hong Kong people. Rich people must pay profits tax after making profits. But should workers working for the rich men also pay profits tax?

The money belongs to all Hong Kong people. You must stop saying that you have to watch over this sum of money, and that poor people do not pay any tax. James TIEN once said to me, "Actually, poor people do not pay any tax." I immediately told him, "Are you out of your mind? When poor people cannot

earn any money, how can the rich pay any profits tax?" I have said many times that property speculation is rampant and everybody must pay an invisible land tax. Every time when we eat out, we will have to pay tax. There is also an invisible tax for mortgage payments. There are the stamp duty and many other kinds of tax. All the tax proceeds go to your pocket, Buddy. All these are the tax types you should be talking about (but they are not related to you, so I must stop referring to them for the time being lest Mrs FAN may reprimand me). All these are indirect taxes. As a result of your present argument, I must say to all the poor people, "You are already dying. But it doesn't matter because if you can cut a meal a day, you may be able to survive somehow." This is no different from Mr TUNG's advice that people should eat moon-cakes, just the same as the story about how starving people were advised to eat meat. You are a medical doctor, so you will certainly tell people to eat pork congee. There is no problem with that. But the question is that poor people simply have no money, simply have no money to maintain their physical health. So, it is impossible for anyone to tell them to eat meat instead.

What then should be done now? You must make good use of the money we have saved and establish a mechanism to ensure stable revenue. All will then be very simple and we need only to look at the actual situation in society. Hong Kong is booming now, but its wealth gap problem is almost the most serious in Asia. Am I correct? There is a huge difference between the income of the top percentile and that of the bottom percentile. Our *per capita* income (calculated on the basis of bank deposits) should be some US\$20,000. But, Buddy, you still want to take advantage of the poor people. You say, "I want to set up another stove." This is just a small stove and many people will surely be victimized. Many people criticize me, "'Long Hair', why do you always target on the rich?" This is not quite the case. The only reason is that rich people have money. Buddy, it is just because only rich people can earn money. All present economic statistics are like this. Only that Henry TANG will look at only those statistics he likes. But why does he not also look at this datum, the datum that shows an ever-widening income difference. The situation faced by wage earners is just the same. I have already mentioned this point, so I shall make no repetition now. But how can you say to them, "Since you are all dying, why don't you pay a little bit more." This is not acceptable, not acceptable at all.

I can tell you that if things continue like this, GST will be turned into the "Government Suicide Tax". It will surely die. Why? Mrs Margaret

THATCHER was once very powerful and she was returned by democratic elections. But when she sought to introduce a poll tax, she encountered the same situation. What I mean is that when she asked all people to pay tax

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung, the issue of taxation was already discussed in the previous two debate sessions. And, the Financial Secretary also attended the debates

MR LEUNG KWOK-HUNG (in Cantonese): OK, I see

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): But you could not attend the meeting and now you want to raise

MR LEUNG KWOK-HUNG (in Cantonese): In that case, it is alright.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): The government officials concerned are not here to answer your questions.

MR LEUNG KWOK-HUNG (in Cantonese): There is no one to answer my questions. Fine. In that case, please tell him for me that poor people must not be made to pay any taxes for the purpose of changing this society and improving its image. Am I correct?

You simply cannot ask a maid to contribute any money for repairing and beautifying the firewood storeroom of your mansion. Now, you cannot give a facelift to your house and everyone entering your mansion will criticize you, "What's wrong? Your house is in such bad shape." As a result, you say to your maids, "Things really can't go on like this. Why don't we do something to beautify our mansion? But since you are one of the household members, you may as well contribute some money for embellishing the gates?" Can you say something like this? Buddy, do you agree that you cannot possibly say so? Therefore, what is so difficult about politics? What are politics all about? To

put it simply, I would say no one think that this is possible at all. This is against justice. What is justice? According to the Bible, justice means that poor people must not be subjected to any further exploitation. Only injustice will lead to something like this. Many of them are believers, so why do they still do something like this? I therefore want to tell Donald TSANG that as a government official, he must bear in mind that the problems faced by Hong Kong now are political, rather than economic, in nature — Mr Jasper TSANG was certainly correct in pointing this out. The reason is that we have amassed huge sums of money. The problem now is how the wealth should be distributed. The first round of distribution is not satisfactory enough, but should we do some fine tuning in the second round of distribution, Buddy? But instead of doing any fine tuning, they have even tuned in to a different programme.

I once staged a protest in the Mainland, and I was even arrested and jailed once. When I was in prison, I wrote the following poem: "The masses left in angst, as the coterie of four hundred 'personages' elected the Chief Executive, sharing the loot. The hundred billion dollars saved the market, but the common people were left to perish. Behind the twinkling lights of the city, lies the anguish of ten thousand families." Today, I must replace one word in this poem. I must replace the word "four" by "eight". I therefore think that he should tell all Hong Kong people that although the current Government was returned by 800 people, it is actually supposed to serve 8 million people. Lawyers often tell me that justice should not only be done, but should also be seen to be done. Is this the case now? Now, we can see that justice is not being done in what he has been doing. Should he do something like this?

Speaking of health care, I must point out that I receive a wide variety of complaints from my constituents practically every day. What are these complaints mainly about? As a result of the haphazard changes introduced by them, elderly people now find it very difficult to access any means of public transport, and the fares are also very expensive. They are thus in a state of constant anxiety — this means that I may not have killed a man, but he did die because of me. Policies are formulated by many different departments, and this is nothing but the trick of government officials. They always try to introduce changes here and there, just to show that they are doing their jobs. Maybe, I should not lecture you on so many cardinal principles. In brief, you must stir up as little trouble as possible and refrain from treating elderly people as guinea pigs, Buddy. They have just been speaking their minds. There is no need for

any confidentiality. Politics in Hong Kong are no grand politics. Secretary Dr York CHOW, you must bear in mind that you should not introduce any meaningless reforms if you know only too well that nothing will come out of them. If you insist on doing so, you will only make elderly people panic and plunge everybody into a state of constant anxiety.

Well, speaking of the art of being a government official, I once offered a piece of humble advice to the Chief Executive (and the Secretary, too). The advice was about a poem called "Looking On During the Cutting of Wheat" by BAI Juyi. The sight of others' toil and sweat during the cutting of wheat reminded him of his annual stipend of 300 *dans* of grain and also the surplus food he had every year. He thus said, "Ashamed was I at this thought, and will this for the rest of my life remember." I am already tired of this poem, for I have referred to it many times.

But I still want to talk about another poem, one which was written by SU Shi. SU Shi was of course not so emotive in language. He wrote, "Kept by official duties, I could not be home early on New Year's Eve. Pen in hand, I could not help sobbing and feeling sorry for the prisoner. Shamelessly, this ordinary man had broken the law just to pilfer some tiny rations. I have likewise missed many opportunities of retirement for the sake of my meagre stipend. All men, wise or not, are just trying to earn a living. Who could release this man temporarily? I was ashamed to have let all past sages down.". Actually, the poem is very simple. He saw someone who had broken the law. Because he could not go home early, he came across someone who had broken the law. He saw that the man had committed the crime simply because he was very hungry and weak in self-control. As Members probably know, at that time, people could not reconstruct the case in the same way as we do it in our police stations nowadays, that is, as what we see in Westerns, so he hastened to write this poem. I now find that my situation is quite similar to his. It is all about earning a living. Have we ever paused for a moment to consider whether we have in any way let all the past sages down?

There are 1 million poor people in Hong Kong now. Four hundred thousand of them are poor workers. The situation is exactly the same. I am not saying that they have broken the law. Rather, I just mean that they are treated as criminals, a burden. And, whenever this issue is mentioned, the Government will claim that it has no money to help these useless people, saying, "How can we have so much money?" Buddy, are you saying that they have

never made any contribution to society? Even if they have never made any contribution, I suppose their children should have done so in one way or another. We are all the time talking about social mobility, are we not? But now, he chooses to follow a path of regression, to drive them into desperation. There is no platform for their young children. As I have mentioned before, even when there are no spectacles and plimsolls for children, they still insist that the situation is tolerable and acceptable.

With regard to elderly people, as I have already mentioned, all people, regardless of age and gender, have been affected by your policies. Why? It is because our Government believes in the trickle-down theory. It believes that business tycoons must first be allowed to flourish. Then, some of their profits will trickle down, like coffee. As more and more coffee trickles down, it can be drunk. This was mentioned by Donald TSANG himself when he described others as second-rate analysts. Buddy, so many years have passed. Should he now reconsider whether we should still wait for any "trickles"? This is where the problem lies. I think the whole problem Yes, Mrs FAN has already instructed me not to speak on other issues, and I do not bother to do so anyway. I will just focus on health care, health and social welfare. I am not going to speak on health either because time is running short. But, well, I may perhaps just say a few words. The problem in this regard actually lies with outsourcing, something that has made a total mess of the situation. For instance, they often say that ovitrap are out of order. I have told you many times that such work must not be outsourced, Buddy. Once the work is outsourced, there will be no quality control. And, you have also failed to monitor contractors and the wages they pay. All this accounts for the messy situation.

Therefore, in the end, all of us must gather here to discuss a policy address that shows no concern for Hong Kong people. All is just for the 800 people engaged in "parallel imports" or "smuggling". These 800 people are free to sail to the high seas, receiving all the attention. But the rest of the 6 million people are completely ignored. This is entirely incorrect. This policy address is actually the election platform of Donald TSANG, the Chief Executive — you may also be involved; you may have advised him, but he did not listen to you. Just take a look at the things he has handed out. CHEUNG Man-kwong has been the fiercest critic, so some money is given to early childhood education. Things are not so good for Arthur LI because he has been scolding people and there is a need to "disable" him. But then, billions of dollars have been spent for the purpose.

What has been done so far is just to pour water onto those places that are on fire. Such fire-fighting is meant not to address Hong Kong people's pressing concerns, but to answer the needs of those sectors having votes in the functional constituencies. Buddy, do you not agree that this is corrupt, very corrupt? And, there are also the talks about affinity. The essence of such a theory is that if a person does not have any vote, no one will ever look at him and he will be left to perish. Do you have any group votes? Mr LAU Kong-wah certainly does. If yes, he will immediately give you what you want. All is so simple. However, it is a pity that you have treated the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions that way. Buddy, you should give it what it wants right away. You have plunged them into the present situation and they simply do not know how to deal with you. Immediately after your assumption of office, you told Miss CHAN that you would consider the setting of a minimum wage Members must take note — Donald TSANG just will not honour his promises. After such a long time, he has not yet honour his promise. Buddy, you must do something to pacify them. How about making some sort of mutual concessions? Surely, you do not want to "blow the whistle" of obedience like the Communists and then ask her to settle the whole thing, do you? It is very difficult to support such a Chief Executive. Anyone who supports him will surely die.

Therefore, I think I have actually brought along many poems, but since I have got into the mood of speaking, let me just put them aside I think that in our discussions, we must adopt one viewpoint. We must treat the whole thing as politics. The policy address is all about a trial of strength among different social classes, about the distribution of wealth in such a trial. This applies to the distribution of both social resources and public resources. The Chief Executive knows very well that the problems with the two power companies and the town gas company have reached a very critical point. But has he ever told us how the problems can be solved? The time for interim negotiations is fast approaching, Buddy. I simply do not know what they are up to. Will there be any renewal of agreement for these companies? Will there be any reduction of benefits? Everything will make people very angry, and all the time, they say that there are not yet any solutions. What are we going to do?

All the areas within your portfolio, including welfare, health and health care, are matters of "life and death". You are sitting here today, but the Chief Executive has told you not to do anything. He has told you to do nothing, but

listen. You cannot possibly tell the truth because you must strictly follow all those rules. Therefore, how can you talk about any accountability? You have no way to redress your grievances, if any.

Therefore, President, I do not think that we have any reasons for expressing any thanks to the Chief Executive for this policy address. Why should we express any thanks? The Governor has already gone back to his home. Members were all appointed by him in the past, so they must of course thank him. Buddy, he was the master, right? This policy address is not written by Mrs FAN, so why should we thank him? Therefore, I will not thank him for the policy address. I think I must tear it apart. I will do it right now. Why am I tearing the English version apart? Because I have torn many copies of the policy address apart. Buddy, I have already torn apart or burnt all copies of the Chinese version in my possession. Therefore, I have no alternative. Behold, Honourable Members, this is a copy of the English version. I am going to tear a copy of the English version apart for the first time. There are just too many problems to talk about. I must tear it into pieces. *(The buzzer sounded)*

Thank you.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Does any other Member wish to speak?

MR ALBERT CHAN (in Cantonese): President, in this session we are mainly discussing health and welfare matters. The issue of welfare relates to the hardships and poverty faced by many Hong Kong citizens in living.

A phenomenon emerging in many communities, including numerous housing estates in the New Territories West and many of those in Tung Chung and Tin Shui Wai, and so on, is that 20% of their resident families are receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA). Dependency on CSSA has gradually become a structural economic problem in some areas or regions. The reasons for the large number of people living on CSSA are not merely high levels of unemployment in certain periods. Failure in overall economic structuring, errors by the Government in its handling of wage issues, poor strategy for economic development resulting in unemployment and insufficient care for an ageing population are all forcing entire families to completely rely on CSSA.

Within the context of a community, the proportion of 20% to 25% of CSSA recipient families among all is an enormously high percentage, and it has been the case for many years. For instances, Yat Tung Estate in Tung Chung and Tin Heng Estate and Tin Yuet Estate in Tin Shui Wai have all maintained such a percentage. No improvement will be achieved in regard to this problem if we only rely on the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau to deal with it. The Bureau can make slight improvements administration-wise in relation to CSSA co-ordination and adjustment within the CSSA application process for recipient families. It will be utterly impractical, however, to rely on the sole effort of the Bureau to lift recipient families out of CSSA ranks or poverty. Therefore, I hope the Secretary can really undertake a more in-depth study on the problems faced by these poor families.

In fact, every year I contribute quite a lot of opinions to the Government in respect of the policy address. If the Government seriously wants to stimulate the local community economy of Hong Kong and to help the lower class get rid of poverty, it must combat the monopolization established by moguls. In this respect, apart from enacting a fair competition law, another feasible solution is the Government giving an impetus to local community economy with local colours at the district and regional level. For instance, the Government has recently stated in the development plan for Mui Wo its intention to build a Silver Bauhinia Square there. However, I think it is a wrong name, am I right? The name "Silver Bauhinia" does not bear any local colours. For a square to be built in Mui Wo, the name "Silver Mine Cave" or "Buffalo" is a better choice. Be it a "Buffalo Square" or "Silver Mine Square", it must match local colours, am I right? Do not always choose the name "Bauhinia". I wonder, is there someone seeking a Bauhinia Medal?

Frequent pressures on the communities by central authority will not expand communities nor promote local characteristics. Given such mindset of central bureaucrats dictating developments, the local community economy has no room for development. It is this kind of stiff and rigid mindset that causes total failures in many regions of Hong Kong which should have been capable of development. Therefore, I hope the Government can consider several fundamental principles: firstly, releasing resources; secondly, stimulating local community economy and creating local employment opportunities.

Hong Kong actually possesses a lot of resources. Take a look at the Hang Seng Index, which has rocketed to over 18 000 points and smashed all previous records. There are many talented people in Hong Kong as well, but they cannot

find a job. Capital is also hoarded in abundance here. Why can we still not achieve anything given so much capital, talent and land? The responsibility lies 100% with the Government. If it can make use of these lands properly, it is absolutely capable of creating small and medium industries, including tourism or certain leisure industries, so that employment can be developed.

I hope the Chief Executive can chair a select committee for the development of local community economy, which will be officially formed by the Chief Secretary for Administration, has solid power and provides one-stop service and specific proposals, including the construction of a Hakka village which Mr LAU Wong-fat has proposed to the Government. However, due to the excessive division of government departments, different departments are in charge of environmental protection, land and transport matters, so the plan will definitely not pass. It has been five years since we first discussed Silver Mine Cave, but still the project has not yet commenced. Therefore, the Government should provide one-stop service and the Chief Secretary for Administration should direct and instruct the departments on how to proceed with it and complete it within designated time. In that way, I believe there will be improvements in the development of local community economy, employment opportunities and the campaign of poverty elimination. Nevertheless, if the Government does not have such will and instead carry on pumping benefits to the large consortia, the realization of the campaign against poverty and creating employment does not stand much of a chance.

Thank you, President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Does any other Member wish to speak?

MR WONG KWOK-HING (in Cantonese): Madam President, in this session I would like to give my views on three issues, namely men's rights, people with disabilities and small business operators.

First, I urge the Government to face up to the hardships of men in Hong Kong and formulate a policy on men's affairs. Madam President, the policy address has devoted a lot of coverage to cherishing the family and promoting family-friendliness, but it has not changed the fact that the Government has long maintained policies which neglect and even discriminate against males. The

Government has never undertaken any serious research or proposed a discussion on the underprivileged status of and support for men in Hong Kong, and it has even breached the principle of equal treatment to both sexes and ignored the inadequate attention to the situation and needs of men given by our existing policy and social services. I hope the Government can give equal treatment to men in Hong Kong, undertake a serious study into the situation and needs of men, establish a men's affairs commission and reform obsolete social policies and support services from the past which place "higher emphasis on women at the expense of men".

The social conditions in Hong Kong have undergone a transformation. Male dominance no longer exists and social problems are no longer gender-specific. Hong Kong's male unemployment rate is much higher than that of their female counterparts. Middle-aged men with low educational qualifications have fewer job opportunities when compared to women of similar background. In terms of education, more women than men have been receiving university education in recent years. As the society holds increasingly high regard for professionalism and educational qualifications, male domination has ceased to exist and as a result, social problems faced by females, such as single-parent family and domestic violence, are gradually turning into a remarkable trend among men.

According to statistics collected by a centre in the University of Hong Kong dedicated to the research and prevention of suicide, the suicide rate of men in Hong Kong is twice that of women. In particular, men aged between 40 and 49 and unemployed are the high-risk group for suicide. The main reason for their suicides is financial pressure. In addition, males always have less desirable health conditions than females do. Their life expectancy is shorter and they tend to suffer from critical illness earlier. This disadvantageous situation of being stout without but feeble within of men in Hong Kong warrants urgent attention from the Government and society.

In the past, the traditional mindset in feudal society that "men are more important than women" led to the disadvantaged position of women. However, the prevailing disadvantaged status of men originates from social neglect of the male situation. Men are still assumed and internalized as the predominant ones. In fact, men in Hong Kong are also suffering from the hardship of "immense stress, difficulty in speaking up and lack of support". The majority of the existing social policies and services place "higher emphasis on women at the

expense of men" and they lack considerations for the situation and difficulties of men. Men will not be included in the scope of services enjoyed by women. The male situation is not understood, and there is no support for their difficulties. If the Government does not make changes to these blind spots in its policies, how can it truly implement the family-friendly policies? For these reasons, I would like to solemnly offer six proposals to the Government.

Firstly, establish a Men's Affairs Commission and encourage society to understand men. Men also have to understand their peers so that ultimately disadvantaged men can be empowered and relieved of pressure and that social and family problems resulting from "immense stress, difficulty in speaking up and lack of support" of men can be reduced. Secondly, legislate for paid paternity leave for employees in order to promote family-friendliness. Thirdly, set up specific social services for men, such as multi-service centres for men, to prevent successive family tragedies from happening. Fourthly, promote health check-ups for men and enhance their health conditions. According to statistics from the Department of Health, the proportion of male deaths from malignant neoplasm is twice that of their female counterparts. At present, the Department has begun promoting health check-ups for men. However, with regard to high-risk illnesses for men such as prostate cancer, the Government should invest more resources and help raise the quality of physical and mental health of men. Fifthly, address squarely to the issue of education levels of the two sexes and future social mobility and adopt the right countermeasure. The education levels of the two sexes have begun to develop an imbalanced trend, and such imbalance will certainly affect social mobility of the two sexes in future. According to statistics from the Education and Manpower Bureau, 56% of the university students in Hong Kong are females, and males account for 44%. The discrepancy is more than 25%. If society and the Government do not face up to the existing trend and conduct a relevant review, the chances of social mobility for the two sexes will definitely be affected in future. The sixth proposal is to urge the Government to undertake a comprehensive review of the obsolete social policies and measures which neglect men, to pay attention to the male situation, to give equal treatment to the respective and common needs of both sexes, to correct the obsolete idea of stout men and feeble women, and to enable mutual understanding and respect in the relationship between the two sexes in Hong Kong, so as to achieve the result of equal development and harmonious families.

In the second part, I would like to urge the Government to implement half-fare concessions for people with disabilities as soon as possible. In page

29, the policy agenda mentions the fostering of a caring and just society, including "care for the elderly, sick and underprivileged". However, none of the 18 measures in the relevant section is devised for the benefit of people with disabilities. Where is the care that the Government mentioned? The crux of the issue of care for people with disabilities is the provision of half-fare concessions on transportation fare. Such concessions have long existed in foreign countries, including Australia and Britain, and so on. The three places on the two sides of the Straits also have such concessions, and Hong Kong is the only place with no concessions on transportation fare for people with disabilities. Is this the way to foster a caring and just society?

Last year, this Council set up an ad hoc committee on the drawing up of concessions on transportation fare for people with disabilities. The Council made an unequivocal and unanimous request to the two railway corporations for such half-fare concessions. However, even when we spoke till our voices turn hoarse and groups of people with disabilities came to this Council to petition and gave proof of their need, the Government still did not pay any attention, and the two Secretaries were not present. The Environment, Transport and Works Bureau passed the matter on to the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau, and the latter passed it back to the former. Is this kind of bucket passing just and caring? According to statistics from the Census and Statistics Department, there are 220 000 people with disabilities in Hong Kong. Compared to the millions of passengers using the two railways every day, it amounts to less than 10% of the figure. The impact on the income of the railway corporations would be negligible, but this is an urgent need of people with disabilities indeed. Why does the Government not give an answer? I hope my appeal this time could stop the Secretary from kicking the ball back to Secretary Dr Sarah LIAO and the two Secretaries will finally make an explanation to the Legislative Council.

Madam President, now I would like to talk about the third issue. I urge the Government to conduct a comprehensive review of the policy towards small business operators and reflect on the outdated measures in the licensing and management of hawkers. Due to the economic restructuring of Hong Kong, a large number of factories has moved out of Hong Kong. Massive middle-aged workers with low educational qualifications and skills are facing unemployment. As the Chinese proverb says, everything is sorrowful for a poor couple. When they can hardly make ends meet from dawn to dusk, how can there be harmony in family? How can there be warmth? It will definitely be affected. The policy address promotes cherishing the family. I think that the Government

should attach the same importance to resolving the issue of employment opportunities.

When the mode of economic development advocated by the Government cannot accommodate them, they have to be given a chance to start their own businesses. Being a small business operator is also a way out. In the past, many people in Hong Kong raised their families by hawking in the streets. Madam President, I also grew up in the streets and my father raised me by working as a hawker. In the past, the people of Hong Kong were willing to try hard and work hard; this is the true colour and character of a "Hongkonger", as the Chief Executive said. However, is the current Government providing any opportunity for the people of Hong Kong to give it a try? No, it is not. In the past year, The Link Management unceasingly raised the rents, made amendments to tenancy contracts, forced many small businesses in the public housing estates into closure and bankruptcy and drove them into a dead end. In the meantime, the Government retains the same old practice from 32 years ago in handling small businesses and common citizens who seek their own way out and make their own living proactively, which is the obsolete policy of freezing the issuance of hawker licenses and smothering and eliminating small businesses. This year, two incidents occurred where PANG Tung-ni was seriously injured and ran into a coma after being knocked down by a car and where another old hawker jumped into a river and was drowned. If the Government has the slightest of sympathy, it should review the outdated policy towards the management and licensing of hawkers.

For large syndicates, the Government is very out-spoken about non-intervention, but why does it have to adopt a policy of extermination towards these people in the lower social stratum who depend their livelihood on small businesses? At the end of the policy address the Chief Executive gave a review of the development and growth of Hong Kong, described how Hong Kong people had worked hard and fought and told the story of "Hongkongers". I notice that the Chief Executive seems to have forgotten about all of these matters, and he was quite frivolous in his speech. However, people in the vast lower social stratum cannot find a way to eke out a living now, so I hope that the Secretary will hear my appeal and conduct a review again. Thank you, Madam President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Does any other Member wish to speak?

(No Member indicated a wish to speak)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): If not, Council will now be suspended for 10 minutes. The designated public officer will speak when Council resumes.

2.31 pm

Meeting suspended.

2.41 pm

Council then resumed.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Council now resumes to continue with the fifth debate session. The Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food will speak in this session. He has up to 45 minutes for his speech.

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH, WELFARE AND FOOD (in Cantonese): Madam President, the work of the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau is closely related to the life of the general public. All along, we work in tandem with Honourable Members and all sectors of society closely to foster the community's well-being in the greatest measure. One of the key areas of work of this year's policy address is to strengthen the support for family. I will explain in detail the work arrangement in this aspect and respond to the concerns raised by Members shortly.

In the year ahead, the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau will work on many other important aspects which have all been set out in the policy agenda, and many of them answer the concerns raised by Members in the past. A majority of these new initiatives comes down in one line with our previous work, aiming to step up our preventive work and to reinforce and improve existing services in areas like medical care and health, social welfare, food safety and environmental hygiene, and to draw up future plans on the present basis to cater for the needs of the public. I will now introduce our work to demonstrate the directions and strategies of policy enforcement by the Bureau.

First, on the area of medical care and health, we have all along attached the utmost importance to the prevention and control of infectious diseases. We

have developed a preparedness plan for influenza pandemic, stockpiled antivirals and maintained a high degree of vigilance. Protection for health care workers against infection has been upgraded. Large-scale inter-departmental drills will be conducted annually. Moreover, stringent surveillance measures, including temperature screening at border checkpoints, surveillance of imported live poultry and the rearing of poultry in Hong Kong, will be adopted. We will establish a point-to-point contingency liaison mechanism with the Health Ministry of the Mainland to enable the prompt exchanges of information in case of infectious diseases incidents, enhance the communication between experts of the SAR and the Mainland, and effectively guard Hong Kong against the attack of a pandemic like avian flu.

Second, we will promote a healthy lifestyle. We attach great importance to the health of our citizens, for healthy citizens are the fundamental elements essential to the continuous advancement of society. We adopt a cross-sectoral co-operation approach in the promotion and development of healthy eating habits and exercise patterns among primary school students. Moreover, we will continue to advocate the healthy lifestyle to the general public, enhancing our work on primary health care.

On the other hand, we will endeavour to co-ordinate various medical tasks and adopt a proactive approach in poisoning prevention and control. The measures include the enhancement of the information provision service of the Hong Kong Poison Information Centre, the setting up of the Poison Treatment Centre with universities in Hong Kong to provide specialist care for patients poisoned, and the further enhancement of the diagnostic capacity of the Toxicology Reference Laboratory. We will also keep under surveillance the poisoning situation in the community and increase the capacity of the public health care system comprehensively in the prevention, diagnosis and management of poisoning incidents.

We have also enhanced the cancer surveillance regime with a view to improving the database on cancer and to conduct clinical tests on the control and treatment of cancers.

To relieve the financial pressure faced by the Hospital Authority (HA), last year, we changed the one-off provision of \$650 million for the HA to recurrent funding. Moreover, we have provided an additional \$300 million per annum to the HA for the three years from 2006, that means from 2008-2009, the

additional recurrent provision of the HA will reach \$900 million. This arrangement enables the HA to budget for a relatively longer term.

To further enhance Chinese Medicine services, three additional public Chinese medicine clinics located in Wan Chai, Tseung Kwan O and Yuen Long respectively have begun operation this year. Three other public Chinese medicine clinics located in Kwun Tong, Tuen Mun and Kwai Tsing will begin operation in the next couple of months. We will open at least two more Chinese medicine clinics next year.

In April 2006, we launched the Electronic Patient Record Sharing Pilot Project which allowed participating private health care service organizations and doctors, with patients' consent, to obtain through the Internet their patients' records kept by the HA. If the project is successful, we will examine the feasibility of territory-wide implementation. The sharing of patient records will greatly enhance the cost-effectiveness of our health care and provide greater convenience to patients.

In recent years, we have been developing family medicine progressively. At present, there are 20 Family Medicine Specialist Clinics providing treatment to patients of chronic illness in stable condition, thus reducing the reliance of these patients on specialist out-patient and in-patient services. We will take a more proactive approach in developing primary health care, community health care and elderly health care, and will continue to identify innovative and relevant public-private partnership on service provision.

We will develop an organ donation computer database in co-operation with the HA and the Hong Kong Medical Association to facilitate the recording of wishes of persons who wish to donate their organ(s) after death, hoping this may help to increase the number of cadaveric organs available for transplant.

Another major task to be carried out next year is certainly the effective enforcement of the newly enacted Smoking (Public Health) (Amendment) Ordinance 2005. We are now actively working on promotion, public education and enforcement on all fronts, so as to ensure that upon the Ordinance taking effect on 1 January next year, tobacco control work can be carried out smoothly with the support and co-operation of the public. The youth and students are the major targets, so we will step up our promotion and education efforts in this respect. Also, we will encourage existing smokers to quit smoking.

On health care financing, studies and analyses have been conducted in respect of various health care financing options, and the work concerned is still ongoing. Our present target is to give an account on this issue by the end of the term of this Government.

Next year, we will introduce some new initiatives which include the consultation of stakeholders on the legislation to provide for a statutory framework on the regulation of medical devices and examination of the setting up of multi-partite medical centres of excellence. We will continue to carry out health care reform and strengthen our primary health care and disease prevention work to meet the challenges posed by an ageing population.

Mr LI Kwok-ying queried just now whether the Department of Health (DH) had been impartial in enforcing the Undesirable Medical Advertisements Ordinance. I would like to point out clearly that the HD adopts a systematic, impartial and consistent principle in enforcement, endeavours to co-operate with the trade and promotes industry compliance with the relevant provisions of the Ordinance. In respect of the relevant details, I did explain them to the Legislative Council Panel on Health Services in September, and I hope Mr LI may take note of that.

Next, I would like to turn to the programme area on welfare services. First, it is on recommendations and studies related to the Family Commission.

Family harmony is the cornerstone of a harmonious society; many social problems do result from failures of families to bring their functions into full play. To enhance the functions of the family, fostering strong relations among family members is our prime task, while family values are the bedrock for nurturing harmonious family relations.

Family issues involve a number of policy areas, including education, housing, tax regime and policy on family welfare. In the past few years, we have adopted a family-oriented approach in social welfare policies. For instance, family services have been integrated to provide one-stop services, and home-based support services have been provided to elderly in need, thus facilitating their ageing in their domestic homes. These policies have shown initial results. We hope that these concepts will be applied to other policy areas more extensively from a relatively macroscopic level.

To address the challenges faced by families in Hong Kong, we must have new thinking. In the policy address, the Chief Executive announced the consideration of setting up an integrated, holistic and high-level Family Commission. The Commission will be able to examine policies from a family-oriented perspective and conduct family impact assessments before the implementation of policies. Moreover, the promotion of family values will be a task of top priority.

Regarding the study on the setting up of the Family Commission, this will include the examination of existing family-related policies and resources, and the identification of organizations, frameworks and resources which required reorganization with a view to providing support to families in a more effective and co-ordinated manner in different policy areas. The study will be completed within the next six months, and recommendations will be submitted to the next Government for reference and decision.

I will now talk about domestic violence. The Government absolutely will not tolerate domestic violence. This problem has to be addressed properly and dealt with from the perspectives of prevention, support provision, crisis intervention and the reinforcement of judicial protection.

In the past two years, a series of preventive, support and specialized services have been introduced to enhance the services and support provided to victims of domestic violence and families in need. This year, the funding for this exceeds \$1.33 billion. Next year, we will further enhance the specialized services and support provided for victims of domestic violence. These will include the strengthening of the 24-hour hotline operated by the Social Welfare Department (SWD), the setting up of a crisis support centre dedicated to victims of sexual violence and domestic violence, the strengthening support provided by Family and Child Protective Services Units and the Integrated Family Service Centres, the allocation of additional resources to refuge centres for women, the strengthening of on-site social work support after normal working hours, the enhancement of volunteer training, the development of mutual help and after-care service for victims, the enhancement of clinical psychological counselling services, and so on.

To reinforce the prevention against domestic violence and to render better protection to victims of domestic violence, the Government will propose

amendments to the Domestic Violence Ordinance. We are now consulting the Legislative Council and the relevant advisory bodies on the relevant issues and are prepared to draft the amendment bill within the current Legislative Session.

In addition, to assist families with young children in facing their family or personal problems, we will launch a new day small group home service and extend the day foster care service. Moreover, to encourage community collaboration in assisting families with child care needs, we will strengthen the service provision of mutual help child care centres by providing financial incentives to operators. Fees subsidies will also be made available for families with financial need.

All along, the Government keeps a keen interest in the mental health of the public. To effectively promote the importance of mental health, public education and the promotion of early identification and intervention are vital.

We have implemented a series of initiatives in this regard, starting from preventive measures like public education to promote the importance of mental health and ways of early identification and intervention, to providing avenues for seeking help and appropriate support, counselling and medical services. In parallel, we also provide a series of rehabilitation services for ex-mentally ill persons to facilitate their reintegration into the community by helping them to re-acquire living skills, communication skills and work ability.

It is mentioned in the policy address that the Government will enhance the community support and outreach services on mental health with a view to enriching the public's knowledge of mental health and ways of early intervention. To this end, we will introduce a new community psychiatric health outreach service and, through home visits and promotional activities in the community, identify early persons with psychological problems to enable them and their families to receive counselling and treatment to pre-empt aggravation of their problems. In addition, through community support networks, we will help them rebuild positive values and reinforce harmonious family relationships.

In respect of elderly care, the principle of our elderly care policy is to encourage individuals and families to display the spirit of mutual help and sharing of responsibilities, and to promote and realize the ideal of "ageing in the community".

In planning elderly care services, in addition to considering the best utilization of public resources, we also have to consider how individuals and families can be encouraged to display the spirit of mutual help and sharing of responsibilities. We also have to make use of the market force to create a favourable environment for development and guide the private sector to inject their creativity in providing services meeting the needs of the elderly. It is hoped that public resources can be pooled together to provide subsidized services to the elderly most in need.

As a saying goes, "having an elderly person at home is like having a gem". The elderly do not only have an important role to play in the family, they are also precious resources of society. We will seize this interval before the baby-boomers enter their senior age to further promote active ageing and to make good use of the experience and wisdom of the elderly.

We have, in collaboration with the Elderly Commission, launched an Announcement of Public Interest earlier on to promote a positive image of ageing and organized a workshop on pre-retirement preparation. Next month, a Silver Hair Market Fair will be held to promote the elderly market and the relevant products.

In pursuance of the Chief Executive's family-oriented principle of governance, we will continue to encourage and assist the elderly to age in the community. Actually, the concept of "ageing in community" and the family-oriented principle of governance come down in one line. For after all, the wishes of the elderly to age in their domestic homes can only be realized with the support of their families. The Elderly Commission will hold a seminar next month, inviting overseas academics and experts to exchange views on and examine ways to provide further assistance to the elderly in respect of ageing in the community.

We are now using the additional \$20 million earmarked in the 2006-2007 Budget to strengthen home care services for the elderly ageing in the community. With regard to those elderly persons who lack family support, we will continue to offer support and care, and encourage them to integrate into the community and lead a positive life.

The number of subsidized residential care places for the elderly has increased from 17 000 in 1997 to 26 700 at present. Next year, we will

continue to create more subsidized residential care places in new purpose-built residential care homes for the elderly (RCHE); and an additional 400 to 500 subsidized places will be generated in private residential care homes. Moreover, we will continue to upgrade subsidized residential care places with no long-term care or continuum of care element to long-term care places providing continuum of care.

The SWD will, by means of statutory regulation and law enforcement and in collaboration with the relevant departments, continue to provide education and training to staff of RCHEs in order to upgrade the quality of services of RCHEs.

The SWD has recruited five additional nurses to strengthen the Health Inspectorate Team of the Licensing Office of the Residential Care Homes for the Elderly and planned to deploy additional social workers to strengthen the Social Work Inspectorate Teams in 2007-2008.

To address the concern of the public for the handling of drugs in RCHEs, the HD is now designing a drug management system tailored for the environment of local RCHEs and will draw up a detailed manual and guidelines on drug storage facilities. It will also provide training to RCHE staff in respect of the relevant system and guidelines. In drafting the guidelines, the HD will listen to the views of the pharmacist sector, and the guidelines will be introduced early next year.

To ease the nursing shortage at RCHEs, we have organized two enrolled nurse training programmes for the welfare sector in particular, which will be launched in March and November this year, providing a total of 220 training places. If necessary, we will consider launching a third enrolled nurse training programme for the welfare sector early next year.

Support for subvented RCHEs will be reinforced to enable RCHEs to provide enhanced care for infirm elderly and those suffering from dementia.

The Government's commitment to the welfare sector will not be reduced. In the year 2006-2007, the amount of expenditure spent on welfare is \$34.6 billion, accounting for about 17% of the total recurrent expenditure of the Government. This proportion will not be subject to any significant adjustment, which represents the Government's commitment to welfare in the long term.

At present, I meet regularly with the welfare sector each year to discuss the priority tasks for the coming year and subsequent years, which covers not only the work of the next year but also the development in a relatively longer term. It should be noted that the implementation of certain welfare programmes cannot be accomplished within a year or half. This mechanism of annual consultation also ties in with the internal administration, and process and timetable of resource planning of the Government.

Now, many welfare policies are time-honoured, and we will continue to implement them. We will also enhance the services concerned gradually in accordance with need, such as reinforcing the community support service for the elderly and people with disabilities. This is a far-sighted measure preparing us for the future.

Moreover, under the lump sum grant arrangement, non-governmental organizations also enjoy great flexibility in resource deployment and may provide the relevant services in the light of socio-economic developments. They know clearly their own direction and that of the Government.

In the past year, we were glad to see that the lump sum grant arrangement started to show results progressively and was well-received by welfare organizations. The one-off grant arrangement which we have newly introduced in particular has helped certain organizations to face their financial difficulties. This arrangement has been implemented and the Government will continue to allocate more resources to enhance our welfare services. Given that, the lump sum grant arrangement will be a long-term policy of the Government, which will be continued.

At present, it is most important that these organizations are given the time and room to perfect their internal management and strengthen their communication with their staff. Next, we will explore whether there is a need to draw up a social welfare blueprint. Moreover, we will examine the need for the establishment of the Family Commission. In the course of such examination, we will consider whether adequate support for families can be provided by the welfare sector and whether various policies can be implemented in accordance with the "family-oriented" concept. When the direction of the Family Commission is set, we may then review the existing mode of service delivery and the role of the relevant organizations with a view to determining whether the drafting of a social welfare blueprint is required.

Earlier on, a number of Members raised the issue of disparity between the rich and the poor, so I would like to give a brief response here.

In the face of the problem of disparity between the rich and the poor, all governments around the world show grave concern, and our Government is no exception. The direction of our policies is to promote economic development, and to strengthen our education, training of talents and job placement services, so that members from different strata of society will have the opportunity to work their way up. The Government has adopted measures on different fronts to upgrade the quality of the workforce and enhance their competitiveness, so that they may cope with the economic development. At present, the unemployment rate of Hong Kong has dropped to 4.7%, and the number of long-term unemployed persons has reduced by half compared to the peak in 2003. The income of low-income earners is also on the rise and the number of low-income families with working members has also decreased significantly. This shows that the employment situation and income of low-skilled workers have been improving in recent years. At the same time, we will continue to invest a substantial amount of resources to establish a non-contributory comprehensive safety net, while heavily subsidized medical, housing, education and other social services will be provided to the needy in society.

Next, I will talk about food and environmental hygiene issues. In respect of food safety and environmental hygiene, in the past year, a series of legislative work have been carried out to further protect the public health. These include:

- the enactment of legislation to ban backyard poultry keeping in mid-February this year to prevent the outbreak of avian flu.
- the passage of the Food Business (Amendment) Regulation 2006 to require that fresh beef, mutton or pork and chilled beef, mutton or pork can be sold on the same premises if only the chilled meat is prepackaged and the package is marked and labelled properly in the prescribed manner. Starting from August this year, chilled pork is imported from the Mainland.
- the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance was amended by the Government in May this year to enable us to deal with the problem of accumulation of water more effectively in the prevention of mosquito breeding.

In the coming year, legislation work will include:

- the proposal to amend the Food Business Regulation to prohibit the abstraction of seawater from specified areas, where the risk of the seawater there being polluted is high, for keeping live seafood, to regulate the quality of fish tank water more effectively. We consulted the trade, members of District Councils and members of Area Committees in respect of the relevant proposals in July and August this year. The trade and representatives of various districts supported the proposal in general and we plan to submit the relevant amendment regulation in 2007.
- the legislation to increase the penalty level and imprisonment term to effectively combat and deter any acts of cruelty towards animals. Ms Margaret NG said earlier that this was the work of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. I would like to correct her for this is actually the work of the Agricultural, Fisheries and Conservation Department.
- the submission of the regulation related to poultry slaughtering and processing plant to the Legislative Council, stipulating the licensing requirement for processing plant to facilitate the regulation of the management of these plants (including the slaughtering process and the hygiene standard of plant environment).
- Moreover, we will consider the introduction of legislation to address the problem of unauthorized shop extension by food establishments.

In recent years, the public has become increasingly concerned about food safety. In May this year, we established a Centre for Food Safety to formulate and implement effective food safety measures for the protection of public health. In September, the Expert Committee on Food Safety was set up to advise on the formulation of food safety measures and the review of food safety standards. The Committee held its first meeting this month and a work plan was drawn up.

To conduct food tests more effectively, we are planning to establish a specialized food testing centre under the Government Laboratory in the coming year, seeking to enhance the work in food chemical analysis through the rationalization of existing resources and limited additional resources.

After consultation with the Legislative Council and the trade, we launched the voluntary Quality Seawater Assurance Scheme in January this year. The Hong Kong Productivity Council was also appointed as the accrediting body to administer the Scheme for three years. As at the end of last month, about 120 premises in total were accredited under the Scheme.

We will also assist the local food business sector to set up a voluntary labelling scheme on genetically modified food to enable consumers to have access to more information.

On the other hand, we have established a communication mechanism on food safety and public health issues with the Guangdong Provincial Government to ensure that Hong Kong will know the relevant situation in advance and in time to make deployments to protect the health of the public.

To further reduce the contact between the public and poultry, thereby lowering the risk of contracting avian flu, we have identified a suitable location for the construction of the proposed poultry slaughtering and processing plant, and a tendering exercise will be carried out.

In respect of food business licensing, we have relaxed certain licensing requirements which do not pose food hygiene problems and streamlined the workflow of food business licensing.

In future, we still have to work on the issues listed below:

- first, we are now working with Guangdong Province to consider the application of radio frequency identification technology to improve the tracking and tracing system of food supplied to Hong Kong, and live pigs will be used as the subject of the trial.
- we will continue to liaise with the trade on the details of the proposed food nutrition labelling scheme to ensure that the requirements on labelling to be launched in future will meet the demands of different parties.
- on food business licensing, we will consider exempting general food establishments from holding a separate bakery licence in selling

bakery products for consumption off the premises. We will also consider the issue of a composite licence for ready-to-eat food to impose regulation on the sale of ready-to-eat food.

In respect of environmental hygiene, since last year, the conversion of 100 aqua privies into flushing toilets has been sped up. So far, 31 aqua privies have been converted into flushing toilets and the conversion of 70 or so aqua privies will be completed next year. We also plan to apply to the Finance Committee next year for funding to convert another 50 aqua privies into flushing toilets.

The Garden of Remembrance at the Cape Collinson Columbarium will be opened next year, allowing bereaved families to hold ritual of disposing the ashes of the deceased in the garden. In addition, the construction of a columbarium with a total of 18 500 niches at the cemetery at Diamond Hill will begin. Moreover, to address the shortage of niches, we have provided a total of 7 000 niches at various columbaria.

In respect of the development of the agriculture and fisheries industry, I must respond to the aspiration of Mr WONG Yung-kan. We have registered about 1 400 local vegetable farmers engaged in commercial food crop production, and will assist them in cultivating vegetables in a safe and hygienic manner to protect public health.

We will continue to assist the local farming industry in cultivating high value-added new varieties of agricultural produces, including the introduction of house strawberries and rock melon from Japan, and so on.

We have set aside another \$190 million under the Fisheries Development Loan Fund to help fishermen and fish farmers to engage in sustainable fisheries and aquaculture business. Another \$60 million have also been set aside for loans to help fishermen tide over the annual South China Sea Fishing Moratorium and prepare for the resumption of fishing activities after the closed season. In 2006, \$70 million was paid out in loans to fishermen to help them tide over the moratorium.

We will establish a committee on the sustainable development of fisheries shortly to study the direction and targets of the long-term development of the fisheries industry in Hong Kong.

Finally, Madam President, I have to thank Members for speaking enthusiastically and for the precious opinions they have offered to the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau. We will continue to maintain close contact with Members, working together to protect the health of the public, reinforce the social safety net, enhance food safety and upgrade environmental hygiene. Thank you, Madam President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): This Council has finished all five debate sessions.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms Miriam LAU, you may now speak on the two amendments. You have up to five minutes to speak.

MS MIRIAM LAU (in Cantonese): Madam President, I believe I need not use five minutes to speak on the amendments. According to the Rules of Procedure, Members can move amendments to a Motion of Thanks.

The amendments to the motion are proposed by Mr LEE Cheuk-yan and Mr Albert CHAN in their individual capacity. Their amendments were not discussed in the House Committee and do not represent the consensus of Members. The Motion of Thanks was moved by me the day before yesterday in my capacity as Chairman of the House Committee, and I am also speaking in the same capacity now. Therefore, I believe I should not and am not in a position to speak on the two amendments.

Thus, I will not urge Members to support, or not to support these two amendments. Thank you, Madam President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now call upon Mr LEE Cheuk-yan to move his amendment.

MR LEE CHEUK-YAN (in Cantonese): President, I move that Ms Miriam LAU's motion be amended, so as to express regret at the Government's refusal to legislate for a minimum wage.

Mr LEE Cheuk-yan moved the following motion: (Translation)

"To add ", but expresses deep regret at the Government's refusal to legislate for a minimum wage at this stage" after "his address".

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the amendment, moved by Mr LEE Cheuk-yan to Ms Miriam LAU's motion, be passed.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you as stated. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(Members raised their hands)

Mr LEE Cheuk-yan rose to claim a division.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LEE Cheuk-yan has claimed a division. The division bell will ring for three minutes, after which the division will begin.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Will Members please proceed to vote.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Will Members please check their votes. If there are no queries, voting shall now stop and the result will be displayed.

Functional Constituencies:

Ms Margaret NG, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, Mr SIN Chung-kai, Ms LI Fung-ying, Dr Joseph LEE, Dr KWOK Ka-ki, Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Miss TAM Heung-man voted for the amendment.

Dr David LI, Dr LUI Ming-wah, Mr Bernard CHAN, Mrs Sophie LEUNG, Dr Philip WONG, Mr WONG Yung-kan, Mr LAU Wong-fat, Ms Miriam LAU, Mr Abraham SHEK, Mr Tommy CHEUNG, Mr Vincent FANG, Mr Daniel LAM, Mr Jeffery LAM, Mr Andrew LEUNG, Mr WONG Ting-kwong and Mr Patrick LAU voted against the amendment.

Mr WONG Kwok-hing, Mr CHIM Pui-chung and Mr KWONG Chi-kin abstained.

Geographical Constituencies:

Mr Albert HO, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan, Mr Martin LEE, Mr Fred LI, Mr James TO, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, Dr YEUNG Sum, Mr LAU Chin-shek, Ms Emily LAU, Mr Andrew CHENG, Mr Albert CHAN, Mr Frederick FUNG, Ms Audrey EU, Mr LEE Wing-tat, Mr Alan LEONG, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung and Mr Ronny TONG voted for the amendment.

Mr James TIEN, Mrs Selina CHOW, Mr CHAN Kam-lam, Mr Jasper TSANG, Mr LAU Kong-wah, Miss CHOY So-yuk, Mr TAM Yiu-chung, Mr LI Kwok-ying and Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming voted against the amendment.

Miss CHAN Yuen-han abstained.

THE PRESIDENT, Mrs Rita FAN, did not cast any vote.

THE PRESIDENT announced that among the Members returned by functional constituencies, 27 were present, eight were in favour of the amendment, 16 against it and three abstained; while among the Members returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, 28 were present, 17 were in favour of the amendment, nine against it and one abstained. Since the question was not agreed by a majority of each of the two groups of Members present, she therefore declared that the amendment was negated.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr Albert CHAN, you may move your amendment.

MR ALBERT CHAN (in Cantonese): President, I move that Ms Miriam LAU's motion be amended.

Mr Albert CHAN moved the following motion: (Translation)

"To add ", but expresses deep regret that the address fails to put forward any measure to alleviate the disparity between the rich and the poor and the problem of plutocratic monopoly" after "his address". "

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the amendment, moved by Mr Albert CHAN to Ms Miriam LAU's motion, be passed.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you as stated. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(Members raised their hands)

Mr Albert CHAN rose to claim a division.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr Albert CHAN has claimed a division. The division bell will ring for three minutes, after which the division will begin.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Will Members please proceed to vote.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Will Members please check their votes. If there are no queries, voting shall now stop and the result will be displayed.

Functional Constituencies:

Ms Margaret NG, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, Mr SIN Chung-kai, Dr KWOK Ka-ki, Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Miss TAM Heung-man voted for the amendment.

Dr David LI, Dr LUI Ming-wah, Mr Bernard CHAN, Mrs Sophie LEUNG, Dr Philip WONG, Mr WONG Yung-kan, Mr LAU Wong-fat, Ms Miriam LAU, Mr Abraham SHEK, Mr Tommy CHEUNG, Mr Vincent FANG, Mr Daniel LAM, Mr Jeffrey LAM, Mr Andrew LEUNG, Mr WONG Ting-kwong and Mr Patrick LAU voted against the amendment.

Ms LI Fung-ying, Mr WONG Kwok-hing, Dr Joseph LEE, Mr CHIM Pui-chung and Mr KWONG Chi-kin abstained.

Geographical Constituencies:

Mr Albert HO, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan, Mr Martin LEE, Mr Fred LI, Mr James TO, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, Dr YEUNG Sum, Mr LAU Chin-shek, Ms Emily LAU, Mr Andrew CHENG, Mr Albert CHAN, Mr Frederick FUNG, Ms Audrey EU, Mr LEE Wing-tat, Mr Alan LEONG, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung and Mr Ronny TONG voted for the amendment.

Mr James TIEN, Mrs Selina CHOW, Mr CHAN Kam-lam, Mr Jasper TSANG, Mr LAU Kong-wah, Miss CHOY So-yuk, Mr TAM Yiu-chung, Mr LI Kwok-ying and Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming voted against the amendment.

Miss CHAN Yuen-han abstained.

THE PRESIDENT, Mrs Rita FAN, did not cast any vote.

THE PRESIDENT announced that among the Members returned by functional constituencies, 27 were present, six were in favour of the amendment, 16 against it and five abstained; while among the Members returned by geographical

constituencies through direct elections, 28 were present, 17 were in favour of the amendment, nine against it and one abstained. Since the question was not agreed by a majority of each of the two groups of Members present, she therefore declared that the amendment was negatived.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms Miriam LAU, you may now reply and you have seven minutes 18 seconds.

MS MIRIAM LAU (in Cantonese): Madam President, delivery of the policy address is a set move for the Chief Executive every year. Citizens can learn of the policy guidelines and various new policies and measures of the Government through the policy address. Therefore, every year citizens have a certain degree of anticipation towards the policy address; Members are the same, they have different expectations of the policy address. Of course, there are parts in the policy address which merit praise from Members, and other parts which disappoint Members. However, for most of the time the disappointing parts are more.

In the past three years, Members have put forward their views on policy areas with which they are familiar and concerned. They expressed views on areas where they believed the Government was underperforming and could make improvements. There were praises and criticisms in the comments of Members; emotional and rational ones; and also moderate and radical ones. In any event, I hope the Chief Executive and all Principal Officials will listen to these views with an open attitude. We need to know that, although we hold different opinions, the most important thing is for us to agree to disagree. As long as we stick to this principle, I believe the relationship between the Legislative Council and the executive can become harmonious, and the policy of the Government can obtain the support of the Legislative Council and the general public.

Although Members may not have dissenting views on the policy address, we have divergent views on the amendments to motion moved by the two Members just now, and we may also have divergent views at the vote on the Motion of Thanks moved by me moments later, I nonetheless believe strongly that our views are definitely consistent on one matter, and that is, the hope that I can finish this speech as soon as possible so that we can finish this meeting of three days as early as we can and get off work.

Lastly, as the mover of the motion, I am in constant hope that the motion moved by me will pass. Although I know the chance is very slim, I still urge Members to embrace the attitude of agreeing to disagree and support the original motion moved by me, which is relatively neutral.

Thank you, Madam President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by Ms Miriam LAU, be passed. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Those against please raise their hands.

(Members raised their hands)

Ms Emily LAU rose to claim a division.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms Emily LAU has claimed a division. The division bell will ring for three minutes, after which the division will begin.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Will Members please proceed to vote.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Will Members please check their votes. If there are no queries, voting shall now stop and the result will be displayed.

Functional Constituencies:

Dr David LI, Dr LUI Ming-wah, Mr Bernard CHAN, Mrs Sophie LEUNG, Dr Philip WONG, Mr WONG Yung-kan, Mr LAU Wong-fat, Ms Miriam LAU, Mr Abraham SHEK, Ms LI Fung-ying, Mr Tommy CHEUNG, Mr Vincent

FANG, Mr WONG Kwok-hing, Mr Daniel LAM, Mr Jeffrey LAM, Mr Andrew LEUNG, Mr WONG Ting-kwong, Mr Patrick LAU and Mr KWONG Chi-kin voted for the motion.

Ms Margaret NG, Dr Joseph LEE, Dr KWOK Ka-ki, Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Miss TAM Heung-man voted against the motion.

Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, Mr SIN Chung-kai and Mr CHIM Pui-chung abstained.

Geographical Constituencies:

Mr James TIEN, Mrs Selina CHOW, Miss CHAN Yuen-han, Mr CHAN Kam-lam, Mr Jasper TSANG, Mr LAU Kong-wah, Miss CHOY So-yuk, Mr TAM Yiu-chung, Mr LI Kwok-ying and Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming voted for the motion.

Mr LEE Cheuk-yan, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, Ms Emily LAU, Mr Albert CHAN, Mr Frederick FUNG, Ms Audrey EU, Mr Alan LEONG, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung and Mr Ronny TONG voted against the motion.

Mr Albert HO, Mr Martin LEE, Mr Fred LI, Mr James TO, Dr YEUNG Sum, Mr LAU Chin-shek, Mr Andrew CHENG and Mr LEE Wing-tat abstained.

THE PRESIDENT, Mrs Rita FAN, did not cast any vote.

THE PRESIDENT announced that among the Members returned by functional constituencies, 27 were present, 19 were in favour of the motion, five against it and three abstained; while among the Members returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, 28 were present, 10 were in favour of the motion, nine against it and eight abstained. Since the question was not agreed by a majority of each of the two groups of Members present, she therefore declared that the motion was negatived.

NEXT MEETING

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now adjourn the Council until 11.00 am on Wednesday, 1 November 2006.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Three o'clock.