

OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 31 October 2007

The Council met at Eleven o'clock

MEMBERS PRESENT:

THE PRESIDENT

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

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

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT HO CHUN-YAN

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

THE HONOURABLE LEE CHEUK-YAN

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

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

THE HONOURABLE LEUNG YIU-CHUNG

THE HONOURABLE SIN CHUNG-KAI, S.B.S., J.P.

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

THE HONOURABLE WONG YUNG-KAN, S.B.S., J.P.

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

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

DR THE HONOURABLE YEUNG SUM, J.P.

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

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

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

THE HONOURABLE TOMMY CHEUNG YU-YAN, S.B.S., 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

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

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT JINGHAN CHENG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE KWONG CHI-KIN

THE HONOURABLE TAM HEUNG-MAN

MEMBERS ABSENT:

THE HONOURABLE CHAN YUEN-HAN, S.B.S., J.P.

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

PUBLIC OFFICERS ATTENDING:

THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL SUEN MING-YEUNG, G.B.S., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION

THE HONOURABLE FREDERICK MA SI-HANG, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

THE HONOURABLE AMBROSE LEE SIU-KWONG, I.D.S.M., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR SECURITY

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

THE HONOURABLE TSANG TAK-SING, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS

THE HONOURABLE MATTHEW CHEUNG KIN-CHUNG, G.B.S., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE

THE HONOURABLE EVA CHENG, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING

CLERKS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

MRS VIVIAN KAM NG LAI-MAN, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL

MRS JUSTINA LAM CHENG BO-LING, ASSISTANT SECRETARY
GENERAL

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

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

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): A quorum is now present. The meeting starts now.

TABLING OF PAPERS

The following papers were laid on the table pursuant to Rule 21(2) of the Rules of Procedure:

Subsidiary Legislation/Instruments	<i>L.N. No.</i>
Dangerous Goods (Consignment by Air) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulation 2007	193/2007
Dangerous Goods (Consignment by Air) (Safety) (Amendment) Regulation 2006 (Amendment) Regulation 2007	194/2007
Air Navigation (Hong Kong) Order 1995 (Amendment of Schedule 16) Order 2007	195/2007
Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority Ordinance (Amendment of Schedule 1) Order 2007	196/2007
Dangerous Goods (Consignment by Air) (Safety) Regulations (Amendment of Schedule) Order 2006 (Amendment) Order 2007	197/2007
Securities and Futures (Contracts Limits and Reportable Positions) (Amendment) (No. 2) Rules 2007.....	198/2007

Fugitive Offenders (Corruption) Order (Commencement) Notice.....	199/2007
Rail Merger Ordinance (Commencement) Notice	200/2007
Unsolicited Electronic Messages Ordinance (Commencement) Notice	201/2007
Unsolicited Electronic Messages Regulation (Commencement) Notice	202/2007

Other Papers

- No. 19 — Electrical and Mechanical Services Trading Fund
Annual Report 2006-2007
- No. 20 — Consumer Council
Annual Report 2006-2007
- No. 21 — Office of the Telecommunications Authority
Trading Fund Annual Report 2006-2007
- No. 22 — Annual Report 2006 to the Chief Executive by the
Commissioner on Interception of Communications and
Surveillance (together with a statement under section
49(4) of the Interception of Communications and
Surveillance Ordinance)
- No. 23 — Post Office Trading Fund
Annual Report 2006-2007
- No. 24 — Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health
Annual Report 2006-2007

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Questions. First question.

Shatin to Central Link Depot

1. **MISS TAM HEUNG-MAN** (in Cantonese): *Madam President, it has been reported that the train depot of the Shatin to Central Link (SCL) will be built on the land at the former Tai Hom Village site at Diamond Hill, with property development projects above the depot. The Wong Tai Sin District Council has expressed its objection to the construction of the depot there and the concern that the construction of the depot will create a lot of noises and wall effect. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether:*

- (a) *it knows if a separate depot has to be constructed for SCL after the rail merger; whether the Government and the railway corporations have considered expanding the depots of the East Rail, Ma On Shan Rail (MOS Rail) or Mass Transit Railway to meet the needs of SCL; if they have, of the details, if not, the reasons for that;*
- (b) *it knows if the former Tai Hom Village site at Diamond Hill is the only suitable site for the SCL depot; if so, how the Government will respond to the residents' objection to the construction of the depot; if not, what other sites are suitable for the SCL depot, and the criteria to be adopted by the Government for assessing the suitability of the final choice of the site for the depot; and*
- (c) *the Government will conduct environmental impact assessment (EIA) studies on the sites concerned before finalizing the site for the SCL depot; if it will, of the details of the studies, and whether it will report the study results to the affected residents, the District Council concerned and the Legislative Council; if assessments will not be conducted, of the reasons for that?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese):
President,

- (a) In a railway construction project, a depot is an essential facility for conducting maintenance works and for train stabling after operating hours. The SCL is no exception.

After the SCL commences operation, it will link up with the West Rail and the MOS Rail to become part of the same railway network.

During the planning stage of the SCL, the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) and the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation (KCRC) have reviewed several times the need for a SCL depot. In the SCL Merger Scheme submitted to Government in July 2005, the two railway corporations anticipated that, after the commissioning of the SCL, the existing 22 numbers of seven-car West Rail trains and the 18 numbers of four-car MOS Rail trains would not be sufficient to cope with the railway demands brought about by the SCL. It is required to increase the train fleet to 53 numbers of eight-car trains ultimately.

The two railway corporations have reviewed the feasibility of using the existing depot facilities, including the KCRC Ho Tung Lau Maintenance Centre, the Tai Wai Maintenance Centre, the Pat Heung Maintenance Centre, and the MTRCL Kowloon Bay Depot. As the KCRC rolling stocks, signalling system and power supply system are incompatible with those of the MTRCL system, the SCL trains cannot use the Kowloon Bay Depot. Furthermore, the latter has already been fully utilized and there is no spare capacity for the SCL trains. As the Ho Tung Lau Maintenance Centre is located along the East Rail, the SCL trains running between the MOS Rail and the West Rail will not be able to access that depot. The Tai Wai Maintenance Centre and the Pat Heung Maintenance Centre can accommodate 37 numbers of eight-car trains. There is however no scope for the former to be further expanded. As regards the latter, there is only limited scope for further expansion and the additional capacity will be used by the future Northern Link. In view of the foregoing, it is required to construct a new depot to accommodate the remaining SCL trains.

- (b) The topography of the Diamond Hill Comprehensive Development Area (CDA) site makes it possible to use "semi-depressed" design to provide the SCL depot with the stabling sidings at about 3 m below ground. The walls of the depot can act as noise barriers. Due to the reduced height of the walls above ground, the depot would cause less visual intrusion. There are already existing noise barriers along the northern side of Lung Cheung Road. Constructing a depot at the southern side of the noise barriers should not cause much adverse noise impact on its surroundings.

The railway corporations have previously proposed to provide a depot in the Kai Tak development area. However, owing to the high ground water level in the area, the chance of flooding is relatively higher. Any flooding would entail high risks to the railway facilities inside the depot. This depot has, therefore, to be constructed at grade. As the depot cannot afford to be constructed below ground, it would cause larger environmental impact to its surroundings. Furthermore, the depot would also impose constraints to the integration of the existing developments in Kowloon City and the future developments in Kai Tak.

In view of the need for minimizing the impact of the depot on its surroundings, we consider that it would be more appropriate to provide the depot at the Diamond Hill CDA site.

- (c) During the further planning of the SCL, the railway corporation will need to carry out EIAs for construction works under the SCL project, including the depot site. At the same time, we will maintain dialogue with the local communities to discuss issues arising from the SCL project. After the SCL scheme is gazetted under the Railways Ordinance, we will consult again the relevant district councils and the public, and listen to their views with an aim of formulating a better and appropriate scheme for the railway.

MISS TAM HEUNG-MAN (in Cantonese): *Madam President, I am most disappointed with the response of the Government. It is evident that the Government does not see the plight of the general public.*

In part (b) of the main reply, it is said that a "semi-depressed" design could be used for the construction of the SCL depot and there are already noise barriers along the northern side of Lung Cheung Road, so the depot should not cause much impact on the environment. Madam President, at a meeting with the Wong Tai Sin District Council last year, the District Council pointed out to the Legislative Council that noise pollution along Lung Cheung Road was very serious, apart from residents of the district

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): What is your question? Please come to it direct.

MISS TAM HEUNG-MAN (in Cantonese): *Fine, Madam President, I will now come to my question.*

According to the findings of an experiment conducted on the noise barriers in the district, the noise level recorded at flats on the 20th floor or above exceeded 70 decibels. How can the Government say that the noise barriers along Lung Cheung Road are adequate measures, which can "adequately" prevent the environment of the district from being affected?

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): President, as I explained earlier, noise barriers have already been installed along Lung Cheung Road, so with the adoption of the "semi-depressed" design and given the topography of the site, the depot will only be 1.5 m above Lung Cheung Road. Moreover, the walls of the depot can also function as noise barriers. Certainly, if the planning is approved, superstructures will be built later, and the depot will then be an enclosed structure. No matter how, it is most important that all projects, including the depot, must pass the EIAs. During the course of EIAs, noise pollution will certainly be one of the factors for consideration.

On the whole, consultation will be conducted again in respect of the SCL alignment and location of the depot. We will first conduct consultation on the options of the scheme. And by the time of gazettal, the public will be given another opportunity to express their opinions.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Miss TAM Heung-man, has your supplementary question not been answered?

MISS TAM HEUNG-MAN (in Cantonese): *Yes, Madam President. I asked the Secretary just now whether the existing noise barriers were adequate in protecting residents from the adverse noise impact. The Secretary has not answered this part.*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): President, regarding noise from the depot, we will not rely solely on the existing

noise barriers as a means to control noise radiation. As I said earlier, we will make use of the "semi-depressed" design, walls of the depot and designs in future, and so on, to control the noise. We hope that the noise level will meet the standard.

MR CHAN KAM-LAM (in Cantonese): *President, the Secretary replied earlier that the "semi-depressed" design would be used to build the SCL depot and the stabling sidings would be built at 3 m below ground. May I ask whether the Government has conducted any assessment of this? Why does it not consider lowering the stabling sidings further by 1 m to 1.5 m and using the fully-depressed design to build the entire depot?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): President, when we come to the detailed design, we will certainly examine whether the sidings can be lowered further by all means. However, there are constraints in railway design, such as the level and gradient of railways, and so on, for railways are different from other ordinary modes of transport. However, we will surely try our level best to achieve this in drawing up the detailed design.

DR LUI MING-WAH (in Cantonese): *President, I think no district will welcome the location of this type of public facility in the district. Since the Government has to build the depot in the district, why does the Government not conduct an EIA beforehand, particularly on the assessment of noise pollution which can be conducted easily? Will the Government seek assistance from universities to conduct the assessment as soon as possible to ease the worries of the public?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): President, we will definitely conduct an EIA in respect of the depot. I said earlier that the SCL had been discussed for a long time. Now, we have received the merger scheme submitted by the two railway corporations, we will consult the public once the merger scheme is finalized. After that, the EIA will commence. The scheme will then be gazetted, and there will again be a period for consultation. Therefore, the EIA will be conducted properly in the course.

DR RAYMOND HO (in Cantonese): *President, I think the main reply of the Secretary is very detailed and I am satisfied with it. However, as a number of technical issues are involved, residents of the district or members of the District Council may not know clearly, particularly on the EIA which would be much better had it been conducted earlier. The Secretary said earlier that the connection or gradient of sidings are different from roads. For sidings, it usually ranges from 3% to 4%, but for roads, the range may be broader. Will the Secretary step up her efforts to explain these technical issues to the local community? Actually, the main reply is rather technical. Though we understand it readily, people who are not versed in the subject may not understand it. Will the Secretary step up the public consultation effort in this respect as soon as possible?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): *President, I think Dr HO's suggestion is very good. When we commence consultation on the merger scheme proposed by the two railway corporations, which will be around early next year, we will have more communication with the local community and explain to them the design constraints.*

MR FRED LI (in Cantonese): *President, I think the residents are keenly concerned about the noise created by the depot. As Miss TAM said, the existing noise barriers are not very effective indeed. May I ask the Secretary whether she will make an undertaking here that if a depot will be built there in the future, it will not increase the existing noise level, in other words, the noise pollution problem will not be aggravated, and that the depot will not create additional noise affecting the residents of Lung Poon Court and Galaxia? Will the Secretary make this undertaking?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): *President, we will surely carry out the work as required by the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance properly and will definitely seek approval in this respect. As I said earlier, many options conducive to noise mitigation may be considered in the detailed design, including the semi-depressed arrangement and depot walls. Indeed, when we come to the detailed design in the future, if the development of superstructure in some measure is allowed, it will also be useful. But, certainly, this will be subject to the approval of the Town Planning Board.*

It is possible that the depot will become an enclosed structure. Therefore, when we decide the details of the design, we will by all means tackle the noise pollution problem properly.

MR FRED LI (in Cantonese): *I did not hear any undertaking by the Secretary. Is the Secretary suggesting that she will ensure this by all means? Or that she has not made any undertaking?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): I undertake that we will definitely carry out the work required by the Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance properly. Every project has to comply with the requirements of the Ordinance, particularly on noise control, the standard must be met.

MR WONG KWOK-HING (in Cantonese): *President, the SCL depot will be located at Tai Hom Village, but a number of heritage items, such as the former site of the hangar and the former residence of QIAO Hong, are located in Tai Hom Village. If the depot is built there, may I ask the Government how those heritage and old buildings carrying rich collective memory will be dealt with?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): President, I believe, under the existing mechanism, we will surely liaise with the Development Bureau and the Home Affairs Bureau to examine which buildings should be preserved, what development should be carried out and how to strike a balance in the development. However, Tai Hom Village has been designated as a CDA site, which is the original planning, where public housing estates, schools and public facilities are included. I believe in the course of development, particularly when consultation is carried out after the examination of the merger scheme, we will welcome the public to express their opinions on this again and will examine whether or not it is possible to incorporate those opinions into our blueprint.

MR ALAN LEONG (in Cantonese): *President, in fact, I would like to follow up the supplementary question asked by Dr LUI Ming-wah just now. Since the*

depot will cause a lot of nuisance to the residents nearby, should the Government not complete the EIA properly before siting instead of conducting the assessment now when the location of the depot has already been confirmed? May I ask the Secretary to explain why there is such a policy which actually puts the cart before the horse?

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): President, actually, a preliminary EIA has to be done in preliminary siting. This is a must. We will carry out not only assessments on the environment but also on planning. This is why we consider the site at Tai Hom Village a better location than the Kai Tak site. Particularly from the planning angle, we know that if the depot is built at Kai Tak, it has to be built at the location of the former airport terminal, which is at grade. I have explained earlier that owing to the geological condition and water level, the depressed or semi-depressed approach cannot be used on that site. As such, an initial EIA has been conducted. We have examined the environmental, planning and safety aspects, and so on, comprehensively. We have now received the merger scheme submitted by the MTRCL and is examining the construction of the depot at Diamond Hill.

Certainly, the EIA can only be commenced at a certain stage of design, for we cannot conduct EIA on "a line" alone, as many different standards and regulations have to be met in the course of EIA. We thus have to wait until the process comes to a certain stage before we can start conducting an EIA. We will carry out the work step by step. First, consultation will be conducted, and then EIA. After that, the scheme will be gazetted under the Railways Ordinance. The public will be consulted by all means at each stage.

PROF PATRICK LAU (in Cantonese): *In part (b) of the main reply, it is mentioned that the Kai Tak development area has once been considered as a site for the depot. My supplementary question for the Secretary is: Has the Government ever considered other sites?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): President, proposals on the siting of the depot are mainly examined by the KCRC and the MTRCL. As the depot has to be located along the alignment after all, we do not have many choices but the two options in Diamond Hill and Kai Tak.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): We have spent more than 16 minutes on this question. Last supplementary question.

MR LAU KONG-WAH (in Cantonese): *President, in part (b) of the main reply, the Secretary said that, "Constructing a depot at the southern side of the noise barriers should not cause much adverse noise impact on its surroundings". The Secretary used the word "much". In other words, it is possible that there will be adverse impact to a "large", "some" or "small" extent, that is, the depot will somehow cause adverse impact. However, residents hope that the depot will be "zero-impact", that is, no additional noise will be created. Therefore, will the Secretary, being a director of the MTRCL, consider instructing the MTRCL via the Board that it is hoped that the future design will not cause any adverse impact?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): President, we definitely hope that the adverse impact of any new facility on the environment will be minimal. For this reason, we will conduct EIAs cautiously. As I said earlier, it all depends on the detailed design or the location of the depot, such as the noise barriers to be used in the future for noise mitigation, and the possibility of using an enclosed design, and so on. We will surely minimize as much as possible noise impact caused to the district.

MR LAU KONG-WAH (in Cantonese): *The Secretary has not answered whether she will consider conveying this instruction at the Board.*

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Secretary, do you have anything to add?

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Cantonese): President, irrespective of what channels will be used in future, including our discussion on the SCL with the future MTRCL, this point will be included on the agenda.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Second question.

Counselling Services for Ex-mental Patients

2. **MR LAU WONG-FAT** (in Cantonese): *Madam President, as cases have occurred from time to time in which ex-mental patients, who have returned to the community but still need to take medication regularly, injuring themselves or other people because they were in emotional distress or did not take medication according to schedule, will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *of the current number of ex-mental patients who have returned to the community but still need to take medication regularly;*
- (b) *of the measures to ensure that the above persons will take medication according to schedule as prescribed by medical practitioners; and*
- (c) *what counselling services are currently provided for the above persons by the Government and the Hospital Authority (HA), and the ratio of the number of ex-mental patients to the number of government and HA staff providing counselling services to them, broken down by 18 District Council (DC) districts?*

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Cantonese): *Madam President, I thank Mr LAU for raising a question of widespread public concern lately.*

- (a) After receiving treatment at the psychiatric hospitals of the HA and upon return to the community, all mental patients are arranged to receive follow-up consultations at the psychiatric specialist out-patient clinics of the HA. In general, all ex-mentally ill persons who have returned to the community have to receive follow-up consultations at psychiatric specialist out-patient clinics and take medications regularly. In 2006-2007, the number of discharged patients of HA's psychiatric hospitals was about 12 000. In the same year, the number of attendances at HA's psychiatric specialist out-patient clinics was about 136 000, including patients of first attendance and patients of follow-up attendance. The attendance of HA's psychiatric day hospital was about 180 000 in 2006-2007.

- (b) HA's doctors explain in detail to mental patients and ex-mentally ill persons the clinical conditions and treatment of their mental illness, advising them of the importance of taking medication according to schedule. The community psychiatric nurses of the HA's psychiatric outreach service also follow up the cases of ex-mentally ill persons through home visits and reminding the ex-mentally ill persons to attend follow-up consultations and take medications according to schedule. If clinical diagnostic information shows that individual ex-mentally ill persons have not complied with the drug regimen, health care personnel of the outreach service would step up their monitoring efforts and urge the patients to take medications according to doctors' instructions. Where necessary, doctors may prescribe medications for injection instead of oral consumption to ensure that the patients would receive the necessary drug treatment.

In addition, the HA organizes talks and disseminates pamphlets on psychiatric drugs to raise the awareness of patients, their families and carers of psychiatric drugs as well as the importance of taking medication according to schedule. The HA also encourages mental patients and ex-mentally ill persons to join patients' mutual support groups. These support groups hold educational talks regularly for mental patients and ex-mentally ill persons, providing them the guidance to take medication according to schedule.

- (c) Prior to the return of the ex-mentally ill persons to the community, a multi-disciplinary team comprising doctors, medical social workers, clinical psychologists and community psychiatric nurses, and so on, would determine the suitable discharge arrangements for these persons, having regard to a number of factors such as the mental conditions of the patients, their compliance with the drug regimen, their self-care ability as well as the availability of community support. At present, rehabilitation and counselling services are provided in the community by the HA, Social Welfare Department (SWD) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to cater for the different needs of ex-mentally ill persons.

The HA hospital clusters arrange for community psychiatric nurses to pay home visits to ex-mentally ill persons at their homes or

half-way houses to monitor the progress of their rehabilitation. If necessary, the HA may also refer ex-mentally ill persons to psychiatric day hospitals for specialist assessment, continued care and rehabilitation services to facilitate their re-integration into the community. HA hospital clusters currently have a total of 118 community psychiatric nurses. In 2006-2007, the community psychiatric nurses have provided a total of about 88 000 outreach attendances.

Relevant key services provided by the SWD and NGOs include:

- (i) community support services, such as Community Mental Health Link Services, Community Mental Health Care Services and Community Rehabilitation Day Services;
- (ii) Training and Activity Centre for Ex-mentally Ill Persons;
- (iii) vocational rehabilitation and training and placement services, such as sheltered workshops, supported employment services, integrated vocational rehabilitation centre, On-the-job Training Programme for People with Disabilities and Sunnyway, On the Job Training Programme for Young People with Disabilities; and
- (iv) residential service, including supported hostels, half-way houses and long stay care homes.

Social workers and counselling staff responsible for taking care of the abovementioned ex-mentally ill persons provide appropriate and timely counselling services to them and their families, helping them cope with the problems they encounter in their daily life so as to facilitate their re-integration into the community. In general, the number of counselling staff of the SWD and NGOs providing the aforesaid services is about 1 580, whereas the number of ex-mentally ill persons being served is about 16 200.

The SWD has also deployed Medical Social Workers (MSWs) at the psychiatric department of various public hospitals and clinics to provide, on referrals by doctors, support to mental patients and

ex-mentally ill persons with welfare needs who are under hospitalization, pending discharge or under follow-up treatments. The MSWs will provide the mental patients and ex-mentally ill persons as well as their families with counselling services, financial and housing assistance, and assist them to address emotional, family, caring and interpersonal problems arising from illness, trauma or disability. The MSWs also collaborate with other medical, nursing and allied health personnel to develop discharge plans for patients, assess patients' psychological health and refer patients and their families to apply for rehabilitation services and related community resources. At present, the SWD has a total of 193 psychiatric medical social workers. In 2006-2007, medical social workers have provided services for 60 543 cases. Over the past few years, along with the increasing number of MSWs, the number of cases being followed up by an MSW at a given point in time has been decreased from 81 in 2003-2004 to 73 at present.

The number of mental patients and the services provided for them are not distributed by districts of the 18 DCs. As such, we do not have relevant data and ratio of the number of ex-mentally ill persons to the number of staff providing counselling services to them in each district.

MR LAU WONG-FAT (in Cantonese): *Madam President, it is of paramount importance to provide follow-up support services for mentally-ill patients in the community, which is also an issue of grave concern to the local residents. Will the Government inform this Council if the Administration will consider involving the DCs, which are well versed in the local situation, to ameliorate the problem, for instance, to set up a relevant committee in the district where the problem is particularly serious, so as to monitor and advise on the local follow-up support services provided for mentally-ill patients?*

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Cantonese): Madam President, I am very grateful to Mr LAU for his suggestion and I believe members of different DCs are also very much concerned about mentally-ill patients. With regard to services, especially psychiatric services in the community, we hope

that the incumbent district that is, district officers will be responsible for co-ordinating the provision of services, which include health, medical and social welfare services. It is hoped that the local residents can be well taken of.

As evident from the historical development, psychiatric services were mainly provided by two large psychiatric hospitals during 1960s and 1970s, namely the then Castle Peak Hospital and Kwai Chung Hospital. Over the past decade or so, these services have gradually been expanded to the seven Clusters of the HA. So, generally speaking, in-patient services are now available to most mentally-ill patients in the districts they live, and they will also be taken care of by the respective hospital cluster after discharge. This enables the patients to recover in a familiar environment with family support. For this reason, I believe they now receive better care than before. Certainly, improvements can still be made in this regard so as to dissuade community resistance to the mentally-ill patients. In particular, special care and love should be given to them so as to create an environment conducive to their rehabilitation.

DR KWOK KA-KI (in Cantonese): *Madam President, it is known to all that the recent Tin Shui Wai tragedy actually involves a mentally-ill patient, who is an ex-mental patient. Over the past few years, the number of consultations of the HA has increased by 45%, which is more than 200 000 people according to the computation of the Department of Health. However, the current total spending on psychiatric services merely accounts for 0.25 of the GDP. Secretary, there are now only 193 social workers, 118 psychiatric nurses and 200-odd doctors, but they have to take care of such a large number of patients. Given that each consultation can only last five to 10 minutes at present, it is downright impossible to help the patients in any way. May I ask the Secretary if he has laid down any targets of improvement to the situation and whether the existing level is deemed a desirable target? If not, what concrete target has been laid down to enable those ex-mental patients and their families to receive better loving care just as the Secretary has said? Where is the love of the Government?*

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Cantonese): Madam President, a committee, which is chaired by me, was set up by the former Health, Welfare and Food Bureau two years ago. The matter has been relayed to the Food and Health Bureau for further study with a view to exploring the future development

of psychiatric services in respect of medical, health care and rehabilitation. Surely, we will take the matter forward in the light of the current situation and the objective to be achieved in the future.

We noted an international trend which is likewise community-based, and it is of paramount importance. Secondly, our psychiatric hospitals should emphasize treatment instead of simply isolating the patients like before. This objective must be achieved gradually. As to what methods will be adopted, like re-allocation of resources or the adoption of the so-called parallel introduction approach — whereby in-patients and patients of first attendance will be handled at the same time, it requires careful consideration and analysis as different treatment methods will be used.

We hope that the sector will render their support in this regard because in the more advanced treatment method used in the international scene, primary health care is an essential part of psychiatric care. Therefore, we have all along exerted great efforts to promote the concepts of family doctor and primary care doctor. These doctors are not alone in resolving problems, but will work hand-in-hand with the relevant institutions, including the welfare and voluntary organizations, within their community network. If we proceed in this direction, there must be careful organization and planning. We intend to do more in this regard in the coming year or so, but I must also point out that considerable resources have been allocated for psychiatric treatment and rehabilitation, which total about \$3.2 billion. Out of this sum, about \$2.6 billion to \$2.7 billion has been committed to health care, whereas about \$600 million to \$700 million has been committed to social welfare. However, we do not want to make clear specification on the application of resources to treating mentally-ill patients or rehabilitation. We wish to provide them with one-stop care so that they can have a continuum of care from incidence to rehabilitation. For this reason, I hope that we can adopt a correct concept in helping the Government to take forward such work.

DR JOSEPH LEE (in Cantonese): *Madam President, the Secretary mentioned in the main reply that, in fact, each year say, last year, 12 000 mentally-ill patients were discharged, the attendance at specialist out-patient clinics was 136 000 and 80 000-odd outreach attendances had been provided by psychiatric nurses. However, I failed to see from the main reply the current number of ex-mental patients in the community. There are nonetheless only 118*

psychiatric nurses territory-wide. Although the Secretary said that some \$3 billion had been spent to help the mentally-ill patients, I am concerned about the number of ex-mental patients in the community who have to be taken care of by these 118 community psychiatric nurses. May I ask the Secretary if there are any figures telling us the number of people waiting for home visits by community psychiatric nurses? What is the interval between each visit by community psychiatric nurses? As far as I understand it, the recent Tin Shui Wai incident occurred when the victim had yet to be visited by the community psychiatric nurses. My concern is: What is the average waiting time of these patients for a visit by the community psychiatric nurses at present?

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Cantonese): Madam President, as I mentioned in the main reply, our 118 community psychiatric nurses had provided more than 80 000 outreach attendances in the past. Since different patients have different needs, it would be very difficult to say who has the need We can calculate the average attendance by dividing the number of attendances by the number of nurses, but this does not represent the general need of the patients. This is indeed a professional judgement. If the community psychiatric nurses and the team concerned considered that a patient warrants more attention, more outreach services will be provided. If a patient receives relatively less family support, more outreach services will be required. But if a patient receives enormous family support or maintains frequent communication with the community psychiatric nurses, it may not be necessary to provide him with extra outreach services. It can therefore be seen that there can be a great variation, and it is very difficult for me to provide a desirable figure.

However, I must say that, just as I have pointed out time and again in the main reply, considerable resources, both government and non-government, have been devoted to the provision of rehabilitation services for patients. I think that the most important point of all is co-ordination and communication, and serving the patients with team spirit. We do not wish to see any tragedies. Meanwhile, we have to approach the patients and their families in order that our professionals will be alerted for immediate intervention once there is any problem with the patients. Mentally-ill patients very often face the problem of sudden incidence and relapse, but it is not always possible for our professionals to intervene promptly on such occasions. Therefore, families or neighbours who have contact with these patients must alert us if they notice any problem with them.

DR JOSEPH LEE (in Cantonese): *Madam President, the Secretary has not answered my supplementary question as the figure 80 000 mentioned by him earlier only shows the workload of community psychiatric nurses. My supplementary question is: Are there any ex-mental patients who have not been visited by community psychiatric nurses under normal circumstances or have to wait for a long time before they are visited due to the heavy workload of these nurses? The Secretary replied that a community psychiatric nurse's decision to visit an ex-mental patient is subject to many conditions. However, insofar as the Tin Shui Wai incident is concerned, something had gone wrong before a home visit was made to the victim. Will the Secretary provide us with some figures to show that — the heavy workload of community psychiatric nurses has rendered them unable to pay timely attention to some ex-mental patients in the community?*

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Secretary, do you have such information in hand?

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Cantonese): Madam President, firstly, I do not have the relevant information; secondly, after talking to colleagues in the HA, I learnt that visits to patients will be arranged when such a need arises. As to the question of whether there are patients who have yet to receive such services, I really cannot give a reply.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): This Council has spent more than 18 minutes on this question. We will now proceed to the third question.

Promoting Development of Social Enterprises

3. **MR FREDERICK FUNG** (in Cantonese): *President, regarding the work on promoting the development of social enterprises (SEs), will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *of the progress of work of the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme; the total number of applications received in the second batch, the reasons why some applications were not approved, and list out the details of each of the approved programmes (including the type of programme, name of applicant*

organization, amount of grant, target beneficiaries, district(s) where the programme operates, as well as the number(s), type(s) and wage level(s) of jobs expected to be created);

- (b) whether it will consider further introducing SEs to districts where the problem of poverty is more serious (including Sham Shui Po, Kwun Tong, Tuen Mun and Yuen Long); if it will, of the details; and*
- (c) of the progress of work in organizing the summit on SEs (including the time, venue and contents of the summit, list of the individuals and organizations proposed to be invited, as well as the expected effectiveness in alleviating poverty)?*

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Cantonese): President, one major characteristic of social enterprise (SE) is achieving social goals with entrepreneurial thinking and commercial strategies. In a nutshell, SE is a business, but its objective is not to make profits for the shareholders. Instead, it puts the achievement of certain social goals as its ultimate objective.

The Chief Executive in his policy address this year has pledged to promote the development of SEs and to foster a new caring culture in Hong Kong. To promote the development of SEs in the Hong Kong community, the Government has provided seed money in a number of specified areas. This includes the Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme (the Programme) introduced in June 2006 to provide grants to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to carry out SE projects to promote self-reliance of the socially disadvantaged groups. The Home Affairs Department (HAD) has further established the Advisory Committee on Enhancing Self-Reliance Through District Partnership Programme (Advisory Committee), comprising eight non-official members and representatives from relevant government departments, to examine applications for funding according to the established criteria.

Regarding the three questions raised by the Honourable Frederick FUNG, I would like to respond as follows:

- (a) We have received a total of 52 valid applications under the second phase application. Upon examination by the Advisory Committee, funding has been approved to 15 of them. The total amount of grants is about \$13 million or an average of about \$900,000 for each

project. The remainder of applications are not approved mainly because they focus too much on training or providing services rather than operating as a business, or because of low business turnover or high risk that casts doubt on the viability and sustainability of the business.

The categories of approved projects fall mainly in catering, recycling, massage, performing arts/productions and organic farming. These projects, carried out in 13 districts, are expected to provide about 280 jobs to Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients, the non-engaged youth, grass-roots women, rehabilitated offenders, new arrivals and single-parent families. As regards job category, it is expected that these projects will create some low-skilled jobs like shop assistants, planters, female garment workers, beauticians and massotherapists. When setting the monthly wages of their employees, the grantee should comply with and must not adopt a rate lower than the average rate stipulated for the relevant industry/occupation in the latest "Quarterly Report of Wage and Payroll Statistics" published by the Census and Statistics Department. The applicant should be a statutory organization or an organization registered under the laws of Hong Kong, and an approved charitable institution and trust of a public character under section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap. 112).

- (b) The HAD launches the Programme with the aim of reinforcing the work in alleviating poverty through a district-based approach. As at today, the Programme has provided under its first and second phases a total grant of about \$50 million to over 50 new SE projects, 29 of which are being carried out in Kwun Tong, Sham Shui Po, Tuen Mun, Yuen Long and Tung Chung of the Islands District, as mentioned by Honourable FUNG. We will continue to strengthen district partnership to promote the development of SEs, to create more employment opportunities for the disadvantaged and enhance their self-reliance through the Programme. Moreover, the Government has successfully liaised with several major organizations which have expressed interest in starting up SEs. While the details are under discussion, it is expected that some projects will be carried out in the above less well-off districts. We will continue to invite the business sector and non-profit organizations to join hand in starting up SE projects.

- (c) SE remains a relatively new concept in Hong Kong and a series of issues need to be further studied. In the context of the market environment in Hong Kong, issues such as how SEs should be positioned in the market to meet market needs and be sustainable for development, whether the Government should have special policies in favour of SEs and how to avoid unfair competition to small and medium enterprises (SMEs), as well as the expected effectiveness of SEs in alleviating poverty, await further examination.

We will organize a summit on SE on 20 December 2007 at the Hongkong International Trade and Exhibition Centre at Kowloon Bay. We are now working on the arrangements for the summit. We will invite different sectors including the academia, the business sector, NGOs and the public sector to participate and jointly explore the way forward for the further development of SEs and to formulate action plans. We expect to be able to announce the details of the summit next month.

MR FREDERICK FUNG (in Cantonese): *President, in part (a) of my main question, I requested an information list which was provided to the public in the past. But the Secretary has not done so in the main reply. Can the Secretary provide the information list in writing later on?*

My supplementary question is also about part (a) of the main reply. The Government said that funding would be allocated to SEs and 280 jobs were expected to be provided. I am a bit worried because the Subcommittee to Study the Subject of Combating Poverty has observed the experiences of the United Kingdom, Ireland and Spain, finding that most of these countries have formulated a series of policies on SEs. But for our Government, there is only one policy and that is, the allocation of funding or providing seed money. And the future policy will only be discussed after the summit on 20 December this year. According to my estimation, should any policy be launched, it will be in the middle of next year when the third phase of funding has been approved. According to my limited information or experience, most of the employees of SEs are CSSA recipients who are relatively old. For any job which requires 10 man-days to complete, they may take 12 days.

The above description is just the background. My supplementary question is about my worry in regard to the belatedness of the policy if it will only

be launched after the summit. Consequently, the funding which has been approved or even the third-phase funding may have been allocated without any complementary policies being formulated. As a result, these SEs may face serious difficulties. May I ask the Secretary whether there will be any contingency or matching policy, apart from the seed money, as an additional measure to help these SEs during this period?

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Frederick FUNG has asked two supplementary questions actually. Would you please focus on the second one because the first one is a request, not a question.

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Cantonese): President, regarding Mr FUNG's request, I will provide a written reply after the meeting because a series of items are involved. We will provide the relevant information to Mr FUNG in a tabulated form. (Appendix I)

Regarding the second supplementary question as to whether there will be any other complementary policy before the summit, in fact, since the assumption of office by the third term SAR Government, we have been conducting studies on the complementary policies and measures. We have certainly noticed that some SEs have asked whether tax concessions can be offered to them or whether favour can be given to them in the Government's procurement policy. We are now considering these policy suggestions but we think that they cannot be launched in a rush because we attach great importance to maintaining the level playing field in Hong Kong. As far as our complementary measures are concerned, we do not only provide seed money. Consequentially, we understand that the SEs are facing a very critical difficulty and that is, the lack of knowledge in market operation and management. We will gradually launch some incentive schemes and facilitate the matching of some enthusiastic people in the business sector who are well-versed in business operation and management with the relevant SEs so that they can share their experiences in business operation and management with the SEs. This will foster the growth of SEs.

Apart from making contact with the grass-roots organizations in order to find out any room for starting up SEs in various communities, we also liaise and communicate with the big organizations — both enterprises and public organizations — in Hong Kong to see whether there is any opportunity for co-operation. These are our ongoing tasks.

MR CHEUNG HOK-MING (in Cantonese): *President, in the main reply, the Secretary mentioned that SEs are mainly engaged in catering, recycling and massage businesses. The Secretary should say that most of these businesses are run by SMEs in Hong Kong. Last week, I went into a bistro café run by an SE. In order to know why its business is booming like a market, I went there to take a look and found that the prices of its food are inexpensive and the quality is good, thus attracting a lot of patrons.*

Regarding such a situation, the Secretary said in the main reply that a review would be conducted to examine if there is any conflict between SEs and SMEs. May I ask the Secretary whether the Government has received any similar complaints in the past? To put it simply, has the Government received any complaints about competition for business between SEs and SMEs? If yes, has the Home Affairs Department set up any mechanism to resolve such complaints? If similar problems arise in future, how will they be solved?

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Cantonese): *President, as far as I am aware, we have not received any complaints about businesses of other SMEs being taken away by SEs. Of course, as I said in the main reply, we attach great importance to factors which are the key to the success of Hong Kong and that is, to maintain a level playing field. In last week's policy debate, I said that under "one country, two systems", Hong Kong has to develop the true capitalism. So, the SAR Government does not intend to operate any enterprises through government policies or measures, resulting in stifling the room of survival of private enterprises or enterprises run by individuals. So, we have actively made reference to overseas experience in developing SEs. On the other hand, we have adopted a very prudent attitude in launching government policies and measures to support the SEs. I remember a Member said in the debate that lots of overseas experiences have proved that the common characteristics of successful SEs are the efforts of enthusiastic social entrepreneurs who have fostered the growth of SEs from scratch and most of them have not or almost absolutely have not received any government subsidy. I think the most important thing is to create an SE culture.*

MR RONNY TONG (in Cantonese): *President, after hearing the Secretary's response, I felt a bit strange. In the main reply, the Secretary pointed out that after the completion of the second-phase scheme, only 280 jobs would be created. Obviously, it is not effective. In its reply to Honourable colleagues, the*

Government said that no special measures would be launched to promote the development of SEs. Just now, however, the Secretary mentioned foreign experiences. I wonder whether the Secretary knows that the Government of the United Kingdom, when promoting SEs, has provided a lot of concessions in terms of tax, loans and planning, so as to facilitate the establishment of SEs. In fact, plenty of such measures have been implemented in foreign countries. Besides, the United Kingdom has enacted a fair competition law, which however is lacking in Hong Kong to date. Why does the Government consider that the promotion of SEs will constitute unfair competition to SMEs? What justifications can the Government provide for our discussion?

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Cantonese): President, I do not think the promotion of SEs will constitute unfair competition to SMEs. I do not mean that. But we will be very careful and will uphold a level playing field. So, when talking about any policies and measures for supporting the development of SEs, we will be very prudent and keep an eye on whether it will constitute pressure of unfair competition to other SMEs.

We will make reference to overseas experiences, but as far as the development of SEs in Hong Kong is concerned, the most important thing is to take account of the actual situation of Hong Kong. In my opinion, if we wish to develop SEs in Hong Kong, we have to take account of the actual situation of Hong Kong's market.

MR ALBERT HO (in Cantonese): *President, from the figures, we can see that many applications were not approved by the Government. Recently I received some complaints from Tin Shui Wai, saying that some people had enthusiastically set up some organizations and submitted some proposals apart from conducting market surveys. For instance, one of the proposals is to provide repair service of air-conditioners for local residents. This will create employment in the district and the residents are living in the district. This is a very good proposal which, however, is not approved on the grounds that, among others, there is a lack of business experience.*

They wonder whether the Government has other reasons. The Secretary also said that if they lack business experience, assistance will be rendered by the Government. But it seems that this is not the case now. Besides, in part (c) of the main reply, the Secretary said that the authorities are worried that the SEs

may cause unfair competition to SMEs. Is this the actual reason? If not, many people do not understand why their applications are not approved. This has dealt a heavy blow to the applicants. They have devoted a lot of efforts in making studies and compiling proposals which are eventually all in vain. Can the Secretary explain whether the criteria adopted by the authorities are very stringent? Besides, have obstacles been created by the unfair competition mentioned in part (c), thus resulting in

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): You have asked your supplementary question, right? Please sit down. Secretary, please answer the question.

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Cantonese): Regarding the vetting and approving of applications, first of all, I fully understand that many non-profit-making organizations or grass-roots organizations in the community have submitted a lot of applications on the setting up of SEs. The fact that there are numerous applications reflects that the concept of SEs is gaining increased exposure in society. We have set up an independent committee which is chaired by a professor and participated by people from various sectors such as accountants and representatives of SMEs. They are responsible for vetting and approving the applications. In doing so, they will usually consider whether the profitability of the SEs can ensure their sustainable development in compliance with the concept of SEs in our understanding.

MR ALBERT HO (in Cantonese): *President, in the last part of my supplementary question, I said that the lack of experience in running a business should not be a reason for being rejected because the Government can render assistance. May I ask whether the lack of experience in business operation will constitute a justification for rejecting an application?*

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Secretary, do you have anything to add?

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Cantonese): President, since the SEs are beginners, I think the committee will try its best to help them and provide experiences in running a business.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): This Council has spent more than 19 minutes in this question. We will now proceed to the fourth question.

Common Descriptors for Associate Degree Programmes

4. **MR CHEUNG MAN-KWONG** (in Cantonese): *President, in consultation with the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA) and tertiary institutions, the Government formulated in 2001 a set of common descriptors for associate degree (AD) programmes, in which the programme objectives, entry requirements, exit qualifications, and so on, were outlined. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *whether it knows if there have been cases, in the past three and the current school years, in which tertiary institutions did not adhere to the entry requirements set out in the common descriptors, such as admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) or a pass in one subject in the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) or equivalent, admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum, and allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum; together with a breakdown by institution, the entry requirements not adhered to and course duration;*
- (b) *whether currently, the institutions are still required to adhere to the relevant entry requirements when admitting students for AD programmes; if so, how the relevant authorities follow up cases in which the tertiary institutions have failed to adhere to such requirements; if adherence is no longer required, when this began and the reasons for that; and*
- (c) *whether it will conduct a review on the admission and exit standards for AD programmes; if it will, of the timetable of the review; if not, how it ensures that graduates conferred with the relevant qualifications have achieved the necessary academic and professional standards?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Cantonese): President,

- (a) In 2001, the Government, together with the HKCAA and the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions (FCE), jointly formulated a set of common descriptors for AD programmes. The entry requirements specified in the common descriptors are as follows:
- (I) AD programmes should generally adopt the principle of "lenient entry, stringent exit".
 - (II) For a two-year curriculum, the proposed normal minimum entry requirements are:
 - (1) attain a pass in one A Level subject or an equivalent number of AS Level subjects in the HKALE, and
 - (i) attain five passes (including English and Chinese subjects) in the HKCEE conducted before 2007; or
 - (ii) attain three passes plus Level 2 or above in English and Chinese subjects in HKCEE conducted in or after 2007;
 - (2) satisfactory completion of a pre-AD programme; or
 - (3) mature students.
 - (III) For a three-year curriculum, the proposed normal minimum entry requirements are:
 - (1) attain five passes (including English and Chinese subjects) in HKCEE conducted before 2007;
 - (2) attain three passes plus Level 2 or above in English and Chinese subjects in HKCEE conducted in or after 2007; or
 - (3) mature students.

Detailed information with regard to the admission by individual institutions of students not meeting the above general requirements, compiled on the basis of materials provided by the institutions, is set out at Annex.

- (b) Institutions basically adhere to the common descriptors when admitting students for AD programmes. They have also set out specific entry requirements following these descriptors. Indeed, information provided by the institutions shows that most programmes have followed the common descriptors for student admission purpose. For example, around 8 400 students were admitted to self-financed AD programmes offered by the institutions in 2006-2007, and the total number of cases not meeting the proposed entry requirements set out in the common descriptors was about 290, representing about 3.5% of the total students admitted. As regards applicants not meeting the minimum requirements under the HKCEE or the HKALE, the institutions will consider whether they possess recognized equivalent qualifications, such as the successful completion of Project Yi Jin. Some institutions have also laid down special admission criteria for applicants not meeting the language requirements under HKCEE. For example, they will be required to attend an intensive language course and be able to obtain a pass before the commencement of the school term, failing which their enrolment will be cancelled.

The specific entry requirements laid down by the institutions, including the recognized equivalent qualifications and additional special admission criteria, have to be accredited by a recognized quality assurance agency prior to the provision of the relevant programme. Universities with self-accrediting status are required to subject their AD programmes to the same internal quality assurance mechanism as those applicable to their regular degree programmes.

The Education Bureau attaches great importance to the quality of AD programmes and has been liaising with the institutions to keep abreast of latest developments. Furthermore, the Joint Quality Review Committee (JQRC) established by the Heads of Universities Committee is now conducting institutional reviews for the eight self-accrediting institutions in respect of their self-financed AD programmes. The reviews, which will cover entry requirements,

aim at improving the quality of self-financed AD programmes, as well as enhancing the social accountability of the institutions concerned.

- (c) In collaboration with the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (AAVQ), JQRC and FCE, we are currently reviewing the entire set of common descriptors, with a view to providing a clear position for AD programmes and to ensure that they dovetail with the development and implementation of the new senior secondary academic structure. We expect the review to be completed by mid-2008.

Annex

Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements
Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD in 2004-2005 to 2007-2008

I. Self-accrediting Institutions

1. City University of Hong Kong — Community College of City University

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD							Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases					Others			
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in one subject in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum					
2004-2005	Due to the limitation of the institution's student admission information system, the relevant information for this academic year is not available										
2005-2006	No Case										
2006-2007											
2007-2008	Associate of Business Administration (Human Resources Management)	2	-	1	-	-	-	90	1. Reasons for Special Consideration - the student has excellent achievements in sports and is recommended for admission by the Student Development Services Unit - the student has good performance in the admission interview		

2. Hong Kong Baptist University — College of International Education

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD					Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases						
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in one subject in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum	Others		
2004-2005	Associate Degree Course (Details not provided by the institution)	2	-	About 80	-	-	-	826	1. Reasons for Special Consideration - completion of two-year matriculation curriculum - school results and good conduct - passed English admission interview - other talents and excellent performance - based on the principle of "lenient entry, stringent exit" and subject to a cap of 10% of total students admitted in the corresponding year, the institution has admitted students without a pass in one subject in the HKALE or equivalent results
2005-2006	Associate Degree Course (Details not provided by the institution)		-	About 80	-	-	-	796	
2006-2007	Associate Degree Course (Details not provided by the institution)		-	About 65	-	-	-	635	
2007-2008	Associate Degree Course (Details not provided by the institution)		-	About 70	-	-	-	682	

3. Lingnan University — The Community College at Lingnan University

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD					Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases						
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in one subject in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum	Others		
2004-2005	Due to the limitation of the institution's student admission information system, the relevant information for these three academic year is not available								
2005-2006									
2006-2007									
2007									

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD						Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases					Others		
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in one subject in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum				
2007-2008	1 Associate of Business Studies		13	15	3	-	-	193	1. Remedial Language Programme (English subject) - students who failed in the Chinese and English subjects in HKCEE shall be required to complete a remedial programme - the standard of the remedial programme is recognized by the institution as equivalent to a pass in the relevant language subject in HKCEE - students who fail to complete the programme successfully will not be admitted to the institution	
	2 Associate of Arts	2	10	7	3	-	-	102	2. Learning Contract - the institution may, on a discretionary basis, admit students who failed in the Chinese subject in HKCEE or have not attained the required results in HKALE. The student and the institution shall enter into a learning contract stating that the student must attain the required standards before promoting to the second year	
	3 Associate of Social Sciences		1	2	-	-	-	24	3. Admission of F.6 Students - since September 2007, students completing F.6 but without HKALE qualifications will not be admitted to the institution	

4. The Hong Kong Institute of Education — School of Continuing and Professional Education

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD						Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases					Others		
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in one subject in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum				
2004-2005			No Case							
2005-2006			No Case							
2006-2007			No Case							
2007-2008			No Case							

5A. The Chinese University of Hong Kong — School of Continuing and Professional Studies

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD						Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases					Others		
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in one subject in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum				
2004-2005	1 Associate Degree in Business	2	-	2	-	-	-	44	1. Reasons for Special Consideration - the applicant obtained a pass in one AS-level subject in HKALE - good performance in the admission interview	
	2 Associate Degree in Computing		1	-	-	-	-	10		
	3 Associate Degree in Recreation and Leisure Studies		-	2	-	-	-	25		
	4 Associate Degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management		-	2	-	-	-	56		
2005-2006			The institution has not offered any AD programme in these three academic years							
2006-2007			The institution has not offered any AD programme in these three academic years							
2007-2008			The institution has not offered any AD programme in these three academic years							

5B. The Chinese University of Hong Kong — Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Community College

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD							Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases								
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in one the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum	Others				
2004-2005	Institution did not operate in that academic year, hence no AD programme was offered										
2005-2006	1 Associate of Arts Programme	2	-	4	2	-	-	103	1. Reasons for Special Consideration - good performance in the admission interview - recommendation by the secondary school principal - other recommendation letters - outstanding leadership and excellent performance in extracurricular activities and other non-academic aspects		
	2 Associate of Business Programme		-	13	1	-	-	258			
2006-2007	1 Associate of Arts Programme		-	5	1	-	-	101			
	2 Associate of Science Programme		-	1	1	-	-	100			
	3 Associate of Business Programme		-	15	-	-	-	281			
2007-2008	1 Associate of Arts Programme		-	6	1	-	-	121			
	2 Associate of Science Programme		1	2	1	-	-	83			
	3 Associate of Business Programme		-	7	-	-	-	196			

6. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University — Hong Kong Community College

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD						Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases					Others		
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in one subject in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum				
2004-2005	1 Associate in Business		3	2	-	-	1	1 273	1. Results in Language Subjects in HKCEE and HKALE (AS Level) applicants who failed in the Chinese or English subjects in HKCEE, but obtained a pass or above result in the Chinese or English subjects in HKALE (AS Level) and passed the admission interview - some applicants obtained a pass in the French subject instead of the Chinese subject in HKCEE and passed the admission interview 2. Non-academic Achievements applicants demonstrated outstanding leadership and performed very well in sports. They have also passed the admission interview	
	2 Associate in Engineering		1	-	-	-	-	132		
	3 Associate in Applied Social Sciences		1	-	-	-	-	243		
	4 Associate in Design		1	-	-	-	-	116		
	5 Associate in Statistics and Computing for Business		2	-	-	-	-	64		
2005-2006	1 Associate of Arts		-	1	-	-	-	20		
	2 Associate in China Business		-	-	-	-	1	34		
	3 Associate in Applied Social Sciences		-	-	-	-	1	164		
	4 Associate in Bilingual Communication		-	-	-	-	2	78		
	5 Associate in Design		-	-	-	-	1	80		
2006-2007	1 Associate of Arts		1	-	-	-	-	23		
	2 Associate in Engineering		3	-	-	-	-	114		
	3 Associate in Information Technology		-	1	-	-	-	53		
	4 Associate in Applied Social Sciences		3	3	-	-	-	187		
	5 Associate in Design	2	1	6	-	-	-	104		
	6 Associate in Health Studies		-	1	-	-	-	104		
	7 Associate in Business (Accounting and Finance)		4	2	-	-	-	477		
	8 Associate in Business (Business Management)		3	2	-	-	-	113		
	9 Associate in Business (Hospitality Management)		4	2	-	-	-	295		
	10 Associate in Business (Human Resources Management)		1	3	-	-	-	75		
	11 Associate in Business (Information Systems and Knowledge Management)		-	1	-	-	-	11		
	12 Associate in Business (Marketing)		-	3	-	-	-	247		
	13 Associate in Business		-	1	-	-	-	190		
2007-2008	1 Associate in Business (Logistics and Supply Chain Management)		-	1	-	-	-	20		
	2 Associate of Science		-	1	-	-	-	72		

7A. University of Hong Kong — The HKU SPACE Community College

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD				# Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum	Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases						
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in one subject in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Others			
2004-2005	1 Associate of Arts	2	-	-	-	-	73	467	# Reasons for Consideration the students' entry qualifications have far exceeded the admission standards as set out in the Common Descriptors for Associate Degree programmes most students have the required qualifications for admission to the first year of a UGC-funded full-time degree programme offered by local universities some students have even given up the offer of a UGC-funded degree place and chose to enrol in the institution all cases have gone through a stringent assessment process and were approved taking into consideration the applicants' qualifications and the requirements of respective programmes
	2 Associate of Business Administration		-	-	-	-	4	363	
	3 Associate of Applied Science in Life Science		-	-	-	-	46	241	
	4 Associate of Applied Science in Physical Science		-	-	-	-	21	82	
2005-2006	1 Associate of Arts		-	1*	-	-	29	451	
	2 Associate of Applied Science in Life Science		-	-	-	-	12	207	
	3 Associate of Applied Science in Physical Science		-	-	-	-	16	72	
2006-2007	1 Associate of Arts		-	-	-	-	115	496	
	2 Associate of Applied Science in Life Science		-	-	-	-	9	234	
	3 Associate of Applied Science in Physical Science		-	-	-	-	11	64	
2007-2008	1 Associate of Arts		-	-	-	-	101	515	
	2 Associate of Applied Science in Life Science		-	-	-	-	6	196	
	3 Associate of Applied Science in Physical Science	-	-	-	-	7	71		

* negligence (individual case)

7B. HKU SPACE Po Leung Kuk Community College

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD					Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases						
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in one subject in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum	Others		
2004-2005			No Case						
2005-2006									
2006-2007									
2007-2008									

II. Institutions Accredited by Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic & Vocational Qualifications

1A. Caritas Bianchi College of Careers

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD					Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases						
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in one subject in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum	Others		
2004-2005			Due to the limitation of the institution's student admission information system, the relevant information for these three academic year is not available						
2005-2006									
2006-2007									

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD					Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases						
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the one subject in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum	Others		
2007-2008	1 Associate Degree in Business	3	11	-	-	-	-	31	<p>1. Remedial Language Programme</p> <p>- students who failed in the Chinese or English subjects in the HKCEE shall be required to complete a remedial programme</p> <p>- the standard of the remedial programme is recognized by the institution as equivalent to a pass in the relevant language subject in the HKCEE</p> <p>- students who fail to complete the programme successfully will not be allowed to graduate from the institution</p>
	2 Associate Degree in Design		34	-	-	-	-	96	
	3 Associate Degree in Hospitality Management		24	-	-	-	-	99	

1B. Caritas Francis Hsu College

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD					Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases						
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in one subject in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum	Others		
2004-2005	1 Associate of Business Administration in Tourism and Marketing Management	3	13	-	-	-	-	31	1. Remedial Language Programme students who failed in the Chinese or English subjects in the HKCEE shall be required to complete a remedial programme the standard of the remedial programme is recognized by the institution as equivalent to a pass in the relevant language subject in the HKCEE students who fail to complete the programme successfully will not be allowed to graduate from the institution
	2 Associate of Science in Business Information Systems		1	-	-	-	-	6	
	3 Associate of Social Science in Social Work		12	-	-	-	-	80	
2005-2006	1 Associate in Hospitality Management		6	-	-	-	-	21	
	2 Associate of Social Science in Social Work		12	-	-	-	-	101	
	3 Associate of Business Administration in Tourism and Marketing Management		4	-	-	-	-	18	
2006-2007	1 Associate in Hospitality Management		2	-	-	-	-	10	
	2 Associate of Social Science in Social Work		15	-	-	-	-	113	
2007-2008	1 Associate in Hospitality Management		1	-	-	-	-	4	
	2 Associate of Social Science in Social Work	19	-	-	-	-	123		

2. Hang Seng School of Commerce

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD					Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases						
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in one subject in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum	Others		
2004-2005	Associate in Business Administration	2	-	2	-	-	-	84	1. Reasons for Special Consideration - performance in admission interview - school results - achievements in other academic or extracurriculum activities 2. Quota for Discretionary Admission - as approved by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications during the accreditation process, the institution may enrol up to 15% of the students who do not fulfil the minimum entry requirements
2005-2006	Associate in Business Administration		-	6	-	-	-	82	
2006-2007	Associate in Business Administration		-	1	-	-	-	201	
2007-2008	Associate in Business Administration		No Case					191	

3. Hong Kong Central College

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD						Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases							
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum	Others			
2004-2005	The institution was not established, hence no AD programmes had been offered in these three academic years									
2005-2006										
2006-2007										
2007-2008										Associate Degree in Services Management

4. Hong Kong College of Technology

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD						Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases							
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in one the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum	Others			
2004-2005	Institution did not offer any AD programme in this academic year.									
2005-2006	Associate Degree in Social Work	3	5	-	-	-	-	33	1. Remedial Language Programme - students who failed in the Chinese or English subjects in the HKCEE shall be required to complete a remedial programme - the standard of the remedial programme is recognized by the institution as equivalent to a pass in the relevant language subject in the HKCEE	
2006-2007	Associate Degree in Social Work	3	4	-	-	-	-	51		
2007-2008	Associate Degree in Social Work	4	6	-	-	-	-	48		

5. Hong Kong Institute of Technology

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD					Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases						
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in one subject in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum	Others		
2004-2005	1 Associate Degree of Business Administration in Financial Services	3	8	3	-	-	-	62	1. Benchmark Language Programme - students who failed in the Chinese or English subjects in HKCEE shall be required to complete a benchmark programme the standard of the benchmark programme is assessed by the AAVQ and recognized by the institution as equivalent to that of the relevant language subject in HKCEE
	2 Associate Degree of Science in Computing and Information Technology		1	1	-	-	-	31	
	3 Associate Degree of Business in Hospitality and Tourism Management		2	-	-	-	-	40	
2005-2006	1 Associate Degree of Business Administration		5	3	-	-	-	45	
	2 Associate Degree of Science in Computing and Information Technology		1	1	-	-	-	25	
	3 Associate Degree of Business in Hospitality and Tourism Management		3	2	-	-	-	24	
2006-2007	1 Associate Degree of Business Administration		-	2	-	-	-	60	
2007-2008	1 Associate Degree of Business Administration		5	1	-	-	-	66	
	2 Associate Degree of Science in Computing and Information Technology		1	-	-	-	-	13	
	3 Associate Degree in Nursing	4	-	-	-	-	108		

6. Chu Hai College of Higher Education

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD					Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases						
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in one subject in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum	Others		
2004-2005			No Case						
2005-2006									
2006-2007									
2007-2008									

Post-Meeting Supplementary Information (Please refer to B1)

MR CHEUNG MAN-KWONG (in Cantonese): *President, various institutions reached an agreement on the minimum admission requirement for AD programmes at the time and the requirement was recognized by the HKCAA. However, according to the main reply of the Secretary, the number of cases not meeting the requirement was 290 in the 2006-2007 school year, of which 41 students failed in the English and Chinese subjects in the HKCEE, and 370 in the 2007-2008 school year, where the number of students failing in the English and Chinese subjects in the HKCEE increased substantially to 135. The problem of violation is worsening. Actually, these students who fail in the English and Chinese subjects in the HKCEE are not qualified for university education, and they may not even meet the application requirement for government posts.*

However, the situation goes from bad to worse. At present, some institutions even concoct various pretexts to offer pre-AD programmes. When the admission rate is unsatisfactory, these institutions will resort to organizing preparatory courses for pre-AD programmes. Academic qualification is no longer a concern. Everyone is offered a place if they pay. Subsequently, almost all the students of these courses will be promoted to AD programmes. The rules have been broken, the quality has been jeopardized

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, please come to your supplementary question direct.

MR CHEUNG MAN-KWONG (in Cantonese): *May I ask the Secretary why increasingly lax admission requirement for AD programmes is adopted in the course of competition? Is this for the purpose of universal education without discrimination or is this a lose-lose situation as a result of vicious competition? Will you contact these universities which have violated the rules and impose stringent measures to change this totally unregulated and "lose-lose" admission practice which may even ruin the students?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Cantonese): President, I have to thank Mr CHEUNG for raising this supplementary question. But I have to clarify one point first. The situation is not totally unregulated as Mr CHEUNG said.

As I have pointed out clearly in the main reply earlier, the admission requirements laid down by various institutions may include certain recognized equivalent qualifications, such as Project Yi Jin mentioned by me earlier. There are other recognized equivalent qualifications, such as certificates or diplomas awarded by other institutions and certain equivalent qualifications obtained overseas or on the Mainland. All these qualifications will be considered and accepted if suitable.

The decision of whether or not certain qualifications should be accepted does not rest with us. As I said in the main reply, for universities with self-accrediting status, under the internal quality assurance mechanism, the specific entry requirements must undergo self-assessment and be passed before the relevant programme is provided. For institutions without such a mechanism, their requirements must be accredited by a recognized quality assurance agency prior to offering the relevant programme. That means the arrangement has to be made beforehand.

Moreover, there are some special circumstances. For instance, some universities may impose certain special entry requirements which require students to attain the required standards before they can continue their studies. Therefore, assurance is in place in this respect. Certainly, if the situation mentioned by Mr CHEUNG earlier does occur, that is, if students who fail to

attain the required standard are allowed to continue their studies, this is a violation. If there is such case, I hope Mr CHEUNG will provide the information of the case to us, and we will definitely follow up the case.

MR CHEUNG MAN-KWONG (in Cantonese): *President, the Secretary has not responded to a very crucial violation which I quoted earlier, that is, students failing in the English and Chinese subjects in the HKCEE are offered a place. Actually, there is no other remedy but retaking the HKCEE. But the student concerned is now studying an AD programme or a pre-AD programme and will be promoted to a higher class later. How should this case be dealt with? Even if the institution concerned let the student complete all the courses in the future, it is unjustified to say that the student concerned will have obtained a pass in the English and Chinese subjects in the HKCEE. He has to retake the examinations. But the student has already been admitted by the institution.*

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Secretary, do you have anything to add?

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Cantonese): President, I would only add one point, that is, we are now talking about equivalent qualifications. Definitely, this is different from a pass in the English and Chinese subjects in the HKCEE, and they are not equal.

However, as I said earlier, if the institution concerned has undergone internal assessment or external assessment, and it is allowed to state in advance the specific admission arrangement, this is definitely an assurance of quality. However, if certain institutions really violate the rules, I hope Mr CHEUNG can provide the information of these cases to us, so that we may follow up.

DR YEUNG SUM (in Cantonese): *Madam President, the number of places of AD programmes offered increases from 15 161 in the 2002-2003 school year to 28 104 in the 2005-2006 school year, representing an increase of 1.58 times. As for pre-AD programmes, the number of places also increases from 1 102 to 4 140, with an increase of nearly 3.67 times.*

The former President of Lingnan University, Dr Edward CHEN, once said, "in view of the competition on AD programme among institutions, which stands

at a ratio of three places to one student, there is no way for institutions to adhere to the principle of "lenient entry, stringent exit", for they fear a low passing rate may scare students off and affect their income". May I ask the Secretary how the current problem of oversupply of places can be dealt with? How can he defuse this time bomb in education, as described by Mr Peter CHEUNG from the HKCAA that students are "earning a degree without receiving education"? What measures will you put in place to prevent indiscriminate admission because of the oversupply of places?

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Dr YEUNG Sum, you have actually asked three questions in a row, but I will combine them into one question: Is there any case of indiscriminate admission and how can the situation be improved?

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Cantonese): Dr YEUNG Sum's supplementary question is based on the assumption that there is an oversupply of places of AD programmes. However, is this really the case? I am afraid this is not necessarily so. At present, a large number of students graduate from secondary schools every year and the number of matriculants is large. However, universities can only offer a very small number of undergraduate places under the existing target rate of 18%. As for the other students, we notice that some will further their studies overseas while others will seek employment in society. However, a good many of them will seek opportunities to further their studies and the AD programme is one of their options, which is a new alternative for learning provided to them by the Government since 2002.

This alternative is now readily known. As more courses of this category are now provided, offering more choices to students, the number of students taking these courses is increasing. However, I disagree that there is an oversupply of places.

DR YEUNG SUM (in Cantonese): *Madam President, my supplementary question is not based on an assumption as the Secretary claimed. My supplementary question is very specific. How will the Secretary monitor the situation and prevent any indiscriminate admission of students? If unqualified applicants are also granted admission, it is indiscriminate admission.*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Cantonese): I think Members will know the situation if they look at the figures in this respect. According to Dr YEUNG, the so-called indiscriminate admission at present is in fact the admission of certain students who have not met the required standard. However, as I explained earlier, there are justifications for such admission. Even if we disregard these justifications, the admission rate in this respect is only 3.5%. Is this tantamount to indiscriminate admission?

President, I think there is no question of indiscriminate admission. An overwhelming majority of admission offers are made according to the required descriptors. Therefore, concerning the standard, the required descriptors and our targets have been met.

MS AUDREY EU (in Cantonese): *President, in part (c) of the main reply, the Secretary said that a review would be conducted of AD programmes to provide a clear position for AD programmes.*

May I ask the Secretary, before this review, of the position of the Government in respect of AD programme and its stance on the admission requirements of AD programmes? In the first half of the Secretary's main reply, I notice that the Secretary said that the principle of "lenient entry, stringent exit" had to be adopted. Moreover, in part (b) of the main reply, the Secretary said that "institutions basically adhere to the common descriptors when admitting students for AD programmes," and only 3.5% of the students admitted did not meet the entry requirements. So, may I ask the Secretary whether he considers the present situation acceptable, and that the Government's requirement on the quality or the positioning of AD programmes has been fully satisfied? Or, does he consider the admission practice now adopted by institutions unacceptable and more stringent requirements should be imposed?

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Cantonese): In respect of the principle, this was the target we set at the time. Now, achievement has been made. We have the assurance.

Concerning the 3.5% admissions, as I have explained earlier, these cases cannot be interpreted as a complete violation or a complete failure in meeting our target, for the requirements laid down are just applicable to the general situation,

and there are exceptions which we may consider. The 3.5% admissions are exceptional cases we consider may be acceptable. However, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said earlier that among the 3.5% admissions, he thought some of the cases actually involved violations. Again, as I said earlier, if examples and information of these cases are available, we will surely take follow-up action. Therefore, before we can get the number of these cases, we are still doubtful about this. But even if there are really such cases, the number will be negligible.

Under this circumstance, we consider that the target has been achieved now. The review is conducted in the light of the development and implementation of the new academic structure for senior secondary education, the "3-3-4" academic structure, for we have to draw up an alternative plan to tie in with the new structure. Moreover, we have to sum up our experience in the past few years and identify areas which need improvement or tighter control. We will take this opportunity to carry out these tasks together.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): This Council has spent more than 18 minutes on this question. We will now proceed to the fifth question.

Appointed Members of District Councils

5. **MR ALAN LEONG** (in Cantonese): *President, concerning the appointed seats of District Councils (DCs), will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *of the following information about each appointed DC member of the current term: the number of other advisory and statutory bodies of which he/she is a member, for how long he/she has been serving as an appointed DC member, and to-date rate of attendance at DC meetings of this term;*
- (b) *given the Government has stipulated that in general, a non-official member of an advisory or statutory body should not serve in that capacity for more than six years, and the same person should not be appointed to be a member of more than six boards or committees at the same time, whether it will stick to these stipulations when appointing DC members of the next term; if it will not, of the reasons for that; and*

- (c) *as the Government had proposed in December 2005 the phased abolition of appointed DC seats, whether it will put forward again a plan to phase out appointed DC seats on this basis; if it will, of the progress and details; if not, the reasons for that?*

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Cantonese): President,

- (a) As regards part (a) of the question, the relevant information about the appointed members of the DCs of the current term is set out at Annex for Members' reference.

I wish to briefly illustrate the information here: Firstly, we learn from the Annex that appointed DC members' rate of attendance at the DC meetings is relatively high. Some of them attained an attendance rate of 100%, while most others reached 80% to 90% or above. Secondly, as regards the tenure of the incumbent DC members, we can see that it is four years for each DC term. Some of the incumbent appointed members have served on the DCs for more than three years since the beginning of the current term (that is, 2004), while some have served on the DCs for more than seven years since their appointment in the last term (that is, 2000). Thirdly, we can also see from the Annex the number of advisory and statutory bodies (ASBs) on which all incumbent appointed DC members are serving. There is a member, who apart from serving on the DC, is also serving on six other ASBs. I have looked into the position of this member and noted that the lady was first appointed as a DC member, and was subsequently appointed to other ASBs. Three out of these six ASBs, namely, the Appeal Board (Bedspace Apartments), Appeal Board (Clubs (Safety of Premises)), and Appeal Board (Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation), deal with related matters and meet only very sparingly when appeal cases arise. In fact, some other members serving on these ASBs also sit on the three ASBs at the same time. She is therefore not the only one, and this is why I am giving such an explanation. We certainly would not encourage appointed members taking up membership in too many ASBs at the same time to ensure that their performance will not be adversely affected.

- (b) In response to part (b) of the question, in appointing members to the DCs, the Government will follow the general principles of

appointment and avoid, as far as possible, appointing the same person to more than six ASBs. The six-year rule will be applied with flexibility. In considering whether a DC member will be reappointed, the Administration will take into account the candidate's ability, experience, integrity, as well as his commitment to serve the community to ensure that suitable persons are appointed as DC members.

- (c) To take forward Hong Kong's constitutional development in accordance with the Basic Law, the Government put forth a package of proposals (the so-called "Fifth Report of the Constitutional Development Taskforce" at that time) in October 2005 regarding the elections of the Chief Executive in 2007 and the Legislative Council in 2008. The proposals included incorporating all DC members in the Election Committee and increasing the number of seats in the Legislative Council to be returned by the DC functional constituency to six. Recommendations of the Fifth Report had to be endorsed by two thirds of the Legislative Council. In view of the concerns in the community on the participation of appointed DC members in the two elections, the Government put forward proposals in December 2005 to abolish appointed members in phases. At that time, the Government stated that, if the package was rejected by the Legislative Council, we would not proceed with the changes to the DC appointed seats on its own. As the package of proposals was not endorsed by a two-thirds majority of all Members of the Legislative Council, the proposed changes were not implemented.

In considering whether the appointed DC seats should be abolished, we need to consider carefully the role played and the contribution made by appointed members. In 2006, the SAR Government conducted a public consultation on the review of the role, functions and composition of the DCs. In general, those who tendered views recognized the contribution made by the appointed DC members.

Those in support of retaining appointed membership were of the view that the appointment system could allow personalities from various backgrounds to take part in the administration of district affairs. Through their expertise and experience, appointed members could complement elected members and made constructive and

important contribution to the work of the DCs. Even among those who were against retaining the appointment system, most recognized the calibre of appointed members and their contribution to the DCs.

Annex

2004-2007 DCs
Information of Appointed Members

<i>Names of Appointed DC Members</i>	<i>DCs</i>	<i>Number of other ASBs on which the Members are serving</i>	<i>Year of Appointment as DC Members</i>	<i>Attendance Rate to DC Meetings in 2004-2007 (%)</i>
Mr CHUNG Yam-cheung	Central and Western	0	2004-2007	96
Mr LAM Kin-lai	Central and Western	1	2000-2007	96
Mr WU Chor-nam	Central and Western	1	2000-2007	100
Mr YONG Siu-chuen	Central and Western	2	2000-2007	96
Ms TING Yuk-chee	Eastern	3	2000-2007	100
Dr WONG Kam-din	Eastern	1	2000-2007	96
Mr WU King-cheong	Eastern	3	2000-2007	92
Hon CHEUNG Yuyan	Eastern	4	2000-2007	92
Ms CHAN Kit-wing	Eastern	1	2004-2007	88
Mr TSANG Heung-kwan	Eastern	0	2000-2007	100
Ms PANG Melissa	Eastern	6	2004-2007	92
Mr LAU Hing-tat	Eastern	0	2004-2007	92
Mr LO Sai-kwong	Eastern	0	2004-2007	92
Ir WONG Kwok-keung	Kowloon City	1	2004-2007	96
Mr HO Chi-kai	Kowloon City	1	2004-2007	93
Mr CHAN Wing-lim	Kowloon City	2	2004-2007	100
Mr LEUNG Ying-piu	Kowloon City	1	2000-2007	96
Mr LAU Yue-sun	Kowloon City	0	2004-2007	75
Mr CHAN Chung-bun	Kwun Tong	4	2000-2007	96
Mr CHOW Yiu-ming	Kwun Tong	0	2004-2007	100
Mr FUNG Kam-chiu	Kwun Tong	0	2004-2007	100

<i>Names of Appointed DC Members</i>	<i>DCs</i>	<i>Number of other ASBs on which the Members are serving</i>	<i>Year of Appointment as DC Members</i>	<i>Attendance Rate to DC Meetings in 2004-2007 (%)</i>
Ms KO Po-ling	Kwun Tong	1	2000-2007	88
Mr LAI Shu-ho	Kwun Tong	2	2000-2007	100
Mr SUN Kai-lit	Kwun Tong	3	2000-2007	100
Mr SO Kwan-hon	Kwun Tong	1	2004-2007	96
Mr WU Kwok-cheung	Kwun Tong	1	2000-2007	81
Mr CHAN Keng-chau	Sham Shui Po	0	2004-2007	97
Dr CHAN Tung	Sham Shui Po	1	2000-2007	91
Dr CHAN Yan-chong	Sham Shui Po	1	2000-2007	78
Mr KWOK Chun-wah	Sham Shui Po	2	2000-2007	100
Mr LI Hon-hung	Sham Shui Po	4	2000-2007	88
Mr CHAN Lee-shing	Southern	1	2004-2007	90
Mr KO Kam-cheung	Southern	1	2000-2007	100
Mr LEUNG Ho-kwan	Southern	0	2004-2007	100
Prof ZEE Sze-yong	Southern	0	2000-2007	93
Ms TSUI Wai-ling	Wan Chai	0	2004-2007	89
Dr SIU Che-hung	Wan Chai	1	2004-2007	100
Mr YAU How-boa	Wan Chai	5	2004-2007	96
Mr CHOW Ching-lam	Wong Tai Sin	1	2004-2007	92
Dr LAU Chi-wang	Wong Tai Sin	2	2004-2007	96
Ms LEE Ming-pui	Wong Tai Sin	1	2000-2007	92
Dr LI Sze-bay	Wong Tai Sin	0	2000-2007	80
Mr NG Yiu-man	Wong Tai Sin	1	2000-2007	96
Mr SHI Lop-tak	Wong Tai Sin	0	2004-2007	96
Mr KONG Wai-yeung	Yau Tsim Mong	1	2004-2007	93
Ms KWAN Miu-mei	Yau Tsim Mong	1	2004-2007	100
Mr SHING Yuen-hing	Yau Tsim Mong	1	2000-2007	100
Mr WU Man-keung	Yau Tsim Mong	0	2004-2007	93
Mr LAM Kit-sing	Islands	1	2000-2007	100
Mr WAN Tung-lam	Islands	0	2000-2007	96
Rev SIK Chi-wai	Islands	0	2000-2007	75
Mr LEUNG Siu-tong	Islands	2	2004-2007	93

<i>Names of Appointed DC Members</i>	<i>DCs</i>	<i>Number of other ASBs on which the Members are serving</i>	<i>Year of Appointment as DC Members</i>	<i>Attendance Rate to DC Meetings in 2004-2007 (%)</i>
Ms CHAN Ka-mun	Kwai Tsing	5	2000-2007	86
Mr CHUI Chi-yun	Kwai Tsing	1	2004-2007	97
Mr LAM Kin-ko	Kwai Tsing	1	2004-2007	79
Mr POON Fat-lam	Kwai Tsing	0	2000-2007	100
Mr SO Hoi-pan	Kwai Tsing	0	2000-2007	69
Mr WONG Chi-kwan	Kwai Tsing	0	2004-2007	100
Mr YUNG Wing-ki	Kwai Tsing	4	2004-2007	72
Mr LUI Hing-chung	North	0	2004-2007	91
Ms CHEUNG Mui-seung	North	2	2004-2007	100
Mr CHAN Yiu-wah	North	5	2004-2007	95
Mr YIP Yiu-shing	North	1	2002-2007	81
Mr KAN Wing-fai	North	0	2004-2007	90
Dr LAM Ching-choi	Sai Kung	4	2000-2007	84
Mr HIEW Chin	Sai Kung	1	2000-2007	97
Mr CHAN Kwai-sang*	Sai Kung	0	2000-2006	95
Mr LAU Hing-kee	Sai Kung	1	2000-2007	81
Mr CHEUNG Chun-hoi	Sai Kung	0	2004-2007	100
Mr CHAN Kuen-kwan	Sai Kung	0	2006-2007	100
Mrs CHAN LO Yin-bing	Sha Tin	0	2004-2007	100
Dr CHUI Hong-sheung	Sha Tin	1	2000-2007	92
Dr FONG Yuk-fai	Sha Tin	1	2004-2007	92
Prof KAN Wing-kay	Sha Tin	0	2000-2007	88
Mrs LING LAU Yuet-fun	Sha Tin	2	2000-2007	50
Dr LO Wai-kwok	Sha Tin	3	2000-2007	88
Mr SIU Ka-keung	Sha Tin	0	2004-2007	88
Dr TSO Wung-wai	Sha Tin	2	2000-2007	79
Ms YU Sau-chu	Sha Tin	2	2004-2007	88
Mr CHU King-yuen	Tai Po	1	2000-2007	100
Ms HO On-nei	Tai Po	0	2000-2007	100
Mr LAM Luk-wing	Tai Po	0	2004-2007	100
Mr LI Yiu-ban	Tai Po	2	2000-2007	96
Mr WAN Hok-lim	Tai Po	1	2000-2007	92

<i>Names of Appointed DC Members</i>	<i>DCs</i>	<i>Number of other ASBs on which the Members are serving</i>	<i>Year of Appointment as DC Members</i>	<i>Attendance Rate to DC Meetings in 2004-2007 (%)</i>
Mr CHAU How-chen	Tsuen Wan	1	2000-2007	100
Mr KWONG Loi-hing	Tsuen Wan	0	2000-2007	100
Mr CHAU Chun-wing	Tsuen Wan	0	2000-2007	94
Ms LEE Kit-ming	Tsuen Wan	0	2000-2007	91
Ms TO Kwai-ying	Tsuen Wan	0	2004-2007	88
Ms IP Shun-hing	Tuen Mun	0	2000-2007	100
Ms LEE Ying	Tuen Mun	0	2000-2007	100
Mr LAU Ip-keung	Tuen Mun	0	2000-2007	96
Mr YING Yu-hing	Tuen Mun	2	2000-2007	100
Mr PONG Chong	Tuen Mun	2	2000-2007	88
Dr LAU Chi-pang	Tuen Mun	1	2004-2007	100
Mr SIU Chor-kee	Tuen Mun	2	2004-2007	96
Mr TANG Siu-tong	Yuen Long	1	2000-2007	100
Ms FUNG Choi-yuk	Yuen Long	3	2000-2007	100
Ms KWONG Yuet-sum	Yuen Long	0	2004-2007	100
Mr LAM Kwok-cheong	Yuen Long	2	2000-2007	93
Mr SUNG Wai-ching	Yuen Long	1	2000-2007	96
Mr TANG Chun-keung	Yuen Long	0	2004-2007	93
Mr TANG Wai-ming	Yuen Long	0	2000-2007	96

* Mr CHAN Kwai-sang passed away in April 2006.

MR ALAN LEONG (in Cantonese): *President, part (c) of my question asks if the Government will put forward again a plan to phase out appointed DC seats on the basis of the phased abolition of appointed DC seats proposed in December 2005. I am not sure if I should expound my understanding of the Secretary's reply as: "No, it will not". If it will not, what is his justification then? It seems that he has not given a clear explanation. Is part (c) of the reply his justification? I hope that the Secretary can make an elucidation.*

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Cantonese): President, as far as I understand it, the phased abolition of appointed DC seats proposed at that time was aligned with the overall constitutional development, especially the ultimate aim of selecting the Chief Executive and Members of the Legislative Council by universal suffrage. However, as the Fifth Report was not endorsed at that time, this aim has yet to be realized. Surely, we all know that the new consultation exercise on the Green Paper on constitutional matters has just completed. The findings, which are now being considered by the relevant Policy Bureau, will indicate our next move in terms of policy. Ever since I took office, I have not received any message about the abolition of appointed seats in the imminent new DC term.

MR MARTIN LEE (in Cantonese): *Madam President, in fact, the former Legislative Council also had appointed seats. It is just that a number of Members who subsequently ran in the election, and even direct elections, were successfully elected. The question before us now is why the DCs often call for the retention of this appointment system. As prescribed in the Basic Law, the ultimate aim is selecting Members of this Council by universal suffrage, then why do we still have to appoint DC members?*

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Cantonese): President, it is true that the Basic Law prescribed the ultimate aim of implementing universal suffrage for the Legislative Council elections. However, there is no provision on the composition and formation of the DCs. According to the Basic Law, the DCs are district organizations, but not organs of political power.

MR MARTIN LEE (in Cantonese): *In the past, all Legislative Council Members were appointed. The question is: Why do the DCs not follow suit after the appointment system of this Council was abolished, whereby all Members are now returned by two types of elections? This is the crux of the question.*

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Secretary for Home Affairs, do you have anything to add?

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Cantonese): I am not going to answer it again.

MR LEE CHEUK-YAN (in Cantonese): *Apparently, I believe the Secretary also agrees that appointment in itself runs counter to the principle of democracy. I am very disappointed to learn from the main reply that the appointment system of DC members will not be abolished. One thing that I still cannot sort out is whether or not the Government wishes to have democracy. We always hear Donald TSANG say that he dearly wishes to have democracy, as well as the selection of the Chief Executive and the Legislative Council by universal suffrage. However, the reason given by him for not electing the Legislative Council by universal suffrage is the failure to secure endorsement of the relevant proposal by a two-thirds majority of Legislative Council Members. It therefore ended in a failure and he found this a very difficult task. There is, however, no difficulty at all in abolishing the appointment system of the DCs. May I ask the Secretary if the Government is inherently against democracy, hence making it so reluctant to abolish the appointed DC seats?*

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Cantonese): President, just as I said earlier, a review of the appointment system was conducted in 2006 and the findings showed that the tendered views fully recognized the contribution made by the appointed members to the DCs. Furthermore, co-operation between the appointed and elected DC members has been very successful, as both of them are working for the districts' development. What is more, given that the appointed DC members usually possess certain expertise, they can complement the elected DC members.

MR LEE CHEUK-YAN (in Cantonese): *He has not responded to a fundamental point of my supplementary question. Does this Government not wish to have democracy conceptually?*

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Secretary for Home Affairs, do you have anything to add?

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Cantonese): President, insofar as the operation of the DCs is concerned, our administration has been in compliance with the Basic Law and the laws of Hong Kong.

MISS CHOY SO-YUK (in Cantonese): *President, I wish to declare interest as I am an elected DC member. I notice that many appointed DC members, apart from contributing their knowledge at meetings, actually wish to contribute more to the district they serve. However, I can see that they do not have a clear platform as the elected members, who are representatives of a specific district, for instance, and the platform is perfectly clear. May I ask the Secretary, in respect of the work of appointed DC members in their respective districts, whether consideration will be made to allow them to Like the Legislative Council Members returned from various functional constituencies, those who are well versed in certain trades will make use of their professional knowledge in the work. Will the Secretary consider reviewing also the availability of other platforms that will enable appointed DC members to serve more effectively in their districts in the review of DCs?*

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Cantonese): *President, DC members returned by elections certainly serve in their respective constituencies, and they represent the voices, demands and aspirations of their affiliated voters. Through contacts with different districts during my relatively short time in office, I can see that it is precisely because some appointed DC members are able to look at problems from a wider perspective that their views and efforts have gained the recognition of other members (including the elected members).*

A pilot scheme has been implemented in four districts this year, under which a number of small to medium projects will be conducted in the districts concerned. As some of our appointed members are more conversant with either small to medium projects or design, they can therefore look beyond the elected members' narrow perspective of geographical constituency and suggest better project arrangements and advices. They have therefore gained the recognition of various DCs as a whole.

MS EMILY LAU (in Cantonese): *President, the Secretary made a response to the "six-six" principle in part (b) of the main reply, saying that this principle has been followed in appointing members to sit in six ASBs. The six-year rule, however, will not be followed but applied with flexibility.*

President, after counting the DC members listed in the Annex, I noticed that more than 50 out those 103 or 104 members have exceeded the requirement of the "six-six" principle. The Secretary said that the Administration will make appointments on a person's capability their ability, experience, integrity and commitment to serve the community in making the appointments. May I ask if no other people in Hong Kong could meet these requirements? Why should those 50-odd people be allowed to stay in office? Or is it simply because the Administration considered it necessary to practise cronyism such that these people are allowed to stay in office? President, is this fair?

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Cantonese): President, of course, not all these 50-odd people will be reappointed again and again. After visiting different DCs and meeting with a number of DC members over the past few months, I found that some local people in certain districts can genuinely be described as "respectable". At the district level, a person must have served long years before he can build up a social network in the district concerned, as well as gaining the recognition, confidence and trust of the residents and kaifongs. Also, he must win over the acceptance of people from all walks of life and those with divergent views. I think that the involvement of these people in the district will help build a harmonious community. For this reason, I consider that the principle of mandatorily banning anyone who have served a term of six years from being reappointed much too rigid.

MS EMILY LAU (in Cantonese): *President, the Secretary has not answered my supplementary question. President, there are plenty of people in Hong Kong, so should we allow those few dozens of people to continue violating the rules that have been previously laid down by the Government simply because no respectable person could be identified? The Government is again being accused of not sticking to the relevant rules. Is this a fair approach? Should we do that?*

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Cantonese): President, I consider this fair. People who are considered respectable should have gained such repute through his service in the respective districts. It is impossible for anyone who "parachutes" onto a district to fit in such a description and give play to his functions.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): This Council has spent more than 18 minutes on this question. We will now proceed to the last oral question.

Promotion of Hong Kong Brands

6. **MR WONG TING-KWONG** (in Cantonese): *Madam President, in January this year, the Focus Group on Trade and Business of the Economic Summit on "China's 11th Five-Year Plan and the Development of Hong Kong" submitted its report to the Chief Executive, proposing that the Government should, among other things, establish a high-level Brand Hong Kong Group to promote the development of Brand Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council of:*

- (a) *the latest progress in establishing the Brand Hong Kong Group, the expected date of its establishment, and the specific work it will be responsible for;*
- (b) *the resources the Government will provide to assist in the internationalization of local brands; and*
- (c) *the details of the Government's work in consulting the commercial sector and the relevant parties on the establishment of the Brand Hong Kong Group and the promotion of Brand Hong Kong?*

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): President, my reply to Mr WONG Ting-kwong's question is as follows:

- (a) With regard to the establishment of a high-level Brand Hong Kong Group, the Financial Secretary is now carrying out an internal in-depth study. The study includes a thorough review of the existing work on the "Brand Hong Kong" programme and ways to promote Hong Kong's image more effectively around the world. The study will also review current measures for helping local enterprises to develop and promote their brands in order to further assist them to improve their brand development work. The Financial Secretary will determine the framework, terms of reference, membership and the strategic direction for the Group as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau has maintained regular communication with local industry and related organizations on the issue of branding, and has discussed with them ways to help local enterprises develop their brands and promote their products and services in mainland and overseas markets.

- (b) At the same time, the Government has continued to implement measures to help local enterprises develop and promote their brands. These measures include the following:
- (i) Trade and industrial organizations, professional bodies and research institutions can apply to the SME Development Fund for funding to implement brand development projects. The maximum amount of funding support for each approved project is \$2 million or 90% of the total project expenditure, whichever is less;
 - (ii) Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) can apply to the SME Export Marketing Fund (EMF) for grants to expand their business and promote their brands through participation in export promotion activities. The maximum cumulative amount of grant that an SME may currently obtain is \$80,000. We plan to raise this grant ceiling, and we will consult the Legislative Council Panel on Commerce and Industry on our detailed proposals after consulting the SME Committee;
 - (iii) Through the DesignSmart Initiative (which has a total funding level of \$250 million), the Innovation and Technology Commission encourages various sectors to apply design elements to their products. Since the setting up of the Initiative, \$76 million has been granted to support projects including the promotion of design excellence, specialist research and collaboration between the design and business sectors, thereby encouraging and assisting enterprises in developing their own designs and brands; and
 - (iv) The Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) is committed to promoting Hong Kong brands in overseas markets. For example, in end of last month, I led a group of over 200 local enterprises to take part in the first large-scale

exhibition of Hong Kong branded products in Moscow organized by the HKTDC. The event gave us the opportunity to promote Hong Kong products and services to the Russia market, in order to help Hong Kong enterprises explore new business opportunities in Russia.

- (c) I recognize that the views of representatives from local industry are important in the development and the promotion of Hong Kong brand products and services. We therefore maintain regular contact with local industry. For example, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau has recently convened a discussion of this issue with industrial, trade and related organizations. During this meeting, the organizations raised the following points:
- (i) Government's resources for brand development are not sufficiently centralized. Although the Government currently provides various types of funding to local enterprises, it is not easy for them to find the appropriate funding scheme. In this regard, they would like the Government to consolidate the current resources available for brand promotion, and also provide clear guidelines on applications for different funding schemes;
 - (ii) Hong Kong does not have a local system of branding that is recognized by the Government and local industry. If there was a government-recognized Branding Award, this would be an effective platform for local enterprises to improve their brands; and
 - (iii) There are currently several brands developing a presence on the Mainland. However, local enterprises cannot advertise on the Mainland the awards that their brands have received, which affects their competitiveness in mainland markets. They would like the Government to discuss the relevant arrangements with the Mainland.

My Bureau is now considering how to follow up the issues raised by the various sectors in that discussion and plans to meet the relevant organizations next month to discuss these issues further.

MR WONG TING-KWONG (in Cantonese): *Madam President, if we want to develop Hong Kong brands, one way to attract the industries of these Hong Kong brands to relocate some of the production process back to Hong Kong, so as to establish the brand "Made in Hong Kong". May I put a follow-up to the authorities on what measures they have to attract these industries back to Hong Kong? Moreover, regarding the protection of intellectual property of Hong Kong brands, what work has the Administration done, considering particularly that Hong Kong brands are easily copied on the Mainland?*

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr WONG Ting-kwong, you have put two supplementary questions, which one do you wish the Secretary to reply?

MR WONG TING-KWONG (in Cantonese): *The Secretary can choose either one to reply.*

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Secretary, please reply.

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): I very much agree with what Mr WONG Ting-kwong has said. Hong Kong brands are very good because they are a mark of confidence. For instance, since the launch of zero-tariff preference under CEPA, many Hong Kong factories have been relocated back to Hong Kong to manufacture or process products which are then shipped back to the Mainland. This is helpful to their business. In fact, we hope many of our present projects, for example, the industrial park, will encourage the relocation of factories back to Hong Kong to manufacture Hong Kong-made products for sale in the Mainland or around the world. Thus, the Government is proactive and committed in this respect.

MRS SELINA CHOW (in Cantonese): *When we mention Hong Kong brands, we mostly refer to export products of the manufacturing and industrial sectors. However, our economy now is service-oriented and many of these brand services are already well-known in Hong Kong. May I ask the Secretary whether he*

plans to provide support to these brand services and conduct more work on, among others, consolidation, promotion or commendation so that people in Hong Kong will know and be proud of these being our own brands, and in turn increase their support for these brands?

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): I think Mrs Selina CHOW's suggestion is very good. Certainly, as far as brands are concerned, Members can see that it is easier to position a product in the market. For the service industry, however, many Hong Kong brands are now very famous in the Mainland, just that they are an institution. For example, Members know that some financial institutions are well-known in the Mainland. Everyone is certain that these institutions in the Mainland that is, everyone knows that these are world-class institutions that have been performing very well. In fact, they have become famous brands in the process. If the service enterprise is a SME, I believe some work can still be done. I wish to consult the industry on this subject to find out how the Government can provide support to them. As they are providing services, the work of branding has to be handled in a special manner. Nevertheless, this point is worth looking into.

MRS SELINA CHOW (in Cantonese): *My supplementary question just now has two focuses, one is that this concerns the service industry, and the other is how to make these brands known in Hong Kong. In fact, may the Secretary inform us whether he will pay attention to this respect?*

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): We certainly will. We have launched the "Brand Hong Kong" programme since May 2001 to promote Hong Kong brands. We will keep up our efforts on this.

MR CHAN KAM-LAM (in Cantonese): *President, at present, if an enterprise wishes to establish a brand, in addition to carrying out a long-term promotion, obtaining quality accreditation for the product is also very important. May I*

know whether the Government will consider subsidizing these enterprises to carry out product accreditation? Moreover, will the Government consider co-ordinating with mainland institutions to automatically exempt products that have already obtained accreditation in Hong Kong from carrying out product accreditation again in the Mainland?

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): I believe Mr CHAN Kam-lam's question just now concerns whether Hong Kong brands — just as I mentioned in the main reply — can be recognized on the Mainland. I will try to elaborate on this. If my reply is not satisfactory, will Mr CHAN Kam-lam please enlighten me.

In fact, many good Hong Kong brands are now encountering difficulties. As I have said in the main reply, we cannot get hold of a Hong Kong brand and promote it on the Mainland. The Mainland has a promotion system for its own brands. If we wish to lodge an application to make a product a mainland brand, there are many categories available, for example, the China Top Brand, the Chinese Well-known Mark, the Most Competitive Brand, all of which being established by different authorities in China. However, to date, brands in Hong Kong cannot be used *per se* for promotion in the Mainland. The industry has relayed this concern to us. I wish to raise this issue with the Mainland in the discussion on CEPA this year.

With regard to the question of quality mentioned just now, the same applies. If the product is accredited on the Mainland, it can directly affix the citation to it. However, the question now is that the product needs to clear another hurdle, that is, if a Hong Kong product wants to enter the mainland market, it has to apply for the brand awards I mentioned just now. If the application is successful, the product can enter the mainland markets. We know that some Hong Kong companies have done so, but they are not automatically granted these awards, for they have to go through one more step before obtaining these citations I mentioned just now.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr CHAN Kam-lam, has your supplementary question not been answered?

MR CHAN KAM-LAM (in Cantonese): *No, President. The Secretary did not mention whether the SAR Government would discuss with the mainland authorities on granting Hong Kong products, which have already obtained quality accreditation and certification, automatic access to the mainland markets or accreditation by relevant institutions.*

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Secretary, do you have anything to add?

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): President, may I clarify whether Mr CHAN Kam-lam said "quality" or "brand" just now?

MR CHAN KAM-LAM (in Cantonese): *One of the important components of a brand is quality accreditation. In this respect, a product, despite having been examined in Hong Kong, has to be examined again in the Mainland. Will it be possible for products to be examined just once? I hope the Government will communicate with the Mainland on this issue.*

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): President, we often communicate with relevant institutions in the Mainland on various issues. If Mr CHAN Kam-lam has a more detailed proposal, I am more than happy to listen to it and then relay it to the mainland units.

DR LUI MING-WAH (in Cantonese): *I do not know the kinds of brands the Secretary wishes to develop, but I know that a Brand Development Council (BDC) was established in Hong Kong some two years ago already. The BDC has done a lot of work on brand development, in particular, promoting Hong Kong brands in the Mainland. Given that the BDC has done so much work with obvious results, why does the Government, instead of using the BDC to carry out further promotion work, have to set up another institution to do this work?*

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): To answer Dr LUI's question, I did not mention that I have to set up another institution. As I have said in the main reply just now, the Chief Executive, by announcing in the policy address that he will entrust the Financial Secretary to set up a group, only wishes to send out a message to the public that we are committed to the development of Hong Kong brands and we attach great importance to it. We do not wish to replace the BDC Dr LUI Ming-wah mentioned just now. We only wish to inject new impetus into the promotion of Hong Kong brands which covers not only products, but also the image of Hong Kong in overseas countries. In other words, we will carry out an overall review and promotion work in a comprehensive manner, and we definitely do not intend to dissolve the BDC which Dr LUI Ming-wah mentioned just now.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): We have spent more than 16 minutes on this question. Last supplementary question.

MR LAU KONG-WAH (in Cantonese): *President, at present, many civic groups organize competitions or accreditations which have considerable impact. Will the Government consider assisting their promotion and stepping up co-operation with them, and continuing with such promotion work in the Mainland or worldwide?*

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Cantonese): In fact, precisely because we have to take a comprehensive view on the matter that this high-level Brand Hong Kong Group led by the Financial Secretary will take into consideration the question raised by Mr LAU Kong-wah just now, that is, how to work hand-in-hand with chambers of commerce and other organizations to promote Brand Hong Kong so that the latter can scale new heights in the international arena and the Mainland. This is one of our key studies in the future.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Oral questions end here.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS**Throughput of Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Corridor**

7. **MS MIRIAM LAU** (in Chinese): *President, it has been reported that there is a very big discrepancy between the actual throughput of the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Corridor and the projected figures, indicating that the corridor has failed to ease the traffic congestion at other control points effectively. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *how the average actual daily numbers of various types of vehicles using the above corridor compare to the relevant projected figures;*
- (b) *whether it has investigated the reasons for the throughput of the corridor being on the low side; if it has, of the findings; and*
- (c) *in addition to exempting goods vehicles of cross-boundary freight companies from the requirement for applying to the relevant authorities in Guangdong Province in advance for additional Shenzhen Bay Port (SBP) crossing endorsement, and extending the arrangements for cross-boundary private cars to use that control point on a trial basis, whether the Governments of Hong Kong and Guangdong will adopt other measures to encourage more goods vehicles, container trucks and other types of vehicles to use the above corridor, so as to ensure that the corridor can achieve its function of diverting traffic flows; if so, of the details of such measures?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Chinese): *President,*

- (a) *The initial daily two-way vehicular flow at the SBP was estimated to be around 29 800 trips. As cross-boundary drivers are getting more used to using the new control point, the daily two-way vehicular flow has increased from about 1 400 in July to 3 256 in September 2007, details as follows:*

<i>Vehicle type</i>	<i>Daily two-way vehicular flow (September 2007)</i>
Coach	389 trips
Private car	1 701 trips
Goods vehicle	1 166 trips
Total	3 256 trips

- (b) We have sought the views of the cross-boundary freight trade on the use of the SBP. Some trade members opined that the ancillary facilities around the Shenzhen port area were not yet fully developed, and the Hong Kong freight companies could not set up offices near the control point to provide support to cross-boundary goods vehicle drivers on customs declaration and clearance of goods. In addition, as the construction works of Guangshen Yanjiang Expressway linking the control point has yet to be completed, some goods vehicle drivers were concerned about the possible traffic congestion after entering the Shenzhen city by the SBP.
- (c) Apart from having reached agreement with the Guangdong Government to exempt goods vehicles of cross-boundary freight companies from the requirement for applying for additional SBP crossing endorsement in advance from the relevant authorities in Guangdong Province and extending the arrangement for cross-boundary private cars to use the control point on a trial basis, we have also conveyed to the relevant Shenzhen authorities the trade's comments on ancillary facilities at the control point and the road network. We hope that they would consider implementing traffic management measures as necessary to improve the traffic condition of the connecting road network and complete the construction of Yanjiang Expressway as soon as possible to increase the capacity of the road network. We will continue to work closely with the relevant mainland authorities to further improve the clearance arrangements at the SBP to attract more vehicles to use the control point.

Enforcement of Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance

8. **MISS CHOY SO-YUK** (in Chinese): *President, it has been reported that the Next Media Limited has been involved in 18 cases of publishing indecent articles since 2003. The reports have also indicated that, Oriental Daily News, The Sun, Apple Daily and NOW, a foreign magazine available in Hong Kong, published in December 2005 an identical set of photographs of an overseas female celebrity, but only the former two newspapers were classified as indecent articles, and NOW was not even submitted for classification. In addition, it has*

also been reported that the Next Media Limited has a record of over 100 convictions for publishing indecent articles so far. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) *whether the Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA) has instituted prosecution in respect of all the 18 cases; if it has not, of the reasons for that, and the number of cases in which no prosecution has been instituted yet;*
- (b) *whether there is a time limit for instituting prosecution of offences of publishing and displaying indecent articles;*
- (c) *whether it has assessed if the TELA has adopted objective criteria for determining whether or not to submit the publications which have published the photographs of the above overseas female celebrity for classification; if an assessment has been made, of the results; and*
- (d) *given that the Control of Obscene and Indecent Articles Ordinance (the Ordinance) (Cap. 390) stipulates that any person who commits the above offences is liable to a fine of \$800,000 and to imprisonment for 12 months on a second or subsequent conviction, whether the Government has examined the definition of "a second or subsequent conviction" referred to in the Ordinance; if it has, of the results of the examination, and whether it has examined if the above record of convictions of the Next Media Limited falls within the circumstances referred to in the definition; if an examination has been made, of the results?*

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Chinese): President, the TELA conducts routine monitoring of newspapers and magazines on sale in Hong Kong. Upon spotting any article suspected to be in breach of the Ordinance, follow-up actions will be taken by the TELA. Given the large number and broad variety of local and foreign newspapers and magazines being sold in Hong Kong and the huge number of outlets all over Hong Kong, it is difficult in practice to include all newspapers and magazines sold in Hong Kong in inspection. Therefore, routine monitoring by the TELA focuses on those publications which are available at news-stands and convenience

stores that might be easily accessed by the public. If the content of a publication is suspected to be in contravention of the Ordinance, the TELA will send officers to check up other newspapers and publications put on sale in news-stands and convenience stores to see if they carry the same or similar content. If so, they will be submitted together with the publication concerned to the Obscene Articles Tribunal (OAT) for classification.

As for the case concerning the photographs of an overseas female celebrity, the TELA spotted three newspapers during an inspection and submitted all the relevant coverage in the three newspapers to the OAT for classification. During the inspection, the magazine *NOW* was not found in those news-stands and convenience stores. Thus, it was not submitted to the OAT.

My reply to the other parts of the question in *seriatim* is as follows:

- (a) There are now a total of 19 cases of publishing indecent articles involving the publications of the Next Media Limited. The TELA has instituted prosecution in respect of these 19 cases. However, upon request by the defendant, the Court has allowed the hearing to be adjourned.
- (b) Pursuant to section 26 of the Magistrates Ordinance, prosecutions of offences under the Ordinance shall be brought within six months from the time when the offence arose.
- (c) Published articles are monitored by the TELA having regard to the same factors taken into consideration by the OAT in classifying articles as set out in section 10 of the Ordinance, as well as past cases of classification by the OAT. In classifying an article, the OAT has to take into account the following factors:
 - (i) standards of morality, decency and propriety that are generally accepted by reasonable members of the community;
 - (ii) the dominant effect of an article as a whole;
 - (iii) the persons or class of persons, or age groups of persons to or amongst whom the article is intended to be published; and

- (iv) whether the article has an honest purpose or is designed to camouflage unacceptable contents.
- (d) If a defendant with a record of conviction for publishing indecent articles is found guilty of publishing indecent articles again, it will be a case of "second or subsequent conviction". As to whether the past records of the concerned company are considered as cases under the aforesaid definition, judgement of such should be made by the Court. It is not appropriate for us to comment at this stage.

Seat Belts for Public Light Bus Passengers

9. **MR CHEUNG HOK-MING** (in Chinese): *President, will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *given that the authorities have required that with effect from August 2004, if public light buses (PLBs) are equipped with seat belts, passengers are required to wear them, of the number of prosecutions instituted by the authorities up to the present against passengers who contravened such requirement and the penalties imposed on them; and among such cases, of the respective numbers of those uncovered by the police during inspections and those reported by the public; and*
- (b) *given that many people have related to me that the passenger seat belts currently equipped on PLBs are lap belts, which are not as safe as the body restraining seat belts used in private cars, whether the authorities will review the design of the passenger seat belts on PLBs, in order to provide passengers with better safety protection?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Chinese): *President,*

- (a) Under the existing Road Traffic (Safety Equipment) Regulations (Cap. 374F), a PLB passenger is required to wear a seat belt if it is provided for his seat. Any passenger who contravenes the requirement is liable to a fine of \$5,000 and to imprisonment for three months.

Since the legislation took effect on 1 August 2004 and up to 30 September 2007, the total number of prosecutions instituted by the police against PLB passengers who contravened the seat belt requirement was 3 353. The fines imposed by the Court ranged between \$50 and \$540. So far, no PLB passenger has been sentenced to imprisonment for breaching the seat belt requirement.

The police do not have a breakdown of statistics on how the offences are detected (for example, during police inspection or through reports by members of the public), but the majority of the 3 000 plus prosecutions should be detected by police officers during inspection. When there are reports from the public, the police will undertake investigation or enhance patrol based on the information gathered.

- (b) According to existing legislation, a seat belt fitted on a passenger seat on PLBs can be a "body restraining seat belt" (that is, three-point seat belt) or a "lap belt" (that is, two-point seat belt). Whichever type of seat belts fitted on vehicles will have to comply with the international standards specified in the law. The provision of high back seats on PLBs to enhance passenger safety is also a legal requirement. A high back seat is padded with soft materials. In case of an accident, it can absorb the energy of possible impact between the body (particularly the head) and the back rest of the seat in front, thereby reducing the level of injury. A "lap belt" fitted to a high back seat has proven to be effective in passenger protection and meets the relevant international standards. Lap belts are also more convenient and easier for passengers to wear. We do not have any plan at this stage to amend the requirements on seat belts on the passenger seats on PLBs.

Upgrading Nursing Education to Degree Level

10. **DR JOSEPH LEE** (in Chinese): *President, regarding the motion on "Policy on nursing manpower" passed by this Council on 20 June this year, the Government indicates in its progress report on the motion that it will upgrade local nursing education to degree level. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *of the estimated number of nursing degree graduates from each institution in each of the next three academic years;*
- (b) *how the proposed upgrading of nursing education to degree level will be implemented, and whether it will provide additional funding so that the University Grants Committee (UGC) can increase the number of government-funded first-year places for degree programmes on nursing; if it will, of the number of the places concerned in the next three academic years, broken down by institution; if not, the reasons for that; and*
- (c) *in relation to the long-term planning for nursing manpower, whether it will amend the Nurses Registration Ordinance (Cap. 164) to prescribe that any person shall meet the qualification requirement for registering as a registered nurse or enrolling as an enrolled nurse only if he or she is a holder of a degree in nursing; if it will, of the details; if not, the reasons for that, and whether it has assessed if the Government has, in not amending the Ordinance, breached its commitment to upgrade local nursing education to degree level; if an assessment has been made, of the results?*

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Chinese): President,

- (a) According to the information provided by various institutions, the numbers of graduates from local nursing degree programmes (including publicly-funded and self-financed ones) in the coming three academic years are projected as follows:

<i>Institution</i>	<i>2008-2009 academic year</i>	<i>2009-2010 academic year</i>	<i>2010-2011 academic year</i>
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU)	206	207	249
The Chinese University of Hong Kong	169	176	175
The University of Hong Kong	157	166	168
The Open University of Hong Kong	92	116	129
Total	624	665	721

Note: The above figures include all students admitted through the first-year-first-degree programmes or senior year undergraduate programme.

Besides, publicly-funded higher diploma nursing programmes are organized by PolyU and the Hospital Authority (HA), the graduates

of which are also eligible for registration as registered nurses. In the coming three academic years, the numbers of graduates of these two programmes are projected as follows:

<i>Course Provider</i>	<i>2008-2009 academic year</i>	<i>2009-2010 academic year</i>	<i>2010-2011 academic year</i>
PolyU	103	110	110
HA	0	110	110
Total	103	220	220

- (b) To implement our policy of upgrading nursing education to degree level, the number of first-year-first-degree places for nursing undergraduate programmes offered by the UGC-funded institutions has already been raised from 450 in the 2004-2005 academic year to 518 in the 2007-2008 academic year. In addition, the UGC has started to provide 30 Year Two senior year places for nursing undergraduate programmes since the 2005-2006 academic year, in order to provide more articulation opportunities for graduates of sub-degree nursing programmes. We will continue to monitor closely the nursing manpower requirements. We will give advice to the UGC in relation to the publicly-funded places of nursing programmes, which will serve as reference for institutions in formulating their academic plans.
- (c) Upgrading local nursing education to degree level is still the long-term target of the Government. In the light of the current and short-term shortage of nurses, and in order to create opportunities for young people with Secondary Five education level and who want to join the health care profession to serve the community, we have put in place other measures to ensure an adequate supply of nurses in Hong Kong to meet the needs of medical and social welfare organizations. For example, we have allocated funds to the HA to continue organizing enrolled nurse training programmes for the social welfare sector.

The Nursing Council of Hong Kong is the statutory body responsible for the registration of nurses. It will, within the purview of its professional autonomy, formulate the most appropriate arrangements regarding the enrolment and registration of nurses, having regard to the community needs and the actual demand for and supply of nurses.

Burst Fresh and Salt Water Pipes

11. **MR LAU KONG-WAH** (in Chinese): *President, will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *of the respective monthly average numbers of incidents, in the past two years, in which fresh water and salt water supplies were suspended because of pipe burst; the public housing estates (PHEs) particularly affected by such incidents and the reasons for that;*
- (b) *whether it will take measures to alleviate the inconvenience caused by suspension of fresh water or salt water supply to residents of individual PHEs which are particularly affected; and*
- (c) *of the latest progress of the comprehensive Replacement and Rehabilitation Programme of Water Mains being implemented in phases by the Water Supplies Department (WSD)?*

SECRETARY FOR DEVELOPMENT (in Chinese): *President,*

- (a) In respect of water mains managed and maintained by the WSD, there were on average 111 incidents of water mains bursts per month in the past two years resulting in temporary suspension of water supply. Of these incidents, 50 and 61 cases involved fresh and salt water mains respectively.

Some of the water mains bursts affected PHEs. The estates more frequently affected, in terms of the average number of cases per year, were Tai Wo Hau Estate in Tsuen Wan (3.5 cases), Lower Wong Tai Sin Estate in Kowloon (2.5 cases), Lek Yuen Estate in Sha Tin (2.5 cases), Shun Lee Estate together with the adjacent Shun On and Shun Tin Estates in Sau Mau Ping (1.5 cases), and Shek Lei Estate in Kwai Chung (1.5 cases). The majority (about 75%) of these incidents resulted in disruption of salt water supply, while the remaining 25% involved fresh water supply suspension.

The WSD will continue emergency repair works on fresh water mains burst into the night if necessary to ensure early resumption of water supply. Records show that fresh water supply was resumed within 6.8 hours on average. With regard to salt water supply, the

emergency repair works will usually be suspended during the night, to avoid noise nuisance to neighbouring residents. As a result, it takes a longer time to resume salt water supply.

Ageing of water pipes is the main cause of the bursts. The problem could be accentuated by external factors such as heavy vehicles on the road and adjacent trench works.

- (b) Staff of the WSD and staff of the Housing Department's estate management office work closely in the emergency response to water mains bursts. Temporary water supply points are established using facilities such as water tankers and water tanks, for use of the affected estate residents. Staff of the estate management office would also keep residents informed of details of the temporary water supply and progress of water mains repair works.

After resumption of water supply, the WSD would assess the need for quick improvement to the water mains network through minor works, to reduce potential mains burst nuisance. These may include, for example, replacing individual sections of the worst-aged water mains to reduce the likelihood of further mains burst, or install valves at appropriate locations of the pipelines to facilitate isolation of bursts to reduce the area of suspension of water supply.

- (c) The WSD is implementing a four-stage programme to replace and rehabilitate 3 000 km of aged water mains throughout the territory.

Works for the first two stages of the programme have commenced, and the rest will start in 2008 and 2011 respectively. To date, works have been completed on about 370 km of water mains, and are in progress on about 980 km of water mains. The lengths of water mains under design and planning are 800 km and 850 km respectively. It is estimated that all works will complete in 2015.

Increase in Tuition Fees by Subsidized Kindergartens

12. **MR ALBERT CHAN** (in Chinese): *President, recently, many members of the public have reflected to me that quite a number of government-subsidized non-profit-making kindergartens (subsidized kindergartens) have increased their*

tuition fees in the current school year. Although starting from the current school year, parents have received fee subsidy through education vouchers, they still find it difficult to afford the high tuition fees, and they also query why these kindergartens have increased their fees. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the names of the subsidized kindergartens which have increased their tuition fees in the current school year, and the rates of such increases;*
- (b) whether it knows the reasons why the subsidized kindergartens concerned have increased their tuition fees; and*
- (c) whether it will take measures to limit the rates of increase in the tuition fees of subsidized kindergartens; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Chinese): President, the Administration has started to provide direct fee subsidy to parents with children attending eligible kindergartens (KGs) through the Pre-primary Education Voucher Scheme (hereafter referred as "PEVS") from this school year onward. The value of the fee subsidy is \$10,000 per student per annum (pspa) in this school year and will progressively increase to \$16,000 pspa in the 2011-2012 school year. Prior to the introduction of the PEVS, kindergartens concerned may receive from the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Subsidy Scheme (KCSS) a subsidy at an average rate of \$2,300 pspa.

Our reply to the three parts of the question is as follows:

- (a) The list of non-profit-making kindergartens (NPM KGs) joining the PEVS with fee increase and the rates of such increase for the 2007-2008 school year is attached at the Annex.
- (b) As in the previous years, individual kindergartens may submit their application for school fee adjustment annually having regard to their own operational requirements. The reasons for fee adjustment may generally include salary adjustment for teachers, improvement to school facilities and operational expenses. Since the PEVS has replaced the KCSS to provide direct fee subsidy for parents starting

from this new school year onward and the former KCSS subsidy received by KGs has not been reflected in the approved school fee of the previous year, some 83% of those KGs with approval for school fee increase need to reflect wholly or partly that part of expenditure previously covered by the KCSS subsidy in the approved level of school fee in the 2007-2008 school year.

- (c) Only NPM KGs and private independent kindergartens in the transitional arrangements charging a school fee not exceeding \$24,000 pspa for a half-day place and not exceeding \$48,000 pspa for a whole-day place are eligible to join the PEVS. This has ensured that fees charged are affordable.

All applications from KGs for fee revision have to be approved by the Education Bureau. Each year, the Bureau issues a circular memorandum to all KGs setting out the procedures for fee revision for the coming school year. KGs are required to submit the application for fee revision in a specified form, providing details of all the expenses. The Bureau would vet the applications with reference to the estimated income and expenses, as well as the financial situation of KGs, to ensure that the school fees are maintained at reasonable limits.

Annex

List of NPM KGs Joining the PEVS Approved to Increase School Fees
in 2007-2008 School Year

[Detailed school fees approved for 2007-2008 of individual KGs are available in the Profile of Kindergartens and Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centres 2006/07 (2007/July version) accessible at <<http://chsc.edb.hkedcity.net/kindergarten/>>.]

With school name in alphabetical order:

<i>No.</i>	<i>School Name in English</i>	<i>School Name in Chinese</i>	<i>Level of School Fee Adjustment %</i>
1	ABERDEEN BAPTIST CHURCH PAK KWONG KINDERGARTEN	香港仔浸信會白光幼稚園	8.17
2	AEFCHK-EFCC-PO NGA NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教播道會聯會寶雅幼兒學校	24.48
3	AEFCHK EFCC TIN YAN NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教播道會聯會天恩幼兒學校	12.03
4	AEFCHK-EFCC-AGC-ABUNDANT GRACE NURSERY	香港基督教播道會聯會厚恩堂厚恩幼兒學校	16.67

No.	School Name in English	School Name in Chinese	Level of School Fee Adjustment %
5	AEFCHK-EFCC-SO SUM MEMORIAL NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教播道會聯會蘇森紀念幼兒學校	14.29
6	AGNES ENGLISH KINDERGARTEN	雅麗斯英文幼稚園	12.87
7	AGNES KINDERGARTEN (GRANDEUR TERRACE)	雅麗斯俊宏軒幼稚園	11.60
8	AL & VS EDUCATION FUND DELIA PEI KINDERGARTEN	藍如溪盛成皿教育基金邊陳之娟幼稚園	15.28
9	AL & VS EDUCATION FUND GORDON PEI KINDERGARTEN	藍如溪盛成皿教育基金邊耀良幼稚園	13.24
10	ANANI KINDERGARTEN	主蔭幼稚園	26.05
11	ANNUNCIATION CATHOLIC KINDERGARTEN	天主教領報幼稚園	13.75
12	A-ONE KINDERGARTEN	第一幼稚園	4.05
13	ASBURY METHODIST KINDERGARTEN	循道衛理聯合教會亞斯理幼稚園	18.34
14	ASSEMBLIES OF GOD WA WAI CHURCH HIN KENG A/C KINDERGARTEN	華惠神召會顯徑中英文幼稚園	23.17
15	ASSEMBLIES OF GOD WA WAI CHURCH WALKER HALL ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	華惠神召會何華閣中英文幼稚園	28.85
16	ASSEMBLIES OF GOD WA WAI KINDERGARTEN (CHEUNG HONG)	華惠神召會幼稚園 (長康)	17.23
17	ASSEMBLY OF GOD MCLEOD MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	神召會麥嘉倫紀念幼稚園	6.67
18	ASSEMBLY OF GOD PAUL CHURCH KINDERGARTEN (TIN WAH ESTATE)	神召會保羅堂幼稚園 (天華邨)	12.64
19	ASSEMBLY OF GOD UNION CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	基督教神召會合一堂幼稚園	31.52
20	B.O.K.S.S. PUI YAN PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOL	浸會愛群社會服務處長沙灣幼兒學校	13.81
21	BAPTIST CONVENTION OF HONG KONG ROTARY CLUB OF HK NORTH WEST KINDERGARTEN	香港浸信會聯會香港西北扶輪社幼稚園	25.32
22	BAPTIST CONVENTION OF HONG KONG YIU HING KINDERGARTEN	香港浸信會聯會耀興幼稚園	24.25
23	BAPTIST PUI LI SCHOOL	浸信會培理學校	10.76
24	BENEVOLENT LIGHT KINDERGARTEN	慈光幼稚園	6.24
25	BETHEL KINDERGARTEN	伯特利幼稚園	4.25
26	BGCA HK CHEERLAND KINDERGARTEN (KOWLOON BAY)	香港小童群益會樂緻幼稚園 (九龍灣)	14.01
27	BGCA HK CHEERLAND NURSERY SCHOOL (TSEUNG KWAN O)	香港小童群益會樂緻幼稚園 (將軍澳)	14.02
28	BGCA HK CHEERLAND NURSERY SCHOOL (WONG TAI SIN)	香港小童群益會樂緻幼稚園 (黃大仙)	9.20
29	BUDDHIST CHEUNG MUI KWAI KINDERGARTEN	佛教張梅桂幼稚園	29.91
30	BUDDHIST CHI KWONG KINDERGARTEN	佛教慈光幼稚園	23.71
31	BUDDHIST CHI WAI DAY NURSERY	佛教慈慧幼兒園	16.18
32	BUDDHIST CHUN YUE KINDERGARTEN (TUNG CHUNG)	佛教真如幼稚園 (東涌)	15.67
33	BUDDHIST FOO HONG KINDERGARTEN	佛教傅康幼稚園	31.19
34	BUDDHIST KAM LAI KINDERGARTEN	佛教金麗幼稚園	23.46
35	BUDDHIST SUM TUNG FOOK KINDERGARTEN	佛教沈東福幼稚園	1.66
36	BUDDHIST TO CHI FAT SHE YEUNG TAM YUEN FONG KINDERGARTEN	道慈佛社楊譚婉芳幼稚園	18.73
37	BUDDHIST TSANG KOR SING ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	佛教曾果成中英文幼稚園	24.63
38	BUT SAN KINDERGARTEN	拔臣幼稚園	29.35
39	C & M A FAIRVIEW PARK KINDERGARTEN	基督教宣道會錦綉幼稚園	5.82
40	C & M ALLIANCE CHURCH UNION TSEUNG KWAN O ALLIANCE KINDERGARTEN	基督教宣道會香港區聯會將軍澳宣道幼稚園	25.28
41	C & M ALLIANCE CHURCH VERBENA KINDERGARTEN	基督教宣道會茵怡幼稚園	15.77
42	CA SAU MAU PING CHEN LEE WING TSING KINDERGARTEN	宣道會秀茂坪陳李詠貞幼稚園	12.40

No.	School Name in English	School Name in Chinese	Level of School Fee Adjustment %
43	CARITAS KAI YAU NURSERY SCHOOL	明愛啟幼幼兒學校	9.92
44	CARITAS LING YUET SIN KINDERGARTEN	明愛凌月仙幼稚園	9.75
45	CARITAS LIONS CLUB OF HK (PACIFIC) NURSERY SCHOOL	明愛香港太平洋獅子會幼兒學校	10.38
46	CARITAS NURSERY SCHOOL-TA KWU LING	明愛打鼓嶺幼兒學校	10.38
47	CARITAS NURSERY SCHOOL-KENNEDY TOWN	明愛堅尼地城幼兒學校	10.43
48	CARITAS NURSERY SCHOOL-LEI YUE MUN	明愛鯉魚門幼兒學校	11.59
49	CARITAS NURSERY SCHOOL-TSUI LAM	明愛翠林幼兒學校	10.38
50	CARITAS NURSERY SCHOOL-YAU TONG	明愛油塘幼兒學校	11.59
51	CARITAS NURSERY SCHOOL-SHATIN	明愛沙田幼兒學校	10.11
52	CARITAS ST FRANCIS KINDERGARTEN	明愛聖芳濟各幼稚園	8.77
53	CARITAS ZONTA CLUB OF HONG KONG NURSERY SCHOOL	明愛香港崇德社幼兒學校	9.92
54	CASTAR KINDERGARTEN	世德幼稚園	25.04
55	CASTAR KINDERGARTEN (LEI MUK SHUE)	世德幼稚園(梨木樹)	16.65
56	CCC HK COUNCIL FUK YAU KINDERGARTEN	中華基督教會福幼幼稚園	7.62
57	CCC SHATIN CHURCH POK HONG KINDERGARTEN	中華基督教會沙田堂博康幼稚園	11.75
58	CCCHK CHUEN YUEN KINDERGARTEN	中華基督教全完幼稚園	16.23
59	CECES ORGANIZED AETNA PRESCHOOL	幼聯主辦安泰幼兒學校	22.97
60	CHAI WAN BAPTIST CHURCH PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION LUI MING CHOI KINDERGARTEN	柴灣浸信會學前教育中心呂明才幼稚園	12.40
61	CHAN EN MEI LUTHERAN DAY NURSERY	路德會陳恩美幼兒園	4.65
62	CHAN MUNG YAN LUTHERAN KINDERGARTEN	路德會陳蒙恩幼稚園	17.93
63	CHEUNG CHAU SACRED HEART KINDERGARTEN	長洲聖心幼稚園	17.32
64	CHINESE CHRISTIAN WORKER'S FELLOWSHIP LTD CHOI PO KINDERGARTEN	神召會華人同工聯會彩蒲幼稚園	23.64
65	CHINESE CHRISTIAN WORKER'S FELLOWSHIP LTD KING SHING KINDERGARTEN	神召會華人同工聯會景盛幼稚園	22.92
66	CHINESE Y.M.C.A. KINDERGARTEN	中華基督教青年會幼稚園	14.85
67	CHINESE YMCA KWAI CHUNG KINDERGARTEN	中華基督教青年會葵涌幼稚園	12.39
68	CHING CHUNG HING TUNG KINDERGARTEN	青松興東幼稚園	14.26
69	CHING CHUNG WU KING KINDERGARTEN	青松湖景幼稚園	25.97
70	CHIU HA KINDERGARTEN	肖霞幼稚園	11.58
71	CHIU YANG KINDERGARTEN	潮陽幼稚園	11.13
72	CHO YIU CHUEN METHODIST KINDERGARTEN	祖堯邨衛理幼稚園	16.32
73	CHOI HA ESTATE KIT SAM KINDERGARTEN	天主教彩霞邨潔心幼稚園	11.77
74	CHRISTIAN & MISSIONARY ALLIANCE CHURCH TAI WO KINDERGARTEN	基督教宣道會太和幼稚園	18.47
75	CHRISTIAN & MISSIONARY ALLIANCE FU SHAN NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教宣道會富山幼兒學校	9.72
76	CHRISTIAN & MISSIONARY ALLIANCE LEI TUNG NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教宣道會利東幼兒學校	9.84
77	CHRISTIAN & MISSIONARY ALLIANCE PLOVER COVE NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教宣道會寶湖幼兒學校	8.57
78	CHRISTIAN & MISSIONARY ALLIANCE SHATIN NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教宣道會沙田幼兒學校	10.24
79	CHRISTIAN & MISSIONARY ALLIANCE SOUTH HORIZONS NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教宣道會海怡幼兒學校	7.80
80	CHRISTIAN & MISSIONARY ALLIANCE TAI O KINDERGARTEN	基督教宣道會大澳幼稚園	35.22
81	CHRISTIAN & MISSIONARY ALLIANCE TIN CHUNG NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教宣道會天頌幼兒學校	9.33
82	CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE CHEN LEE WING TSING MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	宣道會陳李詠貞紀念幼稚園	19.13
83	CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE JOYFUL PEACE KINDERGARTEN	基督教宣道會頌安幼稚園	20.21

No.	School Name in English	School Name in Chinese	Level of School Fee Adjustment %
84	CHRISTIAN EVANGELICAL CENTRE LOK FU KINDERGARTEN	基督教佈道中心樂富幼稚園	6.31
85	CHRISTIAN FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE TAK TIN KINDERGARTEN	基督教家庭服務中心德田幼稚園	19.51
86	CHRISTIAN FAMILY SERVICE CTR CHEERLAND KINDERGARTEN & CHILD CARE CENTRE	基督教家庭服務中心趣樂幼稚園	23.68
87	CHRISTIAN LITTLE ANGEL KINDERGARTEN (KAM FUNG COURT)	基督教小天使(錦豐)幼稚園	19.26
88	CHRISTIAN LITTLE ANGEL KINDERGARTEN (RICHLAND GARDENS)	基督教小天使(麗晶)幼稚園	15.76
89	CHRISTIAN THE FAITH HOPE LOVE CHURCH WAH MING KINDERGARTEN	基督徒信望愛堂華明幼稚園	15.12
90	CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CHINA KEI WA KINDERGARTEN	中華基督教會基華幼稚園	30.35
91	CNEC CHRISTIAN KINDERGARTEN	中華傳道會基石幼稚園	18.77
92	CREATIVE KINDERGARTEN (MA WAN)	啟思幼稚園(馬灣)	4.17
93	CREATIVE KINDERGARTEN (TUEN MUN BRANCH)	啟思幼稚園(屯門分校)	1.34
94	CREATIVE KINDERGARTEN (YAU YAT CHUEN)	啟思幼稚園(又一村)	4.58
95	CREATIVE KINDERGARTEN AND DAY NURSERY (TSING YI)	啟思幼稚園(青衣)	1.65
96	CREATIVE KINDERGARTEN (YUEN LONG)	啟思幼稚園(元朗)	4.17
97	CUHK FAA CHAN CHUN HA KINDERGARTEN	香港中文大學校友會聯會陳震夏幼稚園	14.40
98	CUHK FEDERATION OF ALUMNI ASSN THOMAS CHEUNG KINDERGARTEN	香港中文大學校友會聯會張煊昌幼稚園	30.41
99	CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH GREEN PASTURE KINDERGARTEN	金巴崙長老會青草地幼稚園	22.67
100	CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH PO LAM KINDERGARTEN	金巴崙長老會寶林幼稚園	19.46
101	CWKFA KAI MING KINDERGARTEN	柴灣區街坊福利會主辦啟明幼稚園	36.83
102	DIAMOND HILL BAPTIST CHURCH BRIGHT BLOSSOMS KINDERGARTEN	鑽石山浸信會美欣幼稚園	11.05
103	DMAHK MONG YANG HSUEH CHI KINDERGARTEN	香港學位教師會蒙楊雪姬幼稚園	10.19
104	DOMINIC SAVIO KINDERGARTEN	明我幼稚園	8.03
105	DOMINIC SAVIO KINDERGARTEN (OLYMPIC BRANCH)	明我幼稚園(奧運校)	14.94
106	DYNAMIC KIDS KINDERGARTEN	活力幼樂園幼稚園	14.45
107	ELCHK AMAZING GRACE NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教香港信義會基恩幼兒學校	0.92
108	ELCHK CHUNG ON NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教香港信義會頌安幼兒學校	6.23
109	ELCHK GRACE NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教香港信義會天恩幼兒學校	2.56
110	ELCHK HING WAH NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教香港信義會興華幼兒學校	8.07
111	ELCHK KIN MING NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教香港信義會健明幼兒學校	16.22
112	ELCHK LING KUNG NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教香港信義會靈工幼兒學校	7.14
113	ELCHK LING ON NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教香港信義會靈安幼兒學校	12.50
114	ELCHK SHATIN LUTHERAN KINDERGARTEN	基督教香港信義會沙田信義幼稚園	10.32
115	ELCHK TSEUNG KWAN O KINDERGARTEN	基督教香港信義會將軍澳幼稚園	15.55
116	ENDEAVOURERS CHAN CHENG KIT WAN KINDERGARTEN	勵志會陳鄭潔雲幼稚園	32.76
117	EPWORTH VILLAGE METHODIST CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	循道衛理聯合教會愛華村堂幼稚園	3.31
118	EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF HK NAM CHEONG KINDERGARTEN	基督教香港信義會南昌幼稚園	11.92
119	EVANGELIZE CHINA FELLOWSHIP BLESSINGS CREATIVITY KINDERGARTEN	基督教中國佈道會恩恩創意幼稚園	16.60
120	FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	深信堂幼稚園	17.55
121	FAN HO WAI CHING MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	范賀渭清紀念幼稚園	26.01

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122	FANLING BAPTIST CHURCH LUI MING CHOI KINDERGARTEN	粉嶺浸信會呂明才幼稚園	13.25
123	FANLING GOD CHURCH GRACE LIGHT KINDERGARTEN	基督教粉嶺神召會恩光幼稚園	18.22
124	FEI NGAN KINDERGARTEN	飛雁幼稚園	7.30
125	FIRST ASSEMBLY OF GOD CHURCH TIN CHAK NURSERY	神召會禮拜堂天澤幼兒園	10.03
126	FIRST ASSEMBLY OF GOD PRIMARY SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN	神召第一小學暨幼稚園(幼稚園部)	6.02
127	FIVE DISTRICTS BUSINESS WELFARE ASSOCIATION CHEUNG CHUK SHAN KINDERGARTEN	五邑工商總會張祝珊幼稚園	12.24
128	FIVE DISTRICTS BUSINESS WELFARE ASSOCIATION KINDERGARTEN AND NURSERY	五邑工商總會幼稚園	7.69
129	FREE METHODIST CHURCH BRADBURY CHUN LEI NURSERY SCHOOL	循理會白普理循理幼兒學校	10.56
130	FU HENG BAPTIST LUI KWOK PAT FONG KINDERGARTEN	富亨浸信會呂郭碧鳳幼稚園	42.51
131	FU SHAN KINDERGARTEN	富山幼稚園	1.95
132	FU TAI LUTHERAN DAY NURSERY	路德會富泰幼兒園	11.06
133	FU YIU KINDERGARTEN	富瑤幼稚園	10.42
134	FUNG KAI KINDERGARTEN	鳳溪幼稚園	24.55
135	GARDEN ESTATE BAPTIST NURSERY SCHOOL	花園大廈浸信會幼兒學校	12.51
136	GRACE BAPTIST KINDERGARTEN	懷恩浸信會幼稚園	2.07
137	GRACE METHODIST CHURCH KINDERGARTEN AND DAY NURSERY	循道衛理聯合教會主恩堂幼稚園	18.83
138	GRACEFIELD EAST KOWLOON CHRISTIAN KINDERGARTEN	基督教恩苗東九龍幼稚園	27.16
139	GRACEFIELD MONGKOK CHRISTIAN KINDERGARTEN	基督教恩苗旺角幼稚園	33.33
140	GUIDEPOSTS KINDERGARTEN	佳寶幼稚園	5.98
141	GUIDEPOSTS KINDERGARTEN (TUEN MUN BRANCH)	佳寶幼稚園(屯門分校)	7.97
142	GUIDEPOSTS KINDERGARTEN SECOND BRANCH (KIN SANG ESTATE)	佳寶幼稚園第二分校(建生邨)	10.00
143	GUIDEPOSTS KINDERGARTEN THIRD BRANCH (TIN SHUI ESTATE)	佳寶幼稚園第三分校(天瑞邨)	8.76
144	HEEP HONG SOCIETY HEALTHY KIDS NURSERY SCHOOL	協康會康苗幼兒園	13.10
145	HENG FA CHUEN LUTHERAN DAY NURSERY	路德會杏花邨幼兒園	10.21
146	HENG ON BAPTIST NURSERY SCHOOL	恒安浸信會幼兒學校	12.32
147	HHCKLA BUDDHIST LAM WONG MING WAI KINDERGARTEN	香海正覺蓮社佛教林黃明慧幼稚園	18.65
148	HHCKLA BUDDHIST WAI KWONG KINDERGARTEN	香海正覺蓮社佛教慧光幼稚園	21.30
149	HIP WO H SCHOOL OF THE H K COUNCIL OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CHINA	中華基督教會香港區會協和學校	37.28
150	HK & KKWA SUN FONG CHUNG KINDERGARTEN (SUI WO COURT)	港九街坊婦女會孫方中幼稚園(穗禾苑)	23.30
151	HK & KKWA TING YUK CHEE KINDERGARTEN	港九街坊婦女會丁毓珠幼稚園	9.74
152	HK & KLN KAI FONG WOMEN'S ASSN WAN TSUI KINDERGARTEN	港九街坊婦女會環翠幼稚園	8.83
153	HK & KLN KAIFONG WOMEN'S ASSN SUN FONG CHUNG KINDERGARTEN	港九街坊婦女會孫方中幼稚園	15.02
154	HK & MACAU LUTHERAN CHURCH TSUI EN KINDERGARTEN	港澳信義會翠恩幼稚園	22.32
155	HK CHRISTIAN SERVICE KWUN TONG NURSERY SCH	香港基督教服務處觀塘幼兒學校	12.12

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156	HK CHRISTIAN SERVICE TIMES NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教服務處時代幼兒學校	12.98
157	HK SENG KUNG HUI ST SIMON'S LEUNG KING NURSERY SCHOOL	香港聖公會聖西門良景幼兒學校	12.62
158	HK SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN HONG KONG BANK FOUNDATION NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會匯豐銀行慈善基金幼兒學校	9.45
159	HK SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN SZE WU SHU MIN NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會施吳淑敏幼兒學校	9.45
160	HK SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN THOMAS TAM NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會譚雅士幼兒學校	12.99
161	HK VERNACULAR NORMAL SCHOOLS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION SCHOOL (KG SECTION)	香港漢文師範同學會學校	13.81
162	HK YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION FAITH HOPE NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教女青年會信望幼兒學校	13.40
163	HK YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION CHEUNG CHING NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教女青年會長青幼兒學校	12.57
164	HKFYG CHING LOK KINDERGARTEN (YAUMATEI)	香港青年協會青樂幼稚園 (油麻地)	17.81
165	HKSKH ST PETER'S CHURCH CASTLE PEAK TSING WUN ROAD KINDERGARTEN	香港聖公會青山聖彼得堂青雲路幼稚園	5.12
166	HKSKH TUNG CHUNG NURSERY SCHOOL	香港聖公會東涌幼兒學校	10.59
167	HKSPC AW HOE NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會胡好幼兒學校	9.45
168	HKSPC BOC NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會中銀幼兒學校	14.51
169	HKSPC MA TAU CHUNG NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會馬頭涌幼兒學校	12.99
170	HKSPC MR & MRS THOMAS TAM NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會譚雅士伉儷幼兒學校	14.51
171	HKSPC OCEAN SHORES NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會維景灣幼兒學校	14.51
172	HKSPC PORTLAND STREET NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會砵蘭街幼兒學校	9.45
173	HKSPC SHAM TSENG NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會深井幼兒學校	14.51
174	HKSPC THE JOCKEY CLUB HOK SAM NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會賽馬會學心幼兒學校	9.45
175	HKSPC WAI YIN CLUB NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會慧妍雅集幼兒學校	9.45
176	HKYWCA CHIU OI WAH NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教女青年會趙靄華幼兒學校	13.86
177	HKYWCA TAI HON FAN NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教女青年會戴翰芬幼兒學校	9.46
178	HO CHING KINDERGARTEN (SPONSORED BY SIK SIK YUEN)	齋色園主辦可正幼稚園	21.83
179	HO LAP KINDERGARTEN SPONSORED BY SIK SIK YUEN	齋色園主辦可立幼稚園	18.99
180	HO MAN TIN BAPTIST CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	何文田浸信會幼稚園	14.51
181	HO OI DAY NURSERY (SPONSORED BY SIK SIK YUEN)	齋色園主辦可愛幼兒園	4.87
182	HO SHUI KINDERGARTEN SPONSORED BY SIK SIK YUEN	齋色園主辦可瑞幼稚園	5.56
183	HO YAN KINDERGARTEN (SPONSORED BY SIK SIK YUEN)	可仁幼稚園 (齋色園主辦)	24.08
184	HO YU KINDERGARTEN (SPONSORED BY SIK SIK YUEN)	齋色園主辦可譽幼稚園	12.78
185	HOH FUK TONG KINDERGARTEN	中華基督教會屯門堂何福堂幼稚園	19.82
186	HOMANTIN YANG MEMORIAL METHODIST PRE-SCHOOL	何文田循道衛理楊震幼兒學校	15.67
187	HONG KONG & KOWLOON KAI FONG WOMEN'S ASSN. TING SUN HUI CHIU KINDERGARTEN	港九街坊婦女會丁孫慧珠幼稚園	9.81
188	HONG KONG & MACAU LUTHERAN CHURCH SHEK ON MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	港澳信義會錫安紀念幼稚園	15.54
189	HONG KONG 5-S KINDERGARTEN	香港五常法幼稚園	7.07
190	HONG KONG BETHEL CHURCH GIDEON KINDERGARTEN	香港伯特利教會基甸幼稚園	6.33

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191	HONG KONG CHRISTIAN SERVICE CENTRAL NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教服務處雋匯幼兒學校	16.86
192	HONG KONG CHRISTIAN SERVICE LEI CHENG UK NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教服務處李鄭屋幼兒學校	12.47
193	HONG KONG CHRISTIAN SERVICE SHEK KIP MEI NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教服務處石硤尾幼兒學校	12.06
194	HONG KONG CHRISTIAN SERVICE TAI HANG TUNG NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教服務處大坑東幼兒學校	13.43
195	HONG KONG CHRISTIAN SERVICE TIN HENG NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教服務處天恒幼兒學校	17.48
196	HONG KONG HARBOUR MISSION CHURCH YAN OI KINDERGARTEN	基督教海面傳道會仁愛幼稚園	4.29
197	HONG KONG KINDERGARTEN ASSOCIATION PRE-SCHOOL	香港幼稚園協會幼兒學校	23.57
198	HONG KONG LING LIANG CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	香港靈糧堂幼稚園	3.99
199	HONG KONG SHENG KUNG HUI HA SUI WAN NURSERY SCHOOL	香港聖公會夏瑞芸幼兒學校	13.87
200	HONG KONG SHENG KUNG HUI KEI OI NURSERY SCHOOL	香港聖公會基愛幼兒學校	14.26
201	HONG KONG SHENG KUNG HUI ST NICHOLAS NURSERY SCHOOL	香港聖公會聖尼哥拉幼兒學校	15.79
202	HONG KONG SHENG KUNG HUI ST SIMON'S SAI KUNG NURSERY SCHOOL	香港聖公會聖西門西貢幼兒學校	12.64
203	HONG KONG SHENG KUNG HUI ST SIMON'S TAI HING NURSERY SCHOOL	香港聖公會聖西門大興幼兒學校	14.08
204	HONG KONG SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN OPERATION SANTA CLAUS FANLING NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會聖誕老人愛心粉嶺幼兒學校	12.99
205	HONG KONG SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN BUTTERFLY EST NURSERY SCH	香港保護兒童會蝴蝶邨幼兒學校	9.45
206	HONG KONG SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN CHEUNG SHA WAN NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會長沙灣幼兒學校	9.45
207	HONG KONG SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN LAM WOO NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會林護幼兒學校	9.45
208	HONG KONG SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN SIA WHAMPOA NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會新航黃埔幼兒學校	12.99
209	HONG KONG SOCIETY OF THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN PARK'N SHOP STAFF CHARITABLE FUND NURSERY SCHOOL	香港保護兒童會百佳員工慈善基金幼兒學校	9.45
210	HONG KONG SOKA KINDERGARTEN	香港創價幼稚園	34.38
211	HONG KONG STUDENT AID SOCIETY PO TAT NURSERY	香港學生輔助會寶達幼兒園	8.93
212	HONG KONG YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION SHIU PONG NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教女青年會紹邦幼兒學校	14.05
213	HONG KONG YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION ON TING NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教女青年會安定幼兒學校	9.46
214	HONG KONG YWCA ATHENA KINDERGARTEN	香港基督教女青年會宏恩幼稚園	20.98
215	HONG KONG YWCA CHOI WAN NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教女青年會彩雲幼兒學校	8.44
216	HONG KONG YWCA LUNG HANG NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教女青年會隆亨幼兒學校	12.28
217	HONG KONG YWCA TSUEN WAN NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教女青年會荃灣幼兒學校	11.08
218	HONG YING ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	康盈中英文幼稚園	21.57
219	HOP YAT CHURCH CHAN PAK WANG MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	合一堂陳伯宏紀念幼稚園	6.65

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220	HOP YAT CHURCH SHIN KA CHUEN MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	合一堂單家傳紀念幼稚園	2.86
221	IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY KINDERGARTEN	聖母無玷聖心幼稚園	10.59
222	ISLAMIC ABU BAKAR CHUI MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	伊斯蘭徐錦享紀念幼稚園	37.90
223	ISLAMIC POK OI KINDERGARTEN	伊斯蘭博愛幼稚園	13.54
224	JOSEPH KINDERGARTEN	約瑟幼稚園	14.93
225	KA FUK BAPTIST CHURCH PRE-SCHOOL	嘉福浸信會幼兒園	12.98
226	KAM LAM CATHOLIC KINDERGARTEN	天主教甘霖幼稚園	19.79
227	KAM TSIN VILLAGE HO TUNG KINDERGARTEN	金錢村何東幼稚園	18.38
228	KARLAM ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	珈琳中英文幼稚園	5.68
229	KARLAM ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN (OASIS GARDEN)	珈琳中英文幼稚園 (龍門居分校)	4.02
230	KARLAM KINDERGARTEN (TUEN MUN BRANCH)	珈琳幼稚園 (屯門分校)	2.33
231	KAU YAN SCHOOL (KINDERGARTEN SECTION)	救恩學校 (幼稚園部)	5.08
232	KIANGSU & CHEKIANG PRIMARY SCHOOL (KINDERGARTEN SECTION)	蘇浙小學校	4.13
233	KIN SANG BAPTIST CHURCH BRADBURY PRE-SCHOOL	建生浸信會白普理幼兒園	11.25
234	KIN SANG LUTHERAN KINDERGARTEN	路德會建生幼稚園	18.03
235	KORNHILL CHRISTIAN ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	基督教康山中英文幼稚園	3.76
236	KOWLOON CITY BAPTIST CHURCH HAY NIEN KINDERGARTEN	九龍城浸信會禧年幼稚園	16.06
237	KOWLOON CITY BAPTIST CHURCH KA FUK KINDERGARTEN	九龍城浸信會嘉福幼稚園	17.37
238	KOWLOON CITY BAPTIST CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	九龍城浸信會幼稚園	18.02
239	KOWLOON CITY BAPTIST CHURCH TSZ OI KINDERGARTEN	九龍城浸信會慈愛幼稚園	18.74
240	KOWLOON LING LIANG CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	九龍靈糧堂幼稚園	9.29
241	KOWLOON RHENISH SCHOOL (ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN)	九龍禮賢學校 (幼稚園部)	7.05
242	KOWLOON WOMEN'S WELFARE CLUB NURSERY SCHOOL	九龍婦女福利會幼稚園	12.35
243	KWAI CHUNG BAPTIST CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	葵涌浸信會幼稚園	16.73
244	KWAN TONG BAPTIST CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	官塘浸信會幼稚園	12.38
245	KWONG LAM BAPTIST LUI KWOK PAT FONG KINDERGARTEN	廣林浸信會呂郭碧鳳幼稚園	6.41
246	KWUN TONG BAPTIST CHURCH CHOI MING KINDERGARTEN	觀塘浸信會彩明幼稚園	8.38
247	KWUN TONG METHODIST KINDERGARTEN	觀塘循道幼稚園	13.04
248	KWUN TONG ST AGNES ENGLISH KINDERGARTEN	官塘雅麗斯英文幼稚園	19.69
249	LAI KING RHENISH NURSERY	禮賢會荔景幼兒園	8.72
250	LAM TIN LING LIANG KINDERGARTEN	藍田靈糧幼稚園	5.32
251	LEE ANDREW MEMORIAL ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	李榮基紀念中英文幼稚園	21.08
252	LOCK TAO CHRISTIAN KINDERGARTEN	基督教樂道幼稚園	10.25
253	LOK FU RHENISH CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	樂富禮賢會幼稚園	26.34
254	LOK FU RHENISH NURSERY	禮賢會樂富幼兒園	11.27
255	LOK KING KINDERGARTEN	樂景幼稚園	36.56
256	LOK SIN TONG CHEUNG YIP MOU CHING KINDERGARTEN	樂善堂張葉茂清幼稚園	14.42
257	LOK SIN TONG KINDERGARTEN	樂善堂幼稚園	11.66

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258	LOK SIN TONG KU LEE KWOK SIN KINDERGARTEN	樂善堂顧李覺鮮幼稚園	14.40
259	LOK SIN TONG MAN NG WING YEE KINDERGARTEN	樂善堂文吳泳沂幼稚園	12.61
260	LOK SIN TONG STEPHEN LEUNG KINDERGARTEN	樂善堂梁泳釗幼稚園	7.85
261	LOK SIN TONG TANG TAK LIM KINDERGARTEN	樂善堂鄧德濂幼稚園	15.45
262	LOK WAH KINDERGARTEN	樂華幼稚園	15.63
263	LOTUS ASSOCIATION OF HONG KONG SIU HEI COURT KINDERGARTEN	香海蓮社兆禧苑幼稚園	14.03
264	LOVING HEART LUTHERAN KINDERGARTEN	路德會愛心幼稚園	23.29
265	LUI CHEUNG KWONG LUTHERAN KINDERGARTEN	路德會呂祥光幼稚園	36.18
266	LUI KWAN POK LUTHERAN DAY NURSERY	路德會呂君博幼兒園	7.67
267	LUNG KONG WORLD FEDERATION SCHOOL LTD CHU SUI LAN ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	世界龍岡學校朱瑞蘭(中英文)幼稚園	7.85
268	LUTHERAN PHILIP HOUSE HING MAN NURSERY SCHOOL	粵南信義會腓力堂興民幼兒學園	16.71
269	LUTHERAN PHILIP HOUSE KAI YIP NURSERY SCHOOL	粵南信義會腓力堂啟業幼兒學園	21.62
270	LUTHERAN PHILIP HOUSE MA TAU WAI NURSERY SCHOOL	粵南信義會腓力堂馬頭圍幼兒學園	18.95
271	LUTHERAN PHILIP HOUSE OI LUN NURSERY SCHOOL	粵南信義會腓力堂愛鄰幼兒學園	17.15
272	MA ON SHAN LING LIANG KINDERGARTEN	馬鞍山靈糧幼稚園	5.57
273	MEI LAM ESTATE TO KWONG KINDERGARTEN	美林邨道光幼稚園	19.97
274	MEI TUNG ESTATE ON KEE KINDERGARTEN	美東邨安琪幼稚園	17.92
275	MONG KOK AGNES ENGLISH KINDERGARTEN	旺角雅麗斯英文幼稚園	8.33
276	MOON LOK KINDERGARTEN	滿樂幼稚園	64.50
277	MUI WOH CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	中華基督教會梅窩堂幼稚園	50.00
278	MUNSANG COLLEGE	民生書院(幼稚園部)	19.99
279	MUSLIM COMMUNITY KINDERGARTEN	穆斯林幼稚園	28.00
280	N T ASSEMBLIES OF GOD CHURCH WAI MAN KINDERGARTEN	新界神召會惠民幼稚園	29.47
281	NAAC YUEN LONG DAY NURSERY	鄰舍輔導會元朗幼兒園	7.14
282	NEW KOWLOON WOMEN ASSN TSZ WAN SHAN NURSERY	新九龍婦女會慈雲山幼兒園	19.66
283	NEW KOWLOON WOMEN ASSOCIATION LOK WAH NURSERY	新九龍婦女會樂華幼兒園	18.89
284	NEW KOWLOON WOMEN ASSOCIATION SHA KOK NURSERY	新九龍婦女會沙角幼兒園	19.66
285	NEW KOWLOON WOMEN ASSOCIATION SUN CHUI NURSERY	新九龍婦女會新翠幼兒園	19.66
286	N-M-S LUTHERAN KINDERGARTEN	基督教挪威差會主辦信義中英文幼稚園	19.24
287	NORTH POINT METHODIST CHURCH DAY NURSERY	北角衛理堂幼兒園	3.12
288	NORTH POINT METHODIST CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	北角衛理堂幼稚園	2.98
289	NT TIN SUM ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	新界天心中英文幼稚園	5.14
290	NT WOMEN & JUVENILES WELFARE ASSN. LTD. YUEN LONG CHILDREN GARDEN	新界婦孺福利會元朗兒童樂園	12.67
291	NT WOMEN & JUVENILES WELFARE ASSOCIATION LIMITED FANLING CHILDREN GARDEN	新界婦孺福利會粉嶺兒童樂園	20.65
292	NT WOMEN & JUVENILES WELFARE ASSOCIATION LTD CHEUNG FAT ESTATE CHILDREN GARDEN	新界婦孺福利會長發邨兒童樂園	17.89

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293	NTW & JWA POK HONG ESTATE CHILDREN GARDEN	新界婦孺福利會博康邨兒童樂園	16.49
294	NTW&JWA LEUNG SING TAK ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN (SHEUNG TAK ESTATE)	新界婦孺福利會梁省德中英文幼稚園-尚德邨	14.91
295	OI KWAN ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH LUI KWOK PAT FONG KINDERGARTEN	愛群道浸信會呂郭碧鳳幼稚園	15.24
296	OUR LADY OF LOURDES CATHOLIC KINDERGARTEN	天主教露德聖母幼稚園	22.96
297	PEACE EVANGELICAL CENTRE KINDERGARTEN	平安福音堂幼稚園	3.10
298	PEACE EVANGELICAL CENTRE KINDERGARTEN (TSING YI)	平安福音堂幼稚園(青衣)	3.46
299	PEACE LUTHERAN KINDERGARTEN	路德會和平幼稚園	23.69
300	PENIEL SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN	便以利學校暨幼稚園	23.96
301	PENTECOSTAL CHURCH OF HONG KONG TAI WO NURSERY SCHOOL	竹園區神召會太和康樂幼兒學校	5.26
302	PENTECOSTAL CHURCH OF HONG KONG TSEUNG KWAN O KINDERGARTEN	竹園區神召會將軍澳康樂幼兒學校	7.91
303	PO LEUNG KUK BUTTERFLY BAY KINDERGARTEN	保良局蝴蝶灣幼稚園	9.76
304	PO LEUNG KUK CHAN SENG YEE KINDERGARTEN	保良局曾星如幼稚園	9.40
305	PO LEUNG KUK CHEUNG POON MEI YEE KINDERGARTEN	保良局潘張美意幼稚園	13.50
306	PO LEUNG KUK CHOI KOON SHUM KINDERGARTEN	保良局蔡冠深幼稚園	7.05
307	PO LEUNG KUK CHOI MING KINDERGARTEN	保良局彩明幼稚園	11.22
308	PO LEUNG KUK FONG TAM YUEN LEUNG (TSZ WAN SHAN) KINDERGARTEN	保良局方譚遠良(慈雲山)幼稚園	10.00
309	PO LEUNG KUK FONG TAM YUEN LEUNG KINDERGARTEN	保良局方譚遠良幼稚園	11.22
310	PO LEUNG KUK FONG WONG WOON TAI KINDERGARTEN	保良局方王煥娣幼稚園	26.48
311	PO LEUNG KUK FUNG LEUNG KIT MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	保良局馮梁結紀念幼稚園	15.95
312	PO LEUNG KUK FUNG PAK LIM KINDERGARTEN	保良局馮伯廉幼稚園	9.76
313	PO LEUNG KUK KAM HING KINDERGARTEN	保良局金卿幼稚園	10.04
314	PO LEUNG KUK KINDERGARTEN	保良局幼稚園	11.22
315	PO LEUNG KUK KOWLOON CITY KINDERGARTEN	保良局九龍城幼稚園	9.76
316	PO LEUNG KUK KWAI FONG KINDERGARTEN	保良局葵芳幼稚園	9.76
317	PO LEUNG KUK KWAI SHING KINDERGARTEN	保良局葵盛幼稚園	10.00
318	PO LEUNG KUK KWONG FUK KINDERGARTEN	保良局廣福幼稚園	9.41
319	PO LEUNG KUK KWUN TONG KINDERGARTEN	保良局觀塘幼稚園	9.76
320	PO LEUNG KUK LAU CHAN SIU PO KINDERGARTEN	保良局劉陳小寶幼稚園	19.05
321	PO LEUNG KUK LEE SIU CHAN KINDERGARTEN	保良局李筱參幼稚園	9.76
322	PO LEUNG KUK LEI MUK SHUE KINDERGARTEN	保良局梨木樹幼稚園	9.76
323	PO LEUNG KUK LEK YUEN KINDERGARTEN	保良局瀝源幼稚園	9.76
324	PO LEUNG KUK LI TSUI CHUNG SING MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	保良局李徐松聲紀念幼稚園	15.71
325	PO LEUNG KUK MRS CHAO KING LIN KINDERGARTEN	保良局曹金霖夫人幼稚園	14.23
326	PO LEUNG KUK MRS FONG WONG KAM CHUEN KINDERGARTEN	保良局方王錦全幼稚園	28.27
327	PO LEUNG KUK MRS VICWOOD K T CHONG KINDERGARTEN	保良局莊啟程夫人幼稚園	23.33
328	PO LEUNG KUK MRS. VICWOOD K.T. CHONG (WAH KWAI) KINDERGARTEN	保良局莊啟程夫人(華貴)幼稚園	9.76

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329	PO LEUNG KUK MRS. TAM WAH CHING KINDERGARTEN	保良局譚華正夫人幼稚園	20.03
330	PO LEUNG KUK NG TOR TAI KINDERGARTEN	保良局吳多泰幼稚園	18.96
331	PO LEUNG KUK PING SHEK KINDERGARTEN	保良局坪石幼稚園	9.76
332	PO LEUNG KUK SHEUNG LOK KINDERGARTEN	保良局常樂幼稚園	11.98
333	PO LEUNG KUK TAI KOK TSUI KINDERGARTEN	保良局大角咀幼稚園	9.76
334	PO LEUNG KUK TAI SO SHIU WAN KINDERGARTEN	保良局戴蘇小韃幼稚園	14.40
335	PO LEUNG KUK TAK TIN KINDERGARTEN	保良局德田幼稚園	10.00
336	PO LEUNG KUK TAM AU-YEUNG SIU FONG MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	保良局譚歐陽少芳紀念幼稚園	2.98
337	PO LEUNG KUK TANG BIK WAN MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	保良局鄧碧雲紀念幼稚園	15.51
338	PO LEUNG KUK TIN KA PING KINDERGARTEN	保良局田家炳幼稚園	31.15
339	PO LEUNG KUK TIN KA PING SIU HONG KINDERGARTEN	保良局田家炳兆康幼稚園	17.99
340	PO LEUNG KUK TING MAU HUNG HOM KINDERGARTEN	保良局丁卯紅蘆幼稚園	9.76
341	PO LEUNG KUK TING MAU KINDERGARTEN	保良局丁卯幼稚園	28.26
342	PO LEUNG KUK TONG CHOR NAM KINDERGARTEN	保良局唐楚男幼稚園	10.63
343	PO LEUNG KUK TSZ LOK KINDERGARTEN	保良局慈樂幼稚園	10.00
344	PO LEUNG KUK VICWOOD CHONG KEE TING KINDERGARTEN	保良局莊啟程幼稚園	11.06
345	PO LEUNG KUK WAI YIN KINDERGARTEN	保良局慧妍雅集幼稚園	9.76
346	PO LEUNG KUK WONG SIU CHING KINDERGARTEN	保良局王少清幼稚園	9.76
347	PO LEUNG KUK YAU OI KINDERGARTEN	保良局友愛幼稚園	9.76
348	PO LEUNG KUK YICK CHARK FUNG KINDERGARTEN	保良局易澤峰幼稚園	20.62
349	PO LEUNG KUK YICK KWAI FONG KINDERGARTEN	保良局易桂芳幼稚園	24.43
350	PO LEUNG KUK YUEN LONG KINDERGARTEN	保良局元朗幼稚園	9.76
351	POK OI HOSPITAL CHAN POON PUI CHING MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	博愛醫院陳潘佩清紀念幼稚園	10.25
352	POK OI HOSPITAL SY SIOK CHUN KINDERGARTEN	博愛醫院施淑鎮幼稚園	11.00
353	POOI TO PRIMARY SCHOOL (KINDERGARTEN SECTION)	香港培道小學	7.41
354	PRECIOUS BLOOD KINDERGARTEN (SHUM SHUI PO)	寶血幼稚園 (深水埗)	4.62
355	PROSPEROUS GARDEN BAPTIST KINDERGARTEN	駿發花園浸信會幼兒學校	8.72
356	PUI CHING PRIMARY SCHOOL	香港培正小學 (幼稚園部)	9.38
357	QUEEN ELIZABETH SCHOOL OLD STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION KINDERGARTEN	伊利沙伯中學舊生會幼稚園	15.50
358	REDEMPTION LUTHERAN KINDERGARTEN	路德會救恩幼稚園	24.54
359	REGENT'S KINDERGARTEN (BRANCH SCHOOL)	麗晶幼稚園分校	3.96
360	REGINA COELI ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	天后中英文幼稚園	2.76
361	REGINA COELI ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN (SECOND BRANCH)	天后中英文幼稚園 (二校)	4.96
362	RHENISH MISSION SCHOOL	禮賢會學校	10.23
363	ROCK OF AGES LUTHERAN KINDERGARTEN	路德會恩石幼稚園	47.61
364	ROSARYHILL KINDERGARTEN	玫瑰崗幼稚園	17.61
365	S K H KINDLY LIGHT CHURCH OR PUI CHEUNG KINDERGARTEN	聖公會慈光堂柯佩璋幼稚園	10.71
366	SACRED HEART CANOSSIAN KINDERGARTEN	嘉諾撒聖心幼稚園	22.24
367	SAGARMATHA KINDERGARTEN	無譯名	23.33

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368	SAI KUNG LOK YUK KINDERGARTEN	西貢樂育幼稚園	26.76
369	SALEM KINDERGARTEN (SHAUKIWAN)	南亞路德會幼稚園 (筲箕灣)	5.35
370	SALVATION ARMY LOK MAN NURSERY SCHOOL	救世軍樂民幼兒園	13.24
371	SAN PO KONG REHNISH NURSERY	禮賢會新蒲崗幼兒園	11.41
372	SEMPLÉ KINDERGARTEN	深培中英文幼稚園	17.23
373	SHA KOK ESTATE WAI YAN KINDERGARTEN	沙角邨懷恩幼稚園	9.09
374	SHAM SHUI PO BAPTIST CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	深水埗浸信會幼稚園	25.28
375	SHAN KING ESTATE BAPTIST KINDERGARTEN	山景邨浸信會幼稚園	14.89
376	SHARON LUTHERAN CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	路德會沙崙堂幼稚園	18.21
377	SHARON LUTHERAN CHURCH KINDERGARTEN (TSZ OI BRANCH)	路德會沙崙堂幼稚園 (慈愛分校)	45.16
378	SHAU KEI WAN METHODIST KINDERGARTEN	筲箕灣循道衛理幼稚園	0.87
379	SHAUKIWAN KAI FONG WELFARE COMMUNITY CENTRE ELEMENTI KINDERGARTEN	筲箕灣街坊福利會培元幼稚園	5.74
380	SHAUKIWAN TSUNG TSIN NURSERY SCHOOL	筲箕灣崇真幼兒學校	2.52
381	SHENG KUNG HUI KINDERGARTEN	聖公會幼稚園	11.34
382	SHENG KUNG HUI KINDERGARTEN (MOUNT BUTLER)	聖公會幼稚園 (畢拉山)	22.81
383	SHEUNG SHUI CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	上水堂幼稚園	40.29
384	SHEUNG SHUI RHENISH CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	上水禮賢會幼稚園	23.48
385	SHEUNG SHUI WAI CHOW KINDERGARTEN (BRANCH)	上水惠州幼稚園 (分校)	21.49
386	SHIN YAT TONG ON YAT KINDERGARTEN	善一堂安逸幼稚園	3.05
387	SHUM OI CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	深愛堂幼稚園	2.92
388	SHUN ON KINDERGARTEN	順安幼稚園	15.91
389	SHUN SANG ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	信生中英文幼稚園	21.52
390	SHUN TAK FRATERNAL ASSOCIATION LEUNG LEE SAU YU (SHATIN) KINDERGARTEN	順德聯誼總會梁李秀娛沙田幼稚園	5.89
391	SHUN TIN RHENISH NURSERY	禮賢會順天幼兒園	10.85
392	SISTER OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY GOSPEL SAU MAU PING CCC & KINDERGARTEN	聖母潔心會福音秀茂坪幼稚園	9.18
393	SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY WONG TAI SIN KINDERGARTEN	聖母潔心會黃大仙幼稚園	11.15
394	SKH CROWN OF THORNS CHURCH KWAI CHUNG KINDERGARTEN	聖公會荊冕堂葵涌幼稚園	3.01
395	SKH CROWN OF THORNS CHURCH TSING YI KINDERGARTEN	聖公會荊冕堂青衣幼稚園	2.99
396	SKH GOOD SHEPHERD CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	聖公會牧愛堂幼稚園	13.61
397	SKH HOLY NATIVITY CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	聖公會主誕堂幼稚園	12.00
398	SKH HOLY SPIRIT CHURCH WO CHE KINDERGARTEN	聖公會靈風堂禾輦幼稚園	7.76
399	SKH HOLY TRINITY CHURCH TSANG SHIU TIM KINDERGARTEN	聖公會聖三一堂曾肇添幼稚園	9.22
400	SKH KINDLY LIGHT CHURCH HOLY CARPENTER KINDERGARTEN	聖公會慈光堂聖匠幼稚園	11.34
401	SKH SHAM SHUI PO KEI OI CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	聖公會深水埗基愛堂幼稚園	17.43
402	SKH ST JOSEPH'S CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	聖公會聖約瑟堂幼稚園	15.00
403	SKH ST PETER'S CHURCH KINDERGARTEN (CASTLE PEAK)	聖公會青山聖彼得堂幼稚園	7.12
404	SKH ST PETER'S CHURCH SHAN KING ESTATE KINDERGARTEN	聖公會青山聖彼得堂山景邨幼稚園	3.14
405	SKH ST PETER'S CHURCH CASTLE PEAK SIU LUN COURT KINDERGARTEN	聖公會青山聖彼得堂兆麟苑幼稚園	10.50
406	SKH ST. CHRISTOPHER'S NURSERY (WAN CHAI)	聖公會聖基道幼兒園 (灣仔)	26.32

No.	School Name in English	School Name in Chinese	Level of School Fee Adjustment %
407	SKH THE CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOUR KINDERGARTEN	聖公會救主堂幼稚園	10.08
408	ST ANDREW'S CATHOLIC KINDERGARTEN	天主教聖安德肋幼稚園	11.71
409	ST ANTONIUS KINDERGARTEN	聖安當幼稚園	16.96
410	ST BARNABAS' CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	聖巴拿巴堂幼稚園	3.49
411	ST DOMINIC ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	聖道明中英文幼稚園	19.50
412	ST GATWICK KINDERGARTEN	聖嘉華幼稚園	19.29
413	ST JAMES CATHOLIC KINDERGARTEN	天主教聖雅各伯幼稚園	15.46
414	ST JAMES LUTHERAN KINDERGARTEN	路德會聖雅各幼稚園	27.24
415	ST JAMES' SETTLEMENT BELCHER KINDERGARTEN	聖雅各福群會寶翠園幼稚園	12.69
416	ST JAMES' SETTLEMENT CAUSEWAY BAY KINDERGARTEN	聖雅各福群會銅鑼灣幼稚園	13.71
417	ST JEROME'S CATHOLIC KINDERGARTEN	天主教聖葉理諾幼稚園	15.82
418	ST JUDE'S CATHOLIC KINDERGARTEN	天主教聖猶達幼稚園	21.63
419	ST MATTHIAS' CHURCH NURSERY SCHOOL	聖公會聖馬提亞堂幼兒學校	10.00
420	ST MATTHIAS' CHURCH CHIU CHUN KINDERGARTEN	聖馬提亞堂肖珍幼稚園	5.01
421	ST MONICA'S ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	聖文嘉中英文幼稚園	13.04
422	ST MONICA'S ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN (WAH KWAI ESTATE)	聖文嘉中英文幼稚園 (華貴邨)	4.70
423	ST MONICA'S ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN (HING TUNG)	聖文嘉中英文幼稚園 (興東)	16.36
424	ST MONICA'S ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN (TSUEN WAN)	聖文嘉中英文幼稚園 (荃灣)	19.29
425	ST MONICA'S KINDERGARTEN (TSUEN WAN)	聖文嘉幼稚園 (荃灣)	9.21
426	ST PAUL'S CATHOLIC DAY NURSERY	天主教聖保祿幼兒園	4.63
427	ST PAUL'S CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	聖保羅堂幼稚園	8.39
428	ST PETER'S CATHOLIC KINDERGARTEN	天主教聖伯多祿幼稚園	14.96
429	ST PETER'S CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	北角聖彼得堂幼稚園	20.62
430	ST PHILIP LUTHERAN CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	路德會聖腓力堂幼稚園	16.32
431	ST SIMON'S LEUNG KING KINDERGARTEN	聖西門良景幼稚園	11.58
432	ST STEPHEN'S CATHOLIC KINDERGARTEN	聖斯德望天主教幼稚園	20.97
433	ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN	聖士提反堂小學暨幼稚園 (幼稚園部)	24.53
434	ST THOMAS' CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	聖多馬堂幼稚園	13.51
435	ST THOMAS' CATHOLIC KINDERGARTEN	天主教聖多默幼稚園	14.78
436	ST VINCENT DE PAUL NURSERY SCHOOL	天主教聖雲先幼兒學校	12.56
437	ST. JAMES' SETTLEMENT KATHLEEN MCDOUALL KG/CCC	聖雅各福群會麥潔蓮幼稚園	9.84
438	ST. MARGARET MARY'S CATHOLIC KINDERGARTEN	天主教聖瑪加利大幼稚園	15.28
439	ST. MARK'S CHURCH BRADBURY KINDERGARTEN	聖馬可堂白普理幼稚園	27.80
440	ST. MONICA'S KINDERGARTEN	聖文嘉幼稚園	16.14
441	ST. PETER'S CHURCH KINDERGARTEN (STANLEY)	聖公會聖彼得堂幼稚園 (赤柱分校)	6.64
442	STAR OF THE SEA CATHOLIC KINDERGARTEN	天主教海星幼稚園	34.61
443	STEWARDS POOI CHUN KINDERGARTEN	香港神託會培真幼稚園	45.59
444	STEWARDS POOI YAN KINDERGARTEN	香港神託會培恩幼稚園	30.19
445	SUEN MEI KINDERGARTEN	宣美幼稚園	4.39
446	SUNG KEI KINDERGARTEN	崇基幼稚園	10.31
447	TACK CHING KINDERGARTEN	德貞幼稚園	3.44
448	TAI PING KINDERGARTEN	太平幼稚園	27.51
449	TAI PO BAPTIST KINDERGARTEN	大埔浸信會幼稚園	35.66
450	TAI PO BAPTIST KINDERGARTEN TIN CHAK ESTATE BRANCH	大埔浸信會幼稚園天澤邨分校	15.36

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451	TAI PO BAPTIST KINDERGARTEN WAN TAU TONG ESTATE BRANCH	大埔浸信會幼稚園運頭塘邨分校	25.69
452	TAI PO CATHOLIC KINDERGARTEN	天主教大埔幼稚園	14.01
453	TAI PO MERCHANT ASSOCIATION CHEUNG HOK MING KINDERGARTEN (TSEUNG KWAN O)	大埔商會張學明幼稚園 (將軍澳)	21.51
454	TAI PO MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION KINDERGARTEN	大埔商會幼稚園	21.55
455	TAI PO METHODIST KINDERGARTEN	大埔循道衛理幼稚園	16.63
456	TAI PO RHENISH CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	大埔禮賢會幼稚園	14.32
457	TAK SUN PRIVATE KINDERGARTEN	德信幼稚園	31.32
458	TALENT KINDERGARTEN	天樂幼稚園	10.34
459	THE ASSOCIATION OF EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCHES OF HK-EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH OF CHINA-VERBENA SCH	香港基督教播道會聯會茵怡幼兒學校	10.09
460	THE BAPTIST CONVENTION OF HONG KONG LEE ON NURSERY	香港浸信會聯會利安幼兒園	10.00
461	THE BAPTIST CONVENTION OF HONG KONG PO TIN KINDERGARTEN	香港浸信會聯會寶田幼稚園	31.22
462	THE BOYS' AND GIRLS' CLUBS ASSOCIATION OF HK CHEERLAND KINDERGARTEN (WAN CHAI)	香港女童群益會樂緻幼稚園 (灣仔)	8.85
463	THE CCCHK CHI TO CHURCH KEI POK KINDERGARTEN (TSEUNG KWAN O)	中華基督教會香港志道堂基博幼稚園(將軍澳)	22.28
464	THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CHINA KEI CHUN KINDERGARTEN	中華基督教會基真幼稚園	21.97
465	THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CHINA KEI FAAT KINDERGARTEN	中華基督教會基法幼稚園	40.40
466	THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CHINA TUEN MUN CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	中華基督教會屯門堂幼稚園	12.27
467	THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF HONG KONG CHEUNG WAH KINDERGARTEN	基督教香港信義會祥華幼稚園	21.26
468	THE FANLING ASSEMBLIES OF GOD KINDERGARTEN	粉嶺神召會幼稚園	18.85
469	THE HK CHINESE CHURCH OF CHRIST THE LIGHT KINDERGARTEN	香港華人基督會煜明幼稚園	30.14
470	THE HK CHINESE WOMEN'S CLUB KINDERGARTEN	香港中國婦女會幼稚園	14.04
471	THE HK FEDERATION OF YOUTH GROUPS CHING LOK KINDERGARTEN CHING LOK NURSERY	香港青年協會青樂幼稚園	16.11
472	THE HONG KONG COUNCIL OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CHINA FUK YAU NO. II KINDERGARTEN	中華基督教會福幼第二幼稚園	0.51
473	THE MISSION COVENANT CHURCH LITTLE ANGEL (TIN SHING) NURSERY & KINDERGARTEN	基督教聖約教會小天使(天盛)幼稚園	20.79
474	THE MISSION COVENANT CHURCH SISTER ANNIE'S KINDERGARTEN	基督教聖約教會司務道幼稚園	10.65
475	THE NEIGHBOURHOOD ADVICE-ACTION COUNCIL FANLING DAY NURSERY	鄰舍輔導會粉嶺幼兒園	7.14
476	THE NEIGHBOURHOOD ADVICE-ACTION COUNCIL TUNG CHUNG DAY NURSERY	鄰舍輔導會東涌幼兒園	7.32
477	THE NT WOMEN & JUVENILES WELFARE ASSN. LTD. SHEUNG SHUI CHILDREN GARDEN	新界婦孺福利會上水兒童樂園	10.07
478	THE SALVATION ARMY CATHERINE BOOTH NURSERY SCHOOL	救世軍卜凱賽琳幼兒園	6.69
479	THE SALVATION ARMY CHAN KWAN TUNG KINDERGARTEN	救世軍陳昆棟幼稚園	28.25

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480	THE SALVATION ARMY FU KEUNG KINDERGARTEN	救世軍富強幼稚園	32.76
481	THE SALVATION ARMY HING YAN KINDERGARTEN	救世軍慶恩幼稚園	33.89
482	THE SALVATION ARMY HOI FU NURSERY SCHOOL	救世軍海富幼兒園	8.35
483	THE SALVATION ARMY JAT MIN NURSERY SCHOOL	救世軍乙明幼兒園	13.87
484	THE SALVATION ARMY KAM TIN NURSERY SCHOOL	救世軍錦田幼兒園	6.13
485	THE SALVATION ARMY LAI CHI KOK NURSERY SCHOOL	救世軍荔枝角幼兒園	11.25
486	THE SALVATION ARMY LEI MUK SHUE NURSERY SCHOOL	救世軍梨木樹幼兒園	14.02
487	THE SALVATION ARMY MING TAK NURSERY SCHOOL	救世軍明德幼兒園	13.10
488	THE SALVATION ARMY NG KWOK WAI MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	救世軍吳國偉紀念幼稚園	20.83
489	THE SALVATION ARMY NORTH POINT NURSERY SCHOOL	救世軍北角幼兒園	9.44
490	THE SALVATION ARMY PAK TIN NURSERY/PAK TIN CRECHE	救世軍白田幼兒園	9.70
491	THE SALVATION ARMY PING TIN KINDERGARTEN AND NURSERY	救世軍平田幼稚園	25.00
492	THE SALVATION ARMY SAM SHING NURSERY SCHOOL	救世軍三聖幼兒園	9.40
493	THE SALVATION ARMY TAI WO HAU NURSERY SCHOOL	救世軍大窩口幼兒園	12.67
494	THE SALVATION ARMY TAI YUEN NURSERY SCHOOL	救世軍大元幼兒園	8.44
495	THE SALVATION ARMY TIN KA PING KINDERGARTEN	救世軍田家炳幼稚園	30.88
496	THE SALVATION ARMY TIN PING NURSERY SCHOOL	救世軍天平幼兒園	12.11
497	THE SALVATION ARMY TSUEN WAN NURSERY SCHOOL	救世軍荃灣幼兒園	14.04
498	THE SALVATION ARMY WAH FU NURSERY SCHOOL	救世軍華富幼兒園	16.70
499	THE SALVATION ARMY WO CHE NURSERY SCHOOL	救世軍禾輦幼兒園	10.46
500	THE TRUE LIGHT MIDDLE SCHOOL OF HONG KONG	香港真光中學(幼稚園部)	3.00
501	THE WOMEN'S WELFARE CLUB (EASTERN DISTRICT) NURSERY HK	香港東區婦女福利會幼兒園	14.01
502	TIN KING ESTATE BAPTIST LUI KWOK PAT FONG KINDERGARTEN	田景邨浸信會呂郭碧鳳幼稚園	14.85
503	TIN SHUI WAI ALLIANCE KINDERGARTEN	天水圍宣道幼稚園	26.09
504	TIN WAN METHODIST KINDERGARTEN	循道衛理田灣幼稚園	5.54
505	TIN YIU ESTATE HO KWANG HUNG KINDERGARTEN	天耀邨何廣雄幼稚園	0.92
506	TIVOLI ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	宏福中英文幼稚園	1.68
507	TRUTH BAPTIST CHURCH EMPOWER KINDERGARTEN	真理浸信會富泰幼稚園	17.94
508	TRUTH BAPTIST CHURCH GLORY NURSERY	真理浸信會榮光幼兒園	13.37
509	TRUTH BAPTIST CHURCH GRACE KINDERGARTEN	真理浸信會恩典幼稚園	21.97
510	TRUTH BAPTIST CHURCH HO YUEN WAI KING KINDERGARTEN	真理浸信會何袁惠瓊幼稚園	18.48

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511	TRUTH BAPTIST CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	真理浸信會幼稚園	24.95
512	TRUTH BAPTIST CHURCH PICTORIAL KINDERGARTEN	真理浸信會碧濤幼稚園	15.46
513	TSEUNG KWAN O METHODIST KINDERGARTEN	將軍澳循道衛理幼稚園	14.66
514	TSING YI RURAL COMMITTEE KINDERGARTEN	青衣鄉事委員會幼稚園	23.46
515	TSING YI TRADE ASSOCIATION KINDERGARTEN	青衣商會幼稚園	21.50
516	TSING YI TRADE ASSOCIATION SHEK YAM KINDERGARTEN	青衣商會石蔭幼稚園	20.43
517	TSING YI TRADE ASSOCIATION TIN SHUI WAI KINDERGARTEN	青衣商會天水圍幼稚園	22.15
518	TSING YI TRADE ASSOCIATION TSEUNG KWAN O KINDERGARTEN	青衣商會將軍澳幼稚園	28.45
519	TSUEN WAN BAPTIST CHURCH KINDERGARTEN	荃灣浸信會幼稚園	19.26
520	TSUEN WAN BAPTIST CHURCH SHEK LEI KINDERGARTEN	荃灣浸石籬幼稚園	26.49
521	TSUEN WAN OUR LADY KINDERGARTEN	荃灣聖母幼稚園	23.05
522	TSUEN WAN ST ANDREW ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	荃灣聖安德中英文幼稚園	14.21
523	TSUEN WAN TRADE ASSOCIATION CHU CHEONG KINDERGARTEN	荃灣商會朱昌幼稚園	31.54
524	TSUEN WAN TRADE ASSOCIATION CHUNG LOI KINDERGARTEN	荃灣商會鍾來幼稚園	28.31
525	TSUEN WAN TRADE ASSOCIATION YAU KIN FUNG KINDERGARTEN	荃灣商會邱健峰幼稚園	24.22
526	TSUI LAM ESTATE BAPTIST KINDERGARTEN	翠林邨浸信會幼稚園	20.58
527	TSUNG TSIN MISSION GRACEFUL KINDERGARTEN	崇真會美善幼稚園	13.42
528	TSUNG TSIN MISSION GRACEFUL KINDERGARTEN (MA ON SHAN)	崇真會美善幼稚園 (馬鞍山)	12.34
529	TSUNG TSIN MISSION OF HONG KONG ON HONG NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教香港崇真會安康幼兒學校	5.85
530	TSUNG TSIN MISSION OF HONG KONG ON KEI NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教香港崇真會安基幼兒學校	5.85
531	TSUNG TSIN MISSION OF HONG KONG ON KEUNG NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教香港崇真會安強幼兒學校	5.18
532	TSUNG TSIN MISSION OF HONG KONG ON YAN NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教香港崇真會安仁幼兒學校	5.67
533	TSUNG TSIN MISSION OF HONG KONG ON YEE NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教香港崇真會安怡幼兒學校	7.05
534	TSUNG TSIN MISSION PAK TIN GRACEFUL KINDERGARTEN	崇真會白田美善幼稚園	12.32
535	TSUNG TSIN PRIMARY SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN	崇真小學暨幼稚園 (幼稚園部)	7.52
536	TSZ WAN SHAN KAI FONG WELFARE ASSN RAINBOW ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	慈雲山街坊福利會天虹中英文幼稚園	29.49
537	TUNG CHUNG BAPTIST KINDERGARTEN	東涌浸信會幼稚園	16.81
538	TUNG CHUNG CATHOLIC KINDERGARTEN	東涌天主教幼稚園	19.05
539	TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS FONG SHU FOOK TONG KINDERGARTEN	東華三院方樹福堂幼稚園	15.19
540	TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS HUNG WONG KAR GEE KINDERGARTEN	東華三院洪王家琪幼稚園	22.12
541	TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS KO TECK KIN MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	東華三院高德根紀念幼稚園	18.10
542	TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS LAI TANG YUEN KAW KINDERGARTEN	東華三院黎鄧潤球幼稚園	13.70
543	TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS LEE WONG HING CHEUNG KINDERGARTEN	東華三院李黃慶祥紀念幼稚園	15.88

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544	TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS LIU YAN TAK MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	東華三院廖恩德紀念幼稚園	17.14
545	TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS LO WONG PIK SHAN NURSERY SCHOOL	東華三院羅黃碧珊幼兒園	4.46
546	TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS LUI FUNG FAUNG MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	東華三院呂馮鳳紀念幼稚園	17.83
547	TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS NICKON KINDERGARTEN	東華三院力勤幼稚園	13.50
548	TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS TIN WAN KINDERGARTEN	東華三院田灣幼稚園	15.06
549	TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS TSUI TSIN TONG KINDERGARTEN	東華三院徐展堂幼稚園	14.77
550	TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS WONG CHU WAI FUN KINDERGARTEN	東華三院黃朱惠芬幼稚園	19.04
551	TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS WONG SEE SUM KINDERGARTEN	東華三院黃士心幼稚園	16.10
552	TWGHs CHAN HAN NURSERY SCHOOL	東華三院陳嫻幼兒園	4.46
553	TWGHs CHAN KING HAR KINDERGARTEN	東華三院馬陳景霞幼稚園	30.10
554	TWGHs FONG LAI MING NURSERY SCHOOL	東華三院方麗明幼兒園	4.46
555	TWGHs FONG SHU CHUEN NURSERY SCHOOL	東華三院方樹泉幼兒園	4.46
556	TWGHs KWAN FONG NURSERY SCHOOL	東華三院群芳幼兒園	4.46
557	TWGHs LIONS CLUB OF METROPOLITAN HONG KONG KINDERGARTEN	東華三院香港華都獅子會幼稚園	13.50
558	TWGHs TIN KA PING NURSERY SCHOOL	東華三院田家炳幼兒園	4.46
559	TWGHs WONG WU LAI MING KINDERGARTEN	東華三院王胡麗明幼稚園	18.77
560	TWGHs ZONTA CLUB OF KOWLOON NURSERY SCHOOL	東華三院九龍崇德社幼兒園	4.46
561	UNITED CHRISTIAN MEDICAL SERVICE NURSERY SCHOOL	基督教聯合醫務協會幼兒學校	3.21
562	W F B MANJUSRI NURSERY SCHOOL	世佛會文殊幼兒學校	10.18
563	W.F.B. AVALOKITESVARA NURSERY SCHOOL	世佛會觀自在幼兒學校	11.47
564	W.F.B. MANTRA INSTITUTE NURSERY SCHOOL	世佛會真言宗幼兒學校	18.10
565	WAH KWAI ESTATE ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	華貴邨中英文幼稚園	13.93
566	WANCHAI CHURCH PRIMARY SCHOOL (KINDERGARTEN SECTION)	灣仔堂小學校	12.14
567	WING JAN SCHOOL	榮真學校	7.79
568	WOMEN'S WELFARE CLUB WESTERN DISTRICT HONG KONG AP LEI CHAU KINDERGARTEN	香港西區婦女福利會鴨脷洲邨幼稚園	11.27
569	WOMEN'S WELFARE CLUB WESTERN DISTRICT HONG KONG KINDERGARTEN	香港西區婦女福利會幼稚園	13.90
570	WOMEN'S WELFARE CLUB WESTERN DISTRICT HONG KONG DAVID WOO MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	香港西區婦女福利會何瑞棠紀念幼稚園	16.28
571	WWC(ED) HK LAI KWAI TIM DAY NURSERY	香港東區婦女福利會黎桂添幼兒園	8.65
572	YAN CHAI HOSPITAL CHOI PAT TAI KINDERGARTEN	仁濟醫院蔡百泰幼稚園	9.80
573	YAN CHAI HOSPITAL FONG KONG FAI KINDERGARTEN	仁濟醫院方江輝幼稚園	12.22
574	YAN CHAI HOSPITAL JU CHING CHU KINDERGARTEN	仁濟醫院裘錦秋幼稚園	10.91
575	YAN CHAI HOSPITAL KWOK CHI LEUNG KINDERGARTEN	仁濟醫院郭子樑幼稚園	12.49
576	YAN CHAI HOSPITAL MING TAK KINDERGARTEN	仁濟醫院明德幼稚園	20.86
577	YAN CHAI HOSPITAL NINA LAM KINDERGARTEN	仁濟醫院林李婉冰幼稚園	11.98
578	YAN CHAI HOSPITAL SHAN KING KINDERGARTEN	仁濟醫院山景幼稚園	10.94

No.	School Name in English	School Name in Chinese	Level of School Fee Adjustment %
579	YAN CHAI HOSPITAL TUNG PAK YING KINDERGARTEN	仁濟醫院董伯英幼稚園	9.65
580	YAN CHAI HOSPITAL WING LUNG KINDERGARTEN	仁濟醫院永隆幼稚園	9.63
581	YAN CHAI HOSPITAL YAU OI KINDERGARTEN	仁濟醫院友愛幼稚園	11.61
582	YAN CHAI HOSPITAL YIM TSUI YUK SHAN KINDERGARTEN	仁濟醫院嚴徐玉珊幼稚園	18.57
583	YAN CHAI HOSPITAL ZONTA CLUB OF KOWLOON KINDERGARTEN	仁濟醫院九龍崇德社幼稚園	12.51
584	YAN OI TONG ALLAN YAP KINDERGARTEN	仁愛堂葉德海幼稚園	13.50
585	YAN OI TONG DAN YANG WING MAN KINDERGARTEN	仁愛堂鄧楊詠曼幼稚園	13.91
586	YAN OI TONG LAU WONG FAT NURSERY, YAN OI TONG LAU WONG FAT KINDERGARTEN	仁愛堂劉皇發幼稚園	12.99
587	YAN OI TONG MRS AUGUSTA CHEUNG KINDERGARTEN	仁愛堂張慕良夫人幼稚園	14.66
588	YAN OI TONG NGAN PO LING KINDERGARTEN	仁愛堂顏寶鈴幼稚園	14.89
589	YAN OI TONG PANG HUNG CHEUNG KINDERGARTEN	仁愛堂彭鴻樟幼稚園	12.80
590	YAN OI TONG PONG LO SHUK YIN KINDERGARTEN	仁愛堂龐盧淑燕幼稚園	12.17
591	YAN OI TONG TIN KA PING KINDERGARTEN	仁愛堂田家炳幼稚園	9.53
592	YAN OI TONG TIN YIU KINDERGARTEN	仁愛堂天耀幼稚園	9.14
593	YAN OI TONG WEST KOWLOON KINDERGARTEN	仁愛堂西九龍幼稚園	11.87
594	YAUMATEI YANG MEMORIAL METHODIST PRE-SCHOOL	油麻地循道衛理楊震幼兒學校	7.87
595	YIU TUNG BAPTIST KINDERGARTEN	耀東浸信會幼稚園	11.30
596	YIU WING ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	耀榮中英文幼稚園	14.80
597	YL PUBLIC MIDDLE SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSN LAU LEUNG SHEUNG MEMORIAL KINDERGARTEN	元朗公立中學校友會劉良驥紀念幼稚園	22.93
598	YMCAS OF HONG KONG FARM ROAD NURSERY SCHOOL	香港基督教青年會農圃道幼兒學校	13.59
599	YUE TIN COURT YIU WING ANGLO-CHINESE KINDERGARTEN	耀榮中英文幼稚園(愉田苑)	16.76
600	YUEN KONG KINDERGARTEN	元岡幼稚園	49.92
601	YUEN LONG CHURCH (CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CHINA) CHOW SUNG CHU OI NURSERY SCHOOL	中華基督教會元朗堂周宋主愛幼兒園	5.05
602	YUEN LONG LUTHERAN LIFE KINDERGARTEN	元朗信義會生命幼稚園	2.58
603	YUEN LONG MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION KINDERGARTEN	元朗商會幼稚園	29.96
604	YUEN LONG RHENISH NURSERY	禮賢會元朗幼兒園	10.36
605	YUEN LONG SAM YUK KINDERGARTEN	元朗三育幼稚園	19.52
606	YUEN LONG TUNG KOON DISTRICT ASSN MRS WONG SIU KEUNG KINDERGARTEN	元朗東莞同鄉會王少強夫人幼稚園	25.67
607	YUEN LONG TUNG KOON DISTRICT ASSOCIATION HUNG TING KA KINDERGARTEN	元朗東莞同鄉會熊定嘉幼稚園	24.37

Inflation Problem

13. **MS EMILY LAU** (in Chinese): *President, regarding the problem of inflation, will the executive authorities inform this Council:*

- (a) *given that the imported foodstuffs of Hong Kong mainly come from the Mainland and, in recent months, both the exchange rate of*

Renminbi (RMB) against the Hong Kong dollar (HKD) and the inflation rate on the Mainland have shown an upward trend, of the authorities' measures to alleviate the problem of imported inflation;

- (b) given that HKD is pegged to the US dollar (USD), of the authorities' measures to curb the rise in local inflation rate led by the recent weakening of HKD along with USD; and*
- (c) given the Employers' Federation of Hong Kong (EFHK) had proposed to employers early this month that pay rises given to their employees next year should not exceed 2.5%, which is lower than the projected inflation rates of 3% to 4%, and that the pay rises given to the junior level employees are generally lower than those given to the middle and senior level employees, of the authorities' measures to ease the economic pressure brought by inflation on employees at the junior level?*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY (in Chinese): President,

- (a) RMB appreciated against HKD by 5.5% year-on-year in the first eight months of the year, and food prices in the Mainland also went up continuously amidst food inflation worldwide. Over the period, however, the rate of increase in the import price of goods from the Mainland was lower than the rate of currency appreciation. Import price of foodstuffs from the Mainland was up by 3.9% and that of consumer goods by 3.5%. In other words, the increases in the prices of goods imported from the Mainland were lower than the extent of RMB appreciation because of competition among the suppliers of imported goods.

Because imported inflation is driven mainly by external factors like exchange rates, world inflation and oil prices, there are few measures at the disposal of the Government to influence the movements of import prices. Nevertheless, the Government will continue to maintain the free trade policy and ensure a highly competitive business environment, to allow for more choices for consumers. The competition among suppliers should also enable consumers to enjoy reasonable prices.

The principal concern about imported inflation lies in (1) whether it will push up overall inflation significantly, thereby lowering the purchasing power of household income and hence exerting burden on people's livelihood; and (2) from a macro point of view, a sharp rise in inflation would hurt competitiveness and impede sustainable economic development. On the first concern, the Government has put forward a number of fiscal measures since early this year, which have helped relieve the burden brought about by inflationary pressures on the public. Such measures include the public housing rental waiver in February; rates concession in the second and third quarters as announced in the Financial Secretary's Budget speech in February; the public housing rental cut since August; as well as the implementation of the Pre-Primary Education Voucher Scheme in September. The combined effect of these measures serves to lower the increase in the Composite Consumer Price Index for 2007 as a whole by about one percentage point. On top of this, the rates concession in the last quarter of the financial year 2007-2008 as announced in the policy address would render a further relief to the burden of households and will directly pull down the Composite Consumer Price Index in 2008 by 0.3 of a percentage point.

On the second concern, the Government believes that the best way to prevent resurgence of high inflation is to expand the production capacity of the economy because maintaining sustained productivity growth is the most effective way to keep down inflation pressures. Indeed, inflation was mainly dampened by the rapid growth in productivity and has remained relatively contained, despite the sustained strong economic growth averaging at about 7% per annum over the past four years. In this regard, the Government will strive to push ahead with the infrastructure projects with a view to expanding the production capacity of the economy. In parallel, the Government will also strive to enhance the quality of education and retraining, in order to foster an ongoing process of sustained productivity upgrading. The Government will also ensure adequate supply of land resources to meet with the needs for long-term economic development.

- (b) Admittedly, part of the recent increase in inflation was imported, but the more important underlying factor was the continued strength

in our economic upturn, leading to a return of the pricing power of retailers amidst a vibrant business, and also the increasing upward pressures on business costs. It has to be pointed out that consumer price inflation averaged at 1.5% in the first nine months of this year, and the underlying inflation at 2.5% after netting off the effect of the public housing rental waiver in February and the rates concession in the second and third quarters. By comparison, the increase in import prices was 2.1% in the first eight months of the year, actually lower than the underlying consumer price inflation. From this, it can be seen that imported inflation, though also building up, has not picked up in a significant way. We will, however, continue to keep a close watch on the situation.

- (c) The Government notes the recommendation made by the EFHK earlier this month urging its member companies to keep average salary increase below 2.5% in the coming year and reward staff with one-off bonuses according to operational situation and employees' individual performance.

Conceivably, employers when making pay adjustment decisions to their staff, would take into account performance of individual staff, as well as the overall economic conditions and demand/supply situation in the labour market. Indeed, the results of the EFHK's own pay trend survey indicate that the actual pay adjustments turned out to be generally higher than the EFHK's recommendation in the past few years.

The continuous process of economic restructuring in Hong Kong has led to a huge increase in demand for higher-skilled and better-educated people, which in turn resulted in a generally larger increase in the salaries of middle to higher level personnel than the economy average. Yet, in tandem with the economic upturn, overall employment conditions as well as labour incomes have continued to improve over the past few years, thus benefiting employees in a wide spectrum of trades and in different segments. Taking the wage index which reflects the regular payments to employees at the supervisory level or below, as an example, there has been a steady increase since early 2005. In June 2007, labour wages increased by 2.6% in money terms over a year earlier.

Employees' average payroll likewise went up, by 2.9% year-on-year in the second quarter. Both were somewhat higher than inflation, indicating that even against the backdrop of rising inflation, people were able to enjoy increase in real earnings alongside the economic recovery.

The Government is certainly concerned about the well-being of the grassroots, including low-income people, needy elders and the other disadvantaged groups, and fully understands that the recent price rise has brought increased pressure to their livelihood. The Government will continue to monitor the price trend, and review in a timely manner the adequacy of its support provided to the underprivileged. We will keep our policy under review with a view to building a harmonious and caring society.

In the long run, the most effective and fundamental way to improve the conditions of the low-income group is to foster overall economic development which will in turn create new employment opportunities. Thanks to the economic recovery and sustained economic growth over the past few years, there has been a continuous decline in the number of low-income employees. This shows that alleviating poverty by promoting employment is a move in the right direction. Pushing ahead with the 10 large-scale infrastructure projects will bring about many employment opportunities. We will also strengthen and integrate employment and training/retraining services to enhance the ability of the disadvantaged to achieve self-reliance and adapt to economic restructuring. Moreover, the Administration will try new modes, including vigorous motivation of tripartite collaboration among the Government, business and society, to develop social enterprises, so as to help low-skilled workers with employment difficulties to re-enter the labour market.

Monthly Profits Tax Income

14. **MR SIN CHUNG-KAI** (in Chinese): *President, will the Government inform this Council of the profits tax income received in each month of the past three tax years?*

SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY (in Chinese): President, the Inland Revenue Department sets the due date for profits tax payment for a company according to its accounting date. The majority of profits tax payments are due between November and January, and some provisional payments are due in April. Therefore, profits tax payments are mainly received in April and from October to March each financial year.

The following table shows the monthly profits tax collections for the past three financial years:

	2004-2005 (\$m)	2005-2006 (\$m)	2006-2007 (\$m)
April	2,192.8	2,607.3	2,767.5
May	313.1	700.8	955.6
June	325.8	126.4	144.8
July	398.1	252.5	336.5
August	341.9	216.6	135.7
September	450.4	256.2	962.1
October	8,809.4	12,108.1	14,049.6
November	18,464.2	24,917.5	24,292.7
December	6,068.6	5,296.6	4,093.8
January	15,908.6	17,552.6	17,608.1
February	2,218.5	1,527.4	2,738.2
March	3,148.3	4,234.5	3,834.4
Yearly Total	58,639.7	69,796.5	71,919.0

Work of Business Facilitation Advisory Committee

15. **DR DAVID LI:** *President, the Business Facilitation Advisory Committee (BFAC) was established in January 2006 to take forward the business facilitation advisory role of the former Economic and Employment Council (EEC), which was disbanded in December 2005. Since then, the four Task Forces established by the EEC to conduct regulatory reviews on various trades have been reporting to the BFAC. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *whether the BFAC and its Task Forces have completed work on the priorities identified by the EEC; if not, of the expected timeframe for the delivery of a final report on these initiatives and the winding up of its Task Forces;*

- (b) *of the current mechanism for prioritizing the present and future work of the BFAC;*
- (c) *of the work plan of the BFAC for the coming year; and*
- (d) *whether the Government has assessed if, by implementing the initiatives identified by the EEC and the BFAC which are aimed at cutting red tape and streamlining procedures, it has made meaningful improvements in efficiency and cost savings in the delivery of government services; if such improvements have been made, whether any personnel in any government department(s) have been redeployed to other duties as a result?*

FINANCIAL SECRETARY: President,

- (a) Four dedicated Task Forces, namely the Pre-construction Task Force (PCTF), the Town Planning Task Force (TPTF), the Retail Task Force (RTF) and the Task Force to Review the Construction Stage of the Development Process (CTF), were established under the former EEC to undertake sector-specific regulatory reviews on the construction, real estate and retail sectors. The EEC accorded priorities to these areas based on regulatory impact and employment considerations. Under the BFAC, the four Task Forces have continued to make good progress:
 - (i) The CTF completed its work with the conclusion of the study on private certification of building submissions earlier this year. It was disbanded following the dissolution of the former Provisional Construction Industry Co-ordination Board and the establishment of the Construction Industry Council on 1 February 2007.
 - (ii) The PCTF completed its reviews on land matters that were commenced under the EEC. There were substantive recommendations to simplify lease conditions and streamline lease modification procedures. Under the BFAC, the PCTF conducted a follow-up study on the processing of lease modification and land exchange applications, which was completed in early 2007. The PCTF has recently formed a

Working Group to review the premium assessment process and to examine the use of an Expert Determination Mechanism to resolve deadlock during premium negotiation.

- (iii) The TPTF aims to review the town planning issues encountered during the planning stage of a development and to recommend measures to improve the operational efficiency of the processes involved. After completing a review of the main planning processes and another review on the processing of town planning appeals, the TPTF is currently inactive. It will reconvene to review the progress of implementation of its recommendations later.
 - (iv) The RTF aims to review the regulatory activities affecting the retail sector. It completed reviews that were started under the EEC, namely those relating to non-restaurant food licences, regulation of volatile organic compounds and registration of pharmaceutical products containing New Chemical Entities. Under the BFAC, the RTF has continued with its work to conduct regulatory review and to facilitate communication between the trades and the Administration.
- (b) The BFAC and its Task Forces will continue to focus their work on simplifying regulatory regimes that have impact on business, in particular new legislative proposals causing major concerns to the trade. In addition, issues of common concerns to the business community such as adequacy of international school places or utilization of vacant industrial premises also feature on the agenda. In setting its work priorities, the BFAC will continue to take into consideration input from its members, views and suggestions from the community as well as survey findings.
- (c) Following the sector-specific approach, the BFAC has expanded its work programme through the establishment of a new Food Business Task Force (FBTF) to cover the food business sector. The FBTF has so far completed reviews on liquor licence and outside seating accommodation, and will continue to conduct reviews on food factory licence and the transfer of food-related licences. The other two active Task Forces, the PCTF and the RTF, will continue with their current regulatory reviews. The BFAC will monitor closely

the progress of the Government's comprehensive review on business licensing and application procedures, facilitate consultation with the business community and put up recommendations for consideration by the Government. Other issues of concerns to the business community will also be included in the agenda.

- (d) The initiatives identified by the EEC and the BFAC aim primarily to cut red tape and streamline procedures to facilitate business. In implementing these initiatives, the Government has achieved the key objective of reducing cost of compliance to the trade. For example, with the introduction of a provisional licence for cinema, the lead time for a cinema to commence business has been reduced by half. The processing time for liquor licences has on average been shortened by 25%. The processing time by the Lands Department for lease modification and land exchange applications will reduce by some 20% after implementation of all recommendations of the relevant review. In the process, the Government has also been able to improve efficiency in delivering its services. It is expected that there will be moderate savings in staff as a result of streamlined procedures. Under established practice, any savings in staff achieved will normally be redeployed internally within the bureau/department concerned to strengthen existing services, to cope with increasing demands for services and/or to support new services.

Facilities in Community Centres

16. **MR FREDERICK FUNG** (in Chinese): *President, I have received views from members of the public that the design of old community centres (CCs) in various districts is relatively outdated (such as the lack of lifts, and so on), failing to meet users' needs and causing inconvenience to toddlers, the elderly and disabled persons. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether:*

- (a) *it has assessed the basic facilities of the above CCs (including examining their usages and target patrons, and comparing them with the current design standards), with a view to providing suitable services according to users' needs; if so, of the assessment results; if not, the reasons for that; and*

- (b) *it will consider implementing improvement works (such as retrofitting lifts, and so on) in old CCs which have a high patronage and are used by toddlers, the elderly and disabled persons?*

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Chinese): President, there are altogether 38 CCs under the management of the Home Affairs Department (HAD) and the day-to-day management of which is carried out by the respective district Community Hall/Community Centre Management Committee. District Offices (DOs) assess local needs for the provision of facilities in the CCs from time to time and carry out improvement projects such as installing ramps at main entrances to allow easy access by those using wheelchairs, the elderly and small children. In assessing local needs, DOs will take into account views of the District Facilities Management Committee, Community Centre/Community Hall Management Committee as well as members of the public. In planning for new community facilities, the HAD will ensure that the buildings are barrier-free for the disabled, elderly and small children by making reference to the Design Manual: Barrier-Free Access 1997 published by the Buildings Department.

The HAD has been taking action to gradually improve the facilities at the 38 CCs, including installing child-specific facilities such as smaller water closets, urinal bowls and lavatory basins at appropriate height level for use by children in existing CCs. Of the 38 CCs, two are not fitted with toilets for the disabled, with one being a historical building and the other due to structural constraints. Twenty-eight CCs are already installed with lifts. As to the remaining 10 CCs, the Architectural Services Department (ASD) is installing a lift each at Tai Hang Tung CC in Sham Shui Po and Princess Alexandra CC in Tsuen Wan, and is considering our proposal to install one at the Tai Wo Hau CC in Kwai Tsing. The Sai Kung Jockey Club Town Hall is not installed with a lift because it has only one storey. Lifts cannot be installed at the remaining six CCs for various reasons, including space limitation, structural constraints and one of the centres is a heritage building.

School Textbook Assistance Scheme

17. **MR JASPER TSANG** (in Chinese): *President, it has been reported that although the School Textbook Assistance Scheme administered by the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA) provides assistance to needy students for covering the costs of essential textbooks and miscellaneous school-related*

expenses, many families cannot be benefited because of the relatively stringent assessment criteria and lengthy application procedure. Moreover, the SFAA makes assistance payment normally in October after a school year has begun, and the maximum amount of a full grant is only about \$2,000, which is insufficient to offset the textbook expenses of around \$3,000. As a result, the assistance cannot meet the urgent needs of the parents. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council whether it has plans to review the above assistance scheme (including considering suitably relaxing the assessment standards, increasing the assistance amounts according to the inflation rate, making earlier assistance payment to all eligible applicants, as well as specially expediting the processing of applications from students who were given full grants in the previous year); if it has, of the details of the plans; if not, the reasons for that?

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Chinese): President, it is the Government's student finance policy to ensure that no student is deprived of education for lack of means. The SFAA now provides assistance under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme to help needy primary and secondary students to purchase textbooks. To ensure prudent use of public money and that financial assistance is provided to students with genuine need, applicants must pass a means test.

The means test follows the "Adjusted Family Income" mechanism which takes into account the gross annual household income and the household size of the applicants in assessing their eligibility for student finance. This mechanism also applies to other means-tested student financial assistance schemes. The income ceilings for full and half grant for textbook assistance for a four-member family, for instance, are \$8,290 and \$22,140 respectively. The ceilings are annually adjusted in accordance with the movement of the Consumer Price Index (A). There is no asset test for the SFAA schemes for primary and secondary students, including the School Textbook Assistance Scheme. In the 2006-2007 school year, some 330 000 students benefited from the Scheme, representing about 40% of the primary and secondary school population. Assistance disbursed amounted to \$465 million.

We have reviewed the income ceiling for full grant assistance and concluded that the existing mechanism should continue to be adopted. The Legislative Council Panel on Education was informed of the review results in July 2006.

As for the grant rate, textbook assistance comprises a textbook grant for purchasing essential textbooks and a flat rate grant to cover miscellaneous school-related expenses. Every year, the Consumer Council conducts sample survey before start of the school year on the actual costs of textbooks to be purchased for various levels of studies in various schools. In determining the textbook grant rate for different levels of studies, the SFAA applies without modification the Consumer Council's survey results and takes them as the average costs that students need to pay for textbooks. The actual textbook prices in the school year concerned have been duly reflected in the process. Regarding the flat rate grant, it is revised annually according to the movement of the Composite Consumer Price Index as provided by the Census and Statistics Department, which has also taken into account the inflation factor.

In the 2007-2008 school year, a primary student eligible for full grant assistance may receive textbook assistance of about \$2,300, and junior secondary students may receive about \$2,500. The rate for Secondary Four to Secondary Seven students ranges from about \$1,000 to about \$2,800 depending on the needs of their study levels.

Every year, the SFAA and schools have to handle over 300 000 applications for school textbook assistance. Assistance could only be disbursed in October because of the large number of applications, the need for the SFAA to handle concurrently applications for other financial assistance schemes, and the procedural requirement for schools to confirm applicants' information and study level after start of the new school year.

As some families may not be able to pay upfront the expenses for purchase of textbooks for their children before commencement of the school year, the SFAA launched the "Principal's Recommendation Scheme" with effect from the 2006-2007 school year to accord priority to processing applications of students recommended by school principals. Successful applicants are granted the school textbook assistance before start of the new school year for the purchase of textbooks. In the 2007-2008 school year, over 4 000 students received textbook assistance under the scheme before start of the new school year. We believe that this improvement measure has taken care of families with extreme financial hardship.

Establishment of Qualifications Framework

18. **MR SIN CHUNG-KAI** (in Chinese): *President, the Education Bureau (formerly the Education and Manpower Bureau) has been promoting the establishment of the Qualifications Framework (QF) and its associated quality assurance mechanism since 2002. So far, a total of 12 industries have formed their Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs). In this regard, will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *of the progress of the work to establish QF by the six industries in which relevant pilot studies were conducted in 2003, and whether it has assessed the effectiveness of such work; if it has, of the assessment criteria and results; if not, the reasons for that;*
- (b) *of the difficulties encountered in promoting QF by the industries referred to in part (a) above, and how such difficulties were addressed by the authorities;*
- (c) *given that QF for the information and communications technology industry will be implemented by phases, which is different from other industries, and those in the industry may not have in-depth knowledge of the relevant details, whether it has organized additional promotion activities to enable more organizations, employers and employees in the industry to know about QF, so as to enhance its acceptance; if it has, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that; and*
- (d) *whether it has formulated a strategy for promoting QF; if it has, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Chinese): President,

- (a) In 2003, the Government conducted a pilot study in six industries by forming working groups to test the applicability of QF to different industries and to examine the feasibility of developing competency standards for these industries. The six industries included Chinese Catering, Electrical and Mechanical Services, Information Technology, Watch and Clock, Retail and Accountancy. The result of the study confirmed that QF was applicable to different industries and that it was feasible to develop competency standards for different industries in Hong Kong.

Since the completion of the pilot study, we have assisted 12 industries to set up ITACs: namely, Printing and Publishing, Watch and Clock, Chinese Catering, Hairdressing, Property Management, Jewellery, Information and Communications Technology, Electrical and Mechanical Services, Automotive, Beauty, Logistics and Banking. The membership of ITACs comprises employers, employees and representatives of relevant professional bodies. Their primary task is to develop Specifications of Competency Standards (SCSs) that are suited to the needs of the industries. SCSs set out the competency standards required of employees in individual industries. So far, seven ITACs have completed drafting of SCSs and five of them have completed industry consultation on the competency standards. Starting from early 2007, we have also introduced, on a pilot basis, SCS-based skills upgrading courses for the Watch and Clock, Printing and Publishing, and Hairdressing industries. To date, over 2 000 learners have completed the courses.

In May this year, the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Bill was passed by the Legislative Council. We are now making preparations for the further implementation of QF, including the establishment of an Appeal Board and the making of appeal rules, and preparing for the launching of a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism, a Qualifications Register (QR), and relevant QF Support Schemes. We anticipate that QF will be formally launched within the second quarter of 2008. In assessing the effectiveness of the implementation of QF, we will take into account the following factors:

- (i) effectiveness of SCSs — we will collect feedback from stakeholders on whether SCSs developed by different industries can reflect accurately competency standards required of employees in the industries concerned and gather suggestions for further improvements;
- (ii) availability of SCS-based courses — we will monitor the number of SCS-based courses organized by providers, the number of participants as well as their feedback on such courses;

- (iii) further development of the training market — we will monitor the development of the training market after the implementation of QF, with particular regard to the number of training providers and courses accredited by the Accreditation Authority, and the number of training courses registered by providers under the QR;
 - (iv) implementation of the RPL mechanism — we will monitor the number of workers who have obtained RPL qualifications and the number of those who pursued further training/studies; and
 - (v) implementation of a new accreditation approach — the Accreditation Authority will adopt a new and streamlined accreditation approach that is geared towards the needs of accreditation of vocational qualifications. The Authority will collect feedback from education and training providers on the new approach.
- (b) QF is a new endeavour which involves relatively complicated concepts and details. Promoting QF to relevant stakeholders in different industries so as to enhance their knowledge and recognition of QF represents a great challenge. When conducting the pilot study in 2003, we recognized that the key to the successful implementation of QF was to have a good understanding of the uniqueness of industry concerned and to obtain the consensus and support of different stakeholders. We will continue to strengthen our communication with the employers, employees, professional bodies, education and training providers and relevant parties. We will also seek to establish partnerships with them in the promotion and development of QF.
- (c) The Information and Communications Technology ITAC has established a Publicity and Promotion Subcommittee to promote QF and SCS in the industry through publishing publicity materials and organizing various activities such as briefings and focus groups. Apart from stepping up co-operation with individual ITACs, we also plan to organize a series of publicity events. These include launching a QF Promotion Day, producing documentaries, broadcasting promotional programmes on television and different media channels, as well as organizing seminars and briefings which

cater for the needs of employers' and employees' associations in different industries.

- (d) The development of QF is a long-term commitment which requires ongoing communication with different stakeholders and development of partnerships with them. We will continue to adopt an industry-based and progressive approach in implementing QF. Experience in other countries reflects that the implementation of QF may take over 10 years to achieve.

Crimes Committed by Illegal Entrants

19. **MR LAU KONG-WAH** (in Chinese): *President, recently, a number of robberies which occurred in various districts are suspected to be committed by illegal entrants (IEs). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *of the number of crimes suspected to be committed by IEs last year as well as the details of such cases, and how the figure compares with those of the previous two years;*
- (b) *whether police officers were deployed to regularly patrol rural areas and search for IEs in hiding last year; if so, of the number of IEs arrested; and*
- (c) *of the districts with relatively more crimes suspected or found to be committed by IEs last year, and whether additional police officers have been deployed to patrol those districts?*

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY (in Chinese): President,

- (a) Statistics on crimes suspected to be committed by illegal immigrants and the categorization of those crimes for the past two years are at the Annex.
- (b) and (c)

Counting by police districts, the police have arrested more illegal immigrants for crimes in the Border District, Marine Outer Waters

District and Yuen Long District. Various police districts will, having regard to their respective crime trends, carry out "Operation Champion", which primarily targets activities of illegal immigrants, from time to time as necessary and step up patrolling of places frequented by illegal immigrants. For rural areas, having regard to the crime trends and with particular attention to the crime black spots, the police will step up patrolling of these areas. The police will also deploy the Police Tactical Unit or the Quick Reaction Force to undertake operations against crimes and illegal immigration in country parks and remote rural areas. In 2006, the police arrested 69 illegal immigrants in the countryside or hill areas (including the Frontier Closed Area). Up to September this year, the police have arrested 37 illegal immigrants.

Annex

Figures of illegal immigrants suspected to have committed criminal offences and arrested by the Hong Kong Police Force

<i>Offences</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007 (January to September)</i>
Wounding and serious assault	34	31	20
Robbery	46	56	17
Burglary	35	48	21
Snatching	21	20	9
Pickpocketing	1	6	1
Shop theft	24	24	22
Theft from vehicle	10	17	13
Miscellaneous theft	68	107	67
Forgery and coinage	23	43	86
Serious narcotics offences	3	3	4
Mislead/giving false information to police	6	11	3
Resisting arrest	2	9	5
Serious immigration offences	211	226	181
Disorder/fighting in public place	0	25	19
Possession of arms or offensive weapon	86	89	31
Going equipped for stealing	27	41	22
Others	35	56	29
Total	632	812	550

Statistics on Hotlines Providing Emotional Counselling Services

20. **PROF PATRICK LAU** (in Chinese): *President, the family tragedy which occurred in Tin Shui Wai recently has aroused public concern about the adequacy of assistance hotlines providing emotional counselling services. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council of:*

- (a) *the maximum number of assistance-seeking cases that the existing 24-hour service hotlines can handle at any one time;*
- (b) *the respective numbers of staff, at different intervals of the day, responsible for answering phone calls on each hotline, and the number of such staff who have received professional training in handling emotional problems (for example, social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists);*
- (c) *the respective average daily numbers of assistance-seeking phone calls received by each hotline in the past 12 months, together with a breakdown by intervals; and*
- (d) *the current respective average daily numbers of assistance-seeking phone calls that each hotline has to transfer to the voice mailbox because all lines are engaged, together with a breakdown by intervals?*

SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE (in Chinese): President,

- (a) The Administration currently provides over-the-phone counselling and support services to persons in need (including those with emotional problems) mainly through two telephone hotlines, including the hotline (2343 2255) operated by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) and the Family Crisis Hotline (18 288) operated by the Caritas with full subvention from the SWD.

Social workers operating the SWD hotline are on duty from 9 am to 10 pm on Mondays to Saturdays; and from 1 pm to 10 pm on Sundays and public holidays. Callers ringing up the SWD hotline

outside the duty hours of the social workers may either leave a message on the voice mailbox or choose to transfer their calls to the Family Crisis Hotline to speak with the duty social workers of the Caritas. The Family Crisis Hotline operates on a 24-hour basis.

In addition, other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also operate hotline service to provide support for those with emotional problems or in need, including the 24-hour hotline of the CEASE Centre (18 281) of the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals funded by the Lotteries Fund and the 24-hour "Suicide prevention hotline" (2389 2222) of the Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong.

The SWD hotline and the Family Crisis Hotline deploy their manpower flexibly to provide services to callers in light of different hours of the day and in accordance with the actual service demand. As the nature and the circumstances of each call may vary and the processing time required might differ, it is difficult to estimate the number of calls for assistance that can be handled by the above two hotlines at any one time.

- (b) The SWD hotline and the Family Crisis Hotline are both manned by social workers. The SWD hotline is manned by three to six social workers during the duty hours. The Family Crisis Hotline is manned by two to five social workers from 12 midnight to 8 am and by one to two social workers during other hours of the day.
- (c) Between October 2006 and September 2007, the SWD hotline handled a total of 79 650 incoming calls during the duty hours (an average of about 218 calls per day), 19 591 of which required counselling service, and the remainder was for general information/enquiries. During the same period, the Family Crisis Hotline handled a total of 23 544 incoming calls (an average of about 65 calls per day).

The SWD does not maintain statistics on the breakdown of the number of calls handled at different hours of the day. The breakdown of calls handled by the Family Crisis Hotline between October 2006 and September 2007 is as follows:

<i>Hours of the Day</i>	<i>Number of Incoming Calls Handled^{Note}</i>	
	<i>Total number of calls</i>	<i>Daily Average</i>
8 am to 4 pm	7 004	19
4 pm to 12 midnight	8 808	24
12 midnight to 8 am	7 732	21
Total	23 544	64.5

Note: The number of incoming calls handled includes calls answered and return calls to messages on the voice mailbox made afterwards.

- (d) The SWD hotline and the Family Crisis Hotline both have voicemail service. If an incoming call is not put through immediately due to busy lines, the caller may leave a message on the voice mailbox, and a social worker will return call within 30 minutes during the duty hours.

Between October 2006 and September 2007, the SWD hotline received 7 200 voicemails during the duty hours (an average of 20 per day), whereas the Family Crisis Hotline received 11 972 voicemails (an average of 33 per day).

The SWD does not maintain statistics on the breakdown of the number of voicemails received at different hours of the day. The relevant breakdown of voicemails received by the Family Crisis Hotline between October 2006 and September 2007 is as follows:

<i>Hours of the Day</i>	<i>Number of Voicemails</i>	
	<i>Total number</i>	<i>Daily Average</i>
8 am to 4 pm	4 860	13
4 pm to 12 midnight	5 775	16
12 midnight to 8 am	1 337	4
Total	11 972	33

MOTIONS

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Motion. Proposed resolution under the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Ordinance to approval the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (Malaysia) Order.

I now call upon the Secretary for Security to speak and move his motion.

PROPOSED RESOLUTION UNDER THE MUTUAL LEGAL ASSISTANCE IN CRIMINAL MATTERS ORDINANCE

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY (in Cantonese): Madam President, I move that the resolution to make the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (Malaysia) Order (the Order), as printed on the Agenda, be passed.

Hong Kong has been actively co-operating with other jurisdictions in combating serious crime, and is committed to concluding bilateral agreements with partners who intend to provide closer co-operation in mutual legal assistance in criminal matters. These bilateral agreements ensure reciprocal assistance between the contracting parties, and are conducive to enhancing international co-operation in the fight against transnational crime.

The Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Ordinance (the Ordinance) provides the statutory framework for implementing agreements on mutual legal assistance signed between Hong Kong and other jurisdictions, enabling assistance to be provided to or obtained from foreign jurisdictions in the investigation and prosecution of criminal offences, which includes the taking of evidence, search and seizure, production of material, transfer of persons to give evidence and confiscation of the proceeds of crime.

Pursuant to the Ordinance, the Chief Executive in Council has made the Order to implement the bilateral agreement on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters signed between Hong Kong and Malaysia. By applying the arrangements prescribed in the Ordinance between Hong Kong and Malaysia, the Order allows Hong Kong to provide and obtain assistance in accordance with the procedures set out in the Ordinance and the provisions under the agreement. As the legislation and arrangements on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, modifying certain provisions of the Ordinance to reflect the practices of individual jurisdictions in implementing the orders on the bilateral agreements concerned is often required. Such modifications are necessary to enable Hong Kong to discharge its obligations under the bilateral agreements concerned. The modifications made for the bilateral agreement between Hong Kong and Malaysia are specified in Schedule 2 to the Order. These modifications do not affect that the Order is in substantial conformity with the provisions of the Ordinance.

The Legislative Council set up a Subcommittee in June 2007 to scrutinize the Order. I would like to thank the Subcommittee Chairman, Mr James TO, and other Members for their comments in respect of the Order.

In the course of the Subcommittee's deliberations, we had responded to concerns of the Subcommittee on a number of issues. I will summarize the main issues below.

The Subcommittee had asked about the omission of the provision on the safeguard against death penalty from the Order. We explained to the Subcommittee that the provision was omitted at the request of Malaysia. According to the legal system of Malaysia, the award of punishment at the end of the trial rests entirely with the judiciary. Therefore, Malaysia has difficulties in giving assurance to Hong Kong that the death penalty will not be imposed or carried out. After discussion, Hong Kong and Malaysia have agreed that the Requested Party may refuse to provide assistance for death penalty offences pursuant to the "essential public interests" provision under Article 4(1)(f) of the agreement. Hong Kong has made it clear to Malaysia that Hong Kong will refuse to provide assistance if the request from Malaysia relates to an offence which carries the death penalty in Malaysia unless Malaysia gives sufficient assurance that the death penalty will not be imposed or carried out. Malaysia accepts Hong Kong's approach of dealing with the issue.

Article 8(3) of the agreement provides that "(in) an investigation, prosecution or proceeding where the charge is altered, the information or evidence provided may continue to be used in the investigation, prosecution or proceeding so far as the offence, as charged, is an offence in respect of which mutual legal assistance could be provided under (the) agreement." In this respect, the Subcommittee requested the Administration to explain the operation of this Article. We had provided information to the Subcommittee, explaining that the Article originates from the Model Treaty on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters drawn up by the United Nations, and its operation has to be considered in conjunction with other relevant articles of the agreement. Indeed, Article 8(2) provides that "(the) Requesting Party shall not disclose or use information or evidence furnished for purposes other than those stated in the request without the prior consent of the Central Authority of the Requested Party." In addition, Article 4(1)(h) specifies that the Requested Party shall refuse assistance if the Requesting Party fails to undertake that the item requested will not be used for a matter other than the criminal matter in respect of which

the request was made or that the Requested Party has not given consent to waive any such undertaking. Therefore, if Malaysia requests to use the information or evidence concerned in accordance with Article 8(3), it will need to seek Hong Kong's prior consent. In considering Malaysia's request, Hong Kong will ask for detailed information as required in Article 6 and ensure that the request is consistent with the safeguards set out in Article 4.

The Subcommittee was also concerned about whether a person who had consented to give evidence under Article 15 or 16 and already travelled to Malaysia but subsequently withdrew his consent would be prosecuted for contempt of court. In this respect, we had clarified that the person concerned was providing evidence on a voluntary basis. In accordance with Article 17(3) of the agreement, prosecution for contempt of court shall only be related to the testimony given by that person and does not extend to his act of withdrawing his consent. Article 17(5) further provides that "(a) person who does not consent to provide assistance pursuant to Article 15 or 16 shall not by reason thereof be liable to any penalty or coercive measure by the courts of the Requesting Party or Requested Party."

Moreover, Article 27(2) of the agreement provides that "(the) agreement shall apply to requests presented after the date of its entry into force whether the relevant acts or omissions constituting the offence occurred before or after that date." The Subcommittee had asked how the rule of double criminality would apply under different scenarios in relation to the time of commission of a certain offence and the time when the relevant act was criminalized in Hong Kong and Malaysia. As the Subcommittee had requested, we had provided information explaining that in accordance with Article 1(1) of the agreement, the Parties shall, in accordance with the provisions of the agreement and in conformity with their respective laws, render to one another mutual assistance that pertains to offences over which the Requesting Party has jurisdiction at the time the assistance is requested. Article 4(1)(g) specifies that the Requested Party shall refuse assistance if the acts or omissions alleged to constitute the offence would not, if they had taken place within the jurisdiction of the Requested Party, have constituted an offence against the law of the Requested Party. Therefore, if an act has been de-criminalized in Malaysia or Hong Kong after the agreement enters into force, it follows that Malaysia does not have jurisdiction over that act or that act does not constitute an offence in Hong Kong. Accordingly, Hong Kong will not accede to Malaysia's request with respect to such an act.

The making of the Order will enable the implementation of the bilateral agreement signed between Hong Kong and Malaysia on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters. This is important to the strengthening of Hong Kong's co-operation with foreign jurisdictions in mutual legal assistance in criminal matters.

May I now invite Members to approve the making of the Order. Thank you, Madam President.

The Secretary for Security moved the following motion:

"RESOLVED that the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (Malaysia) Order, made by the Chief Executive in Council on 8 May 2007, be approved."

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by the Secretary for Security be passed.

MR JAMES TO (in Cantonese): President, in my capacity as Chairman of the Subcommittee for the scrutiny of the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters (Malaysia) Order (the Order), I speak on the resolution moved by the Secretary for Security.

The Order has set out the bilateral agreement concluded between the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Malaysia on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters and the modifications on the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Ordinance.

The Subcommittee was concerned about the omission of the provision on the safeguard against death penalty from the Order. The Administration stated that pursuant to the "essential interests" provision under Article 4(1)(f) of the Order, Hong Kong may refuse to provide assistance for death penalty offences. Hong Kong has made it clear to Malaysia that Hong Kong will refuse to provide assistance if the request from Malaysia relates to an offence which carries the death penalty in Malaysia unless Malaysia gives sufficient assurance that the death penalty will not be imposed or carried out. Malaysia has accepted Hong Kong's approach of dealing with the issue.

Regarding the operation of Article 8(3) of the agreement, the Administration explained that it should be interpreted in conjunction with Article 8(2) and Article 4(1)(h) of the agreement. Therefore, if Malaysia requests to use the information or evidence provided by Hong Kong in the investigation, prosecution or proceeding of other offences to which mutual legal assistance can be provided, it will need to seek Hong Kong's prior consent.

In response to the request of the Subcommittee, the Government clarified that regarding prosecution for contempt of court, it shall only be related to the testimony given by the person and does not extend to his act of withdrawing his consent. The Administration also clarified that if an act has been de-criminalized in Malaysia or Hong Kong after the agreement enters into force, or that act does not constitute an offence in Hong Kong, Hong Kong will not accede to Malaysia's request with respect to such an act.

President, the Subcommittee does not object to the resolution for the making of the Order tabled by the Secretary for Security at this meeting today.

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

(No Member indicated a wish to speak)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Secretary for Security, do you wish to reply?

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY (in Cantonese): Madam President, to strengthen the combat against transboundary crime, I implore Members to pass the resolution.

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

(Members raised their hands)

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

(No hands raised)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I think the question is agreed by a majority of the Members present. I declare the motion passed.

MEMBERS' MOTIONS

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Members' motions. Two motions with no legislative effect. First motion: Facing up to the needs of people with disabilities in using transport.

I now call upon Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung to speak and move his motion.

FACING UP TO THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN USING TRANSPORT

MR LEUNG YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): President, before speaking on the subject of the motion, I would like to respond to a newspaper article. According to the article, I move the motion on "facing up to the needs of people with disabilities in using transport" today because I have learnt that the Government will soon introduce a policy of offering half-fare concession to people with disabilities. As the policy will certainly be implemented, I am moving the motion so as to gain political capital.

President, in my opinion, you are the most impartial person. Am I trying to canvass for political capital on this issue? In fact, this is the sixth time I move a motion on this issue in this Council, and as a result, many colleagues have left the Chamber, not bothering about what I am going to say as they know it too well. The newspaper article alleged that I was trying to canvass for political capital. I hope the reporter will make some efforts by looking up the past records. It does not matter if the reporter does not respect me, LEUNG Yiu-chung, but he should respect the history of the Legislative Council as all proceedings have been recorded. To my surprise, such an allegation is made despite the fact that I have moved the motion so many times in the past few years. Nevertheless, I am joyful because, according to the article, the

concession will certainly be granted this time. If so, I hope the Secretary can nod to indicate her agreement. But she does not. So, I think the newspaper article is ridiculous.

In fact, President, people with disabilities and relevant organizations are very disappointed because the Government has been procrastinating. To date, there is still no result coming out of this issue. We therefore query when the issue can draw a conclusion. President, according to the media, you will not see the seventh debate moved by me. I am not sure whether this is true. I certainly do not want to see the seventh debate on this issue. Even if we do, you will not see it. I think it really makes us feel very unhappy. How long should we wait? Can the Clerk check it for me whether the number of debates on this issue has made a record in the Legislative Council? The fact is that I have not broken the record for the motion on the June 4 incident because the number of debates on this incident ranks the first and my motion should come second. So, we do not want to see this. In fact, President, in this process, debates are held not only in this Council but also outside for many times. The process for me to discuss the issue with the relevant departments and organizations and fight for what I want is very tedious. Here I am not airing my grievances. Rather, I am telling the Secretary how urgent the problem is and it is necessary to solve it.

During the many past debates, not only me but also many colleagues who are very thoughtful have collected information from other foreign countries for the Secretary's reference. However, it seems that the Secretary has turned a blind eye to such information, paying no attention and making no reference to it. This is most regrettable. In any case, there is a widespread rumour, particularly just before the delivery of the policy address, that our request will certainly be granted. And eventually when the request was not granted, and an explanation was given. According to the Government, it is because the arrangement is too rush and there will be good news later on. I do not know whether this is true, but the Secretary just now did not nod and I feel disappointed.

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

I do not want to see that the request of people with disabilities will come to naught. We should have further discussions. Madam Deputy, as you know,

we set up a subcommittee to study the issue in 2005. Having made a lot of efforts, we had convened 13 meetings during which we had detailed discussions and all public transport organizations had been invited to discuss the issue with us. However, no further progress has been made and we do not know what else can be said to the Secretary.

I just want to say that, regarding Mr WONG Kwok-hing's amendment to my motion, I very much agree to his query on the Government's sincerity and determination. And this is the biggest problem. I do not see any sincerity and determination on the part of the Government. Why, Deputy President? Because, as you are also fully aware, during the discussions by the subcommittee, the Secretary, for the purpose of window-dressing, commissioned a survey by the University of Hong Kong with the objective of studying the effect of half-fare concession on the public transport organizations. According to the findings, after offering the concessions, the public transport organizations would make profit instead of loss. We were greatly encourage and thought that as it was an independent view, an academic research conducted by the University of Hong Kong, it must be feasible. To my surprise, a wet blanket was thrown over me because no organization subscribed or agreed to this view and none of them supported the report. Meanwhile, the Government told us that efforts had been made but the report was not accepted. In other words, no organization accepted the report despite so much effort and resources spent. May I ask whether the Government has discussed the matter with the public transport organizations if it really wants to introduce the concession to the needy? If it has got a positive reply, it should conduct a study and then implement the scheme accordingly. To our surprise, the Government had conducted the study on its own but the findings were not acceptable as no organization was convinced by the findings of the study. As a result, not only has the academic research been belittled, the Government has also been slapped on its face. To our surprise, the Government's efforts are all in vain. What a pity.

Then the Government said that as none of the big organization accepted it, we should ask them what to do. And the advice is that concession can be offered to Octopus holders on a trial basis for one year and its continuance in the second year will depend on the situation. Madam Deputy, if the Government accepts these organizations' advice and formulate the implementation method anew, it will delay for at least one more year. One year even if it is feasible. So, Mr WONG Kwok-hing's amendment is marvellous because the Government is playing delaying tactics again. It does not have sincerity or determination. We are most disappointed with such an attitude.

Madam President, I have nothing to say anymore because I have said all I want to say and made all criticisms that are necessary in the past few years. I can only ask the Government in a sincere manner to implement the policy and I do not care how the policy will be implemented. I only hope that the policy can be implemented as soon as possible with no more delay because we cannot afford to wait any longer. This is the last time I move such a motion during this term and I do not know whether I can come back in the next. I do not want to see a futile result by the end of my tenure.

Apart from half-fare concession, we have to deal with barrier-free facilities. During the past two years when the Government responded to our questions, Secretary Dr York CHOW and the former Secretary Dr Sarah LIAO would cite many examples to show that enormous improvement had been made by the public transport organizations. For instance, 40% of buses have been equipped with a low floor. However, why is the percentage only 40% instead of 80%, 90% or even 100% as the Disability Discrimination Ordinance has been enacted for more than a decade since 1994? They also told me that progress had really been made. But do they not find the progress too slow? Apart from low-floor buses, they can only tell me that elevators have been specifically provided in three stations for people with disabilities. But the problem is: Can they tell us whether elevators can be provided in every station in order to facilitate the use of public transport by people with disabilities? Besides, our utmost concern is the platform screen-doors which are the grave concern of people with disabilities, in particular, those with visual impairment. But to date, it is still impossible to install screen-doors at all stations to prevent accidents.

I hope the Secretary can tell us what improvement has been made in this aspect. Madam Deputy, I hope Members can support my motion this time so that half-fare concession and barrier-free facilities can be introduced expeditiously. I so submit.

Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung moved the following motion: (Translation)

"That this Council passed motions in the 2002-2003, 2003-2004, 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 sessions calling for improvement to transport facilities for people with disabilities and offer of concessionary fares to them, but the government departments concerned, some statutory

transport corporations and other public transport operators have failed to take corresponding measures and face up to the requests; this Council considers that for many years there is a general consensus in the community that there is a need to offer transport concessions to help people with disabilities to integrate into society and the Government is duty-bound to take the matter forward, this Council is greatly dissatisfied and expresses deep regret that the Government has been procrastinating for years and has not achieved any results so far; moreover, some transport operators have recently proposed that the Government should bear all the deficits or keep all the surpluses arising from the introduction of half-fare concession for people with disabilities, but the Government has been procrastinating on the matter on the ground of financial commitments, which calls into question the Government's sincerity in taking the matter forward; in this connection, this Council reiterates that the Government:

- (a) must put forth, in the near future, specific proposals and timeframe for introducing half-fare concession for people with disabilities, so as to expeditiously facilitate their integration into society and improve their life;
- (b) should allocate additional resources to improve the Rehabus service; and
- (c) should strictly regulate the public transport operators in providing barrier-free facilities, so as to enable more people with disabilities to use transport and integrate into society."

DEPUTY PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung be passed.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr WONG Kwok-hing will move an amendment to this motion. The motion and the amendment will now be debated together in a joint debate.

I now call upon Mr WONG Kwok-hing to speak and move his amendment to the motion.

MR WONG KWOK-HING (in Cantonese): Deputy President, my reason for proposing this amendment is that the original motion fails to highlight the key area, whereas my amendment has brought the idea home by highlighting the crux of the issue, the justifications of our worries about further procrastination by the Government, the means of procrastination and the key to resolving the problem of procrastination.

Deputy President, as pointed out in the amendment, our worries about further procrastination by the Government are indeed fully justified. Although Chief Executive Donald TSANG advised at the Question and Answer Session on the policy address held on the 11th of this month that a response would be given, within a couple of months, on how the provision of transport half-fare concessions for people with disabilities would be addressed, we still have no idea of the details of the response that he is going to make. Given that there were past records of the Legislative Council passing related motions on four occasions but the Government making no progress at all, it is therefore well grounded for the amendment to state our worries about further procrastination by the government departments.

Deputy President, as pointed out in the amendment, the new means of procrastination adopted by the government departments have certain characteristics. Despite 13 discussions having been conducted by the relevant subcommittee, which has already reached a consensus with the attending transport organizations, academics and officials of the government departments concerned, whereby the half-fare concessions, if implemented, would cover about 85 000 people and the financial commitment involved were estimated to be merely tens of millions of dollars per year, meaning that the scope is rather limited both in terms of the number of recipients and the costs incurred, the government departments have ridiculously kept on finding excuses for further procrastination.

What excuses has the Government found? As I have pointed out in the amendment, firstly, it has not assessed the various options; and secondly, it has yet to work out precisely the financial commitments involved in the relevant option. Deputy President, I consider it too ridiculous if such excuses can be put on the table. Despite meetings having been held over the past year or so and that the discussion has indeed reached the final stage, the government departments are still making this kind of excuses for their procrastination. May I ask where the sincerity of the Government is?

Deputy President, as pointed out in the amendment, the key to resolving this problem lies in the attitude of the Government. Therefore, right at start in point (a) of the amendment, it has set out the foremost solution, that is, the Government "must relentlessly shoulder the responsibility to provide financial assistance, regardless of which option of transport half-fare concession it eventually decides to adopt for people with disabilities".

During the debate on the Chief Executive's policy address, I pointed out that there were 10 social problems in Hong Kong, among which was the criticism of government departments for procrastinating the provision of transport half-fare concessions for people with disabilities. I also pointed out that such procrastination by the government departments would only seriously undermine the image of the SAR Government and result in a loss of people's support. I hope that the Chief Executive will heed my advice, though not pleasing to the ear.

Deputy President, I would like to make use of this debate to send publicly my sincere gratitude to the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and its Chairperson, Mr Raymond TANG. If Mr TANG has not written to the Chief Executive to relay the demands and justifications in this regard, I am afraid the Chief Executive would not have made a response on the 11th of this month for us to see a ray of hope in resolving this problem.

Following my request made at a subcommittee meeting, urging the EOC to prosecute the government departments for discriminating against people with disabilities, Mr TANG wrote to the Government. The explanation given by Mr TANG at that time was neither the prevailing functions of the EOC nor the power conferred on it by law enabled it to institute prosecution against the Government. Nonetheless, Mr TANG still acceded to my request and wrote to the Chief Executive in his capacity as the EOC Chairperson to state the case. Deputy President, I would like to pay tribute to Mr TANG for writing to the Chief Executive with his impartial and just attitude.

Deputy President, looking back at the 13 subcommittee meetings held over the past year or so, the different tactics and devices employed by the government departments each time were indeed eye-openers for us. The Government stated initially that the provision of fare concession for people with disabilities was a breach of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance. The way how this Ordinance is interpreted is extremely ridiculous.

There are different kinds of concessions for people with disabilities in Hong Kong, for instance, people with disabilities who are issued with registration cards can enjoy free admission to the Ocean Park, and half-price Arts Festival tickets are available to them and their minders as well. Can these concessions be deemed as discrimination?

Another excuse put up by the Government is given that public transportation is a private enterprise, the autonomy of fare determination rests with individual companies. Does the Government have no say at all in this matter? While the Government failed to require the bus companies to provide fare concessions for people with disabilities when the new franchises were granted the year before, it was again reluctant to include fare concessions for these people when the two railway corporations were merged. The Government was, in fact, telling us that it had turned a blind eye to the aspirations of the community, totally ignoring the strong demands from people with disabilities.

Subsequently, the Government cited another reason for procrastination, saying that it was very difficult to determine the eligibility of people with disabilities for half-fare concession. In fact, at present, people who have suffered from a disability which is permanent in nature or of a temporary nature may apply to the Government for a registration card for people with disabilities by simply providing copies of relevant documents certifying his disabilities, for instance, certificates issued by doctors or allied health personnel. This registration card is now recognized by the Star Ferry, New World First Ferry, Ocean Park and Hong Kong Arts Festival, which allow the cardholders to enjoy free admission or a discount. Why are these companies willing to accept this registration card and offer concessions while other public transport operators refuse to do so?

The fundamental reason is very simple, in that the bus companies and the MTR Corporation Limited are unwilling to shoulder their corporate social responsibilities. Their behaviour also reflected a common phenomenon in Hong Kong, where the large companies are reluctant to shoulder their corporate social responsibilities. The more money an enterprise makes, the meaner it becomes. It would certainly be most desirable if these enterprises can willingly offer concessions to return wealth to the community, but can the Government take up this responsibility should these public transport operators refuse to do so? I believe it can. As we all know, the Treasury is now flooded with money and the Government is expecting an income amounting to thousands of millions of

dollars this year. It can simply subsidize the public transport operators' provision of half-fare concession to people with disabilities by means of reimbursement. Yet, so far, the Government is still unwilling to do so.

Deputy President, the latest tactic employed by the Government is by saying that it has neither assessed the option to be adopted, nor worked out precisely the financial commitments involved in a certain option. This is indeed extremely ridiculous. As evident from the past year or so — just now I have clearly set out the various tactics employed by the Government — why would the Government be doing all these if it was sincere? I think that the government officials are really marvellous in coming up with the tricks which they have played upon us.

Deputy President, we have been discussing this motion for years and the Chief Executive said that a response would be made on the provision of half-fare concession to people with disabilities within a couple of months. I hope that the Chief Executive will give us some good news, but not the bad news that the matter fell through eventually.

Finally, I wish to add one more point. My amendment urges that the Government "should allocate additional resources to comprehensively improve the Rehabus service, and, in particular, must extend such service to remote areas and new towns". I hope the Government will take such a demand seriously. The Secretary went to Tin Shui Wai last night as I saw him in a live television broadcast. Yet, he must be aware of the fact that people with disabilities who live in remote areas and new towns need more help than the able-bodied.

Thank you, Deputy President.

Mr WONG Kwok-hing moved the following amendment: (Translation)

"To delete "this Council passed" after "That" and substitute with ", although the Chief Executive, in response to Members' questions during the Legislative Council's Question and Answer Session on the Policy Address on the 11th of this month, said that he would give a response, in one or two months' time, on how the provision of transport half-fare concessions for people with disabilities would be addressed, in view of the past records that despite this Council's passage of"; to delete "but" after "offer of concessionary fares to them,"; to add "all" after "other

public transport operators have"; to add ", there are worries about further procrastination by the government departments" after "take corresponding measures and face up to the requests"; to add "after a relevant subcommittee was formed by the Legislative Council and meetings held over the past year or so, coupled with the fact that the Chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission has written to the Chief Executive relaying the demands and justifications in this regard, the solution to this problem has dawned;" after "has not achieved any results so far;"; to delete "Government has been procrastinating on the matter on the ground of financial commitments, which" after "keep all the surpluses arising from the introduction of half-fare concession for people with disabilities, but the" and substitute with "government officials in charge have been procrastinating on putting forward a timetable and roadmap for implementation on the pretext that they have not yet assessed the various options and worked out precisely the financial commitments involved if the relevant option is chosen, which very much"; to add "determination and" after "calls into question the Government's"; to delete "reiterates" after "in this connection, this Council" and substitute with "urges"; to add "(a) must relentlessly shoulder the responsibility to provide financial assistance, regardless of which option of transport half-fare concession it eventually decides to adopt for people with disabilities;" after "that the Government:"; to delete the original "(a)" and substitute with "(b)"; to add "expeditiously" before "put forth"; to delete "timeframe" after "in the near future, specific proposals and" and substitute with "timetable"; to delete "expeditiously facilitate their integration" after "introducing half-fare concession for people with disabilities, so as to" and substitute with "help them integrate"; to delete the original "(b)" and substitute with "(c)"; to add "comprehensively" after "should allocate additional resources to"; to add "and, in particular, must extend such service to remote areas and new towns" after "improve the Rehabus service"; to delete the original "(c)" and substitute with "(d)"; and to add "public" after "providing barrier-free facilities, so as to enable more people with disabilities to use". "

DEPUTY PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the amendment, moved by Mr WONG Kwok-hing to Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung's motion, be passed.

SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE (in Cantonese): Deputy President, first of all, I thank Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung for proposing this motion on the transport needs of people with disabilities. I also thank Mr WONG Kwok-hing for his amendment. The Government has all along endeavoured to promote the integration of people with disabilities into the community and encourage them to take part in activities away from home more often. This is consistent with the objective of the Government's rehabilitation policy.

To meet the basic transport needs of people with disabilities, the Government has, in addition to the provision of Rehabus service, provided financial assistance to people with disabilities through the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme and the Disability Allowance payment. In this respect, financial commitment totalling as much as \$6.9 billion from the Government will be required in 2007-2008.

Rehabus is a specialized transport service exclusively provided for people with disabilities who cannot access public transport. It provides point-to-point transport service to people with disabilities, taking them to workplaces, schools, and vocational and rehabilitation training centres through the Scheduled Route Service. Besides, Rehabus also operates the Dial-a-Ride Service which enables people with disabilities to take part in other social activities or attend follow-up consultation more conveniently.

The Rehabus service currently has a fleet of 95 rehabuses, operating 61 scheduled routes and four feeder service routes. Telephone booking service is also provided. Of the existing 61 scheduled routes, 49 provide service to people with disabilities in the New Territories, serving those new towns or remote areas as mentioned by Mr WONG Kwok-hing, such as Tin Shui Wai, Ma On Shan, Tseung Kwan O and Tuen Mun and even as far away as Pat Heung, Kwu Tung, Sha Tau Kok and Ho Sheung Heung. The number of passenger trips last year was 580 000.

We understand that there is a very strong demand for Rehabus service among people with disabilities. This is why we will bid for resources every year to purchase additional buses to meet the demand. In 2007-2008, our original plan is to purchase four new vehicles but in response to the suggestion made by Mr LAU Kong-wah at the meeting of the Subcommittee on 22 May this year, the Labour and Welfare Bureau will provide additional resources for purchasing two more rehabuses this year. It is expected that six new rehabuses

will start providing service in early 2008 within this financial year, thus increasing the fleet to 101, with a view to meeting the demand of people with disabilities more comprehensively. Two of these six newly purchased rehabuses will serve scheduled routes, providing service to people with disabilities in new towns and remote areas — Mr WONG, they will be serving the remote areas. As the fleet of rehabuses grows, the number of passenger trips is expected to increase to 600 000 in 2007.

Apart from acquiring more rehabuses, the Government has since mid-2005 replaced the single-arm tail-lift rehabuses and the aging ones gradually under a bus replacement programme. As these single-arm tail-lift rehabuses have limitations in carrying users of electrical wheelchairs which are heavier and have become increasingly common, the new rehabuses will greatly facilitate the delivery of service. In the past two financial years, the Government replaced 13 rehabuses. Nine more will be replaced in 2007-2008, and we plan to replace the remaining seven next year or in the year after next. By then, the entire Rehabus service will be further upgraded.

I would like to briefly respond to Members on barrier-free facilities. The Government has been committed to providing a barrier-free public transport system for people with disabilities. The Transport and Housing Bureau and the Transport Department have been working closely with public transport operators to actively improve the facilities provided to people with disabilities, with a view to facilitating their access to public transport.

In respect of franchised buses, since mid-2001, all major franchised bus operators have been required to purchase low-floor buses. These buses are equipped with ramps and space for parking wheelchairs for the convenience of people with disabilities. There are now over 2 700 low-floor type buses, accounting for 46% of the entire bus fleet. Over 70% or close to 4 300 of franchised buses are equipped with the next bus stop announcement system to provide information on the next stop to passengers with visual and hearing impairment.

In respect of railway, the new rail lines and most of the existing stations are equipped with facilities for the convenience of people with disabilities. The MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) has allocated \$400 million over the past decade for improvement works, while the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation has since 1999 injected \$235 million to improve their facilities. At present, the

MTR, the East Rail and the West Rail have provided in their train compartments exclusive space for wheelchairs. Portable ramps are also provided for easy boarding and alighting by wheelchair users. Besides, low-height ticket vending machines and even Octopus add-value machines with audio devices and brailles are provided at the stations, and tactile guide paths and bi-directional gates are also extensively used at the concourses and platforms of the stations to facilitate ingress and egress by people with disabilities. Moreover, the MTRCL has installed at all exit gates connected by tactile guide paths audible devices which can announce the fare charged and remaining values of the Octopus cards.

In respect of ferry service, grooved ramps and tactile guide paths are already retrofitted at major piers providing passenger service to enhance the accessibility of ferry service to disabled passengers. Moreover, the taxi trade has also introduced 35 taxis with rear swivel seat capable of a 90 degree turn for easy boarding and alighting by people with mobility difficulties. At present, about 8 500 taxis, or 47% of the entire fleet of taxis, are retrofitted with audio meter for the convenience of visually-impaired passengers.

The provision of concessionary public transport fares for people with disabilities is an issue of great concern to Members. While the series of measures that I have just explained have removed the barriers for many people with disabilities in using public transport, I must admit that transport expenses no doubt constitute a financial burden which will restrict the room for and dampen the desire of people with disabilities who are less well-off to take part in activities away from home. The Government agrees that the provision of concessionary fares to people with disabilities will help encourage them to participate more in activities away from home, thereby enhancing their contact with society and hence achieving the policy objective of "A society for all". We share the same view on this point, and the results of a survey by the Social Science Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong commissioned by us last year on the habits of people with disabilities in using public transport also echo this point.

We hope that public transport operators can uphold the spirit of corporate social responsibilities by offering concessionary fares to people with disabilities. In this connection, the Transport and Housing Bureau has been liaising with public transport operators, encouraging them to further provide concessionary fares to people with disabilities in parallel with the efforts that they have been making to actively improve their services and facilities.

On the other hand, the Government has been discussing with the Subcommittee set up under the House Committee of the Legislative Council proposals on the introduction of concessionary fares. As Members said earlier, it was after many rounds of discussion that the Subcommittee proposed that fare concessions should first be provided to recipients of Disability Allowance and CSSA with a total loss of earning capacity (the number of people in question is about 85 000), while various options for offering concessionary fares to people with disabilities have also been discussed. Given that all the options involve the use of public money, it is necessary for the Government to spend some time studying them in detail. As the Chief Executive has said explicitly, a decision will be made in a couple of months.

Deputy President, I so submit. I will give a detailed response after listening to the views expressed by Members on this subject. Thank you.

MS EMILY LAU (in Cantonese): Deputy President, I rise to speak in support of Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung's motion and Mr WONG Kwok-hing's amendment.

Deputy President, first of all, I salute Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung for his perseverance in bringing up the issue time and again. Deputy President, just now, when he said time was short, he actually meant that the remaining time for this term was short. I do not know whether he wants to return to this Council to serve the next term. However, even if he returns, he will not like raising this issue again, for this issue has after all been discussed for many years. All of us feel deep regrets for this. Moreover, I have to salute Dr Fernando CHEUNG, and other colleagues, for the great deal of effort they have made in this respect.

I notice that in the past these issues were handled by Dr Sarah LIAO, the former Secretary, but now, it is Secretary Matthew CHEUNG rather than Secretary Eva CHENG who comes to this Council on this issue. Perhaps the authorities think that this issue should be handled by a different bureau. If Secretary Matthew CHEUNG is assigned to take up the issue, I believe, it implies that the authorities may use public money to tackle the problem. However, if the issue is handled by the Secretary in charge of transportation, it means those companies will be required to pay for the relevant costs, but efforts made so far are still in vain.

If certain companies are willing to meet the costs, we will definitely agree to it. However, Deputy President, when I put forth the relevant proposal in a luncheon meeting held on one Thursday in September, members from the business sector just shook their heads at the idea, for they did not think they had to bear the corporate social responsibility to help the disadvantaged. Therefore, if the costs are to be borne by the authorities, I will support it and I hope the arrangement can be implemented as soon as possible. The Secretary said earlier that we might have to wait for a couple of months more, but I believe it is most unlikely that he will break good news to us.

However, the Secretary also said earlier that a lot of measures had been introduced to develop a barrier-free environment, which I hope are effective. But I hope the Secretary can present honestly the actual situation. Though he said that much effort had been made in various aspects, such as taxis and buses, how long do people with disabilities have to wait if they want to use those vehicles to go out? What kinds of barriers and difficulties will they encounter?

In this respect, Deputy President, I would like to say, given the great fondness for all kinds of vouchers, education vouchers on the one hand and health care vouchers on the other, shown by the authorities, will the authorities consider issuing some "taxi vouchers"? Deputy President, indeed, you know far better than I do that the taxi trade is now crying for help. If the authorities are sincere — Members asked earlier whether or not the authorities were sincere and determined — in helping people with disabilities who cannot gain access to those vehicles, will the authorities offer "taxi vouchers" for them? Particularly when there are only 101 Rehabuses providing service. I learnt that persons with disabilities had to wait for six months or weeks before they could book a ride for Rehabuses. Like other vouchers issued, the authorities can put the name of the user on the vouchers, so that they can take a taxi immediately when they need. I think this is worthy of the Secretary's consideration.

Surely, we are glad that the Secretary has made a trip to Tin Shui Wai to examine the situation there. Actually, the Secretary can easily notice the difficulties faced by these groups or families in going out. I believe, after understanding their situation, the Secretary and his colleagues will find a greater drive to help them.

Therefore, Deputy President, I strongly support Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung in proposing this motion time and again. I am absolutely confident that this

motion will win full support of the Legislative Council, including your party, Deputy President, and other colleagues. Though this is only a very small issue, it has been discussed for five years, proving that the influence of the legislature on the authorities is limited. No matter how, new styles come with new chiefs. I just wonder why we have to wait for another two months, for the Secretary knows clearly that this motion debate will be held today, and it is the best approach to announce the arrangement here. Moreover, I have raised the proposal on "taxi vouchers", which will help the taxi trade on the one hand and people with disabilities on the other, ensuring genuine barrier-free access for people with disabilities in going out.

With these remarks, I give my full support to the motion, and I hope the Secretary will bring good news to people with disabilities and Hong Kong society as soon as possible.

MR CHEUNG HOK-MING (in Cantonese): Deputy President, recently, the people of Hong Kong may often come across the SAR Government's publicity on the policy address, which makes frequent mention of booster-measures to take care of society and return wealth to the people. These include the issue of health care vouchers, the promotion of social enterprises and the lowering of the standard rate of salaries tax and profits tax rate, and so on. However, society at large considers the efficacy of this booster from the Chief Executive very limited, and even thinks it is not coming up to scratch. To me, it reminds me of the old Cantonese movies I watched in my childhood in the 1960s and 1970s, which portrayed openly the attempt of some misers pretending to be philanthropists. Now, as seen on television, they weight every alternative and finally come up with some "candy-distribution" proposals which offer no real assistance but lip-service.

Deputy President, here, I cannot help asking the Government this question again. Is it really that difficult to provide transport fare concessions to people with disabilities? At the initial stage of the merger of the two railway corporations, the fare issue involved listed companies, government organizations or public organizations, 2.8 million passengers and some 200 000 minority shareholders, the problems and technical difficulties involved would definitely be more complicated than providing fare concessions for people with disabilities. But the issue was settled and the problems were solved in three years or a few years time.

Nevertheless, though the transport fare concessions for tens of thousands of people has already been discussed repeatedly for five years, not a faint hint of progress can be found so far.

We think this is mainly attributable to the unwillingness of the Government to make commitment, whereas transport operators too are unwilling to undertake corporate social responsibilities.

In December 2005, a subcommittee was set up to follow up the issue. Many colleagues mentioned earlier that the subcommittee had held 13 meetings, and that various major transport operators, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and a number of concern groups had expressed their opinions on several occasions. Unfortunately, the Government fails to come up with a specific proposal which is long overdue.

Recently, the subcommittee discussed the proposal put forth by the MTRCL, under which the Government will underwrite the deficit arising from the concession scheme and reap any surplus. Various major transport operators were again invited to give their views on the proposal. At one point, society speculated that the Government had already accepted the proposal of the MTRCL and people with disabilities were excited about it. However, it ends in disappointment. The Government has not yet stated its position so far. The proposal is still empty talk on paper. It really makes people doubt whether the Government has the determination to solve the problem of transport fare concessions for people with disabilities.

As for transport operators, they frequently refer to "prudent commercial principles" and their obligation to look after the interest of shareholders and investors of their companies. Inevitably, one cannot help doubting whether non-government organization must be bound by these so-called principles and obligations?

The Chairperson of the EOC once said at a meeting of the subcommittee that for a public company appointed to provide service for the entire society, operating according to prudent commercial principles does not mean that profit-making should be its only target. Actually, certain private companies, which have the obligation to look after the interest of their investors and shareholders, with profit-making as their major objective, have made donations for community good from time to time to fulfil their social responsibilities.

To put it directly, even if a company is operating according to prudent commercial principles, it does not mean it cannot engage in charity work. These companies are now using these so-called "principles" and "obligations" to gloss over their reluctance to fulfil their corporate social responsibilities.

The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong (DAB) considers that a balance must be struck among the interests of various parties. All three parties, namely the Government, the corporations and the public, should make commitment to facilitating the successful provision of half-fare transport concession to people with disabilities. In fact, the Government's coffer is now stocked up with reserve, while the various major transport operators are enjoying surpluses of tens of millions to hundreds of millions dollars each year, so we do not see that they are facing any financial difficulties. Sincerity is what we need. In the technical aspect, a mode of operation similar to that of the existing Elder Octopus may be used to provide concessions, and success can be easily achieved.

Deputy President, the insufficiency of Rehabus service is mentioned in the original motion. We believe that when half-fare transport concession is provided to people with disabilities, they will naturally take public transport more frequently while their demand for Rehabus service will decrease correspondingly, thus the problem of over-demand for Rehabus service will thereby be alleviated.

However, since Rehabus can cater for the specific needs of people with disabilities, there will still be considerable demand for Rehabus services. For this reason, this target-oriented bus service must be improved, particularly in terms of the number of buses, frequency, routing and the dial-a-ride service, and so on. Vigorous efforts should be made to cater for the needs of users and for the convenience of people with disabilities to go out, so that transport will not become an obstacle to their participation in social activities.

Honourable Members, I believe we all agree that people with disabilities are also members of society. We should neither regard them as a burden of society, nor neglect their needs. On the contrary, we should help and encourage them to integrate into society, to work for and contribute to society. The DAB thus supports the original motion and the amendment.

Deputy President, I so submit.

MR LEE CHEUK-YAN (in Cantonese): Deputy President, this year is the fifth time, and the fifth year, we debate this motion. It is weird that we have to spend five years on one motion. The weirdest thing of all is that, Deputy President, though people think that a motion which has to be debated for five years must involve something most controversial and wonder whether all Members of this Council have been arguing over the issue where no consensus can be reached. But it is just the opposite. Deputy President, a consensus has been reached among Members. It is most unfortunate that a consensus has been reached not only within the legislature but also between Members and the Government. Indeed, when the Secretary stated the position of the Government earlier, he admitted that to people with disabilities earning a low income, the expensive transport fares would cause difficulties to them in their integration into society, a target we wish to achieve. The authorities also agree that if concessions can be given to them to alleviate their burden in transport expenses, it will facilitate their integration into society and achieve the objective of integration of the able-bodied and disabled in the community. The Government too recognizes this point. Despite that, repeated discussions on this motion have so far yielded no result. I think this is really a disservice to people with disabilities, for a consensus has been reached within the legislature and the Government has recognized it.

Members of society may ask: What actually is the problem? I think, Deputy President, the problem lies in the weak governance of the Government who claims to be practising strong governance. The Government may make a show of force, like a tiger showing its crawls, in front of the general public, but it turns into a wimp once it faces the large consortia. Concerning this issue, a consensus has already been reached, what makes the target unachievable? The cowardice of the Government it is, for it turns into a wimp once it meets with the large consortia and dares not rouse them. Since it dares not rouse them, the issue has been dragged on for years. All along, the authorities have failed to find the common ground with transport operators. For this reason, a conclusion on how the issue should be dealt with has not been reached so far. I feel extremely disappointed about this.

Over the years, the Government has failed to persuade these large consortia to offer concessions, for whenever it met with these major transport operators, it acted as if it was mentally retarded, and the only means it could resort to was procrastination. How did it procrastinate? Perhaps, the Government is not the only one causing the delay, for transport operators have also assisted the authorities in doing so.

Let me cite the first way of procrastination. At the beginning when someone put forth this request, the transport operators cited the difficulty of defining people with disabilities. They claimed that the definition could be very broad, and if the chronically ill were also included, there would be more than 1 million people with disabilities in Hong Kong. When we heard of this number of over 1 million, we started to get worried, for it seemed we were sliding into an abyss. It was frightening. For this reason, a definition of people with disabilities was drawn, a task force was set up and discussions and negotiations were carried out. After that, the definition was narrowed down to include only recipients of Disability Allowance and CSSA recipients with severe disabilities, and the number of eligible persons was thus reduced to 85 000.

After the number of eligible persons had been reduced to 85 000, I thought the plan would be achievable, for only a very small number of recipients was involved, and the negotiation should be much easier. Unexpectedly, the Government put forth another argument, stating that under the existing Disability Discrimination Ordinance, the provision of concession to a specific group of people with disabilities would be a violation. Again, discussions were held and the problem was solved, and both the Government and Members agreed to amend the Ordinance. Besides, amending the Ordinance was no difficult task. At that time, I thought we were getting closer to the target.

But then, there came other problems. How could we know the breakdown of the figure of 85 000? How should the transport half-fare concession be provided to people with disabilities and how much would be incurred? As a result, those figures needed clarification.

If those figures had to be clarified, it would be fine. I have been working with Mrs MA on this issue for many years or many months. We had to wait for the figures and invite the persons in charge from the University of Hong Kong to discuss the issue with the relevant subcommittee of the Legislative Council. They put forth a series of figures, and, Deputy President, the result shown that the half-fare concession, if offered, would bring profit to the MTRCL and the KCRC. At that time, I was in a state of great excitement. I thought the issue would be settled easily. Would not the MTRCL be willing to provide the concession when it could make a profit from it? I thought the plan was feasible, for the relevant figures showed a favourable condition. Though bus companies might suffer a small loss, the plan was feasible to the MTRCL and the KCRC. Unfortunately, when we presented those figures, the MTRCL queried the

authenticity of those figures and the feasibility of the plan, for it considered the figures were purely based on estimation.

The transport operators again tried to evade their responsibilities. However, the major problem was that, Deputy President, I, as Chairman of the subcommittee studying the provision of concessionary transport fares for people with disabilities, felt that the whole thing could be likened to a tennis match, while I watched the ball being passed from one side of the court to the other over and over again. In the first place, who passed the ball to whom? The transport department passed the ball to the welfare department by stating that it was a welfare issue. However, the welfare department disagreed and pointed out that since discussions had to be held with transport operators, the transport department should be responsible for this. Then came the second game. This time it was between the transport department and transport operators. The transport department said that transport operators should be responsible for the problem, but transport operators denied the responsibility and said that the Government should be held responsible. The ball was then lobbed back into the transport department's court, and the transport department again passed the ball to the welfare department. Over the past six months, this ball was passed among different parties repeatedly. I am gravely disappointed to see that corporate social responsibilities, vigorously promoted by the Government, were after all nebulous. Actually, these corporations have already given the Government a slap in the face.

All along, the Government has been emphasizing the importance of corporate social responsibilities, but the two corporations, which have government officials sitting on their boards and the Government being the largest shareholder, after all refuse to admit that they have to undertake such corporate social responsibilities. Despite the opinion given by the Equal Opportunities Commission, the two railway corporations eventually refused to admit that they had the social responsibility to do so, and they even said that it was a welfare policy which the Government was obliged to implement.

Therefore, when the measures proposed by the Chief Executive were to no avail, he pointed out that it was corporate social responsibility, attempting to pass the ball to the corporations. But it is indeed redundant, for the corporations actually are unwilling to shoulder these social responsibilities. Now that the corporation with the Government being the largest shareholder also refuses to undertake its corporate social responsibilities, let alone corporations in general.

Therefore, Deputy President, I really hope that the Secretary will give us a finalized proposal in the end and avoid further delay. Certainly, the Secretary will say that a proposal will be submitted within a couple of months. But eventually, corporations are still unwilling to undertake social responsibilities. The Government is now shouldering the burden all by itself. For the time being, the Government is only doing the computations, and I believe the Government is financially capable to foot this bill.

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

MR LEE CHEUK-YAN (in Cantonese): Thank you, Deputy President.

MISS TAM HEUNG-MAN (in Cantonese): Deputy President, around this time every year, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung will propose a motion on the transport needs of people with disabilities. On the one hand, I admire the perseverance of Mr LEUNG in doing so, but on the other hand, I feel so helpless. For as long as this motion remains a subject of discussion in this Chamber, it means that people with disabilities still face barriers in using transport.

People with disabilities have been striving for transport half-fare concession for at least five to six years. However, people with disabilities have been treated like a "human football", being kicked around by the Government and transport operators. The Government said that it was the social responsibility of transport operators to provide fare concessions, but transport operators said that it was social welfare and should be provided by the Government. As a result, the issue has been delayed time and again, while people with disabilities have been kept waiting all along.

Actually, over the past few years, a number of obstacles holding up the discussion on the provision of transport concessions for people with disabilities have been removed one by one. Neither the Government nor the transport operators have any excuse to evade or delay the provision of fare concessions.

Many concern groups of people with disabilities have long since suggested that fare concessions could first be provided to disabled CSSA recipients or recipients of Disability Allowance. But since the Government worried that the

suggestion might violate the Disability Discrimination Ordinance, it did not consider the suggestion even after a long time. Now, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has stated openly that the provision of concessions to certain people with disabilities was not in contravention of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance. As a member of the EOC, I can tell the Government that it should neither worry about this nor use this as a "shield".

Besides, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department currently provides admission charge concessions to people with disabilities. Even the two ferry companies, which suffer loss year after year, provide concessions to people with disabilities. If the provision of such concessions is unlawful, they should have been prosecuted long since. Am I right?

Certain transport operators said that they did not know the exact number of people with disabilities in Hong Kong and it would thus be difficult for them to estimate the impact on their fare box revenue if transport concessions were offered. Actually, this worry is excessive. The figures of disabled CSSA recipients and recipients of Disability Allowance are open and transparent. According to the information of the Social Welfare Department, as at September this year, the number of disabled CSSA recipients and recipients of Disability Allowance are 10 080 and 120 000 respectively. Transport operators are definitely capable of estimating the impact on their fare box revenue because of the provision of fare concessions.

On the other hand, the Subcommittee of the Legislative Council studying the transport needs of people with disabilities has commissioned the University of Hong Kong to conduct a study on the use of transport by people with disabilities. As the findings shown, if full-day transport half-fare concession is provided to people with disabilities, transport operators will, even in the worse scenario, only suffer loss in fare box revenue of \$2.8 million to \$3.2 billion per week, which will be \$146 million to \$162 million per year. In an optimistic scenario, the provision of fare concessions for people with disabilities will bring additional revenue to transport operators. These transport operators, which are reaping billions of profit a year, utterly have no reason to worry that their profit will be seriously affected by the provision of fare concessions.

The most important point is that, according to the position stated by the Government recently, once the transport fare concessions for people with

disabilities are introduced, the Government will provide subsidy to transport operators for the loss in revenue resulted from the provision of fare concessions. Transport operators simply have nothing to worry about.

As the worries of the Government and transport operators about the provision of fare concessions to people with disabilities have been removed one by one, what are we waiting for? The Government should put forth specific proposals on the provision of transport fare concessions for people with disabilities as soon as possible.

Deputy President, I would then turn to another aspect, for the problems faced by people with disabilities in using transport will not be solved altogether even if fare concessions are provided. The main reason is that even though a number of barrier-free facilities aiming to facilitate people with disabilities in using transport have been provided by various transport operators, we found that there is still much room for improvement.

I would like to share a personal experience with Members. Actually, I did cite this example last time when I spoke on the merger of the two railway corporations. My mother has become mobility-handicapped and wheelchair-bound after a stroke. One day, I took her to Central to meet with a lawyer. After the meeting, it was at peak time and was quite difficult to get a taxi home. We had originally wanted to take the MTR, but after going round the MTR Central Station several times and pacing to and fro the Station, we could not find a lift to get down to the Station. I then decided to take the bus. We had waited for a long time, but there was no low-floor bus. How long do you think we had to wait? Eventually, we had to wait for a long time to get a bus home. We had altogether wasted two hours.

Initially, I do not fully understand the transport needs of people with disabilities. But with this personal experience, I now feel with all my heart that improvement should brook no delay. I hope that transport operators will expeditiously provide barrier-free bus and other facilities on a full scale.

Deputy President, I hope this will be the last time we discuss this motion. Secretary, will you make our wish come true?

With these remarks, I support the motion. Thank you, Deputy President.

MS LI FUNG-YING (in Cantonese): Deputy President, as mentioned in the wordings of this motion, "That this Council passed motions in the 2002-2003, 2003-2004, 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 Sessions calling for improvement to transport facilities for people with disabilities and offer of concessionary fares to them, but the government departments concerned, some statutory transport corporations and other public transport operators have failed to take corresponding measures and face up" . Though a consensus on the motion to strive for the interest of people with disabilities has long since been reached in society and within the legislature, it seems that the Government and public transport operators have all along been adopting a delaying tactic, procrastinating to seek a solution to the problem. Comparing with the concept of promoting the integration of able-bodied and disabled persons in the community, which the Government has all along advocated, the Government is obviously not doing what it preaches. The Chief Executive revealed three weeks ago that the Government was considering the arrangement for providing transport allowance to people with disabilities and a finalized proposal was expected to come out after the relevant problems had been sorted out. I surely hope that this finalized proposal will provide a final solution to the transport problem faced by people with disabilities, but I am not optimistic about this. Concerning this finalized proposal to be put forth by the Government, I can only say at best that I will read their lips and watch their deeds.

During the number of debates held in the past on the motions on facing up the transport needs of people with disabilities, I gave unequivocal support to the enhancement of Rehabus services, which was the most convenient platform to assist people with disabilities to integrate into the community, and hoped that the Government could face the problem squarely. Increasing resources by the Government is certainly the most direct means to bring comprehensive improvement to Rehabus services. Secretary Matthew CHEUNG said earlier that there could be 101 Rehabuses by 2008, which would fully satisfy the demand of people with disabilities. Regarding this computation and comment of his, I am not optimistic. Therefore, I suggest that the Government may consider providing subsidy, basing roughly on the unit cost of each delivery provided by Rehabus, to people with disabilities, who need the service but are unable to use it, to use other means of transport.

Regarding the provision of barrier-free facilities by public transport operators, in the past, I suggested the Government to discuss with bus companies the installation of a recorder on the usage of low-floor facility. This recorder

may facilitate the recording of the number of disabled or wheelchair-bound passengers taken by bus drivers, while bus companies may adjust the time required for each trip correspondingly and allow drivers to have more time and flexibility for each trip, thereby alleviating the pressure faced by bus drivers in taking disabled or wheelchair-bound passengers. Moreover, I have once proposed that the low-floor facility should be installed at the rear exits of buses to facilitate wheelchair-bound passengers in getting on and off buses without obstructing other passengers, thus sparing them the embarrassment of causing inconveniences. However, to date, neither the Government nor bus companies have accepted these two suggestions. Though I am extremely disappointed, I hope the Government and bus companies will act proactively and be determined in providing more convenient transport facilities to people with disabilities, and seriously reconsider the two suggestions put forth by me earlier. I earnestly hope that the target of "A Society for All, both the able-bodied and disabled persons" can be achieved ultimately.

Actually, the provision of convenient transport facilities to people with disabilities is an obligation the Government cannot dodge. The Government must tackle the issue from the policy aspect and draw up a "barrier-free transport" policy as soon as possible. This should include a review of the effectiveness of the piecemeal measures now adopted and the consolidation of such measures, so that every person with disabilities will not lose the opportunity of integrating into the community owing to transport problems. However, in assisting people with disabilities to integrate into the community, transport is only part of the problem. In the middle of this year, the Government announced the outcome of the Rehabilitation Programme Plan Review. A number of rehabilitation concern groups and welfare organizations have expressed their opinions and suggestions during the review, and I am glad that certain opinions and suggestions have been accepted in this programme plan review. I hope the Government can further increase funding to ensure that the various concrete measures included in the review will be properly implemented.

Thank you, Deputy President.

MR ALAN LEONG (in Cantonese): Deputy President, the importance of "holistic policies" is always stressed on every livelihood issue. Indeed, with regard to the transport needs of people with disabilities, it is also necessary for

the SAR Government to adopt a comprehensive and holistic policy mindset, so as to facilitate the access of people with disabilities to transport service. Regrettably, for a period of time, the Government has always looked at this issue from a very lopsided and narrow perspective. As a result, no light has yet been cast on this problem no matter how colleagues in this Council have shouted themselves hoarse to make their voices heard.

This mentality of the Government is best demonstrated in the replying letter from the former Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Raphael HUI, to the Subcommittee to Study the Transport Needs of and the Provision of Concessionary Public Transport Fares for Persons with Disabilities of this Council in June. In the letter the Government spelt out its view that the provision of concessionary transport fares to people with disabilities has to be examined in the context of welfare policy, stating clearly that fare concessions will involve public money and so, it is necessary to consider how the overall welfare budget is to be utilized and allocated before a decision can be taken. This may be the reason why Secretary Matthew CHEUNG has taken over the responsibility to deal with this issue. But Deputy President, this is just another example of the Government seeing it only as "expenditure" but not "investment".

Even if we look at this from a commercial viewpoint, according to the survey report released by the Social Sciences Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) early this year, the provision of full-day fare concessions to people with disabilities will lead to a significant increase in both the number of passenger trips and that of new customers in five modes of public transport, namely, the MTR, KCR, buses, Light Rail and trams, and a majority of public transport will also enjoy an increase in cash flow. In the case of buses, only peak-hour concession will result in an increase in cash flow.

If we look at it from the angle of intangible social benefits, Deputy President, the survey found that with the provision of fare concessions, the number of trips on the two railways made by existing customers with disabilities will double, while the number of their bus trips will increase by 72%. Besides, over 30% of the less frequent users of the MTR, buses and KCR will consider taking these modes of public transport. Increased usage of public transport by people with disabilities means a consequential increase in their engagement in employment and also social and consumer spending activities. The chain effects to be produced in society cannot be underestimated indeed.

Deputy President, from these analyses we can see that if the provision of half-fare concession to people with disabilities is considered purely from the angle of welfare expenditure, the potential social benefits of this measure are likely to be neglected and the Government will tend to designate one Policy Bureau to design the details of the measure without the active involvement and co-ordination from other Policy Bureaux. In fact, the survey by the HKU also showed that commuters' choice can be affected by such factors as the coverage of transport service, the choice of public transport and location of stations. This shows that the implementation of transport policies to the benefit of people with disabilities absolutely does not just concern one Policy Bureau. Rather, it requires the overall co-ordination of various policy bureaux and departments, and special attention should be paid to individual localities where a greater number of people with disabilities live, in order to effectively provide barrier-free transport facilities and hence boost the effectiveness of the fare concessions.

Besides, the view that fare concessions for people with disabilities are regarded as welfare expenditure originally came from public transport operators and is supported even by the government-controlled MTR and KCR. The premise of this view, Deputy President, is that transport operators should have regard to prudent commercial principles in their operation and so, they should not provide concessions at the risk of a reduction of profit. The Chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Commission, Mr Raymond TANG, has put forward very strong arguments in response to this view.

As pointed out by Mr TANG at a meeting of the Subcommittee of this Council (and I quote), "..... the way those commercial principles were to be given effect should be different as between a private company and a public body To a public body, the operation on prudent commercial principles did not merely involve profit-making." (end of quote) In other words, Deputy President, public bodies which enjoy a franchise or predominant status primarily have the duty to meet, in response to the demand in society, certain requirements in the public interest in delivering public service. As long as this Council and the public have established that the provision of half-fare concession to an individual social group is part of public interest, public transport operators should have the obligation to provide as much support as possible.

Since the bus operators can agree to offer holiday fare concession to the elderly during negotiations with the authorities, there is not a big difference

between this concession and the half-fare concession for people with disabilities. Even though the Government will not meet the cost of fare concession for the elderly with public money, public transport operators, being corporations funded by public resources, cannot shift all their corporate responsibilities to the Government under the pretext of "welfare expenditure". Once this precedent is set, transport operators and even other public utilities may as well shift to the taxpayers the other kinds of expenditure relating to environmental protection, security and public interests on this pretext.

The organizations of people with disabilities, which have persistently striven for this cause over the years, have made many concessions indeed, and as some legal issues revolving around the provision of half-fare concession for people with disabilities have been resolved, there is simply no reason for the Government and public transport operators to keep on passing the buck to each other.

Deputy President, I support this motion.

DR KWOK KA-KI (in Cantonese): Deputy President, this year is the fifth year that this topic is debated. I certainly thank Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung My apologies, it is the sixth year It is already the sixth year that this issue is discussed. I certainly support and am grateful for the perseverance of Mr LEUNG. In fact, not many people are like him who still works hard persistently when faced with a rock-like government.

Deputy President, this policy address of the Government has vowed to take care of the disadvantaged and build up a harmonious society but got "instant retribution". In fact, after the delivery of the policy address, public support for this year's policy address has gradually dropped. This outcome is quite different from that as intended by the Government or the Chief Executive of polishing up their reputation.

I think the public will see that the Treasury is already flooded with money. In Hong Kong, there are more and more rich people, while the large enterprises, including the two railway corporations, bus companies, and so on, have amassed surpluses of hundreds of million dollars. Yet, the Government has remained totally unresponsive or indifferent to these voices in society, refusing to provide

transport fare concessions to people with disabilities. Ms Emily LAU proposed earlier the provision of taxi vouchers. This, I certainly agree. But can we ask taxis to provide half-fare concession? We certainly will not do so. Will we ask minibuses to provide half-fare concession? We will not. Because they are different modes of public transport, as the two railway corporations and the bus companies operate with a franchise and so, they are basically the only service provider monopolizing the market.

Today, Secretary Eva CHENG is not in this Council, and I am not very happy about it, because the Government may, due to the intimidation of public transport operators, eventually make the Labour and Welfare Bureau pay for this expenditure and this, I think, is most unfair. In fact, many public transport operators have acted like a bad loser. As shown clearly in a survey conducted by the University of Hong Kong, with the provision of half-fare concession, the number of people with disabilities taking the MTR and the KCR will increase by 103.57% and 101.52% respectively, while those taking the bus will increase by 72%, those taking the Light Rail will increase by 70% and those taking trams will increase by 69.96%. In other words, if the Government provides subsidies for this fare concession, the surplus fare revenue will go into the pockets of these private enterprises and public transport operators. They are most willing to reap profits but they refuse to make commitments for their obligations. The Government is very incompetent, because when awarding franchises or issuing business licence to these monopolies, it has the duty to put forward the reasonable demands for those people to be affected and in particular, the reasonable demand of people with disabilities for fare concessions.

In fact, I think the suggestion that the expenditure can be covered by government subsidies will set a precedent for subsidizing business operation with public coffers. How should their profit be calculated? I think the Government has not only neglected the disadvantaged. It even appears to be very keen to protect the interests of tycoons and shareholders, turning a blind eye to many taxpayers or the disadvantaged groups. Although it is said that there may be good news in two months, I wonder if it will be truly good news. First, we do not know when it will be implemented; second, no one knows whether or not our voices will still be totally disregarded; and third, we are worried that these public transport operators and private enterprises will be subsidized with taxpayers' money.

Where do we see that they have this need? I think from the Tin Shui Wai incident we can see that many people with disabilities are actually in great need and they do not have the means to afford it. While many of them have been drawing welfare assistance, including the disability allowance or CSSA, we can see that it is already difficult for them to meet the basic needs of living with their meagre income, not to mention participating in normal social activities and even pursuing studies or seeking employment.

(THE PRESIDENT resumed the Chair)

In fact, many people with disabilities have to go out because of their needs of living. As Members may know, the waiting time for medical consultation of people with disabilities in hospital clusters of the Hospital Authority varies greatly. Many people with disabilities must go to other districts for medical and health care services, surgery or follow-up consultation. In fact, this has clearly shown that while the Government is well aware of this situation and has encouraged them to seek medical consultation across districts, when they put forward this demand, the Government nevertheless ignored them and remained unsympathetic to their needs.

The Secretary cited some figures earlier, stating that the two railway corporations can spend a total of \$1.2 billion, or \$1 billion and \$200 million respectively, on the improvement of on-station facilities for people with disabilities. This is not a small sum of money. But they may have done so purely for commercial interests, hoping to attract more patronage and hence making greater profits. But since they can spend so much money on the improvement works, why are they so mean when it comes to fare concessions that should be provided? This is simply unconvincing.

This is the sixth debate on this topic and the Government still has not convinced public transport operators to do what they should have done six years ago. I am profoundly disappointed about this. I hope that this motion debate I will support both the original motion and the amendment, and I think that this motion, like the previous ones in the past, will be endorsed this year, but after the motion is endorsed, I hope to see a positive response from the Government. The Government should not give all the benefits to private enterprises or public transport operators. They must also bear their share of

responsibilities, rather than taking a bad loser attitude, in that they will do something only when they can make money from it, or else they will dismiss even their obligations.

I so submit. Thank you, Madam President.

MR LEUNG KWOK-HUNG (in Cantonese): Under the leadership of the Chief Executive, the SAR Government has said a lot of good words and done a bit of good deeds but it has also done a lot of bad deeds. Why am I saying this? I am moved in saying such things. Today I heard the Secretary TSANG Tak-shing talk about social enterprises and it shows how he would handle the issue. According to him, with respect to social enterprises, the Government should draw up a policy, offer tax incentives and provide a platform, such as by lobbying the business sector, before anything could be achieved.

The Chief Executives has devoted great lengths to talking about social enterprises, but he has not done anything in this respect. The Secretary in his reply quoted a rather odd example. He said that a level playing field had to be maintained for the enterprises. But the Government does not want to legislate on fair competition. According to my view on that matter which is admittedly not sophisticated, if the social enterprises are to abide by a fair competition law, then under the same legal framework, the view that social enterprises would kill business opportunities would be out of the question. But this is how this idiot Government thinks. It is using the right brain to give orders to the right hand and the left brain to give orders to the left hand. Just a complete reverse of what a normal man will do. That is why I say the Government is lacking in innovation and its logic does not hold water. From the reply given by Secretary TSANG Tak-shing, I realize that with respect to the motion topic today, the Government is still trying to address the ills of Hong Kong with a piecemeal and fragmented prescription.

Ladies and gentlemen, I know that every government would undertake that social enterprises should take up a certain part of the workforce and their output would contribute to a certain share of the GDP. There are policies drawn up and goals set for such purpose. Unlike the SAR Government, they will not just vanish after saying something. The case is like some dodgy customer who, after eating the dim sums in a restaurant, would just say someone is going to pay

the bill and then sneaks out. The Donald TSANG administration is a dodgy administration like this. Nothing is done after things are said. It is not paying the bill, so to speak. Why am I saying that? I am not making things up. I have been in this Chamber for just three years and I am a novice, but I find this same topic of social responsibility brought up every year here.

Ladies and gentlemen, public enterprises in Hong Kong that make the most money like the two railway corporations and the three bus companies are all given a franchise by the Government. They are quasi-monopolies with exclusive rights. The Government has not imposed any terms and conditions to require them to fulfil their social responsibilities while discussions are made in the policy address on social responsibilities. And taxes are even cut so that they can pay less tax and the greedy rich are then exhorted to practise charity. Has the Government ever read the *Bible*? This is harder than a camel going through the eye of a needle. Does Donald TSANG think that he is God? Can he discern any change in the hearts of the rich? Though he does not say so, we can see that he is not thinking in this way. It is the rich who have found a magic wand and so stone is turned into gold. In order to pay back the 800 voters who have elected him to office, Donald TSANG soon after saying that the lower strata should get the benefit is putting on another face and say that the close should be treated differently from the distant. Dear friends, do you know what is meant by this? This is to stand up to those to whom you are related instead of sense and reason and these people are all my colleagues.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung, please face the President when you speak.

MR LEUNG KWOK-HUNG (in Cantonese): Yes, President. Yes, President.

Such acts show that relations count more than reason, right? Those who give him the votes shall be given political rewards according to the powers that he has been vested with. This is a perennial truth. Absolute powers corrupt absolutely. Now it cannot be said that Donald TSANG enjoys absolute powers, for there are still people who can put him under some sort of control. This political assembly for one still has got some powers that can exert some control on him. But in fact these are just empty talks. Sad to say, this political

assembly is afflicted with misfortune. I have spoken numerous times here on matters about Mr Martin LEE and Regina IP, but no one reports on these. However, should one or two members of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) speak here, the newspapers will all fall for them and the views expressed are put under a magnifying glass. This is actually a discrimination against the legislature. The NPC Deputies and the delegates to the People's Political Consultative Conference — sorry, President, I do not mean to offend you — are not elected by Hong Kong people under a "one person, one vote" system. But what they say will get wide media coverage. As for Honourable colleagues of this Council here, be it true or not, they are all returned by elections. They are returned pursuant to the Basic Law and they are mandated by the people to deliberate on public affairs here. But what they say is not reported in the newspapers. This is the sorry sight we can see.

On the issue of persons with disabilities, the Government does not dare to impose any conditions to require franchised bodies to practise charity, nor does it want to be accused by the rich that it is robbing the rich to help the poor. So it is robbing the poor for the benefit of the rich. It refuses to give any funding and the tens of thousand people with disabilities are forced to pay a heavy price because the Government is backward and corrupt.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is actually something about national education. Recently when a member of the Standing Committee of the NPC slammed at someone for being a traitor, he said, "Are you blind, deaf or dumb?" He should have said, "Can you not see, hear or speak?" This remark is a discrimination against persons with disabilities in Hong Kong. When a national leader — he is close to being one — can be so emotionally agitated, how can national education be practised in Hong Kong and how can any importance be attached to persons with disabilities? There is no respect whatsoever for persons with disabilities from someone who is supposedly of high repute and well respected. Words like blind, deaf and dumb are used as analogies to attack his political enemies. This kind of bad example set in national education and this kind of member of the Standing Committee of the NPC can never be expected to spur the Chief Executive into paying respect to persons with disabilities. This also explains why the Government does not respect persons with disabilities and instead respect is paid only to those with votes and money and those syndicates that have got money, votes and power. Thank you, President.

MR SIN CHUNG-KAI (in Cantonese): Madam President, the Democratic Party supports the motion today. We agree that transport concessions should be given to persons with disabilities and relevant transport facilities should be improved. We hope that persons with disabilities can have the same opportunities like other people in making more friends and leading a normal social life.

According to data for the year 2001 released by the Census and Statistics Department, the unemployment rate of people with disabilities is about 2.4 times that of the overall unemployment rate of Hong Kong. If the current unemployment rate of 4.1% is taken for calculation, the unemployment rate of people with disabilities now stands at about 9%. This figure is commonly regarded as an underestimate, for we reckon the actual figure could be more than 30%. On the other hand, the low-income group have only a very limited choice of places to live. Many of these people with disabilities live in the New Territories, in places like Tung Chung, Sheung Shui, Fanling, and so on. They have to pay a substantial amount of transport fares every day.

The Hong Kong Rehabilitation Society and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service interviewed 1 200 persons with disabilities at the end of last year. Seven types of people with disabilities were included, such as the visually impaired, hearing impaired, intellectually handicapped and those with other physical disabilities. Findings of the survey show that the weekly travel expenses of these people are range from \$50 to \$100, which are comparable to those of the able-bodied. But the persons with disabilities face much more difficulties in employment. Seventy per cent of the interviewees make less than \$4,000 a month. Travel expenses take up 20% of their income and this is a burden to them. It also badly affects their chances of integrating into the community. As a matter of fact, close to 30% of the interviewees go out less because of the high transport fares. This is why for many years the Democratic Party has been urging that transport concessions be given to persons with disabilities in the same way as they are given to senior citizens and school children because persons with disabilities have the same kind of financial needs as the former groups.

In addition, we hope that they can be given more chances to come into contact with the community. Now places like mainland China, Taiwan, Australia, and so on, have already offered transport concessions to persons with disabilities. The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Disabled Persons provides that blind persons may take local buses, trolley buses, subways and ferries free of charge. This is part of the benefits the disabled can

get. In Australia, any person aged 16 or above and on receipt of disability allowance can apply for a travel pass which entitles the holder to free rides on means of public transport. The Philippines has a concessionary travel pass for persons with disabilities which enables them to enjoy concessions when they use a means of public transport. In Brazil, free rides are offered to both persons with disabilities and their carers.

Now there are 92 Rehabuses in Hong Kong running a total of 60 routes a day. The annual ridership is about 560 000 passenger trips. I agree that the Government can give more funding to the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation to boost the Rehabus service. However, to tackle the problem at root, efforts should be made to urge public transport operators to give travel concessions to persons with disabilities, for it is their right to integrate into society. We hope the Government can take active steps to encourage public transport operators to give travel concessions to persons with disabilities.

On the other hand, it is important for communities to be barrier-free when persons with disabilities venture out of their homes. The needs of people with disabilities in terms of access facilities are often neglected. If the accesses are not barrier-free, this will create an obstacle to persons with disabilities. In 1984 the Government passed a number of laws to specify that accesses be provided to persons with disabilities. Further amendments were made in 1997 to ensure that barrier-free accesses be provided in buildings. The Disability Discrimination Ordinance came into force in 1996 and it gives persons with disabilities a legal basis to fight for equal opportunities and oppose discrimination. In 2006, the "Design Manual: Barrier-Free Access" was revised and public consultation was conducted. But no update has been made afterwards. In 2004 the Buildings Department began an assessment for revisions but no results have come out of that to date. We hope that the Buildings Department can complete this review of barrier-free access as soon as possible.

Persons with disabilities find many streets and buildings in Hong Kong not convenient. According to the "Barrier Free Access to Shopping Malls" compiled by the Hong Kong Occupational Therapy Association in 2007, of the 927 persons interviewed, 44% do not agree that the existing accesses in shopping malls are easily accessible and barrier-free. Another 42% think that existing facilities in the shopping malls do not permit the common use by people of diverse ages and needs. The report makes a number of improvement recommendations such as those on access ramps, weight of doors and specific

toilets for the disabled, and so on. We hope that the authorities can understand and take on board their views.

As for examples in other countries, in Taipei city, on 23 October the city introduced a compulsory reporting scheme for non-compliance of public buildings with requirements in barrier-free facilities and installations. If the barrier-free facilities in the existing public buildings are not improved, a fine will be imposed. Put it simply, this is a set of regulations that will produce a deterrent effect on government buildings. We do not think that Hong Kong should lag behind other people. We must build a barrier-free community so that Hong Kong can truly become a barrier-free cosmopolitan city where the disabled can live in harmony with the able-bodied.

With these remarks, I support the motion.

DR FERNANDO CHEUNG (in Cantonese): President, I hope this will be the last time this motion debate is moved — not the last time for this term but the last time forever.

It is the sixth time Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung proposes this motion debate. I must pay my respects to Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung for his steadfast and incessant efforts in using six times in a row his privilege of proposing a motion debate on the transport needs of people with disabilities. If it is said that this is merely a move to reap political capital, then so be it and let him go on reaping such capital for his dogged perseverance.

If it is said that this is the last time, there are some reasonable expectations from us. Because the Chief Executive in his reply to my question has actually said that an answer will be given to us within a couple of months. And it seems that he has given some positive thoughts to it. In view of this, we are on the one hand eagerly waiting for the good news while we are also quite worried on the other.

First, we have a feeling that the authorities are looking at the issue entirely from the perspective of social welfare. I must say that I do not fully agree to that. Of course, I hope that this half-fare concession for people with disabilities would be introduced at the soonest, but conceptually it is hard for me to take it if this is regarded as a kind of welfare and nothing else and there is no obligation on

the part of the public transport operators at all. It is a fact that these public transport operators have been making lots of money and some of them do not need to have any transparency at all when they raise or reduce the fares. After the merger, there may well be some kind of change but the so-called profit control is no different from a guarantee of profit. They are offering some public service and public transport is something we all need. And they are given a guarantee that they will definitely make money. This is really a good business to run. When they do not care about the socially disadvantaged even with dead certainty that they can make money, this is exactly what the heartless rich are doing.

The Government's position on that matter is dubious. In terms of ridership, the two railway corporations combined can well be said to be the largest public transport system in Hong Kong. The KCRC is wholly-owned by the Government and the Government is the largest shareholder of the MTRCL but they think the offer of transport concessions to people with disabilities a kind of commercial decision. As for the corporations, they say that this is a kind of welfare which is the obligation of the Government. Thus the Government is a kind of "two-headed snake" in the sense that this is a kind of commercial decision when viewed from the position of the Government, but when it is seen from the eyes of the MTRCL and KCRC either wholly-owned or controlled by the Government, then it is said that this is the Government's obligation. So they can say whatever they like. And those corporations are often given awards like the Best Employer. Also, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service has given one of them a Caring Company award. However, with respect to persons with disabilities, I just have no idea how it shows its care and concern for them.

In past discussions, we have raised the argument that if these concessions are seen as a kind of welfare, then why students are given such concessions and why concessions are sometimes given to the elderly. The reply given by the authorities really open our eyes. President, these corporations have done some market research and after making the calculations, they found that those concessions would eventually bring profits to the corporations. So President, those concessions are in fact commercial decisions. The so-called social responsibility is after all, a lie. These corporations refuse to allow the relevant panels of the Legislative Council to look into the matter, but in the course of their discussions with us, we found that these concessions were introduced after careful calculations and it is only when there are profits that these concessions are given. As for persons with disabilities, they may or may not have made

such calculations. They may have read the study made by the University of Hong Kong, but they do not think they can make any money by offering these concessions and they may even think that they may run into a loss. That is why they refuse to offer any concessions.

Second, we are worried that under the existing system, once this kind of concessions is given, we are not sure if resources put in social welfare and social services would be cut. We are most reluctant to see resources in welfare services being cut on account of half-fare concessions given to people with disabilities. This is not an either-or question, nor is it a zero sum game. This is an issue that hinges on care for people with disabilities and vital to their integration into society. If the authorities say that if they are to do this, they have to forego the other, this is most unacceptable to us.

So we hope that soon we will be given a positive response. But I urge the Government that with respect to these two aspects, even if public money is to be used to share a substantial part of the responsibility, I think that it is incumbent on the Government to see to it that these enterprises will shoulder a good share of their social responsibility. Moreover, the Government must never slash any resources for existing services to offer this kind of transport concessions.

The Secretary talked about the Rehabus and various facilities just now. Frankly, last year there were as many as some 8 000 times when the Rehabus had refused to provide Dial-a-Ride service and it is only when the situation had worsened that some more vehicles were added. And the Government is deliberately giving the credit to LAU Kong-wah of the DAB. This is simply ridiculous. President, countless Members have followed up this matter, but the Government only mentioned the name of one Member. It does not matter even if Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung has been raising the issue for so many years.

Then there is the so-called Design Manual: Barrier-Free Access. After so many years spent on its review, the relevant bill is still not yet introduced to the Legislative Council. I have discussed it in this Council for four or five times, but it is still not submitted to this Council. Just how long are we going to wait for this? Also, no consideration has been given to offering the concession to the carers of people with disabilities.

Therefore, I hope that the concessionary policy can be put into practice as soon as possible and in a lenient manner. Thank you.

MR LI KWOK-YING (in Cantonese): Madam President, building a harmonious society is a policy direction of the SAR Government in recent years. However, to achieve this goal, the prerequisite is not to design any catchy slogan or poster but to enable people from various social strata to have more contacts and dialogues among them. Only by doing so will they know more about each other and there can be greater tolerance. Some people may think that since Hong Kong is an open society and people enjoy the freedom of speech and movement, it would be easy to build a harmonious society. But have we ever thought that there are some people who for reason of their physical disabilities are unable to integrate fully into society?

Madam President, for persons with disabilities to go into society and enlarge their social circle, the first obstacle they have to face is the heavy costs in transportation. Although we often say that Hong Kong is such a small place, people have to use some means of transport when they go out and have fun. So zero consumption is not possible even if they do not do any shopping. It is precisely because transport costs are a great obstacle for persons with disabilities that for many years this Council has proposed motions to urge the Government and the transport operators to face up to the transport needs of persons with disabilities and offer more transport concessions to them. As a matter of fact, there are precedents in providing transport concessions to the disadvantaged. Some local transport operators like the MTRCL have for long been providing half-fare concessions to the elderly, students and children. Many of the persons with disabilities in Hong Kong belong to the low-income group and they face more difficulties in employment than the able-bodied on account of their physical disabilities. Owing to their hardships in life, should persons with disabilities not be given transport concessions like the other disadvantaged groups?

Madam President, after many years of hard work, society has come to a consensus on the provision of transport concessions to persons with disabilities. Recently, there has even been a breakthrough in this when the eight local transport operators have all agreed to introduce half-fare Octopus cards for specific use by persons with disabilities in which reimbursements are made on an accountable basis. Fare subsidy is provided to persons with disabilities as the transport operators and the Government will each contribute to half of the fares. It can be seen there is a shift from a flat refusal to offer any concession and an unco-operative attitude on the part of the transport operators to a willingness to shoulder some of the costs in giving concessions to persons with disabilities. However, the Government has yet to respond positively to this recommendation

from the transport operators and by contrast, it is wavering in this matter and repeatedly putting up excuses that transport expenses need to be reassessed and there are financial implications that must be considered. The result is that the plan has fallen through. This really makes us question the sincerity and determination of the Government in pushing for transport concessions for persons with disabilities.

Madam President, Hong Kong is really very backward when it comes to taking care of the needs of the disabled. Like in fare concessions, as mentioned by Honourable colleagues before, Hong Kong lags far behind many countries. Even in terms of social policy, nothing is done to make it a priority policy consideration to embark on a wholesale improvement of the transport facilities and remove the obstacles faced by people with disabilities when they ride on means of transport. In the case of bus companies, for example, they are using environmental protection as a justification to replace old-style buses by those with a low floor. It can be seen easily that the first and foremost consideration of bus companies in replacing buses is not the need to take care of the needs of persons with disabilities. What is more, though easy access facilities for people with disabilities are provided by public transport operators, such as seats reserved for exclusive use by persons with disabilities in the bus and MTR train compartments, the lifts in the MTR stations, and so on, has any survey been conducted by these operators on their actual use? Have these companies enhanced passenger education in addition to the provision of these facilities so that persons with disabilities can be given a priority in using them instead of these facilities being occupied by the ordinary passengers?

Madam President, despite the fact that in recent years there has been greater care and understanding of persons with disabilities by the general public, judging from the state of the existing transport arrangements and their design, there is still a very long way to go before a harmonious society is built where people with disabilities are treated fairly. In order that persons with disabilities will not become social recluses like some young people are, I hope from the bottom of my heart that the Government and various transport operators can face up to the relevant problems, put aside unnecessary considerations and preconceived opinions and work more for better attention to the needs of persons with disabilities.

Madam President, I so submit.

MS MIRIAM LAU (in Cantonese): Madam President, the position of the Liberal Party on this issue is clear enough. We support the idea that persons with disabilities should be given support as appropriate to encourage them to walk out of their home freely and integrate into society to live just like the able-bodied. Therefore, we agree that persons with disabilities should be offered half-fare concessions when they use public transport.

As mentioned in the motion, the Legislative Council has on four consecutive occasions since the 2002-2003 Session passed motions calling on public transport operators to improve facilities for people with disabilities and offer concessionary fares to them. But it is regrettable to see that the Government does not care about the problem. However, thanks to efforts made by Members, there is a change for the better when the Chief Executive says clearly in the policy address that the Government is ironing out the problems regarding the transport concessions for people with disabilities and it is hoped that a decision can be made within a couple of months. We have great expectation that something concrete can come out of this.

At the beginning of this year, findings of a study done by the University of Hong Kong at the behest of the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau showed that if half-fare concession was introduced, passenger trips taken by people with disabilities on all means of transport would increase greatly. For example, passenger trips for the two railway corporations would increase by 101.52% to 103.57%, those for buses would increase by 72.41%, those for the Light Rail by 70.33%, and those for trams by 69.96%. This means passenger volume would increase by 70% to more than 100%. If these figures really reflect the true situation, cash flow will increase instead of fall if concessionary fares are offered by public transport operators to people with disabilities.

In a meeting of the Legislative Council Subcommittee to Study the Transport Needs of and Provision of Concessionary Public Transport Fares for Persons with Disabilities, it was agreed in principle that the Government should provide half-fare concessions to those persons with disabilities on CSSA by reimbursing the full difference between normal and concessionary fares or by reimbursement on an accountable basis. That is to say, if, after the provision of concessionary fares, the cash flow of transport fares will increase instead of fall, the amount in excess will not be given to the transport operators but returned to the Government. If the amount is not enough, then the Government will give a subsidy. I think this practice is fair enough for transport operators will only

want to maintain the present cash flow and prevent it from dwindling, not because they want to make more money by providing concessionary fares.

Some Honourable colleagues who have spoken today are dissatisfied with the present state of affairs. However, I am rather optimistic about that because after the Subcommittee has met for more than 10 times, we can see that the Government has shifted the responsibility for the matter first from the Transport Bureau to the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau, then the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau passed the responsibility back to the Transport Bureau. So in this way the two Bureaux have been passing the ball back and forth. Now at least the Government has decided that the matter belongs to the welfare policy portfolio. And the public transport operators are saying that they will co-operate and help the Government take that policy forward. I am cautiously optimistic about this and I think that measures giving half-fare concessions to persons with disabilities will materialize in the near future. However, we must keep on working hard on this. I do not want to see new issues springing up from this and consequently a dozen or more meetings will have to be held and arguments will have to be presented once again. I hope there can be concrete action instead of more debates.

Madam President, even if concessions are offered by the public transport operators to people with disabilities, we must improve the Rehabus service because certain persons with disabilities will find themselves not fit to take public transport.

At present, the Rehabus service makes about 585 000 passenger trips a year. But those who apply for Rehabus service will often have to wait for a few months before they can get any service. Last year, there were 413 applications for Scheduled Route Service of the Rehabus but as at February 2007, there were still more than 10%, that is, 47 disabled persons on the waiting list who were yet to be provided any service. As for Rehabus service by appointment, last year there were a total of 88 213 Dial-a-Ride Service orders and about 10%, that is, 8 173 of these orders were rejected. Even if four Rehabuses are added this year as planned, it is expected that rejection of orders can only be reduced by about 30%. Hence the needs in this respect are still not met.

Apart from improving the Rehabus service, the Liberal Party has all along advocated a more flexible and diversified form of travel subsidy to persons with

disabilities. One of the most convenient methods is to give them a taxi travel allowance. I am glad to hear Ms Emily LAU propose the idea of a taxi voucher. Actually, if Members notice the contents of my speeches in the past few years, they would note that I had been making the proposal that the Government should give taxi vouchers to persons with disabilities. Only that no response in this respect was received from the Government.

In a meeting held on 24 July 2007 by the Legislative Council Subcommittee to Study the Transport Needs of and Provision of Concessionary Public Transport Fares for Persons with Disabilities, members passed a motion which included calling on the authorities to introduce a taxi voucher scheme. If this works well, it can reduce the pressure on the Rehabus service while also enable persons with disabilities to choose a more flexible transport arrangement.

Although there is yet to be any taxi voucher scheme in existence, the taxi trade in a bid to enhance the quality of service wants to introduce vehicles that will suit disabled passengers. Actually some time ago the taxi trade introduced a hybrid "deluxe taxi" powered by petrol and electricity and can be used to carry disabled passengers. However, the cost of this kind of "deluxe taxi" is twice as much as the ordinary taxi and its running costs are higher than the ordinary LPG taxis as well. Hence this kind of "deluxe taxi" is not popular. In contrast, with respect to the proposal made by the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation to purchase 20 "easy access sedans" which are intended to provide a similar service as taxis, the Government does not have any special requirements for these sedans such as whether they should be LPG cars or green cars. I think the Government must relax the environmental protection requirements so that the taxi trade can introduce other kinds of suitable vehicles. In fact, Euro IV vehicles using desulphurized diesel are an ideal mode of environmentally-friendly transport. Why can the Government not make some flexible adjustment for persons with disabilities?

As for the amendment proposed by Mr WONG Kwok-hing, we think it is quite similar to the position of the original motion and so the Liberal Party will also lend its support to it.

Madam President, I so submit.

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

MR FREDERICK FUNG (in Cantonese): President, I do not know if you have ever watched a movie called "Infernal Affairs" in which there is a much-quoted line to this effect: "It is three years after three years, and three more years after three years. It is fast coming to 10 years already." The character who says this line is somewhat annoyed and irritated. LEUNG Yiu-chung is proposing the same motion for the sixth consecutive year. His motion was passed on the five past occasions in this Council. This is really like three more years after three years. It makes people annoyed and feel irritated. Recently, there seems to be a turn for the better. Both the Hong Kong Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood (ADPL) and I are of the view that the Government must provide transport concessions to persons with disabilities as soon as possible and there must be no more delays.

All along the Government has been putting up a lot of pretexts to procrastinate, such as it is very hard to define eligibility and it is even said that it would contravene the law. Sometimes it says that it does not have any financial resources to offer such concessions. But in the policy address this year, as much as \$5 billion is given away in a tax cut. This is a cut in profits tax and it is especially targeted at those in business who make money. Is the Government really blind to the needs of persons with disabilities? Is the Government also handicapped? It may be blind or deaf. And so it has not made any response. I think the policy address is really tilted to the side of the rich. The policy address boasts a big heading of "A New Direction for Hong Kong", but what is so new about it? It is said that it will help us create a golden decade in the days to come and together we will fashion a city of glittering splendour. But is all that glitters in that city gold?

Last week I said in this Chamber that poverty assistance was not just a welfare policy and it must also have matching actions in all policy areas before this poverty problem could be addressed. It is a fact that persons with disabilities are financially hard up and they have to consider more factors when they want to go out. These include whether they can get any transport, whether anyone will go with them and whether the fares are too expensive. All these hardships which they encounter in their daily life cannot be understood easily by ordinary people like us. But we and especially the Government should be duty-bound to provide them with a fair and convenient environment to facilitate their integration into the community and in making their contribution.

I have looked up the relevant information and found that the Hong Kong Council of Social Service has conducted a survey on the barrier-free transport needs of people with disabilities. Last year the Hong Kong Council of Social Service and the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation interviewed 1 201 persons with various kinds of disabilities and it was found that close to 70% of the interviewees said that transport expenses were high or very high. More than a half said that they would go out less on account of the transport fares. In other words, transport fares have become an obstacle barring the integration of people with disabilities into society.

Hong Kong is a very affluent city and we have the means to provide support to the disadvantaged groups. Moreover, transport concessions will give an impetus to people with disabilities to go out more often and when added to the fares paid by their carers, this would mean greater fare box revenue to the public transport operators. The Chief Executive in his policy address asks the business sector to fulfil their corporate social responsibility. I believe this is a good opportunity for the Government to forge a partnership with the business sector in order to show a caring culture to the public and the disadvantaged.

Findings of the survey also show that more than 30% of the respondents were not satisfied with the provision of barrier-free transport facilities in Hong Kong. The Government should therefore enhance barrier-free facilities in public transport such as by drawing up standards for barrier-free transport and work out a reasonable timetable for various means of public transport to improve their relevant facilities, and so on. Also when the Government is to stipulate conditions for the granting of franchise for public transport services, it must make it a condition that easy access facilities should be put in place for people with disabilities. There must also be an increase in the number of Rehabuses.

The Government should also urge the bus companies to buy more low floor buses and install bus stop announcement systems and publicize the services and schedules for low floor buses on the Internet. The minibuses can install flash lights for alighting passengers and wheelchair accessible taxis can be introduced.

All along the ADPL has been calling on the MTRCL to install lifts at the ground level which are directly accessible to the station lobby. This is aimed at the convenience of the elderly persons, persons with disabilities, wheelchair users and persons pushing baby prams. I do not know if the Secretary is aware

of the fact that there are a total of eight MTR exits in Sham Shui Po, but seven of them do not have any lifts. In other words, if they want to go from the station lobby to the ground level and since usually, stair lifts can only cover half of the trip and so they are stuck in between and they have to crawl their way through the other half of the trip, so to speak. I do not know how to describe the situation really. Why does this have to happen in the MTR? Places like Shek Kip Mei, Sham Shui Po, Cheung Sha Wan and Lai Chi Kok all are not fitted with lifts. Those mobility disabled and elderly persons may use the wheelchair aid which is commonly called "the monster" and so they can be dragged up with their wheelchair. But they will have to spend a lot of time finding that "monster" and when they are using it, it seems that the whole world is watching them. This is to say, it is like putting up a show when they move up a flight of stairs in that "monster". Not many people like to put up a show before others and not many people like to be watched by spectators as they move up the stairs. This can be very embarrassing. Some of the station exits, such as those at the Sham Shui Po Station, are narrow and those exits close to the Golden Computer Arcade, the Golden Shopping Centre and Apliu Street are especially crowded. If passengers carry large baggage or use trolleys, they are prone to having accidents.

Both the ADPL and I demand all public bodies and operators to upgrade the support and service given by their staff to persons with disabilities. Training should be given to staff at regular intervals so that they are sensitive to the special needs of people with disabilities and conversant with the skills in serving them. In addition, the Government should enhance publicity among other passengers and educate them on treating persons with disabilities kindly so that they can use public transport services on an equal footing like other people.

All in all, both the ADPL and I hope that the Government will not hesitate in offering transport concessions to persons with disabilities to facilitate their integration into the community. I trust if only we can provide more opportunities to persons with disabilities, minimize negative labelling and discrimination, they can work with us to build Hong Kong a better place.

With these remarks, I support the motion.

MR RONNY TONG (in Cantonese): President, many people have said to us that, compared with many other places in the world, transport costs in Hong

Kong are not high at all. President, this may well be true. But unfortunately, for many low-income people in Hong Kong, transport expenses account for a very large portion of their monthly expenses. For those living in remote areas, such expenses may be as high as 20%. This is a totally unacceptable fact, but it is something we have to put up with, though.

Another thing which is very sad is that often times persons with disabilities are unable to maintain a reasonable standard of living on account of their disabilities. They cannot find a decent job and get a decent wage. Honestly, even for those who are not disabled, it would be hard for them to find a job with a decent salary if they do not have a university degree or do not possess university or above qualifications. This is especially true for the working class. Why is it that whenever this issue is brought up for discussion, we will say that there is a need to draw up a proactive labour policy and legislate on minimum wage and standard working hours? This is where the problem lies. For persons with disabilities, transport costs are adding an extra burden to their life but it seems the Government is blind to their plight.

In this respect, I fail to see the Government's mindset towards this important social issue. Persons with disabilities are part of our community. A tolerant and caring government should look after those in need. And this is something which governments all over the world should do because they know that they should help those in need of help.

But we see the policies of the Government are flawed with inconsistencies and contradictions. It is true that the Government has been requiring the bus companies to make improvements, such as providing more low-floor buses and meeting such requirements when purchasing new buses or replacing existing ones. It is also true that many buses have met such requirements. Only that a small number of buses running on routes in some remote areas do not meet these requirements owing to constraints in the journeys or routes in question. But would it be useful if only easy access facilities are provided to persons with disabilities? If they do not have a chance to use these modes of public transport or if they cannot afford the fares, it is useless even if these low-floor buses are laid with gold or if the facilities in these buses are superb. The Government is only making a half-baked attempt to require the bus companies to install these facilities because the most important thing is to enable persons with disabilities use public transport on an equal footing like the other people. This is actually the crux of the problem.

Unfortunately, the Government has been dilly-dallying over things. President, I am not a member of the Subcommittee to Study the Transport Needs of and Provision of Concessionary Public Transport Fares for Persons with Disabilities. Honestly, I have joined far too many committees and subcommittees. I am also a member of many Bills committees. Actually, I am most reluctant to join another subcommittee like that. But I cannot help but attend its meetings whenever I can squeeze out some time. This is because I think the attitude displayed by the Government is really incredible and hardly acceptable. And the arguments I hear every time at such meetings are truly shocking.

I recall last year when I went to one of these meetings and there the Government said that no subsidy could be given to persons with disabilities to help them with the bus or MTR fares for this is disallowed by the Disability Discrimination Ordinance. I was taken by surprise because the purpose of this Ordinance is to help persons with disabilities but the Government was saying that it was precisely because of this law that persons with disabilities should not and could not be helped. What kind of logic is that? What kind of a government is that? What kind of a policy is that? If anything in that law poses an obstacle to the implementation of arrangements that will benefit persons with disabilities, then this law should be amended. What problem is there?

I have joined the Legislative Council for three years and every year we would pass a motion like this one and every year our position is very clear. I can say that no one in this Chamber is against this proposal, but how come no one proposes that this law be amended? In my opinion, there is no need to amend it. Because the present law clearly specifies that this can be done. I really do not know what kind of legal advice has been tendered to the Government, for from the outset, whenever problems of the grassroots are mentioned, the kind of legal advice they give is different from that given by all other people.

At the end of last year, the University of Hong Kong conducted a study and many convincing arguments were presented. One of these is that should this half-fare concession be introduced, most if not all of the public transport operators will make money. Why? Because once there are such concessions, persons with disabilities will use these modes of transport more often and when they use them more often, the transport operators will make money. This is only natural. But the Government is sceptical about this. So we made a simple suggestion and that is, if the Government does not believe in that, it can

just say it will make up for the difference between the normal and concessionary fares. Not much money is involved in this actually. The tax rebate which the Government is giving to those super wage earners amounts to \$5 billion a year. And the sum we are talking about is even less than one tenth of that amount. Why can the Government not say in a tolerant and caring manner something like this, "Well, if the finding of this study proves to be correct, then we will not have to pay any money. But if it is not, it is a matter of course for us to pay that small sum of money." What is wrong with that? Why are all these excuses? Why should we wait and wait for so long?

President, I really hope that the Government can give us a sensible and humane explanation, telling us why no answer is given despite so many Honourable colleagues having spent so much time and effort speaking on this topic and holding a debate on it every year. Thank you, President.

DR JOSEPH LEE (in Cantonese): Madam President, in fact, subjects like facing up the needs of people with disabilities in using transport and assisting people with disabilities to integrate into society have been brought up for discussion every year in the Legislative Council. Although such motions were passed every year in the past, similar motions are still repeatedly moved for discussion. The reason is very simple. It is all because the Government has never faced up to the difficulties faced by people with disabilities in their daily life. Regarding their aspiration, the Government has always adopted an evasive and delaying attitude. We are very disappointed with the Government's performance. Apart from disappointment, I do not understand why the Government on the one hand has encouraged more people with disabilities to integrate into society, yet on the other, it is oblivious to the aspiration of people with disabilities to ameliorating their transport problems. What kind of attitude has the Government actually adopted in formulating its rehabilitation policy in Hong Kong?

In order to enable people with disabilities to integrate into society, the first hurdle that must be overcome is the high transport fares. People with disabilities usually have lower incomes than the ordinary people. In comparison, their transport expenditures are higher than those of the ordinary people. They also face certain difficulties in choosing among different modes of transport, and they have fewer choices. Very often, they even have to use more than one means of public transport and there is a need for interchange before they can reach their destinations. From this, we can see that the high

transport fares and such transport barriers are the greatest hurdles on their way to go out to participate in activities and to work. In past discussions, it has been suggested that half-fare concessions for people with disabilities should be implemented, so as to enable them to enjoy equal opportunities in integrating into society without incurring an additional financial burden. However, the Government has used the pretext that public transport services are provided by the private sector, so it is only willing to reflect to public transport operators the aspiration of people with disabilities to the provision of transport concessions. However, the various public transport operators refuse to provide transport concessions, on the grounds that the definitions of people with disabilities are ambiguous and that there is no way of estimating the number of people with disabilities in Hong Kong.

Until recently, according to a certain source, the eight local transport operators have agreed unanimously on the introduction of a half-fare Octopus card specifically for people with disabilities. This should be taken as good news. However, to this day, the Government still has not allocated additional resources for implementing this measure, and it has also refused to finalize the timetable for implementing half-fare concessions for people with disabilities. From this, we can see how great the Government's determination is in fighting for half-fare concessions for people with disabilities. I note with deep regret the Government's hesitant and indecisive attitude in this.

In fact, people with disabilities are no different from the elderly and children, in that they all belong to the category of people who need to be specially taken care of. If we can reduce their financial burden through offering them transport concessions, we can then encourage them to travel to different districts to participate in social activities, so as to enable them to integrate into society, improve their social life, enhance their self-image and lead a dignified normal life. Therefore, I urge the Government to expeditiously put forward a concrete proposal for implementing the provision of transport concessions to people with disabilities as well as an implementation timetable. It is hoped that the Government would not delay the implementation of an issue on which a consensus has already been reached among the different sectors of society.

Madam President, with regard to improving Rehabus service, at present, there are 95 Rehabuses providing services on 61 fixed routes and three feeder routes. However, the existing number of Rehabuses cannot satisfy the strong demand of people with disabilities for such service. In meetings of the Subcommittee to Study the Transport Needs and Provision of Concessionary

Public Transport Fares for Persons with Disabilities, it was pointed out that graduates of special schools had experienced great difficulties in booking Rehabus service to take them to adult day centres to receive training. From this, we can see that the supply of Rehabus service cannot meet the demand. To address the great demand for Rehabus service, the Government should expeditiously review the routes currently served by Rehabuses with a view to rationalizing these routes and improving the efficiency of the Rehabus service. Furthermore, additional resources should be allocated to purchase more Rehabuses so as to enhance the service. As a service enhancement measure, Rehabuses with a long service record and vehicles fitted with previous generations of raised platforms should be replaced expeditiously, so as to improve the service and enable people with disabilities to use the Rehabuses for expeditious integration into society.

Apart from increasing the number of Rehabuses to enhance the service, the Government should actively consider the introduction of other barrier-free and wheelchair friendly public transport facilities, such as RehabTaxis. Given the relatively higher operating cost of petroleum vehicles when compared to LPG vehicles, the taxi industry has not introduced any petroleum vehicles to be used as RehabTaxis that can accommodate an entire wheelchair. If the Government would consider providing subsidies or subvention to the taxi trade for the provision of RehabTaxis, it will help resolve the problem of inadequate Rehabus services on the one hand, and provide one more option for people with disabilities on the other. That will be a measure that can achieve two objectives at the same time.

On improving transport facilities for people with disabilities, the Government and various public transport operators have been actively promoting barrier-free facilities for many years. When we walk on the streets, we can easily spot that ramps designed to facilitate wheelchair users are in place at public transport interchanges or bus terminals. Furthermore, public transport operators have responded in support to the call for the provision of barrier-free facilities. For example, the KMB has introduced low floor buses and provided a wheelchair bay in the bus compartment near the exit gate, whereas the MTR and the KCRC have retrofitted extra-wide gates at entrances and exits of train stations. Of course, whether these facilities are effective is quite another issue. But from these examples, it is evident that both the Government and public transport operators have accepted the idea of barrier-free transport, and they have actually introduced many of these barrier-free facilities to help people with

disabilities to better integrate into society. Unfortunately, in the course of realizing the idea of barrier-free facilities, both the Government and public transport operators have not been meticulous enough and they have overlooked other support facilities. For example, the space between railings at bus stops is too narrow, the gaps between the platforms and the train compartments at MTR and KCRC stations are too wide, and so on, and these problems are posing obstacles to commuters on wheelchairs in using transport. These inadequacies and measures can be rectified if we could have a better understanding of the needs of people with disabilities, for example, by inviting end-users organizations, that is, the associations of people with disabilities, to provide opinions and comments. Furthermore, the Government should step up publicity initiatives and encourage public transport operators to fulfil their corporate social responsibilities by improving transport facilities that cause inconveniences to people with disabilities, as well as adding and replacing barrier-free facilities. Our long-term goal is to achieve the provision of barrier-free transports and assist people with disabilities to better integrate into society.

Madam President, lastly, I hope the Government can respond concretely this year to the long-standing aspiration of people with disabilities, so as to enable them to enjoy transport half-fare concessions which will reduce their financial burden, thereby making them integrate into society in a barrier-free manner; this will also save us the trouble of discussing this subject in an encumbersome manner time and again, year after year, in this Council.

With these remarks, Madam President, I support the motion.

DR RAYMOND HO (in Cantonese): Madam President, first of all, I have this quote: "The progress of a society is measured not just in terms of per capita income, air quality and cultural and creative activities, but also in interpersonal relationships. This includes how people care for the disadvantaged and whether they are good Samaritans. These are social benefits that should be brought about by economic development." (End of quote) This is not written by me, but an extract from paragraph 66 of the policy address delivered by the Chief Executive some time ago.

Many years ago I was a member of a committee under the Red Cross. This committee was responsible for managing five schools for young people with

disabilities where boarding care services were also provided. This experience has given me a better understanding of their true needs in their daily life, especially in terms of transport. This is also the reason why I have been calling on the relevant authorities and public transport operators over the years to take effective measures to improve the facilities for disabled passengers. In fact, providing the basic conditions of living, including transport service, for the socially disadvantaged is no exemplary charitable act, but a spirit that an advanced society should have in caring for the disadvantaged. In fact, there are about 270 000 people with various types of disabilities in Hong Kong. We cannot simply turn a blind eye to their basic needs.

No doubt the two railway corporations have indeed made significant improvement to their facilities to enhance accessibility by people with disabilities, especially at the new stations. However, the relevant facilities are still lacking at stations developed earlier and so, they have posed certain difficulties to disabled passengers. Over the years, I have maintained the view that apart from installing tactile guide paths and audio devices at the stations, more lifts and escalators should also be provided, and platform screen doors should be retrofitted to enhance the protection of the safety of people with disabilities or visual impairment. I wonder if the two railway corporations, after their merger into one corporation, can step up efforts to further improve these facilities at the stations for the convenience of disabled passengers by various means, including making reference to the experience of other advanced railway systems, commissioning local tertiary institutions to conduct relevant studies and consulting local organizations which are concerned about the rights and interest of people with disabilities.

As for the other transport operators, I wish to take this opportunity to call on them to further upgrade their ancillary facilities to facilitate access by more passengers with disabilities. Take bus service as an example. The bus companies can acquire more low-floor buses for easy boarding and alighting by wheelchair users. The next bus stop announcement system should also be installed for the convenience of passengers who do not clearly see or know whether they have reached their destination. Meanwhile, an electronic information display system can also be retrofitted. All these are necessary facilities which are convenient to passengers with disabilities or visual impairment when boarding or alighting a bus. In the meantime, bus companies can introduce more new technologies, including interactive digital bus stops, to enable passengers with disabilities to obtain the most updated information of bus

service. As regards tram service, although the tram compartments and islands may pose considerable restrictions to wheelchair users, I still hope that the tram company can conduct a feasibility study on the improvement of the relevant facilities. Even if it is difficult to provide facilities for wheelchair users, the tram and stop facilities should at least be improved to extend the accessibility of trams to disabled passengers who are not wheelchair-bound.

Facilities aside, transport fares are always a major consideration of people with disabilities. The local railway corporations and transport operators should give play to the spirit of corporate responsibility by offering fare concessions. In this regard, the Government should take proactive measures to encourage public transport operators to offer discounted fares to people with disabilities.

Madam President, this issue has been a topic of motion debate in this Council for many times before, and I have also spoken on it for many times. But regrettably, the problem has remained unresolved. I hope that the authorities can seriously translate into actions those words in paragraph 66 of the policy address by caring for the disadvantaged, with a view to ultimately identifying an effective solution to address the problem of accessibility of public transport to people with disabilities. Thank you, Madam President.

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

MR ALBERT CHAN (in Cantonese): President, numerous topics have been discussed in this Chamber over the years, especially those relating to constitutional development and class stand, under which Members always give eloquent and sharp speeches. Over the past years, this Council has seldom come up with a consensus like today, which is actually a demonstration of humanity. Today, Members have fully displayed their sympathy with the needs of people with disabilities and social problems, which we have been demanding the Government to look at squarely all these years.

Over the past five or six years, I could not help shaking my head whenever I flipped through the replies given by the Government. After learning that Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung would move a relevant motion again, I have recently gone through the replies of the Secretaries of Departments and Directors of Bureaux, as well as the discussions of the relevant committees conducted between 2002

and last year. This Council has also conducted certain committee meetings during which representatives of organizations of people with disabilities and concern parties were invited. All previous government replies were made by the former Secretary for Environment, Transport and Food alone, but they were subsequently made jointly by the former Secretary for Environment, Transport and Works as well as the former Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food. Today, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare has come here to give a reply, we can therefore see the changes in this regard. Certainly, I welcome Secretary Matthew CHEUNG's remarks that serious consideration would be given by the Government and a response would be made in a couple of months. This seems to be a prediction of good news as we have already waited for five to six years. In case there is still no good news, I think that the condemnation of the Government by this Council will definitely be more severe than that of Ms Miriam LAU — yesterday Ms Miriam LAU used such word as "insensitive" to describe the behaviour and mentality of the Government.

I guess no government in this world will be as unresponsive and slow in action as the Hong Kong Government in the face of the demand of people with disabilities. The demand in question is indeed very simple and the financial commitments involved are not heavy. Of course, I am looking forward to hearing the Government's response within a couple of months.

President, I wish to highlight a few points. Firstly, I have mentioned time and again the issue of low floor buses in this Council, but so far many buses are still not equipped with low floor facilities. As a result, many people with disabilities, who are wheelchair-bound, face great difficulties in using public transport.

The second point is that the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) has always put benefits and money before all else, such that requests for conversion into shopping malls will be expeditiously acceded to. It has been evident that, in recent years, major conversions have been undertaken in many places, including Central, Tsuen Wan and Chai Wan, and these major conversions have greatly increased the number of shops. However, the MTRCL has been indifferent to the request of people with disabilities for improvement in access.

I have been following up the case of Lai King Station for many years. This station has a few flights of stairs at several locations and the steps are rather tall. While people with disabilities can only walk through them with the help of

others, some elderly people have to take this route every day. I had visited the station with the manager and person-in-charge of the MTRCL, but they still refused to retrofit additional access for people with disabilities after the visit. I consider this extremely ruthless. No matter they are insensitive or heartless, their reaction was totally unacceptable. With respect to this problem, I would consider it absolutely intolerable should the MTRCL insist on its own way whereas the Government again injects \$8 billion for the construction of other railways. Organizations being so heartless, cruel and unsympathetic to the plight of the public should be condemned, and no further capital injection should be made to them.

As we can see, in recent years, the Government has retrofitted more footbridges with lifts, thereby providing access for the mobility-impaired people. There are many MTR stations, but I just wish to single out Tsuen Wan Station in particular, which has been a very busy station since it came into operation in 1982. I wrote to the MTRCL a few months ago, requesting that the above station be installed with lifts which the Government has likewise installed in many places for use by people with disabilities or the mobility-impaired, hence obviating their need to climb up the stairs. However, the MTRCL has refused to do so.

Such an attitude has fully demonstrated the MTRCL's insensitivity, again quoting the word used by Ms Miriam LAU to describe the Government. If the Government continues to be biased in favour of the MTRCL instead of exerting any pressure to coerce it into improving the facilities in question, the Government will definitely become an insensitive one too.

Therefore, it is hoped that the Secretary will bid his colleagues to follow up the matter as the above example has been cited in this Chamber time and again. All in All, I will keep on raising this issue so long as no improvement has been made by the MTRCL, and keep on condemning it whenever it requests a capital injection. We must condemn the MTRCL's ignorance of the needs of the disadvantaged groups, and there should be no tolerance.

The answering of questions relating to fare and concession for people with disabilities, President, by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare is a show of the Government's attitude. And yet, this is not without worry. It has been my inclination, which I mentioned at a relevant panel meeting many years ago, that it would be most desirable to deal with the concession issue in granting the

franchise; that is, together with the fare. If government subsidy is calculated on the basis of the number of rides taken by each person with disabilities, it may give rise to very complicated administrative procedures and the question of subsidy. In fact, the most desirable approach would be to require the inclusion of fare concession for people with disabilities in the fare in granting the franchise, so that they can be considered in parallel. Fare concessions should apply to all modes of transport, including bus, MTR, ferries, maxicabs, and so on, and it is hoped that the Government would not say again that the MTR is not included only when the issue is revisited, just as what it did in the case of the public transport fare adjustment mechanism, for the concession concerned will be rendered almost useless.

It is hoped that when the Secretary speaks again later, he will respond to the services that are not yet accessible to many people with disabilities, including low floor bus service, and the unscrupulous acts of the MTRCL. As for the fare, will the Government provide direct subsidy in granting the franchise, instead of giving subsidies for each ride? Surely, I do not oppose the provision of subsidies, but it would be best to take into consideration the fare mechanism as well.

I support the motion. Thank you, President.

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

MR ALBERT CHENG (in Cantonese): President, today's motion is the fourth the sixth of its kind moved by Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, which is the fourth time during my office. I have been repeating the same speech every year, so there is actually no need for me to say anymore. One can simply read the speech given by me last year, and the speeches by Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, Ronny TONG and "Big Hulk", they are actually more or less the same. These are major issues of right and wrong. Today's stock market has rocketed and the Hang Seng Index has surged to over 30 000 points. While the policy address of the Government, in fact, the policy address of Chief Executive Donald TSANG, proposed a reduction in the wealthy people's profits tax, a reduction in rates, so on and so forth, the disadvantaged groups and people with disabilities have no benefits at all. Actually, I do not quite agree with the suggestion that the Government should subsidize the transport operators to provide concessions,

because the public transport operators, as public utilities, are bound to fulfil their social responsibilities to make some contribution.

It is said that Hong Kong has a simple tax regime, but as Members may recall, last year I said that an indirect tax had actually been imposed as a result of the high land price policy. Another issue is the transport cost. I just talked to a cleaning worker of this Council and asked him, "Are you leaving work now? Where do you live?" He replied that he lived in Tin Shui Wai, and I said, "So far away. How long will it take you to return home?" He said it would take an hour, and I asked him how much the transport cost was and where he could take the bus. He said that he could take the bus home opposite the Legislative Council Building and the fare was \$20.7. I am not going to mention the proposed fare increase put forward by these public organizations in spite of their huge profits as this is not the question under discussion today.

Even if fare concession — not free rides — is offered to people with disabilities or the disadvantaged groups in the community who are in need, these organizations can still make a profit. Honestly speaking, how many people with disabilities are taking, say, the MTR at present? This question has been discussed previously. The provision of concession will surely increase patronage, but not during the peak hours. And yet, the MTRCL was not attracted to this profitable move. In fact, I think that money is not the consideration of the MTRCL. It would be wrong for Members to think that it is money that accounts for the MTRCL's refusal to reduce fare. The underlying reason is actually to deter people with disabilities from taking the MTR, for fear that they will cause delays and obstruct the train operation. I do not agree with the provision of government subsidy of any form to either the MTR or other modes of transport because, as public utilities, they are duty-bound to provide these concessions. Needless to say, I also support the other suggestions and all amendments to this motion. Thank you, President.

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

(No Member indicated a wish to speak)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): If not, I will now invite Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung to speak on Mr WONG Kwok-hing's amendment. The time limit is five minutes.

MR LEUNG YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): President, I thank Mr WONG Kwong-hing for moving an amendment to my original motion.

Earlier, Mr WONG Kwok-hing said that his amendment would highlight the key, so I immediately looked again at the details of his amendments. I noticed that he has actually proposed quite a number of amendments, but I believe the keynote should be the following sentences, "procrastinating on putting forward a timetable and roadmap for implementation which very much calls into question the Government's determination" I think that this is probably the crux of the entire amendment. As for the other amendments, they actually bear no substantive difference. So, it makes me worry that some colleagues may consider these amendments redundant and unnecessary, and may not support them. If they really think so, I would find this most regrettable.

The point which I just said to have highlighted the key is whether or not the Government's determination in taking the matter forward should be called into question. President, I think that this is true as its determination would really be called into question. Earlier, I heard the Secretary request Members to give the Government two more months, during which some details would have to be worked out, followed by an outcome. Just now, Ms Miriam LAU said very optimistically that there would be good news after the necessary details have been worked out. However, President, it is questionable why there is a need to work out any detail if the Government is determined?

What else should the Government work out? President, why did I ask this question? Firstly, we must assume that the MTRCL will put forward the option of "footing the difference", whereby the loss incurred from the provision of half-fare concession to people with disabilities will be subsidized by the Government, and the profits generated will be returned to the Government. Even though we might worry about the occurrence of this situation, that is, the possibility of a loss, but the question is how much the loss will be. In fact, the loss is very limited.

This is because people with disabilities are not given free rides, but they have to pay half of the fare. So, the loss will be 50% anyhow and is indeed limited. Why? President, we have been discussing with the Government for many years and we have finally come up with a consensus. Not all people with disabilities are eligible for the half-fare concession, which is limited to those defined by the Government as people with disabilities. President, how many of

these people are there? There are 85 000 of them. Should we calculate on these 85 000 people only, the loss will be limited even if the Government has to subsidize half of their transport costs.

Just now, many colleagues mentioned the \$5 billion which the Government has readily earmarked. Now that there are just 85 000 people with disabilities and only half-fare concession is provided, which is the best offer, what will be the cost incurred then? What else has to be worked out? This is the first point.

Secondly, President, what is the more ridiculous part? It is the Government's commissioning of an academic institution, the University of Hong Kong (HKU), to study the relevant policy as a result of the worry about some uncertainties and a lack of clear figures. The study undertaken by this institution should be independent and fair, and the findings showed that there will only be profits but no loss, which many Honourable colleagues have mentioned just now. In that case, what else has to be worked out by the Government? Does it mean the Government has no trust in the study undertaken by the HKU so that something else has to be worked out? Why was the HKU invited to undertake the relevant study if the Government has no trust in it?

This has really gone too far. One should have trust in the findings obtained from a study which he has invited other people to undertake for him. Now that the Government says it has no trust in the study, what does this mean? No wonder the MTRCL also said that it had no trust in the study. Given that the Government itself also has no trust in it, why would others have trust then? This is the second point.

The third point, President, is about how things will be worked out. I have no idea about the calculations. Will we press the matter forward only when the findings show that there is a profit or a slight loss, and to have it stopped when a heavy loss is expected? This explains why Mr WONG Kwok-hing has called into question the Government's determination in taking forward the matter. In fact, I really have no confidence in the Government because nowhere can I find its determination in taking the matter forward. If this is not the case, the Secretary should then tell us in his later reply that nothing else has to be worked out and the matter will be taken forward at once. This is a show of determination. The Government can demonstrate its determination by taking the matter forward in any event. Where is the slightest determination if it still has to work on something with an unknown outcome?

For this reason, I think this is precisely where the keynote of Mr WONG Kwok-hing's amendment lies. It is however a great pity that many other parts of it have been criticized by Members as superfluous.

President, I so submit.

SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE (in Cantonese): Madam President, I am grateful to Members for putting forward many constructive and valuable opinions and suggestions on the transport needs of people with disabilities.

As I said in my first speech, the provision of concessionary public transport fares to people with disabilities to encourage them to go out more often is consistent with the overall objective of the Government's rehabilitation policy of building a society for all. I had discussed this issue at a joint meeting attended by over 20 organizations of people with disabilities last month. We had discussed for three hours during which I had listened to their views. They said at the meeting that the provision of concessionary fares to them would increase their motivation to take part in activities away from home and hence enrich their lives. I cannot agree with them more, and I have undertaken to do everything I can to respond to their aspiration positively.

As the Chief Executive has clearly said earlier, the Government is actively looking into the proposal of providing subsidies out of public coffers to people with disabilities in using public transport. It is expected that a decision will be made in a couple of months, as Members are aware. After a decision is taken, we will certainly report the details to the Subcommittee of the Legislative Council.

On the other hand, we will "walk on two legs" in that we will continuously make an effort to maintain liaison with various public transport operators, in order to encourage them to actively improve their service and facilities and at the same time consider offering concessionary fares to people with disabilities, so as to fulfil their corporate social responsibilities which we have so often emphasized.

Madam President, I would like to emphasize and clarify that the Government is treating this matter with full sincerity, and we will handle this

matter very seriously, hoping that it can be settled and resolved. We have not dragged our feet, and we have no intention to procrastinate. As I explained earlier on, we have adopted a new policy perspective and that is, we are considering subsidizing transport fares with public coffers. This is a new policy perspective and so, we need more time to rationalize and contemplate this proposal within the Government, for it involves public coffers and caution is warranted. However, I do hope that we will not have to debate this topic again in this Council next year. This is my wish too.

Besides, some Members expressed concern about the improvement of the Rehabus service. As I said earlier on, with the improvement of the service catchment and facilities of the bus and railway networks in recent years, various parts of the New Territories have become more and more easily accessible by public transport, and this has at the same time provided more choices for people with disabilities in need. We will continue to bid for resources for purchase of new Rehabuses in the light of the demand of people with disabilities for transport service, with a view to further enhancing and improving the service of Rehabus overall.

In addition to purchasing new Rehabuses and replacing the existing ones, Rehabus has continuously consolidated the existing routes to meet the needs of users. The current scope of service of Rehabus, as I said earlier, covers Hong Kong, Kowloon and the New Territories, including such remote new towns as Tung Chung, Tuen Mun, Tin Shui Wai and Tseung Kwan O, and even the more distant rural areas. The scheduled service routes of Rehabus have addressed the transport needs of people with disabilities living in these areas, while the Dial-a-Ride Service can arrange for journeys according to the specific needs of individual applicants without any geographical restriction.

Moreover, colleagues of the Transport Department overseeing the operation of the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation will continue to advise on the improvement of the Rehabus service in various aspects with their expertise and experience, with a view to continuously upgrading the standard of the Rehabus service. Rehabus will also apply information technology for service improvement. In the coming two years, Rehabus will gradually upgrade its "Rehabus Information Management System" and review the overall effectiveness of the utilization of the existing fleet resources, with a view to providing services to more people with disabilities. The upgrading project will incur an expenditure of about \$1 million.

As regard the low-floor buses mentioned by Mr Albert CHAN earlier on, as I said in my first speech, there are now 4 300 buses equipped with low floor, accounting for 46% of the entire bus fleet.

In respect of barrier-free facilities, Members have made a lot of suggestions and I would like to make two points in this connection.

With regard to transport and road facilities, all public transport interchanges designed and constructed after the Transport Planning and Design Manual was amended in 2001 are equipped with facilities for easy boarding and alighting by people with disabilities, such as dropped kerbs. Improvement works will be carried out at the existing public transport interchanges gradually in the light of the actual situation, with a view to providing barrier-free facilities for people with disabilities. Moreover, the Transport Department will continue to construct tactile guide paths to connect public transport interchanges or railway stations, particularly those in the vicinity of regional hospitals, eye clinics, and centres or offices frequently visited by the visually impaired. The Transport Department and the Highways Department will continue to retrofit existing footbridges with accessible facilities for people with disabilities, and install electronic audible traffic signals at pedestrian crossings to replace the mechanical type of audible traffic signals, in order to meet the needs of the visually impaired.

The Government has, over the years, injected over \$2.6 billion for carrying out the various improvement works which I have just mentioned. In the future, we will continue to work towards the objective of Transport for All in collaboration with people with disabilities and public transport operators, so as to enhance the accessibility of various parts of the territory to people with disabilities, thus enabling them to take part in different kinds of activities in the community and integrate into society.

Madam President, I so submit. Thank you.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you and that is: That the amendment, moved by Mr WONG Kwok-hing to Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung's motion, be passed. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

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

(No hands raised)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I think the question is agreed by a majority respectively of each of the two groups of Members, that is, those returned by functional constituencies and those returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, who are present. I declare the amendment passed.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, you may now reply and you have four minutes 46 seconds.

MR LEUNG YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): President, just now the Secretary was still telling us that he did not "wish" to have any more discussion on this topic in the next term. However, President, there is always a chance that a "wish" may fall through. If he has made up his mind that this topic should not be discussed again in the next term, he could simply tell us clearly there will be no more discussion on this. This is why I am still not so optimistic as Ms Miriam LAU. She used the word "cautious", but I am not optimistic at all. If the Secretary can rise again and tell me, "Fine, I will handle it, you may sit down", I will be even happier.

However, President, there is one thing which makes me feel very worried. I wonder if it is the implementation of the government policy of maintaining affinity differentiation, just as Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung said, that has attributed to the long years of discussion on this topic. Why do I say so, President? I am not making groundless accusations because all these years, we have been discussing the improvement of the Rehabus service and the transport measures to be put in place to provide better services to people with disabilities, but no concrete results have been achieved. When the Secretary spoke for the first time earlier, he nonetheless said that the request made by Mr LAU Kong-wah in a recent meeting to improve the Rehabus service had already been acceded to. Also, the provision of service in remote areas, as requested by Mr WONG Kwok-hing when he proposed his amendment earlier on, was again claimed by

the Secretary to have been made available. Since requests raised by some political groupings or certain Members have all yielded results, this made me think that the Secretary was making eyes at them whenever he came here. What I have proposed all these years, however, appeared to have been marching on the spot. This really made me feel very worried.

Of course, President, if the Secretary says that if this motion were moved by Members other than LEUNG Yiu-chung it would definitely be endorsed, I would be most willing to back off. It does not matter if the motion is moved by other Members. The most important point of all is it can achieve the result of securing half-fare concession for people with disabilities.

What is the purpose of discussing the half-fare concession over the years? It is to enable people with disabilities to have more opportunities of integrating into the community, and this is our primary concern. Just as the Secretary said earlier on, he had met with a number of organizations — during which I was also present — and exchanged views with them, so he has a very good understanding of their needs. However, very regrettably, he is still not determined enough to tell us that the matter will certainly be taken forward. Why? Many Honourable colleagues said that we have been repeating our speeches, but why has the Government kept handling our requests in this way?

We can see that, in fact, this situation is not unique to half-fare concession. Even in the case of low-floor buses, which the Secretary has proudly mentioned just now (I have also mentioned earlier on), it is said that they only accounted for 44%, which is, President, still less than 50%. Although the Disability Discrimination Ordinance has been in force for more a decade since 1994, the number of low-floor buses which are designed to facilitate the use by people with disabilities is still pretty low. Are you satisfied with this? The Secretary has, however, proudly announced that 44% of our buses belong to the low-floor bus type — instead of saying that a mere 44% is not enough. He did not say so.

Therefore, how great is the social conscience of the Government in doing more for people with disabilities? This has really driven me to — just as Mr WONG Kwok-hing said — call its determination into question.

President, I so submit.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, as amended by Mr WONG Kwok-hing, be passed. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

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

(No hands raised)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I think the question is agreed by a majority respectively of each of the two groups of Members, that is, those returned by functional constituencies and those returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, who are present. I declare the motion as amended passed.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Second motion: Alleviating the disparity between the rich and the poor and re-establishing the Commission on Poverty.

I now call upon Mr Frederick FUNG to speak and move his motion.

ALLEVIATING THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR AND RE-ESTABLISHING THE COMMISSION ON POVERTY

MR FREDERICK FUNG (in Cantonese): President, yesterday, the Hang Seng Index kept soaring once again and exceeded 31 000 points, breaking the highest record in history. Our stock market is now worth more than \$23,000 billion, which is yet another record. In the meantime, the global oil price per barrel has exceeded US\$93. All these statistics show the incessant appreciation of assets. Those who have money for investments are of course delighted. As reported by a newspaper today, owing to the rising stock prices in many different places, the ranking of the richest people in the world has changed. Bill GATES is no longer the richest. An Indian tycoon is now ranked first as a result of rising stock prices. I do not know whether Members are aware that increases in the prices of stocks, properties and oil will invariably produce one harmful effect —

adding fuel to inflation. Grass-roots people are unable to share the "fruit of prosperity" by reaping any profits in the property, stock and oil markets. Quite the contrary, all such price increases have produced an undesirable economic effect. I do not know whether the Government is aware of this effect.

So far, the Government has only given us a report submitted by the Commission on Poverty (CoP) after two years of work. There are 53 recommendations in the report. But how many of them have really been implemented to relieve the people's plight? What we can see are nothing but the widening of the wealth gap and the deterioration of the poverty problem. Therefore, the Hong Kong Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood (ADPL) and I request the Government to re-establish the CoP, so as to narrow the wealth gap and improve the lot of the poor.

President, I must tell Members that I was a member of the CoP.

Last week, for the first time in six years, the Legislative Council passed a Motion of Thanks in respect of the policy address. This is certainly unprecedented. Unprecedented as the case certainly is, the various political parties and groupings however still appended many things to the motion, such as elderly welfare, the "fruit grant", poverty alleviation, and so on. It seems that everybody has turned concerned about people's livelihood. I am very delighted because so many Members now support the cause of improving the people's livelihood.

My motion today is actually milder than the amendment I moved to the Motion of Thanks last week. Last time, Members had to cast their votes, because it was made very clear that the working group led by the Financial Secretary must be vested with the responsibility of tackling the problem of poverty and implementing the recommendations made by the Legislative Council Subcommittee to Study the Subject of Combating Poverty and the Government's CoP in their reports. There are totally more than a hundred such recommendations. But the only thing under discussion today is just the re-establishment of the CoP.

Although the amendments today are quite mild, I am nonetheless puzzled by some of them, particularly the one put forward by Mr LI Kwok-ying of the DAB. I of course hope that when Mr LI Kwok-ying speaks a moment later, he can explain more clearly why the DAB's amendment today is more conservative

than the amendment it supported last time. In what way is its amendment today more conservative? The amendment is more conservative because it says that the CoP should be re-established only "when necessary". I hope that he can make a clarification later on. President, earlier on, the ADPL conducted a questionnaire survey on the disparity between the rich and the poor. Telephone calls were made at random, and we successfully interviewed 416 people. Nearly 70% of the respondents were of the view that the disparity in wealth in Hong Kong was worsening. More than 10% of the respondents even thought that the problem was acute. Some 65% of the respondents claimed that they were unable to share the fruit of prosperity. The Gini Coefficient, which reflects the disparity in wealth, has exceeded the alarm level. Conflicts in society have intensified, thus dealing blows to social harmony. The wages of the grassroots continue to remain at low levels, and the problem of wage increases failing to catch up with inflation has turned increasingly serious.

More than 80% of the respondents said that they were hard-pressed by incessant price increases. The masses can all feel the pressure of worsening inflation, and some disadvantaged groups in society, such as single-parent families and elderly persons, are even unable to bear the pressure of inflation. According to the findings of the questionnaire survey, more than half of the respondents were of the view that the policy address has not put forward any concrete measures to alleviate poverty. More than 60% of the respondents supported the idea of re-establishing the CoP to deal with poverty in a focused manner.

President, I do not intend to repeat all the statistics on the poverty problem in Hong Kong. I believe that Members should have received the information paper from Mr CHUA Hoi-wai, Business Director, Policy Advocacy and International Networks, Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS). Many statistics on poverty and the wealth gap are set out in this paper. If I were to cite all these statistics, it would take me days. I believe Members must all have a copy of the paper. I hope that they can study them. Anyway, all the statistics are collected from the Census and Statistics Department.

Actually, all the relevant statistics can show that the problems of poverty and disparity in wealth in Hong Kong are very serious. The HKCSS and we are not the only ones who have such statistics. The Government should have a fuller grasp of the relevant statistics, for the statistics it has should be far more abundant than those available to us. Since the problem is obvious from all the

objective data, we must then ask whether the Government is really committed to tackling the poverty problem and narrowing the wealth gap. According to the policy address, "the most effective way to tackle the poverty problem in the long run lies in reducing inter-generational poverty." What the Chief Executive has in mind is a solution for the very long term. We naturally support government investments in infrastructure construction, small-class teaching and free education. But all these measures can only tackle the poverty problem in the long run, so does this mean that they will simply procrastinate on tackling the problems and plight presently faced by the poor?

President, as I mentioned last week, the Chief Executive's move to charge the Labour and Welfare Bureau with the responsibility of tackling poverty is a reflection of the Government's narrow mindset, the mindset that welfare policies alone can already tackle the poverty problem. To equate poverty alleviation with social welfare will only lead us to all the disputes on whether poverty alleviation should mean handouts. This is not going to help us solve the problem at all.

If poverty alleviation is really one of the Chief Executive's major tasks, then he should at least set up a commission on poverty. The policy address two years ago said of the terms of the CoP in this way (and I quote), "Its task will be to study, from a macro perspective, how to help the poor in terms of financial, employment, education and training needs. It will also explore practical ways to assist those who suffer from poverty due to old age, disability or single-parent family, particularly those in low-income employment." (End of quote)

It is clear that from the very beginning, from the very inception of the CoP, the tackling of poverty purely from the perspective of welfare policies has never been its objective. Rather, it is supposed to examine government policies as an integrated whole, so as to clarify the role and responsibilities of the Government in poverty alleviation. But the CoP was just an advisory body having very limited powers. I think what it has achieved over the past two years are just the clarification of certain poverty alleviation concepts, the consolidation of the service-delivery framework and the mending of certain policies. It has not explored whether government policies will lead to poverty. Besides, the appointment of the Chief Secretary for Administration I mean, the Financial Secretary as the Chairman of CoP actually led to a conflict of roles. As Members know, very often, in addition to spending money, the Financial Secretary will also seek to control how others spend money.

For this reason, I think the Government must promptly set up a high-level mechanism for tackling poverty. The most effective way is to re-establish the CoP under the Chairmanship of the Chief Secretary for Administration to promote the participation of people at different levels and upgrade the authority and status of the CoP (Although the incumbent Chief Secretary for Administration was the former Financial Secretary, the different ranking, position and authority he now holds can presumably enable him to adopt a different approach). What is more, the CoP should also formulate a strategy on poverty elimination, monitor the Government's poverty elimination efforts and their progress and invite the public to watch the Government and express their views.

The Government must support the work of the CoP by formulating an integrated strategy on poverty elimination. The ADPL supports the proposals made by Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung, Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr SIN Chung-kai in their respective amendments. Frankly speaking, I also support the first to seventh proposals made by Mr LI Kwok-ying. But I cannot agree to his reference to "when necessary" regarding the re-establishment of the CoP. If I have any time left later on, I will explain my views once again. The Legislative Council Subcommittee to Study the Subject of Combating Poverty published totally three reports in the past two years, and these reports all represent the consensus of the Legislative Council, although I must of course point out that the Liberal Party has expressed its disagreement to certain proposals. It is very difficult to arrive at any conclusions, but we have anyhow managed to do so. Therefore, I very much hope that the Government can really consider the recommendations made in the three reports.

I hope that the Government can adopt all these recommendations. It is especially worth pointing out that with regard to poverty alleviation at the community level, the Government should invest appropriate resources in the light of local needs. In some districts where poverty is especially serious, such as Sham Shui Po, Tuen Mun and Tin Shui Wai, the authorities should take account of the local demographic profile and needs when making resource investments, so as to provide services pinpointing local needs. Specially, labour-intensive industries should be introduced to create more employment opportunities.

President, the poverty problem is very serious in Hong Kong. The ADPL and I both demand the Government to address the problem squarely and

promptly implement poverty alleviation measures, not least because while the Government told us last year that the fiscal surplus would amount to \$25 billion, the whole sum turned out to be \$50 billion. Now, the Financial Secretary has told us that the fiscal surplus this year would be \$50 billion. So, I cannot help thinking that the sum may turn out to be \$100 billion at the end of the day. Given such a huge surplus, I fail to see how the Government can come up with any reasons or excuses that can explain away its refusal to tackle the structural and resource problems related to the wealth gap and poverty.

Thank you, President.

Mr Frederick FUNG moved the following motion: (Translation)

"That, as the disparity between the rich and the poor is becoming more serious in Hong Kong, this Council urges the Government to re-establish the Commission on Poverty and formulate a more comprehensive policy on combating poverty so as to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor, thereby improving the life of the poor, reducing social conflicts and promoting harmonious social development."

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by Mr Frederick FUNG be passed.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LI Kwok-ying, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung and Dr Fernando CHEUNG will move amendments to this motion respectively. Mr SIN Chung-kai will move an amendment to Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung's amendment. The motion and the amendments will now be debated together in a joint debate.

I will call upon Mr LI Kwok-ying to speak first, to be followed by Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung, Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr SIN Chung-kai; but no amendments are to be moved at this stage.

MR LI KWOK-YING (in Cantonese): Madam President, the DAB supports the original motion. And, I have still put forward an amendment because I want to put forward some poverty alleviation measures that are more specific, in the hope that the authorities may give thoughts to their implementation. Mr

Frederick FUNG questioned us on our so-called conservative amendment. Honestly speaking, we do not oppose the establishment of a commission on poverty. But since the former Commission on Poverty (CoP) has left behind a large number of measures for implementation after completing its mission, we have therefore put forward an amendment, calling upon the Government to "take positive actions". Certainly, we think the measures proposed by the CoP last time could not solve the problem, so we have proposed an amendment on this occasion.

My amendment originally contained proposals on raising the Old Age Allowance, increasing the number of health care vouchers for the elderly to at least 10 a year and lowering the qualifying age for these vouchers to 65. We are of the view that these measures can provide the exact kinds of assistance generally required by the poorest and most helpless elderly persons in society. These elderly people worked hard for Hong Kong in the past, but since there were no Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) schemes and medical insurance protection, they must now live on their meagre savings during their retirement. For this reason, raising the "fruit grant" and the provision of health care vouchers for the elderly are some of the measures that can directly improve their livelihood. However, Madam President, it is a pity that you did not give your approval for me to move these several proposals in my amendment.

A couple of days ago, Mr CHAN Kam-lam and Mr WONG Ting-kwong of the DAB held a press conference on the DAB's expectations regarding the Budget for the next financial year. Raising the "fruit grant" and increasing the number of health care vouchers for the elderly were given particular emphasis in this press conference. When the DAB meets with Financial Secretary John TSANG next week, we will raise these proposals once again, in the hope of eliciting a positive response from the Government.

Madam President, a poverty problem has emerged in Hong Kong, and I do not think that "the tip of the iceberg" is an apt description, because poverty is now battering the old, middle-aged and young generations in Hong Kong. Therefore, if our society really wants to alleviate poverty and narrow the wealth gap, poverty alleviation policies must be implemented on a full scale.

First, I wish to discuss the poor elderly. I believe Members can still remember that when the Legislative Council passed the Motion of Thanks last week, Members also expressed unanimous support for increasing the "fruit grant". This can show the widespread concern about the financial difficulties

faced by the elderly. The DAB maintains that besides increasing the "fruit grant", we should also abolish the requirement pertaining to the permitted period of absence from Hong Kong.

Madam President, inflation and prices in Hong Kong are both rising, and many elderly people are unable to make ends meet. Most of them therefore want to return to the Mainland and live in their hometowns, so that they can reduce their living expenses and live a better life using what little income they have. But now, to be eligible for the "fruit grant", they must not be absent from Hong Kong for more than 240 days a year. Owing precisely to this limitation, many elderly persons are forced to stay in Hong Kong for 90 days a year. As a result, they must from time to time suffer the plight of having to travel long distances between the two places.

Our offices have frequently been approached by elderly people who complain about the plight they face. These elderly people all want to return to where they came from now that they are ageing. They all want to go back to live in their hometowns. But since they are in poor health or have mobility problems, they are unable to travel frequently between the two places. Consequently, they must either forego the "fruit grant" or give up the idea of returning to their hometowns, much to their frustration.

Madam President, the DAB maintains that the authorities should abolish the requirement pertaining to the permitted period of absence from Hong Kong, so that more eligible elderly people can be helped to realize their hope of retiring to the Mainland or elsewhere after receiving their "fruit grant" every month. As a matter of fact, the Government has already implemented a portable Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme for elderly persons retiring to the Mainland, under which elderly persons need only to report to some designated organizations in the Mainland once a year in order to maintain their eligibility for CSSA. The authorities can study the possibility of following the technical arrangements under this Scheme, so that "fruit grant" recipients can similarly retire to the Mainland. If it is deemed necessary to ascertain whether a certain recipient still needs the "fruit grant", the authorities may consider linkages with the data systems of the Social Welfare Department and the Immigration Department. In this way, the recipient's exit/entry records can be checked on a regular basis. Or, the recipient can be required to report to a nearby District Office once or a twice a year. It is believed that there will not be any technical problems at all.

When it comes to the poverty of middle-aged people, I immediately think of the recent quarrels surrounding bar benders' demand for wage increases. As we saw on television, most bar benders are able-bodied men in their middle age. They are also the bread-winners of their families. However, owing to Hong Kong's economic restructuring, they are faced with underemployment, declining wages and grim prospects.

Madam President, Hong Kong's construction industry is declining, and many workers are thus forced to switch to other industries. We must assist all these middle-aged workers in switching to other occupations. In this connection, the provision of retraining to them is very important. The existing Employment Programme for the Middle-aged aims to encourage employers to take on job-seekers aged 40 or above and to provide them with on-the-job training. In employing every Programme participant, the employer concerned will be granted a monthly on-the-job training allowance of \$1,500 for a maximum duration of three months.

But three months may not be enough for middle-aged persons to adapt to their new occupations, not to speak of expecting them to gain a deep understanding of the trade craft concerned. To employers, the Programme is not attractive either. Therefore, if the validity period of the allowance can be lengthened to six months, employees undergoing retraining will have more time for adaptation and getting to know their new working environments. In this way, they will be helped to better understand their new jobs. Besides, employers will also have more time for providing their employees with more in-depth training.

Madam President, what Members are most concerned about is children in poverty. From time to time, we would learn from the media how some poor children suffer from malnutrition due to the negligence of their parents. This is indeed heartrending. Children are the tomorrow, the future pillars, of our society. We naturally do not wish to see them suffer.

In October this year, the Hong Kong Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association published the findings of a survey on children in poverty. According to the findings, more than 75% of the poor children covered by the survey suffered many other kinds of deprivation, in addition to financial deprivation. The situation was more serious in respect of the desire to learn, education,

parent-child relationship and social networks. The Association is of the view that if the situation goes on, after these poor children have grown up, they are likely to remain in the lower strata of society, doing lowly jobs and earning low incomes. In other words, they are likely to remain poor.

Therefore, in order to upgrade their capabilities, help them break away from poverty and prevent them from becoming a burden to society in future, we should assist them in their wholesome development, in addition to catering for their basic livelihood needs.

Madam President, the DAB has advised the authorities to expeditiously establish an independent inter-departmental Commission on Children. Such a commission should comprehensively review the various policies on the development and rights of children and encourage enterprises to implement programmes on assisting poor children, so that poor children can have appropriate opportunities of life exposure and learning outside their schools. It is hoped that this can bring home the importance of corporate social responsibility. With regard to public housing estates and districts with larger numbers of poor families, we propose that the authorities should provide various family assistance services, such as tutorial classes and interest development classes. The Government may provide non-governmental organizations with funding for the provision of physical and aesthetic development courses. And, poor children should also be granted fee waiver for the use of public sports facilities, so that they can enjoy more development opportunities and enrich their life.

Madam President, we support the original motion, and since the policy address highlights the necessity of "investing for a caring society", we hope that the Government can be true to its words (*The buzzer sounded*)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Time is up.

MR LI KWOK-YING (in Cantonese): I so submit.

MR LEUNG KWOK-HUNG (in Cantonese): President, I shall move an amendment to Mr Frederick FUNG's motion. There are two reasons for my

doing so. First, I am of the view that since the former Commission on Poverty (CoP) was chaired by the Financial Secretary and his duty is fiscal management, and although there was a great deal of discussion on the policies to help the poor, he was selective in listening to and taking on board people's views and he did not implement any measure at all. For example, in order to secure the passage of the last Budget, the Financial Secretary, Mr Henry TANG, told Honourable colleagues in this Council that if Members supported him, he would provide transport subsidy to people in remote areas. A year has passed since then, however, so far, this has failed to materialize. Honourable colleagues of this Council had to take the trouble of moving a motion of no confidence on him before he was willing to provide funding. This is just like going to a Chinese restaurant. Although the restaurant is about to close, a customer is still dragging his feet in paying the bill. The restaurant owner has to make the threat of calling in the police before the customer is willing to pay the bill. The nature of the CoP makes it possible for the Financial Secretary to be thick-skinned and he can still be scot free.

Why did I add "including introducing a progressive tax system for wealth redistribution" to the motion? In fact, the tax regime in Hong Kong is biased. Obviously a low tax regime is practised in Hong Kong, but it robs the poor to enrich the rich. The Government reduces taxes regardless of whether it is justified to do so in order to benefit the rich. The exercise to cut taxes involves billions of dollars in tax revenue, and estate duty was also abolished. All in all, the Government always wants to benefit the rich. However, it turns a deaf ear to the calls from us Members representing the grassroots to introduce social reforms and to use public funds to give the poor and workers a decent life and provide a platform of further development to them. Basically, the Government is influenced by two principles and stipulations on fiscal management, namely, that expenditure must not exceed 20% of Gross Domestic Product and that expenditure should be kept within the limits of revenues.

I have never heard of such stipulations in other countries because the requirement ought to be to raise revenues according to expenditure. Depending on how much the expenditure is, the Government should then If it is something reasonable that must be done, or a right that is prescribed by the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights or a pledge made amidst the spittle of the two Chief Executives, it should be implemented and we should raise revenue according to expenditure, should we not? It is not the case that we do not have the money now. Regarding the

items that were cut in the past, for example, the continuous reductions of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) in 1999 and 2003, as we all know, the recipients of CSSA are mainly poor elderly people, elderly people, single parents and workers who became unemployed due to the bubble economy. In order to save money, the Government made it impossible for the fathers and mothers — mainly mothers — who came from the Mainland to get CSSA, so that they have to live on the food intended for their children under their care. Secretary Matthew CHEUNG visited Tin Shui Wai yesterday. He did not shed any tear and it was other people who did so. This is the problem that I am talking about. Secretary Matthew CHEUNG just stood there, not knowing what to say. Why? Because our Government often says that it has no money.

In fact, judging by international standards, it is not true that our Government was short of money after the financial crisis. For how many months would the reserve last? Our actual amount of reserve was in fact greater than those of many countries, however, the Government cut this and that from the very beginning. How could that be done? Therefore, I believe that in order to get to the root of the problem, a government should exercise its public powers to effect a redistribution of wealth by taking it back, so that people who were subjected to unfair treatment in the first round of wealth distribution in the production process, that is, people who were deprived of the rights they were entitled to under the unfair system of this society, can have the wealth redistributed to them. The Government should not just pay out money but should also provide services and make other investments, so that people can develop their abilities further to repay society.

Therefore, I consider it necessary to put in place a progressive profits tax. At present, the profits tax rate stands at 17%. If it is raised to 20%, the increase is not that great and this will not help much. In fact, if we want to tackle the problem at root, we have to do something about stamp duties. I know that Mr CHIM Pui-chung often talks about abolishing stamp duties, however, my view on this issue is the exact opposite. Nowadays, Hong Kong is a big casino. Funds from the Mainland and overseas all come here to engage in gambling. Local funds have won so much that the Fourth Uncle has made a lot of money and he is grinning from ear to ear. They invest and gamble here and they are the winners, however, "wage earners" who could not take part in this wealth enhancement process are the losers. We can see that the resultant inflation is eroding the wages earned by people who toil to earn them. Those capitalists are also unwilling to heed the Government's call to show some moral

character after getting rich. Even after their tax has been reduced, they may not necessarily increase the wages. There are more than 3 million victims and the Government has the duty to levy more money from this casino.

According to a report carried in the *South China Morning Post*, in the first half of this year, the amount of transactions in shares alone stood at \$10,000 billion. If the rate of stamp duty is 0.1% now, \$20 billion can be levied, and if the rate of stamp duty is increased by 0.1%, \$40 billion can be levied. If the rate is further increased to 0.3%, the amount levied will be \$60 billion. Of course, we know that increasing the stamp duty will lead to fewer transactions but, God, where can one find such a wonderful casino in this world! The frenzies nowadays can be attributed to the incessant flow of speculative funds from the Mainland that serve as quarries. In view of this, I believe that in order to discourage Hong Kong people from day-dreaming and to regulate wealth disparity, the Government should levy a tax on dividends or increase the stamp duty, as well as increasing the profits tax.

Members, today is the Halloween. President, this is a pumpkin and there is a story about it. Everyone knows about Cinderella. She was a very poor girl and just like the "wage earners" in Hong Kong, she worked from day to night. A fairy wanted to save her from this plight, so she was given a pumpkin and the fairy said that the pumpkin would turn into a very beautiful coach. The fairy also gave her a very beautiful dress. She had a great time the whole night, met the prince and they fell in love with one another. However, the fairy told her that she had to go home by midnight, otherwise, everything would be reduced to nought. As Cinderella had had a hard time for too long, she forgot what she should do and went home late. As a result, she lost everything. The ending of the story is that even though the prince knew that she had nothing, he still loved her.

However, reality is very cruel. We now have the stock market and we have Mr TSANG, with his talk of the Cultural Revolution and the impossibility of remaining poor. We also have \$250 billion. He could not even see the huge bubble on the Mainland and the one that GREENSPAN can see. He only said that we would surely get rich. He gave us a pumpkin to appease Hong Kong people, told the elderly and "wage earners" to get rich by speculating on stocks and refused to do anything to redistribute the wealth. He would rather let those people get so fat that they cannot even put on their socks than to levy an

extra one percentage point of stamp duty or more profits tax. What sort of system is this? We do not need such a pumpkin; we have no need of such things. We labourers and ordinary people want to have dignity in toiling and want the Government to be benevolent by taking wealth from the rich and giving it to the poor, by plucking out a single hair to benefit the whole society, not robbing those who need more than they have to enrich those who have more than they need.

President, this pumpkin is in fact poison, a fairy's it is the poison offered by a mortal and also the ploy of Donald TSANG. Today, I am going to smash this pumpkin here. This pumpkin is a bane, a bane to what this Government calls new Hong Kongers. Thank you, President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung, you can sit down. In future, when you speak, you can perhaps try not to raise your voice so high. The audio system in this Chamber is excellent and we can hear every word you say, so you can speak slowly.

MR SIN CHUNG-KAI (in Cantonese): President, however, only such a loud voice will prevent people from falling asleep easily.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr SIN, it is not your turn to speak yet. It should be Dr Fernando CHEUNG's turn to speak first. *(Laughter)*

DR FERNANDO CHEUNG (in Cantonese): President, when one is too excited and absorbed, it is possible that one may not note the level of one's voice.

In fact, the motion moved by Mr Frederick FUNG today is a subject matter that is quite agitating. At a time when the Hang Seng Index has risen to over 30 000 points, so high as to be unimaginable, and the Government has tens of billions of dollars of surplus every year, thus prompting our Chief Executive, Mr Donald TSANG, to remark that now was the best time for the economy in more than two decades and tycoons to open bottles of champagne and drink red wine in celebration, the problems of poverty can be seen all too easily in society.

I have collected some brief press reports in the past few months, so as to let us see how society is treating the grassroots and socially disadvantaged groups at a time of economic prosperity, overflowing wealth and when rich people are so fat that they cannot even put on their socks.

According to the report of the *Sun Daily* on 2 July this year, there was a moving tragedy that happened to an unfortunate family in Sham Shui Po. Originally, a middle-aged woman was completely devoted to the care of his mentally disabled and paraplegic son. Recently, a spate of unfortunate events befell her. First, her husband lost his job, then she was diagnosed as suffering from cancer. It was suspected that yesterday afternoon, as she found life to be drab and dreary, she committed suicide by jumping from height right before the eyes of her son. Her disabled son was incapable of saving his mother and could only weep, totally at a loss as to what to do. The male householder was 62 years old and the deceased was 57 years old. They had two sons. The elder son worked in the Hong Kong Jockey Club, whereas the younger son, in his twenties, was mentally disabled and paraplegic at birth and was wheelchair-bound. The mother did not work and was totally devoted to the care of her younger son. Although they led a poor life, they could still get by. Unfortunately, to begin with, her husband was dismissed by his company but he was already in his sixties. With this second blow of being unable to make a living, the whole family descended into gloom. Moreover, she was recently diagnosed as having liver cancer and her condition had already reached the terminal stage. She probably found this too much to bear, so she committed suicide by jumping from height.

A report carried in the *Wen Wei Po* on 3 July says that a case of assault occasioning actual bodily harm due to a dispute over cardboards had occurred in Ma On Shan. It was suspected that a dumb and deaf woman who collected cardboards and aluminum cans in a housing estate had a dispute with another male scavenger when making her rounds in buildings to collect cardboards and both parties subsequently left with displeasure. Shortly afterwards, both parties had another encounter and the dumb-deaf woman was assaulted on the head with fists and hard objects and she was sent to the hospital with injuries.

According to a press report on 23 July, a very hardworking man nicknamed "the young man from Chiu Chow" migrated to Hong Kong nine years ago to reunite with his family and he vowed to be successful in life, so as to bring

honour to his ancestors and to support his parents. After sitting for the HKCEE and on graduation, he immediately started working to earn money. He did not care about the status of his jobs and even though he had to work as a stevedore at a quay, he was willing to endure the hardship. However, he found that he still could not integrate into society and was discriminated against and marginalized. In the end, he became unemployed and had to live on CSSA. This made him blame himself for being useless. Yesterday morning, he jumped off from the rooftop of the building in which he lived in Sham Shui Po. He fell onto the anti-burglary iron bars of the adjacent building and the iron bars went through his stomach and legs. He suffered serious injuries and was in a critical condition. His mother was 47 years old. She attended to her son in the ward. With tears streaming down her cheeks, she said, "All in all, it is poverty that brought my son to this pass!"

On 6 August, a family tragedy happened in Tuen Mun. A single-parent mother had been caring for her mental disabled son single-handedly, as a result, she suffered from depression. She claimed that she had been misunderstood and someone had given her a difficult time. The night before, she committed suicide together with her son by burning charcoal but they survived. When they awoke yesterday morning, she could not bear the thought of her son going to the underworld with her, so she swallowed 30 sleeping pills and slit her wrists, then laid down on the bed to await her death. When she woke up again in the afternoon, a friend happened to call her. Her friend then called the police. After the police had arrived at the scene, they arrested the woman for attempted murder and saved her 25-year-old son. It was found that this woman was living alone with her son. After her husband had passed away several years ago, she had to take care of her son single-handedly and to rely on CSSA for their living. It was believed that she could not withstand the pressure of living and was suffering from depression. In the end, she chose to commit suicide.

On 20 August, an old woman was nearly burnt to death because she wanted to save \$100 each month. This unsociable dumb-deaf old woman used a kerosene stove for cooking in order to save expenses. Yesterday morning, the kerosene stove in her Tseung Kwan O flat overturned and her whole body was engulfed in fire. She struggled desperately, however, her voiceless cries — she was dumb and deaf — failed to summon any help. She became a human torch. When firemen broke into the flat to rescue her, she had suffered burns on over 50% of her skin. Her neighbours described her as being only half alive.

Earlier on, during the summer vacation, an old man surnamed TSANG had his CSSA payment suspended by the Social Welfare Department. He was stark poor. Without a single penny in his pocket, he had no other recourse but to rob a convenience store at knife-point. After the incident, he said he had no alternative because he had nothing to eat.

According to a report in the *Apple Daily* on 26 July, a great pile of cardboards is often left in an alley behind the Millennium City in Kwun Tong, awaiting collection for the purpose of recycling. This attracted the coveting eyes of the "scavenger sector" in the area. Even though some ferocious cleansing workers were on patrol, yesterday, a woman scavenger in her sixties was so daring as to go there to vie for the cardboards. Consequently, she was kicked at the heels by the cleansing workers. It was only with the timely utterance of "Remember that you also have a mother!" that she stopped those workers from going on to use iron bars to attack her.

According to a report carried in the *Oriental Daily News* on 27 July, a fatal traffic accident happened in Yau Ma Tei the night before. While an old woman scavenger was crossing the road, she was hit by a sports car and thrown to the roadside. Her head cracked and she died. The car involved was a Porsche.

According to a report in the *Wen Wei Po* on 29 July, a traffic accident occurred the night before on Lai King Hill Road. While an old woman scavenger was pushing a handcart along the road in question to collect cardboards, she was first knocked down by a scooter. She then rolled over by a passing private vehicle and was dragged along for more than 10 metres. She was trapped under the car. She was subsequently rescued by firemen, however, she was seriously injured in a critical condition.

According to the *Sun Daily* of 6 August, an old woman scavenger in her eighties who insisted on making a living on her own was pulling along two handcarts loaded with cartons containing fruit and vegetables sometime after 10 am. While she was crossing the road at the roundabout at Che Kung Miu Road in Tai Wai, Sha Tin, she was knocked down by a mini van and her arms were broken. She was 78 years old this year, living with her 60-year-old son. Her son said that his mother had a strong character and she even refused to accept the pocket money that her children gave her. She relied on scavenging for a living, however, because of her old age, this was the second time she was knocked down by a vehicle.

According to a report in the *Sing Tao Daily* on 13 August, a second accident of a scavenger being knocked down by a vehicle happened at the same spot on Lai King Hill Road in a fortnight. While an old man scavenger was pushing a metal cart loaded with waste paper and metal across the road, he was hit by a taxi, thrown into the air and he landed on the bonnet of the taxi, then bounced back to the ground. He was seriously injured and his life was hanging in the balance.

The *Mingpao Daily* reported on 18 August that an old woman in her eighties making a living out of scavenging was knocked down by a taxi the morning before while pushing her handcart along the road to transport the waste paper she had collected. She suffered serious head injuries and died after being rushed to the hospital for emergency treatment. She was the third elderly scavenger to die in traffic accidents this year. This year, at least 14 elderly people have been knocked down when using handcarts to transport waste paper and many of them broke their limbs or were disfigured. A group for the elderly warned that with the rising prices of commodities, CSSA payments would not be enough to meet the daily needs of the elderly, so an increasingly number of elderly people would be forced to engage in scavenging to supplement their living expenses and it is expected that similar accidents will continue to happen.

According to a report in the *Tai Kung Po* on 20 August, the night before, another elderly scavenger using a handcart for transport was involved in a traffic accident. This is the third tragedy in the past week. When an elderly woman nearly 80 years old pushed her cart across the road near Sha Tin Pass, she was hit by a bus and suffered serious injuries. She was in a critical condition after being admitted into hospital.

According to a report in the *Apple Daily* of 13 October, the night before, a man scavenger was pushing a handcart loaded with cardboards and was emerging from a hole in the mesh wire along Victoria Park Road at the seafront when, perhaps due to his not being aware that a road maintenance truck was passing, his head was hit by the rear view mirror of the truck and he was thrown more than a dozen metres away and killed. Even his dentures were knocked off.

President, all these incidents were laden with flesh and blood. On the one hand, we said that we wanted to forego \$5 billion and we would give even more money to the rich, but on the other, if we look at these commonplace

reports which we can find by casually leafing through newspapers, we can see how we are treating the elderly and how we are treating people with disabilities. How many people have to die before we do something? In view of the great reluctance in meeting our demand for the re-establishment of the CoP, where is the conscience of the Government? How many people have to die before it is willing to do something?

With these remarks, President, I support Mr Frederick FUNG's motion. I so submit.

MR SIN CHUNG-KAI (in Cantonese): President, the Democratic Party supports the motion and the several amendments. Of course, we agree with all the remarks made by Mr Frederick FUNG, however, we have some reservation about Mr LI Kwok-ying's amendment because he did not spell out clearly the demand that the Commission on Poverty (CoP) be established. The Democratic Party has only made some technical amendments to Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung's amendment because we have some reservation about whether we should leave the decisions concerning the tax regime to the CoP. However, it is possible for the Government to review the tax regime. Therefore, I hope Members will support my amendment because we are talking about the same thing.

The Democratic Party also supports a progressive tax regime. Specifically, we believe that the existing tax regime should be slightly revised so that it can become progressive in nature. I am talking about profits tax. This measure will not have any major impact on the existing tax regime; it will only slightly our idea is to — and we have talked about this in the past — divide companies into two categories. Companies making profits up to \$10 million can pay less profits tax, whereas those making profits beyond this threshold have to pay 1.5% more. This is where the difference between the two categories lies. To take 2004-2005 as an example, companies making more than \$10 million in profit only accounted for 5.6% of the companies that paid profits tax, however, the total amount of profits tax paid by the majority of companies exceeds companies that makes over \$10 million in profits only accounted for 5.6% of the companies that paid profits tax, that is, the number of such companies is small, however, it should be the case that the total amount of tax they paid accounted for 80% of the total. Therefore, based on this new tax rate, this measure will increase the revenue of the public coffers by \$5.3 billion.

We also support the implementation of a so-called categorization system for rates. The Democratic Party believes that the Government should classify rates charge into three categories, for example, properties with a monthly rateable value of less than \$5,000 can see their rates reduced by 0.5% and properties with a monthly rateable value of about \$15,000 will be considered as being in the middle-upper category even if they are residential properties. We propose that a greater rate of rates charge, for example, an extra 0.5%, should be paid. Put simply, the classification should consist of three categories.

Next, I wish to talk about the present standard rate for salaries tax. Recently, the Government also said that it wanted to abolish the standard rate for salaries tax, so this proposal will only serve to implement the pledge made by Donald TSANG when he stood for election. We believe that such a measure represents retrogression in policy. The Democratic Party believes that the standard rate should be abolished. What we mean is that taxpayers paying the highest tax rate should pay more tax, not less. In the past five or six years, government revenue has experienced great fluctuations. After the Government has increased taxes and reduced taxes several times of course, Donald TSANG has always been lucky because in 1998, it was him who decided to reduce the taxes. This time, when things have come full cycle, it is his turn again and the government coffers are overflowing, so there is again room for tax reduction. However, we think that structure-wise, the standard rate should be abolished so that people with the highest income can pay more tax.

To cite the words of this year's policy address, only high-salaried people with an annual salary of over \$1.4 million in Hong Kong will have to pay the standard rate. There are about 20 000 such people and the number is not great. Should we reduce the tax payable by this group of people? In fact, we have reservations about this. The Government should abolish the standard rate so that this group of high-salaried people can assume greater responsibility towards society. I wish to stress that there are fluctuations in public revenue and this year, it is true that there is room for tax reductions. However, we should not reduce the tax payable by high-salaried people, rather, we should raise the allowances for some people. Doing so can also help narrow the wealth gap. Such a practice is progressive in nature and it is akin to the proposal put forward by Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung, only that he is more specific about the method of implementation.

We think that the Government should broaden the tax bands and reduce the marginal tax rate. In fact, this move will also benefit high-salaried people indirectly, only that low-income people will benefit from it first. Only several thousand people with the highest income will not be able to benefit from it. However, as Members all know, recently, these people have struck it rich and obviously, they are people in charge of major corporations or working in investment banks who have received large sums of bonus. To these several thousand people, whether the Government will reduce the tax or not hardly matters because the amount involved is only a peanut to them. I believe it is also unnecessary for the Government to do so. However, if the tax payable by the grassroots is reduced, it will be helpful to the great majority of the public.

In fact, inflation has exerted some pressure on the livelihood of the general public. The tax rate in Hong Kong, at 16%, can already be considered heavenly and not many countries have tax rates lower than those in Hong Kong. If we look at the neighbouring regions in Asia, in no country are the tax rates as low as ours. It is a shame that government policy seems to be biased in favour of the rich and this is disappointing indeed. Some people believe — perhaps they are speaking in defence of the Government — that public finance must be prudent, however, even when the Government found itself in a very bad situation, it still took special care of high-salaried people. In early 2003, Antony LEUNG increased the salaries tax, reduced the allowances, made the tax bands narrower, increased the marginal tax rate and the middle class was given a hefty tax increase. The wages of some members of the public were cut substantially but the amounts of tax payable by them were increased. Some low-income people had to pay nearly 50% more in tax, but high-income people only had to pay about 20% to 30% more.

Therefore, regarding the overall tax rate adjustment, the Government should in fact look at whether, vertically or horizontally, it should care more about our low-income families, instead of caring just about high-income families. What the Government has done is more of returning wealth to the rich than returning wealth to the people. The Democratic Party believes that not only is it necessary to increase public revenue, it is also necessary to address the wealth disparity. In view of this, the aim in proposing a progressive tax regime is to make improvements both vertically and horizontally, so that it will be conducive to wealth redistribution.

With these remarks, I support Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung's amendment.

SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE (in Cantonese): Madam President, I must thank Mr Frederick FUNG for moving this motion today. Assisting the poor and relieving their plight is one of the work focuses of the new SAR Government and also a great concern of Hong Kong people. The SAR Government is extremely concerned about the needs of disadvantaged groups, and it has been doing its utmost to provide them with support and assistance. A safety net of social security is in place to cater for their basic livelihood needs.

The Government set up the Commission on Poverty (CoP) in February 2005 to further address the concern about poverty expressed by the various social sectors of Hong Kong. Following some two years of studies and discussions, in June this year, the CoP published its report, in which "from welfare to self-reliance" is set down as the core strategy of assisting people with working ability in extricating themselves from poverty. As for the elderly and other disadvantaged groups who cannot stand on their own feet, the CoP is of the view that it is necessary for the Government to continue to provide them with a safety net of welfare assistance, so that they can live a life of dignity.

As I mentioned in the Motion of Thanks debate, the policy address this year has adopted the policy objective recommended by the CoP. It sets out an integrated and clear-cut blueprint and framework for labour, manpower development and welfare services, complete with short-term, medium-run and long-term objectives. It also puts forward many initiatives concerning the provision of diversified and multi-level services directed specifically at different age groups and the needs of various walks of life, with a view to tackling the problem in its totality.

With regard to Mr Frederick FUNG's proposal to re-establish the CoP, we are of the view that since the CoP has already studied and discussed the issue of aiding the poor for some two years, and since it has made a series of practicable recommendations, the Government should now concentrate pragmatically on following up and implementing the recommendations concerned.

In this connection, an inter-bureau/departmental task force within the Government will be set up under my chairmanship to oversee poverty alleviation matters, wholeheartedly follow up the 53 recommendations of the CoP and explore new proposals. The task force will report to the Financial Secretary on its progress at regular intervals.

The various Policy Bureaux and departments will continue to consult the public and relevant organizations in the course of implementing the poverty alleviation measures within their respective portfolios. And, the Labour and Welfare Bureau will also brief the Legislative Council on the progress of poverty alleviation work on a regular basis. If necessary, the task force may even organize consultation sessions and seminars on certain poverty alleviation topics, so as to gauge the views of society and enhance communications with the people concerned.

There is no short-cut to tackling the poverty problem. We think that we must adopt a multipronged, steadfast and sustained approach to assist the poor in improving their lot. The main measures related to poverty alleviation in the policy address this year cover various areas such as employment, manpower development and social security. I shall give a brief account of them in this speech.

With regard to promoting employment, we maintain that the ultimate solution should be the creation of more employment opportunities. For this reason, the Chief Executive proposed in the policy address to push ahead with 10 major infrastructure projects during his term of office. It is roughly estimated that during the period stretching from their completion, inauguration and full operation, these projects will create for Hong Kong 250 000 additional jobs. Apart from these infrastructure projects, the Government will also launch a number of minor works projects to create jobs in the construction industry. Moreover, the Government will co-operate with non-governmental organizations in a bid to create 3 000 three-year posts for young people in the 2008-2009 financial year, with a view to enriching their working experience and upgrading their employability.

The Government will in addition actively promote the development of social enterprises, so as to foster the concept of "helping people to help themselves" and a new caring culture.

Apart from seeking to create employment opportunities and promoting the development of social enterprises, the Government has also put in place various employment assistance schemes for young people, the middle-aged and women over the past decade. These schemes are already well-known to Members, and they include the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged, the Work Trial Scheme Special Incentive Allowance Scheme for Local Domestic Helpers, the

Youth Pre-employment Training Programme and the Youth Work Experience and Training Scheme. Mr LI Kwok-ying is especially concerned about the future development of the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged. Since the Labour Department launched this programme in May 2003, more than 34 000 unemployed persons aged 40 or above have been offered employment assistance. The Labour Department will continue to closely monitor the responses to and effectiveness of the programme, so that reasonable and appropriate improvements can be made in response to the needs of participating employers and job-seekers.

The pilot Transport Support Scheme proposed by the CoP and put in place in June this year aims to encourage the unemployed persons or low-income earners living in specified remote areas who experience financial difficulties to seek employment or go to other districts for work. The Government has undertaken that in case the responses to the scheme in the coming three months are unsatisfactory, it will consider the possibility of advancing the review originally scheduled in June next year, so as to examine whether it is necessary to relax the eligibility requirements to benefit more employees and job-seekers.

We believe that education and training can upgrade the quality of Hong Kong's workforce, and that they are the most effective means of reducing inter-generational poverty. The Government has been investing huge resources in the development of education and training. In the 2007-2008 financial year, it intends to invest \$57.1 billion in education. This accounts for 23% of the total government expenditure and is the highest of all expenditure items. The Chief Executive has announced in the policy address this year that starting from 2008-2009, the Government will fully subsidize students in public secondary schools, including senior secondary education. The Government will also fully subsidize the full-time courses provided to Form Three school leavers by the Vocational Training Council, so as to provide an alternative free avenue for senior secondary students to further their studies other than in mainstream education. Besides, the Government will continue to provide tertiary education with heavy subsidy, with a view to ensuring that all students with the required potentials and ability can receive higher education.

The Government has also earmarked \$300 million for the setting up of a Child Development Fund, with the aim of providing underprivileged children with more development opportunities, so that they can be encouraged to plan for their future and cultivate a positive outlook on life. We will put forward a

detailed pilot scheme at the end of this year and brief the Legislative Council at a later time.

While investing in education and child development, the Government will also strive to offer training and retraining to more young people, unemployed persons and local workers. In this connection, starting from 1 December, we will relax the admission requirements under the Employees Retraining Scheme, extending its scope to cover youngster aged between 15 and 29 and people with educational qualifications at the level of associate degrees or below. The Employees Retraining Board will also increase the number of training programmes and places, in addition to enriching the contents of training courses.

The relaxation of admission requirements and the increase in training places will only be the first step towards the enhancement of training and retraining services. The Employees Retraining Board will further conduct a comprehensive strategic review of its role and future directions. It will strive to assist more people in seeking employment and upgrading their employability.

To realize the objective of "from welfare to self-reliance", we will implement a pilot scheme in the 2008-2009 financial year, under which "one-stop" employment assistance services will be provided on a trial basis. We will also conduct studies on how to rationalize, integrate and upgrade the employment-related services and training and retraining programmes currently offered by the Labour Department, the Social Welfare Department and the Employees Retraining Board, with a view to providing unemployed persons with more appropriate and focused assistance.

In order to cater for the needs of families and individuals who cannot be financially self-sufficient, the Government has been providing a safety net through the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme, which serves to ensure that their incomes can attain a level necessary for meeting their basic livelihood needs.

In the case of those families who are unable to rent private housing flats, the Government also provides them with public rental housing, pledging to maintain the waiting period at roughly three years. Public rental housing tenants in financial difficulties may apply for rent assistance under the Rent Assistance Scheme or the CSSA Scheme.

With regard to medical care, public hospital and clinic services are currently heavily subsidized by the Government. The average subsidy rate is as high as 95%. CSSA recipients may use the medical care services at public hospitals and clinics free of charge. And, non-CSSA recipients who do not have the means to pay public medical care services may apply for fee remission. In the 2006-2007 financial year, the combined fee remission granted by the Hospital Authority to CSSA recipients and non-CSSA recipients amounted to \$512.6 million.

Finally, I wish to respond to the proposals of Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung and Mr SIN Chung-kai on introducing a progressive tax regime. As a matter of fact, the existing salaries tax regime in Hong Kong is already progressive. Concerning Mr SIN Chung-kai's proposal on abolishing the standard rate for salaries tax, it must be pointed out that the proposal will effectively increase the maximum tax rate to 17%, thus adding to the burden of the minority of high-income earners and affecting Hong Kong's competitiveness.

Regarding profits tax, I must point out that currently some 70 000 companies are required to pay the tax, and the 1 300 companies each with annual profits exceeding \$30 million already account for more than 70% of the tax revenue. With the introduction of a progressive tax regime, an even smaller number of companies will have to pay a yet greater proportion of the tax. This will not only further reduce the tax base but also weaken Hong Kong's ability to attract inward investments and talents from the rest of the world.

As for rates, they are charged according to a flat percentage of the rateable values concerned. Rates payable will therefore increase proportionately with rateable values. Hence, the existing mechanism can already reflect the affordability of rates-payers. This is in line with the principle of requiring those who have the means to pay more and can also keep the taxation system simple. In the case of residential properties, for example, those with annual rateable values exceeding \$60,000 only account for some 30% of all residential properties in Hong Kong, but close to 60% of the revenue from rates come from them. If a progressive tax regime is introduced, the burden of the property owners concerned will increase, and the revenue from rates will become even more concentrated on a handful of residential properties. Therefore, we do not support the proposals of Mr LEUNG and Mr SIN.

Madam President, I so submit. After listening to Members' views on the topic, I shall give a further reply. Thank you.

MR WONG KWOK-HING (in Cantonese): Madam President, recently, the stock market in Hong Kong has scaled new heights time and again and the property market is also booming. This gives many people the impression that the days in 1997, when people ate rice soaked in shark's fin soup, have returned. However, can this kind of economic recovery driven by the financial and property markets benefit all strata of society, and the grassroots in particular? If we look at this from the angle of the wealth disparity in Hong Kong, it is obvious that the present economic situation has failed to benefit them.

According to the statistics of the Census and Statistics Department, the median household income in Hong Kong decreased from \$17,500 in 1996 to \$17,250 in 2006. As regards the income gap, families with a monthly income of \$4,000 increased from some 120 000 households in 1996 to more than 200 000 households last year. However, in the same period, the number of households with an income of more than \$40,000 increased by 2% to 17%. As regards the Gini Coefficient, which reflects wealth disparity, it has risen from 0.518 to 0.533. Even though the Government has taken into account tax reductions and various forms of social welfare such as education, housing and health care, the Gini Coefficient in 2006, at 0.475, was still higher than that a decade ago, which was 0.466.

Of course, a lot people, including our Chief Executive, Mr Donald TSANG, do not believe that wealth disparity is ripping our society apart and causing polarization. Earlier on, the Chief Executive claimed in his policy address that we would have a "golden decade" in future. It is true that in future, more opportunities may present themselves to Hong Kong and investors and the business sector will be able to extract buckets and buckets of gold, however, at the same time, this "golden decade" may also create a large group of "miners" consisting mainly of members of the grassroots, who will dig up the gold for the business sector. We all know that the daily work of these "miners" is very laborious and dangerous. They work very long hours but their wages are very low. This group of people is exploited. Although they have dug up many buckets of gold for their employers, in the end, they cannot share the fruits of success.

Madam President, at present, the situation of the grassroots and the poor in Hong Kong is like this: The property market is booming, the stock market is booming, however, this is not relevant to them because they can only live from hand to mouth. They cannot even be sure what tomorrow holds for them. On

the contrary, the economic upswing has caused the problem of inflation and the burden borne by them is even more onerous. Take food, which is a basic necessity, as an example, the year-on-year increase in prices has already reached 11%. Among them, the price of eggs has increased by 32%, the prices of pork, canned food, poultry and beef have increased between 26% and 30%. With the continued exacerbation of inflation, it is highly necessary for the Government to propose practical, specific and bold measures to help the poor, so that they can at least find a log to cling onto in the sea of difficulties.

Madam President, the original aim of the Government in establishing in early 2005 the inter-bureau and inter-departmental Commission on Poverty (CoP) headed by the Chief Secretary for Administration was to address the problem of the wealth gap in society. Although the CoP could not accomplish its mission of eliminating the wealth gap in society, it represents the importance that society and the Government attach to this problem. In fact, some of the issues explored by the CoP, such as those relating to the working poor, inter-generational poverty and the elderly in poverty, have aroused the concern of the Government and society about the poor. As regards some of the recommendations made by the CoP, such as the Transport Support Scheme and the Child Development Fund, although they cannot be described as drastic measures, at least, they can offer practical help to the poor.

However, it turned out that the CoP, which had enormous potential of development and could have achieved more, was disbanded in June this year on the ground that it had completed its work. This is really a great pity. In fact, there is still a great deal of work that the CoP has not completed, for example, so far, the CoP has not established a poverty line and some of the recommendations it made have not yet been implemented. Although the policy address states that another inter-bureau/departmental task force headed by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare will be established to assist in poverty alleviation, just as the Secretary said just now, this task force is an internal one lacking transparency and openness, and its status will not be as high as that of the former CoP. This arouses doubt about whether the Government has changed its attitude towards poverty alleviation.

Madam President, I fully support the re-establishment of the CoP, and what is more, I hold that if the CoP is to be re-established, its scale should be further expanded by including other elements and more voices of the grassroots. At the same time, the Government should also take on board the

recommendations of the CoP, so as to face and solve the problem of wealth disparity in Hong Kong earnestly and honestly. In this regard, I have several proposals and hope that the Government can attach importance to them:

- (1) In order to solve the problem of the working poor, the authorities should set a minimum wage and standard working hours as soon as possible. At the same time, it should create more employment opportunities, so that the grassroots and non-skilled workers can have more employment options;
- (2) to expedite the development of social enterprises and to change the mentality of some businessmen who attach importance only to profits but not to corporate social responsibility;
- (3) to solve the problem of the elderly in poverty by, *inter alia*, providing additional services and support facilities to the elderly, increasing the amounts of Old Age Allowance and health care vouchers, so as to provide assistance in the livelihood of elderly people;
- (4) to provide assistance to poor families to ensure that children in such families can have all-round development and to tackle inter-generational poverty;
- (5) to provide greater support in the form of social welfare, employment opportunities and community facilities to remote new towns such as Tung Chung and Tin Shui Wai and strengthen the community networks in these areas concurrently; and
- (6) to provide greater support to such socially disadvantaged groups as people with disabilities, new arrivals and ethnic minorities, for example, by offering concessionary fares to people with disabilities, and for new arrivals (*The buzzer sounded*)

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

MR WONG KWOK-HING (in Cantonese): Thank you, Madam President.

MR RONNY TONG (in Cantonese): President, we have discussed the problem of poverty every year, however, it seemed that each year, no result could ever be achieved. Just now, I heard the Secretary describe in detail what had been done and what would be done in the future. I believe the Secretary is working very hard to discharge his responsibilities in this regard. However, I find that in this Chamber, the disagreement between Members and the Government lies not in what or how much has been done so far or what would be done, but in the direction.

The Chief Executive pointed out in his policy address this year a new direction for Hong Kong. However, at least with regard to poverty alleviation, we have reverted to the old rut. The greatest problem is that under the leadership of the Donald TSANG Administration, there is an all too well-known remark, namely, "differentiation of affinity". Most unfortunately, the phrase "differentiation of affinity" applies not just to political ties, rather, in respect of social policies, there is also a "differentiation of affinity". The Government gives one the impression that people not having any votes do not deserve any care and attention from the Government, precisely because they do not have any votes. Therefore, even if they do get care and attention from the Government, it is just cosmetic and nothing down-to-earth will be done. To cite one very simple example, we can see that in this year's policy address, the Government can do such a thing as returning \$5 billion to taxpayers, however, will Members please calculate how much will be spent on helping the poor? Whenever we talk to the Government about the issue of wealth disparity, it will always prevaricate and mention the problem of definitions. Every time, some Members would point out that our Gini Coefficient ranked close to first place and all those places ranking higher than us are all under-developed places, cities or countries. Hong Kong is such an affluent society, however, it has such a dishonourable ranking. Even so, not only has the Government failed to address the problem, it even argues that the Gini Coefficient is useless or voices objection to the method of calculation. Even if the Government prevails in the debate, what then? Can it deny the fact that despite the take-off of the Hong Kong economy in the past decade, the number of poor people in Hong Kong is increasing? How can the situation of a gradual decline in these people's wages be resolved? What does it matter whether the Gini Coefficient is accurate or applicable?

President, in fact, poverty alleviation is no longer purely a social welfare policy, it is also a plan to maintain economic vitality. In fact, according to

overseas experience, through the promotion of social enterprises and the simultaneous provision of appropriate support and policy concessions, it is possible to encourage the development of such services as child care and cleansing in remote areas. It can be said that the Cross-District Transport Allowance, a minimum wage and standard working hours are not just social policies but also measures to stimulate the economy. We find it a great pity that the Government does not seem to have an all-round direction and policy for poverty alleviation, nor is there any organization to carry out centralized co-ordination. For this reason, we were greatly delighted when the Chief Executive said he wanted to establish the Commission on Poverty (CoP) two years ago. However, it is a shame that after this organization had functioned for two years, it did not account for its work to the public. I wonder if it is also because of this reason that the Chief Executive considered it unnecessary for the CoP to continue to exist.

President, recently, we had a meeting with the Chief Executive and we voiced our hope that the CoP could be re-established. However, we are of the view that the composition of the CoP should be reviewed and we hope that more social groups and voices in society can be included in this body. However, since the formulation and implementation of policies require the co-operation of various government bureaux and departments, we believe that the Government has to play an active and positive role; moreover, the Chief Secretary for Administration has to take the helm. However, even if the Chief Secretary for Administration assumes a leading role, if he does not accept the views of members of the public or the public at large, re-establishing a CoP would not serve any purpose. Therefore, ultimately, what matters most is still the direction and the resolve.

We think that we cannot merely pay lip-service to poverty alleviation but do not take any actual action, nor can this problem be solved merely through social policies. Since the Government has already established a special financial scheme for small and medium enterprises, why does it not consider adopting commodity measures to stimulate the development of social enterprises? Since the Government agrees that social enterprises are one of the solutions to the problem of poverty, why do we not actively promote their development? During the Question Time this morning, I asked the Secretary concerned why we do not make reference to the achievements of the United Kingdom and Spain in this regard. What has been done in these countries can be readily observed. The Government should summon up greater resolve and

offer concessions in such areas as loans, tax, planning or rent, so as to stimulate local economic activities.

President, the number of poor people now stands at 1.33 million, representing 20% of the population in Hong Kong. This is not a small figure, nor is it a figure that can be brushed aside easily. To say that these people are a burden for society is this unfair to them, and society also has nothing to gain in doing so. Not only can a large pool of labour be found among these people, a very large potential market and tremendous economic potential can also be found among them. Since some members of the Government have finally and gradually realized that wealth disparity can have great social repercussions, they have stopped repeating the lie that "now is the best time for the economy in more than two decades" and begun to seek a way out for the poverty problem in Hong Kong in earnest. In that case, the poverty problem will no longer be a crisis. However, we should not exploit this problem to cause division in society, rather, we have to be more loving, caring and understanding. We hope that a long-term strategy to eliminate poverty, to eliminate working poverty, poverty among the elderly and inter-generational poverty can be proposed, so that elderly people do not have to wait for their reincarnation to be able to see a resolution of their poverty problem.

Only a society with hope can develop harmoniously and this is also the first step in turning hope into reality. In order to establish a fair and just society, legislation on minimum wage and standard working hours, which has remained stagnant for a long time, should be expedited and the support for various strata of society should be boosted. Thank you, President.

MS LI FUNG-YING (in Cantonese): Madam President, it is an indisputable fact that the problem of wealth disparity in Hong Kong is deteriorating, and solving this problem is a pressing task. In view of this, I support the original motion moved by Mr Frederick FUNG today and all the amendments.

As a member of the defunct CoP, I remember that after the CoP had convened its last meeting in June this year, public opinions on the CoP were divided and some people used the remark "passing ere the quest was complete" to describe the CoP, which became defunct before a number of pilot schemes had been launched. Other people were of the view that the CoP had already fulfilled its mission and should go out of service, and that the resources involved can be utilized in over 50 specific proposals set out in the report. The divergent

evaluations of the public on the CoP are indicative of the difficulty and controversial nature of the efforts to help the poor.

In recent years, phrases such as "helping the poor" and "poverty elimination" have become the habitual slogans of the Chief Executive and in this year's policy address, he even stressed that helping the poor would be a priority for the Government in the next five years. I have already voiced my views on the policy address in the debate conducted last week and I am not going to repeat them here. However, concerning the Chief Executive's statement therein that the Secretary for Labour and Welfare would head an inter-bureau/departmental task force, I have grave doubts about whether or not the task force can effectively co-ordinate and follow up the more than 50 recommendations made by the CoP. What I doubt is not the ability and enthusiasm of Secretary Matthew CHEUNG, but whether the Labour and Welfare Bureau will have sufficient power to make inter-departmental efforts to help the poor. Helping the poor is a very complicated matter and the areas involved are extensive. Will a single Secretary be enough for co-ordinating various bureaux and departments effectively? In view of this, it is necessary to implement the proposal to establish an independent framework to monitor the implementation of the recommendations made by the CoP. This framework must have sufficient power and authority to co-ordinate the formulation and implementation of measures by various bureaux and departments to help the poor. In 2005, when the CoP was initially established and when I spoke on the motion "Expectations for the Commission on Poverty", I made it clear that it is necessary to delineate the role of the CoP clearly and that a relationship of accountability should be established between the CoP and government departments. Only in this way could the CoP serve practical purposes and be prevented from degenerating into a showcase or just a forum for empty talk.

If we want to narrow the wealth gap in Hong Kong, the most important thing is the Government's sincerity and determination in helping the poor. If the Government has no determination in solving the problem and continues to use "big market, small government" as the excuse, thinking that we can rely on a bullish market alone to solve the problem, I believe no matter how many CoPs are re-established, at the end of the day, we will only have one more showcase and forum for empty talk.

To solve the poverty problem, we cannot just chant some slogans. The Government should adopt an active attitude and implement the specific recommendations made by the CoP. Concerning some recommendations on

which society has not yet reached a consensus, the authorities should make efforts to encourage in-depth discussion in society, so as to reach a consensus on the differences as soon as possible and implement the relevant recommendations. As regards the pilot schemes which have already been implemented, apart from stepping up publicity, the Government should also consider expanding the scope and level of such assistance schemes. To take the Transport Support Scheme designed to encourage cross-district employment as an example, from June this year to the present, the authorities have only received some 4 000 applications. This is a far cry from the original estimate of 80 000 applicants. I believe the excessively low number of applicants cannot just be attributed to inadequate publicity. The excessively high application threshold and the small number of areas covered by the Scheme will also greatly reduce the number of recipients. In view of this, the Government should lower the application threshold of the Scheme and extend the coverage of the Scheme to the whole territory, so as to ease the livelihood burden of low-income people throughout Hong Kong and attain the goal of promoting employment and self-reliance in an attempt to alleviate poverty.

Madam President, I so submit.

MR LEE CHEUK-YAN (in Cantonese): President, on behalf of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (CTU), I rise to speak in support of Mr Frederick FUNG's original motion to request that the Commission on Poverty (CoP) be re-established.

I remember very clearly that the Chief Executive had made one remark. I very much worry that he really thinks that way. What was that remark? It was "Hong Kong will never be poor", so to speak. When that remark was made, the stock market was not as robust as now as the Hang Seng Index has recently reached the 32 000 mark. It was a time when the local stock market was not particularly flourishing. He said Hong Kong would never be poor only because the economy of our country had all along been making good progress. However, if the Chief Executive thinks that since the economy of Hong Kong has kept on growing, Hong Kong will never be poor, then he has made a very serious mistake in thinking that way.

The greatest problem at the moment is, with economic restructuring, the structural semi-unemployment problem has emerged in Hong Kong, which is

followed by the structural poverty problem. All these problems are structural, but they are not without solutions, and they can by all means be remedied. It all depends on whether the Government is willing to implement some genuinely appropriate policies that can tackle the structural poverty problem. At present, this structural poverty problem is very evident, and we all know that the poverty problem in Hong Kong is very serious now.

The first poverty problem is the problem of elderly in poverty. The population in Hong Kong is ageing, and since there is no retirement protection system in Hong Kong, so the elderly cannot save up any money. Even if they had worked very hard in the past and made contribution for Hong Kong for many decades, yet they may end up without any savings. Even if they did have some savings, the money will soon be used up. This is the problem of elderly in poverty.

The second poverty problem is the problem of working poverty. Even if these people are working, they still cannot feed their families because their wages are too low. Another poverty problem is the problem of unemployment poverty. Both types of poverty are related to work. Under such circumstances, these families will meet the problems of inter-generational poverty, children in poverty or women in poverty. This is the origin of all these problems.

These are all structural problems. If the Government does not seek ways of solving them at the structural level, such problems can never be solved. However, unfortunately, what is the Government doing now? I heard the Secretary say that he was very concerned about the poverty problems. I really believe that the Secretary does have the sincerity to solve the problems. But, sometimes, even the Secretary has limitations of his own, that is, he cannot act on behalf of the entire Government in taking forward the work. However, what about our Government? I am not sure whether the Secretary would agree to this point: That the Government has actually downgraded the importance of the work of poverty alleviation.

Members know all too well that this CoP led by the Financial Secretary was established in the TUNG Chee-hwa era, and the relevant work had already commenced. However, Members all know that this CoP is no longer in existence now. Although the Secretary said that he is also doing the work of poverty alleviation now, and a task force led by him is directly responsible to the

Chief Secretary of Administration, there are some differences between the two. The CoP would see the participation of people from the non-government sector, and it is clearly stipulated to be under the chairmanship of the Financial Secretary. And the Government is officially telling the people that we have a commission undertaking the work in this regard. It demonstrated the Government's concern about the poverty problem. But if the work is to be undertaken by a task force now We do not know how many task forces there are in the Government. Secretary, there are so many of them that we really cannot figure out the exact number; and what is more, it is even an internal task force, which does not have the participation of the non-government sector. In comparison with the previous CoP, does the Secretary not agree that the work of poverty alleviation has actually been downgraded? This is a point that the Secretary cannot deny.

The work has been downgraded and put under the leadership of the Secretary now. I am not questioning the Secretary's sincerity, but I am just questioning whether the Government has provided the Secretary with adequate support so as to enable him to do the work in this regard. But, this is not so in the past. If we want the Government to allocate some money for a certain project, we can at least discuss it with the Financial Secretary because he holds such authority. But the Secretary does not hold such authority. If we want to raise any issue, we still have to approach the Chief Secretary of Administration, and the issue will then be referred to the supreme trio in the entire Government framework for discussion. One issue that worries me is the support provided by the entire Government to the Secretary is entirely inadequate.

The second most significant question is related to what the Secretary said just now, and I think it is also related to the entire development direction of the work of poverty alleviation. It is related to the Secretary's remark that there is no short-cut to the work of poverty alleviation and we must keep up the work like "a small stream that can flow on forever". It is perfectly correct to have "a small stream that can flow on forever". But the words that I wish to find fault with are "small stream". Your "stream" is really too small at the moment. In other words, you have not provided adequate resources for the work. The "stream" in this regard is too small.

But, on the other hand, the "stream" the Government provides to large consortia is very large; the stream has a great width — it gives away \$5 billion all in one go. But the "stream" for poverty alleviation is small, with small

favours being handed out in bits and pieces. As a woman in Tin Shui Wai has said, it is surely insufficient for the Government to hand out \$1 at a time. It will never work. I think the Government really must have the determination and the political will to solve the problems. So, the "small stream" cannot be used anymore. Instead, you must allocate more resources to accomplish the relevant task.

There are several problems that must be tackled at the structural level, such as the problem of elderly in poverty which I have mentioned earlier. The greatest problem lies in the absence of a pension fund for the elderly. Yet the Government refuses to increase the amount of "fruit grant". Frankly speaking, even if the amount of "fruit grant" were increased, the problem still could be solved because this is just one of those petty favours. However, if the Government really wishes to solve the poverty problem, I think a system of universal pension should be introduced. This can be done by injecting half of the total amount of the existing Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) to solve the retirement protection problem. And then the Government may add further funds to the remaining half of the MPF. In this way, with the support of the "big stream" from the Government, the elderly will be able to enjoy a dignified retirement life.

Another problem I have mentioned earlier is the problem of working poverty. In future, even if the legislation on minimum wage is enacted, only two occupations can be benefited. Why can the Government not extend it to a wider scope? Besides, if we can provide living subsidies to low-income families, then we can actually provide assistance to those families suffering from working poverty. The Government may give them additional subsidies if they go out to work. For example, the amount of subsidies may be linked to a certain reference line, which can be considered a poverty line. If someone is living below the poverty line, but he still goes out to work, then he is eligible for such subsidies. Such systems of providing living subsidies to low-income families are also implemented in countries like Britain and the United States. If the Government can bring about some structural changes, it will then really be able to solve the poverty problem. I hope the Secretary can take these into consideration.

MR TOMMY CHEUNG (in Cantonese): Despite the fact that Hong Kong is relatively affluent, the problem of the grassroots living in poverty still warrants our special attention. During the debate on the Motion of Thanks in this

Council last week, the Liberal Party already expressed its full support for the work of alleviating poverty, especially rendering assistance to people in need, including elderly people who have made life-long contribution to society and small children who are the future pillars of society.

Let me cite the Old Age Allowance (OAA), also commonly known as "fruit grant", as an example. The Liberal Party has requested the Government to vigorously repay the elderly when government coffers are flush with cash by raising the amounts of OAA to \$900 and \$1,000 respectively. We have also proposed that the restrictions on the permitted period of absence from Hong Kong be relaxed as far as possible. Our proposal is strikingly similar to Mr LI Kwok-ying's amendment, only that OAA applicants who have settled in their hometowns are required to return to Hong Kong to report once a year to ensure that they are alive and kicking.

Regarding the issuance of health care vouchers for the elderly, our proposal is even more proactive than the amendment. According to our proposal, the number of health care vouchers issued to the elderly should be increased substantially from five to 20 per annum, at a total value of \$1,000, to enable the elderly to make good use of the vouchers to visit private doctors for medical consultations or health check-ups.

As regards other people living in poverty, the Liberal Party has all along advocated that, in addition to giving them temporary relief in the form of assistance, it is most important to provide them with a permanent cure by, in particular, striving to help them achieve self-reliance. Therefore, we should enhance their value through training and education to enable them to re-enter the labour market and get rid of poverty completely for the purpose of achieving upward mobility.

The Government should also foster more conditions favourable to business operation and create more job opportunities to enable the unemployed to secure jobs and the low-income people to get wage raises.

During the past two and a half years, the Commission on Poverty has worked in this direction in coming up with a series of recommendations, including reviewing the training, retraining and skill enhancement schemes; providing "one-stop" employment support services; and creating job opportunities for low-skilled people. These approaches can be said to be

identical with the philosophy behind the poverty alleviation policies adopted by a number of countries, including Britain, Ireland, Singapore, South Korea, and so on. However, it is all the more worthwhile for us to refer to Singapore's experience. For instance, under a job-recreation scheme, all workers' unions throughout the country are responsible for redesigning the posts for different trades and industries for the purpose of creating more job opportunities. Furthermore, a re-employment support scheme has been launched to provide employment support services, offer rewards to job-seekers staying in their new jobs, and assist unemployed people to re-enter the labour market. All these initiatives are relatively targeted.

A "Support for Self-reliance Scheme" has also been put in place in Hong Kong to encourage CSSA applicants to actively look for jobs. In this connection, the Liberal Party considers that more financial incentives can be offered by, for instance, reviewing the upper limits of the amount of disregarded earnings under the CSSA mechanism to examine whether the limits can be lifted and working out solutions to reward CSSA applicants who have retained their jobs for a long period.

We also approve of the district-based poverty alleviation strategy. Some time ago, the CoP set up poverty alleviation teams, chaired by District Officers, in various districts including Yuen Long, Kwun Tong, Sham Shui Po, and so on. The Liberal Party supports the continuation of this policy to enable poverty alleviation initiatives to be better tailored to public sentiments in the community and offer the right remedy.

The Liberal Party takes an open attitude towards the re-establishment of the CoP to enable poverty alleviation initiatives to be led by a higher-level organ. However, should some of the alleviation initiatives fail to bring their functions into full play, we agree that an in-depth review should be conducted expeditiously to study if the restrictions of the scheme are so stringent that many people in need are excluded. For instance, the pilot Transport Support Scheme launched in June has not been satisfactorily received, for only \$2.29 million (0.6%) out of the \$365 million earmarked has been approved. All in all, it is most important for the poverty alleviation policy to strive to enable the poor households to rise up again to be self-reliant and live happily.

Madam President, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung and Mr SIN Chung-kai have separately proposed the introduction of a progressive tax system for wealth

redistribution by such means as introducing progressive rates of profits tax and rates charges, and abolishing the standard rate for salaries tax. These proposals give people an impression that there is intense hatred towards the rich, and are not conducive to the development of a capitalist society and the spirit of "the more we work the more we earn" advocated by Hong Kong people. Furthermore, it is feared that doing so will only further polarize society, thus running counter to the objective of "reducing social conflicts and promoting harmonious social development" as proposed in the motion.

The Liberal Party also subscribes to the proposal raised by Dr Fernando CHEUNG of enhancing community facilities and support services in such remote districts as Tin Shui Wai. In this connection, the Liberal Party will give a detailed account in the debate on the motion to be proposed by Mrs Selina CHOW next Wednesday.

However, we have some reservations about Dr CHEUNG's proposal of immediately reopening Single Parent Centres and Post Migration Centres. This is because, despite the possible inadequacy of the Integrated Family Service Centres in individual districts, it does not mean that we have to go backward by giving up the existing "one-stop" services and setting up different centres to implement individual policies.

Madam President, I so submit.

MR LEUNG YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): President, during last week's policy address debate, Members from different political parties and groupings seemed to have reached four major points of consensus on the problems relating to the people's livelihood. They are: first, how to reduce family stress; second, how to promote mental health; third, how to optimize the workforce; and fourth, how to tackle the disparity between the rich and the poor. The last issue is precisely the theme of today's debate.

President, as the saying goes, "poor and lowly couples often land in multiple distress". The poverty problem is the root of numerous family problems, including domestic violence. Recently, we have seen the recurrence of problems related to domestic violence, family stress and even mental problems encountered by individuals. But regrettably, when talking about how to tackle these problems just now, the Secretary merely repeated such conventional and

trite solutions as employment training, developing social enterprises, creating job opportunities, and so on. President, please allow me to quote a slogan by Andy LAU: "Nowadays, such attitude won't do anymore". If we keep on harping on the old practices without embracing the changes brought by the new era, these problems and situations will keep recurring.

Although the Secretary was told by many people during his visit to Tin Shui Wai that they did not want Tin Shui Wai to be called the "city of sadness" anymore, I am greatly worried that, if the Secretary's guiding principle and practice remain unchanged, in addition to Tin Shui Wai, many districts will become "cities of sadness" too. Kwai Chung, a district frequently mentioned by me, has also demonstrated the same phenomenon because of its great similarities with Tin Shui Wai. Except for the problem of remoteness from urban areas, the two districts are inherently alike. Therefore, if the Government or the Secretary continues to tackle the problems through training or similar efforts, how can the problems be solved? This is because, despite the efforts made over the years, the problems keep occurring. So, what can we do? This is indeed the most serious problem.

I think the problem raised by Dr Fernando CHEUNG is worthy of our consideration. Besides the existing efforts, more has to be done; otherwise, the problems cannot be resolved. For instance, Mr Tommy CHEUNG merely talked about resources when he mentioned the Single Parent Centres just now. They really do not understand the crux of the problem with the Single Parent Centres — it is not simply about resources. Instead, people should be allowed to form themselves into a group to enable individuals to lead a social life and resolve their individual problems while living in social groups. This is crucial to resolving the problems. However, unfortunately, our Government has merely looked at the problems from the angle of resources by indicating that the presence of Integrated Family Service Centres can, on the one hand, save money and, on the other, target individual cases.

However, as Members are aware, the problems cannot be resolved by targeting individual cases. First, the shortage of front-line staff has made it virtually impossible for the problems to be resolved separately. Because it is already quite demanding for one person to take care of 90 cases, not to mention that the number of cases sometimes exceeds 90. This is the first problem. Second, this approach of following up cases will definitely have the drawback of slow response. As there are so many cases, how can the staff analyse the cases

one by one to determine which one is more or less serious? Furthermore, it is impossible for the staff to memorize all the cases. However, if the problems are dealt with from a social angle, the persons involved can then bring their functions into full play so that mutual understanding, mutual enhancement and mutual communication can be achieved. Despite the continued existence of the problems, I think it is meaningless for the Government to try to resolve the problems merely by evaluating the adequacy of resources and utilizing limited resources to perform the task without adopting a new way of thinking in examining these problems. This is the first point I wish to make and, that is, this attitude of the Government will not work.

As regards the second point, the Government has kept saying that it wishes to properly develop social enterprises, create job opportunities, and so on, and yet there is no government participation. So, what is the point of all this? President, during our earlier trips to Spain and Britain, we found that their social enterprises perform very well. We also noted that their performance did not hinge on their verbal commitment of developing social enterprises. Most importantly, practical steps were taken to develop social enterprises. By practical steps, I mean government participation. Without practical steps, there is simply no way for social enterprises to be properly developed. For instance, the Government must participate in implementing policies and offering support. According to a government policy frequently quoted by Mr Frederick FUNG, people with disabilities in Spain are allowed to make money by selling lottery tickets, and the money earned will be used to set up other businesses so that other socially disadvantaged groups will also have work to do. This is the approach adopted by the Spanish Government. In other words, government participation is essential.

Regrettably, our Government has done nothing at all. It has merely encouraged people to operate in social enterprises. People would have already done so if they could succeed. What is the point of encouraging them? Over the years, social enterprises have not yielded any results. Even if there are satisfactory results, it is only because of the existing NGOs. The enterprises set up by the NGOs are actually not social enterprises, only that social services are given the more appealing name of social enterprises. They are by no means social enterprises. Their results are just limited.

Hence, a new way of thinking is vital to resolving the poverty problem. While I agree with Mr Frederick FUNG's proposal of re-establishing the CoP, I

am worried that the CoP will not yield satisfactory results if it still adheres to the policy of "affinity differentiation" mentioned and criticized by me earlier, as it did before, by appointing cronies as members. If the Government is to really re-establish the CoP, it should most preferably, as we suggest, engage itself socially by allowing different strata and groups at the non-governmental level to participate, reaching out into the community. Only by consolidating the views of all the people involved and promoting poverty alleviation initiatives with concerted efforts will satisfactory results be yielded. Otherwise, the efforts made will just be cosmetic, and results can hardly be seen.

President, I so submit.

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

DR KWOK KA-KI (in Cantonese): Deputy President, incidentally, the two motion debates today are concerned about the disadvantaged in Hong Kong.

I cannot help referring to this year's policy address because the expression "golden decade" is frequently mentioned there. It seems that the decade post-reunification of Hong Kong is a case for celebration. The policy address has also made frequent mention of the need to leave wealth with people. However, this wealth is not available to everyone. The rich, including those who are too fat even to put on their socks, will be given a bigger share. As for the poor, sorry, they are not included.

Why do I say something like that? This year's policy address has proposed to slash profits tax and the standard rate (the rate for the highest-income earners) of salaries tax by 1% each, which will cost the Government \$5 billion. However, the Government has barely done nothing to help the poorest and people with the least bargaining power in society. Every initiative proposed is actually just a "gimmick".

Coincidentally, the Secretary for Home Affairs attended this meeting today to answer our question. I heard him say that it is a most opportune time to ameliorate poverty because the Chief Executive has proposed 10 great construction projects to create more than 100 000 job vacancies for construction workers. Then he went on talking about social enterprises — it would have

been better had he not said so for that was really laughable. The Secretary told us that more than 30 of the 50-odd applications received from social enterprises had been rejected, and a total of 280 job opportunities had been created — he had better not tell us the figure, right? His remarks made me all the more feel that he was deceiving himself and others.

Second, given the relatively high unemployment rate in the construction industry, he should indeed give it support. However, can everyone work in the construction industry? Will society at large turn for the better if the industry turns for the better? Let us review some figures about Hong Kong. The number of middle-aged unemployed people who are aged above 50 or 60 is rising. The number of elderly people in poverty has also risen from 230 000 in 1996 (representing 25% of the elderly population) to 340 000 in 2006 (representing 34% of the elderly population). The same goes for the unemployment problems faced by the middle-aged and women. How can they work as construction workers? Does it imply that the problem faced by the entire society can be resolved if the unemployment problem of construction workers is resolved? Certainly not. However, it does not matter. These comments are most pleasing to the ears, but we will not know where the Secretary will have gone by then, and we can simply not make any comments about him anymore. Therefore, I think the Government has neither the intention nor the strength to ameliorate the disparity between the rich and the poor.

Let us take a look at the actual situation. A decade has already passed from 1996 to 2006. To society, it was a "golden decade". But to the poor people, it was a miserable decade. The number of households earning a monthly income of less than \$8,000 has increased by 55%, from 305 000 to 473 000. At the same time, the number of households earning a monthly income of less than \$4,000 has risen from 124 000 to 206 000, with the number of people earning a monthly income of less than \$4,000 standing at 1.33 million. These figures are all stained with blood and tears.

In fact, the present situation is different from what it was decades ago. Back then, no one would deny their humble origins. Even Chief Executive Donald TSANG told us that no one would deny their humble origins, but it did not matter because there was no problem. However, times have changed. Society back then was very different from what it is now. When we are incapable of doing anything, perhaps we can still say that there is nothing we can

do and let us tide over the hard times together. However, things are no longer the same now. We are not incapable of doing anything. The reserves put aside by the SAR Government amount to \$1,000 billion. Tax concession alone would cost the Government billions of dollars. Why has the Government failed entirely to give regard to the lowest income earners?

Secretary, you should have known the present circumstances of Tin Shui Wai after your visit to the district yesterday. You must not say you do not know. Because you definitely must have found out from the visit that none of the Government's poverty alleviation policies is helpful to them, as most of them cannot work as construction workers. Furthermore, social enterprises are merely like a drop in the bucket. The Government has merely treated social enterprises half-heartedly. It has even suggested that businesses and industries be encouraged to develop on their own. But the problem is if they can develop on their own, it would be unnecessary for the Government to give them encouragement. The businesses and industries are now requesting the Government not to impede their businesses because they want fair competition. This is why they do not want the Government to hamper their businesses. Most importantly, they want to make more money. Under such circumstances, how can the Government expect social enterprises to substantially boost employment?

Clothing, food, housing, transportation and health care are all vital to us. In fact, many in the socially disadvantaged groups have found it increasingly difficult to access essential health care services, because the waiting period is getting longer and longer. There are more than 200 000 patients with severe mental illness and their family members in Hong Kong who precisely belong to the poverty class. The Government has really put these poor people in a lowly position. At least, the health care and the time given to them by social workers and community psychiatric nurses are terribly shameful. Furthermore, they are only entitled to meagre medication. In addition, if health care financing is implemented in the future, the Government might not be willing to allocate more resources. What is more, these people will have to bear a greater share, and be required to dig deep into their pockets. In the face of these unfavourable phenomena, I think we are actually expecting the impossible if we believe the Government's existing policies can ameliorate the disparity between the rich and the poor.

Mr Frederick FUNG is greatly infuriated by the dissolution of the Commission on Poverty. I share the same feeling too. The Government might have probably given up. To put it somewhat crudely, the Government

might be performing so badly that it is even unwilling to make a vase and instead, it is merely playing some gimmicks instead. All this has only reflected that the people are completely ignored by the Government. However, this might be somewhat related to the constitutional system. Some people say that it is most important for a government formed as a result of a small circle election to be accountable to the 800 dignitaries in society. Insofar as most of the low or middle income earners are concerned, they might aspire to a lot of things. One of them is to implement universal suffrage expeditiously so that the votes in their hands can turn into an important source of strength to compel the Government to ameliorate the disparity between the rich and the poor.

With these remarks, I support the original motion and all the amendments. Thank you, Deputy President.

PROF PATRICK LAU (in Cantonese): Deputy President, I think no one will question the assertion that Hong Kong's achievement is largely attributed to the resilience of Hong Kong people who are ready to work extra hard. Therefore, I agree creating job opportunities and assisting employable people in upgrading themselves and entering the job market are relatively proactive approaches that can enable Hong Kong to sustain its competitive edge and ameliorate its wealth gap.

Although the 10 major infrastructure projects proposed in this year's policy address, as also mentioned by the Secretary earlier, will definitely help create job opportunities, I hope Members will bear in mind that community building, though unrelated to infrastructure, is equally important.

Because of a lack of support facilities in their communities, many wage earners have to travel long distances to work in other districts. One of the examples frequently quoted by Members is Tin Shui Wai, and the Secretary should be aware of the situation there. Furthermore, transport expenses in Hong Kong are getting higher and higher. If more community facilities can be provided and businesses be boosted through expeditiously improving community planning, then wage earners will have higher chances of getting employment in their own districts. Having spent less on transport expenses, they will spend in their own districts and naturally create job opportunities for other residents living there. The sustainable local economy of the districts can then be promoted in an endless circle.

Furthermore, they would like to return home sooner after work so that they can spend more time with their family members. It will also be easier for them to get back home from their workplaces should their elderly family members or children have any urgent needs. In addition, the provision of more community facilities will also lead to more community support. This will facilitate early prevention, alleviate potential social problems, and create a harmonious district-based environment for family life.

Deputy President, we can see from the examples cited by me that three-dimensional thinking should be adopted in analysing ways to alleviate poverty, and the problem should be addressed in different areas. For this reason, I am in favour of re-establishing the Commission on Poverty (CoP).

Of course, the re-established CoP must have extensive representation as it was before. The former Commission was chaired by the Financial Secretary, and its membership comprised people from all walks of life, such as relevant Directors of Bureau, the top advisor of the Central Policy Unit, Members of the Legislative Council, academics, people from the industrial and commercial sectors, and so on. Given the different backgrounds of these members, the consensus reached by them was naturally more comprehensive. I agree with the remarks made by Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung earlier, that concerted efforts should be made in actual tasks. But more importantly, the leadership of the Financial Secretary and the Government's senior officials should play an important role in co-ordinating various Policy Bureaux or government departments in implementing the poverty alleviation initiatives proposed by the Commission and deploying resources. The officials must assume the co-ordinating responsibility to enable the Labour and Welfare Bureau to implement inter-departmental poverty alleviation initiatives.

After all, long-term effort is required to ease and ameliorate the disparity between the rich and the poor. Furthermore, the former CoP has made a lot of good recommendations. For instance, such work as setting up a Child Development Fund, developing social enterprises, preventing poverty and alleviating hardship with a district-based approach, and so on, has only just begun. It is indeed imperative for the territory to capitalize on its resources when the coffers are having a huge fiscal surplus to invest in retraining programmes and education to nurture talents and resolve the long-standing problem of inter-generational poverty. I also consider it timely to re-establish

the Commission to continue its efforts in promoting, monitoring and overseeing the implementation of poverty alleviation policies to ensure that practical initiatives can effectively ameliorate the disparity between the rich and the poor in Hong Kong.

Thank you, Deputy President.

DR YEUNG SUM (in Cantonese): Deputy President, over the past couple of years, Hong Kong economy went through depression, recovery and development. The Government has also changed from having a fiscal deficit to the current situation where its coffers are "flush with cash". However, it has become increasingly apparent that the disparity between the rich and the poor in Hong Kong is worsening. This is why I support Mr Frederick FUNG's motion. Hong Kong has seen its Gini Coefficient rising from 0.518 in 1996 to 0.525 in 2001, and to 0.533, the highest figure ever recorded in Hong Kong, in 2006. The higher the figure, the more serious the disparity is. This figure has indeed brought shame to Hong Kong. However, the Government has numerous ways to defended itself: "To simplify the complex social phenomenon with one single figure cannot necessarily reflect actual circumstances and changes", and "to compare the Gini Coefficient recently published in Hong Kong with that of overseas countries will not bear much substantive significance, and will even lead to wrong conclusions". In fact, these remarks precisely demonstrate the Government's insular outlook. The Gini Coefficient is virtually an internationally recognized standard for illustrating the disparity between the rich and the poor. Of course, the Government may question whether the wealth gap illustrated can reflect the actual circumstances of the living of the people. However, the Gini Coefficient cannot be denied completely because this will only give people an impression that the Government is being ignorant.

The survey findings published by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) can illustrate the disparity between the rich and the poor even more clearly. Between 1996 and 2006, the number of households with a monthly income of \$4,000 or below in current price terms rose from 6.7% in 1996 to 9.2% in 2006. At the same time, the number of households with a monthly income of \$40,000 or above rose from 15% to 17% during the same period. Economic development will certainly lead to increased disparity between the rich and the poor.

The Government has always attributed the reality of such a wealth gap to Hong Kong's development towards a knowledge-based economy. Actually, the Government has completely failed to account for a more important reason, that it is basically robbing the poor to relieve the rich — do not misunderstand that the Government is robbing the rich to relieve the poor — and aiming at transfer of benefits in governance. Owing to its conservativeness and unfairness in implementing policies in such areas as taxation, welfare, and so on, it is simply impossible for resources to be redistributed in a reasonable manner.

In such a prosperous city as Hong Kong, many households are still living in poverty as a result of the wealth gap, with the elderly people being the most in need. Most of the 20% of the households in the territory with the lowest income are elderly people living in public housing. On average, each household has two members and a median monthly income of a mere \$4,200. These elderly people are living in abject poverty because each of them can only spend an average of \$2,100 a month. Though they have toiled for the whole of their life, they bore the brunt when Hong Kong economy was in the doldrums. And yet, when the economy is thriving and the stock and property markets are booming, they cannot share the economic benefits. On the contrary, they are in dire straits.

Deputy President, I would like to cite health care services as an example as relatively few colleagues have quoted the services as an example. Insofar as health care services are concerned, both the government coffers and the Hospital Authority (HA) were faced with a fiscal deficit in the past couple of years when Hong Kong economy was in the doldrums. Without seeking the endorsement of this Council, the authorities adopted a series of scaling-down initiatives, such as introducing new charges by raising the out-patient charges and hospital charges and levying medical charges, and transferring the burden of medical expenses onto patients. After raising its charges, the HA reported an extra revenue of \$270 million and \$390 million in the year 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 respectively. Most of the elderly are chronic patients who have to frequently seek medical consultation. They are most affected by the increases in public health care charges. Today, the government coffers have abundant surpluses. Despite its proposed tax concession of \$5 billion, the Government has done nothing to lower health care charges. Deputy President, neither has it increased the amount of "fruit grant" — Secretary, please listen carefully — the elderly have not been benefited at all. On the contrary, inflation, driven by economic

growth, has pushed basic food prices up drastically, thereby making these out-of-work elderly people even more hard-pressed. The Democratic Party has made repeated appeals to the Government to provide the elderly with half-fare concessionary health care services, however, the offer of five health care vouchers worth \$50 each is not enough to even cover the consultation fee charged for one visit to a private doctor for treating a flu. Despite the approval of the Legislative Council and the great public support revealed by opinion polls, the Government is not willing to spend \$400 million and has refused to adopt such an extremely beneficent measure. It has merely indicated a willingness to introduce health care vouchers to pacify the public in response to their aspirations.

Recently, there has been an increasingly grave concern in the community about the trend of development of an M-shaped society. Although no consistent statistical conclusions have been reached to confirm the formation of an M-shaped society in Hong Kong, we are seeing such society in its embryonic form. Health care policy is one of the main reasons for the Government to include middle-income households into the poverty bracket. Some patients using public health care services have to bear the expenses of some exorbitant medicines and medical items. It is precisely this policy that has plunged the families of the patients into poverty. I have a friend in the district, whose father was advised by his doctor to undergo Percutaneous Transluminal Coronary Angioplasty (commonly known as "balloon angioplasty"). However, the medical items had to be purchased by them as family members of the patients. As it cost more than \$40,000 for each coronary arteries, a total of \$160,000 had to be spent for four arteries. We can thus see that, for an ordinary family, nearly all the savings it has accumulated for years will be exhausted even if one family member suffers a serious illness only once.

(THE PRESIDENT resumed the Chair)

Furthermore, Madam President, about 70 types of expensive medicines in the general formulary, including more than 20 types of medicines for treating cancers, have to be purchased by patients at their own expense. These exorbitant medicines, actually meant to save lives, are unaffordable to ordinary families. Therefore, this responsibility is precisely one that has to be borne by the Government, and yet the authorities have chosen to shirk their responsibility.

Madam President, given the disparity between the rich and the poor in Hong Kong society, coupled with the gradual trend of developing towards an M-shaped society, it is imperative for the Government to think about this. Although the Chief Executive has made it clear that he will stay out of it, I think he should reconsider the matter. Actually, the Government should redistribute resources in a reasonable manner through social welfare services and taxation rather than through infrastructure projects and education. Though these measures can be useful, distant water will not put out a fire nearby. There are more than 1 million people and one in every four children in Hong Kong who are living in poverty. Therefore, not only do we need distant water, we also need to come up with solutions to put out a fire nearby. As both are indispensable, there is no need to force us to choose either one. But basically, the Government is merely adopting long-term solutions without considering the present circumstances.

Thank you, Madam President.

MR ALAN LEONG (in Cantonese): President, I would like to quote this comment made by the Chief Executive at the end of last year: "Given the fanfare and thriving market recently, I believe this is the best of times for Hong Kong in the past two decades". Of course, the Chief Executive might be right if the Hang Seng Index is viewed from this angle, for the Index has not only soared through 30 000 points, it is even expected by some to reach 40 000 points.

However, President, at a time when the stock and property markets are thriving and the economy is picking up, the poverty problem in Hong Kong has shown signs of deterioration instead of amelioration.

The 2006 By-census conducted by the Census and Statistics Department has shown that the number of low-income households in Hong Kong has risen significantly. It is also pointed out in a recent report on poverty published by the Oxfam that, during the decade between 1996 and 2006, the number of people living below the poverty line rose from 835 400 to 1 160 400. In other words, one in every five to six people in Hong Kong is living below the poverty line.

President, the figures quoted suffice to illustrate that an alarm has been sounded for the problems of poverty and the disparity between the rich and the

poor in Hong Kong, or they have probably reached the critical point. Regrettably, among the 127 paragraphs contained in the policy address delivered by the Chief Executive earlier, only paragraph 79 talks about "alleviating poverty". The degree of importance of the problems of alleviating poverty and narrowing the wealth gap in the mind of our Chief Executive is thus evident. I would like to, once again, express regret over the Government's heartlessness and indifference.

If Members read the content of paragraph 79 more carefully, they will probably ask the same question with regrets as I do. Is this what the Government meant by alleviating poverty? Does the so-called "development" mentioned by the Chief Executive in the notion of "progressive development" suggested by him imply that the size of the poor population will continue to rise every year? Does the "development" uttered by the Chief Executive imply increases in the Government's consolidated surplus year after year, even though the Government has failed to properly deal with the social problems and capitalize on the surplus to resolve them?

President, here I would like to quote the words of the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize of 2006, Muhammad Yunus, also known as a "banker to the poor". In his opinion, development should be viewed as a human rights issue. Development has nothing to do with whether GDP is rising; what is more, it is by no means a wishful assumption that the poor will definitely be benefited once the national economy goes up. He thinks that development should seek to ensure that 50% of the overall population with relatively low economic status can enjoy positive growth. Our Government has neither such a vision nor such an objective. Its so-called poverty alleviation initiatives are merely a most pessimistic response to the strong voices of the community calling for alleviating poverty and narrowing the wealth gap.

President, the underlying notion of the 10 major infrastructure projects proposed by the Chief Executive in the policy address is that infrastructure can create employment opportunities, and in turn reduce the poor population and narrow the disparity between the poor and the rich. President, getting employed does not mean subsistence. Without a support policy for safeguarding labour interests, even if our workers manage to secure jobs, they will still be subject to exploitation and suppression in the end, and will continue to suffer from working poverty.

In recognition of the severity of the youth drug abuse problem, the Chief Executive has proposed in the policy address that the Secretary for Justice lead a high level inter-departmental task force which will make use of the existing anti-crime and anti-narcotics networks to consolidate strategies to combat juvenile drug abuse from a holistic perspective. Such commitment is indeed commendable. However, the poverty problem and the disparity between the rich and the poor in Hong Kong are also equally serious and have reached the critical point. In the policy address, the Chief Executive has only assigned the Secretary for Labour and Welfare to lead an inter-bureau and inter-departmental task force to co-ordinate and follow up matters relating to poverty alleviation. It is regrettable that the Chief Executive has not made the Chief Secretary for Administration, an even higher-level official, to lead the re-establishment of the Commission on Poverty to monitor and study more updated, feasible and comprehensive poverty alleviation initiatives.

Lastly, President, I would like to briefly talk about the problem of elderly in poverty. By 2033, the number of people aged 65 or above will exceed 2 million, more than double the present proportion to the general population. What is more, it should be noted that the number of elderly in poverty is now on the rise. Yet, the policy address has made no mention of policies to resolve the problem of elderly in poverty. The issuance of five health care vouchers worth \$50 each, as stated by Dr Secretary York CHOW, can only be considered a health care policy. Even though the proposal of raising the amount of Old Age Allowance in the Motion of Thanks was endorsed last week, there is still no response from the Government up to this very moment when I am delivering my speech. In 2006-2007, the Government already had a consolidated surplus of \$55.1 billion. Secretary John TSANG has also predicted the surplus could reach as high as \$70 billion to \$80 billion this fiscal year. Despite its sound financial position, the Government knows only how to be a miser rather than capitalizing on its surplus to resolve society's poverty problem in a targeted manner. This merely shows that our Government is devoid of objectives and vision.

With these remarks, President, I support Mr Frederick FUNG's motion on calling on the Government to re-establish the Commission on Poverty.

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

MR TAM YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): President, the number of low-income people aged 60 or above has risen sharply by 47% within a decade, from 230 000 in 1996 to 340 000 last year. At the same time, the number of elderly CSSA cases has also increased by nearly 50%, from 95 000 in 1996 to 153 000 last year. It is evident from these figures that the poverty problem confronting the elderly in Hong Kong is worsening.

Actually, we can still find in society a considerable number of elderly people living in poverty without applying for CSSA, partly because of the traditional concept held by most of them that the tens of thousands of dollars they have saved in half of their life-time are supposed to be "funeral savings", which cannot be used easily even if they have to tighten their belts all day long. It is also because of these so-called "funeral savings" that they cannot pass the means tests to be eligible for applying for CSSA. As a result, most of their daily expenses can only rely on "fruit grant" and a meagre income from their pensions.

All offices of the DAB would receive almost every day similar cases requesting our assistance in applying for electricity tariff or rental allowances. Some people have even expressed the wish to be relocated to older public housing units or more affordable public housing units. Given that Hong Kong has again been hit by inflation recently, the hardship experience by them is imaginable.

For this reason, the DAB has raised a new proposal. Actually, this proposal is nothing new. Under a similar proposal raised earlier, we expressed our hope that, in addition to "fruit grant" and the CSSA scheme, a maintenance grant scheme be launched with relaxed eligibility criteria for people aged 60 or above who are eligible for "fruit grant" but not CSSA, so that they will receive an amount probably lower than the amount of CSSA but higher than that of "fruit grant" to help them meet the needs of their daily life.

It is hoped that the maintenance grant can help the elderly living in poverty meet their basic and essential needs. Given the existing strong financial position of the SAR Government, we believe this scheme will not impose too heavy a burden on the Government. Therefore, we hope the authorities can heed our advice and study and consider the matter seriously to enable some of the elderly people in financial hardship to spend their twilight years happily.

President, although the poverty problem is a matter of great concern to society, sometimes we might have overlooked the welfare of some people of ethnic minorities. Although they are not indigenous Hong Kong people, they live in the same environment in which we live. Furthermore, they have made tremendous efforts in contributing to the economic prosperity of Hong Kong.

In recent years, the Government has devoted more attention to the socially disadvantaged and allocated resources to undertake relevant work. For instance, starting from this year, the Home Affairs Bureau has spent more than \$10 million launching a wide range of publicity campaigns to promote ethnic harmony and equality awareness. However, apart from these publicity campaigns, it seems that the SAR Government has yet to come up with any long-term and substantive measures to ameliorate the hardship experienced by ethnic minorities in living. We have even believed that the SAR Government simply does not have a good grasp of the living conditions of the local ethnic minorities. Without adequate information and data, it is difficult for the Government to formulate policies and measures that can meet their needs. As a most prominent example, no regular and systematic data collection work and study in respect of ethnic minorities have been undertaken by the Government so far.

At present, the population size of ethnic minorities can only be traced back to the Census conducted in 2001. Therefore, there is no way for us to verify the actual circumstances of ethnic minorities in such areas as employment, education, finance, health care, and so on. Very often, we can only rely on the fragmented surveys or studies conducted by non-governmental organizations. Given this inadequate awareness, we will easily overlook their needs. Let me cite employment as an example. At present, the information published on the Labour Department (LD) website advertising job vacancies is mainly in Chinese, and yet no counters providing interpretation services are provided to offer assistance to ethnic minorities. This reflects that the needs of ethnic minorities in seeking jobs are neglected. In addition, ethnic minority groups are relatively less open, and local employers in general do not have a good understanding of them and will probably have some bias against them. All these factors will in effect create more employment obstacles for them, and accelerate their chances of being marginalized in society.

In this connection, the DAB proposes that a comprehensive database be set up by the Government to, on the one hand, enable the Government to grasp the actual living conditions of the ethnic minorities living locally for the purpose of

formulating appropriate policies to improve their lot and, on the other, enhance the understanding of ethnic minorities among the general public. This will in turn help the general public put aside their prejudices against ethnic minorities and facilitate the integration of ethnic minorities with local groups.

I so submit. Thank you, President.

MR CHAN KAM-LAM (in Cantonese): Regarding today's motion, we can certainly see that the economy of Hong Kong has been recovering very fast in recent years, and the recovery has been quite good. However, for the people, we can say that poverty has remained a fairly serious problem among them. Of course, if we examine the situation with the description of "the disparity between the rich and the poor", we may notice that the phenomenon of "the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer" still exists.

We have conducted some analyses recently and found that while the property, stock and financial markets have all been surging drastically at a very rapid rate, the poverty problem at the lower stratum of society has remained unresolved — the problem cannot be solved right away. From the statistics of the 2006 By-census released recently by the Census and Statistics Department, we can see that the number of low-income households has increased, and also at a very rapid rate. Let us take the districts of Wong Tai Sin and Kwun Tong in the constituency I represent as examples. Among the many districts in Hong Kong, Kwun Tong is the fourth poorest district, whereas Wong Tai Sin ranks the sixth. As we all know, the major characteristic of these two districts is the presence of large amount of public housing, and over 75% of the population in both districts is living in public housing. Naturally, the income level of these old public housing districts may be relatively low due to the fact that it is predominately the elderly who are still living in these districts after their children have grown up and moved out of the districts. Nevertheless, such problems have existed for a long time.

Therefore, with regard to community planning, actually we hope the Government can think about this: Is it a good practice to place too many public housing estates within a single district? Apart from the optimal utilization of land use, should the Government provide more land for commercial and industrial use, or even by alter the existing land use, with a view to providing more employment opportunities for people living in these districts and enabling people at the lower stratum of society to get jobs in places near where they live?

What I want to say is, today's amendments have put forward some taxation issues. These are actually proposals already proposed, examined and discussed by us in the past, such as our proposals on progressive tax and capital gains tax. However, in view of the current economic conditions and fiscal revenues of Hong Kong — it is estimated that we shall enjoy a very handsome surplus this year — there is no need to introduce any new tax items in order to boost our revenue. On the contrary, we hope that there can be further reduction in salaries tax and profits tax, so that we can improve our measures in different aspects which can enhance our overall competitiveness, retain our talents, and so on. In doing so, we can on the one hand enhance our overall competitiveness so as to boost our economic development, and on the other, we can provide more employment opportunities for people at the lower stratum of society.

We have proposed recently that, if we wish to work focusedly towards the objective of alleviating poverty, our taxation measures must be targeted specifically at the workforce in the lower stratum of society, and find out how we can gradually reduce their tax burden. For example, we propose to increase the personal allowance from \$100,000 to \$108,000, that is, to restore it to the 2002-2003 level. Furthermore, can we slightly increase the amount of dependent parent allowance from the current \$30,000 to \$50,000? For families whose parents need to stay at care and attention homes, the children will be under enormous pressure in meeting the additional expenditure. Therefore, we hope that this type of tax allowance can be introduced to reduce the burden of the children.

On the other hand, with regard to rates, we do not advocate the adoption of a progressive system in charging rates. In fact, charging at the rate of 5%, the rates have already constituted a rather heavy burden for Hong Kong people. In certain districts, such as districts to the north of northern Kowloon, the people there basically have to pay an additional 3% Government rent, so we can say that the people's burden in this regard is rather heavy. Therefore, we do not encourage the Government to consider adopting such relatively redundant measures that will impose a heavier tax burden on the people.

I would like to speak on another issue as well. After hearing the speeches delivered by many colleagues, I do have some personal feelings. I feel that, if we wish to understand the nature of the disparity between the rich and the poor in Hong Kong we are actually facing the same problem, just as other countries

do. As the Secretary has said, we must identify ways of helping people to help themselves, so that they can properly position themselves in a competitive society and find a way out for themselves; and we should also help children, so that they can receive education. For example, we have proposed the introduction of 12 year of free education. These are rather good measures.

Another point I must make is that we must not convert the disparity between the rich and the poor into animosity between the rich and the poor. This is because all of us are facing the same situation in society. I believe taxpayers are equally concerned about and attach much emphasis to the alleviation of poverty, and they are willing to do something about it. In making any efforts to alleviate poverty, we must put our focus on helping the poor people to get rid of poverty as soon as possible, and enable them to land jobs. I think this is a very urgent task that must be done expeditiously.

Thank you, President.

MR ALBERT CHAN (in Cantonese): President, I would like to read out two excerpts from a speech. The first one reads, "(We must) protect their rights and interests, take the path of prosperity for all and promote their all-round development, to ensure that development is for the people, by the people and with the people sharing in its fruits." The second one reads, "We will gradually increase the share of personal income in the distribution of national income, and raise that of work remuneration in primary distribution. Vigorous efforts will be made to raise the income of low-income groups, gradually increase poverty-alleviation aid and the minimum wage, and set up a mechanism of regular pay increases for enterprise employees and a mechanism for guaranteeing payment of their salaries."

President, these two excerpts share many similarities with the positions of the League of Social Democrats. They are also very similar, in terms of their directions, to the many criticisms I have made in this Chamber with respect to how the Government should have offered help in and dealt with issues related to poverty alleviation. If these words were uttered by us, or by Members of this Council, members of the League of Social Democrats or professors in Hong Kong, the Government would simply ignore them and will not listen to them at all. However, let me tell the Secretary, and I would like the Secretary to tell the Chief Executive as well, that these excerpts were spoken by President HU Jintao

in his report to the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (NCCPC). From it, we can clearly see that the essence of governing the country definitely lies in the protection of the interests of the people. The essence of governing the country definitely lies in taking care of the basic necessities of the people. The essence of governing the country definitely lies also in starting all the work with the consideration of launching development and sharing the fruits of development with the people. The general livelihood and level of income of the people are important elements in the overall governance of the country and in handling any social conflicts. How do we raise the income of the low-income groups? How do we improve and raise their incomes? How do we raise the poverty-alleviation standards and the minimum wage? These are all extremely important issues. Our national leaders are well aware of the importance of these issues, and that is why they were incorporated into the Report to the 17th NCCPC.

However, has our Chief Executive addressed these issues? Let us take a look at the policy address released by the Chief Executive at more or less the same period, and we can see that he has addressed them in just the opposite direction — maybe this is a manifestation of the spirit of "one country, two systems". The Chief Executive would appear to be nervous and solemn whenever he meets with the President, as if he is taking instructions from the President. However, he has not completely followed the instructions and directions given by the President in the report; he simply ignores them all. I wonder if that is because we have "one country, two systems", so the Chief Executive of the SAR wants to demonstrate that his governance of Hong Kong under capitalism is different from China's (our great Motherland) way of governing the country in order to highlight his independence? Or is it because he wishes to demonstrate to the imperialist United States that Hong Kong does not necessarily have to follow the governance direction pursued by the People's Republic of China?

Let us take a look at the policy address. We can say that it contains only very few measures for tackling problems related to poverty. Such measures are so few in the policy address that it simply leaves people with the feeling that the Government is unsympathetic and indifferent, and can even be described as being cruel. Members have cited a lot of data, such as the Gini Coefficient; that 1.2 million people are poverty-stricken; and that many people are living in dire straits. They have provided a lot of data, which I am not going to repeat here. However, as we can see, while the Government is "giving out candies", it is

actually transferring benefits to people who are already very well-off. This makes us feel that the Government is unscrupulous. Let us take tax rebates as an example. The 50% tax rebates on salaries tax and personal income tax for the financial year 2006-2007 add up to a total of \$8.1 billion; the waiver of rates for the first two quarters for the financial year 2007-2008 amounts to \$2.5 billion; and there are countless examples similar to these. The tax concessions on wine and beer also amount to \$350 million. Yet, the funding the Government has made available for the Transport Support Scheme is only \$300 million, which is less than the tax concession given to wine. But the Government is still saying that the Scheme will be reviewed in due course.

President, for many years, I have kept saying in this Chamber that "poverty in an affluent society" is an unacceptable social phenomenon. This is even more unacceptable to a governor with conscience, one who frequently remarks that it is always the well-being of the people that is on his mind. I have kept saying that "poverty in an affluent society", together with "the act of allowing poverty to worsen", is a sin. Allowing this phenomenon to exist is a sin. Allowing this phenomenon to keep propagating and deteriorating is a sin of an even more serious degree, which can be compared to the original sin. I am a Catholic myself, and I understand that we need to pray to God and ask God for forgiveness of our original sin. Our Chief Executive goes to the church every day, though I do not know how he communicates with God. I do not pray very often, but every now and then, after I have witnessed injustices in society, for example, sometimes when I return home from a visit to Tin Shui Wai, I would pray, once or twice, at night. Whenever I pray, I would feel how deeply I have sinned, because I have not been able to help the people, and I have not been able to help the communities I have been in touch with to get rid of their agonies. Sometimes I feel truly remorseful myself, because no matter what I have said in this Chamber, the Government invariably refuses to listen.

Every time when our Chief Executive prays, I do not know how sincere he is? If he does pray sincerely, God must have given him the message, that he should salvage these poor people; that he should salvage these people whose number exceeds a million and who are living in great plight; that he should no longer live with the original sin, but should instead seek redemption by doing some good deeds. However, it seems that this message can never get across to the Chief Executive. Since the Chief Executive has not been able to receive the message from God, I hope these two excerpts of speech delivered by President HU Jintao can give a shocking awakening to both our Government and our Chief

Executive, that these are the basic directions and principles of governing a society. These words were spoken only recently, and I hope the Secretary can present these two excerpts to the Chief Executive for his perusal, so as to enable him to understand the major directions and principles contained in the report to the 17th NCCPC. Thank you, President.

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

MR ALBERT HO (in Cantonese): Madam President, just now Mr Albert CHAN has quoted some excerpts from President HU Jintao's Report to the 17th NCCPC. I wonder how my Honourable colleagues in this Council would react to such excerpts.

I have heard Mr Tommy CHEUNG's earlier speech. He seems to believe this is how the capitalist system should work, that it should come with low tax rates, and those who are well-off should be allowed to make more money. He seems to find the disparity between the rich and the poor a natural phenomenon, and that its existence does not matter, nor is it anything special. Therefore, they oppose the Government's adoption of any fiscal policies to tackle the great disparity between the rich and the poor.

Mr CHAN Kam-lam also seems to have said that the disparity between the rich and the poor is a reality, and it is something that does not necessarily have to be eradicated, as long as it does not give rise to any confrontation; this is the most important point. In other words, as long as stability can be maintained in society, the existence of the disparity between the rich and the poor is acceptable. I believe many people cannot accept such a viewpoint because it violates social justice, and it also represents a misunderstanding of many basic ideas in the development of the modern capitalist system.

For many people, their understanding of the capitalist system has become outdated. They still think that everything is still the same as in the 18th century; they still think that rampant class exploitation should still be tolerated in modern society; and they still think that the existence of poverty is a natural phenomenon, and that it should be fine as long as people are fed and sheltered and are spared from dying of hunger. Sorry, I cannot accept such ideas, because they put Hong Kong, a civilized cosmopolitan city, to shame. If

someone still says that HU Jintao's words only reflect socialist theories, which have nothing to do with us due to "one country, two systems", they have misunderstood or disregarded the undertaking Hong Kong has made in the protection of the interests of the people in its capacity as a signatory to international covenants, including those that cover economic, social and cultural rights. The people need to lead a life in which not only their right to survival is protected, their hunger satisfied and their body warmly clad, but they also demand to have dignity, civilization and the rule of law.

In fact, very often many people would look at the word "poverty" from a narrowly-defined and absolute concept, which is strictly limited to the concept of food and shelter. These people are of the opinion that as long as food and shelter are provided, there is no poverty problem. Because they think that, if the people can maintain their right to survival above this line, then poverty does not exist.

However, Madam President, in today's society, there is a relative concept of poverty. There are different survival requirements for people living in modern and developed places and those living in poverty-stricken places. By "poverty", the concept is relative. If we say that no one in Hong Kong dies of hunger, and no one dies of illness due to the lack of proper medical treatment, does it mean that poverty does not exist in Hong Kong? This is a most backward and outdated viewpoint. In Hong Kong, we also demand equal rights and equal development opportunities.

Madam President, in fact, with reference to the extent of development in Hong Kong now, the fact that we can still see poverty as a social problem is enough reason to put us to shame. We should have felt all the more shameful when the Human Rights Commission found it necessary to instruct Hong Kong to properly handle incidents in which many elderly persons have not been properly taken care of. I really do not understand how the Commission on Poverty could have the audacity to tell people that it could be dissolved because it had already laid down the basic framework within which relevant measures could be implemented.

In fact, there is still a lot of work to do in alleviating poverty, such as setting objectives, formulating specific guidelines as well as a great number of comprehensive and long-term considerations, including retirement and unemployment problems. We must not just aim at tackling inter-generational

poverty to the neglect of the poverty problem faced by the current generation. We can tell many children that we shall provide them with development funds, so they will have very good development opportunities in future. However, when these children are living in a poor family and a poor environment, with their family members living in abject poverty and struggling hard to keep their heads above the poverty line, how can they grow up healthily, to have proper personal development, so as to move up the social ladder?

Madam President, we are extremely disappointed with the Chief Executive as, on the one hand, he has refused to make greater efforts to alleviate poverty, but on the other, he has given away billions of dollars to the better-off class — and such measures are even long-term tax reductions — instead of allocating such amounts to help the most needy people. However, I can only say that, as long as there is no democratic system in Hong Kong, such problems can never be solved.

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

(Mr CHAN Kam-lam raised his hand in indication)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr CHAN Kam-lam, do you wish to clarify your earlier speech?

MR CHAN KAM-LAM (in Cantonese): Yes, because Mr Albert HO has mentioned me just now. He said that I had mentioned in my speech that the problem of poverty did exist in all societies, and it seemed that, as long as they did not give rise to confrontations, the problem of the disparity between the rich and the poor was acceptable.

In fact, this was not what I had meant, nor had I ever made such a remark. I pointed out that some wealthy people or rich people were also very willing to assist the poor people in combating poverty. Therefore, the speech I delivered today only represents some of the views of the DAB on the issue of alleviating poverty. Mr LI Kwok-ying has also mentioned many other proposals of the DAB

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): You need only clarify the part that has been misunderstood.

MR CHAN KAM-LAM (in Cantonese): I wish to clarify our position. We did not mean that. Therefore, I hope Mr Albert HO can understand this properly, and refrains from quoting me out of context.

Thank you, President.

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

(No Member indicated a wish to speak)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): If not, then I now call upon Mr Frederick FUNG to speak on the amendments. You may speak up to five minutes.

MR FREDERICK FUNG (in Cantonese): President, I wish to thank the several Members who have moved amendments to my original motion. In fact, my original motion can be divided into three parts. The first part is the "premise". I presume that the disparity between the rich and the poor is becoming more serious in Hong Kong, and this presumption is actually supported by lots of data, which I had already mentioned in the past. This explains why I have not quoted such data again. Instead, I have quoted the paper provided to Members by CHUA Hoi-wai of the Hong Kong Council of Social Services. The second part is the core, in which, I hope this Council (the Legislative Council) can urge the Government to re-establish the Commission on Poverty (CoP). This is actually the most important part of the entire motion. What is the purpose of establishing the CoP? What kind of effect is it intended to achieve? It is the formulation of measures for alleviating poverty, and we believe that, through ameliorating the poverty problem, we can reduce social conflicts, thereby attaining social harmony. This is the third part.

The amendments proposed by colleagues are actually all focused on the second part of the motion. Of course, I believe none of the colleagues would deny that the disparity between the rich and the poor is becoming more serious. Therefore, I think all the amendments agree with my "premise". In fact, most

of the amendments have "appended" many things to the core of my motion. What do I mean by "appending" many things to it? For example, I propose that the Government should re-establish the CoP and formulate a policy to alleviate poverty, then colleagues would put forward many policies that they think can alleviate poverty, including those in respect of the elderly, the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, the medical system, or even financial or taxation systems; and through a series of systems, such policies can be implemented in the direction of alleviating poverty.

For myself, I am not going to evaluate such suggestions one by one, so as to point out which ones I agree with or which I do not. Since Members have some suggestions, so it would be good to have all of them presented. As long as we can have the CoP re-established later on, we may then pass all these suggestions to it, and let it consider each and every one of them before deciding which are useful and which are not and thus should be discarded. As far as I am concerned, these poverty alleviation measures are individual policies or suggestions put forward by colleagues, so they can be presented to the CoP in future for its consideration. Although I basically accept this direction, I am not going to study them one by one and point out which ones I agree with or which I do not, nor would I discuss their pros and cons.

Of so many amendments, as I have mentioned just now, Mr LI Kwok-ying's amendment tries to amend the core of my motion, that is, it says, "..... when necessary, re-establish the Commission on Poverty". He adds "when necessary" before "re-establish the Commission on Poverty". This is an amendment to my core part. Since I have put forward this motion, I certainly feel that there is the need to re-establish the CoP now. Instead of proposing to establish it one year or two years later, I am requesting it be re-established immediately. He now adds "when necessary" to it. In other words, if he finds there is no difference between his amendment and my motion, then it is not necessary for him to propose this amendment. Since he has added this amendment, then it is definitely different from my original motion, and the difference lies in the word "necessary" in the phrase "when necessary". Probably, in his opinion, only when some of the "premises", conditions or situations envisaged by Mr LI Kwok-ying have emerged would there be a need to establish the CoP.

I find it unacceptable to grant the Government any flexibility in the timing of "establishing the CoP now". This is because I worry that this may lead to the

emergence of some inaccurate messages. For the first possible inaccurate message, it could be telling the Government that it may not be necessary for the CoP to be established now, so the Government or we may establish it when we feel there is the need to do so. The second possible inaccurate message is: The present disparity between the rich and the poor or the poverty problem is not so urgent, thus it may not necessitate the immediate establishment of the CoP now, so it can be established when necessary. Regarding the third possibility, Chief Secretary for Administration Henry TANG had mentioned this in past debates on policy addresses: In the past, the CoP had made a series of recommendations which can be implemented on a trial basis for a period of time. Then, depending on the effectiveness of such measures, the Government would then decide whether there is the need to re-establish the CoP. However, I think that, regardless of which possible inaccurate message would eventually be conveyed to the Government, it would make the Government think that it is not necessary to establish the CoP now. I cannot accept this.

In my earlier speech, I already said that, though the CoP had made 53 recommendations, some of the Government's own policies were actually creating poverty; and there were some new poverty factors which had not been discussed in meetings of the CoP. Therefore, if the CoP is to be established, then instead of having it established when necessary, it must be established immediately. Therefore, I agree with all the poverty alleviation proposals put forward by various Members. The only exception is the wording of "when necessary" proposed by Mr LI Kwok-ying, about which I have some reservation. If Members feel that it is necessary to have the CoP re-established immediately, then I hope Members would not vote for his amendment. Of course, to abstain or vote against it, the decision rests with Members. But definitely Members must not vote in favour of "when necessary". Thank you, President.

SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE (in Cantonese): Madam President, once again, I wish to thank Mr Frederick FUNG for moving this motion today and other Members for putting forward their valuable and concrete proposals on helping the poor.

With the advent of knowledge-based society, globalization and the rapid advances in information technology, the widening wealth gap is now a global trend. The incomes of people engaged in the financial industries and high value-added occupations have been rising continuously, but at the same time the

incomes of lowly menials and low-skilled employees have not seen any increases. It is obvious that some people are not yet able to share the fruit of prosperity. The Government believes that in trying to tackle this anomaly, it should not attempt to narrow the wealth gap through high levels of tax and welfare. At the same time, we should also ensure that the room for and opportunities of wealth creation will not diminish, for wealth creation has been the key to our success.

We believe that the role of the Government should be confined to creating a suitable environment, meaning that it should adopt a multi-pronged policy to assist the low-income group. This includes promoting infrastructure development to induce wage increase, expanding retraining programmes to help the middle-aged and grassroots upgrade their skills, so as to improve their competitiveness in the ever-changing labour market; continuing to invest heavily in education, child development and fostering social mobility, so as to reduce inter-generational poverty; the establishment of social enterprises to encourage tripartite collaboration among the Government, society and business; and adding value to social capital as the target of welfare services development.

In the course of implementing this whole series of medium- and long-term initiatives, the Government will never overlook the needs of the disadvantaged and those who cannot support themselves financially. The views expressed by Members just now can aptly reflect their concern about and understanding of the plight faced by the disadvantaged and the poor, especially the elderly, people with disabilities, new arrivals, ethnic minorities, children, single-parent families, families at risk beset with domestic violence and families with members who are mental patients. I now wish to give a brief account of the Government's efforts to help these social groups.

First, I wish to talk about the elderly. Last week, the various political parties and many Members requested the Government to increase the Old Age Allowance (OAA), so as to improve the life of poor elderly people. I have explained very clearly that the "fruit grant" is not intended to solve the financial difficulties of elderly people. Members all know that senior citizens aged between 65 and 69 can apply for the Normal OAA, and the income and means tests are quite lenient. Senior citizens aged 70 or above can apply for the Higher OAA. As Members know, the applicant does not have to undergo any income and means tests in this case.

With regard to those elderly people who cannot support themselves due to financial difficulties, there is the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme, under which higher standard rates, special grants and supplements are provided by the Government to cater for the special needs of elderly people. Free medical services are also available to elderly CSSA recipients and low-income senior citizens at public hospitals (including their Accident and Emergency Departments) and public clinics. In the policy address this year, a one-off funding of \$200 million is also earmarked to help improve the homes of poor elderly people.

Mr LI Kwok-ying proposes to abolish the permitted period of absence from Hong Kong applicable to OAA applicants. As I mentioned when explaining the overall rationale last week, the Government already extended the permitted period of absence from 180 days to 240 days a year starting from 1 October 2005. In other words, as long as the recipient stays in Hong Kong for no less than 90 days a year, he will be able to benefit from the permitted period of absence. On the one hand, this measure can take account of the fact that some senior citizens would like to spend more time outside Hong Kong on seeing places, visiting relatives or short stays. On the other hand, it can also ensure that public money is spent on helping those Hong Kong residents whose place of permanent residence is Hong Kong.

I also explained very clearly last week that the Government will gladly continue to heed the views expressed by Members and the various social sectors on what measures must be implemented to assist the elderly persons in need. Just now, Mr TAM Yiu-chung proposed to set up an elderly maintenance grant scheme. We are aware of his proposal. We will of course carefully consider all different proposals, in the hope that we can formulate focused and pertinent measures that can really provide further assistance to those elderly persons in genuine need. This is the most important point.

Members are also very concerned about people with disabilities. During the preceding motion debate, I already gave my views on the provision of transport fare concession to people with disabilities. I do not intend to make any repetition here. I only wish to emphasize that the Government is seriously considering the idea of using public money to provide transport subsidy to people with disabilities. It is expected that we can make a decision in the next couple of months and inform Members accordingly.

The support of their family members is very important to people with disabilities. For this reason, we will follow the direction set out in the Hong Kong Rehabilitation Programme Plan 2007 and strengthen the various support services for the family members of people with disabilities, including day care and occasional care services, the Home-based Training and Support Service, counselling services, caring skills training, parents' resource centres and the Community Rehabilitation Network. In the coming year, we plan to reorganize the community support service of the Social Welfare Department by adopting a district-based policy for the provision of "one-stop" community support service to people with disabilities and their family members in the various districts. The aim is to enhance service efficiency and strengthen the support and training for people with disabilities and their family members. In this way, it is hoped that the burden of carers can be relieved and their caring skills upgraded, thus enabling people with disabilities to remain in the communities with their family members or friends.

With regard to new arrivals, the Government has been offering a whole series of preventive, support and also counselling services to individuals and families in need (including new arrivals) through 61 integrated family service centres and two integrated service centres. Group activities and various programmes, such as adaptation programmes and mutual-help groups, are also organized for new arrivals to assist them in coping with the problems they face after coming to live in Hong Kong.

The International Social Service Hong Kong Branch (ISS Hong Kong) has also stationed staff at Lo Wu Station and the Registration of Persons Office located in Cheung Sha Wan to provide prompt information services to new arrivals. Integrated information on social service in Hong Kong is disseminated proactively. In case any new arrivals are willing to receive welfare services, ISS Hong Kong is happy to refer them to the appropriate service providers. If a person assessed to be in need of assistance indicates his tentative refusal to receive any service, ISS Hong Kong will continue to follow up his case, get in touch with him and provide him with outreach service, with a view to helping him as much as possible.

The Community Investment and Inclusion Fund encourages people of different ages and from different social strata and sectors to build up mutual assistance networks. It is hoped that this can reinforce their sense of belonging to the community and in turn achieve the aim of social integration. Nearly 70%

of the projects are targeted on new arrivals to help them adapt to the new life in Hong Kong, one example being the adaptation courses organized for their children.

Members are equally concerned about ethnic minorities. We have likewise made many efforts for them. The Government has been providing them with various types of support services to help them cope with the problems they face in Hong Kong, including the publication of a public service guide, community familiarization, community education activities and Cantonese classes. We will continue with our efforts and reach out to ethnic minorities, so as to identify problems at an early stage and prevent the occurrence of serious family tragedies. Through the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund mentioned a moment ago, we have also been making many efforts. Many of the projects under the Fund are targeted specially on helping ethnic minorities.

As for children, we are also very concerned about their well-being. As I mentioned at the beginning of this motion debate, the Government has earmarked \$300 million for the setting up of a Child Development Fund, and preparations for a pilot scheme are already underway. We hope that the proposal can be implemented towards the end of 2007. Besides, we will expand the Comprehensive Child Development Service, extending its scope from Sham Shui Po, Tin Shui Wai, Tuen Mun, Tseung Kwan O, Tung Chung and Yuen Long to Kwun Tong and other districts, with a view to benefiting a greater number of needy children and families.

We understand that single-parent families and dual-income families in which both parents work have an especially great need for child care assistance. At present, there are 177 non-profit-making daytime kindergarten-cum-child care centres in Hong Kong, providing 12 600 places for children aged six or below. There are also 12 subsidized independent child care centres which provide some 600 places for children aged three or below. These centres also provide some 400 occasional child care places and 1 200 or so extended-hour child care places for those parents who cannot look after their children outside the opening hours of kindergartens and child care centres. Families in financial difficulties may apply for assistance under different subsidy schemes to pay for the aforesaid child care services.

Regarding single parent centres and new immigrant centres, I would like to give a very brief reply. Dr Fernando CHEUNG hopes that these centres can

be reopened. After careful analysis, we do not think that there is such a need. The reason is that currently, through integrated family service centres, we are already able to deliver comprehensive, diversified and convenient services. And, there are also many special follow-up services. It may not be advisable to confine such services to any particular type of centres. Therefore, at the moment, we have no plans to reopen single parent centres and service centres for new arrivals.

Domestic violence is also a great concern of Members. Over the past three years, the Government has invested huge resources in the implementation of active measures to improve the situation. These measures include the provision of additional manpower for Family and Child Protective Services Units and integrated family service centres, improving district welfare planning and cross-sectoral co-operation, setting up new crisis intervention and support centres, enhancing the functions of women refuge centres, strengthening the 24-hour hotline of the Social Welfare Department and increasing child care and clinical psychological services.

Apart from stepping up support and assistance, we also actively promote family education and the establishment of community mutual help networks, with a view to building up social capital and a society marked by mutual concern and stronger abilities to cope with adversities. In this connection, the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund has been encouraging the building up of a community safety net based on neighbourhood spirit. We will take stock of the experience gained from all these projects and explore how to further promote neighbourhood spirit.

Let me now respond to Members' concern about the re-establishment of the Commission on Poverty (CoP). When I spoke for the first time in this motion debate, I already explained the Government's position in detail. I may add a few more points here. We certainly understand that Mr Frederick FUNG's proposal is totally well-intentioned. But I wish to reiterate that the Government does not see any need for re-establishing the CoP now. We think that the most pragmatic action now should be the implementation of the 53 recommendations made by the CoP. This is the most urgent task. And, as Members know, the implementation of any recommendations will inevitably take some time. Therefore, I think that at the moment, we should seek to implement all the recommendations with a pragmatic attitude. I must emphasize that the task force will not only focus on implementing the 53 recommendations. We will also explore whether any other new proposals should be implemented to

cope with social changes and answer new aspirations. Through the various Policy Bureaux, we will continue to maintain contact and communication with different stakeholders. In other words, the task force will be more than just an internal task force. We will co-operate with the wider community and strive to do a good job through the holding of workshops, seminars and talks to gauge the views of stakeholders.

As recommended by the CoP earlier, we will, on the one hand, continue to focus our resources on looking after the disadvantaged members of society and people who cannot support themselves financially. On the other hand, we will strive to create employment opportunities for people with working abilities (including CSSA recipients) and enhance their employability, so as to help them stand on their own feet and engage in sustained employment in the labour market. We will also create a social environment conducive to the development of social enterprises.

Madam President, with these remarks, I hope that Members can continue to support the Government's work of alleviating poverty. Thank you.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now call upon Mr LI Kwok-ying to move his amendment to the motion.

MR LI KWOK-YING (in Cantonese): President, I move that Mr Frederick FUNG's motion be amended.

Mr LI Kwok-ying moved the following amendment: (Translation)

"To add 'the Chief Executive has advocated 'investing for a caring society' in this year's Policy Address and has correspondingly put forward improvement measures, but' after 'That,'; to add 'the relevant measures are inadequate to resolve the problems,' after 'more serious in Hong Kong,'; to add 'take positive actions and, when necessary,' after 'urges the Government to'; to delete 'and' after 'the Commission on Poverty' and substitute with ', so as to'; to delete 'so as to' after 'policy on combating poverty' and substitute with ', ' ; to delete 'thereby improving' after 'the rich and the poor,' and substitute with 'improve'; to delete 'reducing' after 'the life of the poor,' and substitute with 'reduce'; to delete 'promoting' after 'social conflicts and' and substitute

with "promote"; and to add "; meanwhile, this Council also urges the Government to implement the following measures: (a) abolishing the restrictions on the permitted period of absence from Hong Kong for applicants of the Old Age Allowance; (b) extending the period during which the On-the-job Training Allowance is payable under the Employment Programme for the Middle-aged; (c) providing concessionary transport fares for persons with disabilities; (d) allocating additional resources to assist poor children so that they can enjoy more opportunities for proper development; (e) formulating measures to facilitate the integration of the socially disadvantaged (such as the new arrivals and ethnic minorities, etc) into the community; and (f) further improving the quality of public medical services, and alleviating the medical burden on the socially disadvantaged" immediately before the full stop."

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the amendment, moved by Mr LI Kwok-ying to Mr Frederick FUNG'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 HO rose to claim a division.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr Albert HO 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 Raymond HO, Dr LUI Ming-wah, Mr Bernard CHAN, Mrs Sophie LEUNG, 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, Dr Joseph LEE, Mr Daniel LAM, Mr Jeffrey LAM, Mr Andrew LEUNG, Mr WONG Ting-kwong, Mr CHIM Pui-chung, Prof Patrick LAU and Mr KWONG Chi-kin voted for the amendment.

Ms Margaret NG, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, Mr SIN Chung-kai, Dr KWOK Ka-ki and Dr Fernando CHEUNG abstained.

Geographical Constituencies:

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, Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming and Mr Albert CHENG voted for the amendment.

Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, Mr Albert CHAN and Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung voted against the amendment.

Mr Albert HO, Mr Martin LEE, Mr Fred LI, Mr James TO, Dr YEUNG Sum, Ms Emily LAU, Mr Frederick FUNG, Ms Audrey EU, Mr LEE Wing-tat, Mr Alan LEONG and Mr Ronny TONG abstained.

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

THE PRESIDENT announced that among the Members returned by functional constituencies, 25 were present, 20 were in favour of the amendment and five abstained; while among the Members returned by geographical constituencies

through direct elections, 24 were present, nine were in favour of the amendment, three against it and 11 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.

MS MIRIAM LAU (in Cantonese): President, I move that in the event of further divisions being claimed in respect of the motion on "Alleviating the disparity between the rich and the poor and re-establishing the Commission on Poverty" or any amendments thereto, the Council do proceed to each of such divisions immediately after the division bell has been rung for one minute.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by Ms Miriam LAU be passed.

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

(No Member indicated a wish to speak)

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)

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I think the question is agreed by a majority respectively of each of the two groups of Members who are present. I declare the motion passed.

I order that in the event of further divisions being claimed in respect of the motion on "Alleviating the disparity between the rich and the poor and re-establishing the Commission on Poverty" or any amendments thereto, the

Council do proceed to each of such divisions immediately after the division bell has been rung for one minute.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung, you may move your amendment.

MR LEUNG KWOK-HUNG (in Cantonese): President, I move that Mr Frederick FUNG's motion be amended.

Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung moved the following amendment: (Translation)

"To delete "re-establish the" after "urges the Government to" and substitute with "establish a"; to delete "and formulate" after "Commission on Poverty" and substitute with "with substantive powers so that"; and to add "can be formulated, including introducing a progressive tax system for wealth redistribution," after "policy on combating poverty"."

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the amendment, moved by Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung to Mr Frederick FUNG's motion, be passed.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now call upon Mr SIN Chung-kai to move his amendment to Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung's amendment.

MR SIN CHUNG-KAI (in Cantonese): President, I move that Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung's amendment be amended.

Mr SIN Chung-kai moved the following amendment to Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung's amendment: (Translation)

"To delete "including introducing a progressive tax system for wealth redistribution" after "can be formulated," and substitute with "and the Government should also introduce progressive rates of profits tax and rates charges, and abolish the standard rate for salaries tax"."

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the amendment, moved by Mr SIN Chung-kai to Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung's amendment, 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 SIN Chung-kai rose to claim a division.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr SIN Chung-kai has claimed a division. The division bell will ring for one minute, 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, Mr WONG Kwok-hing, Dr KWOK Ka-ki, Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr KWONG Chi-kin voted for the amendment.

Dr Raymond HO, Dr LUI Ming-wah, Mr Bernard CHAN, Mrs Sophie LEUNG, 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 and Prof Patrick LAU voted against the amendment.

Mr WONG Yung-kan, Dr Joseph LEE, Mr WONG Ting-kwong and Mr CHIM Pui-chung 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, Ms Emily LAU, Mr Albert CHAN, Mr Frederick FUNG, Ms Audrey EU, Mr LEE Wing-tat, Mr Alan LEONG, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung, Mr Ronny TONG and Mr Albert CHENG voted for the amendment.

Mrs Selina CHOW voted against the amendment.

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 abstained.

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

THE PRESIDENT announced that among the Members returned by functional constituencies, 25 were present, eight were in favour of the amendment, 13 against it and four abstained; while among the Members returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, 25 were present, 16 were in favour of the amendment, one against it and seven 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): I now put the question to you and that is: That Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung's amendment to Mr Frederick FUNG's motion, 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)

Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung rose to claim a division.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung has claimed a division. The division bell will ring for one minute, 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, Ms LI Fung-ying, Mr WONG Kwok-hing, Dr KWOK Ka-ki, Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr KWONG Chi-kin voted for the amendment.

Dr Raymond HO, Dr LUI Ming-wah, Mr Bernard CHAN, Mrs Sophie LEUNG, 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 and Prof Patrick LAU voted against the amendment.

Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, Mr SIN Chung-kai, Mr WONG Yung-kan, Dr Joseph LEE, Mr WONG Ting-kwong and Mr CHIM Pui-chung abstained.

Geographical Constituencies:

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, Mr Ronny TONG and Mr Albert CHENG voted for the amendment.

Mrs Selina CHOW voted against the amendment.

Mr Albert HO, Mr Martin LEE, Mr Fred LI, Mr James TO, Mr CHAN Kam-lam, Mr Jasper TSANG, Dr YEUNG Sum, Mr LAU Kong-wah, Miss CHOY So-yuk, Mr TAM Yiu-chung, Mr LEE Wing-tat, Mr LI Kwok-ying and Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming abstained.

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

THE PRESIDENT announced that among the Members returned by functional constituencies, 25 were present, six were in favour of the amendment, 13 against it and six abstained; while among the Members returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, 25 were present, 10 were in favour of the amendment, one against it and 13 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): Dr Fernando CHEUNG, you may move your amendment.

DR FERNANDO CHEUNG (in Cantonese): President, I move that Mr Frederick FUNG's motion be amended.

Dr Fernando CHEUNG moved the following amendment: (Translation)

"To add "and targeted" after "more comprehensive"; to delete "so as to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor" after "policy on combating poverty" and substitute with ", particularly in remote areas where a large number of low-income and socially disadvantaged families live, but the leisure and cultural facilities, medical and social services fall far short of the actual needs of the residents; as such, the Government must take into full account the characteristics of the population structures in these areas when allocating community facilities and services, appropriately relax the ratio of population to such facilities and services, and providing strategic and more specialized support services targeted at socially disadvantaged families such as those which are single-parent, poor, under the potential

threat of domestic violence, or having family members who are mentally or chronically ill or disabled, including the reopening of Single Parent Centres and Post Migration Centres in the districts concerned"; to delete ", reducing" after "the life of the poor" and substitute with "; at the same time, the Government should strive to create more employment opportunities in these areas, and relax the eligibility criteria for applying for the pilot Transport Support Scheme, so as to alleviate the burden of travelling expenses on the residents concerned, narrow the gap between the rich and the poor, reduce"; and to delete "promoting" after "social conflicts and" and substitute with "promote".

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the amendment, moved by Dr Fernando CHEUNG to Mr Frederick FUNG'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.

(No hands raised)

Mr CHAN Kam-lam rose to claim a division.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr CHAN Kam-lam has claimed a division. The division bell will ring for one minute, 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 Raymond HO, Dr LUI Ming-wah, Ms Margaret NG, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, Mr Bernard CHAN, Mrs Sophie LEUNG, Mr SIN Chung-kai, Mr WONG Yung-kan, Mr LAU Wong-fat, Ms Miriam LAU, Ms LI Fung-ying, Mr Tommy CHEUNG, Mr Vincent FANG, Mr WONG Kwok-hing, Dr Joseph LEE, Mr Daniel LAM, Mr Jeffrey LAM, Mr Andrew LEUNG, Dr KWOK Ka-ki, Dr Fernando CHEUNG, Mr WONG Ting-kwong, Mr CHIM Pui-chung, Prof Patrick LAU and Mr KWONG Chi-kin voted for the amendment.

Mr Abraham SHEK abstained.

Geographical Constituencies:

Mr Albert HO, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan, Mr Martin LEE, Mr Fred LI, Mrs Selina CHOW, Mr James TO, Mr CHAN Kam-lam, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, Dr YEUNG Sum, Mr LAU Kong-wah, Ms Emily LAU, Miss CHOY So-yuk, Mr TAM Yiu-chung, Mr Albert CHAN, Mr Frederick FUNG, Ms Audrey EU, Mr LEE Wing-tat, Mr LI Kwok-ying, Mr Alan LEONG, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung, Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming, Mr Ronny TONG and Mr Albert CHENG voted for the amendment.

Mr Jasper TSANG abstained.

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

THE PRESIDENT announced that among the Members returned by functional constituencies, 25 were present, 24 were in favour of the amendment and one abstained; while among the Members returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, 25 were present, 23 were in favour of the amendment and one abstained. Since the question was agreed by a majority of each of the two groups of Members present, she therefore declared that the amendment was carried.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr Frederick FUNG, you may now reply and you have five minutes 14 seconds.

MR FREDERICK FUNG (in Cantonese): I wish to thank the 18 Members who have spoken on this motion today. Each of them has put forth many views on alleviating poverty, all of which merit the Government's consideration.

Although my motion is not about implementing individual policies on alleviating poverty, I am very disappointed with the Secretary's reply that there is not the need right now to re-establish the CoP. I believe the Secretary is aware that — as he was also a member of the ex-CoP — taking transport expenses as an example, the CoP agreed to it then. The Legislative Council also unanimously supported it. However, he also knows that this policy committed for implementation within one year is yet to be implemented. I also know that the then Chairman, that is, Financial Secretary Henry TANG, basically supported this. Why, then, is it not implemented? As far as I understand it, it is because the Secretary of Department was unable to convince the Director of Bureau, the Director of Bureau was unable to convince the Director of Department, and the Director of Department was unable to convince his subordinates. The policy has thus been dragged on for over one year. In the end, "Ah Yan" indicated that he wanted to "splash red paint", while we also indicated that if the policy remained stalled, we would move a motion of no confidence. It was not until then that the Government suddenly announced within two days the implementation of the policy.

Members can see that, be it the Subcommittee to Study the Subject of Combating Poverty of the Legislative Council, or the poverty alleviation group of the Government, they serve the same important function, that is, taking forward policies.

Actually, sometimes, for matters unable to be settled among officials, some external force may be helpful. After all, this is not a major measure, involving only \$300-odd million and concerning only the provision of transport subsidies which is one-way. If the Government needs to roll out a major project in future, for example, children fund, training, change of the education system, or even whether the Government has to outsource projects when conducting work on helping the poor, and the scenario of the green light being given at the

top but hold-ups arising at lower levels happens again, that will indeed be "lethal", or more precisely "lethal to the poor". This is the first point.

The second point is, those 53 recommendations certainly must be carried out, but what are the results of such work? Are there any obstacles encountered? Is it necessary to have a CoP to provide advice or even monitor the Government in implementing the recommendations? The CoP does have this role.

Members are aware that the Government, despite having indicated that it will develop social enterprises, ultimately has to convene a summit and some other meetings before doing it. It is hard to know how long these discussions will take. If there is a CoP, there will be a central co-ordinating committee to provide assistance, and this commission is inter-departmental. President, having said so much just now, I believe you are also aware that when the Government talks about helping the poor, it involves labour, welfare, education, training, taxation and out-sourced government works contracts. I am really worried that the Secretary, I am not I believe he is capable, just that his post restricts his capability because he is only in charge of work under the Labour and Welfare Bureau. Education is not under his portfolio; out-sourced government works projects are not under his portfolio; taxation is not under his portfolio. As Ms LI Fung-ying said just now, what can he do?

Some pointed out that this is a downgraded approach. Actually, I agree that an inter-departmental CoP should be established and its responsible person should be vested with powers overriding all other departments, such that decisions can be made on this platform. These decisions I said just now that I am very worried. For a matter as trivial as providing transport subsidies has been handled for over one year and ultimately went against the promise made by the Chairman of the CoP. If the Secretary is now tasked with this matter, I am worried that he, despite his overwhelming commitment, does not have sufficient power to do it.

Thus, I feel the need to establish the CoP. I wish to tell the Government that this CoP will not become an obstacle, but rather, a helping force; and more importantly, it will be able to provide assistance to Hong Kong society, the needy and the poor.

The last point I wish to mention is that there has been a lot of criticism among the public, in particular the stakeholders, of the 53 recommendations. They hold that the recommendations only touch on superficial problems without any discussion on the core issues. For instance, why has a poverty line not been drawn? Will the government policies now create poverty? Regarding the prevailing structural unemployment problem, has the ex-CoP discussed it? All these are indeed new issues which need to be addressed. I thus think that we need to jump out of this framework and consider not just the 53 recommendations. When new issues which need discussion surface, I hold that the CoP has to be established.

President, I hope that Members will also support the amended motion and that the Government can truly consider establishing as soon as possible the CoP. Thank you, President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now put the question to you and that is: That the motion moved by Mr Frederick FUNG, as amended by Dr Fernando CHEUNG, be passed. Will those in favour please raise their hands?

(Members raised their hands)

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

(No hands raised)

Ms Miriam LAU rose to claim a division.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Ms Miriam LAU has claimed a division. The division bell will ring for one minute, 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 Raymond HO, Dr LUI Ming-wah, Ms Margaret NG, Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, Mrs Sophie LEUNG, Mr SIN Chung-kai, Mr WONG Yung-kan, Mr LAU Wong-fat, Ms Miriam LAU, Ms LI Fung-ying, Mr Tommy CHEUNG, Mr Vincent FANG, Mr WONG Kwok-hing, Dr Joseph LEE, Mr Daniel LAM, Mr Jeffrey LAM, Mr Andrew LEUNG, Dr KWOK Ka-ki, Dr Fernando CHEUNG, Mr WONG Ting-kwong, Mr CHIM Pui-chung, Prof Patrick LAU and Mr KWONG Chi-kin voted for the motion.

Mr Bernard CHAN and Mr Abraham SHEK abstained.

Geographical Constituencies:

Mr Albert HO, Mr LEE Cheuk-yan, Mr Martin LEE, Mr Fred LI, Mr James TO, Mr CHAN Kam-lam, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, Dr YEUNG Sum, Mr LAU Kong-wah, Ms Emily LAU, Miss CHOY So-yuk, Mr TAM Yiu-chung, Mr Albert CHAN, Mr Frederick FUNG, Ms Audrey EU, Mr LEE Wing-tat, Mr LI Kwok-ying, Mr Alan LEONG, Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung, Mr CHEUNG Hok-ming, Mr Ronny TONG and Mr Albert CHENG voted for the motion.

Mrs Selina CHOW and Mr Jasper TSANG abstained.

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

THE PRESIDENT announced that among the Members returned by functional constituencies, 25 were present, 23 were in favour of the motion as amended and two abstained; while among the Members returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections, 25 were present, 22 were in favour of the motion as amended and two abstained. Since the question was agreed by a majority of each of the two groups of Members present, she therefore declared that the motion as amended was carried.

NEXT MEETING

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now adjourn the Council until 11:00 am on Wednesday, 7 November 2007.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Seven o'clock.

Appendix I

WRITTEN ANSWER

Written answer by the Director of Home Affairs to Mr Frederick FUNG's supplementary question to Question 3

As regards the projects approved under Phase II application of the Enhancing Self-Reliance through District Partnership Programme, the relevant information is attached for Members' reference.

Enhancing Self-Reliance through District Partnership Programme
Applications Approved in Phase II (15 in total)

<i>Applicant organization</i>	<i>Business Nature</i>	<i>Estimated no. of jobs created</i>	<i>Target group(s)</i>	<i>Target district(s)</i>	<i>Recommended grant (\$)</i>
Youth Outreach	To organize street and youth cultural activities with performing arts and outreach components	41	Young people with low motivation to study and work	All districts	950,000
Stewards Limited	To cultivate and sell organic, edible mushrooms	27	Ex-mental patients, and women and middle-aged people with low education level and low skills	All districts	720,000
The Church of United Brethren in Christ Social Service Division	To provide projects/events management services for mainly artistic performances including dancing, acrobatics, magic, music and traditional performances	15	Low-educated, low-skilled and non-engaged young people	All districts	780,000
H. K. S. K. H. Lady MacLehose Centre	To set up a central logistics workshop mainly for cloth and decorative products	23	Grass-roots women	Tsuen Wan, Kwai Tsing	900,000
The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups	To sell and collect second-hand books	6	Low-educated young people and low-income families	Yau Tsim Mong All other districts	720,000
YMCA of Hong Kong	To set up an organic farm in Tung Chung for growing and selling organic vegetables	15	Unemployed people with low skills	Islands	1,900,000
Bright Services Company Limited of the Society of Rehabilitation and Crime Prevention, Hong Kong	To provide one-stop service to exhibition organizers	15	Rehabilitated offenders, and low-educated, low-skilled or unemployed people	All districts	1,080,000
The Salvation Army	To sell and collect second-hand computers and computer parts	9	Unemployed middle-aged people and non-engaged young people in Kowloon East	Kwun Tong Wong Tai Sin	800,000

WRITTEN ANSWER — *Continued*

<i>Applicant organization</i>	<i>Business Nature</i>	<i>Estimated no. of jobs created</i>	<i>Target group(s)</i>	<i>Target district(s)</i>	<i>Recommended grant (\$)</i>
Youth Outreach	To set up a production company for personal CD album production, stage recording, music production, and so on	22	Young people with low motivation to study and work, and high-risk young people who abuse drugs, stay out late at night or identify themselves with triad culture, and so on	All districts	550,000
Tuen Mun Youths Association	To open a shop for environmental and waste recycling and sale of second-hand goods	39	Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) recipients, disabled people, mildly mentally handicapped people, ex-mental patients, and middle-aged people with low education level and low skills	Tuen Mun Yuen Long	620,000
Hong Kong Employment Development Service Limited	To open a Tui Na (Chinese medical massage) shop to provide job opportunities for Tui Na trainees or those in need	22	New arrivals, single parents, and middle-aged people with low skills and low education	Kowloon City Wong Tai Sin Sha Tin Kwun Tong	870,000
Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong	To open a dessert shop selling pastries and cakes with dine-in and takeaway services	9	Young people with low education level and low motivation	Sha Tin	750,000
Kowloon Women's Organizations Federation Lau Shun Man Fu Cheong Mutual Help Child Care Centre	To open a sweet soup and light refreshment shop to promote a healthy diet	9	People with low education level	Sham Shui Po	680,000
Aberdeen Kai-fong Welfare Association Social Service Centre	To open a shop to collect and sell second-hand household and leisure products	16	Unemployed people with low education level and low skills, CSSA recipients, and people with low income or no working experience	Southern	900,000
Lok Kwan Social Service	To operate a beauty and health care services centre	17	Unemployed people, new arrival women, middle-aged people, young people with low education level, and Employees Retraining Board retrainees	Central and Western	900,000
Total no. of jobs created		285		Total	13,120,000

Remarks: It is expected that the 15 approved projects mentioned above will create various job positions, including programme assistants, mushroom collectors, mushroom packers, sales representatives, sales assistants, store managers, logistics assistants, administrative assistants, clerks, performers, female garment workers, shopkeepers, farmers, environmental protection ambassadors, installation workers, computer repairers, production assistants, electricians, storekeepers, operation supervisors, marketing representatives, drivers, vehicle attendants, bartering workers, cleaning workers, apprentices, bartenders, cooks (dessert), waiters/waitresses, cashiers, trainers, salespersons, shop assistants, general workers, beauticians, massagers, business development managers, business co-ordinators, marketing officers, farm managers, supervisors, foremen, production co-ordinators, project officers, kitchen workers, operation managers and customer service assistants. When setting the monthly wages of their employees, grantees should comply with and must not adopt a rate lower than the average rate stipulated for the relevant industries/occupations in the latest "Quarterly Report of Wage and Payroll Statistics" published by the Census and Statistics Department.

POST-MEETING SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

The Secretary for Education provided the following post-meeting supplementary information to Question No. 4:

2. Hong Kong Baptist University — College of International Education

Year	Programme Name	Programme Duration	Cases of Student Admission Not Meeting the General Entry Requirements Set Out in the Common Descriptors on AD						Total Number of Students Admitted to the Programme	Considerations for Admission or Additional Requirements
			Number of Cases					Others		
			Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the English or Chinese subjects in the HKCEE	Admitting students who did not obtain a pass in the one subject in the HKALE or equivalent	Admitting students who had not matriculated to a two-year curriculum	Allowing matriculants to proceed directly to the second year of a two-year curriculum				
2004-2005	Associate Degree Course	2	-	20	-	-	-	826	1. Reasons for Special Consideration - completion of two-year matriculation curriculum - school results and good conduct - good performance at admission interview	
2005-2006	Associate Degree Course		-	16	-	-	-	796		
2006-2007	Associate Degree Course		-	6	-	-	-	635		
2007-2008	Associate Degree Course		-	15	-	-	-	682		

(Provided on 21 December 2007)