

# OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 2 November 1994

The Council met at half-past Two o'clock

## PRESENT

THE PRESIDENT

THE HONOURABLE JOHN JOSEPH SWAINE, C.B.E., LL.D., Q.C., J.P.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY

THE HONOURABLE MRS ANSON CHAN, C.B.E., J.P.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY

THE HONOURABLE SIR NATHANIEL WILLIAM HAMISH MACLEOD, K.B.E., J.P.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

THE HONOURABLE JEREMY FELL MATHEWS, C.M.G., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALLEN LEE PENG-FEI, C.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS SELINA CHOW LIANG SHUK-YEE, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE HUI YIN-FAT, O.B.E., J.P.

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

DR THE HONOURABLE DAVID LI KWOK-PO, O.B.E., LL.D., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE NGAI SHIU-KIT, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE PANG CHUN-HOI, M.B.E.

THE HONOURABLE SZETO WAH

THE HONOURABLE TAM YIU-CHUNG

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW WONG WANG-FAT, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU WONG-FAT, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE EDWARD HO SING-TIN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MARTIN GILBERT BARROW, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS MIRIAM LAU KIN-YEE, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU WAH-SUM, O.B.E., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE LEONG CHE-HUNG, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE JAMES DAVID MCGREGOR, O.B.E., I.S.O., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS ELSIE TU, C.B.E.

THE HONOURABLE PETER WONG HONG-YUEN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT CHAN WAI-YIP

THE HONOURABLE VINCENT CHENG HOI-CHUEN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MOSES CHENG MO-CHI

THE HONOURABLE MARVIN CHEUNG KIN-TUNG, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG MAN-KWONG

THE HONOURABLE CHIM PUI-CHUNG

REV THE HONOURABLE FUNG CHI-WOOD

THE HONOURABLE FREDERICK FUNG KIN-KEE

THE HONOURABLE TIMOTHY HA WING-HO, M.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL HO MUN-KA

DR THE HONOURABLE HUANG CHEN-YA

THE HONOURABLE SIMON IP SIK-ON, O.B.E., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE LAM KUI-CHUN

DR THE HONOURABLE CONRAD LAM KUI-SHING, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU CHIN-SHEK

THE HONOURABLE LEE WING-TAT

THE HONOURABLE ERIC LI KA-CHEUNG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE FRED LI WAH-MING

THE HONOURABLE MAN SAI-CHEONG

THE HONOURABLE STEVEN POON KWOK-LIM

THE HONOURABLE HENRY TANG YING-YEN, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE TIK CHI-YUEN

THE HONOURABLE JAMES TO KUN-SUN

DR THE HONOURABLE SAMUEL WONG PING-WAI, M.B.E., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE PHILIP WONG YU-HONG

DR THE HONOURABLE YEUNG SUM

THE HONOURABLE HOWARD YOUNG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ZACHARY WONG WAI-YIN

DR THE HONOURABLE TANG SIU-TONG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHRISTINE LOH KUNG-WAI

THE HONOURABLE ROGER LUK KOON-HOO

THE HONOURABLE ANNA WU HUNG-YUK

THE HONOURABLE JAMES TIEN PEI-CHUN, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE ALFRED TSO SHIU-WAI

**ABSENT**

THE HONOURABLE RONALD JOSEPH ARCULLI, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MRS PEGGY LAM, O.B.E., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE EMILY LAU WAI-HING

**IN ATTENDANCE**

MR MICHAEL SUEN MING-YEUNG, C.B.E., J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS

MR HAIDER HATIM TYEBJEE BARMA, I.S.O., J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT

MR DONALD TSANG YAM-KUEN, O.B.E., J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY

MR MICHAEL DAVID CARTLAND, J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES

MRS KATHERINE FOK LO SHIU-CHING, O.B.E., J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE

MR NICHOLAS NG WING-FUI, J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

MRS ELSIZABETH MARGRAET BOSHER, J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES

MR LAM WOON-KWONG, J.P.  
SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL  
MR LAW KAM-SANG

**PAPERS**

The following papers were laid on the table pursuant to Standing Order 14(2):

*Subject*

Subsidiary Legislation	<i>L.N. No.</i>
Pensions (Amendment) Regulation 1994.....	551/94
Pension Benefits (Amendment) Regulation 1994 .....	552/94
Pension Benefits (Judicial Officers) (Amendment) Regulation 1994 .....	553/94
Antibiotics (Amendment) Regulation 1994 .....	556/94
Protection of Children and Juveniles (Places of Refuge) (Amendment) Order 1994 .....	557/94
Smoking (Public Health) (Notices) (Amendment) Order 1994.....	558/94
Leveraged Foreign Exchange Trading (Exemption) (Amendment) Rules 1994 .....	559/94
Exchanges (Special Levy) (Amendment) Rule 1994 .....	560/94
Road Traffic (Multi-Cycles) (Specification of Roads, Places, Traffic Signs and Road Markings) Notice .....	561/94
Electoral Provisions (Miscellaneous Amendments) Ordinance 1994 (10 of 1994) (Commencement) (No. 3) Notice 1994 .....	562/94
Smoking (Public Health) (Amendment) Ordinance 1994 (91 of 1994) (Commencement) Notice 1994 .....	563/94
Official Languages (Authentic Chinese Text) (Crown Land Ordinance) Order .....	(C)22/94
Official Languages (Authentic Chinese Text) (Crown Lands Resumption Ordinance) Order .....	(C)23/94

## Sessional Papers 1994-95

- No. 25 — The Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong Annual Report 1993-1994
- No. 26 — Hong Kong Industrial Technology Centre Corporation Annual Report 1993-94
- No. 27 — The Hong Kong Industrial Estates Corporation Annual Report 1993-94
- No. 28 — Hong Kong Productivity Council Annual Report 1993-94
- No. 29 — Report of the Legislative Council Panel on Security on the Enquiry into the Circumstances Surrounding the Termination of the Employment of Mr Alex TSUI, Former Senior Assistant Director of the Independent Commission Against Corruption
- No. 30 — Revised List of Works Annexed to the Regional Council's Revised Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 1994-95
- No. 31 — Urban Council Annual Report 1993-94
- No. 32 — Urban Council Hong Kong Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 1994 with Report and Certificate of the Director of Audit
- No. 33 — Revisions of the 1994-95 Estimates Approved by the Urban Council During the Second Quarter of the 1994-95 Financial Year
- No. 34 — AIDS Trust Fund 1993-94 Annual Accounts

**ADDRESSES****The Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong Annual Report 1993-1994**

MR PETER WONG: Mr President, as Chairman of the Council of the Opening Learning Institute of Hong Kong (OLI), I have the honour of presenting the fifth annual report and audited accounts of the Institute for the year ended 31 March 1994 which are tabled before this Council today.

The report which is printed on recycled paper gives a comprehensive account of the many milestones reached by the Institute during that period, achieved under the self-financing principle laid down for us by the Government. We have had much encouragement, a relatively free hand, but limited resources on the recurrent account to tide us over.

One of the major highlights took place a year ago this month when 161 adult learners became the first graduates of the OLI at the inaugural congregation ceremony. Their achievement embodies the Institute's declared mission of making higher education available to all those aspire to it, regardless of their previous qualifications, through a system of open access and distance learning. Significantly, more than 100 of the first graduates have chosen to continue their studies, demonstrating the impact of the OLI's efforts in promoting life-long learning. The opportunities offered provide a second chance for the territory's adults who missed out at an earlier stage. By enriching their lives, they enrich society as a whole. And through their learning experience with the OLI, they are better equipped to serve the changing needs of Hong Kong.

A week before the graduation ceremony, the Institute hosted the Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities, attended by more than 200 leading academics from over 30 countries. The success of the event and the keen interest shown by delegates in the work of the OLI reflects the growing standing of the Institute in the international arena. Its growing reputation is based upon a commitment to excellence in teaching, scholarship and public service. This has been seen in the increasing number of courses and degrees offered. There are now a total of 14 articulated and associated sub-degree programmes and 22 degree programmes for adult learners to choose from. In response to new needs identified in the community, professional and vocational training programmes have been developed. These include an Honours Degree in Nursing, specifically designed to upgrade the professional skills of the territory's nurses, and an Honours Degree in Education which is aimed at improving teaching standards in our primary schools. A total of 18 286 students are now enrolled, a clear indication that the OLI is very much serving the needs of Hong Kong's adult learners. This achievement is due in no small dimension to the dedication the staff have demonstrated and their commitment to maintaining the higher standards. They are to be commended for their hard work and determination.

In spite of the fact that the OLI has not come under the umbrella of the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee, a situation many feel unjust, staff and students alike will benefit from our plans to raise the Institute's profile in the area of research and development. Such an initiative is crucial in further strengthening the Institute's standing which has already been built upon through links established with other institutions of high standing.

In financial terms, it was a year which saw the Institute facing the biggest challenge of its short career — the withdrawal of recurrent government support. However, the task of becoming a self-financing body has been taken up with confidence and gusto. It would have been easy to solve the financial situation by relentlessly raising course fees to the students. The Institute chose not to do so, keeping increases to a minimum and in fact below that of many other tertiary institutions. Support from the community in the form of gifts and donations has been especially important at this crucial time. And I would like to express my thanks to all the organizations and individuals who have been so generous. Their continued support remains absolutely vital.

The deficit incurred for the last financial year is attributable to the burden of rent paid to the Government on the present premises. This will be relieved when the OLI gets a permanent home with its new campus in Ho Man Tin. Great progresses have already been made for construction on schedule for completion at the end of next year. The Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club is to be thanked for the strong support it has shown with a generous donation of \$91 million to the project.

We should take great pride in the fact that here in Hong Kong we have what is probably the region's leading distance learning institution — one which is rightfully gaining a fine reputation around the world. But we must also remember that in order for it to flourish in the future, we must do more than paying lip service to its ideals. The OLI needs our constructive criticism, active encouragement and support to ensure that Hong Kong's adult learners remain well served in the future.

**Report of the Legislative Council Panel on Security on the Enquiry into the Circumstances Surrounding the Termination of the Employment of Mr Alex TSUI, Former Senior Assistant Director of the Independent Commission Against Corruption**

MRS SELINA CHOW: Mr President, on behalf of the Legislative Council Panel on Security, I have the honour to table the Panel's Report on the Enquiry into the Circumstances Surrounding the Termination of the Employment of Mr Alex TSUI, Former Senior Assistant Director of the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

The enquiry was conducted in accordance with the decision made by the Panel in November 1993 following its abortive attempts to obtain from the Government explanations for the sudden dismissal of Mr TSUI on 10 November 1993, under section 8(2) of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Ordinance (Cap. 204). Members will recall that on 1 December 1993, this Council passed a resolution authorizing the Panel to exercise, for the purpose of the enquiry, the powers conferred by section 9(1) of the Legislative Council (Powers and Privileges) Ordinance (Cap. 382), to order the attendance of witnesses and the production of documents. To facilitate the conduct of

business by the Panel, this Council passed another resolution on 25 May 1994 to put in place the arrangement to deal with the possible claims of public interest privilege by persons appearing before the Panel.

In conducting the enquiry, the Panel held 26 meetings including eight public meetings and a viewing of a video tape. The Panel took evidence from four witnesses, including Mr TSUI and the Commissioner of ICAC. The Panel sets out in Chapters 2 and 4 of the report a summary of the reasons put forward by the Commissioner for terminating Mr TSUI's employment, the circumstances which Mr TSUI stated to be reasons for his dismissal and other relevant evidence. Chapters 5 and 6 contain the observations, findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Panel after thorough deliberations and detailed discussion.

Mr President, it is not my intention this afternoon to go over all the conclusions and recommendations of the Panel. However, I think it would be appropriate for me to highlight some of the main recommendations. The Panel considers it necessary to point out the importance of the Government's accountability to the public, whilst recognizing that under section 8(2) of the ICAC Ordinance, the Commissioner may terminate the employment of any officer without assigning any reason. The panel regrets that despite the public concern over the dismissal of Mr TSUI, the Government chose not to take into account such concern or give a timely explanation of the dismissal, or its reason for not being able to do so, in order to dispel any speculation about the case. In this respect, the Panel noted the Commissioner's statement that because of a covert investigation was under way between November 1993 and January 1994, he could not disclose the reasons for Mr TSUI's dismissal at that time since such disclosure would compromise the investigation. The Panel, however, considers that his explanation should have been given at an earlier stage for the purpose of public accountability. The Panel therefore recommends that the Government should review its experience from this incident and consider how accountability on issues of public concern can be addressed. The Government should also review the appropriateness of the Commissioner's power under section 8(2) of the ICAC Ordinance in the present-day situation.

The Panel has compared the handling of Mr TSUI's case with that of a former expatriate officer of the ICAC. The circumstances of the two cases were different. But the Panel noted with unease the difference in the degree of care and concern which the ICAC management had shown towards its staff in the handling of these two cases. The ICAC management clearly took more care over the well-being of that expatriate officer. There is no evidence that the difference was due to racism as claimed by Mr TSUI. Nevertheless, the fact that Mr TSUI was dismissed abruptly inevitably left him with strong grievances and created doubts in the minds of the public as to the fairness of his treatment. The Panel therefore recommends that the ICAC should consider introducing measures to ensure consistency in the conduct of disciplinary proceedings and in the modes of punishment within the department. Also since the question of racism within the ICAC has attracted public concern, the ICAC has a duty to

look into the matter and to be ever vigilant in its preventive measures in this respect.

Mr President, I am indeed gratified to report that the Panel has reached unanimity over all conclusions and recommendations stated in the report. On behalf of Members who have devoted much effort in this respect, I urge the Administration and the ICAC to adopt and expedite the implementation of these recommendations.

Finally, Mr President, I would like to say how honoured I am to have served as chairman of the first of such enquiries ever conducted by this Council and to have enjoyed such dedication and co-operation from Members who participated. I believe we have done all we could to ensure that each precedent we set has done justice to the convention that we have taken much care and pain to establish. I wish to express my gratitude to Members, and on behalf of them to all persons who gave evidence and information and to the staff of the Legislative Council Secretariat for their assistance throughout the Panel's work on the subject.

To those critics of the exercise within and outside this Council who have questioned the value of this exercise, I have this to say: Without it, would we know what we know today? Would the ICAC Review Committee have come into existence? And would the public's confidence in the ICAC be where it is today?

Thank you, Mr President.

## ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

### Occupational Retirement Schemes

1. MR PETER WONG: *Will the Administration inform this Council:*
  - (a) *of the number of new occupational retirement schemes that have been registered or submitted for registration under the Occupational Retirement Schemes Ordinance;*
  - (b) *of the ratio between the number of new occupational retirement schemes referred to in (a) and the estimated number of existing schemes; and*
  - (c) *what steps are being taken to avoid an overwhelming rush to register just before the deadline of October 1995?*

SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES: Mr President,

- (a) As at 1 November 1994, there were 300 newly established occupational retirement schemes which had been registered or had applied for registration under the Occupational Retirement Schemes Ordinance.
- (b) Of the 1 017 applications for registration or exemption of new and existing occupational retirement schemes received so far, 30% are for newly established schemes and 70% for existing schemes. It is unlikely however that such a ratio will be maintained as we progress towards the full registration of the 20 000 to 25 000 private retirement schemes already in operation in Hong Kong.
- (c) To avoid an overwhelming rush to register retirement schemes just before the deadline of October 1995, the following measures have been taken:
  - (i) the Office of the Registrar of Occupational Retirement Schemes has maintained close liaison with major operators of retirement schemes, including authorized insurers, scheme administrators, trust companies and fund managers, urging them to apply for registration as early as possible and assisting them in making applications as necessary;
  - (ii) a publicity campaign (by way of seminars, posters, pamphlets and advertisements on television,) has been conducted over the past year, the objectives of which include encouraging employers and scheme administrators to register their schemes early;
  - (iii) with the help of the Inland Revenue Department, letters have been sent to all business entities in Hong Kong drawing their attention, among other things, to the time limit for the registration of occupational retirement schemes. Letters will be sent once again to all the schemes approved by the Inland Revenue Department in the course of this month to urge them to apply for registration early;
  - (iv) guidance notes explaining the registration requirements and application procedure, together with samples of completed application forms, are made available to employers and scheme operators to assist them in making applications for registration; and finally
  - (v) steps are being taken to amend section 21 and section 27 of the Ordinance to give scheme administrators more flexibility in the administration of assets of schemes participating in

pooling arrangements and to enable fund managers to have discretion in investing scheme assets, subject to a limit of 15%, in emerging stock markets.

MR PETER WONG: *Mr President, since the indications are that there would be a last minute stampede for registration, does the Registrar have sufficient resources to handle this rush, and how long will it take to clear all the applications?*

SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES: Mr President, it is perhaps premature to assume that there will be a last minute rush of this nature. As will be apparent from my answer to the main question, all the thrust of the Registrar's efforts at the moment is directed towards encouraging early applications, and the Registrar is aware that the bulk of the schemes are in the hands of about 40 main operators, and these are large institutions, insurance companies, registered trust companies, asset management departments of banks, staff benefits consultants, and so forth.

Those main operators are actively working on preparing their applications. Many of them handle several thousand schemes each, some of them a few hundred, but together they do represent the bulk and they have given, in some instances, assurances that they will be bringing them forward in block applications as early as the end of this year or early next year. So if those efforts to encourage early applications are successful, there should not be a rush at the last minute. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that will occur, and nearer the time if it appears that is actually happening, then the necessary resources will be sought to provide a special exercise to handle that. But at the moment those details have not yet been addressed and we hope that they will not be necessary.

MR JIMMY MCGREGOR: *Mr President, for many years the Government has tried very hard to expand these schemes of occupational retirement. As far as I am aware not more than one third of the workforce is covered by such schemes. What is the record of growth by number of company schemes, and by number of participants during each of the last five years? Is there any prospect that without legal compulsion all or most of our working population can be covered?*

PRESIDENT: Are you able to answer, Secretary.

SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES: Well I think, Mr President, that is a little beyond the scope because the question that I am trying to answer from Mr WONG is really related to the registration of applications prior to the expiry of the deadline next year, as well as new schemes. Of course we have

been trying to encourage new schemes, but our priority at the moment is to get the existing schemes onto the register. It is true though that the existing schemes represent about one-third of the workforce, and that the number of new schemes does not represent a very big increase — the number of new schemes that have come on over the past year does not represent a very big increase in terms of the number of employees covered by them. But I would not want to speculate on what we might be able to do in other circumstances.

MR MARVIN CHEUNG: *Mr President, will the Administration elaborate on the last part of the main reply referring to the steps being taken to amend certain sections of the Occupational Retirement Schemes Ordinance, particularly what are the problems of those sections, what remedies are being considered, and whether all affected persons, for example, administrators, actuaries, lawyers and, dare I say, auditors are being consulted on these proposed remedies, and when will the proposed legislation be enacted?*

SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES: Thank you, Mr President, it is our intention to introduce a bill into this Council on 25 January 1995 to cover the two points that I mentioned in the reply to the main question. The first of these is the requirement of the Ordinance concerning pooling agreements governed by trusts. Under section 21(1)(a), the assets of participating schemes of a pooling agreement are required to be separated from the assets of all other schemes participating in the same pooling agreement. Many pool administrators have voiced their concern about the practical difficulties in complying with this requirement, and applications for these schemes are being held up as a result. As I have said in this connection, legislative amendments to relax this strict separation of assets requirement will be proposed; the draft bill is under preparation for introduction in January.

The other concern relates to the investment restriction under section 27(2) of the Ordinance which prohibits investment of schemes' assets in the share capital of companies listed on stock exchanges not recognized by the Security and Futures Commission. Many scheme operators consider it unreasonable to prohibit investment of retirement scheme assets in emerging stock markets, and many scheme operators have therefore not applied for registration of their schemes to enable them to invest in these markets for as long as possible. So to address that concern, the Registrar has proposed to amend the Ordinance to allow schemes to invest up to 15% of their assets in emerging stock markets. There will of course be full consultation with all the professional bodies and others concerned in the preparation of these legislative amendments.

### **Heavy School Bags**

2. MR TAM YIU-CHUNG asked (in Cantonese): *Mr President, in view of the concern expressed by parents and the medical profession about the harmful*

*effect on the spines of students caused by carrying heavy school bags, will the Government inform this Council whether:*

- (a) more resources will be allocated to the Education Department in the near future to provide sufficient lockers in schools for the storage of students' textbooks and miscellaneous items; and*
- (b) guidelines will be issued to publishers suggesting the use of the lighter paper in printing textbooks and the publication of textbooks by volumes so as to lighten the load of school bags carried by students?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (in Cantonese): Mr President,

- (a) The Education Department aims to provide lockers to all government and aided primary schools and is calling for returns from all these schools on their requirements. Tenders have been invited for an initial order of 36 000 lockers, catering for 345 schools. Delivery is expected to be in early 1995. The Department will progressively increase the supply based on the resources available. New primary schools completed after September 1995 will all be supplied with lockers as part of their standard equipment.
- (b) The Education Department has already made suggestions to textbook publishers on how to reduce the weight of textbooks, including using lighter weight paper, eliminating blank pages or excessive margins, dividing textbooks into different volumes and so on. Publishers' reaction to these proposals has been positive. The Department will monitor improvements.

MR TAM YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): *Mr President, the Government's positive response to my two proposals is welcomed. But in addition to this, has the Government considered any other feasible measures?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (in Cantonese): Mr President, the Education Department has issued a set of detailed guidelines to schools earlier this year in the hope that school authorities would co-operate with parents in reducing the weight of students' school bags. There are several ways to reduce the weight of school bags. Besides appealing to textbook publishers to reduce the weight of textbooks, the Administration has also appealed to the school authorities, including teachers, to design their timetables in such a way that lessons requiring the use of many bulky textbooks will not be conducted on the same day or on two consecutive days. In addition, the Administration has also asked parents to co-operate with the school authorities

and help their children, especially those studying in junior classes, to tidy up their school bags so that they will not bring unnecessary textbooks to school everyday. We have also made other suggestions such as requesting schools to provide drinking facilities, if possible, so that primary school pupils need not carry bottles to school everyday. The Education Department takes the problem of heavy school bags seriously. We would keep in contact with schools and have discussion with them in order to further improve the situation.

MR EDWARD HO (in Cantonese): *Mr President, the issue raised by Mr TAM and the reply given by the Secretary for Education and Manpower seem to be a temporary rather than permanent solution to the problem in view of the fact that students have to bring home quite a lot of textbooks in order to do their assignments. Therefore, even there are lockers in schools, it will not help. Has the Secretary for Education and Manpower considered the possibility of, under the current educational system, allowing students to finish their assignments at school so that they do not need to bring so many textbooks home in order to do their homework?*

PRESIDENT: We are rather expanding the scope of the question and answer, but are you able to answer, Secretary.

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (in Cantonese): Mr President, the Education Department does from time to time hold discussions with schools on students' assignments and has urged schools to reduce the amount of homework to an appropriate level as regards the age and progress of the students concerned. Although the problem of heavy school bags appears to be a simple issue, it actually involves the co-operation of various parties. As I have just emphasized, if parents and the school authorities can provide assistance and guidance to junior class pupils the results can be very satisfactory. According to an investigation conducted by the Home-School Co-operation Committee early this year, the seriousness of the problem of heavy school bags differs greatly among schools. While some schools are able to maintain the weight of school bags at reasonable level, the problem of heavy school bags is very serious in some schools or in particular classes. This shows that if parents, teachers and the school authorities can co-operate with sincerity and are eager to communicate, this problem can be readily solved.

MR TIK CHI-YUEN (in Cantonese): *Mr President, presently the general public and a number of organizations have set the standard weight of school bags at 10% of the student's body weight. In other words, a school bag is regarded as overweight if its weight exceeds 10% of the student's body weight and it is not overweight if its weight is below that standard weight. However, some medical professionals have told me recently that this criterion is not very suitable. Does the Administration have any criterion in place to determine whether a school*

*bag is overweight? If not, will the Government work out certain criteria to serve as a reference for the public?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (in Cantonese): Mr President, regarding the problem of heavy school bags, the objective criterion which the Government has based on up till now is still one tenth of a student's body weight. But we understand that we just cannot apply this criterion in a clear-cut manner. This criterion may not fit all cases as there may be a great difference between one tenth of the weight of a 50-pound student and one tenth of the weight of an 80-pound student. In fact, we hope that schools and parents can pay attention to one thing, that is, to do their best to help minimize the weight of school bags and the things students bring to school. The present criterion for our investigation is still one tenth of a student's body weight. We will, in particular, look into situations where the weight of school bags exceeds one tenth of students' body weight. However, if the medical profession has any new ideas or proposes new criteria, we are eager to have further consideration.

DR PHILIP WONG (in Cantonese): *Mr President, I am very much in favour of installing lockers in primary schools. It is a pity that no such facility was provided when I was a student. I suggest that the doors of the lockers should be transparent since nowadays there are a lot of illegal activities such as drug trafficking taking place. If the doors of the lockers are not transparent, it may facilitate the activities of drug traffickers. Has the Secretary for Education and Manpower taken this point into consideration?*

PRESIDENT: We are straying a bit. *(Laughter)*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (in Cantonese): Mr President, the lockers currently proposed to be installed by the Education Department are made of steel and we have no intention to install glass doors. This design is based on the fact that steel is more durable and it is easier for maintenance. Regarding the suggestion of transparent doors, I believe we have to consider the fact that users of the lockers may also want to have their own privacy even though they are only primary school pupils.

MR HENRY TANG (in Cantonese): *Mr President, my six-year-old son is a Primary One pupil. He weights about 40 to 50 pounds. But I believe that his school bag is more than five pounds for I sometimes weight it with my hands and felt that it was at least 10 pounds. Nevertheless, it is not because he does not tidy up his school bag. I do the tidy up for him everyday. So I know that he has his school bag tidied up but the weight of his school bag still exceeds one tenth of his body weight. I agree with what the Secretary for Education and Manpower has just said, we cannot apply this criterion in a "clear-cut" manner.*

*If we do, quite a lot of textbooks will have to be left at school rather than being brought home for doing assignments. Would the Secretary for Education and Manpower explain whether primary schools can be converted into single-session schools which will be a long-term and permanent measure? If primary schools are operated on a single-session basis, classes can be arranged in such a way that students can have more spare time to finish their assignments at school. Hence, they need not bring their assignments home, and the lockers will be really useful to them. Otherwise, they will have to carry their books hither and thither and lockers' will not be very useful then.*

PRESIDENT: This question is growing and growing. *(Laughter)* Secretary, are you able to answer?

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (in Cantonese): Mr President, it is the Government's policy to have primary schools being operated on a single-session basis. At present, we are doing our best to encourage primary schools to adopt the single-session system as far as the school authorities are willing to do so. But we are now in a transitional period and it takes time to have all the primary schools converted into single-session schools. We do not attach our hope for solving the problem to pursuing the policy of single-session schools solely. We feel that, particularly after having studied the results of the investigation as mentioned above, quite a number of students can have the weight of their school bags reduced to a certain level if parents, the school authorities and teachers can co-operate. The decision on the part of the Education Department to provide lockers on such a comprehensive scale is based on its belief that the provision of sufficient lockers can help those schools in need reduce the weight of their students' school bags.

MS ANNA WU: *Mr President, has the Secretary considered proposing loose-leaf textbooks which would also make it easier to update and more economical to purchase?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Mr President, the Education Department is in regular discussion with textbook publishers on how best to improve the present situation with a view to reducing the weight of the textbooks. This idea will certainly be discussed with the textbook publishers as they meet in December this year.

MR JIMMY MCGREGOR: *Mr President, have instructions been given by schools to the teachers to monitor the weight carried by school children under their control?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Mr President, in the circular issued by the Education Department to all schools, the Department has appealed to the school authorities including teachers to monitor the situation and to, as far as they can, help the students to reduce the weight of their bags. I am sure the school authorities will bear this in mind especially as this issue has now become such a public and widespread concern.

DR LEONG CHE-HUNG: *Mr President, if you allow me, I shall probably make the question grow even wider. (Laughter) Can the Administration inform this Council whether statistics on the number of students who have possibly developed harmful effects on the spine have been collected; and will a school health service be set up to look into this particular area?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Mr President. I am afraid that we do not have those figures, we will try to see if we can get those figures from the Departments concerned, and I will give the answer to the Honourable Member in writing. (Annex)

### **Airport Railway**

3. MR ALBERT CHAN asked (in Cantonese): *Mr President, in view of the Government's failure up to the present moment to reach an agreement with the Chinese side on the financing of the new airport and the Airport Railway, and having regard to the fact that the construction works of the latter project have already been delayed for almost one year because of the Sino-British row, will the Government inform this Council whether:*

- (a) it will proceed with the construction of the Airport Railway;*
- (b) judging from the present circumstances, it is still possible for the Airport Railway to be completed and become operational in parallel with the new airport; and*
- (c) the Government has any plans to resolve the disputes between the British and Chinese Governments over the airport financing plan?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT: Mr President,

- (a) The Airport Railway is an essential part of the overall Airport Core Programme (ACP). The Administration had never wavered from its determination to build the Airport Railway. It will be built and I confirm that it remains our intention to complete it to the maximum extent possible by mid-1997, in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding on the construction of the New Airport.*

As Members are aware, in accordance with the step-by-step approach, work has already started on the cross-harbour immersed tube section and in reclaiming land needed for the Central Station. In addition, advance works have been incorporated into various government ACP contracts to protect the railway alignment. Design work has also been well advanced and the Mass Transit Railway Corporation (MTRC) stands ready to proceed with the construction of the entire railway.

- (b) Given the step by step approach we have so far adopted, we expect that the opening of the Kowloon to Chek Lap Kok section should be compatible with the opening of the New Airport.
- (c) We have already reached a common view with the Chinese side on the main elements contained in our Fourth Financing Proposal for the New Airport and the Airport Railway. We have been tackling this subject as a matter of priority and are now extremely close to finalizing the overall deal.

MR ALBERT CHAN (in Cantonese): *Mr President, evidently, it is not possible for the Kowloon to Central section of the Airport Railway to be completed on schedule. May I ask by how much will the cost be increased as a result of the delay? And what are the differences now remain unsettled between the British and the Chinese sides thus preventing the conclusion of a new agreement?*

PRESIDENT: Sorry, which scheme, Mr CHAN?

MR ALBERT CHAN (in Cantonese): *Mr President, I am referring to the financing scheme of the Airport and the Airport Railway. Why are the British and the Chinese sides still unable to reach any new agreement to date on the financing plan?*

PRESIDENT: There are two questions, Secretary.

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT: Mr President, can I defer to my colleague, the Secretary for the Treasury?

SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY: Mr President, I can assure the Honourable Member that the cost of the project for the Airport Railway remains as we earlier forecast. Although there has been some delay, events particularly since January this year, including tenders received, show that we are able to contain the overall costs of the project within \$34 billion for the

Airport Railway. As regards the second part of the question, this is on the discussions with the Chinese side on financing of the Airport Railway and the Airport Core Programme, we have all but completed our discussions with the Chinese side on the wording of a minute which records the key elements of the financial arrangements agreed by both sides. Similar reports have been made in the press and there are statements by senior Chinese officials to that effect. Informal contacts are continuing as to when exactly we can actually sign the agreed minute, and I am sure we can look forward to a meeting of the Airport Committee to do exactly that in the next few days. As soon as we have an agreement with the Chinese side, I will come before this Council and explain the full details of it, and map out the way forward.

MR STEVEN POON (in Cantonese): *Thank you, Mr President. Paragraph (c) of the main reply (as the Honourable Albert CHAN also mentioned just now) reads, "we are now extremely close to finalizing the overall deal". From June onwards, the Government has been saying that an agreement would be reached. Then there comes the discussion on the wording and what is more, punctuation is also being discussed now. Perhaps there will be disputes over what pen should be used to sign the agreement and what colour the paper should be. The Government has never explained to the Legislative Council what has caused the disputes and what they are about. While it is said that an agreement will soon be reached, the exact time is still unknown. Will the Government advise this Council the specific elements contained in the agreement before signing it? Reports have already been made in the newspapers and yet the Government has not given us any explanation. Will the Government explain to the panel of this Council prior to the signing of the agreement?*

SECRETARY FOR TREASURY (in Cantonese): As regards the elements contained in the agreement over the financial arrangement, basically, we had made it clear when we asked the Finance Committee for appropriation for the initial construction of the Airport and the Airport Railway. All these arrangements are in line with the Fourth Financing Proposal and there is no obvious disparity between these arrangements and those in the agreement which we hope to sign. However, as I have mentioned just now, as soon as the agreement is signed, I will report to Members the full details concerned and the way forward.

DR SAMUEL WONG: *Mr President, from very reliable sources we have learned that a large number of works related to the Airport Railway construction have been tendered for and even provisionally accepted by the Mass Transit Railway Corporation in the form of letters of intent. The lack of funds was given as the reason for not signing on the dotted lines. Since we have already been working on the fourth financial package, why is the Government not coming forth to apply for money for the railway in the same way as they apply for money for the airport?*

SECRETARY FOR TREASURY: Well, we are still committed to the step by step approach in the financing of the Airport Railway and Airport construction. But the next step as far as the Airport Railway is concerned will be a very big step, so we have to be very careful with when exactly we shall proceed and how. We believe that it would complicate our discussions with the Chinese side if meanwhile we approached the Finance Committee for huge amounts of funds for this purpose. I can assure Members as soon as we have signed the agreed minute reflecting the agreement reached on the basis on the fourth financing proposal, I will come before this Council and explain the way forward, including probably the funding of the Airport Railway.

MRS MIRIAM LAU (in Cantonese): *Mr President, it is mentioned in paragraph (b) of the main reply that given the step by step approach the Government has so far adopted, it is expected that the opening of the Kowloon to Chek Lap Kok section of the Airport Railway should be compatible with the opening of the new airport. Can the Secretary for Transport advise this Council why the Hong Kong to Kowloon section is unable to be completed at the same time? When will this section be completed according to the Government's schedule? The Kowloon to Hong Kong section is vitally important to alleviating the crowdedness of the Mass Transit Railway along Nathan Road. The situation is fairly pressing. Can the Government review the so-called "step by step" approach so as to facilitate the full opening of the Airport Railway in mid-1997?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT: Mr President, as far as the Kowloon to Hong Kong section is concerned, as Members have been advised before, there was some delay in starting with the reclamation works. This is now in progress and as I have said we have already let the contract for the immersed tube. The Council has been advised that this section will not be ready before the middle of 1998. In so far as the Kowloon to Chek Lap Kok section is concerned, the Government's intention has always been to build the entire Airport Railway. At the present time because the agreement, we believe, with the Chinese side is so imminent — as has been explained by my colleague — we believe that there is really nothing to be gained by proceeding with the Tsing Yi to Central section separately. Indeed, to try to do this may result in further complications because tenders and contracts may have to be revised.

### **Importation of Graduate Professionals from China**

4. MR NGAI SHUI-KIT asked (in Cantonese): *Mr President, the response to the scheme of importing graduate professionals and managers from China has been enthusiastic and the numbers of applications received in the first and second phases are eight and nine times those of the quota respectively. In view of this, will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *of the respective breakdown of applications received in the first and second phases by profession and post;*
- (b) *whether it will consider increasing the existing quota of 1 000 when the scheme is reviewed in the future; and*
- (c) *whether it will consider changing the existing balloting system used in the allocation of quota so that separate quota can be set for individual professions to meet actual market demand?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (in Cantonese): Mr President,

- (a) The respective breakdown of applications received in the first and second phases by profession and post are at Annex 1 and 2;
- (b) The Government will examine the adequacy of the existing quota of 1 000 when the scheme is reviewed; and
- (c) As part of the review, the Government will examine the appropriateness of the existing balloting system used in the allocation of quota.

Annex 1

APPLICATIONS FOR ENTRY OF PRC PROFESSIONAL  
BREAKDOWN BY INDUSTRY OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

(For the first and second phases)

<i>Industry</i>	<i>No. of Applications</i>
Trading	686
Construction	404
Finance	319
Electronics	297
Manufacture	260
Transport	142
Others	129
Property	115
Garment	91
Information technology	88
Legal	68

<i>Industry</i>	<i>No. of Applications</i>
Catering	43
Food	12
Education	11
Tourism	10
Hotel	8
Total	2683

Annex 2

APPLICATIONS FOR ENTRY OF PRC PROFESSIONAL  
BREAKDOWN BY POST OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED

(For the first and second phases)

<i>Post</i>	<i>No. of Applications</i>
Engineer	735
General/Operations Manager	716
Marketing/Sales Manager	301
Accountant	168
Development Manager	165
Project Manager	113
Consultant	108
Programmer	105
Others	80
Analyst	66
Administrative Secretary	47
Designer	37
Purchaser	31
Journalist	8
Lecturer	3
Total	2683

MR NGAI SHIU-KIT (in Cantonese): *Mr President, in view of the fact that the number of applications received under the scheme of importing professionals is eight to nine times that of the quota, will the Government, when reviewing the scheme, assess the actual demand for these Chinese professionals in each*

*industry on basis of the number of applications received under the present scheme and then set separate quotas for individual industries?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (in Cantonese): Mr President, when we conduct a review on this scheme, we will examine the adequacy of the existing quotas by referring to the actual number of applications received as well as by assessing the actual demand for these professionals in the entire manpower market after the scheme has been put into operation for some time.

MR MICHAEL HO (in Cantonese): *Mr President, the Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Michael LEUNG Man-kin, has mentioned in Beijing some time ago that the Government intended to expand the scheme. Would the Government inform this Council what sort of review has been carried out by the Education and Manpower Branch to date? What has been discussed so far? Can the Secretary for Education and Manpower explain why Mr Michael LEUNG has the idea of increasing the quota at this point in time?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (in Cantonese): Mr President, although the scheme has proceeded only half of its way for the time being, the Education and Manpower Branch and the relevant government departments have carried out short-term assessments on the actual operation and demand after each balloting exercise. However, we have not yet embarked on a comprehensive review. I would also like to take this opportunity to clarify that the statement by Mr Michael LEUNG in Beijing was only made in response to questions put forward by the press and he merely mentioned his intention of considering the proposal of increasing the quota. There is a ground for taking this proposal into consideration because a total of over 2 680 applications have been received up to the second and the latest balloting exercise. This is ten times the 250 quota available for balloting. This is illustrative of the extremely enthusiastic response of the market.

MR MARTIN BARROW: *Mr President, would the Secretary confirm that he agrees with the Financial Secretary's recent statement that there remain acute labour shortages in certain sectors? And if so, would he firstly, accept that this scheme which adds only 0.03% to the workforce is totally inadequate; and secondly, would he explain to the community why a substantial increase in quota is in the public interest and why this should be accepted by certain professions who are resisting these arrangements?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Mr President, the employment situation in Hong Kong has been in a very tight situation for the last decade — that ranges from general labour to professionals. As far as this

particular scheme is concerned, the purpose of it is to meet a market demand and I think, judging from the reaction to the first two ballot results, the market demand is very, very strong. As regards whether this present quota is adequate, we would not like to pre-empt the outcome of our future review. As I said earlier on, Mr President, we will certainly take into account the actual demand in the market by the time we review the whole scheme and we will then decide whether we need to expand it.

MR CHEUNG MAN-KWONG (in Cantonese): *Mr President, one of the conditions attached to the Government's scheme of importing 1 000 professionals from China is that eligible professionals shall come from the 36 major mainland universities. Can the Government inform this Council whether this policy carries the implication that the Government, which includes the Civil Service, has formally recognized the academic qualifications granted by these 36 major mainland universities? If this is the case, has the Government taken any kind of accreditation procedures to acknowledge the standards of these universities? If no such procedures have ever been taken, on what criteria has the Government based its decision allowing professionals from these 36 universities to work in Hong Kong?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (in Cantonese): Mr President, when formulating this scheme of importing Chinese professionals, we have agreed on the point that the scheme has to be simple and efficient, and the procedures for cross-checking of academic qualifications have to be easy to follow. We have established the requirement that the professionals must come from these 36 major institutions mainly because they are the 36 major universities under the auspices of the State Education Commission of the People's Republic of China (PRC). I believe that, apart from Hong Kong, the international community as well as the PRC will also recognize that the academic standard of these 36 major universities is relatively higher. However, I would like to make clear that the recognition of the qualifications of the graduates of these 36 institutions is only applicable in this particular scheme of importing Chinese professionals and is by no means an implication that their qualifications are similarly accredited in terms of employment in other areas. I believe that the recognition of qualifications should be decided by the market itself and this is particularly so in the private sector. For universities, all tertiary institutions have their own yardsticks to assess the level of the other tertiary institutions. As for professions, their respective professional bodies also have their own criteria to assess the qualifications of graduates from these institutions.

PRESIDENT: Last three supplementaries.

MR LAU CHIN-SHEK (in Cantonese): *Mr President, would the Government inform this Council how many people have, so far, come to work in Hong Kong under the scheme of importing Chinese professionals? In addition, I hope the Administration can guarantee that in the future, views of this Council and the labour sector will be sought before arriving at any further decision on importation of labour and professionals. That means the Administration will not repeat what it has done in April this year when it decided to import Chinese professionals. In the above case, it has operated behind the scene and the decision was made without going through any consultation exercise. Thank you, Mr President.*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (in Cantonese): Mr President, so far no one has come to Hong Kong under the scheme of importing Chinese professionals. We have received formal applications for Entry Permits and they are being processed. As for those applicants who have been allocated quota during the balloting exercise held in June this year, the professionals they want to employ are expected to arrive in Hong Kong in November and December. As regards the policies and details in relation to the scheme on the importation of labour, detailed information will be given to this Council and to the Legislative Council Panel on Manpower whenever we plan to expand or enlarge the scope of the scheme and we will try our best to answer all the relevant questions. No matter whether it is the importation of professionals or the importation of labour, the entire scheme has been carried out with hundred percent openness.

MR JAMES TIEN: *Mr President, since the first and second phases of the applications have been closed and over 2 600 applications have been received, will the Government inform this Council when will these 1 000 approved professionals and managers most likely be expected to arrive and work in Hong Kong? And when will the scheme be reviewed for further expansion?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Mr President, the scheme is separated into four batches of 250 each. We had two ballots of 250 quota each held in June and September of this year already. The next ballot will be held in December, with the last one in March next year. So those who are going to be admitted under the scheme will arrive in Hong Kong gradually. We expect the first batch to arrive by the end of this month and December.

As regards the review, our timetable is that we would undertake a comprehensive review in early 1995, with a view to coming up with recommendations when the first 1 000 applications have been processed and when we have actual experience of how the scheme operates.

MR LEE WING-TAT (in Cantonese): *Mr President, in his reply, the Secretary for Education and Manpower mentioned that response to this scheme is extremely enthusiastic and the number of applications received is ten times that of the quota. Have all the applications been subjected to stringent screening procedures by the Education and Manpower Branch? Has the Education and Manpower Branch or the Labour Department implemented any procedures to confirm that the applying companies are really unable to recruit these professionals and managers in Hong Kong and that the professionals can only be recruited from the universities in China? What are these procedures? Will the Education and Manpower Branch carry out the screening?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (in Cantonese): Mr President, all these applications have been subjected to very stringent screening procedures performed by the Immigration Department. After a company has been allocated quota at the balloting exercise, it has to submit to the Immigration Department an application form which requires the applicant to give detailed information, including a full account of the reasons for the company to recruit mainland professionals as well as compiling a list of requirements, such as the qualifications and experience required and the position to be filled. The Administration will grant its formal approval for the company to find a suitable candidate in China only after the aforementioned information has been thoroughly examined. For example, among the applications for the initial 500 quota, some are rejected on the ground that they are deemed ineligible after applications have been examined. We have so far screened 400 applications and 23 have been rejected.

PRESIDENT: Not answered, Mr LEE?

MR LEE WING-TAT (in Cantonese): *Has the Education and Manpower Branch taken part in the examination of each application in respect of the position to be filled by the mainland professional? Is it really impossible to recruit these professionals in Hong Kong and they have to be hired from China? In the Secretary's reply, he only mentioned that the application would be thoroughly examined. However, my question is whether the Education and Manpower Branch has taken part in the screening of the applications to affirm that there is a dearth of these professionals in Hong Kong and the only source of supply is China.*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (in Cantonese): Mr President, the examination procedures are undertaken by the Immigration Department while the Education and Manpower Branch is not involved in this task. As to whether there is a need to ensure that the candidates are genuinely not available in Hong Kong, the answer is yes. When examining the applications submitted by the companies, the Immigration Department will require the

companies to account for the reasons why the professionals cannot be recruited in Hong Kong.

PRESIDENT: When I made my announcement I was not aware that Mr James TO had also signalled his intention to ask a question.

MR JAMES TO (in Cantonese): *Mr President, I want to follow up the Honourable LAU Chin-shek's question. Could the Secretary indicate clearly in which year, which month and on which day or on which occasion had the Government consulted the Legislative Council or the public about the scheme of importing Chinese professionals before the Governor announced this scheme in his last policy address? If the Secretary cannot give an answer right now, is it possible for him to furnish a written reply? Or was there any consultation at all?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (in Cantonese): Mr President, the fact is that the scheme was announced by the Financial Secretary when he presented his Budget to this Council. The Administration did manage to give a detailed account of the background of the scheme before the Legislative Council Panel on Manpower and to the public and thorough explanations were offered on a variety of issues immediately after the announcement made by the Financial Secretary. The scheme is so far a pilot scheme, and a decision on whether the scheme should become an established scheme of importing professionals will be made in the light of the actual operational experience gained in this trial period.

MR JAMES TO (in Cantonese): *I am asking whether there was consultation before, not after, the announcement.*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER (in Cantonese): Mr President, prolonged discussion has been held in the past few years among the people of Hong Kong on whether further expansion should be allowed in the importation of professionals. In fact, the Government has taken the first step in the early nineties, whereby China-born people who have left China for two years or over and have obtained the right of abode elsewhere may come to work in Hong Kong if they can secure a job here. The existing scheme merely aims at working on top of what has been accomplished in the first step by maximizing the flexibility of the scheme of importing professionals to ensure that the scheme is better tailored to meet the need of the market. Mr President, it is most important that a full account and comprehensive explanations are given to the public and to the Legislative Council whenever this kind of policy is introduced. This is, in my view, the most important point.

### Unfairness in District Board Elections

5. MR WONG WAI-YIN asked (in Cantonese): *Mr President, is the Government aware of any unfairness resulting from obvious favouritism shown by some newspapers for certain candidates in the recent district board elections? If so, will the Government inform this Council of the following:*

- (a) *how the authority concerned will handle such cases; and*
- (b) *how it can prevent similar problems from recurring in future elections?*

SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS: Mr President, the Boundary and Election Commission (BEC) is responsible for the conduct of elections. Prior to the recent district board elections the BEC had issued detailed guidelines on election-related activities. Media reporting was covered by the guidelines. The underlying principle in these guidelines is that equal, fair and consistent treatment should be given to all candidates to ensure that elections were held in an open and honest manner acceptable to the community. The BEC also appealed to the mass media to provide equal and fair treatment to all candidates when reporting their electioneering activities. Any publisher who treats some candidates favourably over others may be publicly denounced or censured by the BEC. Cases involving illegal and corrupt activities will be referred to the appropriate enforcement authority for further action.

During the recent district board elections, the BEC investigated two complaints on alleged partiality shown by one newspaper to some candidates. Upon request, the newspaper provided information and explanation to facilitate the BEC's investigation.

After a thorough examination of the evidence presented to it, the BEC found that no illegal or corrupt practices were involved. The BEC also did not find sufficient evidence to substantiate the complaints that the newspaper had deliberately favoured any candidates. The complainants were accordingly informed.

For the elections to be held in 1995, the BEC will continue to explain its election guidelines to all concerned and will again remind the mass media of the importance of equal treatment when reporting on candidates' activities.

MR WONG WAI-YIN asked (in Cantonese): *Mr President, I do not know whether I have to declare an interest. I was one of the candidates in the recent district board elections, though not one of those for whom some newspapers showed favouritism. Mr President, similar incidents occurred not only in newspapers for sale, but also in community newspapers which were distributed free of charge. Would the expenditure involved in these promotional efforts be*

*counted as part of the election expenses of the candidates concerned? How does the Administration determine whether the costs pertaining to the production of the above-mentioned prejudicial articles published in these free publications should be included in the calculation of election expenses?*

SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS: Mr President, the question involves whether local newspapers or advertisements in local publications would count towards election expenses. On this point, the BEC has laid down very clear guidelines as to what constitute election expenses, and in broad terms anything that relate to the candidate's promotion of his candidature and electioneering activities would be included in the calculation. But ultimately, ultimately, it is for the candidate to justify to the BEC as to why and how he spends his money and whether he has exceeded the limit stipulated for election expenses.

MR STEVEN POON (in Cantonese): *Mr President, I have to declare my interest too. I was also one of the candidates in the district board elections. It is mentioned in the third paragraph of the Secretary's main reply that the BEC has not found sufficient evidence to substantiate the allegations that some newspapers had deliberately favoured any candidates. It is a usual practice for newspapers to favour certain candidates in other countries. However, if a Hong Kong newspaper does deliberately favour certain candidates, can anything be done under the laws of Hong Kong to deter such incidents from happening again or can legal proceedings be taken against those involved?*

SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS: Mr President, as I mentioned in my answer, the Boundary and Election Commission lays down very clear and specific guidelines to advise the mass media on how to regulate and to ensure that the reporting of elections will be done in an open and fair manner and to give candidates equal and fair opportunities. And I also mentioned that where there are known breaches, and breaches found with supporting evidence, the BEC does have the power to publicize and censure such an omission or such a problem. So to that extent, the BEC does have the authority to take action on any newspaper that breaches the guidelines on fair and open reporting.

PRESIDENT: Mr POON, not answered?

MR STEVEN POON (in Cantonese): *Mr President, I am afraid the Secretary for Constitutional Affairs has not answered the crux of my question. My question is: can legal action be taken? Is it possible for a certain department to institute legal action against those persons involved? Or whether they can be fined or imprisoned according to the law?*

SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS: Mr President, to the extent that this falls under election activities, the authority to take action is the Boundary and Election Commission. The guidelines do provide for censure and publication, but not fine or further punishment. But in the opinion of the BEC, public censure would be a strong enough measure to ensure that no media or no newspaper would step beyond the line as stipulated.

MR WONG WAI-YIN (in Cantonese): *Mr President, in all his replies, the Secretary for Constitutional Affairs did stress that there was a set of guidelines. However, this is only the first time that we have such detailed guidelines in elections. In fact, in the recent elections, many candidates indicated that they were unsure about certain parts of the guidelines. Has the Administration reviewed these guidelines? If so, what are the results?*

SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS: Mr President, the Boundary and Election Commission is required by law to file a report within three months after a district election, and right now it is busily compiling its report on the district board elections. And in compiling the report, the BEC does take into account comments received from various quarters, as well as experience in the past elections, and obviously any comments on the guidelines would be noted by the BEC and taken into account in laying down fresh guidelines for the next set of elections.

### **Single-parent Families**

6. MR FRED LI asked (in Cantonese): *in view of the fact that there are about 5 000 of the 35 000 single-parent families in the territory who are in receipt of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Allowance and that the number of single-parent families has been increasing as a result of a rising divorce rate in recent years, will the Government inform this Council of the following:*

- (a) *what specific long-term policy the Government has put in place to assist single-parent families in overcoming financial and other difficulties encountered in their daily lives;*
- (b) *regarding the statement in the Governor's 1994 policy address that each single-parent family will be provided with a monthly supplement of \$200 in 1995-96, what criteria have been adopted in determining the amount of the supplement; and*
- (c) *the reasons for the downward trend in the proportion of the single parent allowance to the personal income tax allowances since 1992-93 (the proportion in 1992-93 was 50% while the figures for 1993-94 and 1994-95 were 48% and 44% respectively), and what criteria*

*are used by the Government in calculating the single parent allowance?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Mr President, the family is the cornerstone of society. The Government has a well-defined family welfare policy to preserve and strengthen the family. This policy aims to assist families to cope with their personal, social and financial problems through a comprehensive network of services and assistance rendered by different government departments and non-governmental organizations.

To alleviate the financial hardship which may be faced by single parent families, the Social Welfare Department provides cash assistance under the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme. The Department also co-ordinates a range of services and assistance to help single parent families to overcome other difficulties which they may encounter in their daily lives. For example, families in need of immediate housing assistance can be rehoused under the Compassionate Rehousing Scheme administered by the Housing Department. Furthermore, to help the single parents to achieve self-reliance, the Employees Retraining Board offers specific retraining programmes to those who wish to equip themselves with some skills for taking up employment. In view of their special circumstances, single-parent families are also accorded priority for day nursery and day creche services.

As regards the special supplement for single parents to be introduced next April, the \$200 monthly supplement is about one-fifth of the CSSA standard rate to which these single parents are now entitled. This is on top of the standard rate and the special grants which they currently receive. The amount was determined having regard to its purpose which is to help these single parents join support groups and establish more social contacts with friends and relatives.

Single-parent taxpayers are entitled to the Basic Allowance and in addition, a Single Parent Allowance which seeks to provide additional tax relief to taxpayers who have the sole or predominant responsibility for the care of their children. In recognition of the extra financial burden they bear in raising a family on their own, we have set the allowance at a level which would provide some appreciable relief to this particular category of taxpayers.

Tax allowances are reviewed each year in the context of the Budget. Adjustments are made having regard to the need to maintain the real value of the allowance and the Government's fiscal position. It is not our policy to maintain a relativity between the Basic Allowance and the Single Parent Allowance.

MR FRED LI (in Cantonese): *Mr President, in her reply, the Secretary for Health and Welfare pointed out that the monthly supplement of \$200 for single-parent families is about one fifth of the CSSA standard rate. My question is why is it one fifth? And how can it be sure that it is not a quarter? How can the Administration be sure that one fifth is a reasonable amount for the expenses of these single-parent families in participating in social activities and getting in touch with their relatives and friends?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Mr President, we recognize the extra burden single parents face in bringing up a family on their own without the support of a spouse. They may have to rely on, from time to time, relatives, friends and social workers for emotional and other support. The special supplement is designed to enable them to cover extra expenses arising from such activities and enable them to participate in support groups run by the Social Welfare Department and other non-governmental organizations.

PRESIDENT: Mr LI, not answered?

MR FRED LI (in Cantonese): *Mr President, my question is very simple. Why is the amount of the supplement determined at one fifth? Are there any objective criteria for the Administration to refer to? Why is it not a quarter?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Mr President, I hope I have explained this in my main reply, that the allowance was determined having regard to its purpose, which is to help the single parents join various support groups and establish contacts with their friends and relatives. It is of course open to these parents and families to use the allowance in whatever way they choose.

MR ROGER LUK (in Cantonese): *Mr President, in her reply, the Secretary for Health and Welfare pointed out that when adjusting the tax allowances, they will take into consideration the need to maintain the real value of the tax allowances as well as other factors. However, it is not the policy of the Government to maintain the relativity between the basic tax allowance and other tax allowances. Can the Secretary for Health and Welfare confirm whether it is not always the Government's policy to maintain the real value of individual tax allowances?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Mr President, I can confirm that it is not our policy to maintain a relativity between the Basic Allowance and the Single Parent Allowance.

PRESIDENT: Mr LUK, not answered?

MR ROGER LUK: *Mr President, my question was not answered. I asked whether the Government has a policy to maintain the real value of individual allowances?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Mr President, I have also explained in my main reply that tax allowances are reviewed each year in the context of the Budget and adjustments are made having regard to the need to maintain its real value and having regard to the Government's fiscal position.

MR FREDERICK FUNG (in Cantonese): *Mr President, my question is also about the \$200 supplement. I would like to ask the Secretary for Health and Welfare if there is a breakdown of the \$200 supplement. If there is such a breakdown, what are the items? If there is no such a breakdown, then is the amount of \$200 an arbitrary figure only?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: I am sorry, I did not get your question, Mr FUNG.

PRESIDENT: Would you repeat it please, Mr FUNG?

MR FREDERICK FUNG (in Cantonese): *Mr President, my question is: when determining the \$200 supplement, did the Social Welfare Department have a breakdown of the amount? If yes, what are the items? If no, is this \$200 indeed an arbitrary figure?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: There is no breakdown of the \$200 monthly supplement. This is a supplement based on about one-fifth of the CSSA rate and it is determined with regard to the purpose for which it is intended.

MRS SELINA CHOW (in Cantonese): *Mr President, is the Government aware that many single parents have complained about their children being the subject of discrimination in their schools? If the Government is aware of or realizes this situation, are there any measures to rectify this undesirable and unfair situation?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Mr President, our policy is to encourage all those, either in schools or in their own communities, to take a more positive attitude towards other families which are perhaps not as fortunate as their own, and in the Family Life Education Programmes, this is a major feature and theme of the publicity and education. We take measures to encourage both parents of other children as well as schoolchildren, to treat other people who are less fortunate than themselves in a non-discriminatory way. In other cases, the Government's policy is not to discriminate against single-parent families or any other families for that matter, and we do not wish to stigmatize them in any way.

MS ANNA WU: *Thank you, Mr President. In view of the downward trend in maintaining the real value of the Single Parent Allowance, what does the Secretary propose to do about it?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Mr President, financial assistance is only one form of assistance provided for single-parent families. There is a whole range of services that assist single-parent families to take care of their children, for example, to solve housing problems, social problems and emotional problems. They are also encouraged to take up retraining courses in order to equip themselves with skills so that they become independent ultimately. There are also measures to help them in applications to the Legal Aid Department for assistance in divorce proceedings where these are necessary, such as for custody of children and for maintenance. The Legal Aid Department also assists these single parents who qualify for legal aid to enforce maintenance payments if the other parent refuses to pay.

PRESIDENT: Ms WU, not answered?

MS ANNA WU: *Not answered, Mr President. Can the Secretary confirm that she does not propose to review the effect of the downward trend? Is that the substance of the answer?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Mr President, there is no question of whether there is an upward or a downward trend. This supplement is intended to assist single-parent families. If, in future, we feel that there is a case for increasing either this supplement or any other assistance to single-parent families or any other family in need, we will certainly consider that.

MR ERIC LI (in Cantonese): *Mr President, several Members have asked the Secretary for Health and Welfare the same question. It seems as though higher tax allowance can help those single-parent families which need financial*

*assistance. I hope the Government can perhaps explain clearly — since only the taxpayers are eligible for tax allowances, are they under the category of those who are most in need of financial assistance? It seems to me that the 5 000 people receiving public assistance payments will not be benefited even though the tax allowances are raised since they do not need to pay tax. Thus, can raising tax allowances really help those single-parent families who are most in need?*

PRESIDENT: I cannot quite follow your question, Mr LI.

MR ERIC LI (in Cantonese): *Mr President, I want to have an explanation from the Government and I try to put it in a question. As many Members think that by increasing the single-parent tax allowance, we can help those single-parent families who are in financial need. However, only those single-parent families that have members who have a job and have income are required to pay tax. Are these single-parent families really most in need of assistance?*

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Mr President, I am sorry, I do not quite follow the question either; but let me try. The cases that come before the Social Welfare Department applying for CSSA do not qualify to pay any salaries or income tax and I do not think either increasing the tax allowance or giving them extra allowances under our existing tax system will immediately assist this type of family.

## WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

### **XI Yang's Early Release**

7. MISS EMILY LAU asked (in Chinese): *Regarding the imprisonment of Mr XI Yang — the Ming Pao Daily News reporter — in China, will the Government inform this Council what measures have been taken by the British and Hong Kong Governments respectively to seek his early release?*

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS: Mr President, the Hong Kong Government has conveyed to the Chinese authorities the widespread concern in Hong Kong, both in media circles and more widely, about the treatment of Mr XI Yang and the need for clearer guidelines for journalists working in China. Similar action has been taken by the British Embassy in Peking with the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office with the Chinese Ambassador in London. More recently, Mr XI's case was also raised by the Minister with special responsibilities for Hong Kong, Mr Alistair GOODLAND, during his visit to China in July and by the Secretary of State

during his meeting with the Vice Premier QIAN Qichen in New York in September.

### **Curriculum Development Institute's Open Recruitment of Staff**

8. MR TIK CHI-YUEN asked (in Chinese): *In his reply to the question on open recruitment of posts in the Curriculum Development Institute on 2 March 1994, the Secretary for Education and Manpower indicated that the number of professional posts in the Curriculum Development Institute to be filled by open recruitment was expected to increase to 44 in 1994-95. Will the Government inform this Council of:*

- (a) *the present progress of such recruitment and the number of staff recruited by profession so far; and*
- (b) *the yearly recruitment targets for the next four years?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Mr President,

- (a) Since my reply of 2 March 1994, three additional civil service posts in the Curriculum Development Institute have been converted to non-civil service status, increasing the number of non-civil service posts from 44 to 47.

Of the 47 non-civil service posts, 29 are filled. Recruitment for the 18 vacant posts is in progress. Thirteen suitable candidates have been selected — 12 as subject specialists responsible for developing the curriculum of specific subjects and the remaining one for research and technical aids. They are expected to take up appointment in early 1995. The remaining vacancies will be re-advertised in November 1994.

- (b) It is not practicable to set precise recruitment targets for the next four years. Based on the trend in recent years, however, the department expects to have to recruit six to eight contract staff in the Curriculum Development Institute in each of the next four years.

### **Language Fund**

9. MR TIK CHI-YUEN asked (in Chinese): *Regarding the announcement in the Governor's 1993 policy address that a Language Fund would be set up with an initial allocation of \$300 million, will the Government inform this Council of the following:*

- (a) *what the breakdown is by "the number of applications made" and "the amount applied for" in respect of each of the following groups of applicants: the Education Department, other government departments, subsidized tertiary institutions, schools, educational bodies, commercial and industrial organizations, and other applicants;*
- (b) *how the applications from government departments are assessed by the Administration; the reasons for those government departments who are in need of such funding not seeking the required funding through internal redeployment of resources within the government; and will such applications by Government departments give the impression of the Government competing with the public for resources;*
- (c) *when it is expected to complete the processing of the first batch of applications; when will the second allocation commence and what will the estimated amount of allocation be; and*
- (d) *what the criteria for funding allocation adopted by the Language Fund Advisory Committee are?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Mr President,

- (a) The Language Fund Advisory Committee (the Committee) has received a total of 177 applications, broken down as follows:

<i>Applicant's group</i>	<i>No. of applications</i>	<i>Total amount applied for (\$M)</i>
Education Department	21	273
Other government departments	6	10
Subsidized tertiary institutions	36	166
Schools	32	15
Educational bodies	21	83
Commercial/industrial organisations	3	64
Other applicants	58	72
	----	----
Total	177	683
	====	====

- (b) The Committee has decided that all applications should be treated on an equal footing and assessed solely on their merits and their effectiveness in improving proficiency in Chinese (including Putonghua) and English. As stated in the Finance Committee Paper FCR (93-94) 141 on the establishment of the Fund, one important objective is to enhance existing efforts in the public or private sector and meet temporary shortfalls in resources. Thus, the Education Department and other government departments' applications come within the ambit of the Fund.
- (c) It is expected that results of the first batch of successful applications will be announced before the end of 1994. Since processing of applications is still in progress, it is not possible to estimate the amount to be allocated at this stage. The closing date for the second application exercise is 31 March 1995.
- (d) The criteria for funding allocation adopted by the Committee include those set out in paragraph 7 of the said Finance Committee Paper and the following:
  - (1) the project should contribute to the improvement of proficiency in Chinese (including Putonghua) and English;
  - (2) its resultant benefits must accrue to the community as a whole, and not just to a single organization or institution;
  - (3) it should be non-profit making in nature; and
  - (4) it should be cost-effective.

### **Enhancement of Hong Kong's Competitiveness**

10. DR DAVID LI asked: *In an attempt to micro-manage the economy of the territory, the Administration has established a Governor's Business Council and widened the scope of work of the Consumer Council and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority. In view of this, will the Government inform this Council what specific action will be taken to enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness from a macro-economic perspective?*

SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY: Mr President, I believe the Honourable Member wishes to know about the macro-economic measures which the Government is taking to enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness. The Governor and the Financial Secretary have both spoken recently and clearly on this very broad subject and their summaries of the Government's policy in this regard are set out in paragraphs 12 to 21 of the Governor's address at the opening of the 1994-95 Session of the Legislative Council on 5 October 1994

and in the Financial Secretary's speech during the debate on the Motion of Thanks in the Legislative Council on 26 October 1994. I have nothing to add to these recent statements.

### **Hong Kong Institute of Education's Admission Policy**

11. MR CHEUNG MAN-KWONG asked (in Chinese): *With regard to the enrolment criteria and entry requirements of the Hong Kong Institute of Education, will the Government inform this Council of the following:*

- (a) *what is the grade point average obtained in one examination by the students admitted this academic year; how many of them met the entry requirements and have been admitted on basis of the results of one examination (instead of the combined results of two examinations);*
- (b) *will the Institute adopt this year's practice to exempt students with better results from interviews as its admission policy in future; if so, please explain the rationale and merits of this policy and state whether there is a fixed ratio between the number of students admitted directly without interviews and the number admitted after interviews;*
- (c) *what is the total number of students admitted this year; how many of them have been admitted without interviews, and of these, how many have given up their places; and*
- (d) *how many candidates have been granted interviews this year; how many have been admitted after interviews; how many have been placed on the waiting list, and of these, how many have eventually been admitted and how many of those admitted have given up their places?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Mr President,

- (a) The grade point average for this academic year, defined as the mean value of the best six grades obtained by the 1 170 students currently registered for the full-time pre-service courses in one examination sitting is 14.50, with grades A to E in the HKCE Examination converted to the numeric value of five to one.

Of these 1 170 students, 1 153 met the entry requirements on the basis of the results of one examination sitting, 12 on the basis of two sittings, and five on the basis of other equivalent qualifications.

- (b) The Hong Kong Institute of Education will soon review and consider its admission policy, in the light of the experience gained in this year's exercise. The question about admission interviews will be given full consideration.
- (c)
- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| Total number of students accepted offer of admission                            | 1 372 |
| Total number of students on register as at 28 October 1994                      | 1 170 |
| Total number of students offered admission without interview                    | 1 592 |
| Total number of students accepted offer of admission without interview          | 1 212 |
| Total number of students given offer without interviews but did not accept them | 380   |
- (d)
- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| Total number of students granted interviews this year                         | 1 580 |
| Total number of students offered admission after interview                    | 204   |
| Total number of students accepted offer of admission after interview          | 160   |
| Total number of students given offer after interviews but did not accept them | 44    |

There was no waiting list after the interviews. All interviewed candidates were prioritized on the basis of their interview performance and academic qualifications. 204 candidates on the priority list were contacted to ascertain their acceptance of an offer of admission. 160 of them responded positively and registered in the week before the new term began.

### **Debt Securitization**

12. DR HUANG CHEN-YA asked: *Will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *of the current volume of debt securitization in Hong Kong and its projected growth; and*

- (b) *what measures will be taken to ensure that the level of risks associated with each instrument of debt securitization will be properly documented and made available to investors?*

SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES: Mr President,

- (a) We are aware of three debt securitization issues totalling \$2.04 billion in 1994 so far.

It is difficult to project the growth of debt securitizations as it is dependent on a number of factors, not least the internal plans of the companies that originate such issues and the demand of investors.

- (b) The main takers of such instruments are professional market participants rather than retail investors; the issues in 1994 were all privately placed. The risks associated with such issues from an investor's point of view are set out in the information memorandum or prospectus that is sent to investors interested in acquiring the paper. Although there have not been any issues to date that have been targeted at the general public in Hong Kong, such issues would also have to comply with provisions in the Protection of Investors Ordinance particularly in respect of advertisements and issue of documents relating to such investments.

### **Imported Workers**

13. MR HENRY TANG asked (in Chinese): *It is reported that quite a number of restaurants have been importing workers from mainland China under the pretence of staff training. Apart from receiving practical training, these trainees are also assigned to perform general duties in restaurants. The wages they receive are even lower than those of imported workers, converting them to become cheap labour and thus affecting the employment opportunity of local workers, especially those who have completed retraining under the Employees Retraining Scheme. Is the Government aware of the situation and if so, will the Government inform this Council whether:*

- (a) *such a trend is spreading and how do the departments concerned monitor such activities which may be in breach of the law;*
- (b) *any employer has been warned or prosecuted as a result of such activities; and*
- (c) *the Government will consider introducing specific measures to stop such activities?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Mr President, there is no evidence to indicate that the existing policy on the admission of workers from China for training purpose is being abused. The answers to the specific questions are:

- (a) Under the existing policy, a person may be allowed to enter and stay in Hong Kong for up to 12 months to acquire special skills or knowledge not available at his place of domicile. This often involves on-the-job training at places of employment. To prevent abuse, the Immigration Department, in vetting applications for training visas, requires the sponsoring companies to provide training programmes and justifications for such training in Hong Kong and its duration. In addition, the Department examines the background of the companies to see whether they are indeed able and competent to provide such training. There are no indications of the policy being abused by employers.
- (b) The Government is not aware of any such abuses, so there is no question of warning or prosecution.
- (c) Where sponsoring companies are found to have abused the policy, their future applications will be assessed in the light of these records.

#### **Cost of Speeches by Government Officials**

14. DR HUANG CHEN-YA asked (in Chinese): *Will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *what is the respective average cost of the speeches made by government officials at public forums in the territory and at overseas international conferences during 1993-94, and what is the respective total annual cost of such speeches; and*
- (b) *whether such expenditures are considered to be worthwhile; and whether there are any measures to achieve savings in this respect?*

CHIEF SECRETARY: Mr President,

- (a) Many government officials of different ranks are required to make speeches at a wide variety of public forums and international conferences, both locally and overseas. For example, over 30 such speeches were made by directorate officers in the last month of 1993-94 (March 1994) alone. The cost of making these speeches varies from one occasion to another, as it depends on a wide range of factors, such as the purpose of the function and the length and

- (a) Many government officials of different ranks are required to make speeches at a wide variety of public forums and international conferences, both locally and overseas. For example, over 30 such speeches were made by directorate officers in the last month of 1993-94 (March 1994) alone. The cost of making these speeches varies from one occasion to another, as it depends on a wide range of factors, such as the purpose of the function and the length and nature of the speech. I regret that to calculate the cost of making all these speeches would involve a disproportionate amount of time and effort — and cost. Very extensive research would have to be carried out, covering all the different ranks of government officials involved in making such speeches, and their supporting staff.
- (b) Making speeches, both locally and overseas, is part of the normal work that we expect of our senior officials. As an accountable Government, we should be, and are, active in explaining our policies to various sectors of the community and answering their questions. It is also very important for officials to make speeches overseas to promote Hong Kong. The more that others know of our success, and the more we can do to counter the often negative impression that people who do not know Hong Kong have, the more we can safeguard our international economic and commercial position and our continuing prosperity. I have no doubt that the effort and expenditure incurred in making these speeches is well spent.

### **Location of Polling Stations**

15. MS EMILY LAU asked (in Chinese): *In view of the complaints made by some voters that certain polling stations were located at too far a distance from residential areas causing inconvenience to voters, will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *of the number of polling stations whose locations were not close to residential areas resulting in voters having to walk more than half a kilometre in order to get there; and*
- (b) *whether consideration will be given to opening up more polling stations to facilitate voting and thereby boosting the turn-out rate of voters?*

SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS: Mr President, it is not practicable to locate and designate a polling station within a rigid distance from the main pockets of population in the constituency. The main considerations for choosing a polling station are whether it is centrally located in a constituency, easily accessible and well known to the local residents. Polling stations are

In this respect, for the last district board elections, a total of 442 polling stations have been designated for the 346 district board constituencies. Despite these arrangements, it is unavoidable that electors who live away from the polling station may have to travel a slightly longer distance than the majority of electors who should be relatively close to the polling station chosen for the constituency.

The Boundary and Election Commission is currently conducting a review of the electoral arrangements for the last district board elections. The review will take into account the operational experience and the feedback from the parties concerned. Depending on the outcome of the review, additional or replacement polling stations may be designated to further facilitate electors to turn up to vote.

### **Information for Selection of Schools**

16. MR CHEUNG MAN-KWONG asked (in Chinese): *As parents lack sufficient information to select schools for their children progressing to higher classes, will the Government inform this Council of the following:*

- (a) *whether the Education Department has encouraged primary and secondary schools to compile information pamphlets or leaflets introducing their objectives, policies, size and demands on students and so on, so that parents may understand the operation of these schools in general and refer to such information when deciding which school is suitable for their children; and*
- (b) *whether, in the design of the school selection form for primary and secondary schools, consideration will be given to setting aside some space in the form for schools to provide brief introductions about their policies and teaching methods so that parents may have some basis on which to select schools for their children when filling out the form?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Mr President,

- (a) The Education Department does encourage schools to produce suitable publicity materials publicising their school objectives, policies and other useful information. For schools which have joined the School Management Initiative Scheme, they are required to produce an Annual School Profile containing a general description of the school, its mission and goals, students' aptitude and academic achievements, staff profile, extra-curricular and other activities. Some schools have also produced video tapes for this purpose.

- (b) To include such detailed information in the selection forms for primary and secondary schools will make the forms too bulky. Much information about the schools is already provided in the school lists or parents' guidebooks distributed with the selection forms to students. In addition, parents can access through the Education Department's District Offices to information about all public sector schools in Hong Kong.

### Language Policy

17. DR DAVID LI asked: *Is the Government aware that despite the greater emphasis given by many schools in the territory to the learning of English at the expense of learning Chinese, many students still fail to learn either English or Chinese well? If so, will the Government inform this Council whether the Administration has considered formulating a language policy which reflects the fine balance between Hong Kong as a predominantly Chinese society and its status as an international business centre where the use of English is crucial to its success?*

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER: Mr President, the Government is aware of the concern on the proficiency of Chinese and English among our students. Despite the perception that their language standards are falling, there is no objective evidence that this is the case. Based on the results of "Test Monitoring the Standards of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination Reference Group", the Hong Kong Examinations Authority has observed that "there are no indications to suggest significant change in the overall standard in these two languages in recent years". The perception may therefore be due to higher expectation in the employment market, especially the service sector, rather than lowering in absolute standards.

Nevertheless, the Government accepts the need for Hong Kong to train more people proficient in both Chinese and English. In our 1993 Statement of Aims for Schools Education, schools are asked to take account of the community's needs for competence in Chinese and English in developing the language skills of their students.

For more effective teaching and learning, it is the Government's policy to encourage secondary schools to adopt Chinese as the teaching medium. However, those schools whose students have the proven ability to learn effectively in English may use English as the teaching medium. In order to encourage schools to use Chinese as the teaching medium, whilst at the same time ensuring that students can attain a reasonable standard of competence in English, a series of positive discrimination measures have been introduced since 1987. These include the provision of additional English language teachers and learning facilities, and more intensive English learning programmes.

As an extra effort to raise the standards of Chinese and English, and to enhance the effective use of both languages not only in schools but also at work, a Language Fund with an injection of \$300 million from General Revenue has been established earlier this year to fund new initiatives.

The Target Oriented Curriculum will also set out clear teaching and learning targets and will, in time, enable students to attain higher standards of Chinese and English.

To ensure that Government's language policy will continue to cater for our community's needs, the Education Commission's Working Group on Language Proficiency has undertaken a review of the policy and has published a report for public consultation in July this year. The Education Commission is expected to make its final recommendations to the Government in early 1995.

### **Container Truck Accidents**

18. DR TANG SIU-TONG asked (in Chinese): *As some of the traffic accidents that occurred frequently on Tuen Mun Highway were caused by heavy container trucks, will the Government inform this Council:*

- (a) *of the total number of traffic accidents involving container trucks that occurred on Tuen Mun Highway in the past two years and the total number of such accidents due to overloading; and*
- (b) *what is the present progress regarding the Transport Department's plan to set up the territory's second weigh-station on Tuen Mun Highway to stop and inspect overloaded goods vehicles?*

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT: Mr President,

- (a) There were 40 traffic accidents in 1992 involving container vehicles on Tuen Mun Road, 13 in 1993 and 13 in the first nine months of this year. The police have advised that none of these accidents were caused by "overloading".
- (b) The contract for building a weigh-station at Tai Lam Chung commenced on 19 August 1994. The project comprises the construction of a weigh-station, an office and areas for traffic circulation and space for the temporary storage of goods which have to be unloaded from those vehicles which are found to have an excessive load. It is scheduled to be completed in April 1995. Work is progressing on schedule.

## Container Freight Transport Trade

19. MR JAMES TIEN asked (in Chinese): *As Container Terminal No. 10 will not be completed until late 1997 or early 1998, which will be sometime after the planned completion of Container Terminal No. 9 in mid-1995, will the Government inform this Council what measures will be taken in the meantime to enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness in the freight transport trade?*

SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES: Mr President, as I indicated in this Council on 12 October, the now inevitable delay in completion of Container Terminal No. 9 (CT9) has dealt a severe blow to our ability to maintain Hong Kong's position as one of the world's most efficient container ports. For many years it has been our policy to match the supply of additional container terminal facilities with forecast demand for their use. We have implemented this policy, entirely through the private sector, by a judicious combination of public tenders and private treaty grants.

In the absence of CT9, the first berth of which will be needed by mid-1995, this will no longer be the case. We will also lose a valuable opportunity to enhance competition in the container handling business by bringing in a new player.

In order to minimize the consequent damage to the Hong Kong economy we will do all we can to support the efforts of existing port operators to move the maximum amount of business through existing facilities.

For example, in the coming year:

- we shall be providing over 20 hectares of new land to support container operations;
- we shall be ensuring that all suitable waterfront sites can be utilized to the maximum extent for cargo handling purposes;
- we shall be starting on the construction of a river trade terminal at Tuen Mun. The terminal will consolidate cargoes bound for the container terminals with the aim of a smoother transfer of cargo between ports in the Pearl River Delta and Kwai Chung; and
- we shall continue to encourage all port operators to review their operations with a view to increasing productivity to the maximum extent.

At the same time, we are putting in place more streamlined arrangements for the co-ordination of the development of the first phases of the Lantau Port. The aim will be to drive forward planning and engineering work so as to

achieve the earliest possible opening of the greatest number of berths on Lantau Island.

## MOTIONS

### BANKRUPTCY ORDINANCE

THE SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES moved the following motion:

"That the Bankruptcy (Fees and Percentages) (Amendment) (No.2) Order 1994, made by the Chief Justice on 6 October 1994, be approved."

He said: Mr President, I move the first motion standing in my name on the Order Paper.

The Bankruptcy (fees and Percentages) (Amendment) Order, and the Companies (Fees and Percentages) (Amendment) Order were made by the Chief Justice on 6 October. These are to increase the fees payable to the Official Receiver's Office in relation to proceedings under the Bankruptcy Ordinance and the winding up of companies under the Companies Ordinance.

The government policy is to set fees at levels sufficient to recover the full cost of providing the services. Some of these fees were last revised in November 1993 and some were last revised in November 1992. We propose to increase these fees based on the movement of the Government Consumption Expenditure Deflator. The deflator for the past year is 9.9% and for the past two years is 21.3%. The revised fees, if approved, will come into operation upon gazettal of the amendment orders on 4 November.

Mr President, I beg to move.

*Question on the motion proposed, put and agreed to.*

### COMPANIES ORDINANCE

THE SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES moved the following motion:

"That the Companies (Fees and Percentages) (Amendment) (No.3) Order 1994, made by the Chief Justice on 6 October 1994, be approved."

He said: Mr President, I move the second motion standing in my name on the Order Paper.

The reasons for this proposal are identical to those I have just outlined in moving the first motion.

Mr President, I beg to move.

*Question on the motion proposed, put and agreed to.*

## **BILLS**

### **First Reading of Bills**

**PUBLIC HEALTH AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES (AMENDMENT) (NO. 3) BILL 1994**

**CITY POLYTECHNIC OF HONG KONG (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994**

**HONG KONG BAPTIST COLLEGE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994**

**HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994**

*Bills read the First time and ordered to be set down for Second Reading pursuant to Standing Order 41(3).*

### **Second Reading of Bills**

**PUBLIC HEALTH AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES (AMENDMENT) (NO. 3) BILL 1994**

THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS moved the Second Reading of: "A Bill to amend the Public Health and Municipal Services Ordinance."

He said: Mr President, I move the Second Reading of the Public Health and Municipal Services (Amendment) (No. 3) Bill 1994.

The amendment seeks to plug a loophole in the present legislation which is impeding effective enforcement action against illegal hawking activities involving the use of vehicles. At present, the seizure and subsequent forfeiture of hawking equipment upon conviction of a hawking offence is an important deterrent in combatting illegal hawking. However, a recent High Court ruling has exposed a legal loophole in that a lorry seized in connection with illegal hawking had to be returned to a hawker and the original forfeiture order set aside, on the grounds that only vans but not lorries are mentioned in the relevant provision of the Ordinance governing the forfeiture of hawker

equipment. This adds to the already difficult task of effective hawker control because of the obvious diminution of the deterrent effect of seizure of vehicles.

The amendment will ensure that any vehicle used in connection with hawking will be liable to seizure and forfeiture upon conviction of a hawking offence.

Thank you, Mr President.

*Bill referred to the House Committee pursuant to Standing Order 42(3A).*

## **CITY POLYTECHNIC OF HONG KONG (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994**

THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER moved the Second Reading of: "A Bill to amend the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong Ordinance."

He said: Mr President, I move the Second Reading of the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong (Amendment) Bill.

The Bill seeks to give legal effects to the proposed changes of the title and internal governance structure of the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong to better reflect the self-accrediting status and academic achievements of the institution.

In 1991, the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Baptist College and the Hong Kong Polytechnic have notified the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee (UPGC) of their intention to apply for university title and status. It was subsequently agreed between the UPGC and the institutions that the granting of university title should only follow the acceptance by the institutions of the principle and terms of a differentiation of roles and the achievement of self-accreditation status.

The first precondition was satisfied in 1992 when the UPGC promulgated a policy statement which described the agreed roles and missions of all the UPGC-funded institutions, including the two Polytechnics and the Baptist College. The second precondition was satisfied in July 1993 when the Executive Council approved that the three institutions should assume responsibility for accrediting their own degree courses, subject to periodic external reviews of their quality assurance and quality improvement processes by the UPGC.

Today, three amendment Bills are presented to this Council to give legal effect to the proposed changes to the titles and internal governance structures of the three institutions. The City Polytechnic of Hong Kong (Amendment) Bill provides for the change of the title of the City Polytechnic to read "City University of Hong Kong" and that of the chief executive to read "Vice-Chancellor". The Governor will remain the titular head of the institution by assuming the new "Chancellor" post. The Bill also provides for the

establishment of a "Court" as the supreme advisory body of the university and the replacement of the Academic Board by the "Senate" as the supreme academic body.

The Council will remain the highest executive body of the retitled institution but its composition will be reconstituted to include among others the Deans, a Senate nominee, the Chairman of the Convocation and staff and student representatives. The Council will also be empowered to make "statutes" for the internal administration of the university.

The City Polytechnic was founded in 1984. It is currently offering over 11 000 full-time equivalent places. It has over the years played a very important role in the higher education of Hong Kong, with particular emphasis on professional oriented studies. It will continue to perform its unique role in the publicly funded sector of higher education.

Thank you, Mr President.

*Bill referred to the House Committee pursuant to Standing Order 42(3A).*

## **HONG KONG BAPTIST COLLEGE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994**

THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER moved the Second Reading of: "A Bill to amend the Hong Kong Baptist College Ordinance."

He said: Mr President, I move that the Hong Kong Baptist College (Amendment) Bill be read a Second time.

This Bill provides for the change of the title of the institution to read "Hong Kong Baptist University" and that of the executive head to read "President and Vice-Chancellor". The Governor will remain as the titular head of the institution by assuming the new "Chancellor" post.

Regarding the governance structure of the institution, the Bill provides for the repeal of the existing "Board of Governors" and establishes a "Court" as the supreme advisory body of the university. The Senate will replace the Academic Board as the supreme academic body of the institution. The "Council" will be reconstituted into the highest executive body of the University and its new composition will include among others the Deans, Senate nominees, senior administrators, staff representatives and a student representative.

The Council will also be empowered to make "statutes" for the administration of the University.

The Hong Kong Baptist College was founded in 1956. It is currently offering over 3 600 full-time equivalent places. It has over the years played a very important role as a liberal arts college in the higher education sector of

Hong Kong. It will continue to play its unique role in the publicly funded provision of higher education.

*Bill referred to the House Committee pursuant to Standing Order 42(3A).*

## **HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994**

THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER moved the Second Reading of: "A Bill to amend the Hong Kong Polytechnic Ordinance."

He said: Mr President, I move that the Hong Kong Polytechnic (Amendment) Bill be read a Second time.

The Bill provides for the change of the title of the institution to read "The Hong Kong Polytechnic University" and that of the executive head to read "President". The Governor will remain as the titular head of the institution by assuming the new "Chancellor" post.

The Bill provides for the replacement of the "Academic Board" by the Senate. The "Council" will remain the supreme governing body of the institution but the Bill provides for the change of its composition. The new membership will include among others more lay members, less public officers, a student representative, an alumnus and two Deans. The Council will also be given the power to make statues for the administration of the University.

The Hong Kong Polytechnic was founded in 1972. It is currently offering 12 000 full-time equivalent places. It has over the years played a very important role in the higher education sector of Hong Kong, with particular emphasis on professional oriented studies. It will continue to perform its unique role in the publicly funded provision of higher education.

Thank you.

*Bill referred to the House Committee pursuant to Standing Order 42(3A).*

## **PRIVATE MEMBER'S MOTION**

PRESIDENT: I have accepted the recommendations of the House Committee as to time limits on speeches for the motion debate and Members were informed by circular on 28 October. The mover of the motion will have 15 minutes for his speeches including his reply; other Members will have seven minutes for their speeches. Under Standing Order 27A, I am required to direct any Member speaking in excess of the specified time to discontinue his speech.

## HEALTH CARE POLICY

DR HUANG CHEN-YA moved the following motion:

"That this Council urges the Government to formulate a health care policy oriented to the prevention of diseases, set targets and step up the provision of primary health care services at low charges, particularly for the prevention of heart diseases, stroke, cancer and AIDS, so as to enhance the health of the people."

DR HUANG CHEN-YA (in Cantonese): Mr President, plague and malaria broke out in India recently. This alerted us of the fact that such diseases are still haunting around. At the same time, we think that we are fortunate enough to see that such diseases, and other communicable diseases like smallpox, diphtheria, and poliomyelitis can no longer cause any threat to Hong Kong. Regrettably, although these old enemies are withdrawing, new enemies have arrived. With an ageing population, a changed environment and changes in life-style, there are now more and more degenerative diseases and new communicable diseases. Currently, cancer, coronary heart disease and stroke have become the top three killer diseases that have taken away the lives and health of many citizens. Such illnesses have consumed a large part of our medical resources.

Last year, more than 17 000 people died of these illnesses and 100 000 were hospitalized. In the past 30 years, the number of cancer patients had increased by two times. In 1980, out of 100 000 people, 8.4 people died of lung cancer but the number rose to 46 in 1990. In the same period, the number of cases of coronary heart disease, that is ischemic heart disease, had increased by three times. At present, one person dies of coronary heart disease in every three hours on average. The number of people suffering from stroke has also risen. Last year, more than 3 000 people died of stroke. More than 8 000 were disabled due to the disease. If such figures are not horrifying enough, I would like to remind you that there are 960 000 smokers in Hong Kong, out of which some 300 000 will suffer from cancer, stroke or coronary heart disease. Meanwhile, investigation reveals that 22% of the Hong Kong population is suffering from high level of cholesterol. In particular, the level of cholesterol in children is the second highest in the world. This shows that the number of coronary heart disease sufferers is on the rise and more and more young people are becoming victims of the disease. Although the number of Hong Kong people who have contracted AIDS is small, AIDS is posing as a real threat. Worldwide, the number of HIV carriers has increased drastically from 9 million in 1990 to 14 million in 1993. Last year, in Asia, the number of AIDS patients more than doubled.

The Administration has obviously proved to be quite effective in tackling traditional diseases. However, in dealing with diseases of a modern city, while the situation is worsening, the Government has only focused on treatment rather than on prevention. Expenses spent on disease prevention amount to less than

4% of total medical expenses, thereby causing the situation to deteriorate. Last year, the Government published a consultative document on health promotion. The document pointed to a steep rise in medical cost and therefore the Government intends to recover a greater part of the cost. The Government should be ashamed of its intention. The ever increasing medical expenses is a consequence of the Government's inaction and inadequacy in preventive health care. If more and more people become sick and require treatment, no matter how much money has been recovered, it will never be enough. The only solution to the financial problems in the medical sector lies in the reduction of expenses by minimizing demand. In other words, the only way to curb rising expenses is to go to the root of the problem and reduce the number of occurrences of diseases through prevention. Therefore the Government must re-formulate its medical policy to a prevention-oriented one in which low-cost primary health care services are provided to enable the citizens to prevent such modern diseases.

In fact, by referring to past experiences and the reference materials available in abundance, we are able to conquer the new diseases mentioned above. For example, we have in place effective preventive measures to guard against over half of the cancer cases. Smoking less cigarettes may reduce the chance of lung cancer. Hepatitis B vaccines may reduce the occurrence of liver cancer. Mortality due to breast cancer may be reduced through early diagnosis. We have learnt that the occurrence of coronary heart disease may be reduced through improvement in life-style, lowering of the level of cholesterol, cutting-down cigarette smoking and medication for high-risk patients. Similarly, the occurrence of stroke may be minimized through better control of hypertension, diabetes, and the level of cholesterol. As for AIDS, since the way it is transmitted is clearly understood, prevention is possible.

As a matter of fact, there are four key areas in the prevention of these modern diseases: cost-effective health education; laws made to reduce hazards to the environment; improvement of diet and the application of vaccines to strengthen resistance; and provision of "accessible medical services" that makes early treatment possible.

Several weeks ago, I attended a concert held in the Hong Kong Stadium to promote healthy life-style. During an intermission of the concert, someone asked me how many young people would, apart from enjoying the show and the music, get the real message and change their life-style.

Indeed, a lot of research has indicated that health education, be it conducted through exhibitions, talks, concerts and so on, may be a waste of money, ineffective or fail to change people's habits if it is not carefully planned. For health education to be really effective, it should be conducted in such a way that it is not only attractive to the audience but also has a clear target and an index to gauge its effectiveness. For instance, after an education campaign, questions such as the following should be asked: As a result of the campaign, how many people will quit smoking? How many will stop eating fatty food?

How many will begin to pay regular visits to their doctors or to have an early examination? For health education to be fruitful and cost-effective, it needs to be more than transitory. It needs to be continued for a period of time. It needs the co-operation and participation of community groups.

The Government should review the effectiveness of health education. It should carry out evaluation on the basis of well-defined criteria so as to decide on the most effective means to conduct health education. It should also reach as many people as possible by encouraging participation of community organizations through the grant of subsidies to and co-operation with these organizations. An example is patients' mutual aid organizations. Advices made by the members of these organizations are more convincing since they can cite their own experiences. Therefore such organizations can implement health education more effectively. The Government should treasure the resources provided by such organizations and join hands with them to achieve a more effective health education.

As far as legislation is concerned, the Government has done quite a lot in anti-smoking. However, people can always find ways to get around barriers. Tobacco companies continually formulate new marketing strategies. The Government still has a lot to do in anti-smoking. For example, all tobacco companies shall be required to indicate clearly the tar content in terms of milligrams so that they cannot ambiguously say that the tar content is low and thereby entice people to buy. Tobacco companies shall also be required to indicate clearly on the packaging for tobacco products all major diseases that may result from smoking so that smokers are properly warned. In addition, as tobacco companies often promote their brand image by sponsoring sports and art activities, the Government should use part of the revenue from tax on cigarettes to establish a health promotion fund to sponsor sports and art activities in order to reduce the scope within which tobacco companies may manipulate.

Other than tackling with cigarettes, the Government should also carry out inspection of food. Food and articles containing carcinogenic substances should be banned. At present, there are still a number of carcinogenic pesticides for sale in Hong Kong although such pesticides have been banned elsewhere. This is obviously a loophole.

Another issue is environmental problems. Radon pollution may cause cancer and pulmonary heart diseases. Mr MAN Sai-cheong will talk about this and will ask the Government to improve controls on such disease-causing environmental factors. One further problem, which this Council has repeatedly been drawn attention to, is trauma and occupational diseases arising from industry.

Mr President, preventive health screening is of course our first choice. On the other hand, early diagnosis and early treatment may also minimize the harmful effects caused by diseases. As we all know, after the age of 50, the

chance of a person suffering from cancer, coronary heart disease or stroke would greatly increase. Aged patients, however, often delay treatment. There are several reasons such as: insufficient knowledge about diseases, lack of money and reluctance to take the trouble to visit a doctor. At present, there are 480 000 people aged above 65 in Hong Kong. Yet, the Government plans to open only two health centres for the elderly this year. This is obviously inadequate in terms of the number of service personnel or geographical distribution. Similarly, health care service for women is also severely inadequate which has made it impossible to reduce the occurrence of breast cancer, cervical cancer and other gynaecological diseases effectively. Primary health care service is the last line of defence in disease prevention. If the Government fails to provide adequate primary health care services, early treatment is but an empty word. Therefore a minimum objective for preventive health care for the public should be the provision of an easily accessible and low-cost health care network to enable residents aged above 50 to have a general health screening each year.

Currently, many hypertension or diabetes sufferers have to wait several months before they can get a chance to re-visit a public clinic. This is obviously inadequate as regards the monitoring of patients' conditions. Once such diseases get out of control, the number of cases of coronary heart disease and stroke that stem from such diseases will naturally increase. The Government should allocate more resources to strengthen regional services, and co-operation and liaison with private doctors so as to closely monitor patients' blood pressure and their urine tests for diabetes. Mr Michael HO will speak on the topic of primary medical services and Dr Conrad LAM will speak on the topic of preventive measures against AIDS.

Mr President, in this year's policy address, the Government talked about the fact that prevention is better than cure, but sadly, there has not been any concrete action to achieve prevention. Resources allocated to prevention amount to less than 4% of the total medical expenses. This is only a drop in the ocean and is entirely useless in helping to improve the worsening medical situation. Therefore, the Government must formulate a medical policy that is prevention-oriented as soon as possible and set up a committee for major diseases to co-ordinate the input of resources and deployment of manpower in relation to prevention of diseases, to establish clear and specific objectives, and strengthen and provide low-cost primary health care services, in particular, for the prevention of heart diseases, cerebrovascular disease, cancer and AIDS.

I beg to move.

*Question on the motion proposed.*

DR LEONG CHE-HUNG: Mr President, for many years of medical and health care professions, I have been trying to convince the Administration to formulate a new policy for health and health care. Yet, the Government stayed

undeterred. It therefore comes as no surprise that my honourable friend today is moving this motion.

Many excuses have been put forward by the Government to defend her position. But alas, these are delay tactics, cock and bull stories and an irresponsible and irrational way to say "No".

The former Secretary for Health and Welfare has repeatedly said, and I am sure the current Secretary will say the same thing too, and that is: the Government has a policy, which is "nobody should be devoid of proper care because of lack of means". I entirely accept that this must be the guiding light for any responsible government. yet this is a statement, a mission statement; never a policy in itself. New policies and policy directions are needed from time to time to achieve this particular pledge.

The key word in this mission statement, Mr President, must be the word "proper care", the meaning of which changes with time. In 1974, when the last "White Paper" on health care was published the factors that were missing to attain a "proper care" then were: lack of hospital beds, lack of medical and dental personnel. The White Paper then rightly called for building more hospitals, and opening a second medical school and a dental school.

In the ensuing years, these were attained.

So the world moves. Twenty years down the line, whilst the mission statement "Nobody should be devoid of proper care due to lack of means" must be continually upheld, "proper care" of today must have a different meaning.

Let me explain. A person with a prolonged cough in the past will be given an X-ray check and some cough mixture. This stand was the "proper care". Today, such would be unacceptable both to the doctors and the patients.

Similarly there will be new problems encountered to attain these "new" proper care. New policy directions will be needed to bring these about. There is no excuse for the Government to procrastinate further!

So time will not allow me to go through all the possible "new" proper care. Nor all the problems that we will have to face and their possible solutions. I will therefore highlight the main principles and certain key areas.

With the advancement of medical sciences, two areas become obvious.

Firstly, new techniques for diagnosis and treatment come into the scene. These are expensive but are effective and are much sought after.

Secondly, many conditions which were considered as terminal in the past are now treatable or at least the life of these patients are sustained. The result: there are more and more patients with chronic illnesses. New policy and new

policy direction are therefore needed to ensure that they obtain up-to-date "proper care".

Mr President, it will be expensive and with a finite health budget, a new policy must be formulated so that the highest possible standard of "proper care" be delivered to all of the people of Hong Kong who need them within the financial constraint.

As I see it there could only be three solutions:

Firstly, to curb the increase spending;

Secondly, to cut down the need for health care spending; and

Thirdly, to share and re-distribute the health care resources between the private and public sectors of health care.

The scene is thus set for four policy directions:

(1) *Priority setting to curb increasing spending*

With a finite budget, and an ever increasing demand, it is high time for the Government to take a bold political decision on how many and how far it will provide for health care. It will have to set a balance between how much it will spend on high tech medical advancement versus the provision of common-or-garden health problems.

How many heart transplant, for example, can we afford when it is obvious that the cost of one will be adequate to provide hepatitis vaccination for many in Hong Kong. How many bone marrow transplants can we do when the spending on one will be enough to treat many children suffering from pneumonia. The examples can go on and on.

I have always personally subscribed to the belief that the supply of emergency services must be the responsibility of the Government. Yet, except for those with lack of means, it is logical that non-emergency services should be to a certain extent self-financed either out of one's pocket, through private medical insurances, or through a compulsory territory-wide contributory type of insurance.

(2) *Health targets to cut resources needed*

When fewer people get sick, less resources is needed. The fact remains that many diseases are preventable. At least the mortality and morbidity of them could be reduced given the necessary prophylactic precautions. Our honourable friend Dr HUANG

Chen-ya has given quite a lot of details on this area that I do not propose to elaborate further.

It is high time for our Government to come forward to identify health targets and to take active measures to ensure that these are attained. The Government must have a programme to cut down the incidence of these killer diseases by a defined period of time.

(3) *To improve primary health care as a means to cut resources need*

Hospital treatment of any form is expensive. Meanwhile, our professionals have told us that not all patients need to be hospitalized given a proper primary health care. A new direction must be provided to booster this even further to minimize hospital admission.

(4) *To share resources between the private and the public health care sectors*

Hong Kong is unique in that there is a complete separation of private and public medical systems. Is this the most cost effective way forward in the future? Many expensive diagnostic machines are first installed in private institutions, often times in great number leading to some under utilization. At the same time, government and public institutions are also installing these. Is this most cost effective? Whilst it may be argued that installing such apparatus are necessary for public staff training, yet a lot can be also said of buying under utilized time with the public sector or the private sector as an alternate to serve our public patients.

Similarly, do all patients discharged from a public hospital need to be followed up after stabilization by the public hospital clinics? Can they not be referred back to the original referring practitioners? Such will not only share the resources used in health care but also improve the rapport between those on both sides of the fence to the betterment of all including our patients. The Administration must take a lead to take it to fruition.

Mr President, I would now like to turn to the problem of AIDS since it was specifically mentioned in the motion. But first let me declare my interest as the Chairman of the Hong Kong AIDS Foundation.

Mr President, in spite of the fact that Hong Kong has been tackling AIDS for some 10 years, with respect, we still do not have a "Territory Policy on AIDS". This has led to some alarming results in recent AIDS related studies.

In a survey on teachers done by one major newspaper, it was quoted that some 30% of them still believe that HIV positive students should be identified and put in separated schools.

Ironically, publicity and education in AIDS has been done for some 10 years by the Government and many non-governmental organizations.

It shows the fact that there is no organization or co-ordination to facilitate different government departments and non-governmental organizations to work towards a defined policy direction.

It is with this in mind that Dr the Honourable Conrad LAM and myself have called for the establishment of an AIDS Council to set policy and effective implementation. Regrettably, this was rejected.

*The buzzer sounded a continuous beep.*

PRESIDENT: Dr LEONG, you have to stop now.

DR LAM KUI-CHUN (in Cantonese): Mr President, since the founding of the Liberal Party, we have been advocating the prevention of diseases. The reasons are manifold — the first is the simple fact that joy comes after health; secondly, a healthy community is the essential element for human resources to achieve maximum efficiency; and thirdly, the financial investment on the prevention of diseases is much less than the cost of curing them.

The thrust of today's debate rests with the report published by the Working Party on Primary Health Care four years ago. Most of the recommendations in the report have been put into practice by the Government and at the stage where recommendations have already been implemented, we should urge the Government to set the next target or to pursue an even better state of health in the community.

The modern realm of perfect health is threefold: a strong body, a healthy style of living and a pleasant state of mind, which combine to constitute the concept of "total health", as is defined by the World Health Organization under the United Nations. I have considered moving an amendment to the motion by adding the clause "so as to achieve the target of total health as laid down by the United Nations". Actually, the motto on the logo of the Hong Kong College of General Practitioners is "Towards Total Health". However, to avoid the misconception that the Liberal Party is politicizing livelihood matters, we have decided not to move the amendment, but to explain this concept and express our concern for the promotion of this concept.

Firstly, on the issue of disease prevention, the St James' Settlement in Wan Chai has been playing a leading role in Hong Kong in the conduct of regular

health check for the elderly in order to prevent elderly diseases. Later on, the Honourable Moses CHENG will provide guidance to the Government on the launching of health check-up programme for the elderly in the light of the first-hand experience gained by the St James' Settlement.

On the prevention of childhood diseases, I urge the Government to put an end to the unpopular and ineffective School Medical Service Scheme and to replace it with a new Student Health Service, aiming at improving the health of children.

As regards the development of a healthy style of living, the modern concept has gone far beyond the scope of simply giving up smoking and drinking, and going on oil-free diet. A scientific survey in the United States suggests that enough regular exercise can cut down the morbidity and mortality rates of the population by as much as 15%, which covers all infectious diseases, degeneration, tumours and the three killer diseases in Hong Kong. The Government should embark upon its work on disease prevention from this perspective if it is determined to do so.

The third point regarding the concept of "total health" is a pleasant state of mind. The figures published by the Hospital Authority (HA) at the end of last month reveals that mental problems are common among the elderly. Half of the elderly who committed suicide are either mentally ill or schizophrenic, while the suicide rate of the elderly in Hong Kong is three times higher than the rates in European countries and the United States. The estimates released earlier on even suggest that over 300 000 people in the territory suffer from mental problems to a greater or lesser extent, that is to say, on average, one out of every 20 persons has mental problem. Based on this ratio, among the 60 Legislative Councillors, three of us may be mentally ill.

On the promotion of mental health, the Governor's proposal in his policy address of setting up additional psychogeriatric teams is only directing the efforts at removing the symptoms only. To root up the problem, remedial measures which can effectively alleviate the mental stress of the public should be adopted.

Regarding mental stress, the special working party set up by the St James' Settlement, to which I have referred earlier on, has also begun to carry out check-ups on the psychological health of their clients since the middle of last year. According to the research data as at two months ago, it is found that in a daily life setting, the three main causes which often entail psychological problems are, in the order of prevalence, (1) the passing away of next of kin, under which circumstance about 14% are affected; (2) the moving away or emigration of children, under which circumstance some 12% are affected; and (3) the deteriorating relationship among family members, such as changes in the relationship with spouse or with children, under that circumstance around 6% are affected. Those middle-aged and elderly who appear normal can become depressed as a result of one of these three causes.

On the other hand, the research data further reveals that among the cases which involved patients who appeared normal but had to be referred to social workers for counselling by the doctors in charge of the health check-ups, one third of the clients had to receive simple psychological counselling and some 3% of them had to receive formal case counselling.

After the first stage of collecting data, the staff members at the health centre will then carry out in-depth investigations so as to find suitable solutions. They will also try to think of some methods that can dispel the gloomy mood of the elderly. However, these preliminary results are already strong enough to put the case before the Government and request the Government to pay more attention to the psychological and mental health of the people as well as to provide preventive measures as soon as possible in the light of these problems with a view to promoting the community towards total health.

It has been my repeated advice to the Government that primary health care requires the best possible co-ordination between the public and private medical sectors. I am glad to see that the Government has made clear in the Governor's latest policy address that it accepts this notion.

Mr President, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MR MAN SAI-CHEONG (in Cantonese): Mr President, diseases not only add to the Government's burden of medical spending, they will also cause harm to our valuable human resources. The main killers in Hong Kong include heart disease and cancer, but the Hong Kong Government has not been active in its work in preventing these killers. I would like to take cancer and the air in our environment as an example and make some proposals.

Every one of us needs to breathe in order to survive and we are in direct contact with air every day. If there is carcinogenic substance in the air, practically no one can escape. Since we spend our lives both outdoors and indoors every day, I will take outdoor and indoor air as an example and have a brief probe into the cancer issue.

In recent years, developed countries have been very cautious in handling radon. According to a United States research report, about 10% of the lung cancer cases are caused by radioactive radon. In fact, it is not difficult to reduce the effect of radon on human. The Government should take positive actions, for instance, enacting legislation to restrict the content of radioactive substances in construction materials; enhancing the education of building management companies, such as increasing the proportion of fresh air in the buildings and using effective air-purifiers for the removal of radioactive particles in the air. These measures can effectively monitor and reduce cases of cancer caused by contacts with radioactive substances indoors. Of course, the Government's long-term monitoring is indispensable, especially in respect of radiation, such as the continuous monitoring of the nuclear power radiation of

the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Plant, and strengthening the health education of the public.

The main source of outdoor air pollution is exhaust from motor-cars. Although the Government has set an air-quality index, during peak hours and on busy roads, the air quality is often very far from the index. It has been pointed out in a United States report that 75% of cancer cases are caused by exhaust emitted by vehicles. Carbon dioxide, benzene and the derivative chemicals from exhaust can cause cancer and increase the incidence of heart and lung diseases. Therefore, reasonable and effective control of exhaust emitted by vehicles and taking into consideration the diffusion and circulation of air when designing roads can often improve the health of the community and reduce the cases of the public falling ill as a result of pollution.

Furthermore, there is at present no legislation in Hong Kong specifically combating toxic elements in the air. Hong Kong's current standard of inhalable suspended particles in the air is 180 micrograms in 24 hours, or 55 micrograms per cu m per annum. However, many areas in Hong Kong fail to meet this standard, and the standard itself is too low a requirement which masks the seriousness of the problem. Suspended particles far more minute is able to trigger asthma and chronic bronchitis. Therefore, it is not only necessary for Hong Kong to have a revised version of the said standard, it is also essential for there to be strategies formulated to control air pollution, to further achieve the goal of implementing preventive environment planning.

With these remarks, I support the motion.

DR SAMUEL WONG: Mr President, I am particularly pleased to be able to speak on this motion because it is centred on prevention. Prevention is at the heart of all engineering activities. We call it safety. It is written in the code of ethics of every professional engineer.

Prevention requires the identification of every possible breakdown — and breakdown in health is the subject today. Having identified every breakdown, it is necessary to list all the possible causes. In the health service, these may or may not be medical, but all possible causes must be recognized.

Prevention then takes various forms, such as hygiene, immunization, administration of drugs, surgery, acupuncture, bone setting, safety of equipment and so on. Finally, and I have to say so often overlooked, you can create a feedback mechanism so that the lessons of each incident are fully distilled and promulgated to prevent recurrences. Such feedback should include input from the patient and his condition, because the bottom line is to have a satisfied customer.

This process is well known in engineering and has the general description of "quality assurance". This should not be confused with "quality control",

which is more introverted and limited. I have to say that, in replying to a question on 12 October, the Secretary for Health and Welfare defined "Medical Audit" as quality assurance, with which I am afraid I cannot agree. These days there are international standards to describe the procedures needed for quality assurance. These standards comprise the ISO 9000 series and nowadays many engineering and other organizational activities are tested for compliance with these standards, be they manufacturing, service or consultancy. They are only procedural, however, and are in no way limited by the professional discipline involved. In the debate two weeks ago, I recommended the health service be tested for ISO 9000 series compliance and I still hold the view that this would be enormously cost effective and beneficial to the public. It is a matter of some regret that the Government did not respond to this constructive suggestion, presumably to enable them to refer to this Council in general as unconstructive and depressing.

I have no wish to encroach on the domain of the medical profession, so I only intend to enlarge on two aspects of prevention: first, the identification of causes and preventive measures available; and, second, the feedback.

Clearly in Hong Kong, we have immense knowledge for the preservation of health. But it is so scattered. Much is held within the Western medical profession, but by no means all. There are wide variations of cost effectiveness. There is no identifiable point of input in the Government health service or the Hospital Authority where preventive, diagnostic or healing processes other than orthodox Western can be formally adopted other than the Policy Branch for Health and Welfare. There is therefore a most onerous responsibility in that Branch for the formulation of policy for the bringing together of all forms of medicine, Western, complementary, traditional Chinese — call it what you will. This is the policy that is needed, desperately needed, if the full health facilities available in Hong Kong and the most cost benefits are to be realized. This is the only way that the most productive and cost effective preventive measures can be implemented.

Secondly, feedback. If prevention is to be properly established, every case needs to be examined for possible feedback to prevent recurrence and danger to patients. Let me give a few examples to illustrate this point:

Cross-infection in hospitals needs to be analyzed in every case to find the cause. Targets for reduction need to be set and monitored.

Misdiagnosis needs to be identified in every case, analyzed and fed back to the source and to all other relevant practitioners, to minimize recurrence. The Secretary for Health and Welfare has said the number of cases of misdiagnosis is not exactly known but is thought to be small. This statement clearly implies that cases are not analyzed, not fed back and not used to prevent recurrence. Opinion as to the extent is purely subjective. Other advanced countries, which do such analysis, record typically up to 50% misreading of X-rays and hence misdiagnosis, 80% misjudgment of

sore throats and 12% unnecessary surgery. I suspect, in Hong Kong, misdiagnosis is not small, is costly and needs to be measured.

In the United Kingdom, one in six patients are in hospital because of iatrogenic illness, an euphemism for doctor induced disease. This was only discovered by feedback and analysis. We need to know the position in Hong Kong so we can act on it too.

In most developed countries, except Hong Kong, all potentially dangerous incidents in hospitals and clinics are reported, correlated, analyzed and fed back for preventive purposes. It was this process that stopped nurses wearing nylon clothing in dry countries. It is this process today that results in the promulgation in other countries of hazard notices, concerning suspect medical equipment, particularly electrical.

I believe we need a strong policy to ensure that all resources for prevention are fully utilized and fallibility of the service is recorded, analyzed and fed back to prevent recurrence — in short, to implement quality assurance.

Mr President, with these remarks, I support the motion.

DR TANG SIU-TONG (in Cantonese): Mr President, health is the greatest wealth pursued by mankind. In order to keep the public in good health, apart from the provision of high quality and low-priced medical services by the Administration, many other objective factors are also required to tie in. Dr Judith MACKAY mentioned in *The State of Health Atlas* that, "Global health has little to do with doctors and hospitals. The basic determinants of health are nutritious food, adequate shelters, clean water, elementary education (especially of women), being a non-smoker, and having access to low-cost, low-tech primary preventive health services, which include immunization and family planning."

The existing medical policies of the Administration have three objectives: (1) prevention of disease and promotion of health; (2) treatment of disease; and (3) improvement of the quality of service in clinics and hospitals. The orientation of these objectives tallies no doubt with the actual needs. Nevertheless, there is still a lot of room for improvement on the fulfilment and enforcement of these policies by the Administration. In order to achieve the goal of "prevention of disease and promotion of health", we rely heavily upon active and comprehensive health education, as well as adequate and low-priced primary medical services.

Epidemics and serious infectious diseases like plague and smallpox had already been extinct or under control in Hong Kong in recent years. The new "urban killers" such as cancer, heart diseases, cerebrovascular disease and AIDS have replaced epidemics and infectious diseases as diseases imposing serious threats to people's lives. As shown by the data from the Hospital Authority,

among the 10 major serious illnesses causing people's deaths, the top three causes are cancer (29.6%), heart disease (17.6%) and cerebrovascular disease (10%). There has been a tendency for an increasing number of people died of these diseases in recent years. In 1988, for every 100 000 Hong Kong people, 81.72 died of heart diseases and the number increased to 92.21 in 1992. Concerning cancer, the number of deaths was 8 861 in 1991. It increased to 9 107 in 1992 and then rapidly increased to 9 304 in 1993. There is a common misconception among people that the serious illness of cancer only exclusively occurs to adults or the elderly. In fact, in recent years, there have been about 50 to 60 children aged between 0-15 who died of various cancer diseases every year. Leukaemia tops the list by 40%, followed by cerebral cancer. Cancer has progressed as the number-two killer of children. The mortality rate is just second to traffic accidents and this trend happens to coincide with the trend in other advanced countries.

High quality medical services are required to minimize the incidence and the mortality rate of these urban killers. It is also essential to promote health education and primary medical services. Prevention is not only better than cure. Viewing this from the angle of cost-effectiveness, prevention and the provision of health care services are globally accepted as the most cost-effective methods. Putting the emphasis of medical policies on the prevention of diseases is helpful in alleviating the pressure of rising cost in the whole medical system.

Mr President, the Administration's existing arrangements for the promotion of health education on the prevention of diseases is centrally organized by the Central Health Education Unit of the Department of Health. The Unit has been performing quite well in recent years in publicizing the prevention of heart diseases and AIDS. On the whole, I think the publicity work of the Unit is too passive which in turn restricts the coverage of the publicity work. The Unit has printed many brochures on the prevention of disease and health knowledge, as well as exhibition panels for use in exhibitions. However, the Unit has taken relatively less initiative in contacting organizations such as schools and local groups, to gain their co-operation in or initiative to assist in the promotion of health education activities. There is also a lack of publicity by the Unit in respect of the enquiry hotline service especially provided for enquiries on heart diseases and AIDS. The public knows not much about this service, and even if they want to use this service, they do not know the telephone number.

In order to achieve active and systematically arranged promotion on health education, I propose that the Administration should let the Central Health Education Unit be independent from the Department of Health and set up an ad hoc committee, similar to the ad hoc committees for the promotion of civic education and the anti-smoking campaign, so as to strengthen the promotion of publicity on health education.

In respect of primary medical services, the Hospital Authority provides about 3% of the total medical services, and the Department of Health provides

about 15%, whilst private medical services are relied upon to make up for the remaining inadequacy. The commitment of the Administration to primary medical services is less than 20% and this is obviously not enough. There are complaints in many districts on the shortage of public clinics and health care services. Let me take Tin Shui Wai, my constituency, as an example. About 140 out-patient quota is now given everyday by the Tin Shui Wai public clinic, the number also includes priority quotas for civil servants and the elderly. For a new town with 80 000 to 90 000 people, the demand for the above quotas for out-patient service is absolutely more than the supply. Night clinic service is not available in the Tin Shui Wai clinic and it is inconvenient to the public. In addition, the Administration should also provide free physical check-up service to the public, so that the public can care more about their health. This can also give full play to the effects of prevention of disease as well as early treatment.

Mr President, there is still a general lack of government expenditure on medical services. I must stress that while increasing the above proposed services, the Administration should not take improper measures to transfer existing expenditure allocated on one item to another, for this will give rise to the adverse effects of catering for one item only at the expense of another. The Administration should additionally allocate adequate resources to facilitate improvement in the prevention of disease and primary medical services and in the quality of service of hospital beds along with the times, in order to cater for the needs of the community.

Mr President, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MISS CHRISTINE LOH: Mr President, the status of health of our residents is a solid indicator of Hong Kong's most valuable resource — that is, of course, our people. Hong Kong has been successful in controlling infectious diseases, and we can boast one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the world. Our longevity rate is also impressive. Over the years, our Government has put in place the infrastructure of a health care system by building hospitals and in training medical and health care specialists.

However, to continue to significantly improve the health, and thereby, also improve the quality of life, of Hong Kong people, we now need to establish a comprehensive preventative health care programme.

We must recognize that good health is more than just the absence of disease. Good health includes a positive state of emotional as well as physical well-being. The goal of a preventative health care system is to prevent disease and suffering before they occur. This approach makes good economic sense, especially as our population matures. Keeping people healthy through better education and early screening will result in fewer doctor visits, fewer lost work days, less need for hospitalization, and people will enjoy life more.

As part of the Governor's policy address, the Secretary for Health and Welfare pledged to promote preventative health care and health education. As a start, the Secretary committed to reducing the mortality rate of people suffering from ischaemic heart disease by 20%. This is a welcome step. But, to significantly improve the health of the community, we will need to see more health targets being set in the future.

To be able to set more health targets, we first need to systematically measure the health status of the population, and the extent of various health risks in Hong Kong. Right now, we have hospital admission figures which provide some clue to the major illnesses and causes of death, but those figures do not tell us how prevalent various diseases are in Hong Kong, or which groups of people are particularly at risk.

For example, and my colleagues have already elucidated, heart disease is a leading cause of death in Hong Kong, but we have little information about how prevalent hypertension — the early warning sign of heart disease — is, among the population, or who are at risk. Without such information, it would be difficult to set health education programmes or community health targets.

The Administration should devote resources to better understand the status of health across our society — that means, across gender lines, among different age groups and occupations. With that knowledge, the Administration can then direct resources and investments towards the area of greatest need. Properly charting trends in public health will also enable us to judge the cost effectiveness of health care expenditure and measure the impact of education and screening programmes.

Let me give some specific examples. In the last few years, breast cancer has become the most common form of cancer among women, and cervical cancer is also on the rise. Both these diseases can be detected through screening, and they can be treated successfully in their early stages. A World Health Organization study, published in 1992, shows that if mammograms are conducted once a year for women between the ages of 50 to 69, breast cancer mortality can be reduced by as much as 30% to 40% with the appropriate follow-up treatment. As for cervical cancer, the same study also shows that screening all women once in their lifetimes prevent many more causes of cervical cancer than screening a small proportion of women every five years. Thus, significant health gains are possible if the Administration puts in place a co-ordinated system to educate, screen, treat and counsel women about these diseases.

Further, I would also like the Secretary to focus on the health effects of domestic violence, both in terms of the physical and mental trauma, and the damaging effects on the children of the families concerned. I believe that there is as yet no systematic collection of data on domestic violence among the police, Social Welfare Department, Legal Aid Department, doctors' clinics and hospitals. I implore the Secretary to immediately draw up guidelines to assist

all those who come across the victims of domestic violence to refer the victims for further help.

I would also like the Secretary to acknowledge that a comprehensive health care policy must confront, and aim to reduce, domestic violence. In this connection, a preventative health care policy must include greater provision of shelter for battered women, and the provision of psychological support for the victims, including their children.

Mr President, I am also concerned about the mental health of our community. A survey completed this year by the Chinese University shows that among those over 70 years old, 29% of the men and 41% of the women suffer from depression. More generally, a World Bank study last year shows that women between the ages of 15 and 44 are twice as likely to suffer from depressive disorders than men. Might this also be true in Hong Kong? And, what should we be doing to improve the mental health of our community?

I would also like to say a few words about women's health. It seems that Hong Kong has good health care for women in their reproductive years, but there is a lack of attention on adolescent and older women. The Health and Welfare Branch might like to consider setting up a women's health section in the same way that it has done for student health, social hygiene and oral health services. By focusing on women, the Branch may pay greater attention to the needs of women across the entire age range.

Mr President, I support the motion.

MR MOSES CHENG (in Cantonese): Mr President, along with the improvement in the quality of living and the advancement of medical technology, Hong Kong people has increasingly longer life expectancy. As shown by the data from the Census and Statistics Department, the average male life expectancy has increased from 67.8 years to 74.8 years and the female life expectancy has increased from 75.3 years to 80.5 years in the past 20 years. No doubt Hong Kong people live longer than before, but can Hong Kong people be described as healthy and happy? If we use the United Nations' health standard to evaluate this, the answer is just the opposite — "No". Many Hong Kong people are physically and mentally unhealthy and their lifestyles are to be blamed for causing various diseases.

Mr President, "prevention is better than cure" is a common saying, but the turth behind this idiom has often been overlooked. As early as 1989, Sheng Kung Hui St James' Settlement began to organize a health promotion scheme. This comprehensive and territory-wide health check-up service provides physical examination, laboratory examination and health education to participants aged 45 or above. Between 1990 and 1992, St James' Settlement conducted an evaluation survey on this scheme, comparing 268 elderly participants with 238 elderly non-participants. The results indicated that the

health of the participants has become generally better than that of the non-participants in these two years. The most important point is that the elderly will be more concerned with keeping themselves healthy and with a healthy lifestyle after participating in this scheme. A very obvious fact is that, according to the latest statistics of this scheme, 16 of the participants had passed away so far, which was less than 25 of the non-participants who died during the period. Moreover, more and more elderly people who are non-participants begin to arrange for regular physical check-ups on their own. We can see that health check-up service for the elderly is accepted by older people and such service is worth promoting.

To prevent the occurrence of diseases, the basic task of the Administration is to provide physical and health screening service to the general public, so that the public can seek early treatment when they discover that they have contracted diseases. The policy address of the Governor this year affirms the principle which has been upheld by the Liberal Party for years, that is, to give the service of the prevention of disease the first priority. This is indeed an improvement, but has the Administration put in enough efforts? At present, the Administration provides maternity and child health centre service for new born babies. For school-age children, the Administration will provide a new student health service from this year onwards to replace the previous School Medical Scheme, and physical examination and health education will be conducted for school children. In addition, the Department of Health has recently set up elderly health centres and well-woman clinics to provide physical examination to those in need. On the surface, the service looks quite satisfactory since people from different age groups can enjoy the screening service provided by the Administration. However, if we examine the problem more closely, we can see that there are inadequacies both in terms of the scope and the quality of the health screening service provided by the Administration.

The elderly health centres set up by the Administration has the elderly aged 65 or above as their service targets. This is probably based upon the current definition by the Administration of the ages of the elderly. Please do not forget that cancer, heart diseases and stroke are the top three killers of Hong Kong which take away the valuable lives of over 10 000 of people every year. They are all chronic urban diseases and diseases are infected after 10 to 20 years of incubation and accumulation. The age of such patients has also in recent years been dropping. If the Administration's health screening service cannot be extended to cover middle-aged people, for example, 45 years old as under the St James' Settlement Scheme, it is basically impossible to achieve the goal of early prevention of diseases.

Another inadequacy is that the health screening service offered by the Administration only includes taking urine sample, blood pressure and body weight, while the most important task of blood test has been neglected. Last year, I realized the importance of blood test in preventing diseases from an elderly health campaign organized by the Rotary Club of Hong Kong Northwest and the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong. Many diseases

caused by a high cholesterol level, such as heart diseases or stroke, cannot be detected without a blood test. According to the data collected from St James' Settlement, the conditions of high cholesterol or triglyceride level is now affecting about one fifth of the normal population in Hong Kong.

Mr President, concerning primary health care services, the Liberal Party has always been advocating the concept of health care for all. The health screening services provided by the Administration should benefit all citizens. Our goal is to keep the public both physically and mentally healthy and to promote a healthy lifestyle. Healthy living means not only to dissuade the public from smoking, it also means to advocate more physical exercises. The findings of an overseas medical research reveal that doing 15 minutes of strenuous exercise per week can greatly reduce the opportunity of falling ill. The health standard of the United Nations can only be met by doing these three things at the same time, only then can we become genuinely healthy and happy Hong Kong citizens.

Mr President, with these remarks, I support the motion. I hope that the Administration will take the goal of the Liberal Party as its orientation towards the improvement of primary health services in the future.

DR CONRAD LAM (in Cantonese): Mr President, my speech mainly focuses on the prevention of AIDS and the approach the Government should take AIDS is the number-one killer of people aged between 25 and 44 in the United States. The World Health Organization estimates that there will be 30 million to 40 million HIV carriers in the world by the year 2000. The estimation by some other organizations shows that there will be as many as 110 million HIV carriers. By that time, the number of people who will die of AIDS will be as many as 1.8 million a year. If developing countries are able to increase their expenditure on AIDS prevention by ten times, then the number of people who will die of AIDS during the period from now on up to the year 2000 can be reduced by 9.5 million. At the same time, a lot of money can be saved. All these tell us the importance of AIDS prevention.

According to recent statistics, there are only 493 HIV carriers in Hong Kong. Although the number of HIV carriers is not great, a lot of social problems have resulted. Due to the discrimination against AIDS patients by the people in general, HIV carriers and their families are unwilling to make known their identity. As a result, the authority concerned fails to get accurate information about AIDS and the true picture of the seriousness of this disease. This will affect the formulation of effective strategies and preventive measures to combat AIDS. Therefore, one important thing in the prevention of AIDS is to eliminate discrimination against AIDS patients.

In the medical and health care field, there are still professionals showing discrimination against or misunderstanding towards AIDS patients. This phenomenon concerns us. At present, all the hospitals under the Hospital

Authority will admit AIDS patients. However, quite a number of private hospitals refuse to admit these patients. A doctor once admitted an AIDS patient for treatment but the patient was ordered to leave by the hospital administration. The most surprising thing is that some Catholic hospitals are said to have discrimination against AIDS patients and refused to admit them. Since I am a Catholic, these rumours which violate the teachings of Jesus Christ really disturb me.

In fact, discrimination against HIV carriers and AIDS patients have not been lessened to a very great extent since the debate on AIDS last year in this Council. A lot of AIDS patients cannot get home help service which they need due to discrimination. Some home helpers are reluctant to bring food to the patients' homes. They can only have bread and biscuits as their meal. Non-government organizations which have refused to offer home help service to AIDS patients include the Sik Sik Yuen Multi-Service Centre, the Lok Man Alice Kwok Integrated Service Centre under the Sheng Kung Hui, the Salvation Army Yau Ma Tei Multi-Service Centre and the Holy Carpenter Church and Community Centre.

Recently, the Advisory Council on AIDS has published a report on a study which involves 98 principals, 870 teachers and 1 186 students. According to the report, the resistance of principals and teachers to students who have contracted AIDS is much stronger than the resistance of students to their AIDS classmates. The report also points out that the related curriculum currently adopted by schools fails to change the negative attitude of teachers and students towards AIDS.

Mr President, the Advisory Council on AIDS published a handbook on the strategy for AIDS prevention, care and treatment last month. However, as we can see from the above examples, the Advisory Council on AIDS is just like a tiger without teeth or claws. The Government should take appropriate measures to give power to the Advisory Council or assist it in a certain way so that it can function more effectively and can achieve its aims. I have to declare my interests here. I am a member of the Advisory Council on AIDS.

"Prevention is better than cure." This saying is most appropriate in describing the case of AIDS. It is because we all know that there is still no effective cure for AIDS at present. The best way to prevent this disease is still education and promotion. Yet, representatives of the Education Department and the department responsible for promotion are not among the members of the Advisory Council on AIDS. Only an Education Officer has attended meetings of the panel under the council. That is why the above report on the study shows such a discouraging result.

Mr President, some think that we need not be too nervous since there are only a few hundred HIV carriers in Hong Kong. This argument is utterly wrong. In fact, according to conservative estimation, there are about 3 000 to 4 000 HIV carriers in Hong Kong. Some others estimate that there are as many

as 6 000 to 8 000 HIV carriers. Based on the experience of other places, the number of AIDS patients may multiply quickly within just a few years. Therefore, the Government should strengthen education and promotion and implement effective preventive measures as soon as possible. Otherwise, serious consequences will be brought about and future expenditure on medical services will increase greatly.

Mr President, strategies must be implemented in an effective way. If the Government does not launch the strategies it has formulated, it is meaningless to have these strategies. Moreover, it would give the impression that the Government is telling lies or is just a lame duck. I hope the Government can inform us which department is responsible for launching the strategies for AIDS prevention and treatment covered in the handbook published last month. I also hope that the Government will give the department concerned adequate support so that it can carry out its work effectively.

With these remarks, I support the motion.

MR FREDERICK FUNG (in Cantonese): Mr President, in the section on medical and health in this year's policy address, the Governor used "Better Care For The Sick" as title. In other words, more medical facilities will be provided and the quality of medical services will be improved. However, I think that the above policy can only be one of the objectives of the Administration's medical policy, but not an overall objective. The reason is that the success of medical policy hinges on two factors. First, the general public should be physically healthy. In other words, the number of patients seeking consultation in clinics should be as small as possible. Secondly, When the public fall sick unfortunately, the medical facilities of the community should be able to provide patients from the lower class with afford able and reasonably charged medical services. The former factor, the prevention of diseases, should be the most important task of our medical policy. Primary medical services also play an important role in the promotion of health education, the prevention of diseases and early treatment.

The policy address lays particular emphasis on hospital treatment, facilities and manpower and mentions nothing about the prevention of diseases and health education. This reflects the Administration's medical policy is lacking in comprehensiveness. In fact, effective preventive measures are needed to combat Hong Kong's major killer diseases, including heart disease, cancer and all chronic and degenerative diseases. However, the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority are now only respectively providing 15% and 3% of the primary medical services. They together only provide around 20% of the overall primary medical services which I think is far from adequate.

Taking a macroscopic view, the Administration should enhance the provision of primary health care services, formulate a set of comprehensive objectives and promote the plan for primary health care. Although primary

medical services generally require less resources, the implementation of the plan for health care can play a substantive role in helping to alleviate the heavy burden on the entire medical framework and the expenditure of the Administration on medical services. Diagnoses of diseases such as heart disease and cancer require a huge quantity of resources, including equipment, medicine, surgery and medical staff. However, if the public understand how to prevent diseases and have better understanding of the causes of various diseases, this can naturally reduce the incidence of diseases and lessen the demand for medical services. This can directly alleviate the pressure on general and specialist out-patient clinics under the Hospital Authority. In the past, owing to the shortage of manpower in hospitals and other problems, patients had to wait for a long time and the quality of medical services was not satisfactory. If the general public, especially the elderly, women and children understand how to prevent common diseases, this will definitely help to improve the quality of medical services.

Concerning the development of primary medical services, I suggest that general out-patient clinics should distribute brochures concerning the prevention of various diseases, and organize more seminars and touring exhibitions to widely publicize healthy diets, such that the public and patients can have a thorough understanding of various diseases and can take preventive measures in the future. The Hospital Authority can also regularly provide free medical examinations to the public, for example, taking blood pressure, blood test and the prevention of hepatitis B, and should further remind the public to pay attention to their daily habits and health care knowledge, in order to assist in alleviating the burden of hospitals, doctors and nurses. Certainly, apart from preventive measures on medical services, the Administration should also make concerted efforts in dealing with other social problems, for example, environmental pollution and social welfare policy. Environmental pollution actually brings about many diseases of the respiratory system while the lack of family or community care will also bring about diseases of the elderly such as fast aging and degeneration.

I hope the Administration can formulate a set of comprehensive and macroscopic medical policy to actually realize the objective of promoting the health of the general public.

Mr President, with these remarks, I support the motion.

MR MICHAEL HO (in Cantonese): Mr President, I shall again criticize the existing medical policy in today's debate. I am not going to spend this valuable seven minutes to praise the Government but I still appreciate it in my heart.

My criticism is construction as I am going to make some specific requests and proposals. I hope that the response to today's debate will be clear and more specific. The Government's point of view and standing may well be different from mine but I hope that the Government will give me some clear responses.

No matter whether it accepts my views or not, it should at least put forward arguments to refute my points.

The former Secretary for Health and Welfare has reiterated that, according to government policy, "no one would be unable to see a doctor because of lack of means". I have repeatedly pointed out that I do not agree that such a simple statement can be regarded as our medical policy. We should have a more meticulous policy which incorporates the two main elements of hospital services and primary health care so that our resources can be reasonably divided between high technology in hospitals and the primary health care services.

Many people may think that the inexpensive primary health care is not anything good or important. They tend to appreciate high technology. Nevertheless, I hope that after formulating a clear policy, we can draw the attention of these people back to primary health care.

Many proposals outlined in the 1990 Report of the Working Party on Primary Health Care have been put into practice already. However, the primary health care policy remains far from clear. On the macro level, I request that the policy should state clearly how to make prevention of disease the dominant or major policy. I also request that, on the micro level, a clear-cut policy should be formulated to render the following services in concrete terms in order to combat the three main killer diseases and other diseases: health care for the elderly, health care for the women, occupational health service, health education, services for the chronically ill as well as medical services provided by the public and private sectors.

Health care for the elderly comes under the policy for the elderly and is categorized as a social welfare problem in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, I consider that the primary health care policy should devote part of it to the elderly. I have not been able to find a clear-cut policy relating to this area except that the 1990 Report of the Working Party on Primary Health Care did point out in paragraph 6.18 some inclinations of the Working Party — "..... we do not consider it desirable to advocate at this stage a massive screening programme for all elderly people above a certain age" and "Their individual needs should best be looked after by their primary care doctors". Although these two statements have reflected some of the inclinations of the Government, the report is, after all, only one made by a Working Party and can by no means be taken as a government policy. I hope that the Government can give a clear account on its policy in this aspect.

If the Government accepts the Working Party's "inclinations", we hope that it will explain clearly to what extent its policy is actually aiming to achieve so that we do not have to dig out clues relating to the elderly health care policy from other documents such as the report of the Working Party. I hope that the Government can explain why it agrees that such health care service can fulfil the purpose of protecting the health of the elderly.

Concerning the proposed number of health care centres for the elderly, I wonder if the Government has based itself on some figures quoted from the report, such as the findings that show 21.5% of patients attending out-patient clinics were elderly, to make its decision.

If we make some comparisons, we can easily find that the health care policy for school children is very different from that for the elderly. The health care policy for school children is more clear-cut and it has been clearly pointed out that comprehensive health care services will be provided for all school children. Moreover, an annual medical check-up will be conducted for Primary One, Primary Six and Secondary III students. The objective is clear and even the number of people can be specifically calculated. I hope that we can have the same clear-cut policy for the elderly, women and occupational health.

It looks that there are only two minutes left and I will not be able to finish my prepared speech. Now I wish to talk about how I felt when I was preparing for this debate. As I was unable to identify all parts concerning the primary health care policy from the government documents, I felt just like looking for fragmented pieces of the medical policy in the sand. Just like doing archaeological work, I have to assemble the pieces together after repeated deliberation. Finally, I manage to present this reassembled product here today to ask the Government if this is its original medical policy. It is earnestly hoped that the Government will formulate its medical policy in greater details and to responded clearly to the services concerning women, occupational health, the elderly, school children and dental care that I have mentioned earlier.

Mr President, with these remarks, I support the motion.

SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE: Mr President, I am grateful to Members for their lively interest in this very important area. I stressed last week in the resumed debate on the Motion of Thanks that prevention of disease was a priority item on the health agenda. And I also pointed out that this is a central theme in my Policy Commitments. I am pleased to note that various Members agreed with me. The Honourable Frederick FUNG mentioned this in his address. Miss Christine LOH also mentioned this in her debate, and various other Members also emphasized the importance of prevention of disease as a priority item also on their health agenda.

Various other Members also referred to the definition of ideal health provided by the World Health Organization: Here my aim and theirs are the same, that is, we work towards "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Various Members referred to our past history of disease prevention. And various Members such as Dr the Honourable Samuel WONG and Dr the Honourable TANG Siu-tong also agreed that in the past we have made very remarkable progress. And over the past few decades we have put in place all the basic determining factors for

health, namely, adequate shelter, nutritious food, education, and widespread access to health programmes including immunization and family planning.

The Government's commitment to safeguarding and improving the health of our community is enshrined in its existing comprehensive health care policy which places increasing emphasis on health promotion, prevention of disease and disability and primary health care as the effective means to achieve maximum benefits for health.

Members may remember that in 1989 with the appointment of the Working Party on Primary Health Care and the subsequent endorsement of its 102 recommendations, this reflected quite clearly the Administration's efforts in implementing its health care policy directives towards these goals.

In more specific terms, I would like to refer Members to the recurrent spending on health in recent years. For instance, recurrent spending on health care has increased by nearly 7% in real terms in 1994-95 compared with 1993-94. It will increase by a further 7% in real terms in 1995-96. Our role is increasingly to encourage and enable people to help themselves to avoid disease and disability, and develop lifestyles that are conducive to positive health. And I am pleased to know also that various Members including the Honourable Micheal HO, the Honourable Moses CHENG, and Dr the Honourable LAM Kui-chun also agreed with me. We shall continue to move towards an approach which focuses more on the individual person rather than on disease. We shall enable people to get a healthy start to life, to live that life productively, and to die with dignity.

Various Members also referred to the activities and initiatives of the Department of Health and the Hospital Authority. These are but some of the examples of the determination and dedication of our health care providers in the public sector to help achieve these objectives.

#### *Disease prevention*

I would like now to focus on disease prevention. Various Members have also mentioned this very important aspect. We will continue to protect the health of our children through immunization against the nine common childhood infectious diseases and through other services in our Maternal and Child Health Centres.

Dr the Honourable LAM Kui-chung also referred to the new Student Health Service and I am pleased to announce that this will be implemented in 1995. This will aim at promoting and maintaining the health of school children from Primary I to Secondary VII. Early detection of our health problems will ensure timely intervention. When this scheme is fully implemented, it will be available to all the nearly 900 000 school children in Hong Kong. And I am sure that this will make a major difference.

Various Members including Dr the Honourable HUANG Chen-ya referred to services including woman and elderly health centres. These have stated as pilot projects, but will ultimately be integrated with other primary health care services to provide a continuity of care. They will deliver health promotion, health screening and health maintenance programmes.

We will increase and enhance health education activities towards the top three killer diseases in Hong Kong, and various Members mentioned our three main killer diseases such as cancer, heart disease and stroke.

Our studies show that these three diseases are linked clearly to certain lifestyles, and that the best way to prevent them is the promotion and adoption of a healthy lifestyle.

Health lifestyle is not an abstract and unattainable object. It is centred around the themes of no smoking, healthy eating habits, weight control, regular exercise and alcohol moderation. These habits and measures look very simple, but together, they form a most effective agenda against the three killer diseases. To this end, we will provide the leadership for developing healthy lifestyles in our community. We will maximize opportunities for co-operation and collaboration between different sectors of our community and will design integrated programmes on our healthy lifestyles.

On anti-smoking measures, various Member spoke about this. For example, we will aim at implementing further restrictions on the sale and promotion of tobacco products. Coupled with the public education efforts of the Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health, our measures will reduce smoking-related illnesses and death.

The Honourable Frederick FUNG mentioned the work of the Hospital Authority. Here I am pleased to say that emphasis has also been placed on prevention especially in early intervention to prevent and minimize the effects of disease and disability. The Authority collaborates with other health care providers, social welfare organizations and patient and community groups to achieve this. Patient resource centres have been established in major hospitals to provide a focal point for health education and support for the chronically ill. Collaborative health education and preventive programmes have also been organized and with local community groups. We will encourage more such activities in the centre.

Dr the Honourable Conrad LAM, Dr the Honourable LEONG Che-hung and other Members referred to the important subject of AIDS, here, our policy is clear. It entails four basic components:

- Firstly : Prevention of HIV infection and transmission;
- Secondly : Care of people with HIV or AIDS;

- Thirdly : Surveillance and control; and
- Fourthly : Partnership in HIV/AIDS prevention and care.

In the fight against this deadly disease, health education and behaviour modification are essential. We shall continue vigorously to promote AIDS awareness and to combat prejudice and discrimination. The new initiatives call for greater community involvement in the battle against AIDS. In December of this year, the Lions International and the Department of Health will launch a Community Charter on AIDS. By signing the Charter, companies and organizations will pledge themselves publicly to support our goals. The Government, as the largest employer, will take the lead by being the first to sign the Charter.

#### *Target setting*

I would now like to turn to target setting which was referred to by Dr the Honourable LEONG Che-hung and Miss Christine LOH. To help formulate strategies and set targets towards implementing our health care policy, a wide range of information is needed: for population surveillance as well as for evaluation purposes.

In this respect, Mr President, I am pleased to announce that the Department of Health, in collaboration with the Department of Community Medicine at the University of Hong Kong, has recently published a "Public Health Report". This new initiative aims to analyse the major health problems affecting our community which are preventable. It attempts to provide some pointers to the direction in which we should now move, to ensure that our future assessments of the territory's state of health are relevant, that it is accurate, that it is interpretative and that it is disseminated in a way which will maximize their impact on health policy. It emphasizes the need for collaboration between different sectors of the community: in health promotion, in health research, in information system improvements and in data collection.

The first issue of this report deals with two very important diseases in Hong Kong — heart disease and lung cancer. I hope that this will arouse greater awareness of these health problems, generate feedback, strengthen our prevention strategies for priority areas, and stimulate support and participation by people from all walks of life.

I look forward to discussing the Public Health Report with Members of the Health Panel and getting their feedback on our approach.

#### *Conclusion*

In conclusion, "Public health is the science and art of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts of society". It cannot be isolated to a single branch of policy makers. Health impacts across

many policy areas and sectors of society. The enhancement of the health of the people requires the co-operation of all parties. There is an important role for the individual, the family and the community in this respect. Each and every one of us can make a long-term difference to our health through simple actions. Let us work together to help make that difference.

Thank you, Mr President.

PRESIDENT: Dr HUANG, you are now entitled to reply and you have two minutes and six seconds out of your original 15 minutes.

DR HUANG CHEN-YA (in Cantonese): I am very glad to see that today no one pointed out we had to consult China first on our medical policy and that we should not hold a debate in the Legislative Council because the policy would affect the expenditures on Hong Kong people's health and medical care after 1997.

I would like to read out a document submitted by the Alliance for Patients' Mutual Help Organizations today. They raised the point that the Government should look squarely at the adoption of preventive measures for diseases and step up the work of public education and publicity so as to enable the community to acquire knowledge of various diseases. In addition, the Government should provide the public with screening services and encourage them, particularly children and the elderly, to have regular body check-up. Should any disease be detected, it can be treated at an early stage.

Furthermore, resources should be increased to improve government out-patient and specialists' services and shorten patients' waiting time in order to avoid the deterioration of patients' conditions due to any delay in treatment. The Alliance for Patients' Mutual Help Organizations is made up of a number of chronic patients' mutual aid bodies. They all have painful firsthand experience from which they learned the importance of these preventive measures and they have put forward some reasonable requests. Therefore, the Government should take their views seriously.

Mr President, it is always distressing to find somebody dead or injured in a traffic accident because we think such casualty can be prevented and is not inevitable. Similarly, many diseases can be prevented and are avoidable. We should not be disheartened by the huge number of patients, we should not think that we are unable to help and that it is meaningless for us to make any efforts.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their support today as well as the Secretary for Health and Welfare for her promise to support this motion. Yet, I hope the Government is not paying lip service to me but will indeed increase the allocation of resources for the prevention of diseases in the next Budget, rather than keeping the expenditure at the existing level of a mere 4%. I also hope that

the Government will expeditiously set some explicit and specific targets for its work.

*Question on the motion put and agreed to.*

#### **ADJOURNMENT AND NEXT SITTING**

PRESIDENT: In accordance with Standing Orders I now adjourn the Council until 2.30 pm tomorrow 3 November 1994.

*Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to Six o'clock.*

*Note:* The short titles of the Bills/motions listed in the Hansard with the exception of the City Polytechnic of Hong Kong (Amendment) Bill 1994, Hong Kong Baptist College (Amendment) Bill 1994 and Hong Kong Polytechnic (Amendment) Bill 1994, have been translated into Chinese for information and guidance only; they do not have authoritative effect in Chinese.

**WRITTEN ANSWER****Annex****Written answer by the Secretary for Education and Manpower to Dr LEONG Che-hung's supplementary question to Question 2**

Statistics are not collected on the number of students who have possibly developed harmful effects on the spine as a result of their having to carry heavy school bags. Although there is no evidence suggesting the association between heavy school bags and scoliosis, measures have been and will continue to be taken to reduce the weight of school bags so as to prevent possible undesirable effects on the spine of the young children.

With regard to Dr LEONG's suggestion for a school health service to look into this particular area, I am pleased to inform him that the Department of Health will introduce a new Student Health Service for all primary and secondary students from September 1995. This new service will be free and cover physical check-up, health screening and education. Specific screening for scoliosis will be included and health education will also cover education on proper posture and personal habits. Further investigations and referrals to appropriate specialities will be arranged as necessary under the scheme.

The new service and the associated preventive health education will have beneficial effects on the health of our school children. I trust Dr LEONG will welcome this new service.

