

OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Monday, 10 July 2006

The Council met at Three o'clock

MEMBERS PRESENT:

THE PRESIDENT

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

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT HO CHUN-YAN

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

THE HONOURABLE LEE CHEUK-YAN

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

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

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

THE HONOURABLE MARGARET NG

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

THE HONOURABLE JAMES TO KUN-SUN

THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG MAN-KWONG

THE HONOURABLE CHAN YUEN-HAN, J.P.

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

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

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

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

THE HONOURABLE WONG YUNG-KAN, J.P.

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

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

DR THE HONOURABLE YEUNG SUM

THE HONOURABLE LAU KONG-WAH, J.P.

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

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

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW CHENG KAR-FOO

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

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

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

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT CHAN WAI-YIP

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

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

THE HONOURABLE VINCENT FANG KANG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE WONG KWOK-HING, M.H.

THE HONOURABLE LEE WING-TAT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE HONOURABLE LEUNG KWOK-HUNG

DR THE HONOURABLE KWOK KA-KI

DR THE HONOURABLE FERNANDO CHEUNG CHIU-HUNG

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

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

THE HONOURABLE CHIM PUI-CHUNG

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

THE HONOURABLE ALBERT JINGHAN CHENG

THE HONOURABLE KWONG CHI-KIN

THE HONOURABLE TAM HEUNG-MAN

MEMBERS ABSENT:

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

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

THE HONOURABLE LEUNG YIU-CHUNG

THE HONOURABLE SIN CHUNG-KAI, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE LAU CHIN-SHEK, J.P.

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

THE HONOURABLE CHOY SO-YUK, J.P.

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

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

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

PUBLIC OFFICERS ATTENDING:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CLERK IN ATTENDANCE:

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

PURSUANT TO RULE 8 OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE, THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, THE HONOURABLE DONALD TSANG YAM-KUEN, ATTENDED TO ADDRESS THE COUNCIL AND TO RECEIVE QUESTIONS.

TABLING OF PAPERS

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

Subsidiary Legislation/Instruments	<i>L.N. No.</i>
Schedule of Routes (Citybus Limited) Order 2006	161/2006
Schedule of Routes (Citybus Limited) (North Lantau and Chek Lap Kok Airport) Order 2006	162/2006
Schedule of Routes (Kowloon Motor Bus Company (1933) Limited) Order 2006	163/2006
Schedule of Routes (Long Win Bus Company Limited) Order 2006	164/2006
Schedule of Routes (New Lantao Bus Company (1973) Limited) Order 2006	165/2006
Schedule of Routes (New World First Bus Services Limited) Order 2006	166/2006
Public Health (Animals and Birds) (Exhibitions) (Amendment) Regulation 2006	167/2006
The Ombudsman Ordinance (Amendment of Schedule 1) Order 2006	168/2006
Food Business (Amendment) Regulation 2006	169/2006
Import and Export (Strategic Commodities) Regulations (Amendment of Schedule 1) Order 2006 (Commencement) Notice	170/2006
Import and Export (Strategic Commodities) Regulations (Amendment of Schedule 1) Order 2006 (Amendment) Order 2006 (Commencement) Notice	171/2006

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Members will please remain standing for the Chief Executive.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): The Chief Executive will first address the Council.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): Madam President, summer is here and the southerly wind has brought a pleasant spell of fine days with blue sky and white clouds. When we look back on the hazy, discouraging days, it reinforces our determination to drive the pollutants away and win back our blue skies.

The Government has done a lot in recent years to improve air quality. Compared with 1997, major pollutants in the air have been reduced. In 2004, we found that the concentration of respirable suspended particulates (RSP) and nitrogen oxides recorded at roadside air quality monitoring stations fell by 9% and 24% respectively. Except for sulphur dioxide, emissions of major pollutants dropped between 16% and 28%. This is still far from being enough. Roadside air quality monitoring stations are recording high Air Pollution Indices from time to time and we continue to have days of low visibility, especially in the urban areas. People are often still disappointed and frustrated with our air quality. Therefore, the SAR Government must look the problem in the eye. We, as well as the community as a whole, should also look the problem in the face.

However, measures to improve air quality do not yield results in the short term. It is essential that we set our target well ahead and strive to achieve it step by step. Four years ago, we set targets with the Guangdong Provincial Government that would see, by 2010, a significant reduction in emissions of four major air pollutants in the region. To achieve this target, we and Guangdong have put in place a series of measures. For instance, Guangdong is adopting measures to expand the use of cleaner fuels, restrict the level of sulphur in fuels, phase out small-scale and highly polluting power plants, install desulphurization systems in generation units, and strictly control the tailpipe emissions of vehicles.

In Hong Kong, power plants are still the major source of pollution in terms of emissions, with the amount of sulphur dioxide released accounting for 92% of the total. The Government has imposed emission caps in the licences of the

power plants. In the long run, the Government expects to require power companies to reduce emissions drastically and impose penalties for failing to meet the emission caps through the new Scheme of Control Agreements after 2008.

To meet the 2010 emission reduction targets, we have also implemented other measures, including:

- tightening the specifications for petrol to the Euro IV standard;
- introducing Euro IV emission standards to newly registered vehicles;
- requiring the installation of vapour-recovery systems at petrol stations, where the petrol-dispensing nozzles will be connected to these systems to reduce petrol waste and vaporization;
- controlling volatile organic compounds emissions from specific products; and
- introducing a mandatory energy efficiency labelling scheme covering room coolers, refrigerators and compact fluorescent lamps.

These measures, when implemented, will help us achieve the targets for cutting emissions by 2010. However, if we have the public's participation, we believe the project will get double the result with half the effort. Maybe you will ask: How much can one do? How potent will the force be? But I believe, as we breathe the same air, we should all chip in to improve air quality. A little help from every citizen will mean a lot in cleaning the air. Take energy conservation as an example. Power used for air-conditioning accounts for one third of our current total energy consumption, which is attributable to energy consumption of air-conditioning. If we can raise the temperature of all air-conditioned venues by 3 degrees Celsius, that is to increase the temperature from 21 or 22 degrees Celsius to 25.5 degrees Celsius as the Government advocates, we can save about 1 billion units of electricity a year. This means the public can save \$900 million in electricity tariffs. According to experts, the move will also help cut 700 000 tonnes of carbon dioxide, 2 400 tonnes of sulphur dioxide, 1 200 tonnes of nitrogen oxides and 100 tonnes of RSP annually. The figures are remarkable.

Therefore, improving air quality requires the whole community's participation. I would like to take this opportunity to announce that the Environmental Protection Department will kick off a series of publicity and public education activities from end July, to encourage the public and the business sector to partake in cleaning up the air. The "Clear Air Charter", initiated by the business sector last year, is a good start. The Government will show its support by endorsing the charter.

At the community level, people can make use of public transport, turn off idling engines, choose electric appliances with higher energy efficiency, switch off home appliances such as televisions and lights when not in use before leaving a room, choose electrical appliances covered by the Energy Efficiency Labelling Scheme and avoid using goods with volatile organic compounds such as hair spray and air refreshener. And, of course, do not forget what I just said right now, to raise air-conditioned room temperature to a more suitable and comfortable level so as to save electricity.

Just as I said earlier, all government departments have raised the air-conditioned room temperature to the standard, 25.5 degrees Celsius. Our colleagues were not used to it at the beginning, but they soon found it quite comfortable. Here, I would like to make an appeal — What is the room temperature of the Legislative Council Chamber now? It seems to me that it is 22.5 degrees Celsius, and there is still a difference of three degrees Celsius.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): No, the difference cannot be as great as 3 degrees Celsius.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): What is the room temperature here then?

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Have we measured the room temperature?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): It should be between 23 and 24 degrees Celsius, and no doubt there is room for minor adjustment, after which you will still find it comfortable.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Chief Executive, if we raise the temperature to that standard, I think all gentlemen will have to take off their jackets.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): Exactly. This is precisely what I said just now. We can encourage casual summer dress and to this end, the Government will launch a Dress Down in Summer Campaign. Policies allowing civil servants to dress casually in summer have been put in place. In response to the green groups' appeal, the Civil Service Bureau will issue a reminder later today to encourage colleagues to dress in casual, but appropriate, attire in summer. They will no longer need to wear jackets and ties to work.

Out of deference to the Legislative Council, I am still wearing a suit and a bowtie. However, when the Question and Answer Session comes to an end, my bowtie and coat will be coming off. I hope the private sector will also encourage their staff to dress casually in summer wherever appropriate. The move will allow them to feel more comfortable and it is environmentally friendly. I understand that various trades have their dress codes, such as bankers wearing suits and lawyers wearing their costumes in Court. We also have to dress up when receiving guests. However, we can be more casual on some occasions.

The Government will consider all practical measures to improve air quality, which we think can eliminate pollution, protect public health and boost investors' confidence in Hong Kong in the long run. Aggressive emission reduction measures will inevitably cause short-term inconvenience to the public, and increase operational costs for certain sectors. Therefore, it is necessary to have sufficient discussion in the community and reach a social consensus before implementing any aggressive measures. At this stage, we should take every small step to support the clean-air initiative in our daily lives. As mentioned before, the results of a little help from every citizen will be great.

Honourable Members, Hong Kong is a small place. Air pollution affects everyone regardless of age, wealth, status and profession. So, citizens should shoulder the responsibility together. I hope all Hong Kong people, the local business community, and businessmen investing in the Pearl River Delta Region fully support the activities to be launched by the Environmental Protection Department for a blue sky. Thank you, Madam President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): The Chief Executive will now answer questions on the policy address raised by Members. A Member whose question has been answered may, if necessary and for the purpose of elucidation only, ask a short follow-up question.

MR BERNARD CHAN (in Cantonese): *President, I welcome the proposal made by the Chief Executive earlier, so I can do away with this suit.*

The final match of the World Cup 2006 finished this morning. I wonder if the Chief Executive had time to watch the game last night or this morning, and whether or not Italy is the champion in his mind. The Chief Executive recently mentioned the principle of "the ball is round" in the "Letter to Hong Kong", and that a good leader must be able to inspire the people to give play to team spirit. Being the leader of Hong Kong, does he think that the degree of solidarity in the community is high enough currently? Furthermore, many people of calibre have recently expressed views on the political system of Hong Kong. What does the Chief Executive think about this? Is there any way to make the public go one step further with a view to achieving a greater degree of harmony?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): I think last night's football match could not be missed. However, as I had to prepare for today's Question and Answer Session, so I was determined not to watch the game live but to have it recorded. Yet, there was a sudden "bang" at about 1.00 am when the television was switched on. To my amazement, it was my wife who woke up to watch the game (*laughter*), therefore I was also made to watch until it finished. I am really sorry about this, and do forgive me if I make any slips today. (*Laughter*)

Hong Kong is nowadays an open society. I believe it is only natural for people to have different opinions, and it is the normal operation of a society. And yet, will it give an impression that we are not united? Problems of this kind are definitely common in open societies, but so long as we share the same goal, and work towards the goal in Hong Kong's long-term interest, as well as prosperity and stability, it is fine for anyone to air opinions. The most important thing is to adopt a tolerant attitude, and to put forth constructive proposals and listen to others' viewpoints as far as possible, with a view to seeking a consensus. By so doing, we will be able to reach a consensus no matter how difficult a task is, for instance, the constitutional reform. This is

my personal opinion. However, since Hong Kong is a pluralistic society, I believe we may not be of one heart and one mind at all times.

From another angle, however, Hong Kong also has a beautiful side. What I mean is we may find that people from all walks of life will get involved and work with one heart and one mind, especially when something has happened. As we can see, in case of the occurrence of disasters in the Mainland or SARS outbreak in Hong Kong, the spirit of encouragement of Hong Kong people would become very strong. We, therefore, have our unique value and this is what we should appreciate. There are some deep-rooted problems that have not been properly resolved in Hong Kong, and must be handled progressively with care. And during the course, there will certainly be divergent views. What we have to do is to adopt a tolerant attitude and respect the views of others. Although this might give an impression that we are not united, I think that Hong Kong is, after all, a progressive society of high civilization.

MR ALBERT HO (in Cantonese): *President, when we are joyfully discussing the joy of watching football competitions, I think we should not forget the predicament faced by some residents of new towns. I believe the Chief Executive is also aware of the many family tragedies that happened in a new town, Tin Shui Wai, in the past few years. Two years ago, a family violence incident occurred and claimed the lives of four members of the family. Last month, there was a suicide case where several women killed themselves today. No wonder the Secretary for Home Affairs called this city a city of sorrow in a speech he delivered two days ago.*

Chief Executive, my question is whether, in the planning of new towns like Tin Shui Wai, the authorities concerned have learned from the experience in the '70s and '80s from the planning of new towns like Tuen Mun. Owing to the remoteness of these new towns, the transport expenses are high, and with the northward relocation of factories, job opportunities are limited. More often than not, families on Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA), new arrivals and jobless households are found clustering in these new towns. I would like to talk about Tin Shui Wai in particular. The district has a population of 300 000, but there is an acute shortage of community facilities. The situation in the northern part of Tin Shui Wai is particularly serious. Though there are some 100 000 residents, not a single Leisure and Cultural

Services Department (LCSD) facility is provided there; there is no football pitch, no swimming pool, no library and not even clinic. May I ask the Chief Executive whether he considers the Government is treating these residents fairly when the Government urges these citizens to move into these new towns but failing to provide these facilities to them?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): Actually, regarding the design and completion of new towns, the imbalance at the initial stage did not only occur to Tuen Mun. Comparatively speaking, the situation in Tuen Mun was not a great problem. We may look at the case of Sha Tin. When we developed Sha Tin into a new town, we placed emphasis on its great importance, but still, imbalance was found later. In respect of factories, we did set up a new industrial area in the district, hoping that residents of that district might work in these factories instead of the urban areas and thus avoiding increasing the traffic load of the district. However, it did not work out the way as desired. On the contrary, residents who had already moved into Sha Tin continued to work in their original place of work, while residents from other districts went to Sha Tin to find jobs. This thus gave rise to the situation of imbalance.

I am aware of the current problem in Tin Shui Wai. In respect of the design concept and implementation, we do need to think it over, and I believe this is an aspect we should consider. Why? In fact, in general, we have been doing well in overall planning, which includes the kind of facilities to be built and the provision of facilities in proportion to the population. However, regarding the current situation in new towns, particularly the recent problems in Tin Shui Wai, we notice the problem mentioned by you earlier, that is, in addition to Hong Kong citizens earning a relatively lower average income, many ethnic minorities have also moved into these new towns, and the social problems so arise are those we have never encountered. On the construction of community facilities, it has been an established practice that new facilities will be provided when the population of a certain town has reached a specific level, so that resources will not be wasted at the beginning.

Now, I think we have to reconsider such an approach and some adjustment may be required. For new towns located in remote areas where residents cannot make use of the facilities in other districts, the facilities concerned should be provided for the district as soon as possible. We are keenly aware of the current problem in Tin Shui Wai. But there is no lack of facilities in the district.

At present, the facilities provided by the LCSD in the district include a district library, a mobile library, a public swimming pool, a stadium, a sports ground and other park facilities. However, the northern part of Tin Shui Wai is really in lack of these facilities, and we have now injected more resources in this respect gradually. As far as I know, the plan includes a stadium, a seven-a-side football pitch and a basketball court. There will also be a number of open spaces, a library and stadium complex, a recreation centre, and so on.

Moreover, the Social Welfare Department has also given special consideration to the prevailing needs of residents of Tin Shui Wai and provided certain special services for them. The provision of some integrated services has commenced. Actually, the relevant services have been provided for a long time, and we are just enhancing these services now. Moreover, the Employment Service under the Labour Department has also made special efforts in this respect, and about the work they are now doing, I have explained it before when I came here to answer questions. However, I agree with you that what we are now doing is only remedial work. This time, we have really learned a lesson and may apply this in addressing the situation in other districts. Therefore, my colleagues and I now are particularly concerned about new districts like Tung Chung. So before commencing the development of new towns, we will construct the relevant ancillary facilities in advance. This is what we will do. I agree with this point, but for the time being, we have to work together to examine what remedial measures can be introduced.

MR ALBERT HO (in Cantonese): *I have to thank the Chief Executive for his positive response, stating earlier that more attention will be given to those communities which have been marginalized and impoverished. In fact, this is not the first time this topic is raised, and I think it has been raised for a period of time already, at least two to three years. For instance, in a report released by the Democratic Party last year, some chapters were devoted to a detailed discussion on the problems in Tin Shui Wai. But now, the crux of the problem is who will be responsible for the co-ordination of these measures so that they can be implemented as soon as possible. In addition to hardware provision, facilities on other fronts should also be provided, such as community activities and measures which will reinforce the sense of belonging and cohesion of local residents. In fact, this should not be limited to hardware only, for there are still*

many things that should be done. May I ask the Chief Executive whether he will instruct — perhaps I should not use the word "instruct" — whether he will assign one Policy Secretary to take charge of the overall co-ordination of these issues, so as to ensure that similar imbalance will not occur in new towns again? We should never let these towns become some hopeless and gloomy towns.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): I do not think that Tin Shui Wai is hopeless now. I visit that district about once a month. Every month, I pay site visits to different districts, sometimes during the day and sometimes at night. I have also inspected a number of facilities; I am concerned about this issue just as you do. However, Albert, theoretically, these hardware facilities cannot be established in a couple of years, actually, it depends on whether the relevant work had been done five or six years ago. The processes now before us are public facility hardware approved by the Finance Committee and must have undergone a long fermentation. What we are now doing is only some urgent improvements. I agree with you that we can do more on the software front. In respect of co-ordination, the District Offices concerned will of course be in charge of this at present. We are now devolving powers to the District Councils, and the Government will by all means delegate the administrative authority to District Offices. I hope to see a new scene. Members may be aware that the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs and the Secretary keep a special interest in the facilities at district level and the co-ordination work in this respect. The Financial Secretary and the Chief Secretary for Administration will surely render assistance in the handling of these issues if necessary. Sometimes, I myself may also help handling such work. At present, procedural matters will not hinder our work in the investment on hardware and software services. Therefore, with regard to the problem of facilities in such new towns as Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung, I hope Members will see some concrete improvement gradually in the coming year or two.

MR LI KWOK-YING (in Cantonese): *How are you, Mr TSANG? A few weeks ago, a bill was passed on the issuance of sick leave certificates by registered Chinese medicine practitioners (CMPs). Being the Chairman of the Bills Committee concerned, I was very glad to see the recognition of Chinese medicine in our health care system eventually. However, a controversial issue has arisen*

during the course of scrutiny, that is, for some reasons unknown, listed CMPs are allowed to practise but prohibited from issuing sick leave certificates. This issue has given rise to enormous repercussions in the medical sector and the traditional Chinese medicine profession, and conflicts have also arisen. May I ask if Mr TSANG has any suggestions to resolve such conflicts in the Chinese medicine profession? At the same time, what measure will be put in place to enhance the participation of CMPs in our health care system in the near future?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): Mr LI, continuous efforts have been made by the Government in respect of traditional Chinese medical service and the issue of professionalism of CMPs. There are currently 5 000 registered CMPs, among whom 500 were previously listed CMPs who have become registered CMPs through examinations and can now issue sick leave certificates. What makes a good CMP is, I think, a matter of professional ethics and practice skills. If a CMP has good professional ethics and practice skills, there would be no need to attract patients' patronage with the issuance of sick leave certificates. Another point is there are a lot of conflicts and divergent views on the issuance of sick leave certificates in the profession. Some people hold that, in order to ensure the professional standards, CMPs are required to pass examinations to ascertain that they meet the necessary standard of becoming registered CMPs. Also, the statutory rights currently enjoyed by CMPs can only be exercised after registration. Just as I said earlier, 500 listed CMPs have become registered CMPs through examinations and can issue sick leave certificates now. Furthermore, the Government will also render support to the existing 3 000 listed CMPs as far as possible, to help them achieve the prescribed standard of the existing Chinese medicine profession through examinations. I think this is a more proactive approach to take.

MR LI KWOK-YING (in Cantonese): *Mr TSANG, we certainly know that the public should be protected. But the point is, under the current situation, while some master grade CMPs fail to become registered CMPs for being unable to adapt to the examination system, their disciples have passed the examinations. In this connection, does the Government have any concrete measures to prevent them from being marginalized?*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): Mr LI, the current system of listed CMPs is already one of them. At present, they can continue with their practice and what they used to do. Work which they have been doing is not prohibited now. I think the decision to maintain the Chinese medicine profession at a certain level by setting a registration standard should be respected. I believe this kind of situation will certainly emerge during the transitional period. As for those elderly or very senior CMPs, I think they need not worry about clientele for not having the authority to issue sick leave certificates, as this will not happen. I believe, the most important thing is, with excellent practice skills, they will definitely enjoy a booming business.

MR JEFFREY LAM (in Cantonese): *Madam President, I am very glad that the Chief Executive mentioned the air quality problem just now, and that he is very concerned about the degree of air pollution in Hong Kong. I am even more pleased to note that he attaches great importance to the Clean Air Charter promoted by the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce. I recalled that the day when the Chief Executive first came before this Council, there were a blue sky and white clouds. I hope that whenever you come here in the future — and hopefully you will come here more frequently in the future — there will be a blue sky and white clouds outside.*

Madam President, it is proposed in the 11th Five-Year Plan (FYP) that the Central Authorities will promote healthy interaction of the eastern, central and western regions of China, and enhance co-ordinated developments of different regions to complement each other's strengths. More than a month ago, the Chief Executive led a group of people from the business sector to visit places like Guangxi and Yunan to explore business opportunities. Also, in September this year, the SAR Government will convene an economic summit on the 11th FYP. May I ask the Chief Executive, as it is known to all, business opportunities will vanish in a blink of an eye, and given our vast Motherland, if he can tell us what good leads have been provided by the Chief Executive and the SAR Government to assist the business and industrial sectors in seeking business opportunities in the Mainland and opening up the mainland market?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): The role played by the SAR Government is, of course, facilitation, and this will surely create a new and more competitive business environment. In the past few years, the SAR Government has

specially created a new horizon, that is, CEPA, and opened the gateway to the Mainland for Honourable Members under the leadership of more senior government officials. My involvement in such work started during my days as the Financial Secretary and Chief Secretary for Administration. I hope that Hong Kong businessmen will not only explore new opportunities on their own, but also grasp the opportunities to negotiate with the most senior officials of the local authorities in different provinces and municipalities for special investment opportunities. Our work in this respect will continue.

Furthermore, we also wish to capitalize on our current position as a centre on many fronts and our strengths as highlighted in the 11th FYP. In this connection, we understand that there is a need to convene a summit, hopefully by the end of this year, so as to formulate a more systematic and comprehensive strategy, together with an agenda, with a view to enhancing the competitiveness of Hong Kong.

As regards business operation, we will continue to follow the new trend of the "Nine plus Two" in the Pan-Pearl River Delta Region that prevails, and in particular, to open up new markets and new platforms in the adjacent Pearl River Delta Region, so that businesses will not only be confined to Guangdong Province, but will hopefully be expanded into some new markets. As Members all know, I went to Guangxi and Yunan not long ago, and I will again go to Jiangxi, Hunan and Guizhou in the hope of developing new horizons in the provinces neighbouring Guangdong, and seeking business opportunities as well. I also hope that some large-scale mainland enterprises will be attracted to Hong Kong to establish branches, undergo financing, employ local workers and establish new businesses, as well as to integrate into the international finance and trading systems via the Hong Kong platform, thereby increasing Hong Kong's economic activities and enhancing our status as financial and trading centres.

Therefore, Members can see that work has been done in tourism and trading, and investment in particular. Also, continuous efforts will be made in respect of the existing service network of our manufacturing industry in the Mainland and our position as the platform for the Mainland to reach out. The SAR Government will keep up efforts on these fronts. In order to serve the business sector, just as I said in the past, apart from the Economic and Trade Offices (ETOs) established in Guangzhou and Beijing, two more ETOs will be established in Chengdu and Shanghai in the hope of providing services to Hong Kong businessmen doing businesses there, thereby enhancing our competitiveness. These are again ongoing tasks that will be continued.

Certainly, doing business is not our strength, but that of the business sector. And yet, we will definitely do what they think we need to do and what is within our purview, and then move along the line. What I just said is the work which the Government is doing under the regulated framework, and efforts are being made.

MR JEFFREY LAM (in Cantonese): *Madam President, may I ask the Chief Executive whether two or three more ETOs will be established in the year to come to facilitate our business sector apart from those established in Chengdu and Shanghai?*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): The establishment of such offices is very expensive as we have to rent offices and recruit staff, and directorate grade officials will usually be deployed to head the staff.

With regard to directorate grade officials, we must be very cautious in expanding the establishment. Certainly, such work will be undertaken step by step. As Members can see, the number of ETOs has increased from one to two, and is now further increased from two to four. The trend is obvious. We will surely do so as long as we can afford it.

MR ALBERT CHAN (in Cantonese): *The Chief Executive said just now that he was happy to see the blue sky and white clouds. This may be because he is in high office with enormous powers and he is bound to win a second term of office that he was in such a good mood.*

However, there are still many seamy sides of life in Hong Kong, as is the case of Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung, the two unique new towns. We have discussed this issue in this Chamber many times, but even if we have done so for five or six years, many senior officials still turn deaf ears to it.

The series of suicide cases happened recently have all of a sudden awakened the entire community to the gravity of the problem. Three middle-aged women, finding no reasons to live for, resorted to suicide. Suicide is, in fact, the strongest accusation not only against the community, but also against the Government. They have given up all hope in the Government, which is the biggest irony to "strong governance". I do not know whether the Chief

Executive, when awoken in the middle of the night, will feel guilty for these social and family tragedies, or whether he will ask for God's guidance on how to tackle these family problems in his prayers?

I wish to ask the Chief Executive this question. In view of the fact that many such problems are created by the Government — many community facilities are backward or still delayed, for instance, the construction of the central library has been delayed for five years and that of the medical complex in area 109A of Tin Shui Wai North for four years — the lack of community facilities, together with the expensive travel expenses, has driven many low-income families into destitution, and deprived them of support and a normal social life. Will the Chief Executive have any new measures in particular after the suicides of these three women? Please do not rehearse work in the past. Are there any new measures that can prevent the cruel phenomenon of families in such new towns as Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung being driven to a tragic end from happening?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): For every suicide incident happened in the community, each and every one of us should do some soul-searching and see whether there has been any omission in our work. However, let us not make the picture too bleak. As compared with some advanced countries, the suicide rate of people in Hong Kong remains very low. I am not saying that we should thus be complacent, but sometimes a phenomenon is often caused not only by a lack of facilities but also by other complicated problems.

We may well know that the number of suicide cases in northern Europe is higher despite the fact that their community facilities and education level are better than ours. We, thus, need to find a way, perhaps internally, to prevent it from happening, to minimize or eliminate it altogether. I believe this cannot be solved by one simple way.

As to the things mentioned by you that we need to do now, I am aware of them and I understand what you mean. As I have said just now, the facilities in Tin Shui Wai are insufficient, but we are not sitting on our hands and we will continue with our work. For example, as far as new facilities are concerned, in October — about two or a few months later, a family support programme will be launched specifically in Tin Shui Wai; while other hardware will continue to be set up in the area. Moreover, I know that the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau is setting up an inter-departmental task force to review the mental health services

and to step up community-based service support. These are the efforts that we have initiated after the Tin Shui Wai and other incidents.

Regarding special facilities, from now to 2008, a new integrated children and youth services centre and a district elderly community centre will come into operation, while two non-governmental organizations are planning to set up two new integrated services centres in Tin Shui Wai North on a self-financing basis next year. Hence, you can see that these facilities will come on stream.

I agree with you in that Tin Shui Wai is a district which we have missed or where we have not done enough work in the past. This is because at the time when Tin Shui Wai was developed, the economy of Hong Kong was in the doldrums; and the policy in the past was that facilities would only be constructed when the population had increased to a certain size. I believe this policy should be reviewed.

Therefore, Mr CHAN, our priority task now is to work together and see what remedies can be put in place for the present work. I trust that departments taking charge of social welfare, health care, cultural development and recreational facilities are now focusing on how to allocate more resources for Tin Shui Wai so as to work out a remedy for the situation. I very much hope that these efforts can pay off soon.

MR ALBERT CHAN (in Cantonese): *Thank you, Chief Executive. There seems to be a sudden awakening on the part of the Government today, because the problem is critical, but over the years quite many problems of co-ordination between departments and between bureaux and resource allocation have surfaced. For instance, the medical complex, which we have been lobbying for its early construction, has been planned by the Hospital Authority, but it remains an unknown whether it will be given funding.*

In relation to new towns like Tin Shui Wai (including Tung Chung), will the Chief Executive enjoin the Chief Secretary for Administration to take charge of co-ordination to ensure that, in terms of service planning and facility enhancement, and, for instance, the problem of travel expenses which leads to the isolation of the community, there will be a comprehensive follow-up package to ameliorate these problems? I am sure Chief Secretary for Administration Rafael HUI should be very interested in and would be more than willing to take up this challenge.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): I believe this is not just the work of one Chief Secretary or one Chief Executive alone. I believe every morning our colleagues and Principal Officials have discussed the problem of Tin Shui Wai for more than a few times — frankly speaking, it has been discussed for more than a few times. Any inter-bureau problems will soon be solved, but the problem is not here, but in the course of materializing these facilities, we cannot expect an instant resolution of the problems once funds are injected, because the projects still need to go through certain procedures. While all these facilities have to be constructed according to existing standards, I have, however, streamlined as far as possible the complicated procedures involved so as to expedite the materialization of these facilities.

In addition, I can assure Members that we will handle the problem of Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung seriously. They are our priority tasks and there is no problem in co-ordination. Of course, we still need to consider whether individual facility is necessary and whether the project is worth the support of members of the Finance Committee.

MR ALAN LEONG (in Cantonese): *President, the Chief Executive may well know that the Legislative Council is now scrutinizing the Smoking (Public Health) (Amendment) Bill 2005 (the Bill) in which some terms are considered as misleading to the public, for instance, the terms "extra mild" and "low tar content". The Government should be very familiar with this, for it has been the direction of its policy to criminalize the use of these terms. However, in the final stage of the scrutiny, the Government tabled an amendment proposing the adoption of a grandfathering arrangement for those registered trade mark which have used these words on their packages before the enactment of the Bill, that is, 1 January next year which remains our target date. During the scrutiny, the Deputy Director of Intellectual Property also pointed out to us that up to about 10 days ago, there are 71 registered trade marks which are considered by the Government as containing misleading terms; and by the first of January of next year, there may be even more of this type of trade marks as some may take this opportunity to make the registration within these last few months. If these registered trade marks are still allowed to be used, it seems contrary to the direction of the government policy. In other words, even the legislation is in place, it will just be an illusion without any real use.*

We have enquired with the Department of Justice time and again.....

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LEONG, I am afraid you have to put your question. What you have been saying is in fact what happened in the Bills Committee.

MR ALAN LEONG (in Cantonese): *Yes, because I am afraid that the Chief Executive may not know the background of the problem.*

Colleagues of the Department of Justice said that there are good grounds on both sides of the argument and the argument is not tipped to one side. May I ask the Chief Executive, bearing strong governance in mind, and as the policy direction is clear, whether the Chief Executive has ever heard of my proposal? That is, to provide a period of six months after the bill has come into effect for those registered trade mark holders to consider whether they will take the case to Court? If they will, we can wait for the ruling of the final appeal and see whether it will apply to them. This may be more in line with and consistent with the direction of the government policy. I do not know whether the Chief Executive is aware of this proposal, and whether he will enjoin the Policy Bureau to give this serious consideration.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): The Legislative Council has been very fond of using the word "enjoin" recently. In relation to individual provisions and proposals, I certainly am not as well versed as Mr LEONG, but I can roughly grasp the problem. Regarding this matter, not only one but quite a number of lawyers seem very concerned about it. Mr Martin LEE has raised this issue with me for a number of times. I believe the fact that lies before the Government is that there is explicit stipulation in the provisions under the Basic Law to protect individual property. Just as Mr LEONG has said just now, we have been told by counsel that we can be taken to Court and be sued over this matter. After thorough consideration, the Policy Bureau held that the present proposal of grandfathering is an acceptable approach, which is not unique to Hong Kong and has all along been used. I think that cigarette brands are transient and they will not exist forever. I remember when I was small, my father used to smoke Lucky Strike which is no longer on sale now. Thus, after some time or a number of years, those cigarette brands may no longer be found on sale. I originally thought that cigarette brands like Marlboro and Winston in Hong Kong are very popular in the Mainland, but in fact they are already outdated. Nowadays, the famous brands they smoke are Chunghwa, Yun Yan and Golden Dragon, which I have not heard of at all.

For this reason, I hope that Mr LEONG would not worry too much about whether those brands will flood the market, because they will be replaced by other brands within no time once they fade out. As regards new cigarette brands in future, the new legislation will prohibit their sale. The problem that the Government faces now is that we are told by counsel that once we do so, it is very likely that we will be taken to Court. If the chance of winning is poor, we will have to make a political judgement. The Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food, Dr York CHOW, has already made the judgement. As to who will implement the details, I believe Dr CHOW will surely do so. I am not very clear about the content of the proposal suggested by Mr LEONG just now, but I believe Dr CHOW will surely follow up and give it consideration. The vital point is that we have to, on the one hand, protect the interests of the public, and on the other, respect the provisions under the law, in particular those under the constitution. We attach great importance to this point. Moreover, I do not want to defy the law myself, that is, to take no regard of the matter until we are really taken to Court. I think this may not necessarily be the most responsible approach. I appreciate Mr LEONG's view and very much respect it, too.

MR ALAN LEONG (in Cantonese): *Mr Chief Executive, I believe such brands as Yun Yan and Chunghwa will be registered as Yun Yan Extra Mild and Chunghwa Extra Mild before 1 January. However, I am glad to hear Mr Chief Executive say that Dr CHOW will take our idea into consideration; otherwise, after 1 January, there may be many such cigarette brands flooding the market. I am not asking the Chief Executive to not to respect the Basic Law because the latter should be held in absolute respect. My proposal is to leave it to the Court to make the decision because both sides have explicit grounds.*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): I hold Mr LEONG's view with great respect, but as the Government, should we evade the responsibility of handling matters and pass it to the Court at every turn? This warrants consideration. As to this matter, I understand Mr LEONG's view and I am also aware that several Members are very much concerned about it, so is Dr CHOW. He has addressed the problem and is tackling it now. Internally, many rounds of discussion have been held with the Department of Justice. I believe our final proposal not only has to be legally correct, more importantly, it also has to command popular support.

DR RAYMOND HO (in Cantonese): *Chief Executive, since I have to attend an international conference on intelligent transport systems today, I have to wear a suit. Please excuse me.*

In recent years, the Government has been frequently contracting out some of its services, of which some are professional in nature while some are non-professional. However, under certain circumstances, the outsourcing of such services may have an impact on public safety and public hygiene, and we have to be cautious about this. In the middle of last year, a proposal on outsourcing private certification of building submissions was introduced by the Government, which includes structural and geotechnical designs and plans. However, estate developers may on the grounds of improving business environment request the shortening of certification time and procedures. Actually, the time required for certification is stipulated unequivocally in the Buildings Ordinance. If it is said that the Chief Executive has to consider the question of independence, the possible impact on the business sector regarding certain complicated factors in future, and the possibility that estate developers may set up companies within their own corporations to undertake certification jobs, will public safety, building structure, slopes, and so on, be affected by such practice in future?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): I do not know whether the Government has adopted a new policy. You pointed out that some people have put forth these suggestions, am I right? I do not know about them, will you please enlighten me?

DR RAYMOND HO (in Cantonese): *Last year, the Government did raise the consideration of outsourcing those services. At present, the relevant government departments responsible for the certification of plans and designs of all private projects.....*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): Oh, I know now.

DR RAYMOND HO (in Cantonese): *and decide whether certification should be granted.*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): We do have such a plan. The reason is that we think Authorized Persons who possess professional knowledge in this field are already available externally, and their performance is as good as that of government itself. At present, there are numerous illegal structures, so will it be possible for the Government to make use of private resources now available to accomplish the task? I think this is the right move. As to whether blunders will occur in practice, whether it is fully in line with the legal procedures and whether there will be any oversight, all these questions can be raised for discussion. As for the specifics, I believe you know them better than I do, you know what happened. Now, it is most important that you and the persons concerned make your positions known. I strongly believe that if changes are to be introduced in respect of any new policy, we can only do so after taking on board the views of all sectors.

DR RAYMOND HO (in Cantonese): *Perhaps I will ask a brief follow-up here. Actually, not only the sector is concerned about this issue, I have also asked many people not in the sector who have also expressed their concern about this. This is also a concern of the public. In the past, we have a long history of colonial rule, during which sound systems had been established to monitor the safety of private projects, and a good certification procedure which was the envy of overseas countries had also been put in place. However, some countries, let me quote some examples, such as Singapore and Japan, have tried to outsource these services to external companies, appointing them to certify private project submissions on behalf of the Government, but blunders were resulted. I hope the Chief Executive will give detailed consideration to this and will not alter a sound system which has been established for decades.*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): A sound system should certainly be maintained, but it should be updated even if it is sound. It is particularly so when I have been given to understand that the current certification procedure is very long and that there is a large backlog of cases. We have to think about how these problems should be addressed. We will address the situation by, first, increasing manpower and expanding the establishment, which means increasing the burden of the public, and second, considering the possibility of allowing eligible private practitioners to undertake the task. Certainly, overseas experience in this respect is very important. I believe when we introduce a new policy that involves changes, we must consider the commitment of the Government, the work we must undertake and our capability in law enforcement,

and more so, the cost so incurred. We should particularly consider whether the number of backlogged cases is large and whether it is in the best interest of the public. I think these are the factors we must consider. Earlier on, you cited the unsuccessful examples in Singapore; we will certainly study their cases. But we should at the same time examine the successful examples in Singapore, should we not?

MR MARTIN LEE (in Cantonese): *Madam President, regarding summer attire, I had raised it to the last Governor, Mr Chris PATTEN, but he was unwilling to do so and had not told me why he could not do without his jacket in summer. Later, I found that his waistline was getting thicker every day, so this was perhaps the reason for his refusal to take off his jacket. In fact, the temperature in an air-conditioned room should tie in with our summer attire. The greatest problem now is that the Legislative Council, in order to show respect to you and your colleagues, likes to provide a more comfortable environment for you all and does not raise the temperature of the air-conditioning system to 25.5 degrees Celsius. But if we do set the temperature of the air-conditioning system at 25.5 degrees Celsius, you and your colleagues will feel very uncomfortable and may take off your jackets. We have to show respect to each other. We Members are not willing to take off our jackets while you and your colleagues want neither to take off your jackets nor have the room temperature raised. This is exactly the problem we are now facing. Actually, the President did give you a hint earlier. She said if the temperature of the air-conditioning system was set at 25.5 degree Celsius, all gentlemen here might have to take off their jackets. I thus hope that you will set a good example for us today, leading your officials to take off their jackets now with the consent of the President. (Laughter) This scene being broadcast on the television will be a lot more effective than your words. I believe the business sector in Hong Kong or the Hong Kong Club will soon follow suit. By then, we no longer need to wear a jacket in summer everywhere we go. In fact, even on formal and solemn occasions, we should also be allowed to do without our jackets. Therefore, when I attend the reception hosted by the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong later, I will also dress like this. Will the Chief Executive lead our senior officials to start doing so from now on?*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): Mr LEE, I have never heard my colleagues asking not to wear suits because the room temperature had been set at

25.5 degrees Celsius. To do this, it is not necessary to maintain a below standard room temperature, we only need to raise the room temperature to 25.5 degrees Celsius. I guarantee they will also feel comfortable despite wearing their suits at that time. Nowadays, fabrics for suits are very light and not thick. The point is that I have to respect the views of all sectors. I see that many Members in the Chamber are wearing suits, so in that case, I must show respect to Members and wear my suit. *(Laughter)* However, if a motion barring anyone entering the Chamber from wearing a suit in summer, I will definitely oblige and observe Member's proposal. But discarding our jackets is not a positive approach, neither is lowering the temperature. The room temperature now is indeed too low and should be raised to 25.5 degrees Celsius. Ms Audrey EU monitors the saving we have made on electricity consumption this year. I now check the amount of saving we have made on electricity consumption and the saving the Legislative Council has made every month. I am really concerned about this. Instead of spending money on electricity, we should raise the room temperature to 25.5 degrees Celsius, but we will still wear our suits when we come here. If a motion stating no suit is required is passed, I will immediately and be more than willing to follow that, but I see that all my colleagues are still wearing their suits today. This is a place of decorum and I think we have the responsibility to show respect to the Legislative Council. I think it is necessary to dress in decent attire, but if Members consider that we should dress down and discard our ties and other stuff during certain months, we will follow Members' practice.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Perhaps it is time for me to say something.
(Laughter)

Chief Executive, Mr Martin LEE, as the President of the Legislative Council, I surely do not mind if you do not wear a suit and a tie. In fact, the room temperature of this Chamber is around 24 degrees Celsius now. If the room temperature has to be set at 25.5 degrees Celsius, I believe it can easily be done at my word. However, if we have a long meeting, everyone sitting in this Chamber will be dripping with sweat, and this is the fact. More so, Chief Executive, the air-conditioning system of the Legislative Council is rather old, *(laughter)* we have planned to clean it during this summer recess. I do not mean to refurbish the system. I just mean cleaning it so that it can function more effectively. Therefore, Chief Executive, we also share your concern and will do our level best in this respect. However, I think Members should ask

questions related to the livelihood of the public during the meeting to let the public know that we are concerned about their well-being. In respect of environmental protection, I can hereby assure the Chief Executive that colleagues of the Legislative Council will do our level best.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): Thank you, President.

MR MARTIN LEE (in Cantonese): *Chief Executive, in fact, you should also be aware that this practice has already been adopted all over the world, particularly in many Southeast Asian countries. Many governments have taken the lead to do so. And that is why I approached Christ PATTEN and hoped he could take the lead. Now, I also hope that you can take the lead to do this. We in the Democratic Party are already doing so, other Members of the democratic camp have also followed suit. But the influence of our move will not be comparable to that of yours, for you are the honourable senior — a "younger" senior. No means is as influential as you leading your colleagues to take off your jackets altogether at your command, and this scene will create a very significant impact. Madam President, you said you do not mind us taking off our tie and jacket, am I right? Then, I will take off one extra item. (Laughter) Chief Executive, this can in fact create a good leading effect. We should do so even in a place of decorum in order to get this message across. It is not as you said earlier that we could take a break in other places. It is not the case. We are not only talking about taking a break, we want this to be done in a place of decorum so that it can be inscribed on the minds of the public.*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): I said earlier that the Government had already taken the lead. Members should not forget that, as I said earlier, the Government had long since introduced the Smart Cool Dress Down Campaign and issued guidelines on casual and smart dress in summer. The Secretary for the Civil Service will again remind as soon as possible colleagues to dress down in summer. In Hong Kong, employees of all government departments will dress down at work. However, I have to repeat it once again. Since the Legislative Council, like the parliaments and legislature of all other places, is a place of decorum, I will thus follow the convention. If the Legislative Council does pass a motion to this effect, I will definitely oblige. However, before such

a motion is passed, I will act in accordance with the convention. Moreover, I see that all my colleagues wear suits, and I thus know what I should do. But I do fully respect your decision to discard your tie.

MR LAU KONG-WAH (in Cantonese): *President, I would like to echo your opinion and continue to raise issues regarding people's livelihood and economics.*

I am very much concerned about cross-boundary infrastructure, and so I would like to ask the Chief Executive to talk about the progress of two projects. One of them is the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB), which has been under discussion for a long time. However, there has been by far all thunder but no rain, and mainland officials have recently even mentioned that "there are always obstacles on the course to good things". Good things are obviously desirable, while obstacles are not. The DAB has put forward some suggestions regarding the HZMB, for instance a bridgehead economy. I am not sure whether the Chief Executive can tell us any progress in this respect.

The other project is the Hong Kong-Shenzhen Western Corridor (HK-SWC), the inauguration of which is scheduled within a few months. There will be enormous pressure on road traffic for residents in Tuen Mun and Yuen Long, and this problem has not yet been solved. We have suggested that Route 3 be better utilized and the western bypass from Tuen Mun to Lantau be given the green light as soon as possible. Could the Chief Executive please comment on the relevant progress?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): We have actively worked on the HZMB project, and we are now in the final stage of the study period. The project can only be given the go-ahead after its planning study report has been presented to the Central Authorities. Even though we have been conducting the study for years, the HZMB project is not a minor one, the total length of the project being 35 km and enormous resources having been invested. The bridge will run through several regions, including the waters of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and the Macao Special Administrative Region. Due to the fact that the project requires co-operation among the Governments of three regions and given previous construction cases in Hong Kong as comparison, the time taken in this project should not at all be considered long. Take the Tamar Site project as an

example, how much time did we spend on its study? That project is much smaller when compared to the current one. Since we have taken so much time studying projects of even a smaller scale, it is not surprising that we need a longer time to thoroughly discuss and work on the HZMB project.

I hope that Members of the Council will not have the impression that we no longer proceed with this project. It is certain that it will be completed. Only that we need to follow a normal procedure if we are to seriously study into this matter. The study at the current stage focuses on the issue of port control. Port facilities are important. For instance, should we adopt a co-located system of clearance or otherwise? If a separate system is adopted, will there be sufficient land for port facilities? These are questions that we need to consider.

The second major issue is financing. How will we finance the project? Will we accept private investment from society? If so, what are the items to be included? How about the several facilities in our initial planning? It has been suggested that a rail link should also be built alongside the highway. These are also questions to be considered.

I dare say we will reach a consensus on this matter as quickly as we can. I take a keen interest in it, and so do the authorities of Guangdong Province and Macao. However, it takes time to reach consensus considering the large amount of resources to be invested on the project. Moreover, as I have just mentioned, this is a matter concerning the waters of three regions.

Regarding the HK-SWC, it will be inaugurated next year. As Members all know, we have conducted a rather comprehensive review of the traffic and transport infrastructure in the Northwest New Territories. The result shows that after the inauguration, there will not be, in the initial period, any extra traffic flow to Tuen Mun Road. However, we notice that difficulties may occur in two sections, the first being possible congestion in the town centre section of Tuen Mun. We are currently preparing to expand the two-lane road of the town centre into a three-lane one. It is hoped that the Highways Department will put forward the proposal by the end of the year.

In addition, if technically and geographically feasible, the expressway section of Tuen Mun Road will be expanded from three-lane to four-lane. This will significantly enhance its capacity. When construction is completed, the capacity of the expressway section of Tuen Mun Road will increase while 85% of the highway will become four-lane.

We believe that no problem will arise in the short term. As regards measures for the medium term, the two projects mentioned by me just now should tackle the new traffic flow resulting from the inauguration of the HK-SWC. In the long term, we have made numerous proposals with regard to the review of the traffic and transport infrastructure in the Northwest New Territories. What Mr LAU has just mentioned is one bypass, but we also have another proposal concerning Route 3. We cannot merely take this one region into our consideration, but we also need to consider the progress of the North Lantau Development Plan. We will implement certain projects of a rather large scale if the need arises. However, I can assure Mr LAU that no problems should arise in the short term. Long-term speaking, the two remedial expansion plans on Tuen Mun Road should tackle the increase in traffic flow for a number of years.

MR LAU KONG-WAH (in Cantonese): *President, with regard to the HZMB, the Government once stated that its construction was expected to commence this year. But it was not realized, possibly because of the problems mentioned by the Chief Executive just now. The Chief Executive has just said that it will be done as soon as possible, but then do we still have to wait for another or two years or even more than five years? Could he tell us the approximate time so that we can do some preparation mentally?*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): I very much hope that this matter can be given the go-ahead within my tenure, this tenure.

MR LAU KONG-WAH (in Cantonese): *Approximately how long will the "tenure" be? (Laughter)*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): What I meant to say is that it is my hope that a decision can be made before mid-2007. We will make an effort to achieve this on our part, and I know that Guangdong Province and Macao are also making similar efforts. Our opinions are not entirely unified, and it takes time to iron out the differences. Secretary Dr Sarah LIAO is still working continuously in this respect, and there is also a co-ordination group working on it.

MS MIRIAM LAU (in Cantonese): *Is the Chief Executive aware that oil prices are soaring? The current price of diesel, that is, ultra low sulphur diesel, has risen to \$8.86 per litre, representing an increase of tens of percentage points when compared to the price of about two years ago. In fact, the transport industry is making bitter complaints against soaring oil prices, and I think that if the Chief Executive has read the relevant reports in the newspapers he will be aware of the demonstration and protest that staged by the industry.*

It is a fact that, for many members of the transport industry, oil accounts for 30% to 50% of their total cost. Soaring oil prices therefore have a direct impact on their running cost, and that makes business very hard for them. The Legislative Council passed a motion in November last year requesting the Government to waive diesel duty for a year. The Government, however, has never responded.

Under the current circumstances of surging oil prices, may I ask the Chief Executive if he will, with a view to easing people's burden, decide to convey a positive message to the industry specifically with regard to general oil or ultra low sulphur diesel prices that, help will be guaranteed to them?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): There are many industries affected by the surge in oil prices. These include the overall industrial development, aviation and shipping under the entire transportation system, and so on. This is not a problem for individuals, but one that is faced by everyone.

Regarding the use of diesel by the transport industry, as we all know, we have already adopted special measures to help them, which is the concession of diesel duty by \$2. This measure has been enforced for many years. Initially, every year the Government would propose to restore the duty to its original level. Nevertheless, the concession still remains and no change has been made. This shows that we have specifically offered help in response to the current situation.

Ms LAU, we will face problems of another category if we are to lower oil prices. I think that, for Hong Kong to maintain its maximum competitiveness, we must control traffic flow by economic means so that road traffic is smooth even during the busiest hours. If there is an imbalance in this respect and if economic means are not employed, I believe some other things will happen.

I notice that in many major cities in the Mainland or Asia, roads will become heavily congested during rush hours. This will create problems to our economic development. I think that what is now most important is that the Government should try its best to maintain the current concessionary measure (in the hope that the Financial Secretary will do so where finance permits), and that it will not be suddenly discontinued. However, if we waive the current duty, I believe it will not be beneficial to us in the long term. I hope Ms LAU can also consider this point.

Due to Ms LAU's lobbying on behalf of the industry every year, the current price of ultra low sulphur diesel has not risen, and the concession of \$2 in diesel duty remains effective. We will continue with this policy until certain changes occur. However, we should not do so in an "excessive" manner; otherwise it will affect other things.

MS MIRIAM LAU (in Cantonese): *President, I think that lobbying on behalf of other members of the transport industry is absolutely not "excessive". There is no duty on industrial diesel, and it is also duty-free for ferries and franchised buses. Even airline companies are allowed to impose a surcharge, but taxis (well there is no duty on taxis), public buses (non-franchised), minibuses and goods vehicles all have to pay diesel duty. They are the only industries which are obliged to pay diesel duty, while others are not.*

When business operation is so very difficult, why does the Government still levy diesel duty on them? Why are they still charged the full duty?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): As I said just now, we are not charging the full diesel duty. We have already reduced it by \$2, and I am not sure if there is some communication problem between Ms LAU and me. We have already reduced the duty levied by \$2.

Another point is that diesel duty is levied all over the world. Why should it not be the case only in Hong Kong (hope I am not making any semantic error)? I believe that we must fulfil our own responsibilities. A Legislative Council Member has a certain responsibility being a Legislative Council Member, and the Government also has its own responsibility being the Government, which is

in fact to be accountable to the people of Hong Kong for our economic development. To these drivers who use diesel we are as well committed. But we also have to strike a good balance. I think that the current duty on ultra low sulphur diesel is already a very good balance *per se*. The balancing point is the concessionary measure which we continue to enforce after many discussions over the years. I think that maintaining this measure is a right balancing point.

MS LI FUNG-YING (in Cantonese): *Chief Executive, there is a restaurant with a history of several decades in Lek Yuen Estate, Sha Tin. The name of the restaurant is Orchid Court. I think that the Chief Executive may know it, and I wonder if he used to dine in this restaurant when he was in charge of the district affairs in Sha Tin. This bistro cafe has not changed in the last several decades, only to have recently undergone a major renovation. After the renovation it is very similar to the new-style bistro cafes nowadays. However, in the past the waitresses of the cafe were mostly middle-aged female workers, and now they are all replaced by young people. May I ask the Chief Executive if there are any ways to help these unemployed middle-aged female workers seek employment again?*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): I think that the employment practice of individual food establishments is an individual commercial decision. Nevertheless, currently many retraining programmes are offered by the Careers Advisory Service of the Labour Department providing referrals for job switches such as these. Moreover, special training is provided so that workers can join more attractive trades with more job vacancies available. This kind of training is not scarce at all, for instance, hourly-rated domestic helpers. This kind of job vacancies keeps emerging. As for the existing programmes, I believe Ms LI knows about them as clearly as I do. I would like to thank you for giving me the information on the staff of this bistro cafe. I will ask our colleagues in the Labour Department to contact these women specifically. Are they all jobless now after leaving the cafe? If that is the case, I will certainly help them.

MS LI FUNG-YING (in Cantonese): *President, in citing the example of this bistro cafe in a public housing estate, I did not mean to complain to the Chief Executive about a single case. Most importantly, I would like to state that all*

the training mentioned by the Chief Executive cannot solve the existing employment problem faced by the low-skilled employees. In a motion debate moved by me some time ago, I also requested the Government to improve the employment situation of the low-skilled employees. On that day, I asked the Government to change its current policy of outsourcing, based on cost-saving, to one with an objective to create job appointments for the low-skilled employees. However, the Secretary in Council that day evaded my question. So, ultimately I would like to ask the Chief Executive: Will you change this policy of outsourcing? If not, what way out is there for these low-skilled workers?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): Our current employment situation has been improving, and that is the same case even for the non-skilled grass-roots workers. Wages are also seeing an improving trend. With the progressive recovery of Hong Kong economy, I believe the situation will continue to improve.

On the other hand, regarding the Government's current policy of outsourcing part of its services, we can see that this policy is popular among the public, because public expenditure is reduced and there is no decline in service standard. But of course, a balance has to be struck.

As far as I know, there are currently 10 000-odd job appointments available resulting from our initiative to create jobs, and there are 11 000 job vacancies for labour. We will maintain this, and we have made some effort in this respect. There are some openings which could have been replaced by machines and other procedures, but we have not done so. The most important thing is that we must deal with every kind of problem. For instance, we have to deal with the problem of these workers of this bistro cafe in Sha Tin. We have to assist every worker, and this is a more pragmatic effort to make.

When we are talking about how we can create market, I believe social retrogression towards the past or "driving in reverse gear" is not the best solution. The best solution is to enhance the knowledge of the labour force through training or other processes, so that they can lead a better life and find employment. These are more pragmatic efforts to make. We should not dwell on matching them with the jobs that suit them. Now that we speak of their lowly jobs, we should not keep letting them work lowly jobs. Now that we

speaking of their low wages, we should not keep letting them earn low wages. We hope to raise their skill level so that they can find better jobs and make higher incomes. I believe this is a more practical approach.

MR FRED LI (in Cantonese): *Chief Executive, I had watched the World Cup too, and I hope you would not mind me not asking my question articulately.*

Having heard many questions on the people's livelihood, I would like to ask a question on politics. Chief Executive, on 1 July, which was not long ago, tens of thousands of people took to the streets although it was very hot. Added to this is the emergence of two former colleagues of yours — Mrs CHAN and Mrs IP. Mrs IP said that 2012 should see the implementation of universal suffrage, whereas Mrs CHAN even expressed the wish to see its implementation as soon as possible.

Chief Executive, have you the answers? I can give you some time. Let me ask my question in more details. My question is.....

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LI, please do not make your question too long, or else Members who are waiting will not have the chance to ask their questions.

MR FRED LI (in Cantonese): *I am afraid he might not have the answer ready.*

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): The Chief Executive will know how to answer your question. If he does not know how to answer it, that would be his problem, not yours.

MR FRED LI (in Cantonese): *I think the Chief Executive actually does not have many opportunities to explain this clearly in this Chamber or on public occasions. Two of your former colleagues, for instance, have clearly expressed their expectations for universal suffrage, and on 1 July, tens of thousands of people also very clearly expressed their aspiration for the early implementation of universal suffrage. It was very hot that day, and it even rained. May I ask*

how you will respond to the aspiration of your former colleagues and that of the public?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): On this question, perhaps I have to spend a bit more time answering it.

I will not comment on individual colleagues who have retired or resigned. Like citizens of Hong Kong, they have the liberty to take part in political activities. While other colleagues may disagree with this or they may hold different views, I think this has to do with the ethics and position of individual persons and so, I would not make any comments. However, there is currently no rule or regulation prohibiting civil servants from taking part in political activities after retirement or resignation. So, this will happen indeed, and this has always existed. It does not only concern persons surnamed CHAN and IP. There used to be one surnamed AKERS-JONES — Sir David AKERS-JONES — who has long taken part in these activities, and there will be people doing this on and on. So, please do not see it as anything abnormal, for this is a matter of personal choice.

Concerning the aspiration for universal suffrage expressed by Hong Kong people who took to the streets on 1 July, I can personally feel their enthusiasm and I do appreciate their expectation. In fact, my belief as well as the efforts made in promoting democracy and early realization of the ultimate aim of universal suffrage as laid down in the Basic Law are in line with the wish of the people. I have not only heard the views of the people, I also have the duty to reflect and convey these voices to the Central Authorities. I remember that in the year before last, that is, in 2004, when the Constitutional Development Task Force chaired by me published its Second Report, I already explained very clearly that according to the opinion polls, over half of Hong Kong people hoped that the target of universal suffrage could be achieved as soon as possible. So, the SAR Government has never evaded this issue from the outset, and we have all along addressed this fact squarely. We definitely consider that universal suffrage is a target with major significance pursued by the community but at the same time, universal suffrage is also a design of the political system.

Insofar as this procession is concerned, I saw on television and in newspapers that some people who took part in it wrote this slogan: "Universal

Suffrage Unresolved". In fact, it is a very good slogan because we still have these questions: How can various sectors of the community of Hong Kong build up a consensus on establishing a system of universal suffrage? How can we truly achieve transition to universal suffrage? There have been no answers to all these questions, and they remain to be resolved by us.

How can they be resolved then? According to the Basic Law, if amendment is to be made to the methods for selecting the Chief Executive and for forming the Legislative Council after 2007, it will be necessary to seek consent from three sides. This, we all know only too well. It includes the consent of a two-third majority of all Members of the Legislative Council, the consent of the Chief Executive and that of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. Under this constitutional arrangement, we must come up with a system and a roadmap for universal suffrage supported by the three sides. This is by no means an easy task. To succeed, we must work pragmatically and we must reach a consensus sensibly.

In fact, it is precisely because we must work pragmatically that I organized and arranged for a visit to the Pearl River Delta (PRD) by all Members of the Legislative Council last year, with a view to opening up the gate to communication. I very much hoped that with sincerity, I could convince Members to peacefully conduct discussions on major issues relating to the development of Hong Kong, so that we could move forward to gain a better understanding of each other, to break barriers and to enhance mutual trust, especially with the objective of laying a solid foundation for consensus. Meanwhile, it is precisely because we must be pragmatic that the SAR Government put forth a package of constitutional reform. This package might not be perfect, but I thought that in view of the prevalent circumstances in Hong Kong then, the package would stand the highest chance of fostering a consensus, which would tremendously take forward democratization in a pragmatic manner.

I hoped and firmly believed at the time that as long as the constitutional reform package could be implemented, we would be making a big stride in the course of achieving universal suffrage in a gradual and orderly manner as provided for in the Basic Law, and the ultimate aim of universal suffrage would then be within sight and within reach. That is to say, it might have an inter-dependent relationship with the early implementation of universal suffrage.

The Central Government also said at the time that it respected the two opinions of Hong Kong people of aspiring to universal suffrage and developing democracy in a gradual and orderly manner. But unfortunately, the package still could not meet the requirement of obtaining support from two thirds of Members ultimately despite support from the majority of Hong Kong people and over 50% of Members. We thus missed the chance of moving one step forward in democratization.

In spite of this, I maintain that universal suffrage is still an issue not to be evaded. That is why I made an undertaking at the time that the models for selecting the Chief Executive and for forming the Legislative Council by universal suffrage would be put forward in early 2007 and that a report would be published and submitted to the Central Authorities. There are six months between now and early 2007 and so, we still have six months' time to identify solutions, in order to answer those slogans.

Here, I call on various political parties and groupings, organizations and Members to put forward specific methods or proposals for conducting universal suffrage. I call on them to put forward proposals which they consider to be in line with the value and objective of universal suffrage and also the requirement of tripartite consensus. Certainly, we may have different comments on different proposals, but in order to facilitate pragmatic discussion, this is a very important step, and it may initiate a positive process of interaction. Therefore, I think this is something that must be done. If there is no specific proposal or package, we cannot — how can we narrow differences and reach a consensus?

So, I very much hope that all relevant persons, political groups, political parties and Members can expeditiously put forward more proposals and also more concrete designs of the universal suffrage system as well as details of universal suffrage, with a view to building up a basis for rational discussions. The SAR Government will complement these discussions in the Commission on Strategic Development.

During campaigns for democracy over the past two decades or so, there have been numerous banners and slogans. No doubt slogans can arouse people's sentiments, but politicians, including myself and Members, cannot just rely on slogans. Rather, we must make true commitments and suggest specific solutions, and we must adopt a responsible and pragmatic attitude in our work. Only in this way will there be a day when democracy is achieved.

I think we should set aside all our differences now. We should even go beyond all these slogans and take a pragmatic and rational attitude in discussing the system and details of universal suffrage, seeking common grounds while reserving differences. Efforts should be made to promote universal suffrage in Hong Kong on the basis of the tripartite consensus reached among the Legislative Council, the SAR Government and the Central Government until it is eventually implemented. True democracy must be founded on a broad consensus in society. When this consensus is reached one day, it will signify our common victory, and also the victory of pragmatism.

MR FRED LI (in Cantonese): *Chief Executive, I very much agree that universal suffrage is an issue not to be evaded, and you, as the leader of the SAR, said that there are six months or even more from now to March next year. But I think you should have more time than that. You said just now that there had been many different slogans over the past two decades or so, but in fact, they have only one focus and that is: To hold the dual elections by universal suffrage as soon as possible. Indeed, this has never changed over the years insofar as campaigns for democracy are concerned. May I ask the Chief Executive whether he would consider implementing universal suffrage for the dual elections in 2012 as a target for our concerted efforts? We in the Democratic Party have put forward a proposal to Mr Stephen LAM. Can we work in concert and make 2012 our target in terms of time?*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): As I have always said, we cannot just chant slogans. We cannot just name a date blindly. What we are doing now is to put forward a concrete proposal for discussion. If a consensus comes out of our discussion, we can do it right away; when there is a roadmap, we can do it.

I very much thank the Democratic Party for putting forward their proposal to us. I would, with great sincerity, discuss this proposal in the Commission on Strategic Development, and this is what I am going to do as the next step. However, I hope that there will not be only one proposal. I am afraid that a consensus may not be reached on this proposal, as I can see many of the proposals made in it are controversial. I hope that the package on which a consensus can be reached will incorporate the views of many sides, not just that of the Democratic Party, but also from other political parties. I can also see

that not only the Democratic Party has put forward a proposal. There are also other proposals. But still, these proposals are not enough. On this issue, many people are expressing the wish to see the implementation of universal suffrage one day. They said, "We want dual elections by universal suffrage; we want dual elections by universal suffrage". But they have evaded a real question: How? If we can discuss this in a concrete and rational manner, I believe we could achieve the target very soon.

DR PHILIP WONG (in Cantonese): *Madam President, I would like to follow up Mr Fred LI's question. After every public procession, the number of participants will be reported in the newspapers the next day, and there is always a big difference between the number estimated by the organizer and that by government departments. Can the Chief Executive tell us why he would think that the estimate made by the Government is more accurate?*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): The Government does not compile statistics in this respect, just that the Police Force, being a law-enforcement agency, have to make some preparation for controlling the crowd and so, they will make an estimate, and they will make public their statistics on every such occasion. We consider the statistics of the Police Force very reliable. At present, after every public procession, many independent bodies, especially the creditable ones, will have actuaries work on this too. The two universities also have their actuarial reports. When these numbers are published, which one should we adopt? I think Hong Kong people know very well how many people have taken to the streets, because we can see it with our own eyes. Given that the organizer is so keen as to organize a procession, they would certainly hope to see more people taking to the streets and so, the number that they announced may be higher. This happens not only in Hong Kong, but also in many places elsewhere. So, I think it is common that the number announced is double or even triple the actual number. *(Laughter)*

MR LEUNG KWOK-HUNG (in Cantonese): *President, why do I hold up this cardboard here? It is because I wish to tell the Chief Executive a simple truth. He may not be able to see it and so, let me read out what is written on it: "A bamboo-woven Donald Duck is both heartless and spineless; A Chief Executive returned by a small coterie exploits human rights and devastates the people's*

livelihood." Chief Executive, let me tell you this frankly: I think you are doing a disservice to Hong Kong people. You are heartless and spineless. It is because you said in the Second Report of the Constitutional Development Task Force that over 50% of Hong Kong people aspired to universal suffrage and you said, "Do not worry, do not worry, for I drink the water of Hong Kong and what flows in me is the blood of Hong Kong....."

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Please state your question.

MR LEUNG KWOK-HUNG (in Cantonese): *Yes, and I still have one more point; it is not a question, but a personal appeal. Chief Executive, you made legislation on behalf of the Legislative Council by way of an executive order last year. You said categorically that you had strong justifications for what you did. But today, your government lost the case in Court and in fact, you should apologize here today, because what you said back then has been proven wrong. You should offer an apology. This is not my question, but just an advice to you.....*

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): What is your question?

MR LEUNG KWOK-HUNG (in Cantonese): *This is not my question. In fact, the question that I wish to ask is the one that has us all entangled. Even Mr Fred LI did not dare to say the name "Anson CHAN" earlier on. Nor did he dare to say "Regina IP". In fact, you really have to give an explanation to Hong Kong people. Have you met with Anson CHAN, that is, since the stepping down of Mr TUNG? How many times have you met with her? Did you talk about the question of universal suffrage? Did she tell you that universal suffrage should, in fact, be implemented in 2012? Did you report to the Central Authorities? This question that I have just asked is most meaningful, because a magazine revealed that you often had meals together and talked to each other. I think you as well as some people here have done this. You really must tell Hong Kong people if this is true. Do not put on a show anymore. Did you tell the Central Authorities that Mrs CHAN would contest the election or she would not contest the election, or Mrs CHAN had told you to say that it should be 2012, or you had told Mrs CHAN to "get lost" and that 2012 was out of question?*

In other words, you, being the Chief Executive, should make use of this high ground provided by us to rid yourself of the position of a dwarf and tell us: "I did talk to the Central Authorities about implementing universal suffrage in 2012, as also suggested by Mrs CHAN." or "I have taken Mrs CHAN to task, asking her not to say any more about 2012."

If state secrets are not involved, I hope that you, our respectable Chief Executive, can give us some explanation here about how many times you have met with each other. Was the issue of 2012 a topic of discussion? Did you report to the Central Authorities? Was there any response from the Central Authorities? This is my question.

Yet, I still have to add that your standard of Chinese is too bad. It is wrong for you to say that "there is a difference in the closeness of relationship". That is, it is wrong to describe what you have done as "having a difference in the closeness of relationship". Perhaps LAU Siu-kai and LAU Sai-leung may know that it should be described as "defending supporters but attacking opponents", not "having a difference in the closeness of relationship". So, please remember not to use the wrong expression in future.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): First of all, Mr LEUNG was so worked up just now. Perhaps he watched the World Cup last night, (*laughter*) but that is fine; that is fine.

However, "having a difference in the closeness of relationship" is not a remark made by me. It is the press that said it. It is you who said it. I have not made that remark. It is you who said it, but it does not matter. But you can look up the past records of meetings and you will see that I had only quoted the remarks made by other people. I have not made this remark. I only think that in any case, when we talk about the closeness of relationship, since the wish of the people is the guiding principle, we should be close to those who are close to the wish of the people; for those who are distant from the people's wish, we have to be careful; just this simple.

I have certainly met with my colleagues, especially Anson CHAN who has been a friend and a former colleague of mine for more than 30 years. Moreover, we do not meet furtively, and we see each other and have meals together regularly. But when we see each other (normally I also do the same when I

meet with other colleagues), and on social occasions, I will refrain from discussing certain issues by all means. There are certain issues that I will evade. Political issues, for example, are among issues that I do not discuss. Nor do I talk about religious issues. This is to show respect to other people's views. I am not the only person who does this. Many people will do the same. Moreover, why should our private meetings have to do with the Central Authorities? Why is it necessary to report to the Central Authorities? So, this is fine; perhaps it is because you watched the World Cup.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung, do you have a follow-up question?

MR LEUNG KWOK-HUNG (in Cantonese): *President, my question is very simple. How many times have you seen each other? Did you talk about universal suffrage? Did you report to the Central Authorities? On this point, you can say yes, or you can say no. But how many times have you met? Did you talk about this issue? Afterwards, did you report to the Central Authorities? My question is just this simple; this has nothing to do with air-conditioning, and this is precisely an issue of the utmost concern to all Hong Kong people. If you have done it, say so; if you have not, say so. This will be recorded in history, and there will be a memoir in future. If you have done it, tell me that you have done so. If you have not, then say you have not. Did you report to the Central Authorities? Did you talk about issues relating to implementing universal suffrage in 2012?*

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): If my memory has not failed me, President, it seems that I have just said that we often meet with each other and so, the answer is yes. I already said that I would not report this to the Central Authorities, did I not? I also said that I would not talk about political and religious issues. I thought I had already answered the three questions asked by Mr LEUNG.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): It is just one minute before 4.30 pm. Such being the case, I will not call on any Member to ask a question. A total of 14 Members have asked questions today. Although many Members are waiting to

ask theirs, Members will have to leave their questions to the next Legislative Session. Members who wish to ask a question will then have to press the button more quickly and earlier. I wish to thank the Chief Executive for answering Members' questions.

Will Members please stand while the Chief Executive is leaving the Chamber?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE (in Cantonese): Thank you, President. Thank you, Members.

NEXT MEETING

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now adjourn the Council until 11.00 am on Wednesday, 12 July 2006.

Adjourned accordingly at half-past Four o'clock.