OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday, 9 May 2018

The Council met at Eleven o'clock

MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

THE HONOURABLE JAMES TO KUN-SUN

THE HONOURABLE LEUNG YIU-CHUNG

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

THE HONOURABLE TOMMY CHEUNG YU-YAN, G.B.S., J.P.

PROF THE HONOURABLE JOSEPH LEE KOK-LONG, S.B.S., J.P.

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

THE HONOURABLE WONG TING-KWONG, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE STARRY LEE WAI-KING, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN HAK-KAN, B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN KIN-POR, G.B.S., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE PRISCILLA LEUNG MEI-FUN, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE WONG KWOK-KIN, S.B.S., J.P.
DR THE HONOURABLE HELENA WONG PIK-WAN

THE HONOURABLE IP KIN-YUEN

DR THE HONOURABLE ELIZABETH QUAT, B.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE MARTIN LIAO CHEUNG-KONG, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE POON SIU-PING, B.B.S., M.H.

DR THE HONOURABLE CHIANG LAI-WAN, J.P.

IR DR THE HONOURABLE LO WAI-KWOK, S.B.S., M.H., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHUNG KWOK-PAN

THE HONOURABLE ANDREW WAN SIU-KIN

THE HONOURABLE CHU HOI-DICK

THE HONOURABLE JIMMY NG WING-KA, J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE JUNIUS HO KWAN-YIU, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE HO KAI-MING

THE HONOURABLE LAM CHEUK-TING

THE HONOURABLE HOLDEN CHOW HO-DING

THE HONOURABLE SHIU KA-FAI

THE HONOURABLE SHIU KA-CHUN

THE HONOURABLE WILSON OR CHONG-SHING, M.H.

THE HONOURABLE YUNG HOI-YAN
DR THE HONOURABLE PIERRE CHAN
THE HONOURABLE CHAN CHUN-YING
THE HONOURABLE TANYA CHAN
THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG KWOK-KWAN, J.P.
THE HONOURABLE HUI CHI-FUNG
THE HONOURABLE LUK CHUNG-HUNG
THE HONOURABLE LAU KWOK-FAN, M.H.
THE HONOURABLE KENNETH LAU IP-KEUNG, B.B.S., M.H., J.P.
DR THE HONOURABLE CHENG CHUNG-TAI
THE HONOURABLE KWONG CHUN-YU
THE HONOURABLE JEREMY TAM MAN-HO
THE HONOURABLE GARY FAN KWOK-WAI
THE HONOURABLE AU NOK-HIN
THE HONOURABLE VINCENT CHENG WING-SHUN, M.H.
THE HONOURABLE TONY TSE WAI-CHUEN, B.B.S.

MEMBERS ABSENT:
THE HONOURABLE PAUL TSE WAI-CHUN, J.P.
THE HONOURABLE ALVIN YEUNG
PUBLIC OFFICERS ATTENDING:

THE HONOURABLE PAUL CHAN MO-PO, G.B.M., G.B.S., M.H., J.P.
FINANCIAL SECRETARY

THE HONOURABLE WONG KAM-SING, G.B.S., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

THE HONOURABLE JAMES HENRY LAU JR., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY

PROF THE HONOURABLE SOPHIA CHAN SIU-CHEE, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH

THE HONOURABLE EDWARD YAU TANG-WAH, G.B.S., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

MR TSE CHIN-WAN, B.B.S., J.P.
UNDER SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

DR CHUI TAK-YI, J.P.
UNDER SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH

MR JOSEPH CHAN HO-LIM, J.P.
UNDER SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY

CLERKS IN ATTENDANCE:

MR KENNETH CHEN WEI-ON, S.B.S., SECRETARY GENERAL

MISS ODELIA LEUNG HING-YEE, DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL

MS DORA WAI, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL

MR MATTHEW LOO, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL
PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): Will the Clerk please ring the bell to summon Members to the Chamber.

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

TABLING OF PAPERS

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

Subsidiary Legislation/Instruments

Road Tunnels (Government) (Amendment) Regulation 2018........................................................................ 72/2018

Road Tunnels (Government) Ordinance (Amendment of Schedule 1) Notice 2018................................. 73/2018

Merchant Shipping (Safety) (Gas Carriers) (Amendment) Regulation 2018................................................. 74/2018

Control of Chemicals Ordinance (Amendment of Schedule 2) Order 2018 .................................................. 75/2018

Dangerous Drugs Ordinance (Amendment of First Schedule) Order 2018 .................................................. 76/2018

Banking (Disclosure) (Amendment) Rules 2018............. 77/2018

Banking (Specification of Multilateral Development Bank) (Amendment) Notice 2018 ............................... 78/2018

Construction Workers Registration Ordinance (Expiry of Section 39(1)(b) and (d)) Notice............................ 79/2018
WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Bogus marriages between Hong Kong residents and Mainlanders

1. **MR GARY FAN** (in Chinese): President, a feature article published by the Census and Statistics Department in January this year pointed out that the number of divorces in Hong Kong had increased continuously in recent years, with the number of divorce decrees granted by the Court in 2016 standing at 17,196, which nearly tripled that in 1991. Meanwhile, the media have reported on numerous occasions that some cross-boundary bogus marriage syndicates provide one-stop services. Apart from arranging bogus marriages for their clients to facilitate their application for Permits for Proceeding to Hong Kong and Macao (commonly known as "One-way Permits" ("OWPs")), such syndicates can also take care of the divorce procedure on behalf of their clients after they come to settle in Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of cases in each of the past three years in which people who had come to Hong Kong for settlement on OWPs for two years or below, three to four years and five to six years, or their spouses, applied for divorce in Hong Kong:
(2) whether the Immigration Department ("ImmD") has taken the initiative to investigate the divorce cases mentioned in (1), so as to ascertain whether the people concerned have committed the crime of bogus marriage; if ImmD has, of the number of cases investigated, as well as the respective numbers of persons prosecuted and convicted for bogus marriage; and

(3) whether ImmD has plans to discuss with the mainland authorities if the Department may play a more active role in the process of vetting and approval of OWPs, such as working with the mainland authorities to draw up more stringent vetting and approval procedure in order to identify cases of bogus marriage; whether, in the long term, the Government will reconsider discussing with the mainland authorities ImmD taking over the responsibility of the vetting and approval of OWPs?

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY (in Chinese): President, the Government has always been concerned about "bogus marriages". The Immigration Department ("ImmD") set up a special task force in 2006 to step up enforcement actions to combat such offences to prevent persons seeking entry into Hong Kong by means of "bogus marriages" and intermediaries aiding others to seek entry into Hong Kong through such means. When suspected "bogus marriage" cases are identified, ImmD will conduct in-depth investigations on parties alleged to arrange and participate in "bogus marriages", collect evidence and initiate prosecution.

Any persons who make use of "bogus marriage" to obtain the requisite documents for the purpose of entering Hong Kong, or any persons who facilitate others to achieve such purpose through arranging "bogus marriages" for them, shall be guilty of an offence. In the course of contracting "bogus marriages", and applying for entries into Hong Kong through such marriages, the persons involved may have committed offences such as conspiracy to defraud, making false representation to ImmD officers, making a false oath, giving false declaration, bigamy, etc., and are liable on conviction to imprisonment for up to 14 years.

The reply to the questions raised by Mr FAN is as follows:
(1) To get a divorce in Hong Kong, one should file a petition or an application for divorce to the court, and it does not need to be processed by marriage registries under ImmD. In relation to the feature article published by the Census and Statistics Department ("C&SD") in January 2018 and the statistics raised in the question, we have consulted the Judiciary and C&SD. It is noted that they do not maintain the statistics mentioned in the question. ImmD also does not have relevant figures.

(2) ImmD has been strengthening enforcement via different channels to combat "bogus marriages" with a multipronged and all-rounded approach, and is not limited to investigating suspicious cases in which the subjects have entered into Hong Kong with One-way Permits ("OWPs"). Various measures include:

To step up immigration examination on arrivals

When conducting immigration examinations on arriving passengers, ImmD will critically scrutinize doubtful visitors coming to visit their spouses in Hong Kong on the strength of "exit endorsements for visiting relatives" and refuse their entries if their purposes of visit are in doubt. In case any persons are found to have violated the laws of Hong Kong, such as making false representation to ImmD officers, enforcement officers of ImmD will carry out in-depth investigations and handle the cases in accordance with the law.

To combat illegal workers

Since those entering Hong Kong by means of "bogus marriages" mainly aim to take up illegal employment in Hong Kong, ImmD will pay particular attention to Mainland residents holding "exit endorsements for visiting relatives" during anti-illegal worker operations. In-depth investigations will be mounted against any suspected cases of obtaining "exit endorsements for visiting relatives" via "bogus marriages" and the cases will be handled in accordance with the law.
To step up operations against intermediaries

Many "bogus marriage" cases in the past involved intermediaries arranging Mainland residents to contract "bogus marriages" with Hong Kong residents and then apply for the requisite documents to enter Hong Kong. ImmD has always kept an eye on and conducted investigations into doubtful intermediaries. It also cooperates with the Mainland authorities by exchanging intelligence with a view to combating intermediaries and "bogus marriage" syndicates involved in cross-border crimes.

Besides, ImmD is also aware that criminal syndicates publish advertisements with wordings such as "making quick cash" and "intermediary for Mainland-Hong Kong marriages" to allure people to engage in "bogus marriage" on social networking and instant messaging mobile applications, as well as newspapers and web pages. Taking into account the individual circumstances of each case, ImmD will deploy officers in decoy operations to collect evidence to combat illegal activities of "bogus marriage" intermediaries.

To step up checking of doubtful marriage registration cases

To facilitate effective identification of suspected cases of contracting bigamous marriages on the Mainland and in Hong Kong, ImmD's Enforcement Division established in 2008 a standing checking mechanism with a checking company, which is the only one authorized by the Ministry of Justice of the Mainland to set up in Hong Kong, against suspected bigamy cases. Besides, marriage registries have stepped up examination on suspicious marriage registrations by checking information with the authorized checking company. In handling suspicious marriage cases, the registries will conduct immediate assessment and expedite the checking procedure, and pass the information to the Enforcement Division for analysis at the same time. In addition, suspicious cases identified by the registries will also be referred to the Enforcement Division for intelligence analysis and follow-up actions.
To exchange intelligence and cooperate with Mainland authorities

ImmD will notify Mainland authorities of information on Mainland residents who have committed offences relating to "bogus marriage", enabling strict scrutiny of their applications for exit endorsements in future. Mainland residents who have been convicted of offences related to "bogus marriage" in Hong Kong will normally be barred by the Mainland authorities, upon receipt of ImmD's notification, from obtaining exit endorsements and travel documents for a period of two to five years, depending on the circumstances. This prevents them from revisiting Hong Kong for illegal activities. Mainland authorities will also refer cases of suspected "bogus marriage" to ImmD for follow-up actions. Mainland and Hong Kong authorities will conduct joint enforcement operations as necessary.

To prevent people from giving birth in Hong Kong through "bogus marriage"

ImmD set up a task force in November 2012 to collect the delivery booking records of Mainland pregnant women from private hospitals for analysis and investigation, with a view to deterring them from attempting to give birth in Hong Kong by obtaining the Confirmation Certificate on Delivery Booking through "bogus marriage". As in March 2018, a total of 49 persons were successfully prosecuted. Among them, there were 15 Mainland pregnant women, 28 Hong Kong resident husbands and 6 intermediaries. The task force also forwards information of suspected cases to immigration control points for reference, so that the relevant pregnant women will be closely scrutinized when they arrive in Hong Kong.

To step up publicity

To remind members of the public, including young people, of the possible consequences of participating in "bogus marriages" and the serious implications of committing related offences, ImmD has from time to time disseminated information on crackdowns on "bogus marriage" syndicates and successful prosecutions of intermediaries and participants through press conferences, press releases, media
interviews, etc. In addition, ImmD will continue to disseminate information from different and popular publicity channels. For example, a video clip was produced and uploaded to the Hong Kong Immigration Department YouTube channel last year.

With an array of measures against "bogus marriage", Mainland residents' applications to come to Hong Kong by way of "bogus marriage" will be handled seriously and investigated thoroughly by ImmD. Prosecution will be initiated when there is sufficient evidence. For persons who are found to have obtained their residence in Hong Kong by fraudulent means, regardless of whether they are holders of Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card or Hong Kong Identity Card, ImmD will have their identity cards or residence status invalidated according to the laws. They will also be subject to removal to their places of origin.

In 2015, 2016 and 2017, ImmD investigated a total of 1,542 suspected "bogus marriage" cases and arrested 3,010 persons, among them 296 were successfully prosecuted and convicted. Those successfully prosecuted include intermediaries and parties to "bogus marriages". Apart from individual cases where the convicted were sentenced to Community Service Orders of 80 hours or above, the majority of the convicted were sentenced to imprisonment from 4 to 24 months. The head of a syndicate was sentenced to imprisonment for 48 months in a past case.

(3) ImmD has maintained close liaison with the Mainland authorities to combat crimes related to "bogus marriages". In the processing of OWP applications by the Mainland authorities, ImmD facilitates at case level, including rendering assistance in verifying the supporting documents submitted by the applicants and their claimed relationship with relatives in Hong Kong (e.g. husband and wife, parent and child, etc.) when necessary. Where a case is found to be suspicious or when factual discrepancies are identified, ImmD will inform the Mainland authorities and will request the applicant to provide further documentary proof.

In processing OWP applications under the category of "reunion with spouses" and in case the husband-and-wife relationship is in doubt,
the Mainland authorities will pass the particulars of the applicants and their spouses in Hong Kong to ImmD for verification of the personal particulars of the Hong Kong residents, their certificates of registration of marriage in Hong Kong or other relevant records. ImmD will initiate follow-up actions and notify the Mainland authorities of the verification results.

ImmD has an established mechanism for handling cases of obtaining OWPs by fraudulent means. ImmD will also initiate investigation into doubtful marriages, receive intelligence and collects evidence from various sources and through different channels in order to investigate thoroughly the parties to suspected "bogus marriage" cases and the intermediaries involved. The relevant persons will be prosecuted when there is sufficient evidence. Once a case is substantiated, ImmD can declare the invalidation of a person's Hong Kong Identity Card, regardless of whether that person is a holder of Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card. In addition, regardless of his years of residence in Hong Kong, ImmD has the authority to remove him from Hong Kong.

OWPs are documents issued by relevant authorities in the Mainland. The application, approval and issuance of OWPs fall within the remit of the Mainland authorities. According to Article 22 of the Basic Law and the interpretation by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in 1999, Mainland residents who wish to enter Hong Kong for whatever reason must apply to the relevant authorities of their residential districts for approval in accordance with the relevant national laws and administrative regulations, and must hold valid documents issued by the relevant authorities. The HKSAR Government does not deem it necessary and justifiable to change the existing OWP system and relevant approval practice.

Vetting and approval of plans submitted in respect of building works of modular housing/container housing

2. **MR JEREMY TAM** (in Chinese): President, section 16 of the Buildings Ordinance (Cap. 123) provides that if plans of building works submitted to the Building Authority ("BA") (i.e. the Director of Buildings) are not endorsed with
or accompanied by a certificate from the Director of Fire Services ("DFS") certifying that (i) no fire service installation or equipment is necessary in connection with the building that will result from the carrying out of the building works shown on the plans or (ii) in the opinion of DFS, the fire service installations and equipment shown on the plans have met the minimum requirements, BA may refuse to give his approval of the plans. It has been reported that the Hong Kong Council of Social Service ("HKCSS") is planning to build three modular housing blocks of three storeys each at 202-220 Nam Cheong Street, Sham Shui Po for temporary residential purpose ("HKCSS modular housing"). Regarding the issues relating to the issuance by DFS of the aforesaid certificate for the building works of modular housing/container housing and the vetting and approval by BA of plans submitted in respect of such kind of works, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) (i) of the criteria adopted by DFS for determining whether the aforesaid certificate should be issued for the building works of HKCSS modular housing, and (ii) whether DFS has issued the certificate;

(2) of the criteria adopted by BA for determining whether approval should be given to the plans submitted in respect of the building works of HKCSS modular housing; the number of times for which BA has so far received the relevant plans submitted by HKCSS, and on each occasion, (i) the date of receipt of such plans and (ii) the amount of fees charged; whether BA has approved the relevant plans; if so, of the approval date;

(3) of the details of the applications for constructing temporary modular housing/container housing received by BA and DFS in the past five years, including (i) the dates of application, (ii) the locations of the modular housing/container housing concerned, (iii) the amounts of fees payable by the applicants, (iv) the number of revisions made to the plans and (v) the outcome of vetting and approval (set out in a table); (vi) the number of applications received and (vii) the number of applications approved by BA and DFS in each of the past five years, as well as (viii) the amount of fees charged, (ix) the amount of processing time and (x) the number of revisions made to the plans, per application on average; and
(4) regarding each of the cases in which the plans submitted in the past five years to BA for approval which were subsequently rejected, of the proposed location(s) of the modular housing/container housing concerned and the justifications of BA for not granting approval?

SECRETARY FOR DEVELOPMENT (in Chinese): President, my consolidated reply to the various parts of the question raised by Mr Jeremy TAM is as follows:

For building plan applications submitted by an Authorized Person ("AP") in accordance with the Buildings Ordinance ("BO"), regardless of the proposed construction method (including the Modular Integrated Construction ("MiC") technology), the Buildings Department ("BD") must process the building plans in accordance with BO and its subsidiary legislation. BD's officers will scrutinize whether the planning, design and construction of the building and its building works shown on the building plans comply with the statutory requirements and will also refer the building plans to other relevant departments through the centralized processing system for their assessments on areas of concern or requirements under their purview. Other than the conditions or grounds listed under section 16 of BO that the Building Authority ("BA") may refuse to give his approval of any plans of building works, BA must approve the building plan submission.

MiC technology refers to a construction method whereby free-standing integrated modules (completed with finishes, fixtures and fittings) are manufactured in a prefabrication factory and then transported to site for installation into a building. To provide clearer and more specific guidance on the use of MiC technology to the industry, BD has promulgated a practice note in December 2017, setting out general guidance on design requirements for compliance with BO and relevant factors to be considered for projects using MiC technology. The relevant practice note can be found at the following link: <https://www.bd.gov.hk/english/documents/pnap/ADV/ADV036.pdf>.

Regarding the development proposal at 202-220 Nam Cheong Street at Sham Shui Po, the concerned building plans were submitted to BD on 6 December 2017 and were approved by BA in accordance with BO on 2 February 2018. Nevertheless, BD has not received the related structural plans
and drainage plans yet. In view of the concerned development proposal is a non-profit making community facility, BD has exempted the payment of plan processing fees under section 42 of BO.

Regarding the fire service installations and equipment on the building plans, upon receipt of the building plans referred under the centralized processing system, the Fire Services Department ("FSD") has issued a certificate to the AP concerned on 28 December 2017, confirming that the fire service installations and equipment shown on the building plans complied with the requirements set out in the prevailing "Code of Practice for Minimum Fire Service Installations and Equipment" (i.e. for residential buildings of three storeys or less, fire extinguisher(s) should be provided on each floor).

Up till 30 April 2018, other than the above mentioned proposed development project, BD and FSD has not received similar building plan submissions, viz. temporary housing development projects using MiC technology.

**Handling of construction waste and management of public fill**

3. **MR CHAN HAK-KAN** (in Chinese): President, it has been reported that incidents of people illegally dumping construction waste in public places or rural areas have happened from time to time in recent years. The Audit Commission and the Office of The Ombudsman released reports in 2016 and 2018 respectively, criticizing that the law enforcement agencies had been ineffective in combating such acts. On the other hand, as there have been few reclamation works carried out in Hong Kong in recent years, the quantity of construction and demolition materials used for reclamation and site formation works has declined, resulting in an excess supply of public fill over the demand and the saturation of the existing four public fill reception facilities and two fill banks. As such, the Government can only deliver the surplus public fill to places outside Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of (i) proactive inspections conducted to combat acts of illegal dumping of construction waste, (ii) relevant complaints received, and (iii) prosecutions instituted against the
persons concerned, by the Environmental Protection Department and the Planning Department in each of the past five years; the new measures to be taken by these two departments in the coming five years to further combat such kind of illegal acts;

(2) of the quantity of public fill generated in Hong Kong, and the respective (i) quantities of public fill received, (ii) total amounts of fees collected, and (iii) operational expenses incurred, by the four public fill reception facilities and the two fill banks in each of the past five years;

(3) of (i) the quantity and percentage of the surplus public fill exported (with a breakdown by export destination), and (ii) the quantity and percentage of the surplus public fill discarded at the landfills, by the Government in each of the past five years;

(4) as I have learnt that the demand of the Mainland construction industry for fill materials has gradually decreased in recent years, of the Government's measures to cope with the situation where the Mainland stops receiving fill materials from Hong Kong; and

(5) of the respective current percentages of locally recovered glass materials that have been reused or used as fill materials (i) in Hong Kong and (ii) after exportation; given that there is currently an excess supply of fill materials, whether it has plans to take measures to raise the percentage of glass materials to be recovered for reuse?

SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT (in Chinese): President, regarding the questions raised by Mr CHAN Hak-kan, our responses are as follows:

(1) Illegal land filling and fly-tipping of construction waste involve issues pertaining to various policy portfolios, with the concerned activities regulated by existing legislation on environmental protection, town planning, land management, buildings, drainage, public safety, public health or country parks. Relevant Government departments enforce these legislation under their respective
jurisdictions and statutory powers, and will conduct joint operations as and when necessary.

Figures on inspections conducted by the Environmental Protection Department ("EPD") and Planning Department ("PlanD"), public reports received and prosecutions instituted against illegal dumping of construction waste for the past five years are set out at the Annex.

To strengthen the monitoring and tackling of illegal disposal of construction waste, EPD has installed surveillance camera systems at around 50 construction waste fly-tipping black spots on Government land and in public places to facilitate law enforcement and achieve greater deterrence against fly-tipping. EPD plans to further extend the coverage to a total of about 70 locations by the end of this year and is in the process of preparing for the tendering exercise. Moreover, EPD and other relevant departments will progressively introduce surveillance camera systems on the smart lampposts under a pilot scheme of "Multi-functional Smart Lampposts" as proposed in the 2017 Policy Address.

To achieve greater deterrence against illegal activities, EPD will through various channels continue to raise public awareness on environmental protection, encourage the public to report illegal disposal of waste, enhance collaboration with relevant stakeholders, install surveillance camera systems at fly-tipping black spots and display warning posters at prominent places, etc.

Regarding the unauthorized land filling cases found in the rural New Territories, PlanD will continue to provide additional manpower resources and closely monitor the situation. Timely and appropriate enforcement and prosecution actions will be taken under the Town Planning Ordinance (Cap. 131).

(2) Each year, the construction industry generates a large quantity of inert construction and demolition ("C&D") materials (also known as public fill) which can be reused in reclamation or site formation works. While part of the public fill generated in Hong Kong is
transferred to suitable construction sites for direct reuse, the rest is
delivered to the public fill reception facilities for temporary storage
and future reuse. Currently, there are four public fill reception
facilities, namely the two temporary fill banks in Tseung Kwan O
Area 137 and Tuen Mun Area 38, the Chai Wan Public Fill Barging
Point and the Mui Wo Temporary Public Fill Reception Facility.
The quantity of public fill locally generated and the respective
quantity received by the four public fill reception facilities in each of
the past five years are tabulated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quantity Generated (million tonnes)</th>
<th>Quantity Received (million tonnes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Separately, the amount of public fill charges collected by the four
public fill reception facilities and the expenditure incurred by the
Government on public fill management in each of the past five
financial years are tabulated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Year</th>
<th>Charges Collected ($ million)</th>
<th>Expenditure ($ million)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>1 180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>790(1)</td>
<td>1 070(2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

(1) The increased construction waste disposal charges (including public fill
charge, sorting charge and landfill charge) were effective from 7 April
2017.

(2) The expenditure is provisional actual figure subject to adjustment.
(3) As local reuse cannot absorb all of the public fill generated in Hong Kong in recent years, the Government has been delivering surplus public fill to Taishan in the Guangdong Province for disposal since 2007. No surplus public fill has been disposed of at local landfills.

The quantity of surplus public fill delivered to the Mainland for reuse in the past five years are tabulated below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quantity (million tonnes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) The Government has been closely liaising with relevant Mainland authorities on the delivery of surplus public fill to the Mainland to ensure its smooth operation. In addition, the Government has put in place suitable measures to encourage and help the construction industry to reduce and reuse C&D materials as far as possible. Particularly, we have been encouraging suitable reclamation projects that are ongoing or under planning in the territory to absorb more local public fill, such as the current Three-Runway System project and the Tung Chung New Town Extension project.

(5) Currently, glass containers collected locally will be, after treatment, mainly used for producing eco-pavers. Some will be exported for recycling. Besides, the Civil Engineering and Development Department has drawn up technical guidelines on the use of recycled glass materials as fill materials. The use of recycled glass materials in public works projects has already started. We envisage that the glass materials locally collected can be fully absorbed through these outlets. Meanwhile, we have encouraged the glass management contractors hired by the Government to proactively expand recycling outlets for recycled glass materials, such as using them as raw
materials for producing eco-cement and decorative tiles, and exporting them for recycling into new glass products.

The overall quantity of glass materials recycled in 2016 was 9 300 tonnes. We do not have a breakdown by the use of such recycled glass materials.

Annex

Cases of illegal dumping of construction waste may include fly-tipping of construction waste on Government land and land filling on private land (involving construction waste). Figures on the inspections, public reports and prosecutions on such cases handled by EPD and PlanD in the past five years are tabulated below:

Relevant statistics on fly-tipping of construction waste on Government land

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016@</th>
<th>2017@</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public reports*</td>
<td>1 861</td>
<td>1 525</td>
<td>1 638</td>
<td>1 761</td>
<td>1 850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of inspections</td>
<td>8 008</td>
<td>7 849</td>
<td>8 558</td>
<td>8 577</td>
<td>6 167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of prosecutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Number of summonses issued</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Number of convictions by the court</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Number of Fixed Penalty Notices (&quot;FPNs&quot;) issued**</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

* Including repeated cases.

** The fine level of FPNs is $1,500.

@ The numbers of public reports in 2016 and 2017 were similar, which were about 1 800 including repeated cases of construction waste disposal at black spots. EPD has been since 2016 progressively installing surveillance cameras, which has helped EPD enhance its enforcement efficiency in 2017. In addition, EPD has made use of various channels to raise public awareness on environmental protection, such as displaying warning posters at prominent places, etc. These help enhance the deterrent effect and reduce illegal disposal of waste at black spots. There were fewer intercepted cases of illegal construction waste disposal and prosecutions taken in 2017 than in 2016.
Relevant statistics on land filling on private land (involving construction waste)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public reports*</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of inspections</td>
<td>1 001</td>
<td>1 118</td>
<td>1 235</td>
<td>1 357</td>
<td>1 578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of prosecutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Number of summonses issued**</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Number of convictions by the court**</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

* Including repeated cases.

** As prosecutions might not be concluded in the same year as the issue of summonses, the number of convictions was greater than that of prosecutions in 2014.

Safety of banana boats and jet-skis

4. **MR HOLDEN CHOW** (in Chinese): President, every summer, many people flock to the waters of Hong Kong to engage in a variety of water sports activities, including riding on a banana boat towed by a speed-boat and jet skiing. It is learnt that accidents involving such recreational activities which resulted in deaths and injuries have occurred from time to time. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of water sports accidents involving banana boats and jet-skis recorded by the authorities in the past five years;

(2) whether the existing legislation governing vessels regulates jet-skis and non-mechanized vessels such as banana boats; if so, of the details, including the specific requirements under the various provisions and whether such facilities are required to be registered or licensed; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether the relevant government departments have conducted inspections regularly on the safety of banana boats and jet-skis; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?
SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Chinese): President, the reply to Mr Holden CHOW's question is as follows:

(1) From 2012 to 2017, the Marine Department ("MD") recorded three accidents involving jet-skis but none involving banana boats (neither banana boats nor pleasure vessels ("PVs") towing them).

(2) According to Schedule 1 to the Merchant Shipping (Local Vessels) (Certification and Licensing) Regulation (Cap. 548D), jet-skis fall within the vessel type of open cruiser under Class IV vessels (i.e. PVs), for which an Operating Licence ("OL") for Local Vessel and a valid third party risks insurance certification must be obtained. An operator must also possess the Pleasure Vessel Operator Certificate of Competency for operating jet-skis. To enhance safety, MD has endorsed corresponding conditions in OLs for jet-skis, including permitting the use of jet-skis at daytime only, requiring operators to wear lifejackets and jet-skis to be installed with an equipment commonly known as "kill cord" (i.e. device enabling the engine of a jet-ski to automatically switch off once the operator leaves his seat).

OLs of local vessels are not required for non-mechanized inflatable vessels including banana boats. However, a PV owner who intends to use his vessel for towing inflatable vessels should submit an application in writing to MD. Upon approval of the application, MD will endorse OL of PV concerned with conditions pertaining to the towing of inflatable boats, including keeping proper lookout on PV; providing every person on board the vessel being towed with a seat and an independent handhold; and ensuring that each of these persons shall wear a life-jacket.

(3) Apart from conducting regular inspections of PVs, MD also steps up its patrols and launches anti-speeding operations at popular sites for water sports during the summer. In the summer of 2017, 1100 inspections of PVs and nine anti-speeding operations were conducted. On the publicity and education fronts, to remind the public to pay attention to their own safety and that of others when taking part in water sports or waterborne recreational activities, MD collaborates with the Leisure and Cultural Services Department and the Hong Kong Police Force in organizing the Water Sports Safety
Seminar annually, with a view to raising public awareness of water sports safety. MD also distributes pamphlets on water sports safety to the public with advice on the safe operation of banana boats and jet skis. As summer draws near, MD will continue with its relevant work in patrol and education to ensure water sports safety.

Poor population with high academic qualifications

5. **MR JIMMY NG** (in Chinese): President, it has been reported that the number of working poor with post-secondary education or above ("high academic qualifications") increased from 18,400 in 2012 to 28,300 in 2016, of which the number of university degree holders increased by 83% from 9,300 to 17,000. There are comments that while education has all along been regarded as a major impetus for upward mobility, the above figures manifest a worrying situation that even high academic qualifications cannot help one get out of poverty. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

1. whether it has studied the causes for the rise in recent years in the number of working poor with high academic qualifications; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

2. whether it has estimated how the number of working poor with high academic qualifications by the end of 2022 as well as their age and gender profiles compare with the current relevant figures;

3. as there are views that the increase in the poor population with high academic qualifications is mainly attributable to (i) the increasing industrialization of education, (ii) the mismatch between the supply of talents from the education system and the manpower demand in the labour market, and (iii) the narrow industry structure in Hong Kong, whether the authorities have studied the specific impact of these three factors on the poor population with high academic qualifications; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

4. given that some research results have found that the median starting salary of university graduates dropped from $16,371 per month in 1995 to $13,916 per month in 2015, coupled with the fact that the local Composite Consumer Price Index rose by 37% from 73.3 (with
October 2014 to September 2015 as the base period) to 100.6 during the same period, reflecting that the income levels of university graduates had deteriorated during the period, whether the authorities will introduce more measures appropriate for alleviating and preventing poverty among the working poor who are university graduates; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

CHIEF SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATION (in Chinese): President, the Commission on Poverty announced the first official poverty line in 2013. It agreed to adopt the concept of "relative poverty", setting the poverty line at 50% of the median monthly household income before policy intervention (i.e. before taxation and social welfare transfers) by household size. Households with income below the poverty line are classified as poor while the household members concerned are counted as poor persons. Under this definition, the employed persons with post-secondary education in poor households (i.e. poor employed persons with post-secondary education) can be considered as the working poor with "high academic qualifications". According to the latest poverty situation report, the number of poor employed persons with post-secondary education reached 28 300 in 2016.

Our reply to Mr Jimmy NG's question is as follows:

(1) According to the analysis of poverty situation conducted by the Government, after recurrent cash intervention, the number of poor employed persons with post-secondary education increased from 18 400 in 2012 to 28 300 in 2016. Despite the increase in the number of employed persons with post-secondary education in poor households in Hong Kong, the post-intervention (recurrent cash) poverty rate of employed persons with post-secondary education stayed at the low level of 2%, much lower than the overall figure of 14.7%. Furthermore, the poverty rate among working degree holders was even lower at 1.6%.

Among the some newly added 10 000 poor employed persons with post-secondary education between 2012 and 2016, about 5 600 were part-time workers. This trend is in tandem with a general rise in part-time employment in the labour market in recent years. A close examination of the 5 600 additional poor part-time employed persons
with post-secondary education shows that a majority of them were youths aged 18 to 24 (3 300 persons) and over 80% of this group were students. Among all the above mentioned additional part-timers, most (4 800 persons) lived with non-working members or another full-time working member who had lower educational attainment.

Apart from the increase in poor part-timers, the number of full-time poor workers with post-secondary education also rose by about 4 300 persons between 2012 and 2016. Over 70% of these additional full-time poor workers were the sole breadwinner of the households which were generally families of three to four persons. The relatively heavier financial burden has made it difficult for them to move out of poverty.

(2) Based on the statistics sourced from the General Household Survey regularly conducted by the Census and Statistics Department, the poverty line analysis is updated annually to reflect the actual situation of poor households in the previous year. The analysis also helps the Government monitor the effectiveness of relevant policy initiatives as well as the changes and trends of the poverty situation of different household groups. The Government has not made any projections of the poverty situation.

(3) The poverty situation in Hong Kong is affected by the overall economic, demographic and labour market situations. Under the current analysis of the poverty situation, the Government examines the poverty situation mainly from macro perspectives and further analyses different household groups by a set of socio-economic characteristics. Changes in the people's education attainment and industry structure as well as relevant impact have formed part of the overall economic statistics and have been taken into account under the existing analytical framework. There is no further study on individual factors under the current analytical framework of the poverty line.

(4) The Government has put in place different initiatives to provide support for the working poor. In May 2016, the Government introduced the Low-income Working Family Allowance Scheme
("the Scheme") to provide financial support to eligible working families who are not receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance. One of the Scheme's objectives is to encourage self-reliance through continuous employment. In order to strengthen the relevant support and the Scheme's functions in alleviating and preventing poverty, the Government implemented a series of enhancements on 1 April 2018, which include extending the Scheme to cover singleton households, allowing household members to aggregate their working hours, relaxing the income requirements and increasing the rates of allowances, etc. The Scheme was also renamed the Working Family Allowance Scheme on the same day.

In addition, to alleviate the financial burden of student loan borrowers, the Government introduced enhancements to the student financial assistance schemes in 2012. These included reducing the respective interest rates of the means-tested loan schemes and non-means-tested loan schemes and extending the standard repayment period. Loan borrowers who have difficulty in repaying their loans may apply for a deferral of loan repayment. If their deferral applications are approved, a maximum of two years' interest-free extension of the loan repayment period is allowed. To ease the financial burden of loan borrowers upon graduation and to allow them more time to seek a stable job, loan borrowers are also given the option of starting the student loan repayment one year upon completion of their studies.

Reducing the use of disposable plastic food containers

6. **MR PAUL TSE** (in Chinese): President, the results of a study have shown that the disposable plastic food containers used by quite a number of fast food chains would have an overall migration exceeding the limit resulting in food contamination when they were used to hold food with temperatures of over 100 degrees Celsius. On the other hand, the results of a sampling test on local wild flathead grey mullets have shown that 60% of the samples contained plastic fragments, the constituents of which are commonly used in the making of disposable plastic tableware. Some green groups have pointed out that the persistent organic pollutants ("POPs") adhered to microplastics can cause cancer after entering the human body via the food chain. In addition, the
governments of France and Taiwan have decided to ban the use of disposable plastic tableware in 2020 and 2030 respectively. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it has studied and assessed, among the new confirmed cases of cancers in the past three years, the percentages of those which were related to POPs;

(2) whether it has investigated (i) restaurants' use of disposable plastic food containers which have an overall migration exceeding the limit when coming into contact with high temperatures, and (ii) restaurants' massive use of disposable plastic food containers;

(3) whether it formulated policies and measures in the past three years to encourage school lunch box suppliers as well as operators of restaurant chains and canteens in government office buildings to give greater consideration from the perspectives of reducing microplastics entering the food chain, protecting the environment and safeguarding public health, and switch to the use of reusable food containers or plastic-free disposable food containers;

(4) whether it formulated policies and measures in the past three years to (i) change the restaurants' undesirable practice of massively using disposable plastic food containers, and (ii) develop among members of the public a habit from childhood to bring their own tableware and avoid using disposable plastic food containers; and

(5) in view of the results of a study by an American university which showed that more than 90% of the samples of bottled water contained microplastic particles which can cause cancer, whether the Government will (i) step up its efforts to persuade members of the public to purchase less bottled water and to switch to bringing their own water bottles and using the drinking fountains provided in public places instead, and (ii) install in places with high pedestrian flow higher-grade drinking fountains (such as those adopting medical-grade and reverse osmosis filtration technologies) so as to provide members of the public with drinking water that meets high water quality standards?
SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT (in Chinese): President, having consulted the Food and Health Bureau, the Education Bureau, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD"), the Department of Health ("DH"), the Government Property Agency ("GPA") and the Hospital Authority ("HA"), our consolidated reply to the question raised by Mr Paul TSE is as follows:

(1) According to DH, cancer is generally multifactorial and some common causes include ageing, unhealthy lifestyle, genetic and environmental factors, etc. As for the impact of microplastics on the ecological environment, it is an emerging topic of global concern and scientists worldwide are still exploring and studying the issue. The Food and Health Bureau has not commissioned any studies on this specific topic. Neither does HA keep any statistics on the relation between new cancer cases and plastic pollution. On the other hand, while scientists have yet to fully understand the impacts of microplastics on human health including its carcinogenicity, the international understanding is that precautionary measures should be put in place as early as possible to reduce plastics entering the environment.

(2) No study has been carried out by the Government on restaurants' provision of plastic food containers to customers. That said, the Environment and Conservation Fund ("ECF") has sponsored a green group to conduct a survey in 2018-2019 on the provision of plastic containers and tableware by specific restaurants to customers. The project is underway and estimated for completion in October 2018.

(3) and (4)

The Government has been striving to promote green lunch in schools. The Environmental Protection Department ("EPD") holds talks for schools and provides them with practical guidelines and circulars, and advises lunch suppliers to use washable and reusable food containers instead of disposable ones. Under the "Food Wise Hong Kong Campaign", EPD has also issued the Food Waste Reduction Good Practice Guide for Educational Sector, encouraging schools to, inter alia, facilitate students to bring and use reusable tableware, containers and water bottles, thereby reducing the use of disposable plastic food containers and tableware. To further
nurture the habit of waste reduction at source among students, EPD has implemented the On-site Meal Portioning Funding ("OMPF") Scheme since 2009, under which ECF has earmarked $150 million to subsidize schools to conduct basic conversion works and install facilities necessary for implementing on-site meal portioning on campus, thereby promoting the "food wise" culture, as well as reducing food waste and the use of disposable plastic food containers and tableware. So far, over 120 schools have been subsidized to run OMPF projects.

On the other hand, EPD is committed to facilitating the general public and different sectors of the community to reduce the use of disposable food containers and plastic tableware. For example, EPD engages the catering sector from time to time to encourage restaurants to phase in green measures, such as providing dine-in customers with only reusable food containers and tableware, avoiding the use of styrofoam food containers for take-away food and welcoming customers to bring their own food containers for take-away food. Under the Sustainable Development Fund, the Government has also earlier supported the food and beverage sector to formulate guidelines on green procurement by the trade, with the aim of encouraging various types of restaurants and eateries to practise green procurement, including the use of recyclable or plant-fibre tableware instead of disposable plastic ones to help reduce plastic pollution. Furthermore, under the Hong Kong Awards for Environmental Excellence and the Hong Kong Green Organisation Certification, EPD appeals to food and beverage caterers to take measures to encourage customers not to ask for disposable tableware and food containers. ECF also subsidizes local non-profit-making organizations run various projects to promote less use of disposable tableware and food containers in the community, thereby inspiring citizens and students to use reusable tableware and food containers.

At present, the tenancies entered into by GPA for government departments with operators of canteens in government properties would also generally prescribe that the operator shall use decomposable lunch boxes for take-away services.
The Government will continue to take the lead in adopting a green procurement policy, such as avoiding the use of single-use disposable items (including tableware and food containers) and purchasing products with improved recyclability, higher recycled contents, less packaging and greater durability as far as practicable.

In addition, the Government strives to take forward the implementation of relevant policies and regulations in order to rise up to the challenge of waste management. It is expected that the future implementation of municipal solid waste charging scheme could effectively, through economic incentives, drive behavioural change to reduce waste generation, thereby reducing the overall waste disposal quantity.

(5) To create a social environment where the public is encouraged to cultivate the habit of bringing their own reusable water bottles with a view to promoting waste reduction at source, the Government has required all Policy Bureaux and departments to gradually cease the sale of water in plastic bottles (measuring 1 litre or less) through automatic vending machines at government venues under their purview (e.g. sports complexes, performance venues, government offices, parks, country parks, government car parks, public transport interchanges or ferry piers). The arrangement took effect on 20 February 2018 and is applicable to relevant contracts, tenancies/tenancy agreements or permits tendered on or after that date. As for existing automatic beverage vending machines at such premises, the Policy Bureaux and departments will discuss with the suppliers/operators concerned and ask them to voluntarily implement the new arrangement of ceased sale as early as possible.

AFCD promotes waste reduction and a responsible attitude towards the environment through the "Take Your Litter Home" public education programme. Members of the public are encouraged to plan ahead before visiting the country parks, such as to bring along reusable water bottles and food containers so as to avoid and reduce the generation of waste, and take away their waste after visiting the country parks. In addition, AFCD has launched the "Bring Your Own Water Bottle" Reward Scheme since 2014 to encourage country park visitors to reduce waste at source and avoid consumption of
one-off bottled drinks. Country park visitors who have brought along their reusable water bottles will be given stamps for redemption of souvenirs as reward.

Meanwhile, EPD is coordinating with various Policy Bureaux and departments to install additional water dispensers as necessary at new government venues and suitable existing government venues when conducting renovation works, subject to actual circumstances and technical feasibility. Water quality and hygiene of such dispensers will be maintained in accordance with relevant guidelines by the various Policy Bureaux and departments.

In addition, in December 2017, EPD launched a Waste Reduction Guidebook for Large Scale Event Organisers ("Guidebook"), which provides clear information and practical examples to assist event organizers and participants in achieving waste reduction at source. The Guidebook recommends, among other things, that organizers set up on-site water refilling stations at the event venues and encourage participants to bring their own bottles. We also encourage government departments to set a role model by making reference to the Guidebook and implementing the recommended measures therein as far as practicable.

Curbing the prevalence of youth gambling

7. **MR VINCENT CHENG** (in Chinese): President, as incidents in which young people committed suicide in an attempt to dodge the huge debts built up by gambling have been heard from time to time in recent years, some concern groups have all along been requesting, over the years, the Government to raise the legal gambling age from 18 to 21. On the other hand, the Government established the Ping Wo Fund ("the Fund") in 2003 to sponsor preventive and remedial measures for gambling-related problems. To enhance the promotion of anti-gambling messages among young people and in the community, the Fund introduced the Ping Wo Fund Sponsorship Scheme and the Ping Wo Fund School Project Grants ("the two sponsorship schemes") to sponsor non-governmental organizations and schools respectively for organizing anti-gambling publicity and education activities. In connection with curbing the prevalence of youth gambling, will the Government inform this Council:
(1) whether it knows, in each of the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 financial years, (i) the betting turnover received by the Hong Kong Jockey Club ("HKJC") in respect of each type of betting activities and the respective percentage of each of such betting turnover in the total betting turnover (set out in a table), and among such betting turnover, (ii) the year-on-year growth rate of football betting turnover and the percentage of football bets which were placed online;

(2) whether it knows, in each of the past five years, the number and percentage of HKJC betting account holders who were aged below 21; whether the authorities will examine afresh the proposal to raise the legal gambling age to 21; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) given that HKJC has in recent years upgraded its mobile betting services (such as placing bets via mobile applications) and introduced different betting types, whether the authorities will study if such practices have resulted in the prevalence of youth gambling; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) whether the authorities have assessed the effectiveness of the Fund; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; given the upcoming World Cup which is a widely attention-grabbing sports event among young people, whether the authorities have conducted targeted public education and publicity work to curb the prevalence of youth gambling; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) of the respective numbers of applications received and approved, and the total amounts of grants allocated, by the two sponsorship schemes in each of the past five years (set out in a table);

(6) whether it knows the numbers of requests for assistance received by the gambling counselling hotlines operated by various community organizations, and the attendances of the services provided by the four counselling and treatment centres financed by the Fund, in each of the past five years (set out in a table); and
of the respective numbers of persons prosecuted and convicted for participating in illegal football betting activities in each of the past five years, and the total betting turnover involved; whether the authorities have reviewed the effectiveness of the related law enforcement operations; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS (in Chinese): President, it is the Government's policy not to encourage gambling as gambling addiction may cause harm to individuals and to society. However, we understand that there is a certain demand for gambling in society and it is a pragmatic approach to allow a limited number of authorized gambling channels. Attaching great importance to prevention and alleviation of problems arising from gambling, the Home Affairs Bureau has adopted a multi-pronged strategy including regulation over gambling activities through legislation, law enforcement against illegal gambling, public education and publicity on harm of gambling addiction, and provision of counselling and support services to people in need.

To finance preventive and remedial measures for problems arising from gambling, the Government established the Ping Wo Fund ("the Fund") in 2003 which provides sponsorship for: (1) researches of gambling-related issues and problems; (2) public education and other measures to prevent and alleviate gambling-related problems; and (3) counselling, treatment and other support services for people with gambling disorder and those affected by them.

The reply to the question raised by Mr Vincent CHENG is as follows:

For 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 financial years,\(^1\) the Hong Kong Jockey Club ("HKJC") recorded respectively total betting turnovers of $202.7 billion and $216.5 billion from various betting activities, among which about 60% were bets placed online. A breakdown of betting turnover by betting activity is tabulated below:

\(^1\) HKJC's financial year runs from 1 July to the following 30 June.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Betting turnover ($)</th>
<th>2015-2016 financial year (% in total betting turnover)</th>
<th>2016-2017 financial year (% in total betting turnover)/[year-on-year change]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Horse racing</td>
<td>107.4 billion (53.0%)</td>
<td>115.8 billion (53.5%)/[+7.8%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football</td>
<td>86.8 billion (42.8%)</td>
<td>92.7 billion (42.8%)/[+6.8%]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Six Lottery</td>
<td>8.5 billion (4.2%)</td>
<td>8 billion (3.7%)/[-5.9%]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(2) According to HKJC, the percentage of betting account holders aged below 21 remained at around 1.3% to 1.7% in all account holders over the past five years.

The age of 18 is generally regarded as the indicator of adulthood in Hong Kong, and it is also the statutory age for legal gambling. As revealed by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University's study on Hong Kong people's participation in gambling activities, commissioned by the Fund and completed in 2017, over 60% of the respondents considered it appropriate to set the legal gambling age at 18.

We note that certain countries and places have their legal gambling ages set at 21. Nevertheless, given that these overseas places do not share the same background and objective factors with Hong Kong, their approaches may not be directly applicable here. In fact, restrictions on the gambling age differ around the world and there is no standardized practice. For example, in the United Kingdom, people can enter casinos when they are aged 18 but the minimum age for buying lottery tickets is only 16; in Singapore, the statutory age for entering casinos is 21 but that for participating in betting on horse racing or sports and buying lottery tickets remains at 18; and in Macao, people aged below 21 are prohibited from entering casinos but the age for legal participation in betting on horse racing, football, basketball, etc. remains at 18.

Regarding any proposal to raise the legal gambling age in Hong Kong, the Government has to examine prudently and consider if it will, on the contrary, increase the risk of young people aged between 18 and 21 participating in illegal gambling and developing gambling...
behavioural problems. Raising the legal gambling age may not necessarily be the most effective way to tackle the gambling-related problems (in particular, illegal online gambling) of youth.

(3) to (6)

The Government attaches great importance to prevention of problems arising from gambling, especially those among young people. At present, a number of conditions have been imposed under the licences of betting on horse racing, Mark Six Lottery and football issued to HKJC requiring the licensee to adopt measures to minimize the negative impact of gambling on the public, especially young people (e.g. the licensee shall not permit juveniles to enter its betting centres, shall display notices to remind the public of the gravity of excessive gambling and provide relevant information, shall not target juveniles in its advertising or promotional activities, shall not exaggerate the likelihood of winning or imply that betting is a means of increasing income, etc.).

The Fund currently finances four counselling and treatment centres to provide people with gambling disorder and those affected by them with various services, including telephone counselling, face-to-face counselling and mutual help groups as well as psychiatric treatment in serious cases. These four centres are the Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Even Centre, the Zion Social Service Yuk Lai Hin Counselling Centre, the Caritas Addicted Gamblers Counselling Centre and the Sunshine Lutheran Centre of the Hong Kong Lutheran Social Service. People with gambling disorder and their family members may call the gambling counselling hotline (183 4633) to receive preliminary counselling services immediately. Information on other community organizations providing such services is not available.

The number of enquiries received by the four counselling and treatment centres via the Fund's hotline and the number of beneficiaries receiving their counselling and treating services in the past five years are tabulated below:
Public education and prevention of gambling-related problems are also key areas of work of the Fund. The Fund implements ongoing public education on prevention of gambling-related problems to enhance promotion of anti-gambling messages among the public (especially young people). The Fund introduced the Ping Wo Fund Sponsorship Scheme and the Ping Wo Fund School Project Grants in 2009 and 2010 respectively to sponsor non-governmental organizations and schools for organizing anti-gambling publicity and education activities. The number of applications received by and sponsorship granted under the two schemes in the past five years are tabulated below:

### Ping Wo Fund Sponsorship Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of applications received</th>
<th>Number of applications approved</th>
<th>Amount of sponsorship granted ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3,370,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3,940,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7,560,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8,460,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>4,260,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Ping Wo Fund School Project Grants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of applications received</th>
<th>Number of applications approved</th>
<th>Amount of sponsorship granted ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>110,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>110,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Number of applications received</td>
<td>Number of applications approved</td>
<td>Amount of sponsorship granted ($)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>230,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>180,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in the report of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University's study mentioned in my reply to part (2), there was a decreasing trend in the prevalence rate of gambling among Hong Kong people (especially young people). The prevalence rate of gambling among secondary students dropped from 33.5% in 2012 to 21.8% in 2016. The drop was significant as compared to the rate of 54.0% recorded in 2001. On football betting, the prevalence rate of gambling among secondary students decreased significantly from 4.7% in 2012 to 1.2% in 2016, and this was far lower than 6.8% in 2005. The report also pointed out that such continuous improvement might be resulted from publicity and education efforts jointly made by the Government and the Ping Wo Fund Advisory Committee as well as other remedial measures.

The 2018 World Cup will be held from June to July 2018. In this connection, the Fund and the Home Affairs Bureau have started since March 2018 and will continue until September 2018 a large-scale territory-wide "Enjoy the Game, Say No to Gambling" publicity campaign, under which a series of activities and publicity events will be held across the territory and at district level. We will also step up online publicity to raise public awareness of gambling disorder and promote the messages against excessive gambling. The campaign comprises a series of district and territory-wide activities, such as the launch of a publicity truck, a carnival, a game to break the Guinness World Records and football matches, for members of the public to participate free-of-charge. Separately, the Home Affairs Bureau has produced a new Announcement in the Public Interest for television and radio broadcast to discourage excessive gambling among the public and encourage people with gambling disorder and those affected by them to call the gambling counselling hotline for help. During the World Cup period, the four counselling and treatment centres financed by the Fund will specifically enhance support for the gambling counselling hotline.
In the past five years (i.e. from 2013 to 2017), the Police arrested a total of 397 persons in law enforcement operations against bookmaking in at least 250 cases involving football betting and mixed betting (i.e. a mix of horse-racing, football, Mark Six, etc.). The betting slips or cash seized in these operations amounted to around HK$1.8 billion. The Police do not maintain relevant prosecution and conviction figures.

The Police strive to combat illegal football gambling through a four-pronged approach of prevention, education, intelligence-gathering and enhanced law enforcement, and evaluate the effectiveness from time to time. The Police's Organized Crime and Triad Bureau will, in collaboration with various police districts, closely monitor the illegal gambling activities which may take place during the 2018 World Cup, proactively gather intelligence, and plan for law enforcement operations in light of the circumstances in order to combat such crimes.

Deaths and injuries caused by the industrial accidents happened in the projects relating to the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge

8. **MR CHU HOI-DICK** (in Chinese): President, the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Authority ("the HZMB Authority"), jointly established by the governments of Hong Kong, the Guangdong Province and Macao, is responsible for the construction and operation of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge ("HZMB"). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

   (1) **given that the information provided by the HZMB Authority, as quoted by the Transport and Housing Bureau, indicates that since the commencement of the part in Mainland waters of the construction works of the HZMB Main Bridge project, a total of nine fatal industrial accidents resulting in nine deaths in total have happened so far, whether the Government knows the following details of each of such accidents (set out in a table):

   (i) **the date and time of the accident,**
(ii) the location of the accident,

(iii) the name and post title of the deceased,

(iv) the gender and age of the deceased,

(v) the sequence of events leading to the accident,

(vi) the progress and outcome of the investigation into the cause of the accident, and

(vii) the amount of the employee's compensation and the disbursement progress;

(2) whether it knows the number of serious work injury accidents since the commencement of the part in Mainland waters of the construction works of the HZMB Main Bridge project, and the resultant number of injuries, as well as the details of each of such accidents; and

(3) given that the Zhuhai Housing, Urban-Rural Planning and Development Bureau indicated in a gazette issued in October 2016 that an accident of collapse of structure and drowning of workers had happened in the HZMB Zhuhai boundary crossing facilities ("BCF") project in August of the same year causing one death, whether the Government knows (i) if this deceased person was not counted towards the nine deaths mentioned in (1), and (ii) the respective numbers of industrial accidents as well as the resultant deaths and serious work injuries since the commencement of the construction works of the HZMB Zhuhai BCF and Macao BCF projects, and the details of each of such accidents?

SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING (in Chinese): President, my reply to the various parts of Mr CHU Hoi-dick's question is as follows:

The entire Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge ("HZMB") project consists of two parts: (i) the HZMB Main Bridge (i.e. a 22.9 km-long bridge and a 6.7 km-long subsea tunnel) situated in Mainland waters which is being taken
forward by the HZMB Authority; and (ii) the link roads and boundary crossing facilities under the respective responsibility of the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao.

The HZMB Authority is directly responsible for the construction and management of the HZMB Main Bridge. In the event of industrial accidents or cases of work injuries, the contractors concerned are required to report to the HZMB Authority and the relevant local government department(s) in a timely manner. According to the information provided by the HZMB Authority, since the commencement of construction of the HZMB Main Bridge, there were nine fatal accidents relating to the Main Bridge causing the death of nine workers. The details of the cases are at Annex. Apart from the nine fatal cases mentioned above, the HZMB Authority indicated that they had not received reports of other work injuries.

As regards the accident at the HZMB Zhuhai boundary crossing facilities project in August 2016 referred to in the question, the HZMB Authority indicated that the accident did not occur within the area of the HZMB Main Bridge project and therefore it was not included in the above nine accidents. Based on the territoriality principle, the governments of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao should be responsible for the link roads and boundary crossing facilities within their own boundaries; we do not have the information on industrial accidents that occurred in the sites of either the Zhuhai or Macao boundary crossing facilities project.

Annex

Information on Industrial Accidents of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Main Bridge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Positions of workers involved</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Accident</th>
<th>Progress of Compensation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 April 2012</td>
<td>Island and Tunnel project</td>
<td>Installer hired by supplier</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Falling from height resulting in death</td>
<td>Compensation awarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 January 2015</td>
<td>Bridge project</td>
<td>Construction technician</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Accidentally falling into the sea resulting in death</td>
<td>Compensation awarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Project</td>
<td>Positions of workers involved</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Accident</td>
<td>Progress of Compensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 March 2015</td>
<td>Bridge project</td>
<td>Cleaner</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Falling from height resulting in death</td>
<td>Compensation awarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 March 2015</td>
<td>Island and Tunnel project</td>
<td>Canteen worker</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>A fault with the machine operated by the worker causing death to another person</td>
<td>Compensation awarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 May 2015</td>
<td>Bridge project</td>
<td>Air-conditioning maintenance worker</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Hit by falling objects resulting in death</td>
<td>Compensation awarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 December 2015</td>
<td>Bridge project</td>
<td>Temporary pier removal worker</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Falling from height resulting in death</td>
<td>Compensation awarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 May 2016</td>
<td>Bridge project</td>
<td>Installer</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Falling from height resulting in death</td>
<td>Compensation awarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 June 2016</td>
<td>Island and Tunnel project</td>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Falling from height resulting in death</td>
<td>Compensation awarded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 October 2016</td>
<td>Bridge project</td>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Falling from height resulting in death</td>
<td>Compensation awarded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Attracting overseas technology talents to come to Hong Kong for career development**

9. **MR WONG TING-KWONG** (in Chinese): President, the Secretary for Innovation and Technology has said that the development and retention of technology talents is one of the key foci in the Policy Address published in October last year, and the Government will introduce measures to attract talents from top universities and research institutions overseas to come to Hong Kong for career development. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:
(1) regarding the various admission schemes for non-local talents, of the respective numbers of applications received and, among such applications, the respective numbers of those made by technology talents and the respective numbers and percentages of their applications approved, in each of the past 10 years; the current number of technology talents who were admitted to Hong Kong and have now acquired the Hong Kong permanent resident status, and whether it knows, among these talents, the number of those who are currently living in Hong Kong for most of their time and still engaging in technological research;

(2) whether it has assessed the number of technology talents needed by Hong Kong in each of the coming five years; if so, of the outcome; if not, the reasons for that and whether it will conduct such an assessment expeditiously; and

(3) of the latest position of the implementation of the various measures for attracting technology talents to Hong Kong (including the Technology Talent Scheme and the pilot fast-track admission scheme for technology talents); whether the Steering Committee on Innovation and Technology will further review the existing policies relating to the admission of technology talents, and formulate targeted policies to facilitate this type of talents to come to Hong Kong for career development, with a view to further attracting technology talents to Hong Kong gearing to the needs arising from innovation and technology development in the territory; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

SECRETARY FOR INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY (in Chinese): President, having consulted the Security Bureau, our reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) According to the information provided by the Immigration Department ("ImmD"), the number of applications received and approved under the General Employment Policy ("GEP"), the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals ("ASMT") and the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme ("QMAS") in the past 10 years is set out at Annex 1. The number of
applications approved under the above scheme with breakdown by industry/sector is at Annex 2. Technology industries and sectors including "academic research and education", "biotechnology", "information technology", "manufacturing industry" and "telecommunications" etc. are covered. However, ImmD does not maintain other breakdown figures requested in the question.

(2) and (3)

Technology talent is involved in various industries, coupled with the rapid development of technologies, it is difficult to forecast the number of technology talents needed in the future. However, it is clear that Hong Kong needs to attract and nurture technology talent to promote the development of innovation and technology ("I&T"). The Chief Executive announced in her Policy Address in October 2017, to establish the Steering Committee on innovation and technology, personally led by herself, to examine and steer measures in the eight areas of I&T development, which include pooling together technology talent.

"Technology Talent Admission Scheme"

Currently, there is intense global competition for technology talent with aggressive measures to attract these talents. At the same time, the local technology sector has expressed concern over the shortage of local technology talent in certain specific areas and the lead time needed to admit technology talent from outside Hong Kong. To address these concerns, the Government will introduce a three-year pilot Technology Talent Admission Scheme ("TechTAS") to provide a fast-track arrangement to admit overseas and Mainland technology talent to work in Hong Kong.

The pilot TechTAS will, as a start, be applicable to tenants and incubatees of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation ("HKSTPC") and the Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited ("Cyberport") that are engaged in the areas of biotechnology, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, robotics, data analytics, financial technologies and material science. Each eligible technology company/institute may apply for quota to admit overseas/Mainland technology talent to work for it on research
and development ("R&D") in the above areas. In its first year of operation, TechTAS will admit a maximum of 1,000 persons from overseas/Mainland. Each eligible company/institute may be allotted with a quota to admit not more than 100 persons per year.

HKSTPC and Cyberport will receive and examine the quota applications, and provide recommendations to the Innovation and Technology Commission ("ITC"). The applicant company/institute would need to demonstrate the basis of the quota requested (e.g. for a new setup or for expansion of its R&D programme). It would also need to demonstrate that talent with the relevant skills, knowledge or experience is short in supply or not readily available in Hong Kong, and hence the concerned positions cannot be fully taken up by the local workforce. Having considered comments from HKSTPC/Cyberport, ITC will decide on the quota allotment.

Each quota is valid for six months. Companies/institutes allotted with a quota should sponsor individual non-local persons to apply to ImmD for employment visa/entry permit to come to Hong Kong for R&D work in the companies/institutes. This has to be done within the quota validity period and in accordance with the specifications pertaining to the job positions set out for the quota (including main job duties, academic requirements, technical skills, relevant experience and remuneration package). Persons admitted under TechTAS should be degree-holders in science, technology, engineering or mathematics ("STEM") from a well-recognized university. Work experience is not compulsory for those with a Master's or doctoral degree, while those with a Bachelor's degree only should possess a minimum of one year work experience in the relevant technology area.

To facilitate nurturing of local technology talent, for every three non-local persons admitted under the scheme, the technology company/institute allotted with a quota under TechTAS would need to employ one new local full-time employee plus two local interns. All these local employees should be engaged in technology-related work. The full-time employees should possess at least a Bachelor's degree while the interns can be undergraduates, graduates or postgraduates.
The pilot TechTAS has its merits. By allotting applicant technology companies/institutes with a quota, it will provide certainty for them to proceed with their recruitment and business plan as soon as possible. Besides, to safeguard local work opportunities, TechTAS still requires these companies/institutes to demonstrate at the quota application stage that talent with relevant skill, knowledge or experience is short in supply or not readily available in Hong Kong. Nonetheless, by doing away with the requirement to demonstrate local recruitment failure each and every time the companies/institutes seek to bring in talent through GEP or ASMTP, the arrangement could help save their time and resources needed for recruitment, and effectively streamline the actual admission procedure and shorten the processing time, thus allowing the talent to be in position to commence R&D work the earliest possible.

Moreover, by expediting the procedures for an individual to obtain the visa/entry permit, the chance of such talent being poached to work elsewhere could be minimized.

In addition, the "3:1+2" non-local to local employment requirement would provide more local job opportunities and help nurture our local talent effectively. In brief, the pilot TechTAS would help attract talent from different parts of the world, encourage cross-fertilization of local and non-local talent, and hence contribute to Hong Kong's technological development.

Our target is to start receiving application in June 2018. We will review the design and impact of the pilot scheme in a timely manner.

"Technology Talent Scheme"

In addition, we have set aside $500 million under the Innovation and Technology Fund ("ITF") for a five-year pilot "Technology Talent Scheme" to nurture and bring together more technology talent. The scheme comprises the Postdoctoral Hub Programme which will provide funding support to ITF recipients as well as incubatees and I&T tenants of HKSTPC/Cyberport to recruit up to two postdoctoral talent for R&D work. ITF will provide a monthly allowance of $32,000 for each postdoctoral researcher for up to 24 months. The concerned researcher must possess a doctoral degree in a
STEM-related discipline from either a local university or a well-recognized non-local institution. This includes local talent having obtained a doctoral degree outside Hong Kong and non-local talent having admitted to Hong Kong through TechTAS. We are working on the operation details of the programme with a view to launching it in the third quarter of 2018.

Annex 1

Number of applications received and approved under GEP, ASMTP and QMAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigration scheme/policy</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of applications received</td>
<td>Number of applications approved/quotas allotted</td>
<td>Number of applications received</td>
<td>Number of applications approved/quotas allotted</td>
<td>Number of applications received</td>
<td>Number of applications approved/quotas allotted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEP</td>
<td>28 454</td>
<td>26 466</td>
<td>22 253</td>
<td>20 988</td>
<td>29 121</td>
<td>26 881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASMTP</td>
<td>7 722</td>
<td>6 744</td>
<td>8 055</td>
<td>6 514</td>
<td>8 396</td>
<td>7 445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QMAS</td>
<td>1 358</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>1 296</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>1 177</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigration scheme/policy</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017 (January to March)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of applications received</td>
<td>Number of applications approved/quotas allotted</td>
<td>Number of applications received</td>
<td>Number of applications approved/quotas allotted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEP</td>
<td>35 245</td>
<td>31 676</td>
<td>36 420</td>
<td>34 030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASMTP</td>
<td>10 983</td>
<td>9 313</td>
<td>11 034</td>
<td>9 229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QMAS</td>
<td>2 341</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>1 829</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:

^ Figures denote the numbers of quotas allotted
Number of applications approved under GEP, ASMTP and QMAS with breakdown by industry/sector

**GEP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry/sector</th>
<th>2014 (September to December)</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018 (January to March)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic research and education</td>
<td>1 071</td>
<td>3 763</td>
<td>4 469</td>
<td>4 766</td>
<td>991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture/surveying</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts/culture</td>
<td>1 058</td>
<td>3 973</td>
<td>4 436</td>
<td>3 171</td>
<td>1 302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biotechnology</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering industry</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>768</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce and trade</td>
<td>1 164</td>
<td>3 790</td>
<td>3 921</td>
<td>3 445</td>
<td>1 221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and construction</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>1 341</td>
<td>1 870</td>
<td>1 631</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial services</td>
<td>1 799</td>
<td>4 942</td>
<td>4 148</td>
<td>4 441</td>
<td>1 020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>1 341</td>
<td>1 682</td>
<td>1 323</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal services</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing industries</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>335</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical and health services</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation and sports</td>
<td>2 446</td>
<td>7 115</td>
<td>5 605</td>
<td>5 292</td>
<td>1 436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>657</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Chinese medicine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1 206</td>
<td>5 365</td>
<td>7 476</td>
<td>13 252</td>
<td>2 811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10 750</td>
<td>34 403</td>
<td>35 997</td>
<td>39 952</td>
<td>10 144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:

^ Figures were maintained since September 2014

**ASMTP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic research and education</td>
<td>2 908</td>
<td>2 852</td>
<td>2 548</td>
<td>2 475</td>
<td>2 627</td>
<td>2 470</td>
<td>2 485</td>
<td>2 496</td>
<td>2 466</td>
<td>2 340</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture/surveying</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts/culture</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>1 041</td>
<td>1 607</td>
<td>2 058</td>
<td>1 987</td>
<td>2 127</td>
<td>2 827</td>
<td>2 137</td>
<td>2 871</td>
<td>3 918</td>
<td>988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biotechnology</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering industry</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce and trade</td>
<td>1 620</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>747</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering and construction</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial services</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>1 039</td>
<td>1 167</td>
<td>973</td>
<td>1 021</td>
<td>1 239</td>
<td>1 547</td>
<td>1 433</td>
<td>2 084</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information technology</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal services</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing industries</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical and health services</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation and sports</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>468</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Chinese medicine</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>539</td>
<td>1 062</td>
<td>1 402</td>
<td>1 504</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6 744</td>
<td>6 514</td>
<td>7 445</td>
<td>8 088</td>
<td>8 105</td>
<td>8 017</td>
<td>9 313</td>
<td>9 229</td>
<td>10 404</td>
<td>12 381</td>
<td>3 010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**QMAS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Research and Education</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture, Surveying, Engineering and Construction</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Culture</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcasting and Entertainment</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Support and Human Resources</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catering and Tourism</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce and Trade</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial and Accounting Services</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Health and Veterinary Services</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology/Telecommunications</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Services</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistics and Transportation</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing Industries</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>564</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Territory-wide identity card replacement exercise for Hong Kong residents**

10. **MR CHAN HAN-PAN** (in Chinese): President, the Immigration Department ("ImmD") will launch at the end of this year a territory-wide identity card ("ID card") replacement exercise for Hong Kong residents, which will involve an estimated number of 8.8 million ID cards. ImmD will adopt a number of facilitation measures to enhance public convenience, including the arrangement for its staff to visit residential care homes to provide on-site ID card replacement service directly for elderly persons and persons with disabilities. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

    (1) given that section 25(e) of the Registration of Persons Regulations (Cap. 177 sub. leg. A) provides that the aged, the blind or the infirm may apply for a Certificate of Exemption ("the Certificate") with the
Commissioner of Registration (i.e. the Director of Immigration) either on their own or through their representatives for the purpose of seeking exemption from applying for the issue or renewal of ID cards, of the criteria for vetting and approval of the applications for the Certificates; if it has looked into whether those persons who did not apply for replacement of their ID cards during the last replacement exercise but hold the Certificates have experienced inconvenience in their daily lives; if they have, of the details; and

(2) as some New Territories residents have indicated that some remote districts, such as the rural areas and the outlying islands, have a large number of residents and inconvenient external transport, whether the Government will consider deploying staff to provide on-site ID card replacement service for the elderly persons, persons with impaired mobility and other residents in the aforesaid districts, as well as setting up ID card replacement centres or installing self-service registration and ID card collection machines in such districts?

SECRETARY FOR SECURITY (in Chinese): President, the Immigration Department ("ImmD") is in the process of developing the Next Generation Smart Identity Card System, and intends to launch a one-off territory-wide identity card replacement exercise by the end of 2018. All smart identity card holders will be invited in phases to have their existing Hong Kong identity cards replaced in an orderly manner. ImmD plans to set up nine smart identity card replacement centres across the territory to replace smart identity cards for the public. Subject to actual progress, the exercise is expected to last until 2022.

Our reply to the questions raised by Mr CHAN Han-pan is set out below:

(1) Under section 25(e) of the Registration of Persons Regulations ("ROPR", Cap. 177A), the aged, the blind or the infirm who satisfy a registration officer that their personal attendance for registration of identity cards will injure their health or the health of others are not required to register or apply for the issue or renewal of an identity card. They can instead apply for a Certificate of Exemption, which is issued free of charge, from the Commissioner of Registration (i.e. the Director of Immigration).
Applicants may apply for a Certificate of Exemption by themselves or through authorized representatives (such as a family member, relative, social worker or supervisor of elderly homes, etc.) by including relevant information such as the name of the applicant, the reason for application and health condition, etc, in writing. Samples of the related application forms can be found on the website of ImmD.

The Certificate of Exemption provides the aged, the blind or the infirm with an additional choice, obviating the need for them to apply for identity cards. When the health conditions of the persons issued with Certificates of Exemption so permit, they may at any time apply for a smart identity card, free of charge, at any Registration of Persons Office of ImmD. The Certificate of Exemption arrangement has worked well for years with no report of holders experiencing inconvenience in their daily lives.

(2) To provide facilitation to needy groups such as elderly persons and persons with disabilities ("PWDs"), ImmD will adopt various facilitation measures in the territory-wide identity card replacement exercise, including the provision of on-site identity card replacement services for elderly persons and PWDs residing in residential care homes ("RCHs") as mentioned in the question. The measure will benefit over 1 000 RCHs across Hong Kong, including those located in remote districts and rural areas in the New Territories, and those in outlying islands.

As for other elderly persons and PWDs living in the community (including remote and rural areas in the New Territories), ImmD will adopt other facilitation measures, such as allowing persons under the age of 65, when they proceed to card replacement centres for replacing their smart identity cards, to bring along persons aged 65 or above in the same trip, so that these elderly persons need not proceed to card replacement centres separately to have their identity cards replaced when their respective age-groups are called up for identity card replacement. In addition, ImmD will work with the Social Welfare Department and non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") in arranging special time slots for group visits organized by NGOs, during which elderly persons and PWDs will have their
identity cards replaced at card replacement centres when their respective age groups are called up for identity card replacement. All card replacement centres will be equipped with barrier-free access and facilities to provide facilitation for the convenience of elderly persons and PWDs.

Sufficient self-service collection kiosks will also be made available in card replacement centres to allow applicants to collect their identity cards with ease. Meanwhile, applicants (including elderly persons and PWDs) will continue to be allowed to authorize their relatives, friends or other persons to have their identity cards collected on their behalf, saving their need to collect their identity cards in person at card replacement centres.

In addition, the existing arrangement for issuing Certificate of Exemption pursuant to regulation 25(e) of ROPR to those who are unable to replace their identity cards in person remains unchanged.

Introduction of a mandatory cooling-off period to protect consumers

11. **MR SHIU KA-FAI** (in Chinese): President, earlier on, the Government allocated funds to commission the Consumer Council to conduct a study on the introduction of a statutory cooling-off period. In this connection, the Consumer Council submitted to the Government last month A Report to Advocate Mandatory Cooling-Off Period in Hong Kong (“the Report”), recommending the introduction of a mandatory cooling-off period targeting certain industries (including the beauty industry) and specific transaction modes. The Government has indicated that it plans to submit the relevant proposed legislative framework to this Council within this year. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the Government and the Consumer Council have assessed the impacts of the introduction of a mandatory cooling-off regime on the business environment; if so, of the outcome; if not, why the Consumer Council has made the relevant recommendation on enacting legislation;
(2) as the Consumer Council has indicated that it has examined the legislation on mandatory cooling-off periods in various jurisdictions, if the Government knows whether there are jurisdictions which have introduced a mandatory cooling-off regime for the beauty industry; if there are, of such jurisdictions and the relevant details; if there are not, whether the Consumer Council has enquired with various jurisdictions and studied carefully the reasons for various jurisdictions not having put in place the relevant regime;

(3) whether it knows if the Consumer Council has studied which jurisdictions in which a voluntary cooling-off regime for certain industries have now been put in place; if the Consumer Council has, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) as the Report has pointed out that sales practices which seriously damage the rights and interests of consumers have emerged from time to time in individual industries, whether it knows if the Consumer Council can provide details and objective evidence to support such a remark; if no such details and objective evidence are available, why the Consumer Council has made such a remark in the Report;

(5) whether the Government and the Consumer Council have assessed the prevalence of using distance contracts as a transaction mode in economic activities and the impacts of introducing a mandatory cooling-off regime on such activities, e.g. a distributor not being able to return the products returned by consumers to the general agent and hence suffering a loss; if they have not assessed, why the Consumer Council has made the relevant regulatory proposal;

(6) as the Report has pointed out that various types of unfair trade practices have emerged in the beauty industry in recent years, whether it knows if the Consumer Council can provide objective evidence to support such a remark; how the data on the adoption of unfair trade practices by operators in the beauty industry compare with the relevant data in other industries;

(7) among the complaints in relation to the beauty industry received by the Consumer Council from 2013 to 2017 as set out in the Report, of the number of those which have been found substantiated;
(8) whether it has assessed if the complaint figure, based on which the Consumer Council made the remark that operators in the beauty industry had adopted various types of unfair trade practices, covers complaints which have not yet been substantiated; if the figure does, whether the Government has assessed if such an approach is prudent, objective and fair;

(9) among the various types of complaints received by the Consumer Council in each of the past three years, of the number of those which have been found substantiated and the amounts of money involved (set out the breakdown by type in a table);

(10) whether it knows the justifications for the Consumer Council coming to the view that the duration of the cooling-off period should not be less than seven days;

(11) whether it knows the justifications for the Consumer Council recommending that the time limit for traders to make a refund should not be more than 14 days;

(12) as the Consumer Council has recommended that if the consumer has requested for using the services concerned during the cooling-off period, the trader can deduct from the refund the value of the service used and the amount shall be calculated pro rata to the total consideration stipulated in the contract, whether the Government knows the Consumer Council's justifications for recommending that the mandatory cooling-off regime be applicable to cases in which the consumer has started using the service concerned; whether, before making this recommendation, the Consumer Council has considered (i) the fact that the trader's cost of providing a single unit of goods or service to the customer is usually higher than that of providing a batch of such goods or service, making it very likely for the trader to eventually bear the relevant differences in the cost, and (ii) if this recommendation will induce many people to exploit the loophole to enjoy part of the services at a lower average price through the purchase of packages;
(13) whether it knows if the Consumer Council has considered whether the mandatory cooling-off regime should apply to cases involving existing customers; if the Consumer Council has and the outcome is in the affirmative, of the justifications; if the consideration outcome is in the negative, why the Consumer Council has not recommended in the Report the granting of exemptions to such cases;

(14) as the Consumer Council has recommended that if the consumer has paid by credit card, the trader is to be allowed to deduct, when making a refund, an administrative fee of not more than 3% of the credit card transaction value, whether the Government knows if the proposed administrative fee level is sufficient to offset the related expenses that the trader has incurred (e.g. the costs arising from advance payment for the refund and waiting for refund by the card-issuing bank) and the various handling fees and transaction fees that the bank charges the trader for the refund; if it may not be sufficient to offset such expenses, why the Consumer Council has made this recommendation;

(15) whether it knows if the Consumer Council has discussed its recommendations with the banking industry to understand the corresponding business strategies which card-issuing banks will adopt; if the Consumer Council has discussed, of the response of card-issuing banks; if not, how the Consumer Council ascertains the feasibility of its recommendations;

(16) whether it knows if the Consumer Council has considered the following scenarios: card-issuing banks may increase the refund handling fees or other transaction fees for customers' purchase-by-instalment transactions, impose an additional requirement for using cash or assets as collateral for security, or even delay paying traders the relevant monies for as long as half a year because they have to set aside funds for making refunds, and such practices will increase the operating costs of traders or even render it impossible for them to operate, resulting in closure of their businesses;
(17) whether it knows the justifications for the Consumer Council to recommend that the consumer may request a refund without giving any reasons, and whether it has considered if this recommendation may lead to abuses or even be exploited as a strategy to undermine competitors in the business arena, which may eventually throw the market into chaos; and

(18) as the Consumer Council has recommended that a mandatory cooling-off period be imposed on contracts for beauty services with a duration of not less than six months, whether the Government knows the justifications for the Consumer Council setting six months as the minimum duration of such contracts; whether it will consider bringing this minimum duration on par with the recommended minimum duration for timeshare contracts, i.e. imposing a cooling-off period only on contracts for beauty services with a duration of more than one year?

SECRETARY FOR COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (in Chinese): President, having consulted the Consumer Council ("the Council"), a consolidated reply to the 18 parts of the question is provided below:

According to the Council, the Report to Advocate Mandatory Cooling-Off Period in Hong Kong ("the Report") aims to recommend to the Government the imposition of a mandatory cooling-off period, and suggests principles for a legislative proposal. Over the years, the Council has been encouraging traders to provide cooling-off period on a voluntary basis, and has worked with and encouraged different industries (including the beauty and fitness industries) to put in place voluntary cooling-off arrangements for consumer protection. The Council's study does not cover cooling-off arrangements offered on a voluntary basis by traders in other jurisdictions. Insofar as the local market is concerned, according to the Council's understanding, some traders of the timeshare, beauty and fitness industries provide a cooling-off period to consumers. However, as traders are scattered and their scales of operation vary, ensuring that all traders in the industries provide voluntary cooling-off period would be difficult and challenging. The Council also notes that the cooling-off periods offered by individual traders are subject to different terms, which cause disputes from time to time, for example the cooling-off period only lasts for 24 hours, contracts cannot be cancelled once the supply of service has begun or free gifts has been
received, and a high cancellation fee is charged. Given the various limitations imposed by these terms, voluntary cooling-off arrangement cannot effectively protect consumers. Therefore, the Council considers it necessary to impose a mandatory cooling-off period, with operational arrangements regulated by statutory provisions.

The Report shows that the arrangements on cooling-off period imposed in the jurisdictions studied vary depending on the consumer culture, development of specific industries, and the nature of unfair trade practices encountered by the local consumers. Nevertheless, the commonality shared by the arrangements is that they require the provision of mandatory cooling-off periods that target consumer contracts in specific sectors or specific transactions. The focus of the Council's study is to recommend a solution to improve the situation of unfair trade practices deployed by traders in Hong Kong. According to the complaints statistics of the Council, the numbers of complaints about sales practices of the beauty industry were 225 in 2013, 407 in 2014, 515 in 2015, 444 in 2016, and 373 in 2017 respectively, representing more than 30% of all complaints against the industry on average. The total amounts involved ranged from over $4 million to over $17 million, with the average being $33,000 per case. As for complaints against the fitness industry, the numbers of complaints about sales practice were 268 in 2013, 342 in 2014, 431 in 2015, 328 in 2016, and 221 in 2017 respectively, representing more than 40% of all complaints against the industry on average. The total amounts involved ranged from $6.8 million to over $14 million, with the average being $36,000 per case. The Council is not a law enforcement agency and does not have the power to conduct investigations. When a consumer complaint is received, the Council will help the consumer and trader resolve their dispute through conciliation. The Council points out in the Report that common malpractices deployed by salespersons in the beauty and fitness industries include prolonged sales pitches by a number of staff for a long period of time; using different excuses to take away the identity cards or credit cards of the consumers; and using the credit cards of consumers to purchase service without the consumers' consent etc. Considering that the numbers of complaints against beauty and fitness industries are relatively higher, involve larger amounts, and often relate to high pressure sales, the Council therefore recommends imposing a mandatory cooling-off period on these industries.

In addition to examining the legislation on mandatory cooling-off period in a number of jurisdictions, the Council has also taken into account the views and concerns of different industries regarding mandatory cooling-off period. In
formulating its recommendations, the Council has considered the trades' ability to bear, and recommended various measures to lower the compliance cost of relevant traders and guard against consumer abuse of the arrangement, such as consumers would need to pay for the services consumed during the cooling-off period, and traders could charge an administrative fee of not more than 3% of the credit card transaction value. The Council considers that the imposition of a mandatory cooling-off period would not result in a large number of consumers cancelling their contracts with legitimate traders, therefore the impact should be limited. In addition, as some jurisdictions outside Hong Kong have already imposed mandatory cooling-off period in consumer contracts in different sectors (e.g. fitness services) or specific types of transactions (e.g. unsolicited contracts and distance contracts) for many years, and the Council's recommendations have made reference to the experience of those jurisdictions, the Council believes that a balance has been struck between protecting consumers' legitimate rights and maintaining a business-friendly environment.

In considering the duration of the cooling-off period, the Council made reference to factors including (1) cooling-off periods in other jurisdictions last for 3 to 14 days (including 14 days in the United Kingdom, 3 working days in the United States, and 7 days in the Mainland). Since Hong Kong has no existing legislation on mandatory cooling-off period, the Council is mindful of the effect of cooling-off period on traders and consumers, and recommends that the cooling-off period should not be too long or too short to facilitate adjustment and learning from implementation experience; (2) a cooling-off period that is too long may generate other problems, such as a protracted cooling-off period may more easily lead to wear and tear of goods, cause disputes between the parties on compensation, affect the business operation and cash flow of traders, or lead to abuse more easily; (3) if the cooling-off period is too short, consumers may not have enough time to consider their decision and submit their cancellation notice. Therefore, having considered all factors, the Council is of the view that a cooling-off period of not less than 7 days is reasonable. Similarly, for the time limit for refund, the Council has made reference to the practices in other jurisdictions (including 14 days in the United Kingdom, 10 working days in the United States, and 15 days in the Mainland) and considers that making a refund within 14 days is a reasonable time frame.

On whether to allow the deduction of administrative fee, the Council's study shows that the mainstream practice of other jurisdictions is to prohibit traders from deducting any administrative fee from the refund. However, the
Council notes that credit card is the major payment tool used in Hong Kong, and that while the service charge for use of credit cards is specified in the commercial agreement between the acquiring banks/companies and traders, credit card transactions normally involve a certain amount of service charge. On the premise that the exercise of the cooling-off right is not hindered, the Council considers that traders should be allowed to deduct a small amount of administrative fee when consumers use credit card to settle payment. This can relieve the compliance costs of traders and minimize consumer abuse. The Council, having considered the general level of relevant charge, recommends that an administrative fee of not more than 3% of the credit card transaction value may be deducted by traders from the refund when consumers pay by credit card. In the course of its study, the Council did not come across views expressed in other jurisdictions concerning acquiring banks/companies increasing their administrative fees for refund or delaying payment to traders because of the imposition of cooling-off period. The Council is of the view such matters are commercial arrangements between the acquiring banks/companies and traders, and not directly related to the imposition of cooling-off period.

Regarding the scope of application of the mandatory cooling-off period, the Council recommends that all contracts specified should be regulated except for those that are exempted. The Council also recommends that, if consumers requests for service to be provided during the cooling-off period, traders should be allowed to deduct the value of the services consumed, and such value should be calculated on a prorata basis based on the total price set out in the contract. If an existing consumer renews or signs a new contract, and that contract falls under the scope of the mandatory cooling-off regime, the Council recommends that the consumer should also be protected by the mandatory cooling-off regime. Overall speaking, for legitimate traders in general, the Council considers that the imposition of a mandatory cooling-off period will not lead to a large number of consumers cancelling their contracts, therefore the impact should be limited. To the contrary, the Council believes that mandatory cooling-off period could enhance consumer confidence and may benefit the business of relevant industries.

The Council considers that contracts involving long duration or prepayment warrant special attention from consumers, as the Council's statistics show that quite a number of complaints relating to unfair trade practices are related to contracts with long duration or involving prepayment, for instance, as salespersons may easily be enticed by the large transaction amount to deploy
unfair trade practices in order to increase their sales or commission income. The Council states that, if mandatory cooling-off period is imposed on services contracts with a shorter duration, protection for consumers may be enhanced but traders' operation will be affected more; if mandatory cooling-off period is imposed on services contracts with a longer duration, protection for consumers will be diminished. On balance, the Council considers that imposing cooling-off period on beauty and fitness services contracts with a contract duration of over six months or involving prepayment is a reasonable arrangement. The Council points out that timeshare contracts are different from general consumer contracts, as the terms of the former are relatively more complicated, often involving overseas properties, large amounts of prepayment or long payment periods, therefore they are not comparable to beauty and fitness service contracts.

The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau is working with relevant government departments to study various issues relating to legislating on cooling-off period arrangement, including the scope of application; definitions of sectors; implementation details; redress mechanism; and exemptions, etc.; and consider the appropriate implementation arrangements. The recommendations in the paragraphs above are the Council's recommendations made after its study. The Commerce and Economic Development Bureau will consider the Council's recommendations in detail and make specific policy decisions. We will also listen to views of various sectors regarding legislating on cooling-off period arrangement. For the next steps, our goal is to submit the Government's proposed framework to the Legislative Council within this year, and consult the public thereafter.

Guarding the ecological environment against damages by visits

12. **MR YIU SI-WING** (in Chinese): President, recently, some members of the public have found that some picnickers collected, during their visit to a beach in a country park, a large number of marine organisms dwelling on the beach such as sea urchins, clams and sea cucumbers. These members of the public consider that the incident reflects a lack of awareness among some people about protecting the natural ecology, and the authorities should therefore step up efforts in educating the public and regulating such activities. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:
of the existing legislation that prohibits the acts of unauthorized hunting/collection of wild animals and marine organisms in country parks and marine parks; the respective numbers of persons prosecuted and convicted in the past three years for contravening such laws as well as the details of such cases;

whether the authorities carried out promotional and educational work in the past three years to instil the concept of protecting the natural ecology in members of the public and tourists; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

of the plans, on the premise that visits by picnickers will not be hindered, to step up the protection of the natural ecology?

SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT (in Chinese): President, replies to Mr YIU Si-wing's enquiries are as follows:

According to section 3(1) of the Marine Parks and Marine Reserves Regulation (Cap. 476A), no person shall fish or hunt, injure, remove or take away any animals or plants in or from a marine park or marine reserve, except with a permit or fish by angling with one line and one hook in the designated Recreational Fishing Zone. Offenders are liable on conviction to a maximum fine of $25,000 and imprisonment for one year. In addition, the Country Parks and Special Areas Regulations (Cap. 208A) prohibits the carrying, possession or discharge of any hunting or trapping appliances in country parks. Offenders are liable on conviction to a maximum fine of $2,000 and imprisonment for three months. As for areas outside country parks, marine parks and marine reserve, they are also regulated under the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance (Cap. 170) that no person shall hunt, wilfully disturb or possess any protected wild animal. Contravening the said Ordinance may be fined up to $10,000 and imprisoned for one year.

In the past three years (2015 to 2017), there were 30 prosecution cases of illegal capture of wild animals and marine life in country parks, marine parks and marine reserve, with the penalty ranging from a fine of $300 to $8,000. Most of these cases involved
visitors conducting illegal fishing activities in marine parks or marine reserve. In view of this, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD") has stepped up patrol and law enforcement in marine parks and marine reserve on weekends and holidays in recent years. AFCD has also made on-site announcements to remind the public and visitors of the regulations concerning marine parks and marine reserve, including the prohibition of hunting, disturbing or collecting marine life in the marine parks and marine reserve.

(2) AFCD organizes a series of education and publicity activities each year for teachers, students and members of the public, and produces various publications to promote nature conservation, protection of country parks and marine parks and biodiversity. These programmes include school visits, guided tours at various visitor centres and education centres, eco-tours and field studies, exhibitions, educational workshops and volunteer programmes, etc. Last year, AFCD organized roving exhibitions on Hong Kong Marine Biodiversity in various districts and a series of public education activities including marine ecology talks, coastal eco-tours and coastal clean-up, with a view to enhancing the knowledge of the public on local marine ecology and arousing public awareness of marine conservation. Through the Marine Parks Ambassador Scheme, AFCD also regularly distributes the Marine Park Visitor Code to the citizens and tourists visiting the marine parks to remind them of the good behaviour when visiting the nature. In addition, AFCD liaises with the Tourism Commission to enhance the promotion of good practices and codes of conduct for green travel to tourists through various channels including the Hong Kong Tourism Board.

(3) In addition to the education and publicity activities mentioned above, the AFCD country park wardens and marine park wardens also promote the messages and give verbal advices to visitors from time to time during their regular patrol. If irregularities are detected, appropriate law enforcement actions will be taken. Moreover, AFCD also organizes eco-tours, coastal clean-up day, exhibitions and student ambassador scheme, etc. at coastal areas outside marine
parks and marine reserve such as Ting Kok and Ting Kok East. These activities promote the messages about protection of the marine environment, inter-tidal marine life and mangroves, thus enhancing the public awareness of the importance in conserving the nature and avoiding the disturbance or hunting of marine life. AFCD also regularly promotes the codes of conduct for visiting the nature to educate the public to appreciate the nature with the right attitude.

Patients' waiting time at public specialist outpatient clinics

13. MR JAMES TO (in Chinese): President, quite a number of members of the public have complained to me recently that although they turned up at the specialist outpatient clinics ("SOPCs") under the Hospital Authority ("HA") at the appointment time for follow-up consultations, they still needed to wait for three to four hours before they received doctors' diagnoses and treatment. There was a case in which a hemiplegic patient, when attending a follow-up consultation, waited for three hours and was driven to tears by pangs of waist and back pain while waiting. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council if it knows:

(1) in respect of each SOPC under HA, (i) the current average appointment quota per consultation room per hour, and (ii) the current average time lapse from a patient's appointment time for a follow-up consultation to the patient's receiving diagnosis and treatment (set out in a table);

(2) the criteria adopted by HA for setting the hourly quotas for follow-up consultations at various SOPCs;

(3) whether HA has reviewed the reasons why patients attending follow-up consultations by appointment need to wait for as long as several hours before they receive diagnoses and treatment; if so, the reasons and whether such reasons include (i) manpower shortage of specialist doctors, (ii) an overestimation of doctors' efficiency in performing consultations, and (iii) appointment quotas having been set excessively high;
(4) whether HA has put in place measures to address the problem of excessively long waiting time for patients attending follow-up consultations; if HA has, the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(5) whether HA will consider introducing a technology system whereby short messages are issued to patients who are to attend follow-up consultations to inform them in advance of a more exact time range on that day within which they can receive diagnoses and treatment, so as to shorten patients' waiting time at the clinics; and

(6) as some members of the public have pointed out that they were arranged to take blood tests on the day of the follow-up consultation, but due to the time needed for preparing the blood test reports, they had to wait for as long as four hours before they received diagnoses and treatment, the current average time lapse from a healthcare worker's taking blood sample from a SOPC patient to the completion of the blood test report by the laboratory, and set out the time needed for completing each step?

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Chinese): President, there are currently 48 specialist outpatient clinics ("SOPCs") under the Hospital Authority ("HA"), with an annual capacity of over 7 million attendances. Given Hong Kong's ageing population and rising prevalence of chronic diseases, there is an ever-increasing demand for SOPC services. These factors, coupled with an inadequate supply of health care manpower, have often caused SOPC health care staff to work overtime in order to meet the mounting service needs.

Generally speaking, SOPCs of HA allocate consultation quotas to different time slots having regard to their health care manpower, workflow and the operational needs of different specialties, so as to fully utilize the quotas and resources. To avoid long queuing time for consultation, patients are advised to register at SOPCs according to the registration time printed on their appointment slips. It can also prevent over-crowding the waiting areas.

As patients' medical conditions and thus the consultation time needed vary, and doctors are called away from time to time for emergencies in the wards,
SOPC patients may need to wait longer than expected for consultation. Besides, SOPCs may, depending on the medical conditions of the patients concerned, arrange for them to undergo the necessary check-ups before consultation. Therefore, some patients may have to wait for check-ups after registration. They will then be provided with follow-up treatment by doctors, taking account of their latest conditions, after all reports of the necessary check-ups and laboratory tests are obtained.

To improve the workflow of its specialist outpatient services, HA has launched a mobile application called "BookHA" in recent years to enable the public to submit applications for new case appointments for SOPC services at any time. At present, HA is also working on the phased installation of a queue management system ("QMS") at its major SOPCs. QMS can display the appointment registration time of the patients attending at the clinics, supplemented by an electronic public address system to notify them of their turn for consultation. QMS not only enhances the transparency of the queuing procedures, but also helps SOPCs streamline their workflow and allocate consultation quotas to different time slots. HA will review the operation of its specialist outpatient services from time to time, make timely improvements, and consider the feasibility of enhancing the use of technology systems so as to shorten the patients' queuing time for consultation as far as practicable.

On manpower enhancement, HA will reinforce the doctor manpower for SOPC services through measures such as implementing a Special Honorarium Scheme for serving doctors, employing part-time doctors and re-employing doctors who are about to retire. In addition, HA will continue to promote primary care services and ensure that family medicine specialist clinics and general outpatient clinics play a gatekeeper's role, thereby alleviating the pressure on SOPC waiting time.

HA does not keep statistics on the average appointment quota per hour per consultation room, the average time lapse from a patient's appointment registration time to the patient's receiving diagnoses and treatment, and the average time lapse from blood taking to the completion of the blood test report by the laboratory for each of SOPCs.
Withdrawal of benefits by Mandatory Provident Fund scheme members

14. MR CHAN KIN-POR (in Chinese): President, at present, Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") scheme members may opt to withdraw their MPF accrued benefits ("benefits") in their MPF accounts by instalments or in a lump sum upon their retirement or early retirement. Among those MPF scheme members who withdrew their benefits in 2016 and 2017 on grounds of retirement or early retirement, a vast majority (99%) opted to withdraw their benefits in a lump sum (192,874 cases involving a total sum of $15,884 million), and only 1% opted to withdraw their benefits by instalments (2,169 cases involving a total sum of $285 million). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows, among the MPF scheme members who reached the age of 65 in each of the past two years, the number and percentage of those who have not withdrawn any benefits so far;

(2) whether it knows, among the MPF scheme members who withdrew their benefits in a lump sum in the past three years, the number of those whose benefits received were less than the sum of the contributions made over the years by themselves and their employers; and

(3) given that upon retirement at the age of 65, MPF scheme members generally still have years of post-retirement living, whether the Government will consider introducing measures to encourage soon-to-retire people to retain in their MPF accounts a portion of benefits which is not needed for immediate purpose, so that the retained portion of benefits can grow in value through investment, with a view to providing more ample funds to meet their needs in twilight years, thereby achieving the original purpose of establishing MPF System?

SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY (in Chinese): President, the replies to the questions raised by Mr CHAN are as follows:
As at the end of December 2015 and December 2016,(1) the numbers of accounts held by Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") scheme members who are aged 65 or above were approximately 128,000 and 151,000 respectively. The balances of accrued benefits in these accounts were about $7.47 billion and $8.87 billion respectively. The above figures include accounts of those scheme members who have reached the age of 65 but have never withdrawn their MPF accrued benefits and those who have made partial withdrawals. The Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Authority ("MPFA") does not have information on the number and percentage of eligible scheme members to withdraw their MPF accrued benefits who have reached age 65 but have never done so.

(2) MPFA does not have information on the amount of contributions, investment return and balance of accrued benefits in respect of a MPF scheme member.

The MPF System is mandatory in nature. Employers and employees are required to make monthly contributions. Generally speaking, with the compounding effect of MPF returns, the longer the investment period, the more assets will be accumulated, and the accrued benefits of scheme members should increase gradually over time. Of course, the actual situation of each individual member is subject to the investment decisions made by the member throughout the accumulation period.

In fact, the total assets of the MPF System grew extensively by more than 22 times from about $36 billion as at the end December 2001 (i.e. one year after the implementation of the System) to $843.5 billion as at the end of December 2017 (i.e. 17 years after the implementation of the System), of which about $267.4 billion is net investment return after deducting charges and expenses, representing about one third of the total assets. The annualized return for the period from December 2000 to December 2017 was 4.8%, which was higher than the 1.8% inflation rate over the same period.

(1) Information as at the end of December 2017 is not yet available.
(3) To provide more flexibility in withdrawal options to facilitate scheme members to better plan and manage their MPF accrued benefits to meet their needs after retirement, we have implemented phased withdrawal of MPF benefits in 2016. When scheme members retire or early retire, apart from withdrawing their MPF benefits in a lump sum, they can also choose to withdraw them by instalments. The accrued benefits retained in MPF schemes will continue to be invested.

MPFA reminds scheme members from time to time that they may consider retaining their MPF accrued benefits in their personal accounts for rollover and continuous investment if there is no urgent need to withdraw them upon retirement for use. They may withdraw their benefits thereafter as needs arise.

Scheme members should consider whether or not to withdraw their MPF benefits by instalments, the number of withdrawals as well as the amount of MPF accrued benefits to be withdrawn each time in light of their personal needs and circumstances.

Decline in the population of school-aged Primary One students

15. DR CHIANG LAI-WAN (in Chinese): President, according to the latest projected figures of the Education Bureau, the population of school-aged Primary One ("P1") students will decline by 10 000 from 65 700 in the 2018-2019 school year to 55 700 in the 2020-2021 school year. Some members of the education sector are worried that primary schools may by then face another exercise of "reduction of classes and closure of schools", which will affect the teaching posts of more than 800 primary school teachers on contract terms. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will, in the light of the actual situation in each district, allow individual schools to exercise a certain degree of flexibility regarding the minimum student intake for allocation of classes, and encourage the injection of diversity into the modes of school operation; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
(2) whether it will make the best use of the situation by implementing small class teaching across the board in primary schools during the decline in the population of school-aged P1 students with a view to enhancing teaching quality; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) whether it will provide the affected teachers with professional training in relation to Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics ("STEAM") education and integrated education, so as to assist them in mastering the necessary skills to dovetail with the education manpower demand in future; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Chinese): President, according to the current projections of school-aged Primary One ("P1") students, the Education Bureau anticipates that the overall demand for P1 places will reach its peak in the 2018-2019 school year, begin to drop starting from the 2019-2020 school year and then rebound slightly and temporarily for a few years from the 2021-2022 school year onwards. Since the P1 student population has been increasing in recent years, the overall student population in public sector primary schools will generally remain stable despite the drop in P1 student population starting from the 2019-2020 school year as the number of students in other levels will remain large. Moreover, the Education Bureau has implemented the flexible measures to meet the transient increase in demand for P1 places in recent years in accordance with the consensus reached with the school sector. These measures will be progressively withdrawn in view of the decline in the actual demand. This will relieve the pressure on class reduction arising from the diminishing demand for P1 places. There may be a decrease in the number of classes and teaching posts in individual schools in the next few years as a result of declining P1 student population. Yet, there will not be a substantial and immediate reduction in the overall number of classes and teaching posts in public sector primary schools as anticipated.

For schools which have adopted a "partly-enlarged class structure" in response to the increase in demand for P1 places in the past few years, there may be surplus teachers because of class reduction upon the graduation of the respective cohort of students. In this connection, we are proactively considering targeted relief measures to help schools tackle this problem and stabilize the
teaching force. To address the impact of the diminishing demand for P1 places from the 2019-2020 school year and afterwards, we met with representatives of the Subsidized Primary Schools Council and Aided Primary School Heads Association on 17 January this year to explain the future demographic change in respect of primary school student population and gauge their views on the issue, including the concerns and suggestions of schools in various districts, for formulation of corresponding measures. School heads present agreed that the progressive withdrawal of the temporary flexible measures to increase the supply of P1 places could effectively mitigate the impact of the decline in P1 student population. They also generally agreed with our preliminary suggestion for addressing the problem of surplus teachers arising from the "partly-enlarged class structure", which allows schools to retain surplus teachers for a short period of time to stabilize the teaching force. We will continue to liaise with the school sector to keep in view the situation for the formulation of appropriate strategies.

My reply to the question raised by Dr CHIANG Lai-wan is as follows:

(1) To optimize the use of public resources, the Education Bureau has established the criteria for operation of classes since the implementation of the Primary One Admission System. In accordance with the principle of fairness, the criteria are applicable to all schools participating in the system. The Education Bureau has, where circumstances permit, implemented small class teaching in public sector primary schools in phases starting from P1 in the 2009-2010 school year. Since the allocation of P1 places is basically based on 25 students per class for schools implementing small class teaching (remaining at 30 students per class for other schools), the threshold for operation of a P1 class has been lowered to 16. The number of P1 classes in each school net each school year is determined taking into account the anticipated demand for P1 places, the number of classrooms available, the class structure and parental choices, etc. Under the existing mechanism, a school having an intake of less than 16 students in a P1 class may not be allowed to operate a P1 class if there are still unfilled P1 places in other schools of the same school net. In such cases, we will consider special factors, such as whether the school is located in a remote area where there is no appropriate alternative school, to determine whether there is a need to operate a P1 class. On the other hand, the Education Bureau conducts student headcount every
September to verify the actual student enrolment of aided schools so as to determine the number of approved classes of the schools. If the number of classes has to be reduced because of decreasing student intake, then 25 students per class will be adopted as the basis for determining the number of approved classes. In other words, a school is allowed to operate two classes if it has an actual intake of 26 students.

Besides, the Government has all along encouraged diversity in school operation which goes beyond class sizes. Currently, among the public sector schools (including government and aided schools), most are aided schools managed by sponsoring bodies of various backgrounds (generally religious or charitable organizations), according to their missions. These schools are well-managed and have their unique characteristics. In addition to the public sector schools, there are Direct Subsidy Scheme schools, and private schools which offer local or non-local curricula to cater for the different needs of students and provide parents with more choices.

(2) Small class teaching is a teaching strategy. During the consultations in the past, most stakeholders considered it not desirable to rigidly implement small class teaching for all schools across the board. The Education Bureau will continue to be pragmatic and flexible with the implementation of small class teaching, taking into account the expectations of schools, parents and students, the availability of classrooms to meet the demand for school places in individual districts, as well as the development needs of schools. At present, we anticipate that the overall demand for P1 places will reach its peak in the 2018-2019 school year and then progressively decline to a stable level. Depending on the supply and demand of school places in individual districts, the Education Bureau will contact schools which have fulfilled the conditions for implementing small class teaching in due course.

(3) All along, the Education Bureau has been organizing a wide variety of professional development programmes and activities of different themes in response to various education policies, curriculum development and the needs of teachers and students. Serving teachers are encouraged to participate in these programmes and
activities based on both their individual and school development needs. This would not only broaden teachers' professional knowledge but also professionally equip them to meet their needs. For example, the Education Bureau regularly organizes professional development programmes for teachers, including seminars and workshops, etc., in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics education ("STEM education"); Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics education ("STEAM education") and integrated education ("IE"), to enhance their professional knowledge and teaching skills in these two areas. Moreover, the Education Bureau has also commissioned teacher education universities to organize relevant training programmes. An example is the Certificate in Professional Development Programme on Curriculum Design, Pedagogy and Assessment for STEM Education in Primary Schools offered by The Education University of Hong Kong ("EdUHK"). This programme covers not only the basic knowledge and pedagogy of STEM education, but also the latest developments of STEAM education. For IE, apart from the commissioned Certificate in Professional Development Programme for Teachers (Catering for Diverse Learning Needs), EdUHK also offers structured training courses pitched at Basic, Advanced and Thematic levels to enhance the professional capacity of teachers in the implementation of IE.

Non-local students being admitted to funded universities through taking the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination

16. **MR IP KIN-YUEN** (in Chinese): President, in this year's Budget, the Financial Secretary proposed that the Government pay the examination fees for candidates sitting for the 2019 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination ("HKDSE"). That measure applies to candidates who are enrolled in the 2018-2019 school year in registered schools approved for participation in the 2019 HKDSE and apply to sit for the 2019 HKDSE through their schools. On the other hand, it has been reported that some Mainland students have applied for admission and have been admitted to the eight universities funded by the University Grants Committee ("UGC") ("funded universities") through the Joint University Programmes Admissions System ("JUPAS") by means of taking HKDSE in Hong Kong. Separately, under the prevailing policies, funded
universities may admit non-local students to UGC-funded programmes only by way of over-enrolment of up to 20% of the total approved student number. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether registered schools approved for participation in the 2019 HKDSE include tutorial schools registered in Hong Kong; if so, whether non-local students taking the HKDSE programmes offered by such tutorial schools are eligible to sit for the 2019 HKDSE for free;

(2) of the number and percentage of non-local students among HKDSE candidates in each of the past five years, and the average number of subjects the examination on which that such non-local students applied to sit (with a breakdown by the place of origin of such students);

(3) whether, under the prevailing policies, non-local students may apply for admission to funded universities through JUPAS on the basis of their HKDSE results; if so, whether the authorities know the number of non-local students who applied for admission to funded universities by such means and were admitted in each of the past five years (with a breakdown by the place of origin of such students and the name of the funded universities);

(4) whether it knows if the funded universities concerned have used the subsidized places available for local students to admit the non-local students mentioned in (3); if such universities have, whether they have correspondingly increased the number of places for application for admission by local students; if not, how UGC ensures that the admission opportunities for local students will not be reduced as a result; and

(5) as some parents have relayed to me that although funded universities may admit non-local students only by way of over-enrolment of up to 20% of the total approved student number, those students will still compete with local students for the limited places of the same programme, resulting in a lower chance for local students to be admitted to certain popular programmes, whether the authorities know if the various funded universities have at present set a ceiling
on the percentage of non-local students in the total student number to be admitted to various programmes; whether the authorities will review the relevant arrangements with UGC?

SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION (in Chinese): President, my reply to the questions raised by Mr IP Kin-yuen is as follows:

(1) The participation of schools in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination ("HKDSE") is subject to the prior approval of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("HKEAA"). At the time of application for participation, the school should provide evidence that it is a registered school and is running courses and operating classes in accordance with the Education Bureau registration requirements; and that the school agrees to comply with the examination regulations. The HKDSE Participating School List (as at 15 December 2017) is available on the HKEAA website: <http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/HKDSE/admin/participating_schools/generalsch.html>. The participating schools are not classified into categories by HKEAA.

The measure for the Government to pay the examination fees for candidates sitting for the 2019 HKDSE is applicable to school candidates. Under normal circumstances, visitors from other places to Hong Kong would not be admitted to schools and become school candidates. The implementation details are elaborated in the ensuing paragraph.

Only bona fide Secondary Six students in the school year 2018-2019 of registered schools approved for participation in the 2019 HKDSE ("participating schools") may be entered as school candidates in the 2019 HKDSE. The students must be studying at the registered address of the schools. At present, schools have to refer to the relevant Education Bureau Circular to check whether the person is permitted by the Director of Immigration to reside in Hong Kong when offering a school place to a person who is not a resident of Hong Kong. Since the registration entries of all students who are presented for HKDSE by the participating schools must be approved
by the school principals and submitted through the schools, unless clearance is obtained from the Director of Immigration, visitors from other places to Hong Kong would not be admitted to any school in Hong Kong. Also, he would not be able to enter for HKDSE as a school candidate and is even not eligible for the measure of Government's payment of examination fees for candidates sitting for the 2019 HKDSE.

(2) According to the information provided by HKEAA, when enrolling for HKDSE, candidates need to provide their relevant personal data on the Hong Kong Identity Card ("HKIC") or valid identification document for making relevant examination arrangements and identity verification. HKEAA will not collect and handle any personal data irrelevant to examination administration, including the place of origin of students. Hence, HKEAA does not have related statistics on the number of non-local candidates of HKDSE. Referring to the statistics of identification document used by candidates, only a very small number of candidates do not use HKIC to enter for HKDSE every year. The number of candidates who did not use HKIC to enter for HKDSE from 2014-2018, the percentage among all candidates and the average number of subjects entered by them are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of examination</th>
<th>No. of candidates not using HKIC to enter for HKDSE (percentage among all candidates)</th>
<th>Average no. of subjects entered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>184 (0.3%)</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>55 (0.09%)</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>42 (0.06%)</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>41 (0.06%)</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>44 (0.06%)</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) to (5)

Currently, the Government, through eight University Grants Committee ("UGC")-funded universities, provides 15 000 first-year-first-degree intake places annually. All these intake places must be used for admitting local students. In accordance
with the prevailing policy, UGC-funded universities could only admit non-local students to UGC-funded programmes by way of over-enrolment of up to 20% of the approved student number, irrespective of the academic qualifications or results of any given examination used by non-local students for their applications. This 20% should all be outside the UGC-funded places. As such, non-local students would not compete with local students for UGC-funded places. In addition, to ensure public money would not be used to cross-subsidize non-local students, non-local students have to pay tuition fees at a higher level as compared to local students. At present, non-local students are paying about three to four times the tuition fees paid by local students.

Established in 1990, the Joint University Programmes Admissions System ("JUPAS") aims at handling centrally applications for admission to university programmes by students holding specific public examination results (currently HKDSE). It is noteworthy that JUPAS is a system for processing admission applications centrally. The decision for admission is made by respective universities having regard to the admission criteria of different programmes.

According to the information provided by the JUPAS Office and UGC-funded universities, the number of non-local students who applied for admission to UGC-funded universities through the JUPAS route with HKDSE results and the number of such students being admitted by the universities are set out at Annex.

UGC-funded universities have put in place appropriate measure to ensure local students' opportunity for admission is not affected by JUPAS application submitted by non-local students. In brief, applications of non-local JUPAS applicants will be considered together with applications made by other non-local students through the non-JUPAS route. If a non-local JUPAS applicant is admitted, he/she will not take up any UGC-funded intake places that were for admission of local students and offered through JUPAS. Hence, non-local students will not compete with local students for UGC-funded intake places.
As a matter of fact, UGC-funded universities consider applications for admission, irrespective of whether they are made by local or non-local students, in accordance with the principle of fairness and merit-based selection. Each university administers its own admission policy and criteria as well as approved intake places to identify candidates that best fit the faculty's admission requirements. As in the past, the ranking of a JUPAS applicant in the offer list of a particular programme is not determined solely by HKDSE results. Other factors that are taken into consideration include performance in interviews/tests, banding of programme choices, the number of applicants of a given programme at a given year and other information provided in the online application forms.

Annex

Respective Numbers of Non-local Students Applied for Admission through JUPAS and Successful Applicants from 2013 to 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of JUPAS Cycle</th>
<th>No. of non-local students applied for admission through JUPAS with DSE results(^{(1)})</th>
<th>No. of successful applicants to UGC-funded first-year-first-degree programmes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year of JUPAS cycle</td>
<td>No. of non-local students applied for admission through JUPAS with DSE results⁽¹⁾</td>
<td>No. of successful applicants to UGC-funded first-year-first-degree programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>By university (Headcount)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The University of Hong Kong (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Macao (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vietnam (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

(1) For protection of privacy, the JUPAS Office discards all the application information submitted by applicants and schools six months after completion of the admission exercise. Therefore, information on applicants by place of origin is not available.

(2) The information on place of origin of successful applicants was provided by the relevant universities.

**Promotion of green bonds**

17. **MR CHAN CHUN-YING** (in Chinese): President, the Chief Executive stated in the Policy Address delivered in October last year that the Government would take the lead in the issuance of a green bond in the 2018-2019 financial year and would continue to encourage public sector bodies to issue green bonds in Hong Kong, and promote local entities' establishment of green bond certification schemes that meet with international standards. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will promote the inclusion of the green bonds issued in Hong Kong in the scope of eligible securities for the southbound trading of the mutual bond market access between Hong Kong and the Mainland (commonly known as "Bond Connect") which will be implemented in future, so as to increase the number of potential investors of such bonds; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that the Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency started to provide third-party conformity assessments for green finance issuers early this year, whether it knows (i) the number of certificates issued so far, and (ii) the anticipated number of applications for certificates the vetting of which will be completed this year, by the Agency; and
(3) whether it has considered following the practice of other bond markets and preparing actively for the launch of a green bond index; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES AND THE TREASURY (in Chinese): President, our replies to the three parts of the question are as follow:

(1) The Hong Kong Monetary Authority has been maintaining close dialogue with the People's Bank of China and the relevant Mainland institutions on enhancements to the Bond Connect, including introducing Southbound Trading, which aims to enable Mainland investors to invest in the Hong Kong bond market through mutual access between the financial infrastructure institutions of the two places. The suggestion of including green bonds issued in Hong Kong in the scope of tradable products of Bond Connect would be taken into account when the detailed proposal is explored.

(2) According to the public information available from the Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency, the list of certification under its Green Finance Certification Scheme ("GFCS") as of 26 March 2018 includes three Pre-issuance Stage Certificate issuances. The Government will continue to support GFCS's implementation and encourage local, Mainland and overseas enterprises to make use of the Scheme and our capital markets for financing their green projects.

(3) The green bond market, which is still in its development stage, is fast evolving. While focusing on the development of the green bond market in Hong Kong at present, we are open to further promoting the market development of other green financial products.

The Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Limited has been engaging with various stakeholders and academia to explore business initiatives regarding green finance, such as creating green bond/stock index. Provided that there is a sufficient market depth of green financial products, green bond/stock index may be developed in response to market needs.
GOVERNMENT BILLS

First Reading and Second Reading of Government Bill

First Reading of Government Bill


HUMAN ORGAN TRANSPLANT (AMENDMENT) BILL 2018


Bill read the First time and ordered to be set down for Second Reading pursuant to Rule 53(3) of the Rules of Procedure.

Second Reading of Government Bill


HUMAN ORGAN TRANSPLANT (AMENDMENT) BILL 2018

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Cantonese): President, I move the Second Reading of the Human Organ Transplant (Amendment) Bill 2018 ("the Bill") so that paired/pooled organ donation arrangements are allowed to be made in Hong Kong.

For patients suffering from end-stage organ failure, organ transplant is often their only hope for gaining a new life. There are however cases where the patient who needs an organ transplant has a living related donor who is willing but unable to donate because of an incompatible blood type or tissue type. One option to overcome this barrier is paired donation.

The Human Organ Transplant Ordinance (Cap. 465) ("HOTO") was enacted to prohibit commercial dealings in human organs intended for transplanting and restrict the transplanting of human organs between living persons and the transplanting of imported human organs. Section 5D of the
HOTO sets out the general requirements to be satisfied for organ transplants in all cases with a living donor. One of the general requirements set out in section 5D(1)(c) of HOTO is that only when the donor has given (and has not subsequently withdrawn) the donor's consent to the proposed organ removal without coercion or the offer of inducement will approval for organ removal be given by the Human Organ Transplant Board ("HOTB").

Under a paired/pooled donation arrangement, a donor donates an organ to a stranger in exchange for the donation of an organ to the donor's intended recipient (i.e. the "beneficiary" as defined under the Bill). As the term "inducement" is not specifically defined, it is considered necessary to amend the law so that the fact that consent has been given in consideration of a proposed organ transplant into a person chosen by the donor under the paired/pooled donation arrangement would not in itself constitute an offer of inducement.

The Bill aims to add a new section 5DA to the HOTO regarding the consent given in a paired/pooled donation arrangement.

We intend to provide that, for the purposes of an approval of the HOTB under section 5C, a donor is not to be regarded as having given consent required by section 5D(1)(c) with the offer of inducement only because the donor's consent has been given in consideration of a proposed transplant into the donor's intended beneficiary under a paired/pooled donation arrangement.

In order to better describe the paired and pooled donation arrangements, we intend to introduce a new concept of a dyad, which is a group of two persons consisting of a donor and a beneficiary. The definitions for paired and pooled donation arrangements are also expressly set out. To avoid any impression or possibility that different types of organs could be exchanged under such arrangements, organs to be removed and transplanted under the arrangements are restricted to be of the same kind and every removal and transplant is to be carried out by a registered medical practitioner in Hong Kong.

Paired/pooled donation arrangement is between living non-related persons and therefore prior approval from HOTB is required. For HOTB to give approval to such arrangements, applications, which must be submitted by the medical practitioners, have to satisfy the requirements as set out under section 5D.
We have consulted health care professionals, patient groups, the Panel on Health Services of the Legislative Council and the HOTB on the above proposal. In addition, the Hospital Authority has organized briefing sessions on the pilot Paired Kidney Donation Programme and the relevant legislative proposal. All parties have expressed their support for the proposal.

President, I urge Members to support the Bill so that paired/pooled organ donation arrangements are allowed to be made in Hong Kong with a view to increasing patients' chances of being offered the needed organs. Thank you, President.

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now propose the question to you and that is: That the Human Organ Transplant (Amendment) Bill 2018 be read the Second time.

In accordance with the Rules of Procedure, the Second Reading debate is adjourned and the Bill is referred to the House Committee.

Council became committee of the whole Council.

Consideration by Committee of the Whole Council


APPROPRIATION BILL 2018

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): The committee will continue the second session to debate the 67 amendments to 46 heads.

MR AU NOK-HIN (in Cantonese): Chairman, with regard to the Appropriation Bill 2018, nearly 50 of my proposed amendments were not admitted. The topics covered by these amendments, especially those related to development, planning and infrastructure, are rather controversial and also of public concern. Last Thursday, the Task Force on Land Supply appointed by Carrie LAM announced
the commencement of the land debate. The issue of land has become a focus of attention again.

No matter what development projects are being carried out, the Government will always say Hong Kong is short of land as Hong Kong is a tiny place with a dense population, so more land needs to be developed. It is said that we have to reclaim land, rezone green belts, and even explore the option of residential development in country parks in order to solve housing and other livelihood problems and increase commercial land. Carrie Lam has even repeatedly stated that it is necessary to promote economic development through infrastructure projects. The expenditure that the Hong Kong Government spends on infrastructure every year is an astronomical figure. But in the end, can continuous land development, land reclamation and infrastructure development really bring about a better living environment for our people?

Some of my proposed amendments that are ruled inadmissible made reference to "Hong Kong 2030+", Artificial Islands in the Central Waters, Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge ("HZMB"), Express Rail Link ("XRL"), the Ground Decontamination Works at Kennedy Town, etc. Although these amendments are ruled inadmissible, I still want to mention the above items in today's speech because all of them are very controversial, environmentally undesirable and problematic projects that the Government should not overlook.

Chairman, first of all, I would like to talk about Amendment No. 33 proposed by Hon CHU Hoi-dick. "To reduce the financial provisions for the Planning Department approximately equivalent to the estimated consultancy fee on the 'Provision of Services for Sustainability Assessment for Hong Kong 2030+' entrusted to RHL Surveyors Limited in year 2018-2019".

Right from its projection on housing demand, the "Hong Kong 2030+" Strategy already has a blunder. The premise used by "Hong Kong 2030+" is that the population of Hong Kong will reach 8.22 million by 2043. Allowing 10% buffer, Hong Kong will have to develop sufficient land to accommodate 9 million people in the future. But let us look at other figures. According to the projections made by the Census and Statistics Department ("C&SD") in early 2012, the Government estimated that the Usual Residents of Hong Kong would reach 8.63 million by 2039 and extrapolated that Hong Kong would need an additional 4,500 hectares of land. Six months later, the C&SD revised the projection of Usual Residents in 2039 to 8.22 million. Let us look at the recent
projections. In September 2015, C&SD updated the figure, and the projection of Usual Residents in 2039 was further revised to 8.2 million. We can see that the projection of Usual Residents has been decreasing, yet "Hong Kong 2030+" says that Hong Kong is in need of 4,800 hectares of land. This figure is at variance with the estimate of C&SD just mentioned. This figure is even higher than the original estimate provided by C&SD six years ago, i.e. in 2012, before the downward revision in projections.

Chairman, we have to think about this. Why do we need more and more land while the population projection data is getting smaller and smaller? The Government has a very high-sounding reason, that is to increase the living space per person and enhance the quality of life. In fact, these phrases are just stating the obvious. It is true that many people in Hong Kong are living in very cramped conditions, including "partitioned rooms", subdivided units. We really need more living space. Nonetheless, these problems cannot be solved by developing more land. The Government would say that we have to develop more land for the construction of more public housing units. Yet in reality, the crux of the problem is not about how much land reserve Hong Kong has, but about land distribution.

Whether it is the East Lantau Metropolis or the North East New Territories ("NENT") Plan under the "Hong Kong 2030+", residential land only constitutes a small part of the overall development. A greater part is meant for transport infrastructure and commercial land. Among the residential land, the proportion of public housing, including PRH and HOS flats, is also smaller than private housing. Therefore, we should stop saying that we have to develop land for public housing because these projects would be used for other developments in the end.

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Please hold on, Mr AU Lok-hin. You are now discussing Amendment No. 33 relating to the reduction of financial provisions for the Civil Engineering and Development Department ("CEDD"). You should not bring out the wider issue of housing policy. Please return to the subject of the debate.

MR AU NOK-HIN (in Cantonese): Chairman, the "Hong Kong 2030+" that I am talking about now is quite relevant to the consultancy study. Why do we need to
reduce the financial provisions for CEDD? Because the Department's estimates are inconsistent with the estimates of C&SD. We can see that the prevailing property speculation has led to persistently high property prices. If the Government is serious about developing housing land to build public housing to accommodate more people in public housing as soon as possible, the consultancy report would not tell us that transport infrastructure and commercial land are more important.

Chairman, if we do not revamp the speculative investment-based housing market, if Government planning continues to biased towards land sale to developers for the construction of private housing, while our consultancy report also adopts this mindset, then the housing problem in Hong Kong can never be genuinely improved.

Chairman, while the Government commissioned the "Hong Kong 2030+" consultancy study to explore land development, we have to pay attention to whether the commercial land information contained in the consultancy report is correct. On the one hand, the Government is expecting a slowdown in economic growth. On the other hand, it claims that the demand for offices and floor areas for trade and commerce has increased significantly. It is for that reason that reclamation in East Lantau is deemed necessary to make it become the third core business district ("CBD") after Central and Kowloon East. Is the current estimate of the Government related to the demand for commercial land an overestimation? Hong Kong already has many developing office areas. The Government should conduct a comprehensive review of Hong Kong's industry development and then make good use of the land for targeted development, instead of continuing to develop land blindly given that population decline and economic growth slowdown is projected in 2040 and there is no direction and vision for industry development. Chairman, moving mountains and filling up seas will bring about irreversible damage to the environment. We should think twice before carrying out land development. There are many lands in Hong Kong that have no comprehensive planning. Is forcible development a must? If we go ahead with forcible development, we are just condoning the authorities or parties with vested interests to continue their development indiscriminately.

Chairman, I wish to talk about another amendment proposed by Hon CHAN Chi-chuen, Amendment No. 19. "To reduce the financial provisions for the Highways Department approximately equivalent to the estimated expenditure for maintenance works of the Hong Kong section of the HZMB in year
Chairman, I bring out this amendment because I want to talk about some issues of the HZMB. Not only does the HZMB have world-class length, it itself is also a world-class scandal. The bridge project has been plagued by crazy budget overruns of several tens of billions, numerous labour casualties including 10 deaths and 600 injuries, falsified concrete cube tests reports, "random placement of slabs" of the breakwater. Though the Government claims that the option of random distribution of the concrete blocks, known as dolosse, below sea level is more reliable and effective, the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge Authority has admitted there is a pitfall to it. That is, in the event of strong waves or typhoons, they are prone to drifting or accumulation. Therefore, frequent monitoring and maintenance is necessary, and this will lead to additional expenditure. So far, the Government has still failed to properly clarify and clearly explain the seriousness of this problem and why it has insisted on this option, yet it rushes to pass the maintenance expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2018. I think the Government owes the public an answer. The Government has also shifted the responsibility to the public and the media, saying that making comments based on a picture or two is extremely irresponsible. I find the Government very ridiculous. If no one has taken this photo and there is no pressure of public opinion, would the Government really face this issue and seriously deal with these drawbacks? I don't think so. Hong Kong must be so absurd. The Government is trying every possible means to hide its problems and will not respond until the public or the media has exposed the issue. Still the response of the Government is hardly acceptable.

Do not forget that the HZMB consists not only of the artificial islands in Hong Kong and the link road and related projects in Hong Kong, but also the Main Bridge and the boundary crossing facilities ("BCF") at Hong Kong, Zhuhai and Macao. Regarding information of the latter two, Hong Kong people has no knowledge and the Government also fails to provide sufficient information. More than a month ago, a Member initiated a question about the validity of the news concerning the HZMB Main Bridge. Last month, the Transport and Housing Bureau admitted that apart from the 10 deaths on the part of Hong Kong related to the link road and artificial islands works, 9 workers and one worker had died at the Main Bridge and the Zhuhai BCF work projects respectively.

In theory, the HZMB Main Bridge is managed by the HZMB Authority composed of officials from the three governments. However, our Government has not provided any information to the Legislative Council regarding the management of the HZMB Main Bridge. Hong Kong people only know that the
Hong Kong Government has injected a total of 9 billion yuan to the HZMB Main Bridge and also assumed nearly half of the RMB 22 billion yuan syndicated loan. There are also project overruns that will soon be considered by the Finance Committee ("FC"). The people of Hong Kong are continuously made to pay, even no information is available. With the pro-establishment camp's affirmative votes, the Government treats the FC as an automatic teller machine, without providing any grounds or explanation. It just gets the votes, grabs the money and completes the mission. Chairman, we should not be acting this way. Last week, Mr CHAN Kin-por, Chairman of the FC also said officials' responses were completely irrelevant to the questions asked, which had hit Members' bottom line.

Last week, a Member of the pro-establishment camp said, "Reclamation is inevitable in Hong Kong, so why don't we establish a reclamation fund?" I would like to ask in return: There are so many lands in Hong Kong that have not been put into proper use, planning and allocation, why should we first consider the option of reclamation, which will have irreversible impact? If one thinks that continuous reclamation and development of green belts, country parks, and even crazy ideas like filling up the Plover Cove Reservoir could satisfactorily solve the land problem, one is just evading the crux of the matter.

Chairman, I would like to express my views relating to Amendment No. 28 proposed by Hon CHAN Chi-chuen. The amendment aims to "reduce the financial provisions for the Lands Department approximately equivalent to the estimated expenditure on the annual emoluments for 88 non-directorate posts created to increase and hasten land supply and streamline and expedite the land development process in year 2018-2019". There are many existing lands in Hong Kong that the Government can use for development and planning, such as brownfield sites and agricultural land in the New Territories hoarded by developers. What I mean is: we should resume land for development under the Lands Resumption Ordinance, instead of taking advantage of the public private partnership ("PPP") approach to transfer benefits to developers. There are also the 19th, 20th and 21st options that the Task Force on Land Supply has not raised. They are the development of the Fanling Golf Club, military sites and some of the land reserved for small houses construction.

I want to point out that the Government always uses the acute land problem in Hong Kong to set aside astronomical sum of public money in the annual budget to carry out development projects that are controversial, widely opposed by people and also detrimental to villagers' homes and the environment. In fact,
the Government has many options that can promote sustainable development. Nevertheless, the Government has chosen to forgo these better alternatives in the face of various vested interests. Quite a number of pro-establishment Members say that the proposals of developing the golf club and military sites are ridiculous. Yet, even if the Government takes back the Fanling Golf Club for housing development, it can still relocate the golf club on sites that are not suitable for housing construction. It is suggested that the Government could relocate the golf club at some former landfill sites. In fact, there is a precedent in Tai Po. As for military sites, it should not be a restricted zone for public discussion. Hong Kong has more than 10 military sites, so can the Government fully review the use and current condition of individual sites?

The Government always uses this excuse or shield: the development of more land will solve land problems and housing problems. However, I hope that Hong Kong people would understand that if we only talk about land supply, and forget about the collusion of the government, businesses, village thugs and triads, the concentration of land and ownership, and the land ratio of public and private housing, inequitable distribution of land, disparity between the rich and the poor, rent and tenancy control and the most basic right of housing, no matter how much land is developed, the problem will only persist. Chairman, I so submit. Thank you.

MR YIU SI-WING (in Cantonese): Chairman, I rise to speak in opposition to CSA No. 53: Resolved that head 152 be reduced by $26,300,000 in respect of subhead 000. The sum is approximately equivalent to the estimates of expenditure 2018-2019 of the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau for supporting the Ocean Park in developing education tourism projects and staging a new 3D projection-cum-water light show with local elements.

Both the Hong Kong Ocean Park ("Ocean Park") and the Hong Kong Disneyland ("Disney") are famous theme parks in Hong Kong. It is an undeniable fact that they have made significant contributions to the local tourism industry and related consumer industries over the years, directly boosting local economic development and job creation. Given the increasingly keen competition from neighbouring competitors, the Government increased its equity capital injection for Disney by $5,450 million last year to enhance Disney's overall attractiveness in an attempt to prevent it from continuing to record operating losses incurred in running the various lands. Some of the terms and
conditions involved might sound unreasonable, but anyway, the Government had done the right thing to help maintain Disney's competitiveness in the region.

Established for 41 years up to the present day, Ocean Park, another major theme park in Hong Kong, is a place where many local citizens spent their happy childhood. Moreover, it is also an ideal destination for the elderly to visit for free. Similar to Disney, Ocean Park has also made great contribution to both the economy and enhancing Hong Kong's attractiveness as a tourist hotspot. However, its operation is facing an severe challenge right now because of the emergence of Chimelong Ocean Kingdom in Zhuhai as a competitor to its theme zones. Given the fact that Ocean Park has become an important local brand name, it is still incumbent upon the Government to give Ocean Part due support even though it does not hold nay shares in the latter. It can help enable healthy development of the theme zones in Ocean Park by doing so which will remain a thread of the fabric of Hong Kong citizens' collective memory.

The Government proposed in this year's Budget that an additional sum of $310 million will be allocated to support the Ocean Park in developing education and tourism projects in a bid to enhance its competitiveness. This proposal does have my support. Chairman, when compared with the amount of capital injection into Disney by the Government, this sum is not a huge one, and it is the only means to help the theme park meet its imminent needs. To reverse completely the situation of being forced into a passive position, Ocean Park has to follow Disneyland's example of formulating short-, medium- and long-term planning and development strategies that are more forward-looking to put in place tourist facilities with more special features to enhance the overall competitiveness and vitality of the theme zones. And I do hope that the Government will support the theme park in terms of capital injection and policy-making by then.

Chairman, this amendment also proposes to cut the estimated annual expenditure for the staging of a new 3D projection-cum-water light show with local elements. In recent years, in order to attract more tourists to visit Hong Kong, the Government has increased funding for the Hong Kong Tourism Board ("HKTB"). The HKTB focuses on publicizing and promoting projects with local elements while taking forward new tourism projects in the meantime. Some of these projects have been going fine over the past two years. Thus, the Government should turn away from its unmoving faith in the charm of traditional scenic spots. Instead, it should keep on encouraging and supporting the HKTB to launch creative tourism products in order to attract visitors who have different
needs. By doing so, we can offer different experiences to visitors during their trips to Hong Kong. In fact, the amount of money to be invested in these projects is not that big. If investing in these projects can help enrich Hong Kong's features, why not do so?

Apart from strengthening the existing tourism elements, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau is responsible for making possible the early commencement of travel-related facilities and projects, including actively coordinating with various Policy Bureaux. Taking the Food Truck Pilot Project as an example, the then Financial Secretary proposed that the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau should set up a dedicated office as soon as possible to help the operators coordinate with various government departments and solve problems. The final plan can be launched smoothly. In contrast, last year, the HKTB launched the "Old Town Central" programme to promote historic buildings, arts and culture with local characteristics, fashionable lifestyles, food and entertainment, and all this received positive feedback from visitors and parties. Nonetheless, support from the authorities was still so inadequate that even the provision of QR codes and temporary sign boards along the walking routes had to be financed by HKTB itself. The situation did not improve until the programme on updating and enriching the Dr Sun Yat-sen Historical Trail (jointly promoted by the Tourism Commission, the Central and Western District Council and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department) was launched later. For example, more than 10 statues/design works were displayed on the streets and QR codes were installed so that visitors could have better experience when touring around the "Old Town Central". Needless to say, I do hope that the entire "Old Town Central" can give visitors can have a brand-new feeling so that they will have better travel experience.

The example above tells us one thing: the Government does not have a policy in the systematic development of Hong Kong's tourist facilities and always works according to the will of those in command only. Therefore, I hope the Government will consolidate the experience from running the "Old Town Central" programme and the Food Truck Pilot Project that I have mentioned just now so that improvements can be made in the future. In particular, I hope the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau can assist in coordinating different government bureaux and departments to optimize the use of Hong Kong's tourism resources.

I so submit, Chairman.
MR HOLDEN CHOW (in Cantonese): Chairman, I am going to speak on Amendment No. 29 and Amendment No. 30. Both proposed by Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, these two amendments aim to reduce the estimated expenditure under "Head 92—Department of Justice". Amendment No. 29 proposes the deduction of a sum roughly equivalent to the estimated annual expenditure on emoluments for the Secretary for Justice and the Director of Public Prosecutions, and for the Constitutional Development and Elections Unit. Amendment No. 30 proposes that the estimated annual expenditure on the court costs of the Department of Justice, amounting roughly to $538,000,000, be deducted. I rise to speak in opposition to these two amendments on reducing the estimated expenditure of the Department of Justice. I also note that besides these two amendments, there is also Amendment No. 36, which proposes that the estimated expenditure on the rewards and special services of the Hong Kong Police Force, amounting roughly to $139,000,000, be deducted.

Chairman, the opposition Members' proposals on reducing the estimated expenditures of the Department of Justice and the Hong Kong Police Force naturally make us wonder why they want to pick on these two government departments. These two departments are responsible for keeping social order, law enforcement and prosecutions. So, when these Members seek to deduct the expenditure of the law-enforcer (the Hong Kong Police Force) on keeping social order, and also the expenditure on criminal prosecutions, do they actually want Hong Kong to see widespread unlawful disturbances, the destruction of social order and peace, and the non-enforcement of laws? And, do they actually mean that we should stop taking enforcement actions against law-breakers, and simply let politics deal with matters that should be handled judicially?

If the opposition camp really thinks so and society is thus led to go in this direction, then I honestly fear that moral degradation and lawlessness may result, and law enforcement may become impossible. If this really happens, the opposition camp must be held responsible for all the consequences. Therefore, Chairman, I oppose any deduction of the estimated expenditure earmarked for the Hong Kong Police Force and the criminal prosecution work of the Department of Justice.

The opposition camp should realize that if they turn a blind eye to the many acts of ruining social tranquility and even pick on the law enforcement and the prosecution authorities, seeking to deduct the estimated expenditures on their
discharge of duties, society will surely sustain severe and far-reaching impact. I must therefore rise to speak and oppose their amendments.

Besides, I also want to comment on Amendment No. 33. Moved by Mr CHU Hoi-dick, this amendment seeks to deduct the estimated expenditure on Hong Kong 2030+. Well, Mr AU Nok-hin has also spoken on this amendment just now. I may have to point out that Hong Kong 2030+ is actually a plan drawn up to meet the future needs of Hong Kong in various respects, including land development and many others. The artificial island off the east coast of Lantau Island is of course included.

Chairman, opposition Members have been questioning the Administration how it is going to deal with the present housing shortage and the burgeoning population. They also accuse the Government of inaction. But when the Government responds to social aspirations and formulates long-term planning, they suddenly put forward various proposals on cutting government expenditure, in an attempt to prevent the Government from continuing with its long-term planning efforts. I do not think this is a responsible attitude. They themselves also agree that our society needs to deal with these problems, but when the Government attempts to tackle them and draws up long-term planning, they stand in the way of the Government, seeking to cut its expenditure and prevent it from doing its work. This is an undesirable attitude, I must say.

Therefore, Chairman, I hope opposition Members can all realize that we actually owe it to our future generations to draw up appropriate planning for the long-term development of Hong Kong. If we see any problems that are hitherto unresolved, we should seek to tackle them responsibly. And, we must not turn a blind eye to any future problems that we can foresee.

Chairman, I so submit. Thank you.

MR CHAN CHI-CHUEN (in Cantonese): Chairman, I thank Members of the pro-establishment camp for speaking. I encourage Members to actively express their views regardless of whether they support, oppose or query the proposition.

Having gained the experience of proposing Committee Stage amendments ("CSAs") to the Budget over the past years, I am now more careful and specific in proposing CSAs than I was in the past. Due to time constraint, I may not be
able to explain to the public the reasons for every amendment I have proposed, and my CSAs may be subject to the interpretation of other people or the media.

We proposed CSAs to deduct the proposed annual expenditures of some disciplined forces. Just now, Mr Holden CHOW asked whether we thought that it was unnecessary to have disciplined forces in Hong Kong. Due to time constraint, I cannot respond to each and every statement Members have made on all of my CSAs. However, regarding Mr CHOW's criticism of my CSA to reduce the total estimated expenditure of the Hong Kong Police Force ("HKPF"), I must say that there is a very specific reason for it, not because of my dislike of police officers.

My Amendment No. 36 is similar to Amendment No. 37 proposed by Mr James TO. Both seek to reduce the estimated expenditures on rewards and special services of HKPF. If Members have kept track of the special meetings of the Finance Committee, they should know that we pursued the Government for the details of these rewards and special services. But the Government have all along been maintaining the same attitude, whether in the past or now. The subject is like a forbidden zone where we are not allowed to go in. We asked what the rewards and how much the informers' fees were, so that we could consider reducing a certain estimated expenditure instead of another estimated expenditure. But the Security Bureau would not cooperate and tell you the information. That is why we have specifically proposed this CSA to force the Security Bureau to explain to us what rewards and special services are in the future. The Bureau cannot expect us to endorse the Budget with our eyes closed, and it cannot forbid us to ask questions or refuse to answer our questions.

Chairman, in this debate session, I will speak on Amendment No. 54 proposed by Mr AU Nok-hin. His amendment seeks to reduce head 156 (the Education Bureau) by $254,919,000 in respect of subhead 000. First, I need to point out that I have also proposed an amendment to deduct the estimated expenditure of the Education Bureau by $72 million, which is roughly equivalent to the related expenditures of the Basic Competency Assessments ("BCA") this year. Aside, two Members namely Mr IP Kin-yuen and Mr HUI Chi-fung have also proposed CSAs on this.

I have strictly adhered to the principle of "one amendment to one subhead" in proposing my amendments this year, since I know that the President has laid down this rule. Even if you propose multiple amendments to a subhead, you
may not manage to have all the amendments admitted and may even end up having the amendment you want most to be admitted consolidated into other amendments. For instance, I wanted to deduct the salary of Secretary Kevin YEUNG, but I suppressed my desire to do so and only proposed to deduct $72 million, which is the estimated expenditure of BCA; and the two Members also proposed amendments on this, but their amendments were considered inaccurate by the Government and were ruled inadmissible by the President. I do not know whether they have any errors in their figures, but the Government did not say that my amendment was inaccurate.

However, under the principle of "one amendment to one subhead" to which the President has strictly adhered this year, all Members, rather than each Member, can only propose one amendment to each subhead. That is why I did not manage to propose this amendment in the end. In fact, the President has been very loose in handling the amendment. He allowed Mr AU Nok-hin, Dr CHENG Chung-tai and Mr HUI Chi-fung to move amendments to the head on the Education Bureau.

Chairman, I need to confirm a point with you. My amendment which seeks to deduct $72 million has been consolidated into the big figure of $254,919,000 which is the proposed deducted amount proposed in Mr AU's amendment. As a result, when his amendment is put to vote, I cannot vote specifically on the estimated expenditure of BCA. But when I speak on the consolidated amendments concerning the Education Bureau, I should be allowed to speak specifically on deducting the estimated expenditures on BCA, right? This is the point I wish to confirm with you and tell Mr IP Kin-yuen. His experience is even worse than mine. The only amendment he proposed was not admitted. I told him that his only amendment should be admissible under the "one amendment to one subhead" principle, since the President would exercise discretion to admit the amendment from Members who only proposed one amendment even if multiple amendments had been proposed to the same subhead, provided that the figure contained in his CSA was not wrong or inaccurate. But I believe he can still speak on this subject. This is what I wish to confirm.

However, I wish to raise a point before I talk about deducting the estimated expenditures on BCA. Mr AU Nok-hin and I proposed a similar amendment. His amendment seeks to deduct the estimated expenditure of the Curriculum Development Institute ("CDI"). According to a document on BCA, "For each of the three subjects (Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics), one
working group consisting of serving teachers, staff from the Hong Kong Examination & Assessment Authority, and the CDI was established. Each group drew up 'test blueprints' covering all assessable Basic Competencies." So, the principal official in the Education Bureau is the Curriculum Development Officers of CDI. If we can deduct the estimated expenditure of CDI, we can express our opposition against resuming BCA.

The Government initially said that there would not be any compulsory BCA assessment for all students this year and students would be chosen by means of random selection to sit for BCA. But did things turn out as the Government said? In fact, the original planning of the Government was to select 10% of the students to sit for BCA. But things did not turn out as planned due to a government policy. The policy requires all students to sit for the assessment if a school wishes to obtain the assessment report for the whole grade. Schools are forced to have all students in the grade to sit for BCA if they wish to receive the assessment report for the whole grade. This is against the original purpose of "enhancing" … this is the word the Government has used … BCA. Most of the schools are back to square one and choose letting all the students in the grade to attend the assessments. This is my first point and I will not go into the details.

Second, government schools have taken the lead to opt compulsory BCA assessment for the whole grade of students. Their decision departs from the original intent of BCA. Our survey result shows that over 90% of government schools have opted for compulsory BCA assessment. I raised this issue in a panel meeting, asking whether senior officials in the Education Bureau had put pressure on government schools, forcing these schools to support the resumption of BCA by choosing compulsory BCA assessment. I have a question indeed. In a situation like this, we will never know whether the so-called random selection of students for attending BCA under their present design can truly address the issue of excessive drilling. It is because all students still need to sit for BCA, and more and more schools have informed the authorities of their decision to let all their students in the grade to sit for BCA.

Third, the operation of the test has disregarded the views of parents and students since schools are the one to decide whether all students in the grade will sit for BCA. The authorities claim that this is a school-oriented policy. But have schools included parents, students and teachers in their decision-making process? Do teachers have the courage to voice their opposition, saying that instead of letting all the students sit for BCA, schools should just follow the
policy proposed by the Education Bureau? This is also a question the Government has failed to answer me.

Fourth, the problem of drilling is not solved. Immediately after the resumption of BCA, the nature of BCA changed. Many schools have opted compulsory BCA assessment for their students, in order to receive a BCA report on their students. The Education Bureau says that schools are unable to compare their assessment results. What a nonsense! Will schools not ask their neighbouring schools about their assessment results after they receive the report from the Education Bureau? Will schools truly review their performance based on the figures alone? Due to these reasons, I tried to propose this amendment to deduct the estimated expenditures of the Education Bureau by $72 million.

I now return to the amendment proposed by Mr AU Nok-hin to deduct the annual estimated expenditures of CDI. Regarding the recent criticisms against CDI, are they groundless accusations made by the public or the Government? The officers in CDI are to blame. It has been said that CDI distorted history when it reviewed the content of textbooks, in order to please the Government … I do not know whether it is the SAR Government or the Beijing Government. CDI made many puzzling gestures. For instance, it has been revealed by the media that the Education Bureau, in reviewing history textbooks submitted by publishers, comments that the extract of "Hong Kong lies to the south of China" is inappropriate, and "The transfer of Hong Kong's sovereignty to Mainland China" is also inappropriate; as for the extract of "In 1949, the communist China was established and a large number of mainlanders relocated to Hong Kong" is not inappropriate but is vulnerable to misinterpretation as there is no direct causal relationship between the incidents.

Regarding the above examples, we often come across the sentence "China recovered Hong Kong" in formal papers of the SAR Government or documents issued by the Beijing Government. When I used the phrase "handover of sovereignty" in the past, many people would only say that I was a little unpatriotic. To me, it is an objective description. But today, I am wrong if I say "handover of sovereignty" and I should say "to resume the exercise of sovereignty". How come this expression can be misused for 20 years? If the expression today is correct, how come that expression could be wrongly used in the past 20 years? The authorities now unreasonably stir up troubles with a phrase that we all along regard as correct. I think the authorities have pushed the correction too far. Their action is a waste of resources and a nuisance to the
public. Some even think that the authorities want to gradually "brainwash" young people and students, so as to change their thinking. The authorities distort history in exchange for politically correct expressions. As to whether they did it to please the SAR Government or the Beijing Government, no one knows. But we have reasons to suspect so.

In fact, the contact person of the relevant textbook review panel is Ms CHAN Pik-wa, who is the Chief Curriculum Development Officer (Personal, Social and Humanities Education) and also the one in charge of the Personal, Social and Humanities Education Section of CDI. The subjects she is responsible for include Chinese History, History, Geography, Tourism and Hospitality Studies, General Studies for Primary School, Economics, Ethics and Religious Studies, Integrated Humanities and Life and Society for Secondary One to Secondary Three. All these subjects are under the portfolio of this public officer. So, deducting the expenditure of CDI is a way to express our strong dissatisfaction of this public officer and the section under her leadership.

The textbooks review panels in CDI operate in the dark. We are unaware until now that the sentence "Hong Kong lies to the south of China" is incorrect. Has the panel concerned issued clear guidelines to schools then? Has it discussed with the education sector and history experts? No. The panel tampered with the content of textbooks in the dark. This is a genuine act of tampering with history and its actions have been strongly criticized by society.

I will not go into the details. I just want to tell the Government that the original intent or purpose of education, especially history education, is to train students to seek the truth, so that they can learn lessons from history and avoid repeating errors of the past. But the Education Bureau encourages students to live in lies. As a result, they cannot learn from history. This goes against the purpose of history education. Hence, I am absolutely against paying salaries to this group of ill-intentioned public officers who go against the true meaning of education and "brainwash" students through curriculum design and tempering with history teaching materials. I thus speak in support of Mr AU Nok-hin to deduct the annual estimated expenditures of CDI.

MR CHUNG KWOK-PAN (in Cantonese): Chairman, I wish to discuss head 96 and head 144. Head 96 is about overseas Economic and Trade Offices ("ETOs"), and head 144 is about ETOs in the Mainland.
First, let me talk about head 96, which is about overseas ETOs. Hong Kong has always been an externally-oriented economy, and for more than half a century, export trade has been our means of making a living. Overseas ETOs can provide very significant assistance to our export trade, especially in respect of overseas market information, overseas economic negotiations and trade agreements.

We all know that the TRUMP administration of the United States is now busily engaged in trade protectionism. The impact on Hong Kong's economy, commerce and export trade in the future is still unknown, so the assistance of overseas ETOs is more important than ever before. ETOs serve two basic functions: first, promoting Hong Kong companies overseas; and, second, attracting inward investment from foreign companies. I really do not know how we can assist the economic development of Hong Kong if there is no assistance from ETOs.

The economic development of the world these days is volatile and unpredictable, not least because, as I have just said, the TRUMP administration is rolling out new measures to tackle different countries every day. China is now exploring whether it should wage a trade war against the United States. Should a trade war really break out, how is Hong Kong going to position itself?

The Secretary is now present. He should know that TRUMP's measures on steel and steel products have already produced impact on Hong Kong. Will there be any similar measures for other products in the future? And, what impact will Hong Kong sustain in the end? We really need ETOs to help us obtain the latest information and even hold negotiations with the United States Department of Commerce in the United States. There is also the Brexit issue. What impact will Hong Kong sustain? What changes will occur to Hong Kong's relationship with the European Union? In these respects, we must need the help of our ETOs in Britain and Continental Europe.

I know that the Japanese Government is holding discussions with the SAR Government, in an attempt to ascertain whether we are interested to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership ("TPP"). I naturally hope that the Secretary can look for opportunities to join such partnerships. This will be of very great help to our trade. But whom can we count on when looking for such opportunities? Not the government officials seated in the offices of the government headquarters, naturally. We must instead count on the assistance of those working in overseas
ETOs. What I have said so far is about the role of ETOs in our external economic affairs.

Internally, we also need to attract inward investment from overseas investors. In this regard, we also need overseas ETOs to promote all the new measures we adopt, such as the two-tiered profits tax rates regime and the tax concessions for investments in technological research and development. The latter offers a 300% tax deduction for research and development expenditure, which is indeed unique in the whole world. These measures are highly appealing, surely able to attract inward investment from overseas companies.

As I have said, as an externally-oriented economy based mainly on export trade, Hong Kong has huge volumes of trade and intricate ties with other countries. If overseas ETOs are abolished or downsized, who will be affected at the end of the day? At the end of the day, the revenue of Hong Kong will be impacted. If the revenue of Hong Kong companies dwindle, our tax revenue will likewise decrease. In turn, the expenditure of the SAR Government will be impacted.

How does the SAR Government use its tax revenue eventually? The revenue will eventually be used for providing health care, education and social welfare. So, please do not ever think that cutting the expenditure or publicity expenses of just several overseas ETOs will not matter much at all. The fact is that this will eventually affect our export trade, overseas investors' impression of Hong Kong, and even the Hong Kong economy and in turn our social welfare provision.

We should not underestimate the role of ETOs, and I even think that instead of cutting their publicity expenses, we should really allocate more funding to them, so that they can step up their publicity on Hong Kong and let the whole world know about our actual situation. So, if the Secretary wants to establish more similar posts in different countries, I will certainly offer my support.

Head 144, on the other hand, is about ETOs in the Mainland. They are basically no different from overseas ETOs. But ETOs in the Mainland, be they located in Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu or Wuhan, all perform one additional function—looking after the Hong Kong people in the Mainland. Many Hong Kong people are now working, making investments, running businesses, or living their retired lives in the Mainland. They all need the SAR Government to look after them.
I have, for example, received many requests for assistance from Hong Kong businessmen whose companies are caught in various disputes in the Mainland. They simply do not know which mainland departments they should approach in order to settle the disputes. In such cases, the SAR Government’s ETOs in the Mainland can offer precisely the help they need, giving them legal and professional advice. All these are the services that the SAR Government can provide. Besides, many Hong Kong people are studying or working in the Mainland, and many of them are involved in taxation law problems. In such cases, the SAR Government can offer them the information they need.

Members all know that the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area (the Bay Area) is set to become a very important development area in the region. Hong Kong people have made huge business investments in the Pearl River Delta over the past few decades, but what I want to talk about now is that many new industries, such as health care and elderly care industries, may emerge in the Bay Area, because many elderly people may choose to return to their hometowns to live their lives after retirement.

For this reason, the SAR Government must set up more ETOs in the Mainland, so as to meet the needs of those Hong Kong people who may choose to live their retired years over there. And, it is also necessary to provide greater resource support to health care and education services. To sum up, I think the SAR Government should increase resource allocation and manpower, or even set up more ETOs in the Bay Area, so as to dovetail with the development there.

Mr Chan Chi-chuen and Mr Chu Hoi-dick seldom visit the Mainland and other countries, so they do not know what has been going on in the outside world and our own country. But they should not think that other Hong Kong people do not want to pursue development in the Mainland or overseas. I therefore call upon everyone to extend their vision to the whole world and our own country. We must not confine ourselves to such a small world, focusing only on the affairs of our very tiny Hong Kong.

Chairman, we will vote against the relevant amendments. I so submit, Chairman. Thank you.

MR GARY FAN (in Cantonese): Chairman, I speak on behalf of the Neo Democrats on two amendments, which are Amendment No. 32 moved by Mr CHU Hoi-dick and Amendment No. 29 moved by Mr CHAN Chi-chuen.
First of all, I will discuss Mr CHU Hoi-dick's amendment. This amendment proposes that head 118 be reduced by an amount of money in respect of subhead 000, which is approximately equivalent to the estimated operating expenditure for Programme (1): Territorial Planning of the Planning Department ("PlanD") for the whole year. Chairman, I certainly know that the land policy problem in Hong Kong does not only involve PlanD. But through this discussion of the amendments, I want to air some of my opinions on the priorities of land use and development with a view to better addressing the concern of many Hong Kong people on land issues.

Chairman, under Programme (1): Territorial Planning, one of the major duties during 2018-2019 is to manage the Study on Existing Profile and Operations of Brownfield Sites in the New Territories ("the Study"). This Study was entrusted to a consultancy by the Government in April 2017, and so far, the surveys on South-east New Territories, South-west New Territories and North-east New Territories have already been completed. According to the desktop review in the study report, it is estimated that around 1300 hectares of land in the entire New Territories may be regarded as brownfield sites. However, the SAR Government often takes some excuses, such as part of, not all, the brownfield sites are located in remote places and are too scattered, these brownfield sites are usually small and fragmented, or there is a lack of infrastructure in their vicinity, to avoid conducting a large scale development of brownfield sites effectively. It also says that there is not much room for development.

Chairman, community groups or Legislative Council Members, however, have a clear picture. For example, the survey report released earlier by the Liber Research Community says that as at the end of 2017, it already identified 94 brownfield land clusters in the New Territories spanning two hectares, amounting to a total area of 1171.5 hectares which is equivalent to seven Tsuen Wan town centres. Among these brownfield sites, 723 hectares have not been included by the Government in any development plan or even have any timetable for development. They include 13 brownfield land clusters with areas ranging from 12 hectares to 71 hectares. Hence, we see that the Government has not provided comprehensive and accurate data to the public, the Legislative Council or other administrative departments in carrying out or promoting the policy of brownfield site development, while at the same time, the Government keeps on saying that it has to create land through reclamation and developing country parks and even some green belts. This is the most significant justification for my support to Amendment No. 32 moved by Mr CHU Hoi-dick.
The potential near-shore reclamation sites identified by the Government in recent years include Ma Liu Shui, Lung Kwu Tan and the artificial islands of East Lantau Metropolis. The Government strongly wishes the public to see very clearly its propensity to supply land through land reclamation rather than making use of brownfield sites or other military sites and club sites. It is the intention of the Government to create land through reclamation and developing country parks and green belts. Last year, the Government completed the technical feasibility study report for Ma Liu Shui reclamation. According to the plan, the near-shore reclamation site in the vicinity of the Science Park and the Chinese University of Hong Kong will be as large as 60 hectares. This site, together with 28 hectares of land released after the relocation of the existing Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works to caverns, will provide a total of 88 hectares of land for housing development, and the scale of which will be comparable to City One Shatin.

Nonetheless, Chairman, the residents nearby and even not a few Sha Tin District Council Members are worried that planning on the reclamation of 60 hectares of land at Ma Liu Shui will bring about a lot of problems, such as a lack of transport supporting facilities, creating the wall effect and adding burden to community facilities. Chairman, actually in a consultation conducted by the Government a few years ago in 2013, it was suggested that the area of near-shore reclamation site at Ma Liu Shui would be 30 hectares. But this year in 2018, the Government says that it has to double the area to 60 hectares, which will be under consideration together with the 28 hectares of land at the Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works.

Another reclamation project concerns the artificial islands of East Lantau Metropolis. According to a government document "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" ("Hong Kong 2030+"), the development of East Lantau Metropolis and New Territories North is enough to meet the shortfall of 1,200 hectares of land in Hong Kong in the future. This is what the document says. But Chairman, concerning the demand for land, it is only projected on the assumption of a growth of 980,000 people in the territory from 2014 to 2043, when population growth will peak. In other words, if the population is not increased as projected in Hong Kong 2030+, apart from the land created through reclamation, will the Government have other fallback options? No such information can be found in the document.

Therefore, in the view of the Neo Democrats, the Government is, by means of the proposition or false proposition of land shortage, rationalizing its existing
moves to create land through reclamation, invade country parks and construct buildings on green belts. While it is trying to exaggerate the land shortage in Hong Kong, it ignores or does not make good use of the brownfield sites, vacated military sites and club sites for proper development. Hence, the Neo Democrats thinks that land reclamation should not be given the priority in land development, which must be based on a long-term and comprehensive population policy instead. In the course of consultation, the Government has to respect public opinions and really allow participation of Hong Kong people in the planning, rather than pursuing its present moves of blindly invading the country parks, filling up the Plover Cove Reservoir, the second largest reservoir in Hong Kong, and developing green belts.

Chairman, my other reason for supporting Mr CHU Hoi-dick's amendment is the lack of clear explanation from PlanD on how to set the criteria for green belt development. In July 2017, the Government submitted a proposal on changes in the planned uses of sites to the Town Planning Board. For example, five green belt sites at Tseung Kwan O, New Territories East, which amount to merely 11 hectares of land, are proposed to be rezoned for residential use. The Neo Democrats, however, thinks that this rezoning plan is regardless of, oblivious to and sidestepping the original principle and intent of green belt planning. The original intent of green belt planning is to mitigate damages to ecology due to city development and excessive development. Hence in terms of town planning, green belts can serve as buffer zones, and this function is also a highly significant consideration for setting up green belts.

Nevertheless, in recent years, the Government started rezoning green belts without any public consultation. Even though this involves major policy changes, the Government has not been giving a clear explanation on the criteria for green belt development, including the criteria related to ecological values. PlanD, other related government departments and the Bureau only gave ambiguous responses without any clear explanation. Hence, Chairman, in my opinion, the Government should make an adjustment in the priorities of land development, and this adjustment should appropriately respond to the concerns of Hong Kong people. Therefore, the order of priorities in development by the Government should be brownfield sites, vacated military sites and club sites. Other political parties even put small house sites to the fourth place on the list.

Chairman, in 2013 or even earlier, the Neo Democrats and other planning groups submitted a very concrete and comprehensive proposal to the
Government, by which the development of the Fanling Golf Course can be taken as an alternative option to the development of North East New Territories. Last year, on learning that the lease of the Fanling Golf Course will soon expire in a few years' time, the Government said that the discussion on the development of the Fanling Golf Course would be dealt with separately in different phases and together with the development of North East New Territories. What will this approach lead us to? The North District Council or the residents of that district will think whether the Government should, during the time when the site of the Fanling Golf Course is being developed, consider dealing with the imbalance of transport infrastructural supporting facilities at that area. I really hope that the Government can stop its existing destructive way of developing North East New Territories where many homes and villages have been destroyed. Instead, it should make good use of the Fanling Golf Course to deal with and redress the major problems of land shortage and housing needs that it repeatedly emphasized. Only in this way can it respond to the aspirations of the Council and the community, and effectively set reasonable priorities to land development in Hong Kong.

Chairman, I would also like to spend some time to speak, on behalf of the Neo Democrats, in support of Amendment No. 29 moved by Mr CHAN Chi-chuen. By this amendment, it is resolved that head 92 be reduced by an amount of money in respect of subhead 000, which is approximately equivalent to the annual estimated expenditure for the remunerations of the Secretary for Justice and the Director of Public Prosecutions, as well as the annual estimated expenditure for the remunerations of the Constitutional Development and Elections Unit under the Constitutional Affairs Sub-Division of the Legal Policy Division under the Department of Justice. Why? It is because shortly after Secretary for Justice Teresa CHENG assumed office, she was involved in a scandal related to unauthorized building works. Besides, it is discovered that in the mortgage documents submitted to the bank for the purchase of her house, no basement was mentioned, and thus, she is suspected of obtaining a mortgage with a false instrument. She is alleged to have contravened the regulations specified in the Buildings Ordinance and have used a false instrument. Therefore, the Neo Democrats thinks that the incumbent Secretary for Justice, Ms Teresa CHENG, is bankrupt of integrity and is definitely not fit for taking the position of Secretary for Justice. She should take the blame and resign.

After Ms Teresa CHENG was exposed to be involved in such scandals, she was still backed by Chief Executive Carrie LAM. This has aroused suspicion
from the Hong Kong people that Secretary for Justice Teresa CHENG's assumption of this position involves other missions or significant political missions. Objectively speaking, what happened after she has assumed office? In the incident of disqualifying a few candidates for the Legislative Council By-election on 11 March, the Secretary for Justice has played an important role. The Government has been emphasizing that the decision of disqualifying the candidates rested with the Returning Officers concerned. But under the spate of questions from the media, Secretary for Justice Teresa CHENG could not deny that the Department of Justice has given legal advice to the Returning Officers in regard to the disqualification of the candidates concerned. This obviously is manipulation, taking the Returning Officers with lower official ranking as a shield and authorizing them with illegal and unreasonable power to disqualify the candidates. The Department of Justice is unexpectedly shirking its political responsibilities behind this shield. Therefore, in the opinion of the Neo Democrats, the disqualification of the candidates concerned is depriving Hong Kong people of the rights to vote and to stand for election given by the Basic Law. Ms Teresa CHENG, being the Secretary for Justice, has also failed to uphold the Basic Law and is, therefore, no longer qualified to be the Secretary for Justice. We thus draw a conclusion that we should support Mr CHAN Chi-chuen's amendment to cut the estimated annual expenditure for the remuneration of the Secretary for Justice.

Chairman, I just expressed my views on the two amendments. (The buzzer sounded)

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Your speaking time is up. Please stop speaking immediately.

DR PRISCILLA LEUNG (in Cantonese): Chairman, I rise to speak in opposition to Amendment Nos. 54, 55 and 56 made by Mr AU Nok-hin, Dr CHENG Chung-tai and Mr HUI Chi-fung respectively. These amendments are related to deducting the resources for the Secretary for Education, the Curriculum Development Institute and the Basic Law education.

Chairman, the latest hot topic is certainly whether Cantonese is our mother tongue. I am of the view that the question as to whether Cantonese is our mother tongue is indeed an attempt to stir up trouble. We speak in Cantonese
within the Legislative Council, while the Chief Executive also answers questions in Cantonese when attending the Chief Executive's Question and Answer Session. No one has ever said that we cannot use Putonghua or even English to speak. Hong Kong is a highly flexible society. The majority of Cantonese people start using Cantonese to talk, communicate and express views at an early age. Yet, when we write, we in fact mainly follow the Mandarin (that is Hanyu or Chinese language) grammar. If we write in Cantonese, we will fail in examinations and even bring about many jokes.

We are Cantonese people. Apart from Hong Kong people, if people in Guangdong Province are asked as to whether Cantonese shall be replaced, I think it will really cause a stir among them. Cantonese people certainly have profound feelings for Cantonese and most of the ways of expression in Cantonese also derive from ancient language, such as mortgage, coins and so on. When engaging in translation in the past, I particularly dipped into Cihai (《辭海》) and discovered that many ways of expression are indeed very likeable with deep historical origin.

Nonetheless, there is no need to place Cantonese and Putonghua in a confronting position. As a matter of fact, no one has ever said that Cantonese, as a choice of language when we speak, shall be replaced. Therefore, I do not know why it will suddenly become a major issue. This is probably because some previous researches put forth such viewpoints. Still, I believe the mainstream opinions are definitely not the same, so I think we have no need to worry and panic. Furthermore, I have to express clearly that I consider the current biliteracy and trilingualism adopted effective, and I also believe that it is a practice we love under the "one country, two systems" principle.

However, recently there is a trend that the issue is politicized. I do not want this trend persists because Cantonese and Putonghua shall be as close as "brothers". Cantonese people often say that some words sound better when pronouncing in Cantonese, such as Cantonese songs. We love Mr George LAM's songs and his songs are very popular in the Mainland too, while the Mainland people are also very fond of Cantonese songs.

In addition, I also think that some poems sound better when we read them out in Cantonese, while some poems sound gracious even if we read them in Putonghua. Take "Thinking of You" (《水調歌頭）) by SU Shi as an example. It reads: "When will the moon be clear and bright? With a cup of wine in my
hand, I ask the blue sky. I wonder what season it would be in the heavens on this night. I'd like to ride the wind to fly home. Yet I fear the crystal and jade mansions are much too high and cold for me." The poem is familiar to our ears and also easy to read in Cantonese. However, my two sons used Putonghua to learn "Bring in the Wine" (《將進酒》) by Li Bai and I learned how to read the poem in Putonghua when they recited it. Of course, my Putonghua pronunciation is not very accurate. After all, I am Cantonese: "Have you not seen that the waters of the Yellow River come from upon Heaven, surging into the ocean, never return again? Have you not seen that in great halls' bright mirror, they grieve over white hair, at dawn like black threads, by evening becoming snow? (in Putonghua)". In addition, international kindergarten students also use Putonghua to learn. There is nothing wrong. Why do we need to look at this issue from a political perspective? I think there is no harm in allowing schools to decide themselves and deal with the issue by using a method that is currently effective. So, I hope that we will no longer consider the confrontation between Cantonese and Putonghua an issue. The two languages shall be good brothers who love one another.

After talking about the issue relating to Cantonese and Putonghua, I have to move on to an issue I am all along gravely concerned about that also becomes a hot topic recently, which is the subject of Liberal Studies. Currently, the review of the Liberal Studies curriculum becomes another hot topic. Of course, I am very delighted for that because I joined the Legislative Council in 2008 and I have started following up the issue relating to the Liberal Studies education since 2009. At present, some people are opposed to reforming the subject of Liberal Studies. For instance, the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union advised recently that 80% of Liberal Studies teachers hope the authorities will continue setting examinations for Liberal Studies. We are concerned about the subject of Liberal Studies and I also remember that at a meeting of the Panel on Education held in 2009, not only me, many pan-democracy Members also queried as to whether the relevant assessment method is most suitable for Liberal Studies. We can review the discussion records of the Legislative Council.

In following up the subject of Liberal Studies, I as the Legislative Council Member of Kowloon West at that time had handled two typical cases. In the first case, a pair of parents living in Sham Shui Po who are civil servants told me that their third child, a 16-year-old daughter, started studying the Liberal Studies subject, but when having a quarrel with their daughter, they were very angry saying that if she did not listen to them, they would not send her abroad for
overseas studies as they did for her two elder brothers and she would have to stay in Hong Kong for examinations. The daughter unexpectedly said that she wished they would better die sooner, so that their property would be hers and she had no need to depend on them. After calming down, the parents asked the daughter who taught her the idea of "succession" and the daughter replied that it was the Liberal Studies teacher. So, we began to take note of whether the teaching content of Liberal Studies is so comprehensive to an extent that even the law of succession will be taught?

In the second case, a student studying in a Band 1 school in Kowloon West and his parents brought along a tape to see me. The Liberal Studies teacher spent more than 50% of the lesson time in explaining the so-called "Liberal Studies knowledge". Once he started speaking, he used coarse language to teach the content. I dared not keep on listening. Of course, he may be a black sheep, but I would like to say a few words. The primary reason why my concern was raised on Liberal Studies is not politics but the assessment. Moreover, I find the content involved in Liberal Studies very extensive, while the Occupy Central movement had not yet happened at that time. Then, I discovered that the incomes of some tutorial centers increased because those tutorial centers offered many additional tutorial subjects of Liberal Studies—recitation is initially not encouraged on the Liberal Studies subject.

Also, I found that some old schoolmates and students who are not Liberal Studies teachers originally have switched to teach Liberal Studies due to the curriculum reform. Some of them majored in Chemistry or Music. Some other science students who studied Engineering or Medical Science said that given the extensive scope of Liberal Studies, studying this subject took up most of their time back then and they did not have time to revise several subjects they loved most. In those years, poor examination results would affect the opportunities to admit to medical schools or even universities. Therefore, our major concerns are whether the coverage of Liberal Studies is suitable for a mandatory subject of public examination and whether the mark of this subject has to be taken into account. Of course, after taking a look at the two years' examination papers, we reproached and criticized in the Legislative Council. Questions in the following year will probably be easier. If no criticism is made, controversial questions may appear again in the examination paper that are not suitable for a mandatory subject nor using as compulsory questions.
We now have an opportunity to discuss how to close the gap. In the past few years, we constantly criticized the curriculum design, teaching methods and even pointed out huge loopholes existed in the teaching materials in the Legislative Council. I do not make this up. On 29 March 2013, an organization compiled a teaching material about the Occupy Central movement. Later, after we criticized in the Legislative Council, the organization made revisions to the material. Hence, we need to keep a close eye on the matter.

Recently, Mr HO Hon-kuen published an article pointing out that "the Liberal Studies subject was introduced glamorously, while the Chinese History subject was abandoned rashly" at that time, now shall we let "the Liberal Studies subject remove the glamour and restore its original form"? I am very fond of reading Mr HO's articles while paying very close attention to articles in opposition to his views. I hope parents, students, teachers and even people in the community who are concerned about the Liberal Studies subject understand that what we are discussing now is the assessment method. I also hope that we will put the Liberal Studies subject back to the right track starting from the assessment method. As far as I know, some schools have 12 Liberal Studies teachers because the curriculum comprises six modules, so it is difficult for one teacher to take care of that. I am of the view that in order to put the Liberal Studies subject back to the right track, it is necessary to set a syllabus. The Liberal Studies subject is different from Chinese language, English language and Mathematics because these three subjects have clear syllabuses. Without a syllabus, teachers may be at a loss in teaching and forced to include numerous current issues as teaching materials.

In addition, I think teaching politics is not prohibited, but teachers shall not simply teach those current controversial issues in society. Will teachers teach the basic knowledge? I majored in Politics and Public Administration. Can teachers teach the idea of Charles LINDBLOM that is the adoption of "incrementalism" or implementation in one go? These and the like are basic theories of Public Administration, allowing students to understand what Public Administration means, rather than simply making criticism. This can encourage them to consider from other angles or even gain an insight into the whole government establishment, instead of only getting to know current events. For instance, civil servants in Hong Kong are recruited through a generalist system, which is different from the United States which adopts a specialist system. I think this kind of basic education, such as what is the difference between the two systems, can be taught. We also agree that secondary students shall understand
their own government's mechanism and it is not necessary to teach the Occupy Central movement. Of course, the Occupy Central movement was a big topic back then. Even tutorial centers predicted the related examination question. I think with regard to issues that are not conclusive or still controversial in the society, teachers shall only discuss those issues during workshops but not include them in the formal curriculum. Students have to familiarize themselves with those issues purely for the sake of examination.

What I said just now is not only my own observation but also because I have two "laboratory rats" at home. My two sons had taken the Liberal Studies subject and examinations, so I know how parents do revision with their children. I now propose a direction and hope we can compromise. Currently, there are a large number of teachers teaching the Liberal Studies subject as well as a large number of stakeholders, and under such circumstance, I hope we can narrow the gap.

The Liberal Studies subject can continue to be a mandatory subject, but a "pass or fail" grading system shall be adopted as the assessment method. I consider this method very good. In addition, if Liberal Studies continue to be a mandatory subject, I think the subject shall not be included as "1" among the "3+1" mandatory subjects for university admission. Furthermore, the assessment method can be enquiry study in place of conventional examination, while the simplest way is to exclude compulsory questions in the examination paper. The Liberal Studies subject has been a mandatory subject and the examination paper comprises compulsory questions that, I also think, are too difficult. For example, a question asked about the relation between democracy index and economic competitiveness. Later, I asked a secondary student taking the Liberal Studies examination and he told me that: "Ms LEUNG, you in fact do not need any understanding. Teachers teach us that we do not have to understand everything." In other words, are students only required to learn the techniques to deal with examinations?

The original purpose of Liberal Studies is to encourage students to observe society from multiple perspectives. As for the Liberal Studies subject itself, or Liberal Studies that I got in touch with when I was in The Chinese University of Hong Kong in the past, my impression is pretty positive. Although there was not a subject called "Liberal Studies" when I studied secondary school in the past, we had debates on at least 20 issues every year and were not required to take any examinations. Sometimes we could even write an article. It was very free.
We had debates on issues ranging from marriage system to Iran hostage crisis. This is also a kind of method.

I know the Liberal Studies subject has implemented for nine years and now it is time for us to discuss calmly. What I mean is not changing Liberal Studies to an elective subject, but if the assessment method or the scope of teaching are revised and a teaching method for which headmasters are willing to bear the responsibility is laid down, instead of completely ignoring how teachers teach, I think there is a chance that we can reach a consensus.

I hereby support that more resources be provided for the Education Bureau to conduct more researches and examine how teaching materials and teaching methods can be improved, so that more people will know how to lead special studies and students will enjoy and love Liberal Studies more, doing better in respect of Liberal Studies and alleviating concerns among members in the community. Lastly, besides teachers and students, future employers, parents and stakeholders from different sectors of the community shall also be included as consultation targets.

Chairman, so I submit.

MR LEUNG YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): Chairman, I wish to focus on Mr CHAN Chi-chuen's Amendment No. 45 on head 141. The amendment is to deduct the estimated full-year expenditure for the remuneration of the Secretary for Labour and Welfare. I agree with the proposal in this regard.

Chairman, my previous speech was about labour matters under the purview of the Labour and Welfare Bureau. Today, I wish to speak on welfare matters under its purview, especially matters relating to elderly residential care homes.

Since the Budget was announced, many people consider the improvement of elderly services not so desirable. Although the non-recurrent expenditure of about $2,229,000,000 for the next fiscal year seems to be quite large, actually the expenditure will be allocated for the payment of some old initiatives under some old policies. There is nothing new. At the same time, it is proposed in the budget that non-recurrent expenditure of about $1 billion, that is, almost half of it will be set aside for the establishment of the "Innovation and Technology Fund for Application in Elderly and Rehabilitation Care". On top of that, an estimated
expenditure about $500 million will be allocated for two schemes under the Community Care Fund, and the remainder will be allocated to other service voucher schemes. In general, they are not decisive, bold and innovative. They are just initiatives following the Government's short-sighted, conservative and non-innovative way of thinking and approach in delivering elderly services. It is totally disappointing.

In fact, there have been voices in society calling for allocating recurrent subvention for services in recent years, but the Government simply maintains a very conservative stance and is reluctant to increase the allocation to address the actual demand. We are particularly concerned about space in subvented homes, day care centre and home care service places. We hope the Government can make a bold and decisive move to allocate more resources in these areas. Unfortunately, each year the Government just take some token actions, such as adding dozens of or more than 100 spaces and places and so on. This will not help the situation of elderly people who have been on the waiting list for a pro-long period of time. It is only a drop in the ocean.

On the other hand, the Government is quite pro-active in realms that people do not want it to be that enthusiastic, such as allocating several tens of billions of dollars and making lavish expenditure in the development of innovative technology. And at the same time, it spends quite a lot of money on gerontechnology. Chairman, of course we are not opposing to giving support to elderly initiatives or measures by means of innovative technology. But the question is, should some fundamental work be implemented first prior to launching the initiatives in this area? Such as the example I have pointed out just now, what elderly services need are the manpower support and space and so on. All of these are pressing needs. But instead of considering them, the Government makes efforts in other areas. For example, the Government was trying to shirk its responsibilities by constantly launching care vouchers and other initiatives under tactfully-concocted pretexts in the past. Chairman, why should I say that? It is because the approach will only push elderly services into private market, and thereby the problem is resolved by way of soliciting services from the private market, and gradually the responsibility of Government-driven social services is pushed to market-driven services.

What is more, the Government even makes it pleasant to the ears by advocating concepts such as "money follows the person" or even "those who can afford should pay more". But everyone knows that the approach will only
benefit some people, as not all elderly people will benefit. A lot of elderly people are concerned about that. Because they have to pass the means test on top of some complex procedures. And the most important thing is that they feel that they are not being respected. It only makes us think that what the Government has done could not benefit elderly people. We all know that elderly people are not all living alone. Many are living with their families. There will be definitely chances of conflicts among family members if they are required to go through all the complex procedures. These problems do exist in reality. But the Government seems to have ignored them and allows the problems to continue and deteriorate. I consider that the Government has not made any serious effort to tackle Hong Kong's ageing population problem.

On the other hand, Chairman, just now I have pointed out that in this budget, the Government has set aside $500 million for two schemes under the Community Care Fund, namely the "Pilot Scheme on Home Care and Support for Elderly Persons with Mild Impairment" and "Pilot Scheme on Support for Elderly Persons Discharged from Public Hospitals after Treatment". These two schemes both last for three years, but I will not elaborate on them due to the time constraint.

Nevertheless, what I wish to point out is that the Hospital Authority has been jointly implementing the regular "Integrated Discharge Support Program for Elderly Patients" with various hospitals. Elderly people at the age of 60 who have a higher risk or likelihood for emergency admissions are eligible. This being the case, why should the Government not make the so-called work review a routine or regular appropriation, instead of launching some pilot schemes and making people feel that the Government is not determined to do something? I consider the fact that the Government frequently claims that it has done something by making use of certain funds. This time around, it makes use of the Community Care Fund to implement two pilot schemes. Everyone knows that it is difficult to prevent the Government from launching pilot schemes. But the question is that the Government is trying to make excuses by launching other initiatives and measures which will not benefit elderly people. What is the point of doing this? Moreover, actually people from the local communities have been putting forward views to the Government regarding discharged elderly patients or home-based services, but the Government simply turns a deaf ear.

Another thing is, Chairman, that the pilot schemes I have pointed out just now seem to give us an impression that they are designed for elderly people and
they are offering a somewhat comprehensive range of care. But community
groups to elderly people who are supposed to be benefited consider that the
schemes only create overlaps and redundancies even the Government has made
so much efforts. They question why the Government has not made the schemes
routine services? It will be better than launching a pilot scheme in one area and
then launching another pilot scheme in another area. Since there are too many
schemes, nobody knows what services are being provided. If elderly people
really want to get the service they want, they will have to do some sleuthing jobs
and see which scheme can help them. That will give people an impression that
things are not that ideal at all.

Therefore, a lot of people criticize the budget this time around for being
redundant and unrealistic, as it has not taken care of the people. Most
importantly, even though the pilot schemes allow discharged elderly patients to
opt for the same care and services at private elderly residential care homes or at
Government-run elderly residential care homes, everybody knows that
Government-run elderly residential care homes are not adequate. Thus the
simplest way is to push them to the private market for the services. I consider
that the Government has just made a riddance of the responsibilities that it should
bear by keep on pushing elderly people to private homes. What it is doing will
only give people an impression that it is trying its best to buffer social discontent
and social demand for such services. But it cannot resolve the problem. It
cannot resolve the problem that the number of elderly people on the waiting list is
getting bigger and bigger and the fact that Government services cannot meet the
increasing need. In reality, the problems still exist.

Chairman, another point I wish to mention is: no matter how many pilot
schemes the Government launches under the Community Care Fund, they are all
stopgap measures. They cannot get to the root of the problems. Moreover,
they will only give people an impression that the Government is short-sighted and
lazy. If the Government really wants to resolve various problems relating to the
insufficient elderly support services, it should integrate elderly services into the
overall planning as well as the financial blueprint for the future. For example,
the Government always uses manpower and land shortage as an excuse that it
could not implement any well-thought out plan, therefore it has to implement a
host of pilot schemes. However, the problem of manpower and land shortage
has been emphasized for many years, will it become an eternal excuse of the
Government that it can shirk all the responsibilities by putting the blame on
manpower and land shortage? Chairman, I don't think so. It is because we
know that the Government actually does not lack the manpower and land. Manpower-wise, if the Government provides elderly residential care homes with more resources, they can raise the pay of their employees once the resources are secured. For that reason, the manpower problem is not necessary unresolvable. At present, a lot of elderly residential care homes relay to us that their employees consider the working hours too long and wages too low, and very few people would like to join the industry due to the obnoxious nature of the jobs. Nevertheless, if they can be provided with better fringe benefits and remunerations, in addition to improving their working hours, it is possible for these elderly residential care homes to increase the manpower.

Land-wise, due to the increasing number of applicants on the waiting list for public rental housing ("PRH"), we need to identify more sites for the construction of PRH. This is something we know well. But in the meantime, the Government may do more planning before new PRH estates are completed, such as requiring each PRH estate should provide a specified quantity of elderly residential care homes services. I consider that can alleviate the elderly residential care homes shortage issue which is attributable the longstanding problem of land shortage, as the Government claims. But has the Government done that? The answer is no. Whenever a new PRH estate is completed, only several Government departments will discuss the needs of the estate as if they are having an arm wrestling competition. But if they lack the good policy, they can never resolve the problems.

For that reason, I consider that the Government should change the existing small, patch-up or piecemeal measures on elderly services. It should not fragmentize the policy and ignore the planning work, otherwise the problems can never be resolved. At the same time, we are more concerned about the fact that the Government has been saying that services provided by the public sector are increasingly insufficient, therefore it is better to promote home care services. Nonetheless, we are not opposing to home care services for the elderly. The question is, does the Government provide the necessary resources for elderly home care services? This is the most important point. At the same time, the government should not merely shift the burden onto the family members of elderly people and then forget about it. Everyone knows that family members of elderly people have their own difficulties, such as they have to go to work or to take care of their children and so on. They may not necessary have the adequate manpower to take care of the elderly family members. For that reason, if the Government is able to allocate more resources as we have always urge the
Government to provide more support to carers of people with chronic illnesses, then elderly home care services can actually help the Government to alleviate the pressure of insufficient resources, as they can be considered new ways and channels to improve the current situation, especially under the circumstance that they do not have sufficient hardware.

Chairman, finally I wish to point out that the Government indicated in last year's budget that it would earmark a total of $30 billion to strengthen elderly services and rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities. But we have heard nothing in the past about the specific usage of the $30 billion over the past year. Before the announcement of this year's budget, several Members and I have met with the Financial Secretary. During the meeting, I asked him the whereabouts of the $30 billion. The Financial Secretary said embarrassingly that he did not know how the $30 billion was spent. He said he did not know, thus he gave no reply. But he question is—I do not wish to repeat what he has said, because that is not good to reveal that as it is not in his own words—but the question is, the Government has not formally announced the usage of the $30 billion, as well as if the allocation still exists. I consider that very important because it is an allocation the Government has pledged to earmark, but why nothing has been heard about the allocation? Does it mean that it is scrapped? This is something we concerned most. Therefore, the Government needs to tell us the whereabouts of the $30 billion, otherwise the allocation will exist in name only, and does it mean that all the Government needs to do is to tell us it has earmarked some funds orally, but actually the funds have vanished?

Chairman, lastly, I wish to summarize my points. I totally agree to this motion. Because I consider the Secretary for Labour and Welfare and his colleagues have neglected their duties. With regards to the worsening problem of the ageing population, the Bureau fails to formulate any long-term planning. It lacks the determinations and sincerity. All it wants is to push the services to the market. But the quality in the current market is so varied that we have no confidence that the basic rights of elderly people and people from other socially disadvantaged groups can be protected. Besides, the authorities have also ignored the situation that these people are facing. Therefore, I hope the Secretary and all officials should (The buzzer sounded) … do some soul-searching seriously.
CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Your speaking time is up, please stop speaking immediately.

MR CHUNG KWOK-PAN (in Cantonese): Chairman, I wish to talk about two CSAs proposed by Mr AU Nok-hin both of which seek to deduct estimated expenditures under head 53. The first proposal is to deduct the estimated expenditure of the Funding Scheme for Youth Internship in the Mainland, and the second is to deduct the estimated expenditure of the Funding Scheme for International Youth Exchange.

Chairman, in my speech just now, I opposed deducting the estimated expenditures of the Overseas Economic and Trade Offices and the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices in the Mainland. Because of the same reason, I am against Mr AU's proposal to slash the funding for young people to exchange experience overseas or in the Mainland. The reason is the same as what I just said. What is my reason then?

It is particularly helpful to the development of young people in Hong Kong if they can have an opportunity to go overseas or to the Mainland to explore and see the world outside. If these programmes were available when I were young, I would definitely join in.

Chairman, first, I wish to talk about the Funding Scheme for Youth Internship in the Mainland. The funding scheme subsidizes students to work as interns in different places in the Mainland during the summer holiday. Last year, I recommended some young people to work as summer interns in enterprises in Shenzhen and Dongguan. The enterprises where they worked are not garment factories of my sector, but are in the areas of technological research, design and culture and creativity. I asked them of their feelings and experience when they returned. Most of them said they were very happy and learned many things.

First, their Putonghua has improved; and second, when asked whether they were ill-treated in the enterprise, they replied in the negative, saying that their Mainland colleague were very nice to them and were very willing to teach them. The experience is valuable. In fact, young people in Hong Kong particularly need these opportunities to get to know more about the Mainland. Unlike the factory environment in the Mainland a decade or two decades ago, the economy
and enterprises in the Mainland now are very different. The funding scheme provides an opportunity for cultural exchanges, so that they can have an additional option for career development, no matter in Hong Kong or in the Mainland.

The funniest thing is that one of the students told me, "After lunch, they took a nap." He said he could not fall asleep in the beginning, but then he got used to it and felt full of energy after the nap. They did not understand why Mainlanders had this habit at first, but later they realized the advantage of it. Of course, they will not have a napping time if they choose to work in Hong Kong in the future, but they can at least get to know the practices in other places. Hence, we should not slash the proposed expenditure of this funding scheme.

Second, the Funding Scheme for International Youth Exchange is another eye-opening activity. It covers more than one countries in the world and can be classified into three country levels. The first level covers developed countries, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, Switzerland, etc. The second level is semi-developed countries, such as Brazil, Hungary and Columbia. And the third level is developing countries, such as Cambodia, Myanmar and Nepal. The funding scheme has three country levels for young people in Hong Kong to explore. Of course, I believe many people probably think that developed countries have been visited by many. I think some developing countries, such as Nepal and Myanmar, are also worth going. Despite the fact that the economies of these countries are less developed than ours or the economies of other places, these countries have unique culture, arts and traditions which can be an eye-opener for young people.

Hence, I will end in the same message: I think some Members have restricted their experience to Hong Kong. One should not slash these resources and deprive other young people of the opportunity. Hence, I think Mr AU Nok-hin should also participate in these funding schemes if he has such an opportunity. Although he has well past the age limit, he can pay the cost himself and go and get to know the world and our country, rather than staying put here and depriving other people of the opportunity.

Thank you, Chairman. I so submit.
MR AU NOK-HIN (in Cantonese): Chairman, many Members have responded to my amendments and I would like to thank them for their views, including Mr CHUNG Kwok-pan who sits near me. I particularly wish to respond to Mr CHUNG Kwok-pan as he has mentioned my amendments twice. I am regret to say if he had paid attention to my speeches, he would not have made such comments as "not to put yourself into a straitjacket" and "it is better for you to broaden your horizons".

First of all, I have to declare an interest. I was sort of a beneficiary of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office ("HKETO"). How? When I studied in Japan, I worked as a freelance translator for HKETO and an interpreter for officials of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department who were on overseas training there. Hence, do not think that I do not know the Funding Scheme for International Youth Exchange ("the Scheme") and the relevant exchange activities.

Chairman, I wish to reiterate my opposition to the Scheme. I also wish to explain once again why I propose to reduce the estimated expenditure of Home Affairs Bureau on the Scheme. If colleagues have paid attention to the Report of the Director of Audit concerning the Scheme, they would understand it is incumbent upon us, as Members of the Legislative Council, to consider if the Scheme funding has been put into proper use. The Audit Report revealed that of the 16 quotations received for the Scheme, 14 were from the same service provider. I thus believe that there are problems with the use of the funding. As a Legislative Council Member, I have the responsibility to clearly examine if the funding was used properly. This is why I propose an amendment to the Budget. Actually, I once asked Secretary Lau Kong-wah about this funding. He was present that day and I am sure that he heard my question. My question was about the plan for Hong Kong to set up the Hong Kong Exhibition Park in the Beijing International Horticultural Exposition as told by Deputy Director of Architectural Services after his visit to the Beijing exhibition site. The Home Affairs Bureau has already earmarked over $7 million for this. I think Secretary Lau Kong-wah has not answered my question.

Besides, I would also like to respond to the amendment on HKETO. If we analyse Mr CHU Hoi-dick's amendment on HKETO, we can notice that it actually calls into question the staff establishment of the Mainland offices of HKETO, which is consistent with the point I have just raised.
Chairman, I do not want to spend too much time to respond to Mr CHUNG Kwok-pan's speech. Of course, I wish we could further discuss this in the future. In this session, I mainly wish to discuss Amendment No. 50 moved by Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, which proposes that head 148 be reduced by $7.3 million, an amount roughly equivalent to the estimated annual expenditure of the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (Financial Services Branch) on the provision of Subvention for the Financial Services Development Council ("FSDC") in 2018-2019. I would like to speak on FSDC.

What are the problems with FSDC? It is proposed in this year's Budget that FSDC be incorporated as a company limited by guarantee and funded by Government's recurrent subvention. Chairman, I have a question about this. The aims of FSDC are to conduct strategic studies, provide advice to the Government, foster market development and nurture talent, with a view to enhancing Hong Kong's competitiveness in the international financial market. Established in January 2013, FSDC has operated for quite a long time. But has it really engaged in fostering the development of the Hong Kong financial industry? Is it necessary for us to tackle the problems associated with FSDC squarely? FSDC has published a total of six research reports since its inception. The themes include Hong Kong's position as an international financial centre; advancing the development of Hong Kong as an offshore Renminbi centre; and the development of Mainland China's financial sector and the strengthening and enhancement of Hong Kong's pivotal role as a financial centre. Another three reports, which are available in English only, are more technical in nature. I would like to focus my discussion on them. They concerns proposals on the development of Hong Kong as a capital formation centre for real estate investment trusts ("REITs"); proposals on legal framework for open-ended investment companies; and proposals to extend offshore private equity fund tax exemption to Hong Kong businesses.

Chairman, I do not know what do you think about FSDC? I note that FSDC was set up by C Y LEUNG and that it was FSDC's release of the research report on developing Hong Kong as a capital formation centre for REITs which eventually led to the Securities and Futures Commission's ("SFC") relaxation of its code on REITs. The relaxed code thus allows Link Real Estate Investment Trust ("Link REIT"), an asset management company, to participate in property development. In the course of the Budget debate this year, I observe that a number of Members have voiced various concerns about Link REIT and expressed hopes that Government departments could put Link REIT under
supervision through various measures, including by means of lease control and the building of more markets. Actually, some of these proposals are put forward in a form of amendments to the Budget. However, I think the core problem is the total tilt of Hong Kong's financial policies towards the financial development, turning a blind eye to the harms which such research reports would bring about, thus disablig the city to address various financial problems at root.

Chairman, we can all witness the consequences of FSDC's release of its research report on developing Hong Kong as a capital formation centre for REITs. Following the release of the report and SFC's subsequent relaxation of its code on REITs, Link REIT have gone on a divesting spree. On the one hand, it has cashed in by divesting of its properties, and it has invested in the Mainland property market and continued with its financial investments on the other. These investments are done at the expense of the grass-roots living in public housing estates. Chairman, before SFC's relaxation of its REIT code, Link REIT could at most seek to yield more income through asset enhancement initiatives ("AEIs") at its shopping malls and the unceasingly substantial rent hikes at its car parks, and such AEIs are actually never-ending. Yet, it is another story after FSDC has indirectly caused SFC to relax its code on REITs. Following the relaxation, Link REIT is able to engage in property development, including the projects at former Trade and Industry Department Tower and Hoi Bun Roa, Ngau Tau Kok. These problems arise from FSDC's ignorance of how the development of the financially-oriented REITs will impact on society.

(THE CHAIRMAN'S DEPUTY, MS STARRY LEE, took the Chair)

Deputy Chairman, we are rather puzzled by this Budget proposal. Why? The Government seeks to transform FSDC from a quasi-government organization into an independent body limited by guarantee and funded by recurrent Government subvention. When asked about the reasons for the change, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau responded that it aimed to boost the development of the Hong Kong financial sector through the FSDC incorporation. I then raised a supplementary question on the Budget, asking if there is any precedent for the incorporation and whether this can help the Government achieve its objectives. The authorities' reply says it does not have information on companies limited by guarantee set up by the Government and receiving recurrent subvention. This is unacceptable. The transformation of the operation of FSDC has never been sufficiently discussed in the Legislative Council. Worse
still, with no precedent at all, the Government is unable to draw from experience to prove that such a change can help it achieve its objectives. How can the Legislative Council be convinced that the incorporation of FSDC as a company limited by guarantee can boost the development of the financial sector?

I recall that in 2012, Mr Joseph YAM commented on CY LEUNG's proposal to establish a financial development council, an organization similar to the current FSDC, in his Manifesto. YAM considers the proposal as unprofessional, with no theoretical basis and pragmatic meaning. He alleges that the proposed organization is a duplication and redundancy. According to YAM, under the "one country, two systems" principle, there is no relationship of subordination between the People's Bank of China ("PBC") and the Hong Kong Monetary Authority ("HKMA"), but the Governor of PBC and the Chief Executive of HKMA have developed a smooth cooperation and communication patterns. Expressing worries that the establishment of another financial organization would interrupt this direct communication and policy coordination patterns, he considers such a proposal as unprofessional, with no theoretical basis and pragmatic meaning. Deputy Chairman, FSDC is an unnecessary overlap.

I wonder if Members can remember that the Establishment Subcommittee has earlier discussed the creation of a financial planner post at HKMA. The official in charge will be responsible for studying the future competitiveness of Hong Kong. Many people may then ask: apart from HKMA which already has six departments monitoring different aspects of the financial industry, there are also PBC, SFC, and FSDC. How outstanding its economic or financial researches are for FSDC to win over its counterparts? In the end, which party Government departments would listen to Deputy Chairman, what I can see is the Government has taken on board the proposal to develop REITs, paving the way for Link REIT's unceasingly divestment of its properties. I cannot help but ask why someone would ever propose such an aberrant proposal? Why the Government would adopt such a aberrant financial development proposal at the expense of the public? I am keen to hear Members' responses on this, including those returned by functional constituencies.

When I participated in the Legislative Council election for the Wholesale and Retail Functional Constituency two years ago, I said the tilt towards the development of the financial industry and the defending of the interest of the property sector will ultimately do harm to other industries. The wholesale and retail sector, for example, has fallen victim to the misdeeds of Link REIT. It is
the FSDC report and SFC's subsequent relaxation of the code that causes the retail sector to suffer from the evil claws and under the continuous exploitation of Link REIT. Deputy Chairman, I therefore have great reservation about the Budget's proposal to provide recurrent funding to FSDC.

Not only can I see that the incorporation of FSDC as a company limited by guarantee is, in the words of Joseph YAM, a duplication and redundancy, but I can also see that the FSDC research work involves a conflict of interests. Mr George HONGCHOY, Chief Executive Officer of Link REIT, has participated in the approval of the preparation of the report on REITs. How could such a significant stakeholder be involved in the preparation of the report? The report has eventually led to the relaxation of code on REITs from which KWOK has directly benefited. This reveals the operational deficiencies of FSDC. Hence, despite the Government's repeated assurance to us that there is a well-established interest declaration mechanism in place and that a Board of Directors to be established after the incorporation of FSDC as a company limited by guarantee will still be under the supervision of the regulatory authorities, with all its Board members to be appointed by the authorities, this is not at all convincing. The fact is most appointees are stakeholders of the industry, if not direct beneficiaries. May I ask why the Government would still allow these problems to exist? Deputy Chairman, I really hope that Members would address squarely the various problems associated with the incorporation of FSDC as a company limited by guarantee.

Deputy Chairman, I so submit.

MR CHU HOI-DICK (in Cantonese): Deputy Chairman, my speech will focus on Amendments Nos. 62 and 63 moved by the Financial Secretary, which are related to the remedial measure, or the payment of $4,000 under the Caring and Sharing Scheme ("the Scheme"). Deputy Chairman, before going into the details, I think we have to see the overall picture, and that overall picture is why in these 65 amendments …

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr CHU Hoi-dick, I want to know which amendments you are now referring to.
MR CHU HOI-DICK (in Cantonese): Amendments Nos. 62 and 63. They are the amendments moved by the Financial Secretary.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Please continue with your speech.

MR CHU HOI-DICK (in Cantonese): If I understand correctly, among the 67 amendments, only Amendment Nos. 62 and 63 call for an increase in the estimates, whereas other 65 amendments moved by Members all seek to reduce the estimates. Members of the public may not be clear about the background. I will spend some time here to give an explanation, and this is in fact related to Article 74 of the Basic Law.

From the Government's perspective, Members cannot introduce bills which are related to public expenditure. Of course, when it comes to whether Legislative Council Members can, in regard to the Budget, introduce amendments asking to reduce the estimates, the Government and our President of the Legislative Council hold different views. The President thinks that we can introduce amendments to reduce the estimates but cannot introduce amendments to increase the estimates, whereas the Government thinks that neither of these amendments can be moved by Members, as the Legislative Council is not vested with the power to do so. Hence, we can see the special phenomenon that of the 67 amendments, only the amendments by the Financial Secretary, who represents the Government, can call for an increase in the estimates. Due to this structural problem, much room for proactive changes has been removed by the Government in the Budget debate.

Deputy Chairman, if Legislative Council Members can move amendments asking to increase the estimates, what will happen? The Government or colleagues may say that society will be thrown into chaos. But in retrospect, it is exactly due to the Government which disallows Members to move amendments to increase the estimates that over the years, Members have come up with the ideas like filibustering, making numerous speeches and moving numerous amendments to force the Government to make some minor changes. However, if Members can move amendments to increase the estimates, the situation will be different. For instance, those Members striving for universal retirement protection can directly move an amendment to this effect which will then be put to the vote in this Council. If this amendment is negatived, we still have to
accept the result. But because of this "inhibiting magic spell", we are now in a predicament, and what we can only do is to move amendments asking to slash the estimates so as to force the Government to do something. This is the first point.

Secondly, from the experience over the past 10 years, we see that Members from whatever political factions also wanted to force the Government to do something by moving amendments to the Appropriation Bill, and the only way the Government would amend the budget was not to increase expenditure for certain heads under individual bureaus. For example, a lot of Members mentioned the elderly dental problem for many years but so far, no funding has been allocated from the Government for this purpose, and there is also no government funding to resolve the problem concerning residential care places for the elderly. But we can now force the Government to move these amendments to increase the estimates, which are scarcely seen, and the only approach adopted by the Government is to give cash handouts. We can imagine that it was in a convoluted way that the Legislative Council could reach this stage. With various kinds of aspirations, the political sector and the public in Hong Kong want the Government to increase public expenditures, but the Government is just like a tool for squeezing the cream out. Facing requests from all sides for increasing public expenditures, when the Government finally cannot stand public pressure and has to cede to their requests, its only approach is to give cash handouts. This is just like squeezing the cream out, and the only way out is to give cash handouts. Hence, this is how we can come to this stage of discussing whether to support the amendments seeking to additionally inject more than $10 billion to the Scheme as a remedial measure.

The above is some background. I have read the paper submitted to us by the Financial Secretary on the amendments concerned. In the paper, I am particularly interested in the eligibility criteria. I found two very interesting messages from the eligibility criteria. The paper says that a person who meets the eligibility criteria may apply for receiving $4,000 under the Scheme. In criterion (a) which is related to age, it requires that a person has to be aged 18 or above. I believe that we can discuss whether an eligible person has to be above 18 years old, or any person, including newborn babies, can be eligible, or an eligible person has to reach a certain age. This question can be discussed. Criterion (b) requires that a person has to hold a Hong Kong Identity Card, and this can also be subject to discussion. However, in my view, criterion (a), which requires that a person has to be aged 18 or above and this is similar to the line drawn for voters in elections, as well as criterion (b), which requires that a person
has to hold a Hong Kong Identity Card, will not be challenged by the public. By
criterion (c), it requires that a person has to ordinarily reside in Hong Kong. I
think there will not be strong objection to this criterion. If a person who has
migrated overseas come back to Hong Kong to receive that $4,000, I think most
residents in Hong Kong will find this inappropriate.

The interesting criteria are criteria (d), (e) and (f). Criterion (d) requires
that the applicant should not be benefiting from the two-month extra allowance of
Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA"), Old Age Allowance, Old
Age Allowance, or Disability Allowance. Criterion (e) says that the applicant
should not be required to pay salaries tax. Criterion (f) requires that the
applicant shall have no property in Hong Kong.

Deputy Chairman, through the remedial measures under the Government's
Scheme, who actually can be benefited and receive the $4,000? You can see
that the Government is harbouring two kinds of attitude. Firstly, in the mind of
the Government, certain people are considered invisible. Who are they? I am
not referring to criteria (a), (b) and (c) but only to criteria (d), (e) and (f).
Criteria (d), (e) and (f) obviously do not represent all Hong Kong residents. In
other words, not every resident is benefiting from any of the allowances
concerned, is required to pay tax or owns any property. However, when the
Financial Secretary proposed the original scheme, he could only see people under
criteria (a), (b) and (c) but not those under criteria (d), (e) and (f). That is why
he would introduce this remedial proposal to include this group of people.

I was thinking why he would ignore people under criteria (d), (e) and (f). I
guess this is out of bureaucracy. We always laugh at the Government that it
now has a lot of money but does not know how to spend. I think when the
Financial Secretary was about to learn the amount of surplus for this year, he
started to feel annoyed and kept on asking different departments how much
money could be splashed out according to the existing bureaucratic mechanism.
It was later decided that some money could be splashed out to cover some Ocean
Park tickets, DSE fees and to the usual measures, such as providing two-month
extra allowance of CSSA, rebates in salaries tax or rates. Given that this
bureaucratic system is already established, he finds that these arrangements are
very convenient. But he fails to see those who are not included under this
bureaucratic system. Therefore, first, this reflects how this bureaucratic system
has blindfolded the Government such that it fails to see a lot of people. Second,
from the figures concerning the sweeteners given out by the Government over the
last decade, we notice that when the Government has surplus, certain people would enjoy more benefits than other people. As we all know, what I am referring to are the people who can enjoy rebates in salaries tax and rates.

Colleagues from the Research Office of the Legislative Council are very nice, as they have prepared a chart for us—but at such a long distance, perhaps only those who are now watching the live television broadcast of the meeting can see clearly. This chart tells that from 2007-2008 to 2016-2017, the financial surpluses amounted to $566 billion, from which the Government dished out a total of $320 billion in sweeteners and cash handouts (excluding the amount this year). The distribution of the handouts is very clear. 64% of them went to rebates in taxes and rates, which could only be enjoyed by those who had properties or had to pay taxes, no matter salaries tax or profits tax. And 64% of this $320 billion went to these people. Obviously, the numbers of grassroots families and disadvantaged groups are not small, and they could enjoy 16% of that amount. This 16% together with 64% made up the amount of money given to the people covered by the existing bureaucratic system, and another 17% of that amount went to the general public. But the general public are actually divided into two groups. One group covers those who have paid electricity tariffs and they are also regarded as the general public. But in fact, not every citizen has an electricity meter installed at home. Even if we assume that all of them have electricity meters, only 17% of that amount of money can really be shared by everyone.

Deputy Chairman, we can notice a phenomenon. From putting forward a proposal, being criticized to introducing a remedial measure at present, has the Financial Secretary ever reviewed and reflected on his entire mentality? In fact, we do not mean that he has done anything wrong. But in a government of all the people, it is not desirable if public officers have the two kinds of attitude that I mentioned earlier. The first kind of attitude is being so arrogant as to disregard certain people, while the second kind of attitude is seeing those who have paid taxes and own properties are more superior to others and thus will give more consideration to them. In regard to these two kinds of attitude, the Financial Secretary should amend this amendment in order to rectify himself. If the Financial Secretary felt embarrassed when he was criticized and then proposed to amend simply out of fear, he actually just wanted to get it over with. We hope that he can change this kind of attitude.
After he has changed this kind of attitude, we expect that when preparing for the coming budget, he will not intend to firstly, rely on the bureaucratic system to splash out the surplus money, and secondly, give the public an impression, through dishing out sweeteners, that this is a biased Government which sees certain people more important than others. When there is $4,000 billion, including foreign currency reserves, in the coffers, it is more important for the Government to understand the need to conduct wealth redistribution more thoroughly with our annual surplus and reserves. During the Second Reading of the Bill, I mentioned a proposal which I will reiterate here: We should stop dishing out the sweeteners and stop working for dissimilation. Instead, in the following year, we will start setting a target. So long as the surplus has exceeded a certain amount, say $50 billion, the excess shall be shared equally by the public. As this system is stable and bound by guidelines, people do not have to argue over the budget each year, and it can also save the Financial Secretary the trouble of being fidgety and asking various departments to do so much extra work each year.

I so submit.

MR KENNETH LEUNG (in Cantonese): Deputy Chairman, after Mr CHU Hoi-dick has delivered his speech, I wish to follow suit by focusing on the amendment to head 170.

The amendment is also relevant to the so-called "gap-closing" measures as the Financial Secretary stated. Before Secretary Paul CHAN proposed the measures, of course he was criticized by people. But after he had proposed the measures, he was also criticized by people. It is really interesting.

Let us look at the eligibility criteria for the "gap-closing" measures—just now Mr CHU Hoi-dick has explained—several criteria, including: (a) the applicant is aged 18 or above; (b) he holds a Hong Kong Identity Card (including new arrivals, but excluding those who have been admitted to Hong Kong to work); (c) he ordinarily resides in Hong Kong; (d) he is not benefiting from the extra allowance of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, Old Age Living Allowance and so on as announced in the 2018-2019 Budget; (e) he is not required to pay salaries tax for the year of assessment 2017-2018; and (f) he does not own any property in Hong Kong.
I know the Secretary's train of thought well. Because he is an accountant, he will do the precise calculation, including who will be missed; who should be repaid and how much should be repaid. He will do the precise calculation. But the question is, we are talking about the budget, we are not talking about how a bookkeeper should keep his account and calculate how much each citizen should receive, such as a person should not receive the $4,000 after he has received the $2,000 under item (a), thus the citizen should only receive the remaining $2,000 or so on. This is not the vision that we need, and it is not a macroscopic budget of visions.

Why are these "gap-closing" measures introduced? Actually, there are three major reasons—Deputy Chairman, if I cannot finish all three reasons in the speech this time around, I will keep on elaborating the remaining reasons in my subsequent speeches. First, all Government departments lack the long-term planning and the eyesight. They have the money but know nothing about how the money should be spent. So, even though the Government has the money and the Financial Secretary has asked them how the money should be spent, say there are $140 billion for them to spend, they cannot spend that much. As a result, it will be useless to allocate the money to them, because they know nothing about spending the money. Second, perhaps the Financial Secretary really thinks that he has missed some people in the budget, but he does not know why, therefore he wants to make up for the shortage by allocating extra subsidies. This is just like what he said about item (f) of his strategies in paragraph 49 of his budget speech: "caring for and sharing with the community by enhancing support for the disadvantaged and enabling members of the public to enjoy the fruits of our economic success".

I consider the "gap-closing" measures are formulated to embody the strategy depicted in item (f), that is, the principle of "sharing with the community the fruits of our economic success". However, if we look at the way the "gap-closing" measures are implemented, besides the $10 billion that he will allocate, there will be extra expenses for the implementation of the "gap-closing" measures this time around: staff expenditure, office expenditure, information and technology expenditure, publicity and printing expenditure and so on. These expenditures will be as much as $311 million in total, but he is only handing out a subsidy of a little more than $11 billion.

Let us look back to 2011—Deputy Chairman, I opposed the handing out of cash at that time, but perhaps you cannot remember, as I was not a Member of the
Legislative Council at that time—during the fiscal year 2011-2012, the former Financial Secretary John TSANG handed out $6,000 to each Hong Kong resident. He handed out a total of $37.3 billion; while the administrative cost including the handling charges of banks and the post office, was nothing more than $130 million. If we adopt the financial management criteria of listed companies, the cash hand-out this time around should be considered a failure. It also shows that the authorities are at a loss. Actually, now I can think of the third reason why the Government should come up with a cash handout this time around. It is absolutely because of the political pressure. But the question is, it cannot alleviate the political pressure even if it is going to hand out the cash, as the Government is being criticized.

The question is, instead of frequently thinking of some "gap-closing" measures, should we think of establishing a regular mechanism, so that the Government may rely on some big data or a similar mechanism for future use? For example, if the Government can compile the bank account information of permanent Hong Kong residents—of course, these are very sensitive information—perhaps when the Government implements some "gap-closing" measures in next year, then perhaps it is able to make the allocation according to the information. Or should we think of other measures to help the Government to share its fruit of success with the people in future? All of these measures are so innovative that they have never been adopted. For example, can we propose the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL") to grant all Hong Kong residents a 6-month free MTR ride? Of course, MTRCL may recover all the fares from the Government.

Perhaps can we extend the scope of existing mechanisms to widen the existing transport subsidy scheme; to waive the payment of interests of Government loans borrowed by university students or to extend the repayment period? All of these can be taken into consideration. Thus the Government needs not adopt the complicated, cumbersome or even dreadful approach. However, I think the Government has never thought of that. As a professional accountant, Secretary CHAN can accurately work out that each person should need a handout of $150, $200 or $300. As a matter of fact, I think some members of the public do not care about whether or not they should take the handout, or if they should get an extra $100 or $200. In fact, the decision making process of the Government and the impression given to the public are important. The entire decision making process and the impression given to the public is actually quite poor.
I wish to elaborate on a longer-term view, that is, we cannot find a way to spend the money. Of course, it requires three years or more for the incubation of a policy from its planning to its implementation, as some projects may need several years for the planning before the time is favourable for such projects to launch. However, the authorities (especially Secretaries of the Policy Bureau) could not say that they do not need to spend the money or the money is not necessary because they cannot explain what funding should be needed to spend on any specified projects in the current year.

Last month, the Legislative Council Secretariat conducted a research on the budget. The research papers were published in mid-April. We can see that in previous budgets, the Government would earmark many so-called dedicated funds. Of course, Deputy Chairman, in those days when the Government or the Financial Secretary specified the dedicated funds, many people would consider that those were just a sum of money. Should we consider that the work had been done even though no policies or measures were put in place? It also involves a question of how we weigh this policy address or budget. Should we treat it from a long-term and macroscopic perspective? That is, should we take a longer-term view to evaluate it? Or should we only consider a specific year and if the report of the first year of that term of Government is good or bad?

At the same time, accountable officials, or the Secretary or the Chief Executive could not explain clearly the governing philosophy. For example, the Government would allocate $50 billion in the fiscal year 2008-2009 for medical reform; and $1 billion in 2008-2009 as a financial assistance to elderly owner-occupiers in the future five years, and so on. In fact, each policy address or budget should look ahead and back cautiously. As to looking back, it also means what the Government should do in future, or to look back at the provision or dedicated budgetary allocation made in the past few years in order to see what has been done in the past years, then to plan what should be done in the coming years or what should be done this year. Say, in this year we will have $10 billion different provisions, thus the Government should let the public know what the provisions will be used for. This is something each term of Government should do in its 5-year term. We should not consider the budget for a specific fiscal year only. Failing to do so, the public will be at a loss. Say, this year the policy will benefit the middle-class; in the next year, the budget will benefit "N-nothings", then the middle-class will criticize the Government for not taking care of them; then in another year, low-income people will complain that they are so miserable as the Government only cares about students and young
people. There will be similar voices each year, and there will be similar criticism each year, they are inevitable. But if the Government introduces a 5-year policy plan in its policy address and presents a blueprint in its budget, and if it can look ahead and back cautiously, the problems will not crop up.

Why should I make so many criticisms of head 170 this time around? A lot of friends ask me about my position in casting the votes. Last night I had a dream. I dreamt of Karl MARX—it is the 200th birthday Karl MARX as he was born in May. He appeared in my dream. In my dream, I thought of some words said by Karl MARX. It was something he said in _Critique of the Gotha Programme_ in 1875. What did he said? "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs". This grand master of socialism, Mr Karl MARX, asked me in my dream, what in the world was our Financial Secretary doing? It was clearly stated in socialism that "from each according to his ability". Of course, we have also achieved that in today's world. Perhaps each person will need to pay a different amount of tax. We seem to have a marginal tax rate, but it does not apply to our income tax. However, as to "to each according to his needs", have we really achieved that? Now everyone can get a $4,000 subsidy, is it actually something relevant to the idea of "to each according to his needs"? I am at a loss.

If we are going to implement socialism, we should give away the money to the best use. We should give away the money to those who need the money. But this time around, regardless of the need, everyone has to accept the $4,000 or the shortfall. I asked Mr Karl MARX again, how should I vote? He told me to decide by myself. Of course the vote is related to a political decision. I can openly state in this Chamber that I do not know how I should vote for the time being. It is because this time around, the budget does have any bright spots. For example, there are bright spots in relation to the financial sector and there are bright spots in relation to the innovation and technology sector. But there are also proposals being denounced and criticized, in particular matters relating to the lower-class and long-term development. The budget fails to provide a long-term vision and it fails to look ahead and back cautiously. Therefore, I asked Karl MARX at the end, how should I vote? He did not answer me. He then disappeared in my dream. Tonight is the last chance. If I dream of Mr Karl MARX again, I will ask him how the vote should be cast.

Thank you, Deputy Chairman, I so submit.
**DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** (in Cantonese): This Council is conducting the second debate session of the Appropriation Bill 2018. In this session, a total of 27 Members have spoken for 50 person-times. I note that in the speech of Mr Kenneth LEUNG delivered just now, although this is his first speech, he has discussed at length the overall planning, long-term and macroscopic concepts of the budget, or even his position in casting the votes. I hope Members who are going to speak later on will focus their speech on the amendments relevant to this debate session, and to make their speech as concise as possible. Please do not repeat your argument.

**MR LUK CHUNG-HUNG** (in Cantonese): Deputy Chairman, this year's Budget is originally a very good fiscal debate topic because the Chief Executive has introduced a new fiscal philosophy, and the contribution to Gross Domestic Product by various recommendations in the Budget has also increased from 20% in the past to 21%, which is a breakthrough in itself. Apart from $50 billion injected into innovation and technology, there is also quite a number of recurrent expenditure in the areas of medical service and education, but why is there nobody to take notice of that? Let us start from subhead 700 under head 173 in the Financial Secretary's Budget. Simply speaking, it is related to the Caring and Sharing Scheme, that is also the gap-filling measure as described by the public. I consider it an amount of $10.8 billion used for filling gaps and making amends.

How come such an amount of $10.8 billion appears? This is in fact because of a blind spot existed in the Government's mindset in respect of the Budget, having no basic judgments or ideas about the unfairness caused by public finance to Hong Kong society and the nature of exploitation of the capitalism. As a capitalist society, Hong Kong is also the freest economic entity, and to a certain extent, to put it bluntly, it is indeed the freest economic system to carry out exploitation.

In view of the capitalism, a colleague mentioned Karl MARX a moment ago. I would also like to talk about this philosopher and revolutionary two centuries ago. He did not see the current progress in technology or productivity nor might he be able to foresee some more hidden tactics of exploitation nowadays. In those years, there might only be some blood and sweat factories, some child labour who had to work more than 10 hours per day and some landlords who charged rent indiscriminately. Today's situation may have some
differences in form, but the degree of exploitation therein may be higher than that in those years.

In light of the growth in technology, economy and development capacity, there is no improvement in the current situation of capital accumulation, wealth accumulation and disparity between the rich and the poor, particularly in terms of assets accretion. Some people can make substantial profits by land, property or stock speculation. Such acts can even directly jump over the production process and it is unnecessary to carry out exploitation by means of residual value in the production process to.

So, how the Government will make use of public finance for redistribution of wealth is indeed very crucial, especially when we have abundant reserves, members of the public will certainly have expectation in this respect and wish to have a feeling of happiness. In particular, in Macao, our brother city in the vicinity, the Government hands out cash to citizens every year. So, how can the people of Hong Kong not have expectation and envy? Yet, when the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions requested for "cash handouts", the response from the Government was very unrealistic, while some Honourable colleagues, especially those from the pan-democratic camp, are also required to shoulder a very big responsibility. I do not want to name them one by one here because it will be embarrassing if I miss anyone. Many colleagues from the pan-democratic camp initially opposed "cash handouts", but they are now standing out and criticizing the Government for not handing out cash. This is in fact very repulsive, but I am not going to elaborate here.

As a matter of fact, what is the purpose of "cash handouts"? In the past, the Government only had two fiscal concepts. The first one is cash rebate. For example, member of the public can receive cash rebates on taxes paid, including rates, salaries tax and profits tax when there is a surplus in the Government's public coffers. It seems that this practice sounds very reasonable. It is also a right thing to do to give cash rebates to people who earn the lowest income, the poorest, those with special needs or people who are in need of caring in the community. Of course, some people may find it unfair in terms of proportion because the current proportion of money used for tax rebate to that for poverty alleviation is 4:1.

As I said a moment ago, the most important issue is that the Government does not feel that there is unfair distribution of social resources. The purpose of
taxation is for redistribution of wealth. Therefore, under the circumstance that there is a considerable surplus of $150 billion in the society, the best solution is to hand out cash non-discriminatorily. So, I hope the Government will learn from this painful experience and avoid repeating the same mistake when there is a considerable surplus in the future. Yet, sometimes it depends on the sources of such considerable surplus. If it relies on incomes from high land price, rates or stamp duty, the cost will be rather high for the society. I believe people in the society will also reflect upon the matter.

With regard to the Caring and Sharing Scheme, when we met with residents in the districts and listened to their views, they all considered the Scheme just a remedial measure, but it is better to have a measure than not having one. Although the Government deserves to be reproached, but it is better than doing nothing. I hope the Government can deeply reflect on that.

As for other amendments, I would like to talk about the transport matters involved under head 186. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen made a request for deducting the estimated expenditure for the Transport Department. I disagree with that, but it does not mean the Transport Department has excellent performance. I simply consider that deducting the estimated expenditure for government departments will be helpless in improving their services, which will only victimize members of the public.

I would like to focus my remarks on two points. First, the Government introduced a non-means-tested Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme ("Subsidy Scheme"), but inflation is even fiercer than a tiger, various public transport organizations, including the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL"), the Hong Kong Tramways Limited, bus companies and ferry companies, have applied for fare increase one after another ranging from 3% to 10%. For average citizens, the burden of transportation cost is indeed quite heavy. Yet, the threshold of the Subsidy Scheme is pretty high. A commuter can make application only if his monthly public transport expenses reach $400. Hence, we suggest that the threshold shall be lowered to $300, that is a commuter can benefit from the Scheme if his average daily transport expenses reach $10.

In addition, the rebate rate of the Subsidy Scheme is only one fourth, can the rate be raised to one third? This is because the estimated expenditure of the Scheme is only $800 million, but the Government obtains billions of annual income through MTRCL. Simply injecting the income earned from MTRCL
into the Scheme can subsidize other transport expenses so as to relieve the burden of transportation cost on members of the public. Many organizations, including the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions, have proposed to establish a transport expenses fund of which the concept is actually the same. In this connection, given the huge profits obtained from MTRCL, can the Government do it more drastically?

Secondly, concerning the young-olds aged between 60 and 64, although the Government advocates the employment of silver-haired group, but a dreadful situation faced by this group of senior citizens is that some employers in the job market treat them unfairly and consider them less competitive. Meanwhile, they are not yet eligible to enjoy the concessionary fare of $2 per trip and have to pay full transport fares. Even though the Government does not offer them the $2 fare concession, it can at least provide a half fare concession in order to care for their feelings. Of course, in the long term, they want to enjoy the $2 fare concession as well.

The $2 fare concession for the elderly cover most of the transport modes, but it happens that trams with most local characteristics are not included. In this connection, I really need to redress the injustice for trams. The reason for not providing the $2 fare concession to trams is that tram fare is already extremely low. The tram fare for adults is only $2-odd, while the tram fare for elderly is $1-odd which is even lower than the concessionary fare of $2, so no fare concession is provided. As a matter of fact, it is unfair to trams, not only punishing the Hong Kong Tramways Limited, but also indirectly punishing its staff and workers. This is because if the operating condition of the Hong Kong Tramways Limited is unsatisfactory and not much revenue is generated, the room for salary increase of its employees will be narrowed accordingly, which will also indirectly suppress the Hong Kong's cheapest and most convenient transport mode with the longest history and most local characteristics.

Can the authorities offer free tram rides to the elderly aged 65 or above? This is because in recent years, a number of short-haul elderly commuters who originally travel by trams choose to take other transport modes, such as buses or MTR. Despite the issue relating to higher short-haul transport expenses, it is also extremely unfair to trams and I hope the Government can absorb this …
DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr LUK Chung-hung, I would like to know which head are you talking about?

MR LUK CHUNG-HUNG (in Cantonese): I am talking about head 186 relating to the Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme. In light of the amendment made by Mr CHAN Chi-chuen to deduct the expenditure for the Transport Department, I would like to express my views on transport matters.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Expressing views on policy matters falls out of the scope of debate in this session. Please confine your speech to the relevant heads involved in the amendment.

MR LUK CHUNG-HUNG (in Cantonese): OK, I will try to confine my speech to the subject concerned.

With regard to head 152, Ms Claudia MO suggested that the estimated expenditure of $26.3 million for the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau be deducted. My view is still that: it is helpless in improving the matter, so I will not support it because this is simply an expression of political position as well as a "political show".

Regarding the tourism industry, I am of the view that the Government has injected numerous resources into promotion this year. In particular, our view expressed last year has been accepted to set aside $12 million to implement the Pilot Scheme for Characteristic Local Tourism Events. However, due to rather complicated application procedures and higher threshold, and applicant organizations are required to make payment in advance, there is a small number of organizations applying for the Scheme and the number of projects approved is even smaller. Since it is the right direction, the authorities shall encourage more practitioners from the sector, local groups and voluntary organizations to promote local characteristic tourism economy through the Scheme. Apart from an economic project, it can also encourage members of the public to participate more and raise their sense of belonging. Recently, I especially notice some very characteristic local guided tours, but the organizers may not meet the qualification for applying for the Pilot Scheme, so I hope the Government can review the relevant threshold.
Under head 173, the Financial Secretary suggested in the Budget that $8.5 billion be injected into the Continuing Education Fund with a view to raising the subsidy ceiling. In this way, the recommendation made by the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions has been responded, but we hope the subsidy ceiling can be raised from the current level of $20,000 to $40,000, though it is appreciative of such great progress made. However, sometimes the Government gives the public a feeling that it is miserly and calculating because after increasing the subsidy ceiling from $10,000 to $20,000, the level of subsidy for the second $10,000 will be lower, amounting to only 60%.

According to the explanation made by the Government, this is to prevent training institutes from overcharging fees, but with the level of subsidy adjusted downward to 60%, the institutes concerned can still overcharge fees. A balance shall be achieved by market competition. If some institutes overcharge fees, there is naturally no customer patronizing those institutes. The Government can even strictly perform its gate-keeping role, rather than reducing the original anticipated amount of subsidy to be provided for continuing education participants. This gives applicants an impression that the Government's mindset is unrealistic. Hence, to do it more thoroughly, the levels of subsidy for the first $10,000 and the second $10,000 shall be the same setting at 80%. Moreover, we still consider the continuing education subsidy ceiling of $20,000 insufficient, hoping that the authorities will accept the request from the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions to further increase the ceiling by $10,000.

With respect to the Working Family Allowance, we also expect continuous improvements. Currently, the main problem is the number of working hours, but the requirement has been relaxed recently, many workers are able to make application with our help. Yet, the biggest problem is, based on the current working requirement, a person has to work 192 hours in order to apply for full rate allowance. Some junior members of the civil service or most people working in other positions who work five and a half days and 44 hours per week, their monthly working hours will be 176 hours only. As a result, they are not eligible to receive full rate allowance.

Yet, those applicants actually work full time with incentive to work, so there is no reason to ask a full-time basic-level civil servant to intentionally take up a part-time job for few more hours in order to reach 192 working hours. As I said a moment ago, the Government only calculates these small figures, so how can it bring members of the public a feeling of happiness?
Last week, I originally had many words to say, but I guess the Deputy Chairman would rule that my remarks were out of context, so I left them aside for a while. Unfortunately, I was sick last week. Although I attended the meeting, but I completely lost my voice and could not speak. Most importantly, I hope the Government can learn from this negative experience being harshly criticized by the public and make improvements in planning for the Budget next year.

Thank you, Deputy Chairman.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr LUK Chung-hung, we still have the third debate session later.

DR KWOK KA-KI (in Cantonese): Deputy Chairman, I will speak on Amendment No. 41. It seeks to reduce the expenditure of head 137 in respect of subhead 000 by an amount roughly equivalent to the one-month emoluments of the Secretary for the Environment. I know the Secretary is in the Chamber, and I do not want him to feel bored. So, I change the order of my speeches to talk about this amendment first. Mr CHU Hoi-dick, the mover of this amendment, is so lenient with the Secretary that he proposes a modest reduction of the one-month emoluments of the Secretary, in comparison with some other amendments which seek to reduce the full-year or half-year emoluments of many other Secretaries of Departments and Directors of Bureaux. If I could propose an amendment to this amendment, I would have sought to reduce the half-year emoluments of the Secretary.

Deputy Chairman, why do I say so? The Secretary for the Environment is already in his second term, but in the past five years, no progress was made in various environmental protection policies, such as the reduction of waste at source and the waste separation. It appears that many new initiatives have been introduced during his term of office, including the setting up of an EcoPark in Tuen Mun and the implementation of two environmental projects, namely the Tuen Mun landfill extension and the building an incinerator at Shek Kwu Chau. However, the latter two projects are highly controversial. When the Government first introduced the incinerator project to the Legislative Council, it said the construction cost was $24 billion. Yet, the cost has already overrun the budget by 30% or $7.5 billion despite the fact that it has still a long way to go for the incinerator to commence operation. Cost overrun is now too normal that the
Government is totally indifferent to it. Yet, I just wonder how the Government performs its gate-keeping role in respect of the construction costs of its works projects. When the Government submitted the incinerator funding application to the Legislative Council, it did not mention the possibility of a huge cost overrun. The construction works have yet to commence, and to be frank, according to past experience, the cost will overrun the budget again when the construction kicks start. Sometimes, I really do not know what kind of contract the Government has signed with its contractors. To put it bluntly, the contractors may simply regard taxpayers' money as their bank vaults and the Treasury as their automatic teller machines. To implement the environmental measures, we have to pay for not only the operation costs of landfills, but also the construction of the incinerator which registers a cost overrun of 30% or $7.5 billion even before the commencement of the construction works.

Why does the incinerator project record such a huge cost overrun? According to reports and Government documents, the successful bidder is a joint venture formed by Singapore-funded Keppel Seghers Hong Kong Limited and Zhen Hua Engineering Co. Ltd. We may not be familiar with Zhen Hua Engineering. It is a subsidiary of China Harbour Engineering Company Limited ("CHEC"). Being a large-scale state-owned enterprise, CHEC has engaged in many construction projects in Hong Kong. I am going to list out some CHEC projects of which Hong Kong people will not possibly be unaware.

First, there is settlement of steel cells at the reclaimed land of the artificial island for the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge ("HKZMB"), to be followed by the use of clay sand in place of manufactured sand for the third runway reclamation. These are the deplorable track record of the "great" state-owned enterprise. The Government is so formidable that it continues to award CHEC with construction contracts. Sometimes when I chat with local residents, some are wondering why Hong Kong still has to spend several hundred billion dollars for construction projects, while some others believe that it is because state-owned enterprises are tapping Hong Kong for easy money. CHEC is a good example. Despite its deplorable track record including movement of the artificial island in the HKZMB project and the use of substandard material for the third runway reclamation, CHEC can still be awarded works contracts. Contracts for new projects will come on stream including the Government's plan to carry out reclamation at Tung Chung. We are against the controversial East Lantau reclamation project. However, with the royalists and pro-establishment camp coming into defence, the Government is ready to fund the project no matter how
many billions it will cost. It is the very aim of the spendthrift Government to spend all of its money, the faster, the better.

The Government has told us boldly that the construction cost of the incinerator was $24 billion, but why does the cost swell to $31.4 billion now? It is precisely because of the poor environmental protection work. We have all along advocated increasing the recovery of municipal solid waste ("MSW") and reducing the amount of food waste, paper waste, and plastic waste as far as possible. But so far, the waste recovery volume is still far from satisfactory with the correct waste separation rate only at 30%. In respect of waste recycling, there are two different kinds of people in Hong Kong. One will not hesitate to walk several streets in order to put the domestic waste into the 3-colour bins, but the other does not bother to do so. When we ask the latter why they are not keen on waste recycling, they say the waste will still be sent to landfills even putting them into the 3-colour bins. How much of the waste collected through the waste separation bins are handled properly and responsibly? This is a question no one knows the answer to, but according to some reports and covert operations, waste recycling contractors would adopt the fastest way by dumping the waste into landfills.

Ultimately, the Government suffers from a two-pronged loss: first, it has to pay several hundred million dollars to outsource its recycling work to contractors in the implementation of the waste recycling policies, but the outcome is the contractors dump even more waste into landfills as if they were afraid of not able to fill them up. Second, the cost for the handling of MSW is equally high. The operation of landfills requires public funding. There is no free lunch, and the operation and maintenance of landfills cost a lot of money. If the Secretary could speak now, he would definitely say this is value for money.

There is a wide performance gap in the implementation of environmental protection polices between what the Government has said and what it has done. The Secretary has kept telling us that he has taken part in the Paris Agreement. So, let us have a look at how many targets stipulated under the Paris Agreement have been met and how many of them defaulted on. I expect to see many defaulted cases in the future. The Government has already conducted several rounds of consultation on MSW charging to solicit views on the charging approaches. What is the progress now? There are still rounds and rounds of discussion. I guess the Secretary will publish another consultation document to further consult the public nearer the end of this Government term. When the Government says it has no money to build hospitals, provide elderly services, and
so on, it earmarks $31.4 billion for an incinerator which I consider a "white elephant" project. The several dozen billion dollars are public coffers. How can the public have trust in the Government if it can default on its previous proposals?

Deputy Chairman, let me tell you a funny thing. The Chief Secretary for Administration has said the selling of plastic bottled water through the automatic vending machines would be banned in Government buildings. Hence, when the Government has kept submitting funding applications to the Legislative Council for the construction of new Government buildings, we asked if the buildings would be installed with water dispensers. The answer was no. Government departments themselves have not taken this policy into implementation. There is no such requirement in works contracts. Neither the Architectural Services Department nor Visitor Centres of the Environmental Protection Department and the Environment Bureau have done so. This matter is not at all serious, but I tell you this because we can infer from this trivial matter the mentality of the Government in submitting its funding applications for the construction of landfill and incinerator …

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Dr KWOK Ka-ki, this is the third time you speak. Please focus on the discussion of the amendments.

DR KWOK KA-KI (in Cantonese): Deputy Chairman, I have focused my discussion on Amendment No. 41 by explaining why we should reduce the one-month emoluments of the Secretary …

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): You have talked about other issues. Please focus on the discussion of the amendments.

DR KWOK KA-KI (in Cantonese): All right. I think the proposed one-month salary reduction is not enough. Deputy Chairman, if I would propose an amendment to this amendment, I would have revised it to a two-month salary cut. Yet, I do not wish to propose a very substantial reduction because Secretary WONG Kam-sing is not as annoying as some of his colleagues in the Government who are fond of speaking unfunny gags. Secretary K S WONG is not too bad, but I just want him to do practical things.
The second point which I wish to raise is about the new Scheme of Control Agreement ("SCA") signed during his tenure. I consider the deal as outrageous. The Government has said the permitted rate of return would be slashed in the new SCA, but it went back on its word once again. Instead, the Government told us that the two power companies promised to purchase the renewable energy generated in the community at rates which are higher than the prevailing electricity tariffs. I originally thought this was an empty talk, but now the Government really puts forward the feed-in scheme. The scheme requires an initial investment of $50,000 to $100,000 for the installation of solar panels. Hence, even though the power companies offer to raise the purchasing prices to two times of the prevailing electricity tariffs, the public still found it impracticable. Yet, some people, including those who have unauthorized building works ("UBWs") at their rural buildings in the New Territories, say they are ready to install solar panels at the rooftops if the Government could waive and not regulate their UBWs. So, if the Government would grant them waivers and no longer prosecute them for the UBWs, they would build additional stories at the three-story buildings illegally and then install solar panels at rooftops. The problem could then be solved.

I definitely do not wish the Government to do so. The adoption of the impractical scheme which provides no guarantee can only allow the two power companies to earn handsome profits under the new SCA. Secretary, may I ask you to take up a bit of responsibility? Of course, you would say if the deal involves exchange of benefits, this could not be made at your level and have to be decided at a senior level. I am aware of this. It was your boss who discussed with the power companies over the electricity tariffs to avoid affecting the profits of the power generators. I understand this. The two power companies are members of the Election Committee. Even though they are not members themselves; they have influential people as their representatives. Under the deformed political system in Hong Kong, even the environmental protection policies have to be brushed aside. I can understand this.

But have the Government and the Secretary ever fulfilled the responsibilities placed on them? I feel sad and ashamed about this. Still, they are able to make some small progress. Recently, the Secretary for the Environment and the Secretary for Development have conducted a site visit to observe the floating photovoltaic systems on reservoirs. I think the use of
floating solar plants on reservoirs is feasible, which can help reduce the temperature and generate electricity as well. But if the Government keeps defaulting on major polices and recording cost overruns on its works projects, it will be useless no matter how many floating photovoltaic systems are installed on reservoirs.

Hong Kong is terribly poor in its waste separation and recovery work. A lot of people keep using tens of thousands of plastic bottles. The Government's environmental protection education is inadequate and the environmental protection policies are not implemented even by Government departments themselves.

It will be acceptable if you are a newly appointed Secretary and are thus fresh to the post. But you are already in your second term and have been working for the post for six years. Secretary, I am really reluctant to use this kind of amendment to drive you to work things out, but if I do not do so, the Secretary will simply not bother to face the problems. He may feel good that no one requests to reduce his salary. Yet, even if we propose to reduce his one-month emoluments, he still compares favourably with other Secretaries and his boss Carrie LAM of whom many Members have proposed to cut their annual emoluments. In this sense, the Secretary is 12 times better than his boss, right?

I do not wish to do so. Hopefully at the same occasion next year, I can propose to increase instead of reducing the Secretary's personal emoluments. This depends on whether the failed environmental protection and recycling policies as well as some perplexing polices could be improved in one-year time. It is hardly likely, though.

I would like to use one more example: the electric vehicles. You may say it is a transport issue which is not directly related to the Environment Bureau. But as we all know, the switch to electric vehicles is one of the ways to reduce road-side pollution.

I know many rich people will buy electric vehicles. Secretary, I can tell you that you just cannot stop people from buying vehicles, particularly electric vehicles. They will not turn a hair even if you triple the taxation, because they can afford to pay $900,000 to $1,000,000 comfortably for an electric vehicle. It
may not be bad if the use of electric vehicles can reduce road-side pollution, only
that the lack of coordination among Government departments is deplorable.

I have not yet decided how to vote. I am not sure if I could propose a
bigger salary cut before proceeding to vote. Anyway, I hope the Secretary can
give himself a self-review properly.

I so submit.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Dr CHENG Chung-tai, this is the third
time you speak.

DR CHENG CHUNG-TAI (in Cantonese): Deputy Chairman, I will speak on
amendment numbers 39 and 40 which concern head 135—Government
Secretariat: Innovation and Technology Bureau, on cutting a sum of money
roughly equivalent to the estimated expenditure on the annual remuneration of the
Secretary for Innovation and Technology in 2018-2019, and on cutting a sum of
money roughly equivalent to the estimated expenditure on the Innovation and
Technology Bureau's Innovation and Technology Fund for Better Living ("FBL")
in 2018-2019, respectively.

Before I speak, I wish to make a simple declaration of interest, because
what I am going to say may have something to do with the FBL, and that is, it
may have something to do with the smartphone app that we have been talking
about. Later on, I will explain why there is an aspect in which I need to declare
that I may have an interest, whether direct or indirect.

I think these two amendments are very reasonable. Let me first talk about
the FBL. This so-called FBL is an important fund under the Innovation and
Technology Bureau in the current-term administration for promoting innovation
and technology ("I&T"), and for stimulating the development of I&T economy in
Hong Kong. The amendment seeks to cut more than $100 million, an amount
roughly equivalent to the estimated expenditure on the FBL in 2018-2019. Why
do I think there is a need for such a cut? It is because the Innovation and
Technology Bureau keeps establishing funds that are useless and meaningless
before it has well-thought-out plans, and then use these funds to make up the
number; more importantly, there is no vetting procedure, and under the situation
wherein there is no vigorous gatekeeping effort, incidents of transfer of political interests or conflicts of interests may occur in the future.

Let me just cite an example. In recent days, the FBL's website has begun to upload some FBL-related projects, and a new one of which has caused an uproar. We think that the Innovation and Technology Bureau has not played a good gatekeeping role, and that it has randomly approved applications for money from the fund. The said project, titled Baduanjin (Eight-Section Brocades) Health Programme Game, is related to research and development of a smartphone app. I can recall that the app is to promote Baduanjin—you should know what Baduanjin is. The purpose of the app is to "promote healthy lifestyle and encourage the elderly to practice Baduanjin exercise through a mobile app/game of artificial intelligence."

You may find it unthinkable, because the elderly have plenty of chances to run into Baduanjin in their daily life, and so how do they use their cell phones to learn the moves of Baduanjin? Do you want them to practice Baduanjin by staring at their cell phones? This indeed has some resemblance of a "solar energy flashlight." Deputy Chairman, what is more is that this project has obtained a grant of $4.5 million from the FBL, to develop a smartphone app in order to teach and encourage the elderly to practice "cell phone Baduanjin."

Deputy Chairman, how big is this business deal? For instance, if I promote the National Anthem Law of the People's Republic of China in the future, can I apply for funding allocation of $10 million for a project that would last for four or five years, to teach everyone to sing the national anthem in orthodox northern accent? Can I apply for funding allocation of $10 million simply in this way? In addition, the organization that has applied for funding for the project is a neighborhood welfare advancement association in a certain local district, and its aim is to educate the elderly on how to use their cell phones to practice Baduanjin. What is the new thing that will emerge when Shaolin Kung Fu and smartphone app are lumped together? It is a thing that is impossible to happen. How can this app promote innovation and technology? Deputy Chairman, it is too bad that Secretary Nicholas Yang is not present, otherwise I would really want to ask him what type of innovation and technology we will have by lumping together smartphone app, Baduanjin, and the elderly. However, to everyone's surprise, the Bureau has allocated $4.5 million to this project that will last for four years. Just this project would make everyone feel unthinkable.
Of course, you may say that there are other projects which are meaningful, and indeed there are; in fact, I have just launched a new smartphone app, therefore I need to make a declaration of interest. My app is to encourage residents in their neighborhood, small businesses or ordinary people to engage in community economy and barter trade; my concept originates from the advertisement board that used to be found at the entrance of some large-scale chain stores for people to place their advertisements on tutorial lessons or childcare services—these things have now gone. At present, I have got an app, which I put to public test last week. In that case, may I apply for funding from the FBL for a four-year project? I feel that my app is more meaningful than the "Baduanjin Health Programme Game." Such being the case, Deputy Chairman, may I apply for a funding allocation of $10 million? May I? Is it true that just relying on this project, we will be told on how to promote innovation and technology? The amendment seeks to cut the estimated annual expenditure on this Innovation and Technology Bureau item, and what we have to look is simply this funding allocation of $4.5 million to encourage the elderly to practice Baduanjin, and to additionally require them to use their cell phones, whereas they will find many organizations offering Baduanjin lessons in their districts whenever they go downstairs, so is there any need to approve the grant in order to teach them Baduanjin?

Therefore, first, I think the FBL should not spend this money. In fact, this sum of $100 million that is allocated to the Innovation and Technology Bureau is a negligible amount in this year's Budget, but just because the Innovation and Technology Bureau has $50 billion to $60 billion at hands, it throws money on such a senseless smartphone app. Pause and think: how much money have we spent on this kind of meaningless things?

Second, why would I support amendment number 39 for cutting a sum of money roughly equivalent to the estimated expenditure on the annual remuneration of the Secretary for Innovation and Technology in 2018-2019? Of course, it is related to the so-called policy of admitting people that I heard in the past two days. A news report yesterday said that Secretary Nicholas Yang had announced that the Government will roll out a plan called the Technology Talent Admission Scheme, for the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation ("HKSTPC") and Cyberport, to encourage overseas and Mainland technology talent to come to Hong Kong quickly—perhaps as quickly as a few weeks—through this scheme.
The reason for rolling out this scheme is because HKSTPC and Cyberport need IT talent in the future, but the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme ("QMAS") and the Supplementary Labour Scheme cannot meet their needs; in particular, QMAS's threshold is very high, and furthermore it is not necessarily simply for the purpose of employment or for technology talent, but is also an immigration scheme. Therefore, there is the need to devise one more scheme, called the Technology Talent Admission Scheme.

In fact, if you still remember, or have looked at the website of the Immigration Department, you will know how many schemes exist for admission of Mainland talent. For example, the General Employment Policy is applicable to non-Mainland residents, and this is known to all; the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals focuses on Mainland residents, but this is different from QMAS or the Supplementary Labour Scheme I just mentioned; the Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates is further down the list; and then there is the Admission Scheme for the Second Generation of Chinese Hong Kong Permanent Residents—of course, some of them are likely to be overseas persons, but it is also possible that some are children born outside Hong Kong to the fresh immigrants in Hong Kong who have gone to a location outside Hong Kong after obtaining Hong Kong identity cards, and these persons can also return to Hong Kong through this scheme.

Deputy Chairman, with so many talent admission schemes in existence, why must we in particular establish this Technology Talent Admission Scheme in such a redundant way? This scheme has a practical and immediate role to play; it is implemented for HKSTPC and Cyberport, the so-called I&T bases. Of course, the Government may say that this matter belongs to population policy, but I want to point out that, in political terms, this scheme merits in-depth criticisms and discussions.

It is a fact, if you still remember, that the Innovation and Technology Bureau not only used the land of Hong Kong people and their $50 billion to invest in the Science Park, but also rolled out a supporting policy called the "InnoCell," which are housing units hired at 60% of the market rent—i.e., they build housing unit—and for the companies there to attract talents. Deputy Chairman, this is related to the performance of the Secretary. On the matter of the InnoCell, I have some doubts. How can they take the land and tax money of the Hong Kong people in order to canvass business, attract capital, and admit experts and companies from other parts of the world to this place for the purpose
of establishing companies? It is a practice that seems to have existed for some time, but I had not expected that the Technology Talent Admission Scheme that was proposed yesterday would move the entire system of unit from the Mainland to the Science Park here in Hong Kong.

I think many people do not know what a system of unit is. It is a system in which private or private-sector enterprises, when engaging employees, pledge to take care of everything of their daily life, nominally from cradle to grave; it resembles somewhat the situation in the Pearl River Delta, that is, in places like Shenzhen and Dongguan, the places to which peasant workers moved in the 1980s due to reform and opening up, as they moved from the interior to the coastal regions, gradually … Deputy Chairman, I know, I understand …

**DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** (in Cantonese): Dr CHENG Chung-tai, you have strayed from the question. Please come back to the question under debate.

**DR CHENG CHUNG-TAI** (in Cantonese): Yes, I will come back to the subject. I have just wanted to explain why we cannot view the Technology Talent Admission Scheme simply as an I&T talent scheme. In fact, Hong Kong's private companies or commercial establishments are, in the final analysis, built upon our freedoms and productivity, which are adjusted by the free market itself. But the current I&T concept is that it takes the land and money from the people of Hong Kong to build this Science Park; not only that, it devises a plan to recruit Mainland talent to work in Hong Kong. For the companies that will open in the Science Park, the Government will provide three meals and accommodation for the workers, and will even provide InnoCell for them to live in. That is the system of unit. It is equivalent to the situation when Hong Kong and Taiwan businesses set up factories in Dongguan in the 1980s and the 1990s, they had to provide accommodation for the peasant workers, and to build dormitories for them.

**DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** (in Cantonese): Dr CHENG Chung-tai, are you still discussing the Technology Talent Admission Scheme announced by the Government yesterday? If so, you have strayed from the subject. Please stick with the subject of the debate and focus on the relevant head for cutting provision.
DR CHENG CHUNG-TAI (in Cantonese): Alright, thank you Deputy Chairman. Therefore when we come to the amendment, I think there is a need to cut the pay for the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, because his work now is not the proper work that should be done by the Innovation and Technology Bureau. What is the role of the Innovation and Technology Bureau? Its role is to promote science and scientific spirit. The practice by the Innovation and Technology Bureau now is to use the land of the Hong Kong people and spend the money of the Hong Kong people to solicit foreign companies. I wish to ask, on the contrary, whether the local IT companies in Hong Kong can receive any assistance or benefits from this scheme. The Secretary's explanation was that the scheme requires applicant companies to employ one local person plus two local interns for every three Mainland professionals admitted, as if the scheme was encouraging the enterprises in the Science Park to use local talents. In fact, how many local IT firms need this scheme to hire local persons? Is this practice not equivalent to exploitation?

Hong Kong hires IT professionals at the market prices in Hong Kong. But the Secretary said that IT professionals on the Mainland can come to Hong Kong speedily through the Technology Talent Admission Scheme. What is behind the scheme is not simply innovation and technology, but a possible change of the model that the Hong Kong market is so accustomed to. We will not "pledge a baby" as you let nature take its course, nor will we operate like a unit and take care of everything in the daily life of our employees. But the Government is worried that no talent would come to the Science Park, so it provides convenience to Mainland companies through the scheme, but the eventual and actual outcome would be Hong Kong people falling into disuse.

Deputy Chairman, I will not talk about the personal background of the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, or about whether he grew up here in Hong Kong, but basically his policy was not in any way encouraging the I&T or research development in Hong Kong. I have mentioned in an earlier speech that Hong Kong has a foundation for research on electric vehicles, as well as noninvasive surgeries. Why did not the Innovation and Technology Bureau mention these I&T examples? At present, regardless of the FBL or the Innovation and Technology Bureau, the thing that is being said over and over again is nothing more than smartphone app, but just as what I have shown in my example, it was a far cry from the normal wisdom when the FBL allocated $4.5 million for the elderly to practice Baduanjin.

Therefore, I support amendment numbers 39 and 40. I so submit.
DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Let me remind members that the committee of the whole Council is now having a debate on the amendments to the Appropriation Bill 2018. If an amendment seeks to cut the expenditure on certain services, then a member's speech should focus on the policy of the services for which the cutting is proposed, instead of elaborating on the overall policy; if the amendment seeks to cut the operational expenses of a department or the remuneration of a public servant, then the member's speech may touch upon the performance of the department or the personnel concerned, but should not elaborate on the overall policy.

MR JEREMY TAM (in Cantonese): Deputy Chairman, I am going to speak on Amendment No. 52, which seeks to deduct the estimated expenditure on the annual emoluments of the Secretary for Security.

I speak on this amendment because I think the Secretary for Security does not worth our support on account of his past performance as well as the public's image on him. In particular, I would like to express great regret over his management of the Government Flying Service ("GFS"). Though small in size, GFS's contribution to Hong Kong is definitely not small. GFS carries out rescue operations and provides support to other Government departments. Rescue operations will take place even under Typhoon Signal No. 10. GFS thus deserves the respect of the public. But why the Secretary for Security has turned a blind eye to the serious manpower shortage in the establishment of GFS.

I will provide some figures on the GFS establishment in the pilot grade for illustration. In principle, the current establishment of the pilot grade is 70, but the actual working strength is only 43, representing the rate of vacancy of 39%. The pilot shortage has occurred long before last year, as GFS has been facing this problem for several years consecutively. In 2015-2016, the establishment of the pilot grade was 44 while the actual working strength was 38; in 2016-2017, the establishment was 51 while the actual strength was 43; in 2017-2018, the establishment increases to 70 while the actual strength remains at 43.

Why has the number of Hong Kong pilots serving in GFS been decreasing? Deputy Chairman, first, the unattractive remuneration packages make it difficult for GFS to scramble for talents in the market. The Hong Kong Business Aviation Centre ("HKBAC"), which is located nearby the GFS headquarters, has its pilot crew made up of former pilots from GFS. Statistically, pilots who have
left their GFS jobs have already outnumbered pilots who are still serving at GFS. In other words, more than half of the GFS-trained pilots have left the Government for the commercially-run HKBAC. Deputy Chairman, GFS has to invest a great deal of time and money for the training of pilots. It needs at least one year for cadet pilots to obtain the necessary licence before they can start to work for GFS. They can really become qualified pilots to perform a wide spectrum of GFS operations I have just mentioned only after they have accumulated several years of experience …

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr Jeremy TAM, I would like to know whether you have mentioned that you sought to reduce the expenditure under head 166.

MR JEREMY TAM (in Cantonese): Deputy Chairman, I am speaking on Amendment No. 52.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Are you speaking on Amendment No. 52 which seeks to reduce the estimated expenditure of an amount roughly equivalent to the annual emoluments of the Secretary for Security?

MR JEREMY TAM (in Cantonese): Yes.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Please continue with your speech.

MR JEREMY TAM (in Cantonese): I have just said the serious wastage of GFS pilots is first of all caused by the unattractive remuneration. The second reason is the fringe benefits. As I have just said, despite the persistent manpower wastage at GFS over the past few years, the authorities have been reluctant to address the problem, leaving GFS to continue to face the manpower shortage. Deputy Chairman, we once wrote a joint letter to the Secretary for Security, urging him to tackle the shortage problem. His reply indicates that the authorities have already increased the establishment of GFS. This is so ridiculous. According to him, the increase in the number of pilot posts from 44
previously to the current 70, which I have also mentioned just now, is tantamount to the increase of the strength of pilots.

The increase in the staff establishment alone is not helpful. The existing remunerations of GFS pilots will make it hard for the Government to recruit sufficient manpower. For example, with a crew of 43 pilots, increased from 38 pilots previously, GFS is still facing the manpower shortage. Likewise, the establishment and strength of GFS pilots was 51 and 43 respectively last year. In this year, the establishment is 70 pilots but the actual strength is only 43. It is thus meaningless for the authorities to increase the establishment of the pilot grade. In a puzzling move, the Security Bureau indicates its plan to create two more pilot posts, increasing the establishment to 72 pilots. But unfortunately, the strength of the GFS pilots remains at 43. I wonder if the Secretary for Security is serious about solving the pilot shortage problem. He even says the authorities will conduct an overseas recruitment for licensed and qualified pilots. However, this overseas hiring only seeks to recruit two to four pilots. Even if the authorities can successfully recruit four overseas pilots to join GFS, there will only be 47 pilots in GFS, which is of little help to improve the pilot shortage. I wonder why the Secretary has kept on increasing the number of "tea pots" when the supply of lids is inadequate. Actually, it is questionable whether the authorities could ever identify qualified overseas pilots to join our pilot crew. I can assure you that the pilot wastage and shortage will be more serious in the next year or two.

Actually, what is the reason for the high pilot wastage? Because of the rapid development of airlines across Asia, it is inevitable for them to scramble for talents. Why do so many pilots jump jobs to work for private airlines? It is because many aircraft owners are now from the Mainland, and they prefer to hire pilots who can speak in Cantonese or Mandarin, so that they can ask and communicate with the pilots right away in case of emergencies. This is the reason for the continuous wastage of Hong Kong pilots, including GFS pilots.

Besides, GFS pilots have to handle a lot of paper work, the higher their positions are, the more time they have to spend on paper work. Yet, many pilots apply for the GFS jobs because they are fond of flying, but they are required to handle loads of paper work at GFS. I have proposed that the authorities should recruit additional manpower to help pilots handle the paper work. Regrettably, the Secretary for Security does not heed my views. Instead, he lets the problem exist.
As I have just said, I confidently expect the pilot wastage to aggravate in the future. GFS's recent purchase of new jet aircraft is the third reason for the high pilot wastage. As the concept of "jet hours" prevails in the aviation market, the opportunities for GFS pilots to fly jet aircraft and thus accumulate their jet hours are a catalyst for them to leave GFS for private airlines. The purchase of the jet aircraft by GFS provides greater incentive for its pilots to leave GFS, thus aggravating the manpower wastage.

Deputy Chairman, I really do not understand how the authorities would deal with the manpower wastage in various GFS grades. Apart from the vacancy rate of 39% for the pilot grade which I have just mentioned, the manpower situation of the Air Crewman Officer ("ACMO") grade is equally undesirable. Deputy Chairman, the establishment of the ACMO grade is 55 but the actual working strength is only 42, representing a vacancy rate of 24%. I particularly wish to compare the vacancy rates of pilots and ACMOs with those of the Marine Officers ("MO") and Surveyors of Ships ("SoS"). It is because the Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service has recently been invited to conduct a grade structure review for MO and SoS grades of the Marine Department. The review report has been completed and submitted to the Legislative Council for its consideration. The next step is to submit the relevant funding application to the Finance Committee.

We learn from the report that the establishment of MO is 55, but the actual working strength is only 34, with a vacancy rate of 39%, the same as that of the pilot grade. The establishment of SoS is 53, but the actual working strength is just 39, with a vacancy rate of 27%, similar to that of the ACMO grade. Both GFS and the Marine Department are facing a shortfall of staff, but why the authorities have conducted the grade structure review for the Marine Department on the one hand, and dodged the GFS's manpower problem on the other? The Security Bureau, however, denies this, pointing out that the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service ("SCDS") conducted the grade structure review for GFS in around 2007. The review, conducted some 10 years ago, saw no need for any changes to the existing grade structure. Deputy Chairman, the review was conducted 10 years ago, while the manpower shortage at GFS persists for some years. I therefore think that the Government should conduct the grade structure review for GFS to, among other things, look into the pilot grade and the ACMO grade.

There is almost no promotion ladder for the two GFS grades. For the pilot grade, there is still a Chief Pilot (D1) rank at the upper rung of the
promotion ladder, but this rank is not available for the ACMO grade. The upward progression of the two grades is actually very limited. Do not think you can take another leap after you are promoted to the Chief Pilot post? You have rather reached the end of the promotion ladder because the next higher rank is already the Controller, or the Head of Department ("HoD"). Hence, the existing grade structure offers little prospect for promotion. Have the Secretary for Security taken any actions to improve the unpromising promotion prospect? He only quotes the 10-year-old SCDS review as saying that there is no problem with the GFS grade structure. He thus believes that there is no need to conduct any study. There was no need to conduct the grade structure study 10 years ago does not necessarily mean that we do not need to do so now. I understand the concern of the Security Bureau. It fears once it sets a precedent, other disciplined services will also request for the same. But Deputy Chairman, we also have to take the vacancy rates into account, right? Are other disciplined services also facing such vacancy rates? The Government has recently conducted the grade structure review for the Marine Department, but it was kicked start right after the vessel collision incident off Lamma. May I ask if the Government is willing to conduct the GFS grade structure only after the occurrence of incidents causing deaths and injuries?

The Government would shift the focus of the discussion to the morale-boosting matter if I speak further on the need for grade structure review. Deputy Chairman, I really do not know how we can boost the morale of GFS. Let us first have a look at the Government's treatment of the head of GFS. The HoD of GFS is the Controller. However, Deputy Chairman, a pip insignia is not found on the shoulder of the GFS Controller when compared with the rank insignia of the Director of Fire Services and the Commissioner of Police, heads of another two disciplined services under the Security Bureau. The two have three insignia on their shoulders. I do not know how we name them now, but in 1997, we described them as "one crown", "one crest", and "one pip". But there is no "pip" insignia on the shoulder of the GFS head, making his rank only equal to the deputy director level of other disciplined services.

In response, the Government may casually quote the 10-year-old SCDS study as saying that there is no need for any grade structure changes for GFS, and it is thus desirable for the Controller to remain at the deputy director level. But the point is even though the Government is unwilling to provide additional funding to create new posts at GFS, it should at best return the pip insignia to the Controller. There should be no difference in the rank insignia among HoDs of
the various disciplined services under the Security Bureau, including the Police Force, the Fire Services Department, the Immigration Department, and GFS when they stand in a row. How can we ask the Controller and his department to accept with ease the lower rank or how can we boost the morale of GFS if the Government is treating its head this way?

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr TAM, you have already spoken for 11 minutes mainly on your dissatisfaction with the various Government policies towards GFS, so as to explain why you propose to reduce the emoluments of the Secretary for Security. You have fully expressed your views. I cannot allow this debate session to become a forum for the discussion of GFS policies. This is very clear. Please return to the subject of the debate.

MR JEREMY TAM (in Cantonese): Deputy Chairman, I got it. But it is rather hard for me not to mention GFS as the problems facing GFS is the main reason why I want to deduct the emoluments of the Secretary for Security.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): I have already allowed you to talk about various issues at GFS for 11 minutes. Please continue with your speech.

MR JEREMY TAM (in Cantonese): I can speak for up to 15 minutes, so could you not bother with the remaining few minutes speaking time and allow me to continue with the criticism? Actually, I have not digressed from the debate subject, and I have kept asking if the Secretary for Security is in dereliction of his duty after saying a few words. Deputy Chairman, my speech is highly relevant to the subject matter. I think the Secretary does not treat GFS fairly by only downgrading GFS among various disciplined services under the Security Bureau. This is a dereliction of duty. Hence, Deputy Chairman, my long-time call for elevating the status of GFS actually seeks to make the Secretary for Security to be fair to each of the disciplined services under his rein.

Besides, as I have said, the Secretary has long been aware of the problems facing GFS, and has thus been in dereliction of duty for years. It would be forgivable if he was unaware of the situation. But Deputy Chairman, we did write to the Secretary to inform him of the problems. As what I have proposed
just now, the several-page letter makes proposals on the effective recruitment of staff to fill the vacancies at GFS and the boosting of staff morale. Deputy Chairman, paying lip service is not helpful to morale boosting. Is the Secretary's offer to boost the morale mere rhetoric? Or will he simply use the report published 10 years ago as an excuse for his non-action and lack of attention? How can this be able to boost staff morale? We have to bear in mind that the high staff wastage at GFS are attributable not only to the inferior remuneration packages, but also to the authorities' disdain for this disciplined services department. The latter, as I have just said, is the fundamental cause for the wastage. Staff members at GFS truly feel that the authorities have looked down on them. Is the boosting of staff morale not the duty of the Secretary for Security? How can the Secretary pay more attention to other disciplined services departments simply because they are bigger in size? I wonder if the Secretary allocates more resources to the bigger departments is to avoid any possible disputes which will get him in trouble?

As I have said at the beginning of the speech, the contribution of GFS is not insignificant despite its small size. However, in the words of the Secretary, the highest-ranking official at GFS is at the rank of deputy director because of the established grade structure and the small size of the department. Deputy Chairman, as I have just pointed out, apart from the remuneration packages and the deputy director rank, what also matters is the insignia on the shoulder of the GFS Controller as this very insignia is a symbol of the head of this disciplined services department. This matters the most to GFS staff. As the Secretary for Security, how can he not be aware of this? Perhaps, he just does not care about the insignia matter, so his reply assures us that a review has been conducted and additional posts would be created. The reply is really laughable. If the existing recruitment conditions were effective, GFS would not have had the strength of only 43 pilots now. The strength remains to be 43 despite the swelling of the pilot establishment from 51 to 70. On the allocation of additional resources, may I ask in what areas have additional resources been allocated? Acting like an ostrich, the Secretary has kept on increasing the number of "tea pots" when the supply of lids is inadequate.

Deputy Chairman, you are right in saying that I have kept on talking about GFS in my entire speech. I just want to use GFS as an example to illustrate how incompetent the Secretary for Security is, who have neither the determination nor the capability to resolve the problems facing his subordinates or his departments.
While no Security Bureau official is in the Chamber now, I hope other Government officials can help relay my views to the Secretary for Security. Indeed, I am helping him to perform the duties expected of him, so that people will have confidence in him. As I have just said, the Government's introduction of new types of aircraft is expected to aggravate the staff wastage problem. It is because the sooner GFS pilots accumulate sufficient jet hours, the earlier they will leave the Government department for other jobs. Hence, I hope the Secretary could face this problem squarely and tackle it as soon as possible.

Thank you, Deputy Chairman.

MS CLAUDIA MO: I am speaking in support of Amendment No. 23, proposed by my colleague Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, to cut the entire spending for propaganda work by the Information Services Department ("ISD") for the upcoming financial year.

If you look up in the official government website, ISD is described as "the Government's public relations consultant, publisher, advertising agent and news agency". Please take note that the term "news agency" comes last.

It goes on to say that as a result, ISD forms or provides the link between the Government and the media, local and foreign of course. As a result, ISD could help the public to achieve some better understanding of government policies, decisions, and so on. Thus, it is propaganda work. ISD does not try to hide on the record that everything it does is public relations work for the sake of the Government. The question is why should taxpayers pay no less than $50 million for such propaganda work, when it does not do anything more than sugarcoating controversies, or if it would actually bother to report such controversies in the first place, or simply presenting Hong Kong as some sort of paradise? Let us be honest about it.

ISD is a propaganda machine. It is nothing but a propaganda set-up. Of course, you would say that it has something to do with government information. So, information is information and it is related to the Government, and there is nothing particularly wrong with it. Please note that in Chinese, it is called "政府新聞處", literally the government news bureau. Now, that title is almost an insult to the word "news", because it is not doing news at such.
Of course, if you say that we need to present Hong Kong, not just to Hong Kong people but also to outsiders, as an entity that is smart and spiffy and cheery, then it is your choice. But I beg to differ.

I can give you one reason why I am so against this ISD today. It is completely different from the days when I worked as a full-time journalist. Ever since 1997—I would not use the word "handover" either, thank you very much—ever since 1997, this particular department has evolved or changed for the worse, much much worse. Ever since then, ISD has been headed by bureaucrats who are known to be yes-men. I am going to give you one example.

Last Saturday, we had a public hearing on the national anthem law. Who was in charge? The Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs. Sorry, off the top of my head, I could not even remember his name … Mr NIP. There were members of the public giving their opinions on the issue. One of them, obviously a patriot or a self-proclaimed patriot, said something like "If you go against the national anthem law, you would be propagating Hong Kong independence. You could be advertising separatism, etc." These may not be his exact words, but to that effect.

So, I turned round in between fairly melodramatic interludes. I posed the same question to our Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs, who was the head of ISD in the last decade. Now you see the linkage, right? He is all being trained and all smartened up for this sort of so called government work. I asked him, "Could you respond to that sort of allegation that if anyone is against the legislation of the national anthem law, the person could be propagating, advocating separatism, etc.? What do you think?" You know what he replied? He said, "No, I did not hear that sort of comment." He sums up literally, he embodies the Government's stance on popular opinion. "We don't want to know." "You said something? We didn't hear." "You said I turn a blind eye to it? I just don't want to know." He said he did not hear and this is the former ISD's head. If I remember correctly, Mr YAU sitting there was also one of the frequently changed ISD's heads in Hong Kong …

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Ms MO, you said just now that you would focus your speech on deducting the estimated expenditure of the Information Services Department. You have spoken for seven minutes, but I notice that you have used most of the time on commenting the performance of
Secretary Patrick NIP in a public hearing this week. Please come back to the subject of the debate.

**MS CLAUDIA MO:** No, I think you missed my presentation all together. My first three, five minutes certainly were focused on the functions and duties of ISD, which is nothing but a propaganda machine. Did you not hear that? I am trying to link up this whole mentality within the Government which does not seem to understand public opinions. If everyone sings the same note, it does not get harmony but this is the other way round to it. In order to get harmony, everyone sings the same note, starting with ISD, of course. And who pays for those spin doctors to spend our taxpayers’ money? Our taxpayers who pay $50 million altogether, no less. Do you understand all that?

**DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** (in Cantonese): Ms MO, please return to the subject of the debate and speak on the proposal to deduct the estimated expenditure of the Information Services Department.

**MS CLAUDIA MO:** That is what I have been talking about. I do not need to come back. I am back here.

Now, all these have been happening at the time when Beijing ordered or at least instigated a campaign on Hong Kong’s cultural and ideological front, a massive and deliberated ideological campaign in Hong Kong to shut down our sense of core values, our sense of human rights, rule of law, democracy and freedom.

You may say it has nothing to do with ISD. Probably not. ISD is, as the website describes, an advertising agent, publisher and indeed public relations consultant—the word "consultant" irritates me to no end. We pay somebody to consult the Government which would try its best to fool us. Give me a break. What sort of government structure this is?

What does ISD actually do? In Chinese, it is "新聞". In English, it is information. There could be a huge difference between the two. Information can be weaponry, information can be used as political tools. We all know that it depends on how you spin it. I hope you understand this context of spinning
information. The word "information" is in the label of ISD. But when it comes to news, which is the Chinese label of this particular government department, news is about what people need to know. What they need to know is public interest, and they have the right to know, too. But of course, there are some people who want to know. They do not need to know but they want to because they are just being curious or being gossipy. We are talking about paparazzi basically, or "puppy squads" in Chinese. Paparazzi basically chase pop stars but in this Council, we have "puppy squads" sent along by the Government. There are quite a few outside right at this moment.

Hence, what I am trying to say is that this government department is fairly schizophrenic. On the one hand, it claims to be doing news in some sort of manner, shape and form but it is not actually doing anything of that sort. It fails in its duty and function related to news miserably. But when it comes to information, it would need to screen in and screen out. Of course, it would only talk about government information. The word "government" comes before information.

Anyway, this morning, I was trying to look up whatever ISD has talked about HUI Chi-fung's fairly dramatic incident lately, how it reported this, if not to the local press, to the foreign press, and what exactly ISD has been doing these days. I looked and looked, and I finally found the response from some supposedly top government officials to questions from the press on HUI Chi-fung's incident. They did not even dare to talk about anything on their own. And according to ISD, they were being asked and they had the courtesy to reply and that is all. It is all completely one-sided, of course. And you call that news? I disagree. You call that information? Perhaps. But it is government information. This is propaganda. ISD is no different from the Central Propaganda Department in Beijing. Will you not agree with that statement? So there we are.

I still have two more sheets, and I do not think I can finish. Of course, we do not need to talk about newsworthiness either. To 政府新聞處 which means government news bureau, what is news? Newsworthiness is defined as a subject having sufficient relevance to the public to warrant news attention, and that includes news values. News value to ISD, of course is how to present our ministers, our top officials in a better way, in a more positive way or at least in a harmless way. So, if you think ISD is doing Hong Kong any good by spending
$50 million worth of taxpayers' money on propaganda work, in order to promote, to help along this Government to present Hong Kong as some sort of paradise, *(The buzzer sounded)* … you are wrong.

**DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** (in Cantonese): Ms MO, your speaking time is up.

May I remind Members that you should focus your speech on the policy behind the service which a CSA seeks to deduct its funding. You should not speak on the overall policy in detail, or provide definitions for individual terms. Since Members have spoken for 55 times so far in the second debate session, I hope we can have a more focused debate.

**DR KWOK KA-KI** (in Cantonese): Deputy Chairman, I wish to speak on Amendment No. 6. This amendment concerns subhead 000 under head 30, with the aim of cutting the estimated annual expenditure for the remuneration of the Commissioner of Correctional Services (*"the Commissioner"*).

Deputy Chairman, the Complaints and Resources Management Division of the Legislative Council Secretariat have met with many people recently concerning some cases in which I have also participated. The major concern arising from those cases is the abuse or maltreatment of persons detained in jails and correctional institutions. Members may have heard the story of some people, including former juvenile prisoners who have been released from the correctional institution near Sandy Ridge. To most Hong Kong people who are outside prisons or correctional institutions, the cases that have happened in the correctional institution near Sandy Ridge or other correctional institutions are simply terrifying. Juvenile prisoners are treated in an extremely brutal way in prisons, including arbitrary assault, and they have experienced ordeals that even I am embarrassed to talk about—Deputy Chairman, I wish to say it out—such as swallowing their own semen or other saddening instances. All this was what happened to those who have been released from correctional institutions.

Legislative Council Members had the opportunity to meet with the Commissioner to discuss the relevant instances and visit some correctional institutions. But regrettably, the visits arranged by the Correctional Services Department (*"CSD"*) were merely some "model visits", just as CSD staff
members told us. By this, I mean everything is "beautified", so as to present
Members with the best picture. But when we ask former prisoners and juvenile
prisoners who have been released why they did not speak up during their
detention in correctional institutions (including the one near Sandy Ridge and
other correctional institutions)—Deputy Chairman, perhaps you also understand
why—they tell us that they will get beaten every time after making a complaint.
If any prisoners (including juvenile prisoners) say a word to a visiting Justice of
the Peace ("JP"), they will receive "special treatment" from CSD personnel at
night on the same day. "Assault at a dark corner" happens not only during the
Umbrella Movement in Admiralty. It may even happen in CSD's prisons and
correctional institutions every day.

When we ask CSD to give a direct reply, the Commissioner asserts that
various mechanisms have been put in place, saying that a prisoner may, for
instance, tell a JP during the latter's regular visits, or discuss with his welfare
officer or even the Superintendent of Correctional Services ("SCS"). I wonder if
Members have seen a movie called Midnight Express. This movie is about some
terrible instances in a prison in a backward region, and the contents of every
complaint may be traced back to the person who orders the abuse. The SCS in a
correctional institution is precisely this very person in charge. Welfare officers
do their job in correctional institutions every day. What can they do? Are you
saying that they should be asked to reprimand their supervisors for prisoners
(including juvenile prisoners)? This is inconceivable, and such outrageous
instances should not have happened in the present Hong Kong.

As Members know, it is reasonable to detain law-breakers in prisons or
correctional institutions. But the purpose of correctional services is to enable
law-breakers to turn over a new leaf and give them new opportunities. I
honestly do not understand the logic behind the assertion that "physical abuse can
help them change for the better". If this is true, they will change for the better
after some more physical abuse, right? This certainly cannot resolve the
problems associated with prisoners, especially juvenile prisoners. According to
a long-term diachronic study in the United States, over 80% of all existing
juvenile prisoners in the United States suffer from various mental illnesses, such
as learning disabilities, attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder, and also autism or
Asperger syndrome of a varying degree. Why are juvenile delinquents sent to
jail? The reason is that they fail to receive appropriate care in various places,
such as schools or education institutions. As a result, they drop out of school or
lose the ability to find jobs, and they become juvenile delinquents. Not only
does CSD fail to help them, but it has also adopted extrajudicial punishment. Imposing extrajudicial punishment on defenceless juvenile prisoners is definitely shameful.

(THE CHAIRMAN resumed the Chair)

As Members know, the Independent Police Complaints Council ("IPCC") was set up in Hong Kong specifically for handling complaints against the Police, even though it is not independent. There are non-official members in IPCC, and representatives from the democratic camp once served as such members. But sadly, the positions have all been taken up by the pro-establishment camp and royalists. The Government is solely responsible for this. But …

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Dr KWOK Ka-ki, I know that the Deputy Chairman already reminded Members just now …

DR KWOK KA-KI (in Cantonese): Chairman, I am now speaking on the debate topic and explaining why CSD …

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): I know you are speaking on the debate topic. But you only need to explain the grounds for supporting the expenditure cut instead of going into the details of the overall policy.

DR KWOK KA-KI (in Cantonese): Chairman, you have resumed the Chair for less than one minute. You are really something.

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): I have been listening to Members' speech all along. Please be concise as far as possible.
DR KWOK KA-KI (in Cantonese): Alright. I will continue with my speech.

Therefore, I think the Commissioner has failed to do his job well in this regard. He must squarely address this problem and formulate an independent and transparent redress mechanism for CSD. This is rather the correct direction. If we agree that IPCC can serve as an effective mechanism or at least as an intermediary or official body within the Government which is responsible for monitoring and restraining the police's use of extrajudicial punishment or abuse of power, then we should also agree that CSD should follow this example. Some propose to set up a committee for monitoring correctional institutions. I think it is indispensable.

Why is the use of extrajudicial punishment more serious in CSD than in the Police? As Members are aware, the police's abuse of power will not last long because the Police must release a suspect after detaining him for 48 hours or even a shorter time frame if the Court does not give its consent. In contrast, prisoners in correctional institutions have nowhere to go. Instances of assault and extrajudicial punishment can literally happen every day. As long as one is detained in a prison or correctional institution, such instances may ...

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Dr KWOK Ka-ki, I remind you again that your speech …

DR KWOK KA-KI (in Cantonese): Chairman, I am still speaking on the debate topic and have not digressed from it. I am discussing the expenditure cut for the Commissioner's remuneration …

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): The Committee is now holding a debate on the amendments to the Appropriation Bill 2018 rather than any individual overall policy. You have already spoken for seven minutes, but you have not put forth any grounds for cutting the relevant remuneration expenditure. Please return to the debate topic.
DR KWOK KA-KI (in Cantonese): Alright. I now discuss the reasons why his remuneration should be cut.

I propose to cut his remuneration amounting to $2.92 million. Why do I want to cut his remuneration? The reason is that he is unfit for the post and fails to return justice to prisoners. He is also unable to monitor the work of CSD, including enabling prisoners (especially juvenile prisoners) to turn over a new leaf. Quite the contrary, the Commissioner allows juvenile prisoners to face injustice continuously, and this has driven them to turn away and escape from society. In my view, if the Commissioner fails to propose any solution within his terms of office, including the formulation of a transparent and practicable redress mechanism that commands people's trust, he should not receive any remuneration.

Besides, CSD itself is also involved in many outrageous incidents, including the scandal involving the sale and exchange of shifts among CSD personnel for monetary gains. And, some SCSs have even forced front-line CSD personnel to buy tickets for celebration banquets. I am unable to list them out; neither do I want to do a recount. During daily operation, CSD may pay no heed to people's views because after all, those who receive all sorts of torture in correctional institutions are all regarded as socially inferior. But Members should not forget that our society has spent quite many resources on nurturing them. If they are given an opportunity to turn over a new leaf and rejoin our society … There were many successful examples in the past, and I will not repeat them here. Many prisoners detained by CSD achieved remarkable results in open examinations, and many others completed courses offered by the Open University of Hong Kong. They have become useful persons in society after release from prisons or correctional institutions.

I have no intention to show any disrespect for those dutiful CSD officers or responsible management personnel who are in the majority. I merely hope that CSD can reflect on its shortcomings and devise rectifications focusing on the incidents involving assault, extrajudicial punishment and abuse of power that are not visible to the people outside and happen in prisons every day. If the Commissioner maintains the same answer as that in his reply to Legislative Council Members and says that the existing mechanism is already sufficient, then his remuneration must be cut. How can he possibly say that the existing mechanism is already sufficient? If the existing mechanism were sufficient, there would not be any cases of assault on prisoners. Besides, the assault on
them has cast an ineffaceable shadow on their life forever. As we saw at the public hearing or our meeting with the relevant complainants, they immediately burst into tears when recounting how they were assaulted in prisons, showing that they can never forget the torture they received over all those years. For this reason, I hope such problems can be resolved.

Another issue is also related, and that is the cutting of the remuneration of the Secretary for Security. CSD is a department under the Security Bureau. But the Secretary for Security appears that this matter has nothing to do with him. I have never heard the Secretary for Security say a word of fairness regarding CSD's management blunders or the maltreatment of prisoners in correctional institutions. Of course, the failure of the Secretary for Security to do his job well is reflected not only by CSD. I now change the topic and talk about the Police Force.

After the Umbrella Movement in 2014, people are concerned about the abuse of power by the Police. Many incidents in the several police-public conflicts that happened after the Umbrella Movement have given people the feeling that the Police have failed to handle conflicts fairly and impartially. This has not only done harm to the public but has also undermined the police's reputation and police officers' morale. As Members know, after the "seven cop" case (that is, the alleged serious assault on a person by police officers), the police's reputation has dropped to the lowest point ever. At the time, some police officers assaulted a member of the public secretly or did something unacceptable on the thought that they could escape the eyes of the public. As a result, people's impression and trust regarding the Police have dropped to the lowest point.

This year, we have likewise dealt with issues relating to the Security Bureau, including the procurement of two water cannon vehicles for the Police. Regrettably, on the procurement of water cannon vehicles, the Security Bureau and the Police refused to give a direct reply as to the conditions on deploying water cannon vehicles and the protection of those who may be injured by water cannon vehicles in the future. As Members know, in some overseas incidents, some people lost their sight or even lives after being injured by water cannon vehicles. Such cases are all too common. Without a clear and transparent guideline … We once asked the Security Bureau and the Police whether any guideline had been formulated to specify the circumstances of using such a highly
injurious devise as water cannon vehicles against the public and also what safety measures would be put in place. But the Security Bureau refused to give an answer.

The problems with the Police and CSD will only increase the hostility between the Government and people and make it more difficult for the Government to gain people's trust. This is simply no good to maintaining law and order and correctional services. Instead of refusing to face up to the reality like a tortoise hidden in its shell and burying their heads in the sand, the Secretary for Security and the Commissioner should come forward and address the problems. Why should the Commissioner refuse to conceive any proper ways to provide prisoners with the slightest bit of protection in the future?

I will discuss other amendments in the next session.

I so submit.

IR DR LO WAI-KWOK (in Cantonese): Chairman, I speak in general support of the Appropriation Bill 2018 and the two amendments raised by the Financial Secretary and in opposition to various amendments raised by Members from the non-establishment camp.

Chairman, Members from the non-establishment camp have, since 2013, moved a large number of amendments year after year to delay the passage of appropriation bills. This year, 15 Members put forth a total of 230 amendments to reduce funding proposals under various heads. Though the number of amendments is the smallest in the last five years, the amount is still great. After giving this a comprehensive consideration, the President struck a balance between respecting Member's rights in raising amendments and ensuring the orderly and effective conduct of business. He finally permitted Members to raise 65 amendments which involve 46 heads.

Chairman, Hong Kong must take forward various infrastructure works to cater for housing supply, new development areas planning and to implement the construction of railways, ancillary transport facilities and various livelihood facilities. As a representative of the Engineering sector in this Council, I urge, through various channels, the HKSAR Government to find ways to improve the
overall planning and to implement infrastructure works in an orderly manner, on top of repeatedly asking the Government to put in adequate resources. With regard to the financial commitment and manpower supply in various planning exercises, the Government has a particular obligation to ensure an adequate availability of professional grade personnel in the civil service establishment and ancillary resources internally, so that we have the necessary policies, planning, talents, resources to realize the policy undertakings pledged to the people.

I am glad to see the Financial Secretary state in paragraph 191 of the budget speech that "[t]he Government will increase manpower to support the implementation of various new policies and initiatives and ease the work pressure on civil servants. … [T]he civil service establishment is expected to expand by 6 700 posts … This represents a year-on-year increase of about 3.7%, the highest since reunification." It is even more noteworthy that engineering-related departments will undergo relatively sizable increase in manpower. For instance, a total of 404 newly created posts have been approved, making up 7.9% of the existing establishment in the professional grades concerned. The increase is higher than that of the overall civil service establishment.

Meanwhile, I believe that the authorities should pay attention to the training and succession of professional grade civil servants. They should put in place mechanism to conduct regular reviews and formulate reasonable promotion ladder for grooming and retaining engineering professionals. According to the authorities, about 400 time-limited posts will be made permanent and close to 590 time-limited posts will be extended in this financial year. These posts primarily come under the works divisions within the Development Bureau and the Transport and Housing Bureau, with more than 200 of them are engineer positions. I believe that the above measures can help retain talents, mitigate the work pressure of the civil servants concerned, facilitate the expeditious implementation of various public works projects, and enhance the performance of professional services. The proposal is welcomed by the sector and the people.

Of course, this does not mean that the work performance and efficiency of various Policy Bureaus and government departments are outstanding or that the funding allocation among various heads is thoroughly reasonable. For instance, the Water Supplies Department has to carry out such measures as enhancing the quality of potable water, ensuring the safety of potable water, reducing the leakage rate of water mains. But there is only a 3% manpower increase among
the relevant professional grades within the Department in this financial year. The percentage is on the low side when compared with the measures to be carried out. I hope that the authorities can consider recruiting more professionals to maintain professional quality and the overall morale of the civil service.

However, the amendments proposed by certain Members are going against the above purpose. Some of these amendments even ask for the reduction of the annual estimated expenditure on the personal emoluments for the staff of the relevant departments. For instance, Amendment No. 28 raised by Mr CHAN Chi-chuen proposes to slash an equivalent of the annual estimated expenditure on the personal emoluments for the 88 non-directorate grade posts created to increase and expedite land supply and to streamline and expedite land development in the Lands Department. He also raises Amendment No. 42, asking for the reduction of an amount equivalent to the annual estimated expenditure on the personal emoluments for the Secretary for Development, as well as positions which include engineer/assistant engineer and senior town planner which are newly created for the provision of service support to increase land supply. This not only defeats the purpose of compelling the Government to improve services as claimed by the Members concerned but also brings the relevant government services to a standstill. This is really outrageous.

Chairman, the supply of land and housing is the most prominent livelihood issue in society. Many people, including a lot of middle-class families and the younger generation are eager to have their own homes. The SAR Government also regards it a priority in governance and spares no efforts in identifying land for housing development. However, land development and housing supply certainly involve the strategic study of long term planning. Therefore, the Planning Department is now stepping up efforts on the update study of the "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" ("Hong Kong 2030+") and various sectors in the community are looking forward to the early announcement of the final version of the territorial development strategy. However, Mr CHU Hoi-dick puts forward Amendment No. 32 and 33 which respectively propose reductions approximately equivalent to Planning Department's estimated operating expenditure on territorial planning and the estimated expenditure on consultancy for the sustainability assessment of Hong Kong 2030+. Meanwhile, Mr CHU Hoi-dick raises Amendment No. 9, asking to reduce an amount equivalent to about half of the expenditure of the Sustainable Lantau Office. Do Members from the non-establishment camp really think that all these short, medium, and long term development planning and public works
projects, which are closely related to Hong Kong's economy and livelihood, can be ignored? How can we address people's housing demands then?

Chairman, it is common in recent years for some non-establishment Members to blast severely important infrastructure projects which are now underway. They even resort to bringing up absurd and truth-defying arguments which include calling all infrastructure projects promoted by the SAR Government "white elephant" projects and claiming the funding approval of such projects tantamount to pouring money down the drain. Therefore, they have to exhaust all ways to delay the public works funding approval of relevant infrastructure projects, impede the local legislative exercise for implementing the co-location arrangement at the West Kowloon Station of the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and even create trouble for the future operation of some infrastructure projects. For instance, Amendment No. 19 raised by Mr CHAN Chi-chuen is asking to slash an equivalent of the estimated expenditure that the Highways Department will use to maintain the Hong Kong section of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge ("HZMB").

Chairman, it is weird that in recent years all projects relating to the cooperation and integration of Hong Kong and the Mainland have apparently fallen prey to the assault of the non-establishment Members. The engineering sector finds this ridiculous and is at its wits' end with regard to this phenomenon.

Take HZMB as a case in point. This project is a centennial example of excellence in building techniques, featuring a complicated bridge-cum-tunnel structure and involving a large number of yet-to-be-resolved technical challenges. Under the project, the main bridge is connected by an artificial island to the tunnel. The placement of wave-dissipating concrete blocks on the seawall of the artificial island is a relatively simple and standardized craft involving no technical difficulty. But the issue has surprisingly been hyped in recent days and was even mentioned in today's meeting. All these attacks originate from an artist impression which critics regard as the original layout plan and they call the placement of wave-dissipating concrete blocks around the artificial island a "jerry-built" which follows not the design. They even criticize the Hong Kong Government for ineffective monitoring and, in a fear-provoking bid, they even assert that the seawall has collapsed under the force of waves. Logic tells us, however, that absurd arguments of this sort can simply be refuted with data and facts.
Actually, the PowerPoint slides that the Director of Highways showed in the press conference on 9 April did illustrate clearly the design of the artificial island head or the seawall above the immersed tube tunnel. Under the design, wave-dissipating concrete blocks are placed all over that section of the tube where it starts to immerse in the sea. The images made plain the relevant design and works requirements. One side of the artificial island connects to the bridge and the other side to the immersed tube tunnel, with wave-dissipating concrete blocks placed differently on the two sides. In the island head where the immersed tube tunnel connects with the tunnel at the island, loading is an important design consideration for mitigating the effect of settlement onto the structure of the connection. Therefore, the wave wall is built with hollow caissons and with wave-dissipating concrete blocks placed underneath. Over the section of the tube where it starts Immersing in the sea, on every 10 m times 10 m surface there are 55 pieces of wave-dissipating concrete blocks, each measures 2.483 m times 2.483 m, placed and heaped to a height of 3.1 m tall. The random placement of wave-dissipating concrete blocks is designed for the control of position and density, under which the orientation of dolosse can be arbitrary. Given the said density, the 3.1 m high dolosse are certainly self-interlocking. The sizable surface covered by the dolosse, which stretches from the island head to the immersed tube, comes to an approximate length of 130 m.

Above the part of the tunnel which immerses deep in the sea, rocks of 2 m tall are used to protect the top of the immersed tubes. Rock is the material frequently used to protect the top parts of tubes. As we have to keep under control the load of the tube located at the island head, dolosse are randomly placed above the tube by design. Given there is more space in-between, the overall density of the dolosse is lower than that of solid rocks, achieving the dual effect of protection and load reduction. A large surface of underwater dolosse is observable during low tide; and during high tide, the underwater dolosse at the island head …

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Ir Dr LO Wai-kwok, how is your current discussion related to the amendment?

IR DR LO WAI-KWOK (in Cantonese): I just want to point out the amendment which seeks to deduct the future maintenance costs for HZMB should not have been raised.
During high tide, the underwater dolosse at the island head will not disappear or be washed away. However, the biggest problem is that the explanation provided by the works department, however detailed it is, is not widely reported but arbitrary accusations are frantically hyped and spread everywhere online.

Chairman, for a better understanding of the relevant works standards, I have downloaded from the web the *Code of Design and Construction of Seawalls* (JTS 154-1-2011). You may also like to download, for your reference, the method, rules and standards for the random placement of wave-dissipating concrete blocks. The *Code* states upfront the strict and compulsory observation of three mandatory provisions. The first mandatory provision is 3.1.6 which stipulates that seawall structures must be subject to wave model trial inspection. Evidently, the design of seawalls is vigorously regulated.

Chairman, some non-establishment Members on the one hand strongly demand service improvement from government departments, in a bid to accentuate their own gesture of concern over people's livelihood. On the other hand, they put forth unreasonable amendments to the budget. For instance, apart from raising Amendments No. 15 and 17 to reduce sums equivalent to the annual estimated expenditures of the Funding Scheme for Youth Internship in the Mainland and the Funding Scheme for International Youth Exchange, Mr AU Nok-hin puts forth Amendment No. 40 to reduce an equivalent of the estimated expenditure of the Innovation and Technology Fund for Better Living under the Innovation and Technology Bureau. These amendments not only reduce chances for young people in Hong Kong to engage in internship and exchanges but also go against the expectation posed by various sectors in the community to the SAR Government on promoting the development of innovation and technology to improve people's daily lives. I find it regrettable that Mr AU Nok-hin had not joined the four-panel joint duty visit to the Bay Area held for three days from 20 to 22 April. He should have noticed a pan-democratic Member who had participated in the visit told the media in public that innovation and technology is developing in leaps and bounds in the Mainland, sounding a big alarm to Hong Kong. The SAR Government should thus make more proactive moves in this respect. I suggest Mr AU Nok-hin follow the examples of other young people and seek chances for exchange outside of Hong Kong proactively in future.

Chairman, I so submit.
MR VINCENT CHENG (in Cantonese): Chairman, I rise to speak in opposition to Amendment No. 13 and Amendment No. 26 moved by non-establishment Members. The amendments seek to deduct the staff costs and departmental expenses of the Joint Office for Investigation of Water Seepage Complaints (the Joint Offices). Why do I oppose these amendments? The reason is that there are many old buildings in Hong Kong, and the Joint Office has had to deal with too many things indeed since its establishment. The task of investigating water seepage complaints is very important and undertaken jointly by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Buildings Department. Yes, we can hear from time to time that investigation into the performance of the Joint Office is conducted by the Audit Commission and the Office of the Ombudsman, and that they both criticize it for taking too a long a time to handle water seepage complaints. But I still oppose the amendments. At present, there are very few channels for the public to handle water seepage cases, and the Joint Office is one of the very few available options. Without the Joint Office, the public will have to appoint private adjusters to carry out investigation and follow up their cases. The whole process is very complicated, and the outcomes of investigation may not be recognized.

I have handled many such complaints, and I observe that in many cases, people are simply unable to solve the water seepage problem after hiring an adjuster with their own money to carry out investigation. In contrast, the Joint Office can still be of some help anyhow. I do not know whether the proponents of these amendments have ever experienced any water seepage in their homes, or whether they have ever handled any such complaints from the public. I think that if they have, they will surely not seek to cut the expenditure of the Joint Office. The point is that even if the expenditure of this body is really cut, the problem will still be there and cannot be resolved overnight.

Chairman, to be fair, it must be admitted that the performance of the Joint Office is not quite so satisfactory. I think there are three problems. First, the Joint Office has been under the joint management of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department and the Buildings Department over all these years, but the two departments may sometimes have arguments and shift the responsibility to each other, because the Joint Office is not run by any accountable management personnel from the two departments. Second, many people complain that they must wait a very long time before the Joint Office starts to handle their cases. Third, the technology used by the Joint Office to investigate water seepage cases is very backward.
As shown by the Director of Audit's Report in October 2016, the number of water seepage complaints from the public rose from 17,400 in 2007 to 30,000 in 2015, with an increase rate of 70%. Under the performance pledge of the Joint Office, the reference time-frame for case handling is 133 days. But can the Joint Office achieve this goal? I think the answer is definitely in the negative. As shown by the Report, the handling of more than half of the cases could not achieve this target. In many cases, the handling process actually took two to eight years to complete. So, I really wonder how many cases are still outstanding at present. But, having said that, I must say that all these problems cannot possibly be solved by cutting the expenditure of the Joint Office. Rather than putting the cart before the horse and cutting the expenditure of the Joint Office, we should consider the idea of reorganizing its work. We should at least consider whether management personnel should be deployed to it for the purpose reviewing the procedures of handling water seepage cases. We should also consider the provision of additional resources and equipment, and also the speeding up of investigation.

Chairman, I also oppose other amendments. I am going to discuss two amendments involving the Food and Health Bureau. One of them, Amendment No. 43, seeks to deduct $530 million in relation to the Food and Health Bureau (Food Branch). The deduction is roughly equivalent to the estimated annual personal emoluments for the Food Branch in 2018-2019. The other amendment, Amendment No. 43, seeks a deduction roughly equivalent to one month's salary for the Secretary for Food and Health.

The proposed deduction of the estimated annual personal emoluments for the Food Branch will affect totally 57 posts. To begin with, Members must realize that the Food Branch is responsible for overseeing improvements to public market facilities and the cleanliness and hygiene of the environment, especially the anti-mosquito and anti-rodent work in hygiene black spots. Members may be aware that the rodent infestation rates and ovitrap indexes have been on the rise in recent years. With the approach of the rainy season in June and July, the public are very concerned about the outbreak of mosquito infection and dengue fever, hoping that the hygiene black spots can be cleaned as soon as possible. If the manpower expenditure of the entire Food Branch is deducted, who are going to do all this work? Are we going to watch the spread of pests all around with folded arms? That is why I am totally against this amendment.
Besides, I am against the deduction of one month's salary for the Secretary for Food and Health. The Secretary is present here now. The Secretary has a very range of duties, covering food safety, environmental hygiene and public health care. Very soon, the Finance Committee will commence discussions on the funding for the works projects of five hospitals. These include the redevelopment of King's Park Hospital and the Kwong Wah Hospital, and many people are waiting for the expeditious improvements to a number of hospitals. We also hope that Our Lady of Maryknoll Hospital can be equipped with an accident and emergency department. So, the post is very important, because she must negotiate with the Hospital Authority to ensure that the public can receive the health care services they need.

Next, let me ask Members to look at the news stories these two days. Here, you can see "A long wait of nine years for joint replacement operation" and "A wait of almost three and a half years for first orthopedics consultations". The Secretary should look at this as well. At present, the waiting time for specialist outpatient services at public hospitals is really very long. The worst-hit area is New Territories East, but the waiting time in Kowloon is also rather long, as long as 105 weeks or 26 months. The waiting time for specialist outpatient clinic services is also as long as two to three years. We need the Secretary to tackle all these problems. If the Secretary does not do the work, who else will?

Chairman, the Secretary will surely understand that people with sufficient means may use the specialist services of private hospitals. But those who are not so well-off may need to wait for public hospital services. If money is not a problem, should we speed up health care manpower training or implement public-private partnership, so as to quicken the delivery of services? That is why the work of the Secretary is very important, and I hope that she can take quicker actions to address people's urgent needs.

Chairman, finally, I wish to discuss two of the amendments proposed by the Financial Secretary. The Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong asks him to increase the amount of Elderly Healthcare Vouchers permanently to $3,000. But even when the Government possesses a surplus of $150 billion, he is still so tight-fisted and has just introduced a one-off increase of $1,000. Many elderly persons have in fact asked me whether the amount can be further increased. The Financial Secretary was not present last time, but he is here now. Will he find time to talk with elderly people? These vouchers are very important to them.
Also, when I spoke during the Second Reading of the bill, I expressed the hope that the Secretary could quicken his pace, so that eligible residents did not have to wait until February next year before they could apply for the cash supplement of $4,000. Last Wednesday, the Financial Secretary said in this Council that this was a new arrangement, so time for processing was required. In other words, he meant that the Government would hand out money, but the process could not be expedited. Many people have in fact said to me that the Financial Secretary should not be so sluggish, and they hope that the pace can be quickened. I understand that some procedures will need time. But I still hope that the Financial Secretary can work out how to speed up the whole thing as much as possible. At the same time, he must make sure that the procedures will not cause too much inconvenience to the public, and that everybody can receive the $4,000 as soon as possible. Those people waiting for this amount of assistance are definitely not second-class people. We must take their concern as ours. I hope that the committee stage, the Financial Secretary can take forward the measure as early as possible.

Chairman, I so submit.

MR JEREMY TAM (in Cantonese): Chairman, to begin with, I wish to add a few points to my earlier speech on Amendment No. 52 concerning the deduction of the estimated annual expenditure on the Secretary for Security's remuneration. I wish to add a few points only. Air Crewman Officers in the Government Flying Service ("GFS") are actually involved in highly dangerous tasks. Members can imagine this. Air Crewman Officers are sometimes deployed to helicopter winch operations for rescuing vessels at sea under inclement weather. This is a highly dangerous task. Besides, another unique feature of GFS is that its engineering department possesses highly complex skills. They must have knowledge of not only helicopter repairs but also aircraft repairs, and various types of certifications are required. They must be generally capable in all these aspects, and that is what makes GFS able to serve the public. So, I hope that after listening to my speech, the Secretary for Security can seriously deal with the reform and upgrading that GFS deserves.

Chairman, next, I wish to discuss Amendment No. 41 on deducting one month's salary for the Secretary for the Environment. First, I think this is
already not quite so harsh to him because the amendment is not aimed at cutting his remuneration for the whole year. This amendment proposed by the Member merely seeks to deduct one month's salary for the Secretary for the Environment. This shows that the Member does not think that everything he has done is wrong. But it is certain that some of his work is not quite so satisfactory. Chairman, to some extent, I agree to the proposal on deducting one month's salary for the Secretary for the Environment's because of his previous deeds. I only want to discuss the failure of his policy on promoting electric vehicles ("EVs").

All his measures on promoting EVs—the total waiver of First Registration Tax ("FRT") several years ago, the complete and abrupt replacement of the waiver by a cap of $97 500 later, and the one-for-one replacement scheme now—are actually very problematic. But I do not intend to limit my discussion to the purchase of EVs, because the job of the Secretary for the Environment in promoting EVs is more than making just a taxation decision. And, I must say that although the Housing and Transport Bureau also has a role to play, the policy of promoting EVs is mainly guided by the Environment Bureau. So, Members should also look at his other mistakes in his promotion of the policy. The provision of charging facilities in car parks, for example, is actually marked by many problems.

As reported by the media earlier, some developers who provide parking spaces with charging facilities in the car parks they build are granted land premium exemption for the car parks. Members may remember that according to the media reports, some developers are granted land premium exemption with the proviso of providing EV charging facilities. But interestingly, they do not need to actually provide any EV chargers and the required installations. As long as they can provide the infrastructure for charging, it will be alright. The whole is so absurd that …

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr Jeremy TAM, you should be speaking on Amendment No. 40, which seeks to reduce head 137 by an amount roughly equivalent to one month's salary for the Secretary for the Environment. But what you are discussing now does not fall inside the portfolio of the Secretary for the Environment.
MR JEREMY TAM (in Cantonese): Yes, Chairman. But the department responsible for giving written replies to the questions of the Special Finance Committee was the Environmental Protection Department, and the paragraph I cited just now is from the reply of the Secretary for the Environment. So, I am just referring to his replies, and this is really one of his duties. Chairman, you may think that the Buildings Department is responsible for executing the policy. But do not forget that the one who formulated this policy is the Environment Bureau.

Experienced as the Chairman, he is not aware that this is actually the job of the Secretary for the Environment. That is why the general public likewise may not know that the Secretary for the Environment is responsible for a number of tasks under this policy, including the subject matter of the written reply numbered ENB730. He really said in the reply that it was not necessary to actually install any chargers or charging facilities, and developers can still this policy support. As a result, some developers can enjoy land premium exemption for the car parks they build without doing anything.

As I have said, Chairman, the Secretary for the Environment is responsible for formulating the policy and the Development Bureau is responsible for execution. Of course, I must add that the Financial Secretary also has a role here. Why? That is because the Government set up a certain steering committee on promoting the use of EVs some years ago. I cannot quite remember its full name, and the Financial Secretary is its chairman. Anyway, the Secretary for the Environment must have a look at the points I have mentioned, so as to prevent any abuses of the land premium exemption.

Let me carry my point a bit further. Why do we say that the Secretary for the Environment should lead the promotion of EVs? Chairman, as I said at the beginning of my speech, although the Transport and Housing Bureau also has a role in promoting the popularization of EVs, the policy is mainly guided by the Environment Bureau. As we can see, the Government set down two objectives for the popularization of EVs some years ago. First, by the year 2020, 30% of the private cars should be EVs or hybrid vehicles. Second, 30% of the private car parking spaces in newly constructed buildings should provide charging facilities. This is the policy I have been referring to.
But as at January 2018, only 10 000 of the 550 000 private cars were EVs. This is 2% of the total, meaning that we are falling behind the target. I really do not know how we can attain the target in 2020. Also, there are only 1 862 chargers in Hong Kong now, representing just 0.3% of the total number of parking spaces in Hong Kong. Hence, there is a huge shortfall, and we are falling behind the target once again. What is going on anyway? I do not know whether the Government was in fact driven by the shortage of chargers to halt the total FRT waiver all of a sudden and replace it by the cap of $97 500. Has the Government in fact chosen to do the opposite thing due to this shortage of parking spaces with charging facilities? Has it thus chosen to curb the number of EVs running on the roads in order to make the shortage look less serious?

There is also an interesting point here. One may argue that all is just the result of market forces, because the Government possibly do anything if not many people are interested in EVs. But how about government vehicles? Chairman, the Secretary for the Environment was also the person who replied to the questions of the Special Finance Committee. One of the questions was about why the Government does not provide more parking spaces with charging facilities. He replied, "Nowadays, the driving range of electric private cars is at least around 150 kilometres, while the daily mileage of most private cars in Hong Kong is a few tens of kilometres. As such, an electric private car should be able to sustain a whole day's journey after a full charging at its owner's home or workplace. The need for electric private cars to top up their batteries by public chargers should be minimal." This means that the existing driving range is already enough, and as long as there are sufficient charging facilities in people's home car parks, there is no need to provide so many parking spaces with charging facilities.

But when he replied to another written question of the Special Finance Committee on the number of EVs in the existing government vehicle fleet, he gave the answer of 256. Chairman, this is really a miserably small number. When asked why the number was so small, he replied, "The percentage of EVs in the Government fleet is still low, mainly because of the unsatisfactory battery performance, including the failure to charge to the rated capacity and the short driving range after charging ... ." Chairman, what a reply! The same Secretary, when talking about the same subject matter in two different written questions, could give such different views. In one reply, he said that the driving range was sufficient, so there was no need to have so many chargers and charging
facilities. But when asked why the number of EVs in the government vehicle fleet was so small, he said that the driving range of EVs was not good enough. Seeing such black-and-white replies from the Secretary, we should really deduct one month's salary for him, right?

About the one-for-one replacement scheme, what is the biggest problem? It is said that it can bring a tax reduction of $250,000. But is this really true? This is policy is equally erroneous. To begin with, the Government's estimation of the number of eligible vehicles is wrong. Why? According to the Transport Department, about 300,000 vehicles will be eligible. But is this really true in reality? All is just a matter of simple arithmetic. At present, anyone who buys an electric vehicle will already be eligible for a basic FRT exemption of up to $975,000. How much additional exemption can the one-for-one replacement scheme really bring then? Roughly $150,000. This is because under this scheme, the exemption is $250,000, but we must deduct the basic FRT exemption I have just mentioned. This means that the additional exemption the scheme can actually bring is just $150,000. Also, it is required that the vehicle to be replaced must be aged over six years. Now, if a certain vehicle was bought six years ago at $300,000 and $400,000 when it was new, it may still be worth about $100,000. But then the Government requires the owner to scrap the old vehicle before he can become eligible. Why must the Government require the owner to scrap a vehicle which is worth $100,000 for an additional tax exemption of $150,000 only? Chairman, this is simply stupid and not justified. Also, a vehicle which is just six years old is still very new. Why should we turn it into a piece of rubbish? This is not environmentally friendly. The Secretary's measure is not environmentally friendly, right?

What should the additional gain be if the scheme is to offer any incentive? It will become an incentive only when the price of the vehicle drops to a very low level. A vehicle aged 10 or more years may be worth $10,000 or $20,000 only. In that case, it will make sense, right? In that case, I will naturally scrap my old vehicle so as to benefit from the tax exemption of $150,000. Therefore, in the very first place, the Government's estimation of the number of eligible vehicles is wrong. Its figure is just a simplistic one. Some vehicles are still worth $300,000 or $400,000 six years after purchase. There are many such vehicles. The Government has wrongly estimated the number of people who will participate in the scheme. Drawing the line at six years is unreasonable.
Second, the scheme requires an ownership period of three years. I can appreciate the reason for this requirement. The Government does not want people to buy a vehicle and scrap it right away in order to get the tax concession. But this should not be the prime concern of the Secretary for the Environment. The one-for-one replacement scheme is meant to replace old, preferably very old, vehicles by EVs without increasing the overall number of vehicles. In that sense, any single vehicle thus scrapped should be welcomed. This should be the main consideration of the Secretary. Why should he bother about how the owner got the vehicle and for how long he has owned it? The main thing is that the sooner an old vehicle is scrapped, the better. Therefore, an ownership of three years is not warranted. And, there is something still worse. Suppose I want to enjoy the tax exemption and I do not own any car at present, can I buy one now in order to qualify? Well, under the scheme, it will be too late for me to do so now. The reason is that three years later, the effective period of the scheme will have expired. True, there may be a new policy by then. But who knows whether the new policy is going to be a good one? It may be something worse, as worse as the sudden replacement of the total FRT waiver by the cap of $97,500. The new policy may be as bad as that.

What is the third thing that the Secretary for the Environment has done wrong? This third mistake is about the Secretary's agreement with the Transport Department, which requires the vehicle to be replaced must be licensed for 20 months without any interruption in the 24 months preceding the replacement? There is a problem here. Why? I know that the purpose here is to make allowance for car owners who forget to renew their vehicle licences. I think for this purpose, there is actually no need to make it so lenient as to allow for four months of no licence discs within a period of 24 months. The Government may make the period shorter, and I will have no objection. But what is it that I oppose then? It is the idea of "without any interruption". This exactly where the problem lies, because some people ... Chairman, especially in cases where the cars concerned are very old and not worth much, most people will not take out any car mortgages from any banks. In such cases, there will be no banks to remind the car owners to renew their vehicle licences. Car owners must themselves remember to renew their vehicle licences. But Chairman, people do really forget these things. They may forget to do so for just two or three days or, say, two weeks. And, shortly afterwards, they may realize that they must renew their licences. They do not really want to buy a car from others and scrap it
quickly in order to get the benefit. They truly forget to do so. So, it is actually better to specify that the vehicle to be scrapped must be licensed for 20 months with or without interruption within 24 months. And, it is okay to make it 23 months. But the main thing is to do away with the "without any interruption" condition. This is because "without interruption" may create time gaps that deprive car owners of eligibility.

I therefore maintain that the policies on EVs rolled out by the Environment Bureau are not well-thought-out in many ways, and there is too much confusion in the course of implementation. Hence, I support the proposal on deducting one month's salary for the Secretary for the Environment. I think this is very appropriate. I so submit.

MR JAMES TO (in Cantonese): Chairman, I have focused the discussions in my last speech on Amendment No. 37, which is about the estimates of expenditure for Rewards and Special Services of the Hong Kong Police Force under subhead 103 of head 122. In my current speech, I am going to talk specifically about Amendment No. 35, which seeks to reduce $85.95 million in respect of subhead 000, and the amount is approximately equivalent to the annual estimated expenditure of the Complaints Against Police Office ("CAPO").

Chairman, over the past 20 odd years, I have always been fighting for the independence of CAPO from the Police Force, and the reasons behind are actually very simple. Take the Independent Commission Against Corruption ("ICAC") as an example. Our anti-corruption agency was once established under the Police Force decades ago, but ICAC has so far been operating independently for dozens of years, and its achievements are obvious to all. It is generally believed in our society that corruption can only be eradicated with the establishment of an agency which is independent of the Police Force to investigate corruption allegations against the Police. Likewise, with regard to complaints against police officers and cases of alleged abuse of police power, public confidence in the relevant investigation work can only be instilled when it is undertaken by an independent body.

The problem of "peer investigation" lingers, and this can be elaborated from various different perspectives. First of all, the Government argues that some overseas police forces have also adopted the practice of investigating
complaints against police officers by their peers in the forces, and in this connection, I can only say that some overseas places do have a very large police force. For example, the control, command and accountability systems of the Metropolitan Police Service of London, which is commonly known as "the Scotland Yard", are completely different from those of its counterparts in Scotland and Wales. Therefore, although the same practice of investigating police officers by their peers is adopted, and cases of alleged abuse of police power are investigated by people familiar with the work of the Police, this can still safeguard the effectiveness of the investigation work and instill public confidence in the independence and impartiality of the investigations conducted, given that the officers concerned are from completely different entities.

Nevertheless, in Hong Kong, although the Government may argue that CAPO is an independent unit and will act with impartiality, we should all understand that police officers working in CAPO will not serve in this unit for their whole life, but will be promoted according to their own personal experience, competence and expertise. Alternatively, police officers from other units may be transferred to serve at CAPO, while those working in CAPO may be transferred to other offices, such as criminal investigation teams in other divisions or investigation teams in the Police Headquarter.

In other words, police officers will often be transferred to different units in their work, and although belong to the same Police Force, no police officers will serve at CAPO forever. Things may be better if a revision can be made to the system, such as supporting the work of CAPO with at least several teams of police officers, or a senior management structure comprising officers who will serve at CAPO permanently and will not be transferred to other posts. Under such circumstances, it may be possible to reduce public distrust in the system and clear the suspicion of "peer investigation", because police officers working in CAPO will never be transferred to other units.

What problems will arise from exercising staff postings within the Police Force regularly? As all police officers belong to the same Police Force after all, officers serving at CAPO will not try to burn their bridges because they may work in the same unit with officers under investigation one day, and these officers may then become their supervisors, subordinates or fellow colleagues. There is also a dangerous side in the execution of police duties, when police officers are often required to go through fire and water with each other, and mutual trust, affection, assistance and psychological support among them are extremely important.
Motivated by their professional ethics, police officers will often put their own life at risk when they are on duty, and there should be a high degree of trust among colleagues, otherwise the whole thing will become a mess. The problem is that with staff postings exercised within the Police Force regularly, it is possible that police officers serving at CAPO have once worked with officers under investigation in the same unit, or there was once supervisor-subordinate relationship between them, and this will only arouse public suspicion of the independence of investigation work undertaken by CAPO.

The Government has also argued from another perspective and claimed that officers in the Police Force did not support the independence of CAPO because in their opinion, if non-police personnel were allowed to conduct investigations against police officers, there might be a misjudgments on their part because they did not know or understand the work of the Police Force, and they would then come up with conclusions that the officers under investigation had committed mistakes or abused powers. I can only say that if some police officers really think that only "peer investigation" can make them rest assured, they should bear in mind that the general public are on the other side of the coin. For those members of the public who have complained against police officers for wounding and abusing powers in serious cases, or for being bad mannered in minor cases, how can they believe that totally independent and impartial "peer investigation" can be conducted by police officers?

Furthermore, complainants against the Police are usually persons who are involved in a court case. In other words, it is possible that a suspect has been arrested by a team of police officers, and the suspect has later complained against the police officers for using force to make him/her confess. As it may involve a direct conflict of interest, if the case is not investigated by another team of officers who are deemed to be completely independent in order to ascertain whether confession was made after the suspect has been tortured, I think the public will only regard the system as totally not trustworthy.

With regard to the example cited above, it may be suggested that the defence counsel can raise this argument in court and urge for a fair judgment, since forces may have been used to make the defendant confess. However, a fair judgment will usually be passed by the Court in a trial held after a long time, so as to determine whether the statement in question cannot be established, and is therefore not admissible as evidence in court. In some extreme cases, the Court may accept that there is suspicion of using force to make a defendant confess, and
order that an investigation of the case concerned should be conducted afresh. What disadvantages will it have?

First of all, it is absolutely not the Court's intention to investigate into the relevant case, and it is only concerned about the consistency between the details of that case and the contents of the statement in question. Secondly, for a case which occurred some months ago, although the Court has ordered that an investigation should be conducted afresh by the Department of Justice or the Commissioner of Police, much evidence should have already been lost. As the complainants in respect of some complaint cases under investigation by CAPO are persons who are involved in court cases as I mentioned just now, and police officers working in CAPO actually belong to the same Police Force, such complainants will often be advised that in accordance with the law, it may be necessary for them to take their own legal rights and interests into consideration, and decide if they should give a statement on their case to CAPO so soon to commence investigation into the case. They should bear in mind that in so doing, CAPO will be required to pass their statement to the police officers responsible for investigating the criminal case concerning them.

In other words, the statement given by a complainant to CAPO will be passed immediately to a team of police officers who have allegedly beaten up the complainant. Given this legal dilemma, a defence counsel representing a complainant may sometimes suggest that a statement should not be given to CAPO for the time being, and without the complainant's statement, CAPO will not be able to commence its investigation into the relevant complaint case. This is a legal deadlock which has so far not been entirely untied, and the situation is grossly unfair to complainants.

We can imagine that if a team of police officers is conducting an investigation against a suspect, and the suspect is of the view that these police officers have engaged in corruption and have therefore arrested him/her, the suspect can report the case to ICAC immediately. ICAC will not hesitate for any reasons, and will commence investigation at once when it appears that there are grounds for pursuing the case. Why is that so? It is because ICAC is not a body established under the Police Force, and it can investigate into any reported cases on the basis of individual merit. The complainant can put his/her mind at ease and give a statement to ICAC, explaining the reasons for suspecting that the team of police officers who arrested him/her have engaged in corruption.
Therefore, while ICAC is investigating whether the police officers are involved in corruption, the Police Force is also conducting an investigation at the same time to determine whether the suspect has committed a criminal offence, and both investigations can be conducted in parallel and in a fair manner. However, as CAPO is a unit under the Police Force, many complaint cases of such a nature have got stuck as an investigation cannot be carried out for the time being, and it is indeed very unfair to the complainants concerned.

Chairman, there is another problem that we are facing at the same time: Whether the establishment of the Independent Police Complaints Council ("IPCC") to monitor and review the investigations undertaken by CAPO an adequate measure to address all credibility issues? I have no doubt about the endeavours made by the Chairman, Vice-chairmen or staff members of IPCC to review and raise questions about investigation reports submitted under the system, and make their observations about the substantiation of some complaint and investigation cases. However, according to a conclusion drawn a few years ago by Ronny WONG, a Senior Counsel and also the former Chairman of IPCC who has remained in the office for six years, IPCC is actually trying to achieve an objective which is almost a mission impossible. He pointed out that IPCC had to find out whether there were any power abuse cases among the many cases handled by CAPO, and the whole thing was tantamount to ramming its head against the wall.

This is a conclusion drawn by someone who has held the office of the IPCC Chairman for six years. He can in no way be described as an outsider, and by drawing such a conclusion, he has made a very serious allegation. He has of course elaborated his views clearly in great detail, and has pointed out that they are often required to debate with CAPO on the question of whether certain complaint cases should be substantiated, or try to find out where exactly do the problems of CAPO lie. He has revealed in his remarks the inadequacy in the structure of this regulatory body (that is, IPCC) above CAPO, and it is in fact what we commonly call an institution of "three nos".

First, no matter how much IPCC is not convinced that CAPO has conducted a proper investigation into a particular case, it is after all not possible for IPCC to deploy its own investigation teams or commission a team of investigators to carry out an independent investigation of the case. In other words, it does not even have a secondary investigation power. Even though IPCC is satisfied from most of the reports submitted regularly by CAPO that its
investigations are proper and impartial, it still cannot enjoy a secondary investigation power when it is of the view that impartial investigations have not been carried out in respect of certain cases. Secondly, IPCC has no power to pass a verdict, because it has no rights to determine whether a particular complaint case is substantiated or not, and can only engage in an endless debate with CAPO when the case is not substantiated. Ultimately, IPCC will have no alternative but to submit a written report to the Chief Executive, stating clearly its disagreement with the decision of CAPO for consideration by the Chief Executive. Thirdly, IPCC has no power to impose sanctions.

Under such a system, when three obvious defects as mentioned above have been identified in the institution which is supposed to monitor the Police Force on behalf of Hong Kong people, how can people believe that the existing mechanism is impartial, independent and thorough? Chairman, in the absence of a trustworthy system, the amount of money in question will only be spent without any return. Hence, I will keep ramming my head against the wall, and try to find a way out of this dilemma by proposing to cut the estimated expenditure for this purpose.

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, please speak.

MR CHAN CHI-CHUEN (in Cantonese): Chairman, in this section I will speak on Amendment No. 19, which seeks a resolution that "Head 60—Highways Department" be reduced by $269,600,000 in respect of subhead 000, a sum of money roughly equivalent to the estimated expenditure on maintenance of the Hong Kong section of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge ("HZMB") by the Highways Department in 2018-2019.

In fact, when I drafted my questions on the Budget this year, I found that the maintenance cost for the Highways Department had greatly increased by $400 million, and I felt very strange. Why would this cost be increased so much? When I looked at the current financial year, I found that the maintenance cost of the roads to be commissioned by the Highways Department had skyrocketed, and as far as I know, in 2018-2019 only the HZMB is expected to be commissioned. Therefore, I enquired about which roads were involved in the newly added $400 million. Exactly as I have expected, this sum of money, i.e. the newly increased maintenance cost, covered the HZMB which has yet to be
commissioned. However, what I have not expected is that just the maintenance cost of the Hong Kong section of the HZMB would be as high as $269.6 million, which accounts for the major portion of the upsurge in the maintenance cost. Within this maintenance cost of $269.6 million, the maintenance cost of the Hong Kong section is as high as $143.9 million in a single year, and equivalent to 0.58% of its construction cost. As far as the maintenance cost of the Hong Kong Boundary Crossing Facilities ("HKBCF") is concerned, it is $125.7 million, and equivalent to 0.35% of its construction cost.

After the figure was made known to the public, the media followed up and reported on the matter. When I posted the relevant content on my Facebook, netizens responded with uproars and gave many angry emoji. The media all asked one single question: Why would the maintenance cost of the HZMB, which has yet to open to traffic, be so expensive and as high as $270 million?

Chairman, let me draw an analogy here. You have purchased a new property, and this property with its interior decoration is now handed over to you, but before you move to that property and live in it, someone tells you that the maintenance fee for this property this year would be hundreds of thousands of dollars or even $1 million. In that case, only two scenarios are possible. First, you are not careful enough at the time when you take possession of the property, so you find that the property needs repair and maintenance immediately after you take possession of it, and so comes the maintenance fee. Second, the developer did shoddy work and used inferior material, so the property becomes tattered and needs repair and maintenance soon after you take possession of it.

However, the HZMB is not yet completely built, so how come it would involve a huge amount of maintenance cost? I think all those who see this figure will have doubts in their minds instantly. The bridge is not yet open to traffic, but it needs maintenance; the bridge is not yet completely built, but it needs maintenance. Exactly how the maintenance cost and the construction cost are derived from calculation? The bridge should enter the stage of maintenance only after it is built and open to traffic without glitches.

Therefore, I have raised related questions to the Highways Department at a special meeting of the Finance Committee, and I thought this amount of maintenance cost had a lot of unclear and unreasonable aspects, so I proposed the current amendment. First, the cost is unreasonably high, and the Government has not clearly explained why. The HZMB is not yet commissioned, the date it
will open to traffic is still being estimated, an exact date is still unavailable, and we merely expect that it will be commissioned in September or October this year. If it becomes operational in September or October, then within this fiscal year, it will be operational for only half a year until 31 March next year, but the maintenance cost is as high as $269.6 million, which is unimaginably queer. The most unthinkable part of this is that the maintenance cost of the Hong Kong Link Road ("HKLR") is $150 million, however, the HKLR is not yet open to traffic, nor do we know when it will, so how come we have this maintenance cost of $150 million?

I put this question to the Government twice, and only then did it say in its reply to my supplementary question that the HKLR's maintenance cost is indeed higher than that of ordinary roads, because some marine viaducts of the HKLR have unprecedentedly long span structures (up to 180 m span), and there are over 150 viaduct piers (with some of them situated at nearly 50 m above sea water level), and because maintenance cost of the HKLR covers daily inspection and cleansing of road carriageways, routine maintenance of the marine and land viaducts, regular monitoring of the structural health of the viaducts, electricity cost for highways depots for the HKLR, etc., so the maintenance cost is higher than that of ordinary roads.

However, I did not understand after listening to this explanation, and remained perplexed despite much thought. The HZMB is not yet operational. Is that right? The HZMB is not really open to traffic at present, but just the routine inspection cost is so high, a condition that worries everybody. That is to say, you have now taken possession of the property, and you hire someone to carry out daily inspection, and this inspection and other routine maintenance will cost you $150 million in the first year. After you move into the property, that is, after the HZMB is officially open to traffic, if there comes a windstorm or a natural disaster to the extent of causing damage, then how would the maintenance cost look like? That is to say, before the bridge has any problems, before it is open to traffic, and before it is operational, we need to pay a maintenance cost of $150 million; how can we handle the maintenance cost if wear and tear really occurs after the bridge is open to traffic?

What angered me more was that the Highways Department had seemingly given misleading information in its reply to me during a special meeting of the Finance Committee. At that time I asked why the maintenance cost was so high, and the Director of Highways advised that it was a result of the high operating
cost of the HKBCF. I think that this reply is an attempt to confuse, because within the sum of $269.6 million, only $120 million was earmarked for maintenance of the HKBCF, and $150 million was for maintenance of the HKLR, but the Highways Department described the $150 million maintenance cost of the HKLR as the maintenance cost of the HKBCF, to the extent that people were confused. When the media covered this matter extensively, and the Director of Highways gave a reply, the public also felt that the Director of Highways was somewhat dishonest, for people were not sure whether he had purposely misled them, or just skillfully let them misunderstand the figure he mentioned. Consequently, I needed to once again submit a written supplementary question and asked again at a Finance Committee meeting, only then did the Highways Department clearly pointed out that HKLR maintenance cost is not the same as HKBCF operating cost. Even though the Government has clarified that HKBCF operating cost does not include HKLR maintenance cost, its description of HKBCF operating cost as HKBCF maintenance cost is unacceptable to the public. People cannot accept that operating cost is maintenance cost. In fact, in the contract concerned, maintenance and operation are distinguished from one another. Therefore, whether the $150 million maintenance cost of the HKBCF should include the operating cost is a matter worth a discussion.

The several replies from the Government were all ambiguous and had mixed up different concepts, and until now the Highways Department still said in its reply to my supplementary question that the maintenance cost includes the cost of repairing ordinary wear and tear, and that the Highways Department does not have a breakdown of the relevant data. Such a reply convinces me all the more that there are lots of unclear aspects in this sum of estimated maintenance cost. In order to ensure proper use of our public money, I put forward this amendment. To be honest, he says this sum of money is merely a budget, and the official date for the bridge to open to traffic is still an unknown. We know that many problems remain unresolved, and once a delay occurs, we may not necessarily see traffic within this year. Therefore, this amount of estimated expenditure may not be utilized, and the Director of Highways just wanted to tuck this expenditure into the maintenance cost, so even if I cut this expenditure, he can still manage in case of need simply by reallocating funds from one corner to another. But this can teach him a lesson and make him realize that he must explain clearly to the public the astronomical cost of the HZMB, as well as its astronomical maintenance cost.
Another viewpoint I propose is: should some of these maintenance expenses be shouldered by Zhuhai and Macao? I say this because the HZMB has a Y-shape design, in which the Zhuhai link road and Macao link road will be connected to the HKLR through the Main Bridge. In the future, when the Zhuhai Bridge is built, vehicles departing from Hong Kong will diverge onto the Zhuhai link road and Macao link road respectively, but vehicles departing from Zhuhai and Macao will converge onto HKLR through HZMB Main Bridge.

Concerning this point, I believe everyone understands, and that is that the traffic volume on the HKLR of the HZMB will surely be larger than those on the Macao link road and Zhuhai link road, because the vehicles from Macao and Zhuhai must use the HKLR of the HZMB. Based on this reason, when the HZMB is open to traffic, vehicles from Macao and Zhuhai will surely cause a certain degree of wear and tear to the HKLR and the boundary crossing facilities. Without the HKLR, the HZMB would not be able to function, nor have value of existence, let alone being called the HZMB. Therefore, I demand that Zhuhai and Macao jointly shoulder with Hong Kong a certain percentage of the expenditure on the HKLR and the boundary crossing facilities, and I think this demand is fair and reasonable.

Finally, Hong Kong's participation in the construction of the HZMB was in fact a move to meet the demands of Zhuhai and Macao. In order to build the HKLR and the HKBCF, we had used a contractor with very bad reputation, and the result was that the actual cost exceeded the approved cost by more than $10 billion. The HKLR and the HKBCF built by this contractor, like I said a while ago, may reveal their real quality only in the future. As is meant by what I have said, after taking possession of the property, everyone thinks it is fine and intact, without expecting that after about a year it is already in need of repair and maintenance, and I believe that by then the maintenance fee will greatly increase and become something like a bottomless pool. Therefore I request Zhuhai and Macao to shoulder the expenses with us, and this is fair and reasonable. Therefore, I put forward amendment number 19, and I hope Members will support it.

Next, I wish to discuss amendment 29, which resolved that "Head 92—Department of Justice" be reduced in respect of subhead 000, involving operational expenses of roughly $12.44 million; and I also wish to discuss amendment 30, which resolved that head 92 be reduced in respect of
subhead 234, involving litigation costs of $538 million. I think the time remaining is only enough for me to speak on the first half.

I demanded that "Head 92—Department of Justice" be reduced by roughly $12.44 million, which included the remuneration of Secretary for Justice Teresa CHENG. In fact, I had taken the initiative to emerge amendments, and integrated other amendments requesting pay cut for personnel belonging to different grades. Therefore, in addition to the Secretary for Justice, the amendment also includes the estimated expenditure on the annual remuneration of the Director of Public Prosecutions, as well as the estimated expenditure on the annual remuneration of the Constitutional Development and Election Unit of the Constitutional Affairs Sub-division in the Legal Policy Division of the Department of Justice—a total of three areas are involved. Of course, this method is not necessarily the most ideal, because someone may concur that Teresa CHENG's remuneration should be cut, but may not agree with cutting the remuneration of the Director of Public Prosecutions, however, my current amendment which needs everyone's support, is a package which put the three items together.

Let me first talk about Teresa CHENG. Why should we cut her remuneration? Regarding Teresa CHENG, I think the Council has been very accommodating. Since the occurrence of the incident of unauthorized building works ("UBWs"), the matter has not had any development, as if it no longer exists so long as it is not mentioned, and has thus been settled. I do not know whether this is lamentable or laughable, but this construction expert, and law expert, who has written *Construction Law and Practice in Hong Kong*, this Secretary for Justice who holds qualifications as a Counsel and as a civil engineer, actually owns a number of properties full of UBWs, and says she did not notice any of those UBWs—the biggest absurdity under the sky.

This person, who is a suspected law offender engaging in UBWs, now continues to serve as our Secretary for Justice, and continues to use her power to instruct Returning Officers to "disqualify" legitimate candidates in elections. As for the meeting addressing the laws relating to the "co-location" arrangement, she quit coming after attending the meeting two or three times, and sent the Law Officer to attend the meeting instead. However, I think perhaps this is better, because the Law Officer's replies are indeed better than Teresa CHENG's replies. Therefore, you should all the more support me in cutting the remuneration of Teresa CHENG.
We are now discussing the use of public funds, and many Members have also raised demands for cutting the remunerations of the heads of different departments, but if we should aim at this Secretary for Justice who is neither competent nor upright, the pro-establishment camp should definitely consider giving support too. Many people say her crime is not serious enough for her to receive a death penalty, but they also consider that she is guilty. In that case, would it not be a small punishment and a big admonishment if we cut her remuneration and ask her to serve as a volunteer for one year? I do not want to mention again the whole incident of her UBWs, nor do I have that much time to speak, but I do hope that the Government can announce as soon as possible the progress in the investigation into the UBWs involving Teresa CHENG, the incumbent Secretary for Justice. Has the Government proved that she is not guilty and therefore there is no need for prosecution? If the Government already has a decision, please tell the public as soon as possible, because this also involves public interest. Will the Government sue the Secretary for Justice? At present, she says she will stay out of the matter and will not participate in the decision on whether or not prosecution relating to her UBWs should proceed, and I hope that the staff in the Buildings Department and the Department of Justice can submit a progress report as soon as possible, so as to ease public concerns. In fact, she should step down, not just have her remuneration cut for one year. Therefore, I hope everyone supports this amendment, proposed by me, with the Secretary for Justice as the target.

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Let me remind members, to allow sufficient time for public officers and the 15 movers of amendments to speak again, I will begin at around 6:30 pm today to invite them to speak. The debate in this session is expected to come to a close at around 11:30 am tomorrow.

Upon completion of the debate, the Committee will immediately vote on the amendments one by one, and then the third session will begin.

Members who wish to speak, especially those who have not yet spoken, please press the "Request to speak" button as soon as possible.

MR GARY FAN (in Cantonese): Chairman, this time I am going to speak on CSA No. 57 proposed by Mr AU Nok-hin that head 156 be reduced by $8,400,000 in respect of subhead 700. The proposed cut is approximately equivalent to the 2018-2019 annual estimated expenditure for the "Pilot scheme
on promoting interflow between the Hong Kong-Mainland sister schools" ("the Pilot Scheme") participated by primary and secondary schools.

Chairman, the three-year Pilot Scheme was first launched for trial in 2015-2016 school year with the original intent to encourage more schools in Hong Kong to pair up with their counterparts in the Mainland as sister schools. Yet, this year's Budget proposes to regularize the Pilot Scheme starting from this year, which will involve an additional recurrent expenditure of $170 million per year. The Neo Democrats doubts that the increased expenditure on the various Mainland exchange programmes under the Education Bureau every year had not been spent properly. Hence, I rise to speak in support of such an amendment moved by Mr AU Nok-hin.

Initially, Chairman, I had also proposed a similar amendment, but due to the President's decision to tighten the criteria and adhere to the "one amendment to one subhead" principle for the sake of all Members in general, my amendment was not admitted. However, I still wish to emphasize that, in our opinion, the problem with the huge sum of public money spent on funding different types of Mainland exchange programmes under the Education Bureau every year lies not only in the Pilot Scheme. In recent days, Chairman, some media and media organizations have attempted to examine the number of subsidized places in Mainland exchange programmes under the Education Bureau offered to Hong Kong students over the past five years and found that the number of unfilled places kept increasing incessantly from the original 10% to a significant 40%. Such Mainland exchange tours funded by the Education Bureau offered 56 000 places in 2013-2014 school year, but the number had increased to 10 600 by 2017-2018 school year, meaning that the number of subsidized places had increased by 90% in just 5 years. Nevertheless, the actual number of students participating in these exchange tours did not increase in proportion to the increase in the number of subsidized places as expected. During these five years, the actual number of students participating in these exchange tours only increased slightly from 50 000 to 63 000.

Chairman, we only need to look at the increase in the actual number of participants in contrast to that in the number of places offered to understand that the latter did not increase as significantly as the former. Inevitably, this has caused me to doubt the motive of the Education Bureau's spending huge sums on regularizing the three-year Pilot Scheme to continue providing financial support for a large number of such Mainland exchange programmes.
Chairman, some secondary school principals have remarked during interviews that it was difficult for them to increase the number of students participating in those Mainland exchange programmes since the time available for arranging external visits for students is rather limited. Besides, exchange tours do not simply involve conducting interflow among students. In fact, they entail deployment of teachers to take charge of the tours, but it is impossible for the school to increase drastically the workload of its teachers purely for the sake of meeting the target number of students participating in those Mainland exchange tours because teachers in Hong Kong have already been assigned onerous tasks. For teachers, these exchange activities necessitate a great deal of extra work, including preparing work sheets, making reports to the school and handling administrative duties, etc. Above all, teachers have to look after and supervise the students throughout the entire exchange tour. It is no easy task and very tiring indeed. Some teachers even felt that they were exhausted both physically and mentally participating in such exchange programmes and it has unduly added to their work pressure.

At the end of last year, it was heard that in launching the exchange tour under the Junior Secondary and Upper Primary School Students Exchange Programme Subsidy Scheme: "Understanding Our Motherland" organized by the Education Bureau, some schools assumed that all parents did agree to let their children take part in the exchange tour unless they explained to the school in writing their reasons for not giving consent to let their children participate. No wonder why both the parents and members of the public were of the view that students were being forced by the schools to participate in those tours, while teachers were forced to meet the target set on the number of participating students.

Chairman, it is revealed in the Director of Audit's report released in April 2018 that the Home Affairs Bureau has been offering generous financial subsidies to support some pro-establishment bodies in organizing different types of youth exchange tours in the Mainland, where the total amount of expenditure had exceeded $100 million, representing an increase of 400% (i.e. an four-fold increase) as compared to that of 5 years ago. Yet, some of the exchange tours were very much under-participated indeed. Take for instance an exchange tour to Hunan organized for 2015-2016 school year which was participated by only one single student, but funding for this tour was still approved by our gate-keeper, the Home Affairs Bureau. Finally, the tour was made up of a student and 3 accompanying representatives of the organizing body who headed for the
Mainland to conduct interflows. The cost of this very tour consisting of one single participant who was accompanied by 3 persons amounted to $5,533, among which only $1,440 was used to subsidize the participant, while the remaining $4,093 being the administrative cost of the tour.

Chairman, take a look at the example above. Should our Government spent the public money this way, may I ask? I just cannot help querying once again if the public money used to provide government funding for the various Mainland exchange programmes has really been properly spent. We even doubt if those organizing bodies of the Mainland exchange tours have benefited from the block subvention granted by the Government. For example, the Youth Development Commission under the Home Affairs Bureau has been, for many years, funding the tours under "The Red Journey for Hong Kong Youths" ("香港青少年紅色之旅") jointly organized by the China Civic Education Promotion Association of Hong Kong and the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in HKSAR in collaboration with the United Front Work Departments of various Provincial Communist Party Committees during which young people from Hong Kong visit the former residence of Mao Zedong and Jinggangshan. Having regard for this, how can the Hong Kong people not query if, instead of being any ordinary Mainland exchange tours, such tours are actually part of the central government's united front work aiming at "brainwashing"?

It has been proved by facts that such "brainwashing tours" were ineffective. Otherwise, it would not have been the case that, as illustrated by the outcomes of numerous surveys, the resistance to Mainland in recent years has grown much stronger among the younger generation in Hong Kong than before. In the past, the Government believed that increasing opportunities for local youths to exchange their views and thoughts with their Mainland counterparts could help enhance their knowledge and understanding of the State as better knowledge and understanding of the State would help facilitate integration of China and Hong Kong, thereby deepening Hong Kong people's knowledge of Mainland culture. Yet, the fact turns out to be exactly the opposite. Why? Chairman, government resources should not be used in this way. On the one hand, the Government has admitted Mainland professionals and on the other, it allows local young people's opportunities of moving up the social ladder to be suppressed under the current education system and other relevant systems as well, thus leading to more China-Hong Kong conflicts in the end. The increase in Mainland exchange tours is indeed no remedy to this particular problem. Should public money not be spent on training local students instead of funding
such Mainland exchange tours which have been reduced to kind of mere formality?

Chairman, at present, only 18% of school-age students in Hong Kong are offered places to attend bachelor degree programmes funded by the University Grants Committee ("UGC") each year. Nevertheless, the HKSAR Government encourages Hong Kong's young people to pursue development in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area on the one hand while refusing to increase either the recurrent expenditure on implementing education policy or UGC-funded undergraduate intake places. Why would the young people in Hong Kong will be heartily willing to take part in those Mainland exchange tours in view of these facts?

Chairman, the Neo Democrats considers the Government's practice of funding all sorts of Mainland exchange programmes with public money a user-resource mismatch in fact. Hence, I rise to speak in support of Mr AU Nok-hin's amendment which proposes to cut the estimated expenditure for the "Pilot scheme on promoting interflow between the Hong Kong-Mainland sister schools".

In addition, Chairman, I also wish to express my views on CSA No. 54, another amendment proposed by Mr AU Nok-hin in respect of the Education Bureau. that head 156 be reduced by $8,400,000 in respect of subhead 700. This amendment proposes that head 156 be reduced by $254,919,000 in respect of subhead 000. The cut is approximately equivalent to the 2018-2019 annual estimated expenditure for the CDC under the Education Bureau.

Chairman, the Education Bureau has triggered a crisis recently concerning the wording used in history textbooks. Members belonging to different political parties and groupings have expressed their views on this issue just now. The crisis emerged as certain terms used in some history textbooks (e.g. "China took back Hong Kong", etc.) were suddenly criticized as "inappropriate wording", causing members of the public to doubt that the Government wanted to, taking the form of textbook assessment, interfere with the curriculum matters by means of "black-box operation".

Currently, textbook publishers are required to follow the Guidelines for Printing of Textbooks and the latest relevant syllabuses/curriculum guides developed by the Curriculum Development Council in writing and compiling
textbooks. However, Chairman, such guidelines and guides have never been made public while the Education Bureau's internal editing panel must keep confidential all the procedures and contents concerned in conducting compilation and editing tasks. This cannot but make people doubt why suddenly, 20 years after the handover of Hong Kong's sovereignty, the wording of "recovery of sovereignty" has to be changed into "resumption of sovereignty". Does this only mean to make trouble out of nothing or whatsoever? Yet, the situation is dissimilar to the case in which Carrie Lam refused to answer the simple question of "What is the mother tongue of Hong Kong people?" earlier at the question-and-answer session of the Legislative Council meeting. The term "recovery" has been in use in Hong Kong's textbooks for 20 years, but now it has to be changed into "resumption of sovereignty". No wonder members of the public have started to doubt if our mother tongue, medium of instruction and the editing panel under the Education Bureau have all undergone certain fundamental changes. Well, where there is smoke, there is fire. And so this is kind of reasonable doubt indeed.

Chairman, members of the public doubted that the Education Bureau was seeking to brainwash students through implementing national education. Their doubt was formed not overnight but over so many instances in the past that worried them. For instance, the Education Bureau mentioned two years ago in its website that Cantonese was not an official language of Hong Kong. Subsequently, the contents in question were deleted when raised doubts against such remarks of the Education Bureau.

In the early years, the Curriculum Development Institute had pushed through the Liberal Studies subject as a mandatory independent core subject. In recent days, however, we are told that the examination and assessment mechanism for Liberal Studies will be reviewed and the existing seven-grade assessment scheme will be simplified to a two-grade scheme (i.e. either "passed" or "failed"), and the Liberal Studies subject may even be removed from the list of mandatory subjects. Former pro-establishment Members, including those belonging to the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong, had repeatedly criticized the Liberal Studies subject in the past. For example, Dr Priscilla LEUNG, who has also delivered her speech just now, initiated a joint operation with Miss Leticia LEE which demanded that the Liberal Studies subject be "de-politicized" and made an elective subject instead. Actually, the Liberal Studies subject will touch on different issues (including socially sensitive issues) which aims at developing students' independent thinking
skills and their sense of concern for politics and current affairs, but since those in power only want to implement national studies in order to brainwash the young people in Hong Kong, the Liberal Studies subject has become the main target for attacks from pro-establishment Members.

Chairman, the education sector has spent 10 years to take forward Liberal Studies which had cost them much time and effort to come to grips with the approaches of teaching and learning this very subject as well as the ways of examining and assessing students' performance in this regard. Therefore, if the Chief Executive Carrie LAM's remarks (i.e. "education for education's sake") holds true, then the Government should not introduce changes so frequently that the initial ideal of education reform is refuted in consequence, leading both the students and teachers or even the whole education sector nowhere.

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr Gary FAN, please stop speaking immediately.

MR AU NOK-HIN (in Cantonese): Chairman, before I speak, allow me to fill some gaps in my previous speech since the Government is also fond of doing so with its Budget.

I mentioned the Beijing International Horticultural Exhibition in my previous speech. In fact, I brought up the subject to respond to Secretary LAU Kong-wah's enquiry on this subject. I do not think I ever mentioned this example when I spoke. But I did ask him something about the Mainland exchange programme. I thus need to clarify. However, there is a project related to the Beijing International Horticultural Exhibition. Let me tell Members more when I have the opportunity to do so.

I talked about subhead 50 when I last spoke. I notice Political Assistant Mr CHAN Ho-lim is here. I really want to ask him why the SAR Government could have formulated such a strange financial policy and ended up having the Link Real Estate Investment Trust divested its assets. I thus think that Members, especially Mr SHIU Ka-fai, should pay special attention to the problem concerning the Financial Services Development Council ("FSDC") under subhead 50. I know Mr SHIU has some views about finances and investment. He is welcomed to share his views here.
I am concerned about the future development of FSDC. Its nominal function is to give advice on financial policies, but actually, I remember the original idea of LEUNG Chun-ying of setting up FSDC is to serve the function of a sovereign wealth fund, just like the Temasek Foundations in Singapore to pool together state-owned funds to make investment. However, if Members know something about the financial system of Hong Kong, they should know that the exchange fund of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority has been performing a similar function. Of course, we have no way to prove whether FSDC will have this problem after it is incorporated as a company limited by guarantee. We can only keep this issue in view for a longer time.

Chairman, I wish to talk about Committee Stage Amendment ("CSA") No. 66 this time. The CSA seeks to deduct the funding for head 190 in respect of subhead 000. In other words, it will revise the estimated meeting expenses of "the University Grants Committee ("UGC"), Research Grants Council and Quality Assurance Council".

I may have mentioned to a few friends that I teach in tertiary institutions. In her reply to my question on autonomy of tertiary institutions last week, Mrs Carrie LAM refuses to comment on the plight of many part-time lecturers, or what I call "wandering lecturers", in tertiary institutions. Honestly, in order for tertiary institutions to have true autonomy, they should be immune from political interferences or be free from the influence of business logics. It is the responsibility of UGC, and also that of the Government, to provide the soil that truly fosters autonomy in universities. Universities are the forefront of society. University researches should improve the condition of society and intervene in problems facing society; they should not focus on the unrealistic idea of internationalization.

On the other hand, universities are the place where we train future talents for society and where we provide quality tertiary education for the all-round development of students. This is the responsibility of universities and their different faculties. Education should not be marginalized in universities, nor should it become something minor to the university operation. These are what society expects universities to fulfil, and also what every citizen, university student and parent expects universities to fulfil. In order to warrant that universities can meet the aforesaid expectations, they should not foster a logic that encourages endless competition. Universities do not need to operate or survive like a commercial enterprise. But Chairman, we notice that the
administrative logic of UGC is quite the opposite of what society expects. It stresses research and disparages teaching; it develop education with many business logics, which has led to the gradual deterioration of university education.

Has UGC duly discharged its responsibilities? We notice that UGC preaches blind and infinite competition. It encourages universities to go after international rankings. When universities only prize researches and rankings, they are actually punishing the students. The triennial competitive allocation has prevented university faculties from making long-term development and planning and also intensified resources competition among them. Faculties that are less popular but instrumental to the scientific research are closed. The Government has been promoting the idea of multiple pathways for and different specialties among young people. But in reality, it does not attach importance to or respect minor school subjects. As a result, major subjects become increasingly dominant, thus making it impossible for Hong Kong to achieve diversified education and for some subjects to continue to survive.

The logic of infinite competition has led to the serious problem of managerialism. The intense competition and rank fighting have made the university system increasingly bureaucratic. In the past, heavy administrative work that primary and secondary school teachers had to handle impacted negatively on education quality; today, such administrative work that undermines education logics are affecting our tertiary education. The university administration regards students and teachers as a number and assesses the profitability of the university using cost-effectiveness, completely ignoring its education vision and philosophy.

We notice that different university faculties dismissed experienced lecturers who had taught for 10 or even 20 years in the name of financial reasons, but the fundamental reason is the so-called cost-effectiveness. They replace a stable teaching system with a low-paid, unstable system made up of wandering lecturers who are not given any protection. Chairman, universities are not running out of money; UGC is not running out of money either; and the Government is of course not running out of money. But then why have so many university faculties acted like being plagued by poverty and had to fight for survival? Why do they all seem to have run into financial difficulties? This is the product of managerialism and blind competition. This is also the present situation of UGC.
Chairman, perhaps Members do not understand what wandering lecturers are. I have a sad joke. Many people nickname me "Coach KIM". When asked which soccer team I am attached to, I always say the Rangers because I am a wandering lecturer. Over the recent years, university education has turned to a self-financing mode and become fragmentary. Universities employ an increasing number of part-time lecturers, including I myself, and less full-time lecturers. I have to tell Members this example again. One of my past part-time lecturer contract comes from one-third of the work of a full-time lecturer ... I do not mean dividing a person into three parts, but dividing the teaching post into three parts and then three part-time lecturers are employed to teach the three subjects. This is the present situation of tertiary institutions.

The work of a lecturer is highly insecure because universities are dividing their work into small parts. I may be teaching in this university in this semester, and then in another university in the following semester because my contract is not renewed. Many lecturers have to teach at a few universities at the same time to make a living. Take me as an example. I am now teaching associate degree programmes in the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the City University of Hong Kong. But I often cannot tell students of the two universities for sure whether they will see me next year. They may not see me again next year, or I may be assigned to teach another subject. Let me tell Members what my favourite subject is, and I like to teach East Asian politics the most. I was able to teach this subject in the last semester, but I am not assigned to teach it this year. I often do not have a formal room, but just a table, to meet students for tutorials. Sometimes, I do not even have a table. This is the problem facing tertiary institutions. Tertiary institutions and UGC are so rich, but when it comes to education, why do they have to impoverish lecturers to such an extent?

We, the wandering lecturers, take up a large part of the teaching in universities, but we are pressed to the very bottom by this system. I am not going to talk about our remunerations today. After all, this is a debate on the Budget. I wish to talk about the teaching quality. No matter how passionate lecturers like us are about teaching, or how much we aspire to teaching, one can imagine that we feel insecure when we teach the programmes. We are only informed of the subject that we will teach in the coming semester one month before the semester starts. In one example, I was informed that I had to teach critical thinking one week before the semester started ... "AU Nok-hin, teach this subject for another semester". That is it. It is not that lecturers in other tertiary institutions or faculties do not want to do a better job, but that they are now facing
a tertiary teaching environment that is highly volatile and precarious. The teaching quality will definitely be affected if students cannot easily find their teachers in the school campus. Insufficient education resources will also affect the teaching quality. This has been the trend of university education over the past few years.

Chairman, there are still many young people in Hong Kong who believe in and aspire to academic researches and they earnestly wish to contribute to the Hong Kong academia. But many of them are reduced to wandering lecturers under this highly pressurized and competitive system. Their contracts are renewed annually or even biannually. They strive to survive in the tertiary education sector. This is the outcome created by universities that blindly pursue rankings and researches but disregard teaching; and this is also the present situation shaped by the UGC policies over the years where universities are only keen on resources seeking. This is the present situation created by this appalling system.

My discussion today is about the CSA on deducting the meeting expenses of "the UGC, Research Grants Council and Quality Assurance Council". I hope the Chairman or Members here will not mistake that these institutions will not have any funding after the deduction. This is not my purpose either. All along I am talking about "starting over". If we do not propose this CSA, how are we going to force UGC to start its system over? If the Government and UGC truly have a vision of tertiary education in Hong Kong and want to ensure the quality of our universities and act responsibly to parents and Hong Kong citizens, they absolutely should not continue to turn a blind eye to the situation. To reform the whole funding system, to put teaching back into the focus of tertiary institutions and not to marginalize education are responsibilities that UGC should discharge.

Chairman, having education in Hong Kong is under immense pressure. One of the major sources of pressure is insufficient subsidized university places. Many students study very hard just to get a place in the eight major universities. I do not think that should be the only pathway for students. But it does not mean that when they receive university education, they should be having such fragmentary education. Nowadays, universities employ wandering lecturers and regards researches more important than education. The Government may not have to take full responsibility of the tertiary education in Hong Kong, but it should at least take some responsibility.
Perhaps Chief Executive Carrie LAM is watching this meeting broadcast when I speak. And I believe she is doing so; otherwise, she would not be able to mention something Mr James TO said in her Question and Answer Session. She is incredible. She can manage to watch the broadcast of Members' speeches, and I hope she is watching now. Regarding the Chief Executive's exchanges with a Member on that day, I think the institutional autonomy that we talk about is not the institutional autonomy she said at that time. It is certainly important for tertiary institutions to have autonomy, but it is even more important that tertiary institutions are developed into a people-oriented and not an appalling place and also a place with education quality and not a place of distortion.

In her statement last week, Mrs LAM says that the Government has already provided assistance to students studying at self-financing institutions. She seems to think that she has already tackled the problem of tertiary education. I disagree. If the Government continues to turn a blind eye to these problems, it is not acting in a way that respects institutional autonomy. Its inaction is the biggest irony to institutional autonomy.

Chairman, I so submit.

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr AU Nok-hin, let me remind you that if you are still working as a wandering lecturer, you should consider whether you need to declare interests and whether you should take part in the voting of the CSA concerned.

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

(Mr Gary FAN stood up)

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr Gary FAN, what is your point?

MR GARY FAN (in Cantonese): I request a headcount.
CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Will the Clerk please ring the bell to summon Members back to the Chamber.

(While the summoning bell was ringing, Mr AU Nok-hin stood up)

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr AU Nok-hin, what is your point?

MR AU NOK-HIN (in Cantonese): Chairman, I wish to declare interest.

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): You can make a declaration now if necessary.

MR AU NOK-HIN (in Cantonese): Chairman, I declare that I am a part-time lecturer at both the Unit College of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Community College of City University. The relevant information is recorded in the Register of Members' Interests.

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

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Dr KWOK Ka-ki, please speak.

DR KWOK KA-KI (in Cantonese): Chairman, I am now speaking on Amendment No. 29, which seeks to resolve that head 92 be reduced in respect of subhead 000, and the proposed reduction amount is approximately equivalent to the annual estimated expenditure on the emoluments for the Secretary for Justice and the Director of Public Prosecutions, as well as the annual estimated expenditure on the salary costs for the Constitutional Development and Elections Unit under the Constitutional Affairs Sub-Division of the Legal Policy Division of the Department of Justice.

Let me first talk about the Secretary for Justice. As we all know, the new Secretary for Justice of the current-term Government enjoys high popularity not
in the sense that she has striven to safeguard Hong Kong's rule of law or enhance the impartiality of our judicial system, but in the sense that she has taken the lead to undermine our rule of law with the scandal of unauthorized building works ("UBWs") relating to her. We all know that once there was news about the assumption of office by the Secretary for Justice, the existence of UBWs at nearly all her properties was exposed, including her properties in Tuen Mun, Shatin and Repulse Bay, as well as her industrial properties in Fo Tan.

Chairman, as we all know, it is not something new for senior officials to get involved in an incident concerning UBWs, given that LEUNG Chun-ying, the previous Chief Executive, his competitor Henry TANG, his predecessor Donald TSANG and many incumbent senior officials have all been involved in scandals concerning UBWs. However, the biggest difference between the case involving Teresa CHENG and all other similar cases is that Teresa CHENG is a registered engineer herself. She is not only a former Chairman of the Appeal Board Panel (Town Planning) but has also published a textbook on the enforcement of the Buildings Ordinance. As an official with engineering background, she is familiar with the local Buildings Ordinance and is a Senior Counsel herself, so how can she not act in an upright manner? The biggest problem is that she has done further harm to Hong Kong's judicial system, which is already very fragile.

It has been more than 20 years since the establishment of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("HKSAR"), and our judicial system and rule of law have been faced with many challenges over the past 21 years. The greatest challenge is of course the several interpretations of the Basic Law made in the past, but prosecution decisions made by the Department of Justice on certain cases have also aroused wide public concern about Hong Kong's judicial system and rule of law. If Ms CHENG, our new Secretary for Justice, fails to rectify such a serious mistake which the general public do not think she should have committed, and keeps avoiding offering an explanation to the public and the media after the incident has come to light, we will inevitably be worried about the situation. It is because we all know that in the face of an incident concerning UBWs, it is not a difficult thing to admit, rectify and apologize, but as a principal official, it is really worrying if she cannot even do the three simple things of admitting the mistake, rectifying the problem and apologizing to the public.

Many officials in the SAR Government tend to adopt such an attitude, and they have been evasive about nearly everything. By running away from the
difficulties, dodging responsibility and avoiding admitting mistakes, it is not she herself who will get hurt in the end, because as an ordinary person who is merely a Senior Counsel, not many people will take such cases concerning UBWs very seriously. As we all know, for properties acquired by individuals, the more expensive and luxurious they are, the higher the possibility that UBWs would be identified therein, and the biggest problem actually lies in Ms CHENG's ways and approaches in handling the matter.

Chairman, this is also related to the amendment I propose in respect of subhead 000 under "Head 21—Chief Executive's Office" to reduce the estimated expenditure on the emoluments for the Chief Executive, and why do I say so? It is because Carrie LAM herself is exactly the person who has tried in every way to connive at the Secretary for Justice in the incident, so that Ms CHENG is not required to admit her mistakes. We all know that this is not the first time that Carrie LAM has handled incidents concerning UBWs, and she has in fact handled two cases of such a nature when she was the Secretary for Development, one involving Henry TANG and another involving LEUNG Chun-ying.

Nevertheless, the approaches adopted by Carrie LAM in handling the two cases are not consistent. With regard to the case concerning Henry TANG, she as the then Secretary for Development was very aggressive and has bluntly said that she would "show no mercy". She subsequently recommended to initiate prosecution action against the case, and in this connection, the wife of Henry TANG has assumed full responsibility. I have no intention to comment on their family matters, but Henry TANG's wife has actually assumed full responsibility for the case and was fined $110,000. Yet, Carrie LAM's attitude in handling the case concerning LEUNG Chun-ying was different, and it seems that she has attached less importance to the case.

When it comes to the current case concerning Teresa CHENG, Carrie LAM has acted like a totally different person, and has tried to shield her by explaining that this could only prove that "public business comes before private affairs" for Ms CHENG, hoping eagerly to say that she should be forgiven. If the Chief Executive can show her mercy to me and the Chairman or anyone else, we can also use "public business comes before private affairs" as a defence in respect of our unlawful acts to ask for forgiveness, because as a Member or the President of the Legislative Council, we are indeed too busy. What kind of a society will ours turn into then? All government officials and the rich and influential are
heavily engaged in their official duties and a number of public offices, but can they use these as justifiable excuses for their unlawful acts?

(THE CHAIRMAN'S DEPUTY, MS STARRY LEE, took the Chair)

As our Chief Executive who has more than 30 years of experience in public administration, and a person who is always keen to project a "good fighter" image, should she maintain a clear stance on such cases and firmly state that unlawful acts by public officers will not be tolerated no matter how high their official ranks are? Should she made it clear that public officers who have made mistakes must take actions as soon as possible to give a clear account of the incidents, apologize and admit that they are wrong? It would instead be a better way to handle cases concerning officials under her. I am not agreeable to her attitude of conniving at her subordinates, and would therefore like to say a few words about my amendment, which does have some relationship with the amendment under discussion.

Yet, let me return to the subject and talk about the estimated expenditure on the Director of Public Prosecutions in Amendment No. 29, especially that for the Constitutional Development and Elections Unit under the Constitutional Affairs Sub-Division of the Legal Policy Division of the Department of Justice. Deputy Chairman, over the past period of time, we have witnessed a spate of incidents concerning disqualification, in which Members were disqualified from office and possible candidates were disqualified from running in the Legislative Council By-election. In our eyes and in the eyes of the public, such cases are definitely political incidents. After the outbreak of such incidents, the Administration has even taken prosecution actions with political intents, thus rendering the so-called principles of "one country, two systems", "Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong" and "a high degree of autonomy" nothing but empty slogans.

The Government possesses ample resources and money, and this is indeed very wicked of the Administration to resort to every possible means to disqualify several Members from their office through judicial reviews. Not only this, Agnes CHOW of Demosisto was subsequently nominated to run in the Legislative Council By-election of Hong Kong Island Constituency, but she was disqualified by the Government, and this is absolutely a dirty trick and an
unacceptable act. The Government has not only disqualified Agnes CHOW from running in the By-election but has also set a very bad precedent of making up all sorts of excuses to seek satisfaction by removing a thorn in its flesh.

Elections we now have are actually not that fair because as we all know, such tactics as vote-rigging and offering free "snake banquets, vegan feasts, moon cakes and rice dumplings" to voters through many pro-establishment organizations can be employed in elections conducted nowadays, so as to attract a large number of votes for individual candidates. Our fair and impartial elections have already become rotten due to the many questionable practices observed on election days, such as the marking of candidate numbers on voters' palms, the offering of personalized and point-to-point transport services, and the provision of reminder cards. However, it is most outrageous or worrying that when any candidates in an election are not regarded as people standing on the Government's side, or when they are considered threatening by the Government, and to put it even more frankly, when they are considered not acceptable by the masters in the Chinese Communist Party, the Government can simply remove them by depriving them of the chance to run in the election. This is exactly the main reason why Mr CHAN Chi-chuen has proposed to reduce the relevant estimated expenditure in respect of subhead 000 under head 92.

I am sure our original understanding is that the estimated expenditure for this Sub-Division would be used to implement the principles of "one country, two systems", "Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong" and "a high degree of autonomy" in Hong Kong, so that our rights as stipulated under the Basic Law would be safeguarded, and we would be free to conduct fair and impartial elections, stand for elections and assume public offices in Hong Kong. However, when placed in the hands of senior officials of the Department of Justice, the estimated expenditure is regrettably used nowadays as the means to eliminate political opponents, and the civil servants concerned are appointed Returning Officers and made to bear the greatest responsibility. That is why we were not able to get in touch back then with the Returning Officer of Hong Kong Island Constituency, who has virtually disappeared without a trace.

It is really hard for us to criticize them for this, because as ordinary civil servants at middle to senior or middle ranks, we all understand that they do not have the courage and ability to disqualify any individual candidates from running in an election lightly. In his reply to a related question raised in the Legislative
Council, the Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs also said that legal advice has been given by the Secretary for Justice and the Department of Justice in this connection, and things are indeed very clear. In other words, in the whole case, including the disqualification of some candidates from running in elections and the disqualification of Members from their office, the Secretary for Justice and individual officials of the Department of Justice have become nothing but tools for political suppression, and this is definitely the last thing people in Hong Kong would wish to see.

For a long time, Hong Kong people have been proud of our legal system and judicial impartiality, especially when Hong Kong is a neighbouring city of Mainland China. As we all know, Hong Kong's rankings in various indices concerning competitiveness, economic activities and economic prospects are usually higher than those of Mainland China, and among such indices, we consider our rankings in several indices of freedom the most important. Unlike people in the Mainland, we enjoy freedom of the press, freedom of speech, freedom of publication, and even freedom of demonstration or freedom to strike in Hong Kong. With regard to the confidence in judicial system, there has also been a marked difference between the situation of Hong Kong and that of the Mainland.

However, very regrettably, over the past 21 years since the establishment of HKSAR, Hong Kong's rankings in indices concerning our judicial system have been dropping, and this has directly caused damage to the future of Hong Kong. When we are hoping that Hong Kong would enjoy an independent status, so that it would exert its best in its own future development or that of China, the Secretary for Justice and the officers concerned in the Department of Justice have taken actions to damage the rule of law in Hong Kong, and they are the arch-criminals who ruin the future of Hong Kong. If we allow this situation to continue to exist, and turn selective prosecution, selective nomination and selective participation in elections into regular practices, Hong Kong will have no future.

Agnes CHOW is a representative of the younger generation, and as the future masters of society, they have their own clear views on the existing system. We should entrust the future of Hong Kong to these young people and let them shape our future, for they do have sufficient ability to do so. Regrettably, under the existing judicial system, and with the manipulation of the black hands of the Secretary for Justice and senior officials of the Department of Justice, elections
conducted in Hong Kong are no longer fair and impartial. Hence, they absolutely do not deserve the public funding support proposed in the Budget.

I so submit.

**MR CHU HOI-DICK** (in Cantonese): Deputy Chairman, I wish to discuss two amendments in my present speech. The first one is Amendment No. 56 proposed by Mr HUI Chi-fung. It resolves to cut a sum roughly equivalent to the estimated annual expenditure for the Education Bureau to develop learning and teaching resources for Basic Law education.

Deputy Chairman, perhaps other Members have already put forth their views on this issue. But I think my viewpoint is different from theirs. I do not mean that the resources developed by the Education Bureau for Basic Law education with this $320,000 at present are misleading to our children. I rather think that it is simply unnecessary to spend this $320,000 on teaching children about the Basic Law. The reason is that the Government and the Legislative Council have already taught us with living examples that even though the Basic Law booklet is very think with 159 provisions, these six words actually say it all: "Those with power can defy justice."

Deputy Chairman, one year is already way too long honestly. At least four incidents which took place last year can serve as Basic Law education. As long as students turn on the television or browse through Facebook, they will get a deep feeling of the Basic Law. The first instance is the amendment of the Rules of Procedure proposed by a pro-establishment Member. The meeting of the Committee of the whole Council—namely, the present proceedings—should be part of the Council meeting, with a quorum of 35 Members. But pro-establishment Members and President Mr Andrew LEUNG echoed with each other and said that the meeting of the Committee of the whole Council was not part of the Council meeting, so 20 Members would suffice. This is how the relevant Basic Law provision is given a new interpretation. Even though the wording of the relevant provision appears to have a certain meaning, anyone with power can actually construe it in another way.

Similarly, the Second Reading of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (Co-location) Bill ("the Bill") will soon be resumed. As the Hong Kong Bar Association pointed out openly, Article 18 of the Basic Law
stipulates that national laws shall not be applied in Hong Kong's territory. How will President Mr Andrew LEUNG deal with it? How will he rule on the resumption of the Second Reading of the Bill introduced by the Government and also the passage of the Bill? If the Bill is passed, he will say that those who want to challenge this outcome can file a judicial review. But even primary school students should have realized by now that no judicial review can be successful. And even if it is successful, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress will hand down its interpretation of the Basic Law and impose its new interpretation on us. Therefore, the result will only be an endless loop, and those with power can always be the victors and need not base on the contents of the relevant provisions.

Dr KWOK Ka-ki also talked about the third instance just now: While the Demosistō was allowed to participate in the 2016 election, they are barred from standing in the 2018 by-election. Their decisions were based on the same Basic Law, which provides for the protection of Hong Kong people's political rights. But as the Government has power, it can defy justice and interpret the relevant provisions in whatever way it wants.

The fourth instance certainly concerns a recent remark of Prof Benny TAI in Taiwan. An adjournment motion on this matter is scheduled as the last item on the Agenda of this meeting. But we probably do not have time to discuss it. This matter was dealt with by the mere word "unconstitutional". Nobody can explain how his remark is unconstitutional and which Basic Law provisions it contravenes. In any case, they just impose their will on us. As long as their voice is loud enough, they can "bully" any dissenting voices.

Deputy Chairman, there are already four examples in one year to tell children that even though the Basic Law contains 159 provisions, the six words "Those with power can defy justice" can simply say it all. So, this $320,000 can basically be saved.

The other two amendments which I wish to discuss concern the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD"), and they are proposed by Mr CHAN Chi-chuen and Mr KWONG Chun-yu respectively. One of the amendments seeks to cut the estimated annual expenditure for AFCD to catch and treat stray animals, and the other one aims to cut the expenditure for AFCD's humane handling of animals. Why do I choose to discuss this issue at this moment? Because it so happens that the Under Secretary for Food and
Health is now present. The Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene of the Legislative Council just discussed the mindset that the Government should adopt in treating animals in various districts. As the Government told us, it began to implement the "Trap-Neuter-Return" Trial Programme ("the Trial Programme") several years ago in Yuen Long and Cheung Chau. Several years have passed, and a discussion was held yesterday. During the discussion, the Government said that the target was not fulfilled. What is meant by this? It means that the target of reducing the number of animals (namely, dogs) in communities has not been fulfilled, and they are unable to catch and neuter dogs within the specified time frame.

Deputy Chairman, as I listened along at the meeting yesterday, I honestly got more and more infuriated. As the Government comments on the pros and cons of the Trial Programme, it actually has not earmarked any dedicated funding for this task in the Budget. They merely let animal welfare organizations and volunteers do the work with their own time and efforts, including the purchase of dog food, and also the catching of dogs in the pilot areas of Yuen Long and Cheung Chau for neutering. Then, they have to take care of those dogs on their own. Deputy Chairman, the volunteers are dedicated to taking care of those dogs. But three years have passed, and the Government merely says, "Sorry, it looks like the Trial Programme has failed to fulfil the target."

Actually, the target itself is already erroneous. The most important principle of the Trial Programme is to reduce AFCD's killing of dogs and animals. This can in turn reduce its sins and enable animals to live a better life in communities. But this is not included as an indicator. AFCD will not consider whether the selection of the two pilot areas for the Trial Programme is the reason for the decline in AFCD's killing of dogs. Without formulating any positive indicators, AFCD purely considers whether the number of complaints or dogs has dropped. Besides, instead of bearing any responsibility, AFCD only shifts its responsibility to volunteer groups. I really wonder if animal volunteers and animal welfare organizations owed anything to the SAR Government and senior officials in their previous life.

"Safeguarding animal welfare" is an objective laid down by AFCD. But Deputy Chairman, AFCD adopts the number of stray animals it catches and kills as an indicator for determining the funding it requires. What I mean is that the required funding they clearly set out will exactly be used to do something that people do not want AFCD to continue to do. But they refuse to seek any
funding for promoting a positive direction. This precisely explains why I support the two amendments of Mr CHAN Chi-chuen and Mr KWONG Chun-yu with the aim of cutting the funding for them to catch and kill dogs. When they have no money—I do not mean to say that when they are poor, they should go after their debtors—they should think about who is good to them. So, who is good to them? Animal welfare organizations and volunteers. They are honestly committed to speaking up for animals in Hong Kong.

AFCD's statistics show that it killed 10 240 dogs in 2008, and the figure for 2017 was 1 478. This is honestly a significant decline. But AFCD should not claim credit for this and think that the drastic decline in the killing of dogs is due to the introduction of various measures, as stated in the relevant paper. A mere look at its appropriation request will enable AFCD to realize that the funding it seeks will not be used for reducing the catching and killing of dogs. The decline in the killing of dogs can obviously be ascribed to changes in social atmosphere. Because more people are committed to furthering this cause, AFCD cannot but gradually reduce its catching and killing of dogs. I hope AFCD can return credit to animal welfare organizations and those dedicated volunteers.

Deputy Chairman, why do I want to cut the expenditure for AFCD to catch and kill dogs with immediate effect from the coming fiscal year? Because rural areas in the New Territories—from Wang Chau to the North East New Territories, Hung Shui Kiu, Yuen Long South and Kam Tin—will see the conduct of various large-scale development projects very soon. But the authorities have not formulated any policies. Earlier, I asked Secretary Prof Sophia CHAN an oral question about whether the Policy Bureau concerned had counted the numbers of dogs and cats in, for example, Wang Chau. Her answer was in the negative. Then, I asked her what villagers were supposed to do with their dogs if the authorities relocated them to public housing—suppose they can receive public housing allocation—where dogs were not allowed. But she nonetheless told me in reply that she believed dog owners had a conscience, so she conjectured that there would not be any massive abandoning of animals.

Is she really so unrealistic? It is the authorities that force villagers to leave and plunge huge numbers of animals into homelessness. Some people cannot do anything to help as they have no alternative but to live in subdivided units. How can they keep any animals? Nevertheless, AFCD refuses to seek any funding for tackling the foreseeable massive abandoning of animals. But it seeks funding for catching and killing dogs, cats, and other animals. As a result,
AFCD continues to push ahead with this task as in the past. Even if a village will be demolished, it still refuses to seek any funding to ensure the protection of animals' welfare. Therefore, AFCD needs to kill more dogs, cats and other animals at the same time. This is a problem reflected by AFCD's appropriation request. And the officials concerned can do nothing but proceed with this.

This year is very critical as many works projects will be commissioned very soon. This year, I hope Members, especially those who are concerned about animal welfare, can pass this amendment on cutting this $30 million funding for AFCD. AFCD will not run out of money in the future as they may put forth the ground of policy changes and ask the Government to seek funds on account for conducting the "Trap-Neuter-Return" Programme or dealing with animal problems caused by large-scale rural development projects. They must conceive other ways and seek funding from the Legislative Council Finance Committee. I will definitely render my support at that time. But we must first cut the two items of expenditure in the appropriation request. This is the only way to force them to think about other ways; or else, they will only continue to push ahead with this task.

We cannot avoid the catastrophe in the future, but I hope Members can give careful consideration. We will vote on the various amendments tomorrow. I hope Members can support the two amendments proposed by Mr CHAN Chi-chuen and Mr KWONG Chun-yu.

I so submit.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Does any Member who has not spoken wish to speak?

(Dr Elizabeth QUAT indicated a wish to speak)

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Dr Elizabeth QUAT, please speak.

DR ELIZABETH QUAT (in Cantonese): I wish to speak on Amendment Nos. 6, 7 and 8, and they concern the Correctional Services Department ("CSD").
Amendment No. 6 proposes to cut the estimated annual expenditure for the remuneration of the Commissioner of Correctional Services ("the Commissioner"); Amendment No. 7 proposes to cut the estimated expenditure for replacing and enhancing the closed-circuit television ("CCTV") system in Pik Uk Prison; and Amendment No. 8 proposes to cut the estimated expenditure for replacing the telephone system in visit rooms of correctional institutions.

I do not agree to these expenditure cut proposals. Let me first talk about the one about CCTV system. This time around, Pik Uk Prison intends to replace and digitalize its CCTV system for providing images with higher resolution, install a better server for the storage of video-recordings, enhance its network equipment, and set up an uninterrupted power supply system.

I believe the installation of a CCTV system is one of the most effective measures in prison management. Over these few months, we have visited many different prisons. Members from various political parties invariably agree and hope that the CCTV systems in all prisons can be updated as soon as possible, so as to enhance their quality and surveillance functions. That way, staff members can respond to any incident quickly, and prisoners' rights can be given effective protection. In case of incidents, video-recordings can serve as the strongest evidence. Therefore, I wish to see the installation of more CCTV systems instead of cutting the relevant estimated expenditure. And, I also hope that they can be installed gradually. We have enquired with CSD about why it cannot install all CCTV systems in one go. But actually, it is really difficult to conduct installation in all prisons simultaneously.

For this reason, their plan is to progressively replace such systems, in the hope of eliminating any blind spots in prisons after replacement and offering greater protection to staff members and persons in custody ("PICs").

Besides, the proposal on cutting the estimated expenditure for replacing the telephone system in visit rooms is honestly perplexing. The reason is that as we all know, the existing system is already out-of-date. We hope to enhance such facilities as the alarm system and also the public announcement system as soon as possible. If these systems are not replaced, discipline and also law and order in prisons will be affected in case they malfunction during emergencies. Apart from this, if the telephone system breaks down, relatives and friends of PICs will be affected during their visits. So, we do not think it is necessary to cut these expenditure items.
I also wish to say that the proposal on deducting the Commissioner's remuneration is unreasonable to me. These days, I have heard various accusations against CSD from some Members or other people. Recently, Dr CHENG Chung-tai wrongful accused CSD officers of assaulting a PIC. But actually, they were trying to save his life. Nevertheless, he refused to apologize. There are also many complaints about maltreatment of PICs and accusations that the facilities in correctional institutions are unfair to PICs. Many CSD staff members told me that they were indignant and infuriated because their work should deserve respect and recognition rather than punishment through cutting the estimated expenditure for their remuneration and facility replacement.

After all, the work of Hong Kong's CSD commands international recognition. CSD officers work in a difficult and appalling environment. I do not think it is reasonable to require them to make every PIC at home in prisons.

Members should bear in mind that a prison sentence is intended as a kind of punishment and teaching rather than a vacation. It is certainly not very enjoyable. Living a disciplined life in prisons, PICs are expected to learn self-restraint and get used to complying with rules, so that they can turn over a new leaf and abide by the law in the future. The crime rate and recidivism rate in Hong Kong have remained low all along, thanks to this group of passionate CSD officers who have worked in prisons for many years towards the goal of changing PICs with the mindset of saving as many lives as possible.

So, it is actually very unfair to accuse CSD staff frequently on the pretext of safeguarding PICs' rights. This will affect their work and deal a great blow to maintaining overall law and order in Hong Kong. We should instead show concern about the existing difficulties faced by CSD staff at work. For example, as we know, the wastage rate of front-line CSD staff is the highest in all disciplined forces, and their wastage problem is actually very acute. They are also plagued by a retirement wave. A new recruit can only fill a vacancy after an existing staff member has retired. But he needs to complete an induction programme before filling the post, so there is a gap of around one year in between. Due to manpower shortage in this period, other front-line officers must also absorb part of the duties. So, if this system remains unchanged, front-line manpower will become tight and their workload will increase. This may trigger a retirement wave and in turn create a more serious vicious cycle of greater manpower wastage.
I hope the Government can squarely address this problem and change this system. Actually, CSD knows roughly when a staff member will retire. Can it conduct a recruitment exercise and training in advance rather than doing so after the departure of an existing staff member?

Besides, the five-day work week arrangement has been implemented for many civil servants. But only around 1 100, or 16%, of the 7 000 CSD staff members can truly enjoy this arrangement. Members can imagine how unfair it is to them. The leave deduction arrangement is likewise the case. As I said earlier, the existing leave deduction arrangement has failed to treat CSD officers fairly. Besides, their duty hours are very long. CSD's duty is different from that of other disciplined forces, in the sense that they must constantly patrol prisons and work for seven consecutive hours. Very often, they do not even have any opportunity to take a seat or time for a rest. Is this humane? Can we improve their working conditions?

Moreover, they usually live far away from their workplace. So, when they are assigned overnight stand-by duties, it is unlikely that they can return home in time for a rest or sleep after release from duty. They may need to stay in the rest room inside staff quarters. But the rest room is very small, and it is merely equipped with a bunk bed. When one goes up to the upper deck to sleep, one may awake the person at the lower deck. If someone enters the room, he may awake others. CSD officers think that the facilities in rest rooms are dilapidated, and the space is insufficient. They merely ask for a rest place that gives them dignity. I have discussed with three Bureau Directors one after another. But so far, the problem still remains unsolved. I have found out that the provision of better accommodation rests with the Government Property Agency ("GPA"), and this means that even the Civil Service Bureau and the Security Bureau are unable to solve this problem. I can only get in touch with GPA via the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau and ask them to study ways to increase the rest area for them based on the existing Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines. Deputy Chairman, this matter is actually very complicated. I am still working on it, in the hope of resolving this difficult issue.

Besides, their workplace is located in remote areas. But CSD has not provided them with any modes of transport for commuting to work. During inclement weather such as typhoon attacks on Hong Kong, they are unable to go
to work. This is likewise an acute problem. I strongly hope that Members will not care solely about striving for the rights and interests of PICs. For the sake of maintaining law and order in Hong Kong, can they also strive for better fringe benefits and remuneration for CSD staff, so as to reduce their manpower wastage and enable them to work more happily? Members can imagine the working environment of CSD staff. They work very hard and never speak out their demands openly. All along, I have described them as the unsung hero in Hong Kong. I hope Members can show greater respect for CSD staff and give more support to its work.

Deputy Chairman, I also notice that among the dozens of amendments, Amendment No. 20 put forth by Mr CHAN Chi-chuen proposes to cut the estimated annual expenditure for the personal emoluments of the Immigration Department ("ImmD") in 2018-2019. I wonder why Mr CHAN Chi-chuen thinks that ImmD staff should not get any remuneration. Does he want them to work as volunteers? ImmD staff deal with immigration affairs for us every day, and their workload is very heavy. Besides, the bogus refugee problem involving the abuse of the non-refoulement claim mechanism in recent years has given much work to ImmD officers, especially those responsible for this matter and also those working in the Castle Peak Bay Immigration Centre, and their workload is already very heavy. Why does he want to cut the estimated annual expenditure for their remuneration? The mere raising of this idea is already very disrespectful and unfair to ImmD staff. Such amendments proposed by Members will only hurt the feeling of front-line staff regardless of what their grounds are.

Amendment Nos. 34, 35, 36, 37 and 38 are targeted at the Hong Kong Police Force ("HKPF"). They concern the estimated expenditure for the remuneration of everybody in the entire HKPF—from the Commissioner of Police to police officers. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen proposes to cut the remuneration of all police officers, and he has even said that the estimated annual expenditure for all specialized vehicles in HKPF should also be cut. What should Hong Kong do then? Deputy Chairman, what should Hong Kong do without HKPF? Is he saying that there is no need to maintain law and order in Hong Kong? If police officers are ripped of any remuneration, they will have to work as volunteers, right? I do not quite understand what is in his mind.
We have been talking about the need to promote the development of innovation and technology. But Amendment Nos. 39 and 40 put forth by Mr CHAN Chi-chuen and Mr AU Nok-hin nonetheless propose to cut the estimated annual expenditure for the remuneration of the Secretary for Innovation and Technology and also the estimated expenditure for the Fund for Better Living. While expressing support for the promotion of innovation and technology, they nonetheless propose to cut all the estimated expenditure. I fail to see their point.

I notice that in Amendment No. 67, Mr Gary FAN proposes to cut the estimated annual expenditure for the Water Supplies Department to purchase drinking water. Does he want everybody to stop drinking water? I understand that these days, some people are always more hostile to China and resentful to anything Chinese, and they will not hasten to oppose anything associated with the Mainland. As Dongjiang water comes from the Mainland, so they must even oppose our purchase of Dongjiang water. However, what is our immediate alternative if Hong Kong people do not consume Dongjiang water?

I agree that our existing water resources are very precious, and I also agree that water resources from Dongjiang have become increasingly tight. Hong Kong should develop itself into a Sponge City and recycled water. We should also think about ways to encourage people to treasure our water resources and gradually reduce our reliance on Dongjiang water. Deputy Chairman, I agree with all this. But does it mean that we do not need any Dongjiang water today? Or, does it mean that we should smear Dongjiang water? Members should bear in mind that the Guangdong side can still assure Hong Kong people that they will be given water even when water resources in the Mainland are so tight, and that they need not worry about the need for water rationing or conservation. Certainly, we may continue to discuss the relevant charges; but then in my view, the amendment proposal on cutting the estimated annual expenditure for purchasing drinking water is very unrealistic.

Deputy Chairman, I support Amendment Nos. 62 and 63 proposed by the Financial Secretary. Except these amendments, I will oppose all other amendments.

Deputy Chairman, I so submit.
MR SHIU KA-CHUN (in Cantonese): Deputy Chairman, I wish to speak on Amendment No. 66 moved by Mr AU Nok-hin.

The amendment seeks to reduce head 190 by $34,553,000 in respect of subhead 000. The reduction is roughly equivalent to the commissions of the Treasury's agents in 2018-2019 ... Sorry, it should be roughly equivalent to the estimated expenditure on the meeting expenses of the University Grants Committee ("UGC"), the Research Grants Council ("RGC") and the Quality Assurance Council ("QAC") in 2018-2019.

Deputy Chairman, I am filled with all sorts of feelings after listening to Mr AU Nok-hin's story about his miserable experience as a part-time teacher. I thus recall ... I must make a declaration of interests and disclose that I am a teacher in a publicly-funded university. Mr AU Nok-hin's story reminds me of the anxieties I felt when I was a part-time teacher. I was sometimes even more desperate than Mr AU Nok-hin. He calls himself a "nomad" lecturer. But back then, I called myself a "drifting" lecturer, instead of a "nomad" lecturer. It was all like what happened in the comics called the Drifting Classroom. People all seemed perverted. The world likewise seemed abnormal and people were eating each other up. But then, at other times, I was more optimistic than Mr AU. I once called myself, somewhat jokingly, the big scholar of four universities (because I taught in four universities at that time). It was so stupid of me.

Many Hong Kong people may wonder why the amendment proposes the reduction. Are not the universities doing very well? Is not UGC doing a very good management job? Are not the universities getting bigger and bigger? Yes, the universities are getting bigger and bigger, and so are their campuses, their funding and expenditure. They are getting bigger in all respects. So, the universities are literally getting very big. They are now bigger in size, but how are they doing academically? By this, I mean to ask how their scholars, academic research and impartation of knowledge are doing under the management of UGC. Can scholars really express their own views independently? Is academic research really neutral and based on the facts, able to reflect the independent views of the researchers? As for impartation of knowledge, are people really operating their universities as academic institutions, rather than sellers of knowledge and information? All this is connected with UGC.
Perhaps because many members of the public are not insiders of the universities, their only impression of the universities is their nice and quiet environment. But I must tell everybody that the universities are already changing, and the office doors of university teachers is a hint of how the changes are taking place. There is a joke among us. We say that perhaps because of the attitude and approval of UGC, the universities all adopt a "closed-door policy" now. I am not talking about "closed-door" in the sense of isolation. I am talking about the closing of room doors, rather.

I can remember that back in the 1980s when I was at university, all the teachers' rooms along the hallways were wide open, and students were welcome to go inside and have discussions on academic issues and their lives with teachers. Students and teachers were then able to have many exchanges, and sometimes, students might even sit down and have tea, water or coffee with their teachers. Together, they could engage in many different kinds of activities. After classes, students could spend an entire afternoon or at least one or two hours in their teachers' rooms, and this was somewhat regarded as a formal part of learning. Classrooms are very important to learning. But then, we should also realize that teachers' rooms and professors' offices, all outside of classrooms, are also good learning venues. But what is happening nowadays? All the room doors are closed, though not locked. Some professors may even lock their doors and switch off the lights, saying they must hurry up with their theses. They may only switch on their desk lamps lest others may know they are inside and they thus have to entertain visitors. That is because they must really rush along with the paper work on their theses and administrative duties. This is really a very strange phenomenon.

We then saw that the rooms of our professors were very disorderly, with many newspapers and faded documents scattering all round. There was a smell of staleness, but the atmosphere was quite academic. We saw that our professors actually lived a simple life, because with just the biscuits and cup noodles inside their desk drawers, they would busy themselves with teaching work day and night. But what is the case nowadays? Everybody's office is just like a CEO office. When you open the room doors, many schemes, plans and assembly lines will come into sight. Research assistants are busy helping the professors with their research work all at the same time. And, the professors are just like foremen and managers, following up the research progress regularly and writing up, revising and publishing their articles to record their research findings afterwards. The cycle simply goes on and on.
Mr AU Nok-hin says that under the governance of UGC, the universities are all undergoing "mutation". Well, I would say both the institutions and the teachers are undergoing "mutation". Part-time teachers are paid much less than full-time ones, and their work is getting more and more "casual". Even less than "casual", I must say.

They may, as described earlier, contact you all of a sudden and ask you to stand in and teach a class of critical thinking at very short notice. And, there is something even more miserable. Just today, for example, they may ask you to stand in and teach a certain class. But then, tomorrow, they may tell you that your help is no longer needed. This is really intolerable. But such is the life of part-time teachers.

We are worried about the emergence of an academic underclass who are employed on an increasingly "casual" basis. Their pays are very meager, ranging from $400 to $300 (or even $250, as I have heard). So, after teaching 40 hours or 45 hours, after setting examination questions, invigilating and marking answer scripts, they will only get a very small payment. Institutions may ask for their help today, but may say they are no longer needed tomorrow. And, when institutions really need their help, a very meager pay is offered. Also, they may not even be given any support. They may not have any offices, any desks, any door keys or any lockers. Such is the life of these academic people; they are entirely at the disposal of others.

Deputy Chairman, many such bitter stories …

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr SHIU, let me remind you that you are dwelling on points that have already been made.

MR SHIU KA-CHUN (in Cantonese): Deputy Chairman, thank you for your reminder.

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Your points have already been raised by Mr AU Nok-hin. Even if you dwell on them, you are just repeating the same points anyway. Mr SHIU, please go on, but please do not repeat those points that have already been raised.
MR SHIU KA-CHUN (in Cantonese): All such bitter stories can be traced back to the culprit, that is, the governance of UGC.

UGC now upholds "the priority of research over teaching". It places all the emphasis on ranking, and has devised various ranking-linked mechanisms, one example being the mechanism of "competitive allocation" mentioned just now. To a professor, research does not merely mean publication in journals. Research must come with research funding. So, every professor must write a specified number of articles, and his or research must also come with a certain amount of funding. If a professor can get many different research projects from the Government, he or she will be regarded as a professor with "fund-raising" or "profit-making" capability. This is the outcome, intended or unintended, of the UGC policy.

Deputy Chairman, there have been many negative news about the university sector recently. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University is facing a loss of $23 million, and in order to save $1 million, it has dismissed nine teachers who have been working for it for 18 to 23 years. I really do not know how they make their computations. There will be a loss of $23 million in 2020, so in order to save just $1 million, it has decided to dismiss nine part-time teachers today. I frankly cannot understand why. Are there actually some reasons that have not been disclosed? Also, the City University of Hong Kong has stopped offering a part-time social work programme. All these are the affairs of the universities, but they are also connected with UGC.

Deputy Chairman, Mr AU Nok-hin, Mr IP Kin-yuen, Dr Fernando CHEUNG and I have made an appointment to meet with the UGC Secretary-General on 28 May. We will discuss what has been going on. For this reason, we do not want to discuss the policies of UGC in this Budget debate as far as possible. But since this $34,553,000 is for the meetings of UGC, RGC and QAC, we want to know what these meeting are, how they are held, and why things simply get worse and the universities cannot perform their true functions after all these meetings. Why have the universities lost their souls as educational institutions after getting bigger? I think we must hold UGC responsible.

For this reason, I will support Mr AU Nok-hin's amendment. Thank you, Deputy Chairman.
MR CHARLES PETER MOK (in Cantonese): Deputy Chairman, I am sorry that I pressed the "Request-to-speak" button by mistake just now. I was not yet ready to speak at that time, so I am sorry for the trouble. I am going to speaking on Amendment No. 39 moved by Mr CHAN Chi-chuen, which seeks to deduct the estimated expenditure on the annual emoluments for the Secretary for Innovation and Technology under head 135. Perhaps because I was upstairs and away from the Chamber just now, I am not very clear about Mr CHAN's reasons for moving this amendment. But I may still look at innovation and technology from my personal perspective. As a member of the industry, I really think it is very good that society has started to recognize the importance of innovation and technology a bit more.

This is a good thing and the direction is correct, but I simply do not know why the Government's measures have still aroused so much criticism and so many negative views. Is that because the Government is simply unrealistic and cannot see the needs of the industry. The Technology Talent Admission Scheme rolled out yesterday is one example. As we all know, the policy address announced by the Chief Executive in October puts forward the idea of nurturing talents. I can see that places all over the world, including the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area and other places in Asia, Europe and America, are all competing for talents. All places say that they face a shortage of talents. It is only natural, and very good too, to attract talents. But Members must realize one thing. Yes, the industry indeed complains frequently about the difficulty in recruiting talents, but actually, this is only due to a mismatch of jobs and people, as I have often said. We must squarely address this mismatch, rather than thinking that we can solve the problem overnight simply by importing talents. Indeed, many Members have likewise questioned whether can really attract talents in this way.

Deputy Chairman, looking at this policy of the Innovation and Technology Bureau, I really cannot helping saying that it should have informed us of it much earlier. In this way, we would have advised the Bureau that it must adopt a three-pronged approach. Besides attracting talents, we must also provide sufficient resources for our own talents to transform their skill sets, rather than merely increasing the continuing education allowance for a person during his whole life time from $10,000 to $20,000. Everybody knows that this is not enough and sustainable. More importantly, the authorities should help create more types of jobs in Hong Kong. This is the only way to retain local talents and at the same time attract foreign talents.
I think of an analogy here. For example, the Water Supplies Department faces the problem of water pipe leakage. But instead of tackling this problem, the department simply keeps purchasing more Dongjiang water. If the innovation and technology industry in Hong Kong can become a bigger and bigger pie all the time, I believe we will surely have more and more talents. The innovation and technology talents in Hong Kong are either dismissed or have had to switch to other industries. They are just like the water lost through pipe leakage. But the Government turns a blind eye to this and only seeks to import labour. Does the Government know how employees feel?

The Government must not be so unrealistic, and it must not evade this problem or even take the lead in suppressing the salaries of technology talents. As I mentioned in the last debate session, two thirds of the information technology staff working in the Government are recruited through agents, and they are paid less for doing the same work as others. No staff of the Innovation and Technology Bureau are present, but I must say this is also related to the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau. The Government tells us that this arrangement cannot save any money; the expenditure will be the same, and people must not think that the Government can thus save money. In brief, it says that this is an arrangement to enable government departments to recruit staff according to their own needs. But then, when these people are paid less for the same work done, when the Government simply allows agents to pocket money in the process, how can we encourage young people to join the industry? They will only become out-sourced staff, not knowing when the Government will stop renewing their contracts. This is the problem we must solve.

But Deputy Chairman, when I look at the Technology Talent Admission Scheme introduced yesterday, I can at once notice three mismatches. First …

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr MOK, some members have already discussed the Technology Talent Admission Scheme introduced yesterday. I have reminded members that this debate is not an occasion for discussing the relevant policies. Please focus on the amendment on deducting the funding. And, please do not repeat the arguments of other members.

MR CHARLES PETER MOK (in Cantonese): Deputy Chairman, I am not going to repeat other members' arguments. And, this scheme is a new one, so please permit me to say a few quick words on it. Actually, you have already
decided to stop the debate at 6:30 pm, so I will not speak long anyway. But I really want to say a few quick words on this scheme as an example. This is basically a good measure, but it is full of mismatches. First, as many employers tell me, their companies are not located in the Science Park and the Cyber Port. So, they are not eligible under the scheme, and it cannot be of any help to them. As for employees, they question why people with such little experience are still allowed to work in Hong Kong. They also question why people with more experience are not invited. They say that if the latter is the case, they will be more willing to work under the imported talents and learn from them. But then, they say, the people imported under the present scheme will only compete for jobs with the lowest workers in Hong Kong.

Deputy Chairman, I wish to make one more point. Actually, we must consider the feelings of local employees, rather than blindly and massively importing workers. In the past, Singapore also blindly imported talents from abroad. But since the middle of this year, it has tightened its policy. Foreign workers are now required to undergo stringent vetting, and employers must put up recruitment advertisements in newspapers for two weeks to prove that they cannot recruit any local workers before they can apply for labour importation. The reason for this change is that even in a place like Singapore, the reaction of local talents is still very fierce.

Therefore, Deputy Chairman, we really need to learn from other people's experience. We must not swing from one end to the other abruptly. And, everybody can see that other countries invariably face many problems after importing labour. Let me point out on this occasion that if the Bureau really wants to introduce any further policies, it must first look holistically at the whole picture before taking any actions. I also hope that the Bureau can first consult the industry before rolling out any similar measures lest it may face various criticisms that force it to spend even more time on making improvement. This can actually be avoided.

Deputy Chairman, I so submit. Thank you.

MR CHAN HAK-KAN (in Cantonese): Deputy Chairman, the Council has been debating the amendments proposed to the Appropriation Bill 2018 since last week's meeting. Having listened to the speeches delivered by the pan-democratic Members for so long, I also feel like getting it off my chest.
We are all aware that pan-democratic Members always move a large number of amendments, which seem ridiculous to me, at the debate session on the Government's Budget (the "Budget") every year. This year, they have proposed more than 200 amendments but only 65 among which were admitted by the President. After going through the 65 amendments, I realized that many pan-democratic Members have proposed amendments out of their personal bias against certain government departments. I even think some of them are abusing their public office to seek personal revenge. Some Members may have proposed to cut the funding for the Police and the Correctional Services Department because of their dislike for those disciplinary forces, while some proposed to cut all the funding related to the Mainland simply because they dislike the Mainland. All such amendments are entirely unacceptable to me indeed.

A Member has indicated just now whose purposes of proposing amendments: to spark off discussions among Members, identify the problems and urge the Government to improve its policy implementation. However, please ponder this: will the passage of such amendments serve to push the Government to improve its policy implementation or cripple its policy implementation? Obviously, it will only cripple the Government's policy implementation.

I do not intend to speak in detail on all 65 of their amendments, but I will briefly discuss some of them. CSAs Nos. 6, 7, and 8 moved respectively by Mr CHAN Chi-chuen and Mr AU Nok-hin are targeted at the Correctional Services Department because they actually want to reduce financial support for this department. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen seeks to cut the personal emolument of the Commissioner of Correctional Services from the estimated annual expenditure, while Mr AU Nok-hin opposes replacing and upgrading prison facilities. Deputy Chairman, as a Justice of the Peace, I do have concerns about the rights and interests of prison inmates. I dare say that as a matter of fact, Hong Kong has adopted a civilized approach in prison management. At least, widespread torture or harsh treatment of prison inmates has never occurred here in Hong Kong. Actually, I think the overall work performance of the Correctional Services Department is quite good and stories about inmates who eventually determined to right their past wrongs while serving their sentences in prison are frequently heard. When the Correctional Services Department's contribution to the local society is quantified by using scientific methods, the contribution of the department's rehabilitation work to our society in monetary terms amounts to $74.3 billion between 2012 and 2016 according to a consultancy study conducted earlier by the City University of Hong Kong. In other words, the rehabilitation work of the Correctional Services Department has
added value to Hong Kong as a whole. Therefore, it is unfair to reduce funding for the Correctional Services Department as this will mean to ignore the past efforts made by the department. I believe passage of such amendments will definitely deal a heavy blow to the morale of the department's staff.

(THE CHAIRMAN resumed the Chair)

I wonder if those Members who proposed these amendments are aware that officers of the Correctional Services Department are currently working in an undesirable environment. Due to the rigid style of prison management, staff of the Correctional Services Department are required to abstain from communicating with people outside while on duty and such a rule must be strictly enforced. Given that people often make use of WhatsApp to keep contacts with one another and for maintaining external communications nowadays, staff of the Correctional Services Department are actually subject to more constraints in respect of communications for the time being. We are informed by relevant parties that this is the main reason behind the resignation of some of their newly recruited staff. At the current stage, the Correctional Services Department has a far higher turnover rate as compared with other disciplinary services departments. Should they be booed instead of being given due encouragement and support regarding their work, how are we supposed to boost their morale and keep them committed to doing well in their work?

Of course, as a new Member of this Council, Mr AU Nok-hin proposed to cut the funding for replacement and enhancement of the closed circuit television ("CCTV") system for Pik Uk Prison from the estimated annual expenditure of the Correctional Services Department because he does not have much understanding of the situation. Yet, as the Chairman of the Panel on Security ("the Panel"), I am certainly against his such amendment. Numerous members of the Panel also agree to enhancing the CCTV system inside the prison because this will help guarantee safety of both the inmates as well as the staff of the Correctional Services Department. I recall that members belonging to different political parties and groupings did have indicated their support for such funded projects when they were discussed at the Panel's meetings. Thus it does not sound reasonable that Mr AU Nok-hin proceeded to demand cutting the amount of provision appropriated for this purpose during the Budget debate on various appropriations at the Council meeting. I even have a deep memory that
Mr CHAN Chi-chuen once remarked that the Correctional Services Department had acted too late in replacing its CCTV systems which were still not good enough. Therefore, if Members do wish to guarantee the safety of inmates and improve their treatment in prison—or to monitor the work of the staff of the Correctional Services Department as in Mr AU’s opinion—we should give a nod to the enhancement project on its CCTV system. And so, I do hope that Mr AU would examine in detail his such amendment.

The second point I want to talk about has something to do with CSA No. 34, which targets at the police force (a disciplinary services department). Chairman, as we all know, Hong Kong is a relatively safe city as compared with other places. Thus, I consider Mr AU’s proposal of cutting from the 2018-2019 estimated expenditure the funding for creating 1,057 new non-directorate posts inappropriate. At present, the Hong Kong Police Force has to carry out counter-terrorist duties in response to the potential risk of terrorist attacks apart from their daily routine of maintaining law and order. Members belonging to different political parties and groupings agree that it is incumbent upon the Police to step up counter-terrorist response. That aside, they also opine that either the Government or the Police should put in more efforts to combat computer crime and telephone frauds which frequently occur nowadays. Under this backdrop, is there anything wrong with the creation of additional posts in the Police to facilitate maintenance of the law and order of Hong Kong?

Some Members proposed to slash the funding for the purchase of police specialized vehicles, perhaps because they think those vehicles are purchased for the purpose of dealing with them, and they certainly do not want the Police to be allocated funds for procurement of additional equipment. However, I would like to point out that procurement of equipment and how it will be used are two different things. The police will probably be grilled by Members if it has not put in place appropriate equipment to deal with certain difficult or unexpected situations, but at this moment, they do not approve of the procurement of necessary equipment by the Police. At present, all police officers carry firearms when they are on duty, but does this necessarily mean that police officers carrying firearms will recklessly fire their guns in the street without a cause? Definitely not because the Police must have issued to all police officers relevant guidelines and rules governing the use of police firearms. Hence, I think it is not appropriate to slash the entire amount of funding for the purchase of police specialized vehicles from the estimated expenditure of the police force.
CSA No. 51 proposes to cut from the estimated expenditure the funding for conducting the exercise to be held on Daya Bay Contingency Plan. I remember that pan-democratic Members frequently voiced at meetings their concerns for the safety issue concerning the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Station and urge the Government to conduct exercise on contingency plans. Yet, is it not self-contradicting that Members of the pan-democratic camp proposed today to cut from the estimated expenditure the funding for conducting the exercise to be held on Daya Bay Contingency Plan?

CSA No. 67 proposes to cut from the estimated expenditure the funding for the purchase of Dongjiang water. Again, this is not a new issue. We all know that Hong Kong has only very limited water resources. I have watched a television programme recently which highlighted that it has not rained for quite a long while in the past—well, it seemed to have rained these few days—thus leading to the exposure of the remains of village houses lying at the bottom of Plover Cove Reservoir due to the descended water level of the latter. And so, if we really decide to spend not even a penny on the purchase of Dongjiang water but rely solely on the proposed desalination plant which has yet to be constructed so far, how can we cater for the Hong Kong's need for drinking water? Some Members may disapprove of the "package deal lump sum" approach adopted for purchasing water, it does not mean that they have good reasons to cut from the estimated expenditure the entire provision for the purchase of drinking water. If the entire sum for purchasing Dongjiang water is really slashed, who should we turn to if we need to use water? Should we tell the Member who have proposed such a cut to solve the problem then?

Chairman, I have mentioned just now a few points to illustrate the irrationalities found in the amendments in the hope that the pan-democratic Members will mend their ways upon hearing what I have said. In fact, I tell them to mend their ways every year, but they still keep on proposing amendments of this sort. I understand that this year's Budget has not scored full marks and I will not give it full marks, of course, but this does not mean we should reject it completely because it has not scored full marks.

Hence, Chairman, I will oppose the 65 amendments proposed by pan-democratic Members. However, the 2 amendments moved by the Government and the Budget will have my support. Thank you, Chairman.
MR IP KIN-YUEN (in Cantonese): Chairman, I wish to speak on a few Committee Stage amendments ("CSAs"), including …

(The microphone in the Chamber was interrupted)

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr IP Kin-yuen, are you carrying a mobile phone with you? Please put it aside.

MR IP KIN-YUEN (in Cantonese): Chairman, I do not have a mobile phone with me. My phone is on the table.

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr IP, the signal interference should be coming from a mobile phone. Please move it further away and continue to speak.

(Mr Charles Peter MOK took Mr IP Kin-yuen's mobile phone away)

MR IP KIN-YUEN (in Cantonese): A Member took my mobile phone away.

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): If you do not understand, you can ask the Member from the Information Technology sector.

MR IP KIN-YUEN (in Cantonese): Chairman, I will speak on the CSAs concerning education, including CSAs nos. 54, 55, 56 and 57. These CSAs seek to deduct the annual estimated salary of the Secretary for Education, the annual estimated expenditures for developing learning and teaching resources for Basic Law education and also the estimated expenditures of the "Curriculum Development Institute" and "Pilot Scheme on Promoting Interflows between Sister Schools in Hong Kong and the Mainland".

The amendment on deducting the annual estimated salary of the Secretary for Education is actually meant to express an overall view of our present education system, including the performance of the Secretary for Education, and whether we agree with the education policy of the Education Bureau. If we very
much agree with the education policy, we certainly have no reason to deduct the Secretary's salary; conversely, if we disprove his performance or find it unsatisfactory, I believe we can easily understand why this amendment is proposed.

Recently, the popularity or ranking of the Secretary for Education has dropped significantly. Some people even compare him with his predecessor. This shows that his "honeymoon period" has come to an end. But my concern is not only about whether his "honeymoon period" is over; I notice that some issues are developing. We have a few expectations of the Secretary. First, political problems are something we are all concerned about. We hope that education in Hong Kong can manifest the principle of "one country, two systems" of the Basic Law. In other words, our education should basically be administered by Hong Kong and be able to reflect the values that this system attaches importance to, such as freedom of speech and freedom of thinking; and that the whole education process should be able to reflect our freedom and high degree of autonomy. And the Secretary for Education should hold fast to this point and strive to do his best for the education in Hong Kong.

Over the past, many controversial issues have surfaced, and also some incidents "stirred up for no reasons", according to the Chief Executive, but there is actually a reason behind the incidents. These issues have tainted the reputation of the Secretary for Education and the overall image of the Education Bureau. I hope the Secretary can be adamant that education in Hong Kong is in line with the concept of "one country" and also "two systems". On the matter of sovereignty, I think the Secretary has already made a clear statement. However, I hope that he can also clearly state his views on the review of world history textbooks, the status of Cantonese, and the compulsory status and the assessment of Liberal Studies. These are issues of great concern in society now.

If these issues are only fabricated by the media, the Secretary can come out and clarify. If the Government has a clear stance, for instance, the Secretary has indicated that Cantonese is his mother tongue, he can directly tell us. When he cannot clearly express his stance, we will be worried and he will lose popularity. We will then suspect whether the education system in Hong Kong can still uphold its important values. I hope the Government, as well as the Secretary for Education, will be mindful of this point. This problem is not only under the portfolio of the Secretary. I believe the Government as a whole will be subject to public scrutiny.
We have a second expectation of the Secretary for Education. I believe we all hope that his education policy can lead Hong Kong to progress in a good direction in respect of education. One of the major reasons that has recently tainted the reputation of the Secretary is the Territory-wide System Assessment ("TSA"). If the Secretary has a clear education vision to guide us how to proceed, we do not need to leave a trail behind in handling TSA for primary three students; and he can dispel public concern and alleviate the pressure on students and teachers. The problem of excessive drilling, or perhaps the deformed nature of teaching, can also be addressed.

Most importantly, TSA is only part of the cause to the exhaustion that primary school students feel or the excessive homework they have. If the Bureau cannot even tackle this part of the cause, the public will lose confidence in the education in Hong Kong. Recently, Members might have heard many parents say that they were considering transferring their children to international schools or even to study abroad. If the education system in Hong Kong cannot rid itself of excessive drilling or pressure, people will have to find another way out. It is indeed very regrettable if the Government fails to give a clear message to the public on the matter of TSA for primary three students, so as to let people know that the Government is determined in ending the suffering of students in Hong Kong.

Apart from TSA for primary three students, another issue also drained away our confidence recently. The issue is having one social worker for each primary school. This issue is supposed to be the golden opportunity to enhance the counselling capacity of primary schools in Hong Kong. Especially in view of the incident of the little girl Lam Lam and the subsequent discovery that the primary school where Lam Lam's brother attends is also ignorant of her brother being abused, we increasingly feel the need to improve counselling services in kindergartens and primary schools to tackle difficult cases that require the help of social workers.

Hence, the proposal of one social worker for each primary school precisely seeks to employ more social workers within the existing resources of primary schools. Regrettably, the Government seems to think that it is unnecessary to employ an additional full-time social worker if there is already a full-time Student Guidance Teacher ("SGT") in each primary school. It thus proposed a plan. If a primary school prefers keeping its SGT post, it cannot create a new social worker post; similarly, if the primary school already has a guidance service, it can only upgrade the part-time social worker post to a full-time social worker post.
The Government's goal is to have a full-time social worker. But people's concern is whether the guidance work can been properly taken forward.

In order to properly take forward guidance work in primary schools, the role of SGT is very important. Should we adopt the "one-plus-one" model highly aspired by the education sector, social work sector and society in general? This model refers to one SGT plus one social worker. If there is already one SGT in the school, one school social worker post can be created. This will solve the problem. But regrettably, in formulating the new policy, the Government quickly jumped to the conclusion of having either a SGT or a social worker. The Government's decision has disappointed many, sending a very bad message to SGTs and guidance personnel, whether they are a social worker or a teacher, and also people who are now studying a counselling diploma programme. They all feel very disappointed.

Besides, a new situation arose recently. The Government seems to have an intention to increase guidance classes in primary schools and change the funding mode from a regular post within the staff establishment to a cash subsidy. The primary school sector is very concerned about this proposal. Moreover, there is yet to be a comprehensive allocation method for secondary and primary schools that can convince people that the Government truly wants to create a stable environment for primary and secondary schools, or can convince people that many problems can be solved under the new Government, the new Education Bureau and the new Secretary. Hence, all these are very disappointing.

The third expectation of the Secretary that people have, and I believe it is also a major expectation, is whether he can properly solve the problem of education funding. This includes several factors. First, education funding should be in the form of recurrent funding rather than short-term funding. Since the Government cannot made a big commitment on education with short-term funding, recurrent funding is preferred; and second, the funding should be used on useful places. For example, the Government proposes that each school be given several million dollars to conduct some short-term one-off projects this year. I think the Government should pay attention that such short-term funding will further increase the heavy workload of teachers. We hope that education resources can be transformed into education power, but teachers often have to take up more projects in order to translate this funding into education power. But our existing practice often cannot achieve this effect. Without additional manpower, teachers often have to re-arrange all their work when they are assigned with more non-recurrent projects. This is not a desirable practice.
The worst part is that on top of the $1.4 billion, which is the reserved but unused portion of the $5 billion funding for education, the Government also pledges in this Budget to reserve an additional $2 billion for education. This should be something to be happy about, and I think this is also an proactive commitment. As a member of the education sector and also a member of society, I believe and also hope that the money will be put to good use. However, to date the Government does not have any specific plans. If there is no specific planning, the money cannot be put to good use; and if the money cannot be put to good use, it will, at least in this year, be something unreal. So, can the Secretary for Education put forth a specific plan and convince the Chief Executive or the Financial Secretary to use the money reserved to improve education problems, and respond to the pressing needs of the education sector? We have proposed that the ratio of graduate teachers should be increased and that the class-to-teacher ratio in the establishment should be improved. These are issues that we already have a consensus. Why is the Government unable to expeditiously respond to our aspirations? Hence, there is a reason behind the recent dropping popularity of the Secretary for Education. I hope that he can expeditiously improve the education in Hong Kong.

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): I now call upon the public officers to speak. After public officer speaks, I will call upon the 14 Members and the Financial Secretary who have proposed amendments to speak again. The debate will then come to a close, and the committee will proceed to vote on the amendments seriatim. Does any public officer wish to speak?

(No public officer indicated a wish to speak)

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr AU Nok-hin, please speak.

MR AU NOK-HIN (in Cantonese): Chairman, does any public officer want to speak?

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr AU, no public officer has indicated his wish to speak. Do you wish to speak again?
MR AU NOK-HIN (in Cantonese): Chairman, I would like to raise a point of order. As Mr WU Chi-wai pointed out earlier, he only has five minutes left in the second debate session. Can Chairman give him a chance to speak for five minutes in respect of the amendments?

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr AU, this is not a point of order. At 4:15 pm this afternoon, I already reminded Members about the time to end this debate session and urged Members who wished to speak to come back to the Chamber as soon as possible. Mr AU, Do you wish to speak again?

MR AU NOK-HIN (in Cantonese): Yes, I wish to speak again, but please hold on. Honourable Members, I am sorry … In fact, I think Chairman should give more time to Members on this Budget debate. In my view, he should allow each Member to speak for five more minutes. In regard to my amendments, I notice that Members responded to my amendments in different ways, and now I would like to respond to their comments.

As I have noted, Dr Elizabeth QUAT said she did not understand my reason for moving Amendment No. 40, which seeks to reduce an amount of money from head 135—Government Secretariat: Innovation and Technology Bureau, which is approximately equivalent to the estimated expenditure for the Innovation and Technology Fund for Better Living of the Innovation and Technology Bureau for 2018-2019. Why do I have reservations towards the estimated expenditure for the Innovation and Technology Fund for Better Living of the Innovation and Technology Bureau? Because as we can see, from the Cyberport to the Hong Kong Science Park ("Science Park"), in the course of infrastructural development, the developers often develop quite a number of real estate projects in the name of innovation and technology, science and digital technologies.

Chairman, if we really want to encourage the development of innovation and technology, we should have a comprehensive innovation and technology policy as advised by Mr Charles Peter MOK. By this innovation and technology policy, it should not be as simple as allocating a piece of land for the development of innovation and technology. Let us think about it. Many computer and technology companies are not located in the Cyberport or the Science Park. Of course there are some companies in those two places, but many of them are
located in Kwun Tong, Lai Chi Kok and Quarry Bay, forming clusters of innovation technology companies. Why is it like that? Why are such companies not set up in the already established Cyberport or Science Park? Notwithstanding certain companies in the Cyberport or Science Park, when we see a large number of projects on innovation and digital technologies being transformed to real estate development projects, we should really think carefully.

Chairman, you have certainly reminded me to declare interests, which I already did. I do not mind declaring a dozen times where I am teaching, and I also believe that I do not have conflict of interests in moving the various amendments and speaking on them.

I thank Mr CHAN Hak-kan for taking note of my amendments and airing his views on my Amendment No. 7 to Head 30—Correctional Services Department ("CSD"), concerning the upgrading of the closed-circuit television ("CCTV") monitoring system in Pik Uk Prison. However, Chairman, I must clarify one point concerning our amendments to the Budget. If we had a choice to ask for an increase in the estimated expenditure, we would want to make use of this choice, but it is very unfortunate that we do not have this choice of asking for an increase in the estimated expenditure, which I believe Mr CHAN Hak-kan, being more experienced than I, is also aware of. For my stance, I very much agree to provide better treatment to CSD staff and upgrade the facilities of CSD, otherwise our colleagues from the democratic camp would not have drafted a report relating to prisoners' rights. The report not only describes the situation faced by the prisoners, but also mentions the situation faced by CSD staff, whose treatment should also be improved in our view. Hence, it is not my wish to have the CCTV system of Pik Uk Prison removed. I hope that Mr CHAN Hak-kan can understand my stance.

As regards Amendment No. 34 which seeks to reduce an amount approximately equivalent to the estimated expenditure for the remunerations of the additional 1 057 non-directorate posts (notional annual mid-point salary value) in the Hong Kong Police Force for 2018-2019, I think we need a space for discussion. I note that the Police to population ratio is usually taken as a yardstick to assess whether a city has an appropriate police force. But we see that the existing police to population ratio in Hong Kong is on the high side when compared with many cities in the world, and is so high to have, in my opinion, slightly upset the balance. First of all, the Police to population ratio of Hong Kong is the highest in Asia. According to the figures released earlier, with one
Over the past few years, the overall crime rate in Hong Kong has been decreasing, whereas the number of disciplinary officers has risen 7% within four years. Is it not necessary for the Police Force to give an account on these additional 1,057 posts? From the paper submitted by the Police Force to the Finance Committee, I notice that the reasons are mainly for enhancing the capability of emergency response and handling major incidents, strengthening Hong Kong's counter-terrorism capability and preparedness, providing manpower support to projects such as the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, Sha Tin to Central link and Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai Boundary Control Point, as well as supporting the operation of the Anti-Deception Coordination Centre.

Chairman, it has been four years since the Occupy Central movement, and in each of these four years, the Police Force also used this reason of enhancing the capability of emergency response and handling major incidents for strengthening its arms and manpower. However, when we ask the Security Bureau whether there are such practical needs, they would usually be unwilling to disclose the figures for reasons of security or maintaining confidentiality by law enforcement agencies, or would simply refuse to give any reasons of whatever kind. I believe Mr CHAN Hak-kan, being Chairman of the Panel on Security, would quite understand this situation. In fact, the Police have already ruthlessly suppressed the civic society through their indiscriminate arrests and prosecutions in recent years, and clashes between people and the Police also scarcely happened in these years. In 2017, 78 people were arrested due to public meetings and public processions, and only 13 people were prosecuted. With such figures, it is difficult to convince the public of the Police Force's need to increase its manpower drastically to deal with some so-called major incidents.

In fact, while there is year-over-year growth in the number of police officers, is there sufficient support in terms of training, monitoring and manpower management? No wonder in recent years, the calibre of police officers has been declining. With the lowering of the physical fitness standard, we notice that many police officers on the street may not be able to reach the previous physical
fitness standard. The Police Force now asks to create 1,057 additional posts. How can we tell that this is a value-for-money exercise? We have never seen the Security Bureau giving any detailed account of these matters to the Legislative Council. During the meetings of the Panel on Security, even in regard to the roadblocks formed by civilian vehicles under recent discussion, the Security Bureau has also repeatedly refused to face public opinions and respond to public or Members' queries. Their answers are highly unsatisfactory to us.

Chairman, I really wish to use the remaining speaking time to discuss the amendment on Head 163—Registration and Electoral Office ("REO") in respect of subhead 000. Nevertheless, before I start to speak on this amendment, first of all, I have to rectify one point. I feel sorry that when I spoke on the Financial Services Development Council ("FSDC"), I addressed Mr Joseph CHAN incorrectly, who should be the Under Secretary. I need to clarify in the first place. I am very sorry and hope that he would not mind about that.

I have to tell you that when discussing the amendment on FSDC earlier, many Members said they would by all means oppose all the amendments moved by the democratic camp and only support the two amendments moved by the Financial Secretary. However, I hope Members here can understand why we move amendments in respect of so many subheads. Are they really not worth supporting at all? For example, how could FSDC come up with such a twisted study report in favour of the real estate sector? Because of this, the rules concerned were finally relaxed by the Securities and Futures Commission, which attributed to the problems related to the Link. Those Members who claim themselves to be concerned about the Link problems and have an eye on the Link, including Members from the pro-establishment camp, should respond to my question. If they are against the Link, they should support my amendment in respect of the subhead to cut the expenditure for FSDC.

I am now back to the discussion on REO. My amendment seeks to deduct a total amount of $61 million which is approximately equivalent to the estimated expenditure for verification of voter registration particulars by REO for 2018-2019. Chairman, I move this amendment because of the various problems with REO in recent years. Under the tremendous pressure from the Beijing authorities, the justice of election in Hong Kong has been seriously called into question, and an election is often turned into a wrestling ground of different values. In the Chief Executive Election and the Legislative Council Election held last year, there were serious political controversies in which REO was
undisputedly playing a significant role. When discussing this amendment, it is of course difficult to merely discuss the verification of voter registration particulars. Chairman, you told us that our discussion should be on the basis of one amendment to one subhead. But in fact, when we proposed the amendments, we also want to make an overall assessment of REO's performance.

First of all, I want to mention an incident happened a while ago, which was related the loss of notebook computers containing voters' information. During the Chief Executive Election in March last year, REO has lost the notebook computers containing the personal particulars of 1 200 Election Committee Members and 3.7 million voters in the whole territory, including you and me. This incident caused a public uproar. In a Chief Executive Election with only the participation of 1 200 people, why would the computers contain the personal particulars of all voters in Hong Kong? In a highly secure and guarded environment, how could someone enter a room which was supposed to be locked? Why would the computers containing such important information be placed inside a room instead of stored in the cabinet? Why would REO need so much manpower and so many resources itself but no security guard was deployed in the vicinity of the AsiaWorld-Expo venue? To the above queries, the Government just prevaricated in its reply, utterly unable to allay public worries. When the public asked how the Government would deal with the risk of information leakage, it only said that the system has already been encrypted. But we all know that when the computers have been snapped away, it is just a matter of time for the person to decrypt the system if he has sufficient time and technological knowhow. Does the Government have a crystal ball so that it is sure the person who has stolen the computers is in lack of such technology know-how?

Secondly, I also want to talk about the problem of vote-rigging. During the Legislative Council Election this year, there were suspected vote-rigging cases in my contesting Hong Kong Island constituency. For instance, some households in First Street and Second Street of Sai Ying Pun have received election notices which did not belong to them, and vote-rigging was suspected. The son of a household, Mr LO, said that his mother has been living in Second Street for 30 years and has never received an election notice not belonged to the household. He was worried that the address of his mother has been unduly used. At the same time, we also notice that in some cases, the voters have lost their eligibility. In fact, they want to continue to vote but have suddenly lost their eligibility. In the course of random inspection, are there areas which should be
improved? Besides, we see what REO has done in triggering the incident of disqualifying certain candidates running for the Legislative Council by-election. In fact, these incidents can prove that there are countless areas which warrant improvement by REO.

Chairman, it is difficult for me to go through all my amendments within limited speaking time, but I have briefly given my views on different areas and the reasons for moving my amendments. I have to reiterate that we move amendments because we all want to do our best under the existing system and restraints of the Legislative Council. We are unable to ask for any increase in the estimated expenditure, which I surely hope that we are allowed to do so. Nevertheless, when we suggest how various departments can be improved so that they can do better, we can only voice our views through the means of asking to deduct their expenditures in respect of the subheads concerned.

Chairman, I really hope that Members who speak later on the amendments can be given sufficient time to express their views. Chairman, I so submit.

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr CHU Hoi-dick, do you wish to speak again?

MR CHU HOI-DICK (in Cantonese): Yes, and I originally wished to say a word of thanks to you, but you have indeed gone too far. Just now several colleagues have pressed the button and requested to speak, and you have also set our time target at approximately 6:30 pm, so what reasons do you have to disallow them to speak? For what reasons can you do so? Where are you rushing to? Fellow colleagues do have the right to speak, and for what reasons can you obstruct them from speaking? You are just acting like "a donkey in a lion's hide"!

You have rejected quite a number of amendments I proposed and again, what reasons do you have to do so? Buddy, you should be reasonable. For how many hours has the whole Budget debate been going on, and why can these officials not even utter a single word? They have given absolutely no response to all the amendments under discussion, be they proposed by Members or by the Financial Secretary, and are they dumb? How can they not respond …

(Ms Claudia MO spoke loudly in her seat)
CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Ms Claudia MO, if you keep yelling in your seat, I will regard your behaviour as grossly disorderly.

MR CHU HOI-DICK (in Cantonese): President Andrew LEUNG, has Ms MO ever yelled?


(Ms Claudia MO continued to speak loudly in her seat)

MR CHU HOI-DICK (in Cantonese): This is really unfair …

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Ms Claudia MO, I warn you for the second time, if you keep speaking in your seat, I will regard your behaviour as grossly disorderly. Mr CHU Hoi-dick, please continue with your speech.

MR CHU HOI-DICK (in Cantonese): Ms MO, there is no need to say anything, just let me criticize Mr Andrew LEUNG. When Ms Starry LEE took the Chair just now, I indicated my support for an amendment proposed by Mr HUI Chi-fung to reduce the annual estimated expenditure of the Education Bureau in developing learning and teaching resources on Basic Law education. I think the estimated expenditure of $320,000 for this purpose can be reduced because there are persons like you, Mr Andrew LEUNG, who serve as the best and a living example to illustrate to all students in Hong Kong that the only function of the Basic Law now is to advocate the prevalence of authoritarianism.

You are the one who have vetted and approved the amendments made to the Rules of Procedure, and under these amendments, only 20 Members will be adequate to meet the quorum requirement for a committee of the whole Council, but this is actually in contravention of the Basic Law. Similarly, the co-location arrangement is in contravention of Article 18 of the Basic Law, and are you going to give approval for the resumption of Second Reading debate on the relevant bill? You serve as the best teaching material, and as long as our students can see
you on television every day and realize what Mrs Regina IP has done, there is no need to spend the proposed sum of $320,000 on Basic Law education. We can see the very essence of the whole thing in you two.

I just want to ask the four public officers present here in this Chamber now: The Government has proposed some really wonderful amendments this time, has it not? Where is Paul CHAN now? He is criticized by all the people of Hong Kong for spending over $40 billion very generously to merely offer tax concession and rates waiver. Yet, he was later forced to put forward another proposal to plug the gap, and has undertaken to do this and that, but the public officers present here can remain silent although our debate has been going on for a couple of days. I have already stated very clearly just now that instead of caring only about property owners and taxpayers, the Government should treat every person with the right attitude. If the Government fails to change its arrogant attitude, the proposal put forward this time to plug the gap will reduce to nothing but a hypocritical game, and members of the public will not be fooled by this trick.

If public officers choose not to give any response in an important debate like this, why should there be a debate then? The Legislative Council is ruined by people like you, Mr Andrew LEUNG, and what you have done cannot even be described as "tailoring the filibuster". With you sitting there, the Legislative Council will only be deprived of the chance to have discussions, and public officers have to remain completely silent so as to accommodate themselves to your style. No one attaches importance to this legislature, because people consider that there are far too many cheering team members and royalists here. There is also nothing we can do because in many respects, the more you connive at the Government, the more outrageously it will behave.

I have proposed quite a number of amendments concerning the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge ("HZMB") project, but they have all been rejected by you, Mr Andrew LEUNG, and the amendment proposed by Mr CHAN Chi-chuen on the project is the only one left for us to discuss here. I will render my full support to his proposal of reducing the estimated expenditure for the maintenance of the Hong Kong Section of HZMB, and why is that so? Mr CHAN Hak-kan is not present in the Chamber now, but my support for the amendment is a gesture to protest against him, and I agree to reduce all expenditures proposed for the HZMB project. Why should I do so? I am not afraid to state my position openly on the street, because every one of us here in Hong Kong knows that with this "white elephant" project, we will fall into a
bottomless abyss permanently, and so will the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link ("XRL") project lead us into.

The construction of the Hong Kong Section of XRL has already completed, but when it has achieved readiness for commissioning and the Government is pushing forward the co-location arrangement, Frederick MA stealthily tells us today that we will actually not be able to buy train tickets to many Mainland destinations in Hong Kong. Passengers heading for these Mainland destinations will have to buy their own tickets at Guangzhou South Railway Station or on the Internet through agents. This is simply incredible, and the whole thing is nothing but a perfect scam.

The construction of the Hong Kong Section of HZMB is another perfect scam. The annual maintenance fee for the section linking Hong Kong up to the artificial island alone will be $270 million, and if we multiply the amount by 50 years, the total fee will be as high as $13.5 billion excluding inflation. Furthermore, the HZMB project does not consist only of the Hong Kong Section but also the HZMB Main Bridge, and I do not know how much money Hong Kong will have to dump into that bottomless abyss and how high will the amount of interest accrued. I can only learn from the reply to a supplementary question raised at a special meeting of the Finance Committee that the annual maintenance fee for the HZMB Main Bridge will be RMB 210 million. Together with the annual maintenance fee of $270 million mentioned just now …

(Ms Claudia MO stood up)

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Ms Claudia MO, what is your point?

MS CLAUDIA MO: Can we have the quorum please?

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Will the Clerk please ring the bell to summon Members back to the Chamber.

(After the summoning bell had been rung, a number of Members returned to the Chamber)
CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr CHU Hoi-dick, please continue with your speech.

MR CHU HOI-DICK (in Cantonese): Fellow colleagues, just now you might not have the chance to understand what is going on in the Chamber. The point is that a debate has been going on for over 10 hours in this Council to discuss various amendments, including those proposed by the Financial Secretary on behalf of the Government. There are diverse views on the proposal to plug the gap by handing out $4,000 to certain members in the community, and arguments for and against the idea have been made. However, the Government has not even uttered a single word about its response to such views, although they are about the amendments proposed by the Government itself.

Then, Mr Andrew LEUNG did not allow Members to speak …

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr CHU Hoi-dick, please refer to the Script for the debate arrangements. The Financial Secretary will be the second last one to speak in the current debate session and by then, he will give a reply on the views expressed on his amendments. Please be patient.

MR CHU HOI-DICK (in Cantonese): Thank you, but I hope fellow colleagues will show respect for this legislature, so that members of the public will not be increasingly let down by us. We should hold debates in the Chamber, instead of acting as yes-men or rubber stamps.

I have already expressed my grave dissatisfaction about the Government just now, and since it has turned a blind eye to the situation of many people who are not required to pay tax and rates, it is required to put forward a proposal to plug the gap. As for the HZMB project, the whole thing is like a black hole for us, and we have to put bits and pieces of information together in order to clarify the exact amount of maintenance fee we have to pay in the future.

First of all, we have learnt from the reply to a question raised by Mr CHAN Chi-chuen that the annual maintenance fee for the Hong Kong Section of HZMB would be HK$270 million. Subsequently, I have raised a supplementary question and learnt from its reply that the annual maintenance fee for the HZMB
Main Bridge would be RMB 210 million. It was further revealed in a hearing of the Development and Reform Commission of Guangdong Province held in December 2017 that apart from this annual maintenance fee of RMB 210 million, there would also be an additional annual expenditure of RMB 65.44 million on overhaul cost. Adding the three sums together, the Hong Kong Government will have to pay a maintenance fee of up to HK$614 million annually, and if we multiply the amount by 50 years, the total amount will be as high as over HK$30 billion.

We have to pay a maintenance fee of over $30 billion in the coming 50 years, and we can simply forget about recovering the construction costs, but what can we do? We can only rebuke you here, telling you that Hong Kong people are very disappointed at the Government. Whenever an agreement of this sort is signed with the Mainland authorities on cross-boundary infrastructural projects, the Government is always treated as lamb to the slaughter, with only an obligation to shoulder even the biggest share of the expenditure, but is never given the right to know and the power to make decisions. The construction of the Hong Kong Section of HZMB has already led to the death of 10 workers, and it was recently revealed that another nine workers died of industrial injuries during the implementation of the HZMB Main Bridge project. Therefore, apart from such fatal cases, I raise a written question today to enquire about the number of workers injured in industrial accidents which happened during the implementation of projects relating to HZMB.

According to the reply given by the Transport and Housing Bureau, apart from nine fatal cases reported by the HZMB Authority, it has not received reports of other work injuries. A friend of mine has immediately browsed through the web page on judgments delivered by the Mainland courts, and found that court hearings of some industrial injury cases concerning the HZMB project have already been scheduled, meaning that there were indeed work injuries during the implementation of the project. However, the Government echoed the views of the HZMB Authority when the latter indicated that it had not received reports of other work injuries. In this case, what is the difference between you and those dolosse floating in the waters of the artificial island? Is it not another big black hole for us? Therefore, be it the maintenance fee of $270 million or other funding proposals submitted by the Government for the HZMB project, I will raise my objection against them and propose to reduce the amount of funding requested, so that members of the public can vent their spleen.
Since the annual maintenance fee alone will amount to over $600 million, according to some recent news reports, the number of cross-boundary vehicle licences has already increased to over 11,200, and the quotas for Mainland enterprise or official vehicles have also increased from 300 to 1,000. Can you offer an explanation on the reasons for such increases? It is exactly because the HZMB project has run over budget that there is a need to broaden its sources of income as far as possible, lest the usage rate of HZMB may be too low. It will be better if we can attract more vehicles to use HZMB after the quotas have been increased.

The construction of HZMB has first of all aroused strong feelings among the general public, since there is no knowing when the construction costs can be recovered. Besides, there are also public concerns that the Government will use the hardware as an excuse to allow the free entry and exit of cross-boundary private cars, official vehicles and even all other vehicles. What makes us worry most is that you will turn a blind eye to these public concerns, hold on to your own position, and choose to allow by hook or by crook the free entry and exit of all vehicles with the provision of the hardware support. Is this a right approach?

The Basic Law was originally designed to safeguard the basic rights of Hong Kong people, and if this is really the case, I will give you my support no matter how much money you wish to spend on the implementation of Basic Law education among children. However, this is not the case now, and the Basic Law is used to teach people a lesson, put labels on others and disqualify Members from their office. Furthermore, apart from the Basic Law, when WANG Zhimin came here to visit the Legislative Council, he has also given us a copy of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China ("the Constitution"), which has a white cover and was placed on top of the Basic Law. We are now asked to comply with not only the Basic Law but also the Constitution, and the nature of those labels put on us by Carrie LAM is also getting more and more serious, requiring us to state our position on nearly every issue.

Hong Kong is messed up by people like you, and from those in Beijing to Carrie LAM and her cheering team members as well as supporters, what they have done has only served to break all the rules and regulations. Their only function is to advocate the prevalence of authoritarianism, and everything is a black-box operation. Why do the public not believe that the big debate on land search can help them improve their living standard? It is because the Government is holding huge reserves of $4,000 billion, but fails to get the most
out of the Budget to make life better for the elderly. There is no provision of universal retirement protection in Hong Kong, and worst still, due to the acute shortage of residential care places for the elderly, many elderly people waiting for such places passed away before being admitted into residential care homes. Since you do not know how to distribute the fiscal surplus, why should we lend you our support and make such a big fuss about searching of land? This can only help developers and contractors make more money, and under the governance of such a quality, how can the ordinary public lead a good life?

Hence, although the royalists will definitely vote against these proposed amendments, the general public can see very clearly that we must absolutely vote for them.

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr KWONG Chun-yu, do you wish to speak again?

MR KWONG CHUN-YU (in Cantonese): Chairman, this speaking time of 15 minutes can enable me speak on my own amendment. I shall focus on animal rights. Chairman, my amendment seeks to reduce head 22 by $1 million, which is roughly equivalent to the expenditure of the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD") on euthanizing animals. Over the past few days, we have tried to speak upfront on euthanasia at this critical juncture of discussing the bill. Euthanasia in this context actually means capturing cats and dogs and killing them as a solution to the problem. But is this the real solution?

Our city is ever advancing, and Hong Kong people have started to care about animals' right to life. But the Government is still adopting this very backward method of euthanasia. Euthanasia is totally inhuman. Last year, the Government killed 1400 dogs and some 300 cats with $1 million of public money. Every year, we approve this funding request, and the Government simply continues with euthanasia. If there is really no alternative to euthanasia, then we really cannot say anything. But is there really no alternative to euthanasia? Yesterday, the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene discussed the "Trap-Neuter-Return" Programme (TRN Programme). This programme has been going on for three years at two trial sites. Actually, many other places have been making great efforts to implement this programme, in the hope that it can replace the very cruel method of euthanasia, and animals can live
peacefully to the natural ends of their lives. It is hoped that all those animals which cannot speak any human languages, and which however still have feelings, such as cats and dogs, can all live where they are living, rather than being captured and killed by AFCD.

But Chairman, the Government's conclusion on the pilot programme is really absurd. It claims that the programme has not been very effective, because it cannot achieve the intended objective of reducing the number of stray dogs by 10%. I hate to describe these animals as stray dogs. I think they should be called community dogs. Yes, I know that Ms Claudia MO will be very happy whenever I use the right words. In fact, they themselves do not want to be stray and dirty. They are community dogs. And, about the failure to achieve the objective of reducing the number of stray dogs by 10%, I think the main reason is that there were only three years under this programme for AFCD to trap, neuter and return the dogs. So, unless the dogs all died at the same time, how could it be possible to effectively reduce the number? And, in Tai Tong, one of the trial sites, stray dogs actually came and went at all times, and when a new stray dog entered Tai Tong, it was counted in the department's statistical analysis. Also, when someone abandoned a dog at the site, the dog was again counted. As a result, the department simply could not effectively control the number of stray dogs. So, it draws the conclusion that the programme has not been very effective.

I think the reason for such ineffectiveness does not lie with the "TRN" Programme itself. It actually lies with AFCD. The department should actually think about the source of the whole problem, and start with the prevention of all those problems arising from animal abandonment. It should then consider whether there are any other methods that are more humane. All these cats and dogs have feelings. But after they are captured by the department, they will be put inside animal management centres for just four days. Chairman, just four days, and afterwards, they will be euthanized right away, killed by human beings without any further ado, if they are not adopted or claimed by anyone. I have asked my friends how euthanasia is administered. Well, the person concerned will administer a shot on the animal's muscles, then on its heart, and after several seconds, the dog's heartbeats will stop, and it will die.

I have said that last year, the department killed 1400 dogs and some 300 cats. There are 365 days in a year, so how many animals are euthanized by the department every day? I think even the AFCD staff responsible for handling the
syringes will also feel very sorry, right? So, I must say all is the fault of the policy. What is that fault? Backwardness is the fault. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap. 169) in Hong Kong was first enacted based on a similar law drawn up in Britain in 1991. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance in Hong Kong was enacted in 1935, and it was amended in 2006, to be fair. The penalties were increased, with a maximum prison sentence of three years upon conviction. And, the maximum fine was raised to $200,000. But that does not change anything. The underlying intent of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance simply remains unchanged. Here, I must say the intent should instead aim to ensure that people shall have the obligation to prevent the injury of the animals under their care, and that the authorities shall always effectively enforce the law. Professor Sophia CHAN sitting over there has also paid attention to this problem. I really hope that besides posting an essay on Facebook to show her concern, she can also help us amend the outdated legislation. I long forward to seeing a whole series of laws on respect for animal lives. It is really high time for us to amend the legislation, Secretary.

Chairman, you may say I am talking about euthanasia again. Yes, I am. Euthanasia is a very big issue intricately related with many other issues. Taiwan and Macao have already enacted an integrated set of laws on animal protection, but there is none in Hong Kong. Hong Kong is often called a civilized city, and Ghandi once remarked that how a city treats its animals can show how civilized it is. How civilized is Hong Kong, then? The Rabies Ordinance (Cap. 421) is totally outdated; it has been a long time since rabies was last recorded in Hong Kong, right? Why do we still find it necessary to "arrest" a cat or a dog when it is mistakenly suspected of injuring a human being? Marbles was a good example. That day, as many as a million Hong Kong people signed up to save it, requesting AFCD not to "arrest it by appointment". You know, the authorities have only increased the penalties under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and over all these years, the longest prison sentence handed down by the Court is just 10 months. Can this serve any deterrent effect? Well, there is finally a ray of hope about our request over all those years for the establishment of an animal police team. The number of Police regions with dedicated teams for investigating animal cruelty cases has increased from 13 to 22. But has the Government considered how it should invest resources for the purpose?

I wish to tell the Secretary that the dog poisoning cases in Wah Ming Estate have had a sequel. Following the tragic killing of her dog, the dog owner cried over the dead body and reported to the Police. The Police hence carried out an
investigation and intended to do an autopsy to identify the toxin. After all the procedures, a problem emerged. You know, under a very antiquated policy, the dead body of the dog will not be returned to its owner. Put simply, even though the owner wanted to inter her dog, she could not do so. In the end, thanks to the Secretary's mediation—I believe she must have made lots of efforts—AFCD agreed to an early return of the dead body to its owner. But the story does not end here. The procedures of returning the dead body are very messy. Even though the department has issued a statement indicating its agreement to returning the dead body to its owner, there are actually no established measures and guidelines on how the return can actually take place. So, in the above case, all the front-line staff could only stand helplessly by, not knowing what to do. So, the dead body must be stored somewhere. But where? Many voluntary animal rescue organizations all faced a shortage of dead body freezer boxes. They told me, "Mr KWONG, we are sorry that we have no more freezer boxes already." Should the dead bodies be put along the hallways then? But how could we possibly do so? Then, how about AFCD? I do not believe that there was no room in AFCD. How can we believe that there is no room in a government department for refrigerating dead animals? Also, the dog owner in the above case has been waiting for a laboratory examination of her dead dog. She has been waiting for a very long time, but her dead dog is still not given any toxicological examination.

Let me point out that if the Government is willing to take the "first half-step forward", the public will surely know. The simplest way to take the "first half-step forward" is to do away with euthanasia. If the Government cannot abolish it within a year, well, it is okay for it to use 10 years for planning its abolition. In any case, the Government must formulate planning and a time-frame for abolishing euthanasia, rather than just applying to the Legislative Council for $1 million year after year to euthanize animals. The government funding given to animal welfare organizations for rescuing animals is just $600,000 or so, but the sum of money used by the Government to kill animals is far larger. Chairman, this is very saddening indeed. Let me return to the issue. What will happen if we still do not kick-start the process of abolishing euthanasia now? But actually, we should first consider whether the use of so much public money for euthanasia is really justified. Anyway, if we do not kick-start the process now, then I am sorry to say that euthanasia will still be with us even in 2047. All the policies are interrelated. As many as 10 ordinances in Hong Kong touch upon animals, and they are not compatible with one another. But the main problem is that all these ordinances are already outdated. Why should
we approve this funding request for $1 million? The Government has identified an alternative to euthanasia, the "TNR" Programme, but why does it say that it is ineffective? Well, as explained by animal welfare organizations, with its approach of analysis and studies, the Government will of course find the programme ineffective. What is more, with just a simplistic conclusion that the programme is not feasible, the Government has quickly decided not to extend it to all the 18 districts. Many animal welfare organizations are in fact waiting for the Government's next step, because no matter how hard they work, they are essentially community organizations and must depend on the Government. As the highest authority, the Government controls all our resources, so animal welfare organizations must first receive funding before they can do their work. Actually, once the Government issues an order, it will be possible to kick-start the Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return ("TNVR") Programme in all 18 districts tomorrow. And, I think this is the only direction that can gradually reduce the unnecessary deaths of animals under the euthanasia policy.

Chairman, when we discussed issue of animal rights last year, people might jeer at us. But today, as we can see, the Secretary has started to show her concern, and even Carrie LAM talks about her concern about animal rights in various social media. So, this year is really the best time to discuss animal rights. The existing Road Traffic Ordinance mentions only seven kinds of animals such as ass, mule, horse, cattle, sheep and pig (excluding wild boar). If a motorist runs into these animals, he must stop. The authorities have already made a proposal on introducing an amendment to require a motorist to stop when he runs into a cat or a dog. We have all started to discuss the issue now, but this is not yet enough. However hard we try, we must actually tackle the problem at source.

What is meant by tackling the problem at source? We must start with children. We are now actively requesting the incorporation of animal protection into school textbooks. We advocate that separate sections on protecting animal lives should be added to textbooks. This is far better than teaching children that our mother tongue is not Cantonese. If we can teach children that they must protect animals, then we will be able to mitigate the problem of inhuman euthanasia of animals by AFCD.

I have therefore moved the amendment that head 22 be reduced by $1 million. And, as I said when I first spoke, I have done so with the clear knowledge that the amendment will not be passed. But I must still call upon
Members from all political parties and groupings to reconsider their stances when my amendment is put to vote later. I hope they can all consider the idea of really cutting their estimated expenditure this time around, so as to make it impossible for AFCD to carry out its duties and thus force it work out new approaches and new directions. That way, we need not look helplessly on as AFCD slaughters the animals year after year. Frankly, I think the front-line staff will also find it very cruel to do so, but they are helpless as all must depend on the Legislative Council's decision on the funding. Sadly, the Legislative Council passes this expenditure year after year. With the money, the Government can continue with the killing of animals. And, after killing the animals, the Government thinks that the problem is solved and continues to juggle the figures to prove the effectiveness of its measure.

Actually, many of those areas in need of reform are connected with the idea of humane treatment in my amendment. As I have mentioned, at present, if an animal is not adopted or claimed within four days, it will be euthanized. And, when propose TNR as an alternative to euthanasia, the Government only designates two trial sites in Hong Kong. This shows that the Government is totally reluctant to invest any resources in this. And, by the way, apart from putting up one or two advertisements, the Government has not worked out any means to tackle the problem of animal abandonment. But can the advertisements really work? We must remind ourselves very seriously that if our city is to enter a new era, it must truly respect animal lives. How can we respect their precious lives? The answer is very simple. It is okay for us not to love them. But we must not kill them. We fell pains, and so do they. All those who hide in the dark corners of our society and delight in torturing animals to death are condemned to hell, as they have already sold their souls to Satan.

Chairman, I have not moved this amendment as a matter of routine. Rather, I am very concerned about the issue involved. Yes, animal policies are a very broad topic, but we should know that other cities have already done a very good job. I dare not be so ambitious as to mention Germany as an example to emulate. But you see, Taiwan is a also a Chinese society, and it has already attained the nil-killing target. Our neighbour, Macao, has also introduced the Animal Protection Law. Of course, they can be still be criticized in one way or another, but Hong Kong should still learn from their good practices and formulate a new and separate ordinance on animal protection. This is better than our terribly fragmentary approach at present.
At present, the task of caring for animals is so ridiculously taken up by the Rabies Ordinance (Cap. 421). The rationale behind this cannot possibly convince anyone. Actually, animal abandonment is prohibited under the ordinance because it is feared that this may cause epidemics and the spread of diseases. This was the original legislative intent years ago. And, the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance is even modeled after the Protection of Animals Act enacted in Britain in 1911, when animals were treated as properties. But then, under the Road traffic Ordinance, cats and dogs are not regarded as properties; only horse, cattle and sheep are so regarded, and motorists running into them must pay compensation. Why was this requirement first drawn up? Because there were many farms in Britain at that time.

The original intents of the above ordinances are not to protect animal lives. And, every year in the Budget, there is invariably an estimated expenditure on euthanasia. This funding request is often passed very smoothly, and the amount this year is as much as $1 million. Honestly, how can I be unaware of the impossibility of cutting this expenditure? But I have still put forward the amendment because I do not want to see this funding request from AFCD being passed too easily.

I therefore sincerely call upon Members to consider giving support to the amendment. I do not know how others think. Maybe, some people or pro-establishment Members (I do not want to give any names here) will dismiss the amendment as senseless and a waste of time. But very sorry, I must ask everybody here: Do you support euthanasia? If the answer is no, we must cut this estimated expenditure, so as to force the authorities and AFCD to consider other alternatives, other humane alternatives, as a means of handling the animals in this city.

Chairman, this is only the beginning because people in this Chamber are adopting a more and more serious attitude towards the discussions on animal policies. In the past, not only the public but also Members would jeer at us, saying that they just would not bother about any animals. But we must realize the justifications for introducing animal policies; I have quoted GHANDI as saying that how a city treats its animals can show how civilized it is. If we think Hong Kong should love its animals and people who torture and kill animals are a disgrace to us, we will be happy to see the enactment of the legislation concerned. Most importantly, is the use of the $1 million mentioned in the Budget today really justified? Is it justified to spend money on killing cats and dogs, 1 400
dogs and 300 cats? I hope Members can reflect on these questions. I so submit.

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr Gary FAN, do you wish to speak again?

(Mr AU Nok-hin stood up)

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr AU Nok-hin, what is your question?

MR AU NOK-HIN (in Cantonese): Chairman, I request a headcount.

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr AU Nok-hin requests a headcount.

Will the Clerk please ring the bell to summon Members back to the Chamber)

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

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Mr Gary FAN, do you wish to speak again?

MR GARY FAN (in Cantonese): Chairman, I will certainly opt to speak as I am present, otherwise why should I sit here and wait?

Chairman, I am sure that the Budget this year will be the one approved most quickly in five years. The debate on the budget will be concluded in less than 22 hours, and up to now 17 hours have passed. This is really unfortunate, because the budget this time around is the most objectionable and controversial one.

This year the Government recorded a surplus as high as $148.9 billion, which is $10.9 billion more than the $138 billion as announced in the budget in this February; when compared with last year's estimated surplus of $16.4 billion, we actually have earned $132.5 billion more, it is $132.5 billion, thus the wrongly estimated extent is the most severe in the past 20 years since 1997. Is our
Government losing its functions? How can it wrongly estimated the surplus so excessively?

Chairman, the short scrutiny period of the budget is of course relevant to your tightening up of the approval criteria for amendments by adopting the principle of "one amendment to one subhead" on an overall basis instead of an individual Member basis. My proposal of "reducing the estimated full-year expenditure for the Transport and Housing Bureau in printing and publicity of the co-location scheme of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link ("XRL")", and "reducing the estimated full-year expenditure for the preparatory work on the planning and engineering study for nearshore reclamation at Ma Liu Shui" have not overlapped any of the 65 amendments in our debate, but the Chairman maintains that they should not be approved, how can you find an excuse for that?

Chairman, I have proposed 10 amendments, but only 2 of them were approved by you, including the amendment to reduce the estimated expenditure for the Water Supplies Department in purchasing fresh water from Guangdong Province in 2018, and the amendment to reduce the estimated full-year expenditure of the operating costs of the South East New Territories landfill, which is also known as the Tseung Kwan O landfill. Just now when some pro-establishment and pro-Administration Members are delivering their speeches, such as Dr Elizabeth QUAT of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong ("DAB"), they accuse my amendment for tarnishing the Dongjiang water. I just can't believe that she could say such things. It is not my amendment which has tarnished the Dongjiang water, it is the severe pollution problem in the upper reaches of Dongjiang which has tarnished the Dongjiang water.

DAB's Dr CHIANG Lai-wan has been reiterating in the past that we should feel grateful for the supply of the Dongjiang water when we drink a cup of water. However, it is an open transaction concluded under a commercial agreement, unless we do not read the news reports and unless we shut our eyes to the facts in front of us. That is, there are numerous reports of pollution problems concerning the Dongjiang water: 20 May 2010, the "fourth estate" of Hong Kong, the media and reporters conducted an on-site inspection of the open nullah of the Dongjiang water supply source in Zhangmutou, Dongguan. The water quality in the open nullah was very poor as it was in close proximity of a landfill. Moreover, as the Mainland Government is planning to build an incinerator in the nearby area, toxic substances will possibly be discharged into the open nullah and
will contaminate the water sources. For that reason, Hong Kong people are concerned if we are paying a high price for some very poisonous water.

On 18 December 2012, Hong Kong media visited the source of the Dongjiang water in Jiangxi. They found that the water quality was contaminated by some agricultural activities. Domestic and livestock wastes were discharged directly into the Dongjiang water. The poverty-stricken and backward area was unable to deal with the contamination problem after the closure of mines in the area, thus a serious problem has cropped up at the source of the Dongjiang water.

On 23 January 2013, the media found that one of the water sources of the Dongjiang water, the Xinfeng Jiang Reservoir, had illegally discharged sewage containing chemical substances into the Dongjiang water, which had caused the massive death of frogs and fish. The pollution was caused by the contamination of the nearby mines.

In November 2015, an environmental group took water samples of the Dongjiang water stored in various reservoirs for laboratory test, including the Plover Cove Reservoir, the High Island Reservoir and the Tai Lam Chung Reservoir. Hazardous and carcinogenic per and poly-fluorinated chemicals were found, and the content was higher than the water in other reservoirs which only collect rain water. For that reason, it was suspected that the Dongjiang water was one of the sources of carcinogen.

In February 2016, during the peak season of avian influenza outbreak, more than 60 bags of dead chickens were found near the source of one of the tributaries of the Dongjiang water, Jiaodong Reservoir—it is Jiaodong Reservoir, not Guodong Reservoir. In November 2017, there was report that cattle and buffalos in a village in Dongyuan County, Heyuan, fell ill and died one after another. 95 out of a total of 300 cattle and buffalos fell ill, and 30 died. It was suspected that the deaths were related to the contamination of the water, and the location of the village was very close to the Dongjiang.

Chairman, the Mainland Government is unable to maintain the quality of the Dongjiang water at a reasonable and acceptable level, let alone a perfect standard. The SAR Government is also unable to monitor the water quality of the Dongjiang water supply. What can Hong Kong people do? All we can do is to spend substantial public funds to purchase some fresh water with no quality
assurance. As a result, we have to spend substantial public money to process the filtration and treatment of the Dongjiang water. The figures provided by the Government are very clear, in 2015-2016, the unit cost of fresh water produced from Hong Kong reservoir water amounted to $4.3 per cubic meter, flushing water amounted to $5 to $6, but what is the cost for the procurement of the Dongjiang water plus the filtration and treatment works? It is 50% more, as the unit cost for the Dongjiang water is $9.5 per cubic meter. It is $9.5.

Chairman, why should I propose the amendment? The most important point is not like what Mr CHAN Hak-kan, Dr Elizabeth QUAT and Dr CHIANG Lai-wan say each time in their speeches: "the Dongjiang water is good; Dongjiang water is awesome; we should be grateful when we drink the Dongjiang water ". Of course that is not the case. It is rather convenient for them to perform their duties as legislators. They will only follow what the Government says. I hope the Government will expedite and augment the scale of Hong Kong’s desalination plant project and self-sufficiency in potable water supply, so as to build up our bargaining chips, to abolish the package deal lump sum approach in concluding the procurement agreement and to purchase the Dongjiang water from the Mainland Government according to the quantities of consumption, as well as to perform the gate-keeping role in the spending of our public funds. All of these are the most important objectives for me to propose my amendment. My objectives have nothing to do with those remarks with no substance in terms of policies and contents. Those are nothing but mere political attacks.

Chairman, the second point I wish to mention is that I will not support the budget this time. Why? As the SAR Government has such a substantial fiscal surplus and fiscal reserve, one should know that they have been increased by so many times if we compare the current fiscal surplus and fiscal reserve with those in the years when the then Financial Secretary John TSANG entered the market to deal a blow to predators. But the Government fails to furnish a long-term planning to resolve Hong Kong’s deep-rooted conflicts with the help of the budget, and it fails to return wealth to the people. Due to strong opinions and public pressure, the Financial Secretary Paul CHAN reluctantly introduces amendments to the budget to hand-out extra cash allowance of $4,000 to people who have no properties, who need not pay salary tax, and who are not receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, "fruit grant", the Old Age Living Allowance ("OALA"), disable allowance and low-income allowance. He calls it the "gap-plugging" measures. He has widened the scope of recipients to 2.8 million people and the estimated expenditure is $11.2 billion.
Nevertheless, can this achieve the new fiscal philosophy as the Financial Secretary and Chief Executive claimed? Does the Government really want to share the more than $140 billion economic fruits? If so, it should step up the amount of cash being handed out under the 'gap-plugging' measures in order to achieve the principle of sharing the fruit of economic success with the people. Ordinary members of the public would only receive an allowance of $4,000, what about high-income people and businessmen? They could receive a maximum tax concession of $30,000. They will receive more if they have properties, as each property unit will receive a $10,000 rates concession. And there is no limit on the number of properties. For that reason, the treatment to high-income people and businessmen is very different from the ordinary citizens. It would not be an exaggeration to describe it a heaven-and-earth difference between the two groups of people.

Chairman, according to the supplement of the budget, if we compare the amount of benefits each person will receive, the per-capita benefits will be $12,000 as about 1.4 million people will enjoy the tax concession under the salaries tax and tax under personal assessment. The most benefited group is the 800 000 people who are earning a salary more than $400,000/year. As to rates concession, five major property developers are currently holding more than 6 100 vacant residential units. The rates concession these developers receive in 1 year will be as high as $15.26 million. If these units are unsold within the 1 year period, the rates concession to them will be as much as $61 million. Members should take a look at the figures, and Chairman, you should take a look at them too. The 'gap-plugging' measures are merely a drop in the ocean. The Government is unable to solve the problem of wealth distribution among the poor people, the rich people, the wealthy people and the low-income class by way of the budget. Therefore, the remark of sharing with the people said by the Financial Secretary, Paul CHAN, is nothing more than a slogan. Grass-root people cannot share the economic results. The so-called new fiscal philosophy is nothing more than a slogan, we should simply laugh it off as a joke.

Of course, I suspect our Chief Executive Carrie LAM and Secretary Paul CHAN are forced to make the decision of the cash handout reluctantly under the pressure of public opinion. However, Carrie LAM is unable to get rid of the problem on her mind. That is, when John TSANG was the Financial Secretary, he initiated the 2010-2011 fiscal year cash handout measure. In view of a successful precedent which handed out $6,000 per person with a relatively low administrative cost, the current budget will hand out cash to the public with a very high administrative cost. And the public have to wait until February next year before they can apply for the cash handout. That is why this budget is so controversial. Obviously, the Government has the money and resources, but it
just handles the cash handout in an undesirable way, which has caused the gradual drop of the popularity of the Chief Executive and the Financial Secretary after the budget was announced. All of these are evidenced by the naked figures displayed in front of us.

Chairman, I have to reiterate that the SAR Government has the ability to return wealth to the people on the one hand by handing out $8,000 to $10,000 to Hong Kong residents at the age of 18 or above; and at the same time, it may also formulate a long-term planning and policy to deal with Hong Kong's deep-rooted conflicts, such as allocating $50 billion to set up a seed fund to promote the universal retirement protection scheme on the other. Besides, it may allocate $20 billion to a housing reserve fund on top of the $77.1 billion, in order to speed up and increase the volume of Hong Kong's housing construction. These are things that the SAR Government should do. Failing to do these, I will find it impossible to agree with this budget. For that reason, I will cast an opposing vote during the Third Reading of the budget.

Chairman, I so submit.

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): Ms Claudia MO, do you wish to speak again?

MS CLAUDIA MO: I surely need to do a rebuttal to what our tourism representative has said earlier about this $30 million assistance for the Ocean Park Hong Kong ("the Ocean Park") from the Government.

As I was saying, the tourism sector's delegate is speaking on behalf of his trade and industry. And we all know that Functional Constituencies are made up of basically vested interests, and they need to safeguard their vested interests—most of them and most of the time. I am not saying that it is absolutely every one and every time.

Tourism, of course, is important to Hong Kong. It makes up about 5% of our Gross Domestic Product. It is not particularly small; but it is not mega large either. We are talking about the Ocean Park, which is my Amendment No. 53, I think. That is right. You cannot make it sound as though tourism, one of the major icons being the Ocean Park, is so very important to Hong Kong's livelihood; and without the Ocean Park, all the tourism industry will be dead, if not by now, by next year. This are all quite flawed arguments. I need to refute our tourism representative's points one by one.
First, he was talking about this $300 million basically, spread over a five-year period of spending, to sort of rescue the Ocean Park. Point one. He said the Ocean Park is our collective memory. I quite agree except that the Ocean Park is not quite the park we manage to remember. It has revolved so much these days that quite a few sites of the Park have become rather unrecognizable. And I am sure my tourism colleague over there … He is not around anymore, of course.

Hong Kong people have been terrified of going to the Ocean Park at least in the last decade. Why? Because that site has been so overwhelmed, so flooded, so inundated with Mainland tourists. And if you remember what the Government had to say about how exactly that $300 million is going to be used, it would include sums—which they did not actually specify—sums that would go and attract even more tourists and visitors to the Park from our favourite client labels. So, you know, and I know you know, what we are talking about—Mainland Chinese tourists again. So, this is all logically wrong. We are terrified of something. You spend more money to do something that would make that something even more terrifying. Excuse me?

And in any case, if you look at the figures, Hong Kong tourist arrivals per year these days have been similar in the last five or six years. It is about 60 million a year. That is more than the total for the whole of the United Kingdom—I am not talking about London alone—and it is more than the whole of Japan—and I am not talking about Tokyo alone. Has Hong Kong gone nuts? Do we really need all those travellers milling around towns or setting up camps on our beaches? Come on! They are making Hong Kong even more third-world looking.

And our tourism delegate's argument number two was that we need to help the Ocean Park or try to help take it out of the red because it is losing money, without saying that it is a statutory body and supposed to be financially independent. That is going to be very dangerous, Chairman. If that is the case, from now on, what if the Housing Authority is in the red and says, "Oh, poor me. Please, could you help me, dear Government?" Or, what about the Urban Renewal Authority? Although it has been making money, I know. It is very dangerous, Chairman. And of course, the argument was saying that there has been so much keen cut-throat competition in the region, so the Ocean Park needs to shape up. How?

What has been talked about is what is called the "Ocean Kingdom" in Zhuhai. Now, if you think more Mainland tourists would prefer to go to Zhuhai
to look at the performances of white dolphins and white whales, let them, because
we do not want any more animal shows in Hong Kong in any case.

Point number three that I need to argue against is that the Ocean Park is
going to put up this new light and shadow and whatnot show, and it is full of local
colours. Well, we will see. We have not seen it, right? But, once again, you
know, and I know you know, what light and shadow show it will be. A
four-dimensional ("4D") extravaganza? What is about it? How attractive
really could it be? Just for the sake of it, people would go and see and buy a
ticket to get into the Ocean Park? I doubt it very much. This is not Luxor; this
is Hong Kong. We do not have the pyramids here. No light and shadow show
could be as, you know, attractive. And, is it worth it? But never mind.

Point number four. The argument goes, "We are only talking about
$300 million, a tiny sum." Of course, it is a tiny sum compared to our really
overflowing government coffers. But if you say that because the money, the
sum, is so small, we can just ignore it, then excuse me. We are also fighting for
the cutting of this spending of mere $1 million. For what? For supposedly
mercifully murdering our animals. We are only talking about $1 million. It is
barely 1 cent, as far as the Government is concerned. What a tiny sum
completely negligible, right? So, it is not the amount that matters. The crux of
the problem is that aquariums of the kind and animal entertainment parks should
not really exist anymore.

Earlier, I was saying that we should also cut that spending of $50 million to
the Information Services Department, which is the Government's publicist, spin
doctor, what have you, right? We are all talking about small sums. But we
need to look at the logic and health, the literal moral health, of our government
budget—the Appropriation Bill 2018.

Already, we are talking about the shutting down of actual aquariums and
entertainment parks with animal shows around the world. There is this "Empty
the Tanks" international movement. It is picking up steam and it is a very
fast-growing international movement. "Empty the Tanks". We are going to
the Ocean Park again this coming Saturday to urge this advocacy of ours that let
all animals be wild and free. This is not a particularly radical movement that
would demand that all caged marine mammals should be released back to the sea.
We understand that quite a few of them were actually born in captivity and they
are not fit to just be back in the ocean and be asked to survive on. They would
not be able to cope. We understand that. But the idea is that we should put a
stop to this. We have to start putting a stop to this. And for those which, or
who, rather, cannot make it back to the ocean right now, we should at least let
them live in some sort of sea pen, meaning that they could at least live in some sort of surrounded sea water. That is the idea. And we do not try to sell the Ocean Park again as an animal fun place.

We are not saying that the Ocean Park should go. Not at all. It should stay on and it will stay on with this, rather fun, I would say, mechanical rides. The roller coaster, in particular, has been very popular and I have tried it myself. It is rather fun, and let that stay on. For the animal shows, we can always use, whatever they call it, light and shadow 4D performances or presentation. They are very real. Already in Shanghai Disneyland Park, they are using those 4D films to really impress the young.

So, my tourism colleague's argument earlier today that the Ocean Park should be left alone with the $300 million government handout, the government dole, is not just logically wrong; it is also—I hate to use the word but it is true—morally wrong. The "Empty the Tanks" campaign has this saying, "Marine entertainment parks have no place in our world anymore". We are living in 2018, a new age, if not for the humankind, for the animal kind. Why? Because many of all these marine animals are incredibly social, intelligent beings that are being exploited to make money. This is animal slavery. This is included in the manifesto of "Empty the Tanks", and it is on their website.

Only yesterday, the Ocean Park had some protests apparently. Somebody hung up a huge banner next to its Seahorse icon, and the Seahorse's eye got a big cross on it instead. People are waking up that when we were young, we seriously appreciated the killer whale, you remember, all those white dolphins—not white dolphins but dolphin shows—and all the seals performing. "Oh, they are so cute, so sweet." But things have changed. We were quoting GANDHI just now. He was not talking about a city; he was talking about a people, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated."

Thank you.

**SUSPENSION OF MEETING**

CHAIRMAN (in Cantonese): I now suspend the meeting until 9:00 am tomorrow?

*Suspended accordingly at 7:57 pm.*