OFFICIAL RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday, 8 November 2018

The Council continued to meet at Nine 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.
THE HONOURABLE MRS REGINA IP LAU SUK-YEE, G.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CLAUDIA MO

THE HONOURABLE STEVEN HO CHUN-YIN, B.B.S.

THE HONOURABLE FRANKIE YICK CHI-MING, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE WU CHI-WAI, M.H.

HE HONOURABLE YIU SI-WING, B.B.S.

THE HONOURABLE MA FUNG-KWOK, S.B.S., J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHARLES PETER MOK, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHAN CHI-CHUEN

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

THE HONOURABLE ALICE MAK MEI-KUEN, B.B.S., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE KWOK KA-KI

THE HONOURABLE KWOK WAI-KEUNG, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE DENNIS KWOK WING-HANG

THE HONOURABLE CHRISTOPHER CHEUNG WAH-FUNG, S.B.S., J.P.

DR THE HONOURABLE FERNANDO CHEUNG CHIU-HUNG

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, S.B.S., 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

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

THE HONOURABLE HO KAI-MING

THE HONOURABLE LAM CHEUK-TING

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, J.P.

THE HONOURABLE CHEUNG KWOK-KWAN, J.P.
THE HONOURABLE HUI CHI-FUNG
THE HONOURABLE LUK CHUNG-HUNG, J.P.
THE HONOURABLE LAU KWOK-FAN, M.H.
THE HONOURABLE KWONG CHUN-YU
THE HONOURABLE JEREMY TAM MAN-HO
THE HONOURABLE GARY FAN KWOK-WAI
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 MICHAEL TIEN PUK-SUN, B.B.S., J.P.
THE HONOURABLE LEUNG CHE-CHEUNG, S.B.S., M.H., J.P.
THE HONOURABLE KENNETH LEUNG
THE HONOURABLE ALVIN YEUNG
THE HONOURABLE JIMMY NG WING-KA, J.P.
THE HONOURABLE HOLDEN CHOW HO-DING
THE HONOURABLE TANYA CHAN
THE HONOURABLE KENNETH LAU IP-KEUNG, B.B.S., M.H., J.P.
DR THE HONOURABLE CHENG CHUNG-TAI

THE HONOURABLE AU NOK-HIN

PUBLIC OFFICERS ATTENDING:

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

DR THE HONOURABLE LAW CHI-KWONG, G.B.S., J.P.
SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE

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

THE HONOURABLE MICHAEL WONG WAI-LUN, J.P.
SECRETARY FOR DEVELOPMENT

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

MR SONNY AU CHI-KWONG, P.D.S.M., J.P.
UNDER SECRETARY FOR SECURITY

MR CASPAR TSUI YING-WAI, J.P.
UNDER SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE

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

MR JACK CHAN JICK-CHI, J.P.
UNDER SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS

DR RAYMOND SO WAI-MAN, B.B.S., J.P.
UNDER SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT AND HOUSING
CLERKS IN ATTENDANCE:

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

MISS ODELIA LEUNG HING-YEE, DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL

MS ANITA SIT, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL

MISS FLORA TAI YIN-PING, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL

MS DORA WAI, ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL
MEMBER'S MOTION

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): We now proceed to the third debate session. The debate theme is "Improving People's Livelihood".

This session covers the following eight policy areas: Health and Medical Services; Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene; Poverty Alleviation; Family, Women and Children; Elderly Care; Support for Ethnic Minorities and the Disadvantaged; Retirement Protection and Labour Issues; and Welfare Services.

Members who wish to speak in this session will please press the "Request to speak" button.

MOTION OF THANKS

Continuation of debate on motion which was moved on 7 November 2018

PROF JOSEPH LEE (in Cantonese): President, the theme of this session includes health and medical services, food safety, elderly care, and so on. I will first speak and express my views on the impacts of the medical and health measures proposed in the Policy Address and the related policies.

The Policy Address proposes to enhance resources and policies for promoting primary health care. We certainly welcome this. As the Secretary is also aware, Kwai Tsing will be the first district with a District Health Centre ("DHC"), and various Members have already put forth different views. The Secretary should note that DHC is geared to preventing diseases as well as promoting and fostering public health. Despite the dissenting views among various sectors, the Secretary should avoid the medicalization of DHC, lest people may mistakenly think that the authorities intend to set up a health centre where they may seek medical consultation. I do not believe this is the intention of this plan or the Government's original policy intent. True, people may inevitably seek medical consultation at DHC when necessary; but the original intention of the plan is, after all, not for them to seek medical consultation.

President, what does this mean? Yesterday, the University of Hong Kong ("HKU") announced an interesting finding. As pointed out in a report issued by HKU's University Health Service, an appropriate amount of exercise can improve
physical health, and even in the case of patients, it may also improve their health. Besides, strength and conditioning training may likewise achieve this objective. Recently, the Department of Health ("DH") joined hands with some doctors—I wonder why the latter also have knowledge in this respect—to launch the Exercise Prescription Project. As far as I remember, I once discussed all this at a meeting of the Panel on Health Services ("the Panel") several years ago.

The purpose of DHC is to prevent diseases, so apart from resource allocation, the Secretary should also define its service scope. This plan is based on the major premises of preventing diseases, enhancing health and protecting public health rather than encouraging people to seek medical consultation from the centre. Regarding the specific details, the Secretary may need to give an account to the Panel. But we definitely support this plan, while also hoping that the Secretary can draw on various medical and health professions to enable people to realize that maintaining physical health is their own responsibility, and that the Government's responsibility is merely to set up platforms for the public to improve their health. This is the objective of setting up DHC. People should not think that it is an additional centre where they may seek medical consultation or undergo blood pressure tests, and that is all. This is not the original intention of this plan. But the plan definitely merits our support.

Another point is about DHC's expansion. At present, DHC in Kwai Tsing will be operated on a pilot basis, and it is hoped that it can commence service next year with gradual expansion to the 18 districts in the territory. This will require substantial resources, so the Secretary should pay attention to the proper use of public money. Very often—I may be overly suspicious, perhaps—bid-rigging may occur, meaning the participation of a few large syndicates in the bidding process. And, DHC may ultimately be medicalized and turned into a clinic. This will run counter to the original intention of the plan, and the efforts of the Secretary and the Government may go down the drain. Certainly, I have longed to see the implementation of this plan for some 10 years, so I hope it can be materialized in the end.

President, other proposals for promoting primary health care are all very desirable, and we will render our support. One proposal is the early vaccination against influenza and the lowering of the minimum eligible age. Besides, the provision of free vaccination against cervical cancer for students and the conduct of studies to identify risk factors associated with breast cancer all command our approval. While I have pointed out all along that it is important to offer
screening and vaccination at the second tier, I advise the Government against over-relying on screening. I say so because the provision of screening will lead to some follow-up work. If the Government offers breast cancer screening for women in various age cohorts, they may need to undergo follow-up treatment or other diagnoses in case the screening result is false positive or even positive. This will require a great deal of resources. The Government must learn a lesson from the Colorectal Cancer Screening Programme and properly allocate resources, or else such a well-meaning plan may end up doing more harm than good and give people a "false hope" or unreasonable hope. This will exert greater pressure on the public health care system.

Of course, the Government may argue that people may choose to seek medical consultation in the private sector after receiving colorectal cancer screening. But this is tantamount to giving our public money to doctors in private practice. I hope that the Government can learn a lesson from the unnecessary practices under the various screening programmes in the past, so as to improve the aforesaid programmes. I hope to see fruitful outcomes in this respect. In our view, the Policy Address's initiatives on promoting primary health care and other services can truly help Hong Kong people to prevent diseases and promote their health.

Speaking of health care manpower, I am grateful to the Government for introducing two "10-year plans" over the past several years. If my computation is correct, dedicated funds to the tune of nearly $500 billion have been earmarked specifically for the development of public health care under the two "10-year plans". That said, the Government should likewise learn a lesson from previous examples. President, I have joined the Legislative Council for more than 10 years. As far as I remember, the Government of a previous term indicated that it would allocate $50 billion for implementing a health care reform. But we have no idea about how this sum has been spent. I do not want to see that several years later, we likewise have no idea about how this massive sum of nearly $500 billion has been spent, only knowing that it has not been used to construct hospitals or it has not been used for providing other support facilities after the construction of hospitals. This is an outcome that we will hate to see. I hope that when earmarking this sum of around $500 billion for implementing the "10-year plans", the Secretary can also draw up proper planning for manpower and support measures.
At present, the Government allocates resources to institutions funded by the University Grants Committee and other self-financed institutions as a means of encouraging such institutions to train up around 2,000 people, including doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and occupational therapists. But these 2,000 people may only be able to provide services five years later. In that case, can this initiative solve our existing problems? The Secretary should have noticed that even though the winter influenza season has yet to set in, hospitals are already overloaded with patients, and the occupancy rates of medical wards in most hospitals have already exceeded 100%. What kind of short-term solutions have been formulated by the Secretary? Of course, the Secretary may reel off the same old litany, saying that she will retain manpower, increase promotion prospects and improve the working environment. Most importantly, I hope the Secretary can disseminate a clear message to the public that they should properly use public health care resources, instead of creating any unreasonable expectations.

I also understand that in case of illness, people will naturally go to hospital to seek medical consultation, or they may even be admitted to hospital for treatment. The Secretary should be aware that the existing manpower is unable to solve all problems. Besides, even the addition of 2,000 health care workers will be unable to solve all problems either because it will probably be five years before they can provide services. The Secretary should tell people that despite the tight manpower in the public health care sector and an insufficient number of hospital beds at present, the existing health care personnel have already exerted their utmost to help people.

In addition, speaking of nursing manpower, the Government has showed a total lack of courage over all these years to implement the standard of "one nurse for five patients" in the public health care sector. As discovered by a survey conducted by the Association of Hong Kong Nursing Staff early this year, the current situation has seen no improvement at all, it has deteriorated as a nurse needs to look after 11 to 12 patients. I hope people can realize that public health care manpower is very tight, and the measures now under discussion are intended to solve long-term rather than short-term problems. I hope the Government can truly solve the manpower shortage in the public health care sector in the long run. Furthermore, in the case of short-term measures, I hope the Government can enable people to realize that frontline health care manpower is very tight, while also allocating resources for expanding the nurse consultant establishment and providing reasonable promotion opportunities for doctors and personnel in other
grades, so as to retain talents. With all such measures, nurses may continue to work and serve people on the front line of the public health care system without any worries. I hope the Secretary can examine the situation concerned.

Furthermore, I wish to discuss the regulation of a profession. The Association of Hong Kong Nursing Staff and I have discussed the regulation or otherwise of nurse specialists over the past 10 years. I am grateful to the Secretary for pointing out clearly in the Policy Address that it is necessary to do so, and the implementation of voluntary regulation will be the first step. As far as my understanding goes, the Nursing Council of Hong Kong ("HKNC") has already implemented this arrangement, and our bigger hope is for regulation by legislation. While the Secretary asserts the necessity to do so, we also hope the Government can allocate more resources to HKNC because the funding for them is inadequate. The Government hopes that HKNC can take up additional duty. But manpower will be required for this purpose. They also need manpower resources to perform their regulatory duty. I hope the Government can offer support.

On HKNC-related issues, my predecessors actually pointed out during the previous terms of the Legislative Council (spanning around 21 years) that six of the HKNC members might be returned by direct elections. But this has not been implemented thus far. To my understanding, the regulatory authorities for social workers and doctors have also adopted a similar arrangement. In the case of HKNC, despite the relevant statutory provisions and the passage of 20 years, the Government has still refused to implement the relevant arrangement. Why? Is it due to the lack of money, its infeasibility, the impossibility to amend the law, or what? Actually, the relevant legislation was passed long ago, so the Secretary should squarely address this matter. HKNC should progress abreast of the times. As direct elections have been adopted for other regulatory authorities, why is HKNC the only organization whose members are all returned under an appointment system? Why should the Government refuse to open those six seats for direct elections by nursing practitioners? The Government should examine this matter.

Moreover, the people concerned also think that the five boards of the Supplementary Medical Professions Council should be led and chaired by industry practitioners. But sadly, due to statutory constraints, this is not possible. Secretary, I know that the authorities have compiled a report which examines the review of regulating medical professions. Will the Government
study the feasibility of amending the legislation? Can the Government appoint people who are more suitable during the transition period? The Government should not always appoint doctors because doctors are not omniscient, and appointing doctors may likewise give rise to much unnecessary misunderstanding or trouble. Actually, the Government may allow industry practitioners to assume the positions concerned.

I also wish to further discuss the issue of how to optimize health care manpower. We very often count on frontline professionals (such as optometrists, chiropractors and physiotherapists) in the community or public health care system to provide primary health care. But in the case of optometrists and physiotherapists, they are not allowed to make direct referrals of patients at present, and this has resulted in the waste of resources. After treating a patient, an optometrist must refer the patient to a general medical practitioner. And, a patient can receive treatment from a physiotherapist only with the referral of a general medical practitioner. Despite this legally required indirect arrangement, can the Secretary conduct any study or review at the administrative level, so that people can receive convenient and expeditious services from supplementary health care professionals who may assist in protecting and promoting public health?

Speaking of chiropractors, for example, they have a long history of at least 20 years in Hong Kong, and they are regulated by the Chiropractors Council. But disappointingly, chiropractors can only engage in private practice. When it comes to the public sector, some already asked whether it was possible to include chiropractors in the service scope of the Hospital Authority during the times of former Secretary Dr York CHOW. But we have not heard anything further about this proposal so far. I wonder if this is due to opposition from orthopedists or political reasons. Actually, chiropractors have done a lot to promote spinal protection knowledge among primary school students, in particular. Now that the Secretary has assumed office, can she consider the inclusion of chiropractors in the public health care system and the provision of government subsidies for them, so that people may receive chiropractic services?

One issue in public health care discussions is student's mental health. This is likewise related. Certainly, there is a shortage of psychiatric nurses at present, and the Government also said in a previous report that its computation was erroneous. But my focus is not simply on the shortage of psychiatric nurses, it is the fact that many students have various special needs. For
example, students with special education needs are required to undergo assessment. But under the existing system, the relevant assessment is only provided until Primary Six. Students with hyperactive disorder will only show the relevant symptoms when they are in secondary school. It will be a pity if they are not provided with this assessment.

Can the Secretary consider the allocation of additional resources, so as to meet the special needs of primary and secondary school students with hyperactive disorder (especially primary school students) as early as possible? If manpower shortage is a problem, can the Government give thoughts to the idea of setting up a team comprising nurses and clinical psychologists to deal with this matter rather than entrusting it to individual doctors? This team can conduct preliminary assessment and then refer students to psychiatrists when necessary. That way, service expansion will become easier, and more students can benefit. If they are proven to be alright after assessment, their parents will certainly be happy. But if problems are found, this team may follow up the case immediately, and unlike the present arrangement, the students concerned needs not wait a few years before receiving services. I hope this arrangement can be implemented in primary schools as this is better.

Speaking of the relevant services, I must also agree that DH is actually very miserable. The reason is that DH must take care of many people with the small amount of funding it receives from the Budget each time. In particular, the demand for various services such as student health services is keen. As far as my understanding goes, it looks like the number of psychiatric nurses in DH has not shown any increases over all these years amidst the growing needs of children and patients with psychiatric illnesses. In this regard, the Government needs to consider the allocation of additional resources to DH for enhancing its training on conducting student assessment and increasing manpower as appropriate (such as psychiatric nurses) as a means of tackling the relevant problems.

When it comes to health care needs, ethnic minority people actually have specific health care needs. As I have pointed out many times on various occasions, the needs of ethnic minority people in Hong Kong lie not only in overcoming language barrier. While HA has pointed out the availability of translation services, the services we talk about are not only confined to translation services. Some ethnic groups among ethnic minority people are prone to illnesses such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases due to their distinguished
cultures and dietary habits. It looks like the Government has nonetheless neglected the needs of these people for preventing the relevant diseases. The Secretary will certainly say that I am talking about lower oil and salt intake. Well, I will talk about this later on. In fact, many ethnic minority people (especially elderly people) do not know much about this area. And, their awareness of disease prevention and personal health protection is likewise lower. Therefore, they may not seek medical attention at once in case of illness. This explains why I hope the Secretary can inject more resources to show concern about ethnic minority people and, particularly, to provide them with early assistance in preventing noncommunicable diseases with health hazards, instead of only offering translation services in hospitals. I hope the Government can do more.

The last point which I wish to discuss in the medical, health care and health protection aspect is the provision of support for victims of sexual violence. I remember that some 10 years ago, a non-governmental organization ("NGO") told me that victims of sexual violence should be provided with support. But now that at least 10 years has passed, it looks like the Government has no intention to offer such services. According to the NGO concerned, the relevant services can enable victims of sexual violence to complete all medical examinations and the process of case reporting in hospital in one go and give them some peace of mind and a sense of security.

The Secretary may consider one approach. With the passage of such a long time, the Government should no longer solely rely on the NGO concerned. The Government may inject resources for coordinating the relevant services and offering systematic support to victims of sexual violence in Hong Kong, so that they can undergo medical examinations without any worries. Besides, the Government may also offer follow-up services, so that they can receive support for easing their depression after being sexually assaulted. I hope the Secretary can squarely address this matter.

Certainly, many areas in medical and health care services are worthy of discussion. But I only have a speaking time of 30 minutes, and I have already spoken for 15 minutes. I wish to put aside issues in this aspect for the time being and turn to another matter. But I hope the Secretary can pay attention to the work in this regard.
In the following part of my speech, I wish to discuss elderly care. Speaking of elderly care, I notice that Secretary Dr LAW Chi-kwong is now present. Yesterday, Secretary Dr LAW Chi-kwong might be a bit disappointed, wondering why the debate was not like what he had expected and also why the discussion was not heated at all because no Member had risen to speak except Mr SHIU Ka-chun. I hope this will not happen again today, and at least more Members will rise to speak later on in the afternoon.

I wish to discuss several points. Speaking of elderly care, I wish to say that not all elderly people want to live in residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs"). I have no intention to discuss ageing in place and ageing in community again as proposed by the previous Secretary. But I think the crux of the matter is that the existing Residential Care Homes (Elderly Persons) Ordinance is honestly very outdated. Over all these years, I have pointed out, and Mr SHIU Ka-chun may also agree, that it is necessary to review the existing legislation on regulating RCHEs. I hope the Secretary can review, for example, the requirement of one care worker for every 60 residents in a RCHE. Why do I think that it is outdated? As Secretary Dr LAW may be well aware, the physical conditions of RCHE residents may not be that good. Under the previous legislation, a RCHE with over 60 residents must employ one care worker. If it is unable to recruit any such worker, it must employ two health workers instead. In the past, elderly people were physically healthier. But now, the physical conditions of elderly people are not that good, so they need specific care. Should the Ordinance only cover the regulation of RCHEs' provision of general daily care to elderly people? Or, should it require them to provide quality care services? The Secretary should conduct a review of this because the authorities' failure to deal with it over all these years has enabled some people to manipulate the loopholes in law.

The quality of care services in RCHEs is also involved. Why? The Secretary knows very well that over 50% of the RCHEs in Hong Kong are privately run. The Secretary will definitely say that this does not matter as the Government has introduced the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme ("EBPS") and increased the number of places. After revisiting some information, I notice that the Policy Address states that the number of EBPS places has been increased to almost 5 000. As the Secretary may be aware, the occupancy rates of RCHEs under EBPS are not so high. So, where do elderly people go? Most elderly people are living in private RCHEs which are not participants in EBPS. If the legislation is not amended, it is possible to see the absence of any care worker on
the premises of such RCHEs. Besides, elderly people need not only daily care but also specific care. For instance, elderly people suffering from a stroke may need specific care besides bathing or dietary care.

If the Secretary agrees with me and intends to adopt a basket of measures, he should begin with legislative amendment. But the Secretary may also know that if the legislation is to be amended, some operators will come forward and argue that they will be unable to sustain their operation after the legislation is amended. They will question whether the authorities will be able to take over all the elderly residents in their RCHEs who account for 50% of all elderly people in case their RCHEs close down. We have heard such assertions for quite some time, and the Secretary likewise knows their points very well ever since he became a scholar. In that case, what should he do? Well, this is a test of the Secretary's wisdom. The Secretary is a politically appointed official, and I hope he can examine this matter. As the authorities advocate ageing in the community, ageing in RCHEs or even passing in RCHEs, the quality of residential care will be of great importance, and the Government must address it squarely. All this cannot be achieved solely by a numerical increase in the number of places or bed spaces. Have the authorities optimized the bed spaces? Have the authorities ensured the provision of appropriate care of a high quality to elderly people? The Secretary must give due attention to all such matters.

Speaking of elderly care, I must also discuss hearing problems which I have often talked about over these few years. The hearing ability of elderly people will deteriorate as they get older. People of our age say "I cannot hear you clearly" actually because they are "selective in their hearing", meaning to say that they tend to pay no heed to those words which sound unpleasant to the ear. But elderly people will begin to suffer from hearing loss at the age of 70 or above. The problem is that the Government has refused to give due attention to this problem and only provided some services in the public health care system. As I have pointed out, most elderly people in Hong Kong begin to suffer from hearing loss at the age of 65. This problem can be rectified through early treatment. At present, Hong Kong only relies on otolaryngologists or a handful of audiologists. But they can only offer limited medical support. I hope the two Secretaries can consider the allocation of resources—it is honestly good to see the inclusion of audiologists in the regulatory ambit this time around—to make adjustments in the public sector or even the private market, so as to offer care to elderly people.
Besides, can the Government make particular efforts to cater for elderly people's hearing needs, so that they can receive early treatment and know that there are always ways to restore their deteriorating hearing ability due to growing ages? This can improve their social life so that they will not be troubled by sadness and despair due to their need to rely on others. When it comes to hearing problems, the Government has never squarely addressed this issue. I have pointed out this matter over the past couple of years. Today, I hope to bring up this issue through the debate on the Policy Address this year and urge the Government to duly address it.

True, I am no expert in elderly care; but then my area of interest also covers two related respects, namely RCHEs' quality and hearing problems among elderly people. Matters in these two areas are very important. I will not repeat the dental problems among elderly people as mentioned by various Members just now. But I think these problems must be squarely addressed.

President, I must likewise declare interest. As I get older, my teeth begin to fall out, and my hearing ability and eyesight are worsening. What should I do? I may not count on the Government, but to say the very least, I need to know how I can obtain support and how I can spend my twilight years in the community. I hope the Secretary can achieve this.

After discussing issues relating to elderly people, I wish to talk about another area which pertains to children. Why? Children-related issues actually concern Secretary Prof Sophia CHAN. Not long ago, the authorities released a report on lower salt and sugar intake. At the recent Chief Executive's Question and Answer Session, I also brought up this matter. It certainly commands my approval and support. But interestingly—let me put aside the statistics of the World Health Organization for the time being—according to the Nutrient Testing of School Lunches in Primary Schools in Hong Kong 2018 conducted by DH and a related organization in January this year, the sodium content in most of the 100 lunch samples collected from primary schools is 300 mg higher than the standard. This is one big problem because students eat at school on a daily basis, and the Secretary also advocates lower salt and sugar intake every day. Nevertheless, the meals in their lunchboxes are high in salt contents. The authorities should deal with the problem of high salt contents.

What about reducing sugar intake? According to another report released by DH, many food suppliers of kindergartens have indirectly encouraged students to consume more sugar. For instance, they will add sweeteners to their meals.
Besides, teachers even use candies—I am certainly not talking about the carrot-and-stick approach—to encourage students to do certain things. Should this be changed? It is impossible to change the situation of people from our generation. Elderly people may have a high risk of contracting diabetes, and this is irreversible. But in the case of kindergarten and primary school students who inevitably have to eat at school, I hope that the Secretary can step up efforts and regulate their salt and sugar intake from such meals in addition to the food they eat at home. In the long run, this can help to reduce their risk of contracting diabetes or cardiovascular diseases and in turn alleviate the pressure on the entire health care system in the long term. I hope the Secretary can take effective measures to promote primary health care in this respect.

Certainly, when dealing with this matter involving children, the Secretary can beef up the efforts in taking forward the labelling of salt and sugar contents for prepackaged food products. The Secretary has pointed out that the "Salt/Sugar" Label Scheme for Prepackaged Food Products is a voluntary scheme, and this is understandable to Members. However, the Government has not formulated any standards for products with sugar-free or low-sugar claims on the market, and people will buy such products anyway. Therefore, this is rather complicated. Will the Government exercise regulation by enacting legislation? It is introduced after prolonged discussions on food labelling among Members in the Legislative Council since 2000 and repeated criticisms. Secretary, I do not know how I can help you. But the Secretary is a politically appointed official. Can she consider the formulation of measures for regulating those products with sugar-free or low-sugar claims? The Government should at least bar the relevant manufacturers from making false claims, so that people can make the own choice. People who like products with high sugar contents can buy such products and will not end up buying those products which are high in sugar contents despite their low-sugar claims. This is attainable.

If the Government has drawn reference from overseas examples, it will realize that the arrangement I have just mentioned is feasible. When doing shopping in Europe or the United Kingdom, one will notice that yellow, green and red labels are affixed to product packaging. What do these labels stand for? Sugar and salt contents. The red label on a product is meant for telling consumers that its sugar and salt contents are higher. Consumers who love sweet tastes can buy those products with a red label, whereas those who have a liking for mild flavours may buy those products with a green label. Hong Kong may try out this arrangement with the Government taking the lead in publicity.
The Secretary for the Environment is now present. He has also urged people to "go plastic-free"—what I mean is to "get rid of plastics". As the Secretary has also spent public money on encouraging people to "go plastic-free", why should the Government refuse to give it a try and spend public money on requiring packers to affix labels in red, blue and green or in red, green and yellow to product packaging beforehand? This can enable people to know that the products they buy are safe to their knowledge, and they may choose products with a red or green label at will. This is very important to the promotion of lower salt and sugar intake. The Government should not reply that a committee has been set up to take forward the relevant tasks. I hope the committee concerned can do more, so that people can realize that lower salt and sugar intake is very important to their health in the long run. When promoting health education, the Government may enhance this area of work, so as to prevent illnesses. And, the incidence of those illnesses I mentioned just now, such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, can actually be reduced. I hope the Government can take the lead to carry out this task, so as to promote public health.

President, sorry for telling you yesterday that I probably would not use up my speaking time of 30 minutes. Secretary for Transport and Housing Frank CHAN is not present now. But please allow me to take this opportunity to spend two minutes on discussing the housing problem.

I wish to highlight two points. First, we welcome the housing plans put forth by the Government this time around, such as entrusting the Urban Renewal Authority ("URA") with the redevelopment of buildings under the Civil Servants' Co-operative Building Society Scheme ("CBS"). I have questioned many times why the Government should refuse to make good use of such CBS buildings. I hope that this time around, the Government can use such buildings effectively. And, URA's adoption of a different threshold may also induce property developers to develop such buildings and in turn unleash a greater potential.

Secretary Frank CHAN's assistant is now listening to my speech. We welcome the proposal of converting industrial buildings to residential housing because this can expeditiously resolve many housing problems, such as the housing needs of young people and subdivided units. We hope to see its implementation. But after putting forth the relevant concept, the Government seems to have failed to tell us clearly about the details. The Policy Address merely proposes to convert industrial buildings to residential housing, and the implementation of the details must depend on the leadership of Secretary Frank
CHAN, such as the number of flats to be provided and also ways to reduce the number of subdivided units and to resolve the housing problems of young people. I hope the Secretary can put forth concrete figures, so that we can understand how the spending of public money can support this area of work.

Finally, I also wish to take this opportunity to discuss the land policy. Today, various Members have mentioned the Lantau Tomorrow plan. If Members read the Policy Address, they will see that the Government has proposed three approaches to increase land supply this time around: First, the Lantau Tomorrow plan; second, the development of brownfield sites in the New Territories; and third, the Land Sharing Pilot Scheme ("the Pilot Scheme"). In my view, the Government should specifically point out the size of land that can be provided in Hong Kong under the three initiatives in the short, medium and long terms, the ratio between public and private housing, and the priority of these two types of housing.

As indicated by the current situation, people seem to have focused their discussions on the Lantau Tomorrow plan only. To me, the Lantau Tomorrow plan is a concept, and education or professional service practitioners should emphasize problem-solving and critical thinking. The existing discussions on the Lantau Tomorrow plan seem to have remained the expression of "position first" and characterized with populist standpoint, in the sense that there are only the two options of either implementing the plan or otherwise. But how can the plan resolve the existing problems? For example, in the case of developing brownfield sites in the New Territories and the Pilot Scheme—some will certainly dismiss them as means to funnel benefits to the business sector—the Government ought to give a clear account. I also hope that Secretary Frank CHAN can clearly point out how these three initiatives can resolve the dire housing problems in Hong Kong, including problems with the wait for public housing, public housing allocation and subdivided units. How will the authorities take forward the Pilot Scheme or the development of brownfield sites in the New Territories? Members should not merely discuss whether we should have undertaken reclamation a couple of decades ago. Even if reclamation is necessary, the Government should also answer a few questions: If reclamation is not possible, can mountain removal be an option? And in case mountain removal is not possible, can cavern development be an option? Should we cease to develop land in Hong Kong? We should squarely address all such issues.
I am open-minded about the Lantau Tomorrow. The problem is that Members' discussions merely focus on the merits and demerits of the plan, without discussing how the two other approaches proposed in the Policy Address can increase land and housing supply and in turn resolve the existing housing problem in Hong Kong.

President, I am sorry as I have just spent three minutes on discussing the housing problem. It should fall within the scope of the next debate session. But I hope to put forth my views in this respect for Secretary Frank CHAN's consideration. I have just spoken on issues relating to the sector to which I belong while touching upon some housing issues.

Thank you, President.

MR SHIU KA-CHUN (in Cantonese): Good morning, President. I am speaking on the scope of "Improving People's Livelihood" in the Motion of Thanks for the Policy Address. I am going to start with the story of an idiom. This Chinese idiom, which reads "the wicked and glib-tongued people", is a story in the Analects about Confucius scolding his student Zi Lu. In the story, Zi Lu suggested that Zi Gao be an official of a small town. Confucius opposed it because Zi Gao had never studied rituals and music, and he was not knowledgeable. If he became an official, he would make mistakes easily as his experience of life was insufficient. Zi Lu replied, "Why should we worry? As long as an official can govern the people and society, why must he learn how to govern? Actual practice is the most important." Confucius added the phrase in reply, "Wicked and glib-tongued people!" He despised such people of sophism, those who "know nothing but empty talks" arguing with perverted logic. Whether rituals and music should come first or afterward is not the main topic today, but I think the latter part of the phrase, that is, "glib-tongued", would be worth reflecting by most accountable officials.

Today, the Chief Executive is not present. Chief Secretary Matthew CHEUNG is not here either. Secretary WONG Kam-sing is the Acting Chief Secretary for Administration. I remember that Chief Secretary CHEUNG has mentioned the words "avoiding no difficulty" and "proactive style of governance", which form the title of his blog article on Sunday, 4 November. It begins like this, "The Legislative Council will debate the Motion of Thanks for the Policy Address from 7 to 9 November, and the Government will listen to
Members' views in an open and humble manner and respond appropriately." The Secretary has also said, "Nothing about people's livelihood is trivial." He also cites 10 examples to show his strength. I estimate that the Secretary deliberately cites 10 examples from the 244 new measures in the Policy Address. Even if he was not showing off, he is probably emphasizing that these 10 measures are the top priority of the Government and stressing to the public that the proactive style of governance will not end in nothing.

Let me take a look at these 10 examples to see how they can improve the people's livelihood. Eventually, I see one: the exemption of bus tunnel tolls. But will this policy benefit bus companies or the public? Are e-cigarettes banned because the Government is under pressure from tobacco companies? Why are guns not controlled while air guns are? That's okay. There are other items including maternity leave, striving against MPF hedging, finalizing the market sites, the upgrading of lifts and the health centres. They are indeed measures to benefit the people's livelihood. However, we must also note that these are, of course, the Government's obligations. Even if they are implemented today, it is the result of many Members' hard struggles over the years.

Take the construction of markets in Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung Town Centre as examples. How many years have passed since the residents first moved into Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung? Having worked as a frontline social worker in Tin Shui Wai, I understand what is wrong with the planning and how much the residents in the district are suffering in life. It is only at this moment that the location of the public market has been finalized. Shouldn't the Government feel a bit ashamed in its planning?

Let's take a closer look at the specific commitments of this government, which claims to "avoid no difficulty with proactive governance" for the disadvantaged. The results of such policies of top priority are closely related to welfare issues. Among the 10 examples, only the last one mentions casually that the support for ethnic minorities in terms of their studies, employment and welfare would be stepped up. That is the end, full-stop. Dr LAW Chi-kwong, none of the 10 examples put forward by the Chief Secretary are about welfare. Item 10 can only be taken as an overlap of welfare and home affairs. Why is this so? Where does the top priority lie? The Government wants to express a message through the Chief Secretary's blog to stress that many people's livelihood measures mentioned in the Policy Address are dealing thoroughly with a series of
issues which are "old, big and difficult", and that these measures fully embody the government's new style of "avoiding no difficulty with proactive governance". However, I believe that the government's thinking is still "old, big and difficult", but in another form: "older style, bigger lies and more difficult to act".

President, I picked up "Anybody" and read it last night. He is a young man with only money, money and money in his eyes. He is surrounded by red lines, red lines and red lines. This makes our young people become "red line gals" and "red line guys". Today, I brought along another "Anybody". This time, he has neither money nor red lines, but many black spots, meaning many "old points" which are "pointless". I think they are really "pointless" hopes. For example, the United Nations Human Rights Council reviewed the human rights situation in China for the third time in Geneva, Switzerland on 6 November. Many Western countries are very concerned about the human rights situation in the two special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macao, including Hong Kong's "DQ" of its Legislative Council Members. In addition to the situation, the United Nations also mentions the disparity between the rich and the poor in Hong Kong, the abuse of disabled people and young prisoners. But what is the Government going to do? Mr Matthew CHEUNG is not here today, precisely because he is going to Geneva to take part in this meeting. He chose to issue a press release in the small hours, at 2:00 am, to say in response, "Recent concerns over some aspects of Hong Kong's human rights situation are unwarranted, unfounded and unsubstantiated. They arise from misconception and a lack of understanding of our real situation." As the government representative, the Chief Secretary said that the government would listen to the opinions in an open and humble manner and respond appropriately. After listening to the opinions, he immediately denied the facts and criticized the concerns of others as unwarranted, unfounded and unsubstantiated, and that they lack understanding of the real situation in Hong Kong.

To give another example, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service conducted a public opinion survey on the day when the Policy Address was announced, on 10 October, and interviewed 545 people to find out their scores on this year's poverty alleviation measures. The result was 45.6 points. This failing score is the second lowest among those of the last nine years of investigation. Mr Matthew CHEUNG also made a comment when he attended a radio program. He was aware of some opinions saying that the poverty alleviation measure mentioned in the Policy Address were inadequate, but he considered such opinions unfair. He repeatedly stressed that this was related to
the fact that the newspaper did not report the details of the poverty alleviation measures. I originally thought that the motion debate on the Policy Address should not focus only on whether Members should thank the Chief Executive. It should also give the Government a chance to understand its shortcomings and improve them through repeated debates. However, the government's attitude is that "I will always be right; what you say is always wrong." It only persists in its "old, big and difficult" attitude of "older style", "bigger lies" and "more difficult to act". The rogue attitude of the Government is not necessarily accidental. This is what I am most worried about. This may be related to the Carrie LAM Administration's authoritarian governance and its indifference and hazard to civil rights and the rule of law. Take the establishment of the Civil Service Academy in this Policy Address as an example. It is one of the manifestations of authoritarianism. In the absence of any communication, Carrie LAM issues a command under which the Shine Skills Centre (Kwun Tong) ("SSCKT") of the Vocational Training Council ("VTC"), a community facility still operating at Kwun Tong Road, will be closed. The performance of the government's dictatorship is comparable to the behavior of the Mainland in evicting the low-end population.

On different occasions, including meetings of the Welfare Panel, Dr LAW Chi-kwong, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, has said that the trainees will not be affected and the Government will make a seamless handover. However, will the students of SSCKT not be affected? The fact is that the Fast Food Restaurant Operation Course and the Healthcare Course provided at SSCKT are not available at the two Shine Skill Centres in Tuen Mun and Pok Fu Lam. The Fast Food Restaurant Operation Course of SSCKT is the only one in Hong Kong that provides a qualification certificate for the disabled. Once SSCKT is closed, its students will definitely be affected.

The VTC is the only academic institution that provides professional education for people with disabilities. The closure of SSCKT means that its unique curriculum will disappear forever, and there is no bridging at all. The permanent closure faced by SSCKT will mean permanent termination of 300 admissions of Shine Skills Centres.

The way in which the Administration handled the case is certainly overbearing. What frustrated me most is that while it has obviously reduced the services for people with disabilities, it not only refuses to confess the facts, but also deceives students and parents by saying that there will be no problem.
Dr LAW has also argued that after the closure of SSCKT, a more comprehensive and better service training centre will be set up in a more centrally located and convenient venue in Kowloon. However, the question is that we have asked the Government a few times where this more centrally located and convenient campus is but the Secretary refuses to answer. I think that he refuses to reply not because he has not found a place but because the location of the site is totally unacceptable. It is designed for a health centre, not for Shine Skills Centre. The government continues with its "older style" and "bigger lies" to deal with us in a perfunctory way.

WANG Shuo, a Mainland writer, once said, "I am a hooligan, so who am I afraid of?" Indeed, a rogue has nothing to fear. I thought, "Who else, apart from a rogue, is not afraid of anything?" Today I find it. In addition to rogues, those in positions of authorities are such people because they think, "I am in power, so who am I afraid of?" Therefore, Carrie LAM can conquer the world and make things done as she says. Officials backed up by her can also adopt such attitude. In the closure of SSCKT, they feel no shame and tell one lie to cover another.

Joint Forces Concerning Social Expenditures, a civil society, conducted a survey in conjunction with my office to study the impact of social welfare expenditure on the grass roots and to solicit their views. It also suggested that, to strengthen support for caregivers, the Government should replace the one-off relief grant with recurrent expenditure. Nearly 80% of the respondents believe that the government's resources for social welfare are insufficient. More than 50% of the respondents agree that the service quotas, space and manpower should be increased, and the waiting time should be shortened. In addition, more than half of the respondents believe that social services in the areas for the elderly, disabled and youth fail to meet the needs of the public and improve their quality of life. They are particularly dissatisfied with social security and medical social services. Nearly 80% of the respondents believe that the social services have not effectively reduced their pressure. Almost all respondents believe that the government should regularly carry out welfare planning, including using fiscal reserves proactively to improve social welfare and increase recurrent expenditure. Finally, half of the respondents do not support the direction of "user-pays" or "self-financing", which is currently adopted by social service organizations.

President, I very much hope that this survey can receive the attention of the Government, which has a rich fiscal surplus and sits on a trillion-dollar surplus. It is very generous when proposing to build artificial islands to the east of Lantau.
When it comes to supporting the services for the elderly, the Government is mean and evasive. The number of elderly people waiting for places at government-subsidized homes 10 years ago was 18,000. It has now increased to more than 30,000. Many elderly people, about 6,000 a year, have passed away while waiting for such places. Private residential homes lack supervision and their service quality varies significantly. Most of the elderly can only live alone in their homes. They are left unattended and become citizens of "four waiting", waiting for food, waiting for sleep, waiting for excretion, and waiting for death.

Oxfam also published the Hong Kong Inequality Report earlier, suggesting that the Government should allocate an additional of $36.7 billion to the public service budget so that the ratio of recurrent expenditure to GDP will return to 15.7%, the 2003 figure, from the current figure of 14.4%. I know that Dr LAW has already responded. He points out that this year's recurrent expenditure budgeted for social welfare has increased by 21.3%, which is unprecedented and difficult to repeat. However, I must once again emphasize in this speech that the actual amount of government funding is only $21 billion, still a shortfall of $16.3 billion from the target of $36.7 billion. When compared with other countries' ratios of resource inputs to their budgets, ours is a world behind. The authoritarian government continues to play its "old, big, and difficult" character by claiming brilliant figures whose ratios are in fact very depressing. Time and again, they are "older style", "big lies" and "more difficult to act".

If the Government wants to do things seriously, it should increase the recurrent expenditure on social welfare to replace the one-off relief measures. Secondly, the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines should be revised to clarify the population ratio standards for various services and ensure that social services have enough quantity and space.

In response to the insufficiency of medical social services and support to caregivers, the Government should strengthen the cooperation between medical and social services by setting up proportionate elderly accommodation and respite services and providing short-term and emergent support to caregivers.

Even Nelson CHOW Wing-sun, a retired professor of the University of Hong Kong, wrote an article criticizing the two major policies in Carrie LAM's second Policy Address, namely the reclamation plan for Lantau Tomorrow and the abolition of the offsetting arrangement of the Mandatory Provident Fund System. Although the Chief Executive says that she would "connect with the
people", the common folks and "wage earners" may not be able to recognize and concur with these two policies. Where will they go when connected with her? Or is the Chief Executive only selectively moving forward on her own, and not listening to the real voice of the public?

President, Prof Timothy SNYDER of Yale University has a book "On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century", which quotes the historical lessons of tyranny and resistance in the last century, warning that the history of the world is going backward. He reminds us not to be consciously tame, but to guard against one-party dictatorship, and to fight from minor acts of everyday life, and to uphold professional ethics.

Today's "moving forward" requires partners. The Government's administration also requires consensus of the public and cooperation of the Legislative Council, rather than blindly emphasizing economic interests and depoliticization. Given Carrie LAM's style of going it alone, "raising false" hopes and ignoring the grass roots, I will definitely vote against the Motion of Thanks. There is no choice. Thank you, President.

MR POON SIU-PING (in Cantonese): President, in the Policy Address this year, the Chief Executive puts forward her target of "Striving Ahead Rekindling Hope". In paragraph 3 of the Forward in the Policy Address, the Chief Executive says, "It is high time for us to decide and proceed after discussions; since procrastination will just bring greater sufferings to families living in a poor and overcrowded environment, in particular the children, and to grass-roots workers who need better retirement protection." However, the Chief Executive has not clearly stated what factors are holding back the administration of the Government of the Special Administrative Region ("SAR") and its efforts to improve the poor living environment of the people and the protection of grass-roots workers.

In terms of labour rights, I think that the most powerful example of the SAR Government's resolve to "decide and proceed after discussions" was its new proposal to abolish the offsetting arrangement under the Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") System. The stance of the labour sector is very clear towards the abolition of the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System and that is, the measures concerned should be quickly implemented so long as they will not undermine workers' rights and interests. Since the last Government took the
initiative to deal with this issue, there have been a lot of twists and turns, and it is not until this year that an ultimate proposal is introduced eventually in the Policy Address. Apart from making up for the loss of benefits of employees due to the implementation of the new policy, the Government has also responded to the request of the business sector by picking up the bill of employers with more public money, as the Government's subsidy to employers will be significantly increased to $29.3 billion from $17.2 billion which was proposed at the beginning of this year.

Another new initiative related to labour rights and interests in the Policy Address is the extension of the statutory maternity leave from 10 weeks to 14 weeks, and the Government will also pick up the bill. In answering my question earlier, the Secretary said that the Government would need to take out $479 million from public coffers for the employees' wages of the additional four weeks' maternity leave. As a representative for the labour sector, I of course welcome the Government's decision in abolishing the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System and extending the statutory maternity leave. However, I am worried that the direction of subsidizing employers to improve labour rights and interests with public money will bring even more difficulties in the future improvement of labour welfare and make employers more reluctant to make concessions in improving labour rights and interests.

Full-pay maternity leave, legislation on standard working hours and the alignment of statutory holidays with general holidays are the aspirations of the labour sector. The solution of these issues cannot entirely rely on public coffers, otherwise, we will make no progress at all.

President, according to the Policy Address, the Government has completed a review on labour benefits of non-skilled employees engaged by government service contractors. As early as 2017, during the motion debate of this Council on reviewing the government outsourcing system, I proposed stipulating in the outsourcing service contracts the terms and conditions on standard working hours and compensation for overtime work, as the starting point for the Government in promoting standard working hours. But to my disappointment, my proposal was apparently not accepted by the Government.

In regard to the review on improving the outsourcing system, according to the Policy Address, the working group responsible for the review suggests increasing the weighting of wage level in tender evaluation, providing a
contractual gratuity and adopting service contracts with a minimum term of three years where situations permit. It was disclosed by the media last year that some government departments did not follow the Government’s procurement policy. For example, the security contract of a market under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department was awarded under the lowest bid wins arrangements instead of the scoring system. I expect that the Government, while improving the outsourcing system, can also step up monitoring of government departments to make sure that they will follow the procurement policy.

President, on page 82 of the related Policy Agenda (or page 72 in the Chinese version), the Government says that a series of enhancement measures for the Continuing Education Fund will be implemented from April next year to encourage the public to pursue continuing learning. In fact, surveys after surveys have found that Hong Kong is the place with the longest hours in the world, with an average of 52 working hours per week. The main factor that prevents our workers from engaging in lifelong learning is long working hours. As at the end of last year, less than 20% of the labour force in Hong Kong had participated in the training programmes under the Continuing Education Fund, a rather poor response. In my opinion, the goal of lifelong learning pursued by employees will not be able to be achieved effectively if the Government only focuses on minor fine tuning of the Continuing Education Fund without introducing legislation on standard working hours.

President, I have to commend the Chief Executive for raising occupational safety and health policy for discussion again in some rather long paragraphs following the Policy Address last year in which she did the same. According to the Policy Address this year, the Government will look into the provision of timely and well coordinated rehabilitation services for injured workers through private medical services. I support this recommendation from the Government and hope that the Government can, as soon as possible, announce details of this proposal for public discussion and then implement the measures concerned. On the front of occupational safety, I welcome the recommendations in the Policy Address that regarding high risk industries, the Labour Department will strengthen its efforts on inspection and enforcement, and will review the penalties of relevant legislation to amplify their deterrent effect. These recommendations, however, were also found in the Policy Address last year. I hope that they can be implemented very soon.
According to the data on industrial accidents released by the Labour Department, in the first half of this year, there were over 5,000 industrial injury cases and seven fatal industrial injury cases. The figures were slightly lower than those in the first half of last year, but are they the real figures of industrial injuries? At the beginning of this century, after conducting a large-scale survey on labour force, the United Kingdom came up with a ratio in the assessment of industrial injuries and accidents that behind each fatal case, there were 1,772 work injury cases with more than two days of sick leave. If we make an assessment of the industrial injuries and accidents in the first half of this year with this ratio, we understand that behind these seven fatal cases, 12,404 industrial injury cases with more than two days of sick leave should be involved. I believe that the existing system of reporting industrial injuries and accidents can hardly reflect the real situation, and thus request that the Government should comprehensively review this system.

President, in the debate session concerning labour issues, I cannot help but mention the subject of importation of talents and the labour importation policy. Take the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals as an example, in the 2017-2018 financial year, 12,740 people were approved to come to work in Hong Kong, but among them, 40% were not degree holders and 30% of them earned less than $20,000 per month. Are these talents worthwhile? Why some of these talents earn less than $20,000 per month? The Policy Address says that the Government introduced the Technology Talent Admission Scheme and the Talent List one after another in the middle of this year. The above scheme and measure were still in their preliminary stages of implementation, and I do not want to see similar loopholes witnessed in the so-called talent schemes.

The Policy Address brings up again the proposal to extend the importation of labour. It says that the Government has been, through a number of measures, assisting the residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs") in the employment of additional manpower. What it needs to do next is to determine when and how to implement the importation of carers in subsidized elderly service and rehabilitation service units. What the Chief Executive implies is that she has already decided to import labour for RCHEs. In fact, the various measures for increasing manpower in RCHEs are full of loopholes. For instance, the Policy Address last year mentioned that the salaries of carers in these subsidized RCHEs would be increased by two pay points. But in reality, many subsidized RCHEs are still employing carers at a level below the starting salary point set by the
Social Welfare Department. Concerning the importation of labour, the stance of the labour sector is very clear. The Government must make sure that the employment opportunities and remuneration of local employees will not be affected. In response to my question at the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Manpower earlier on, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare said that a survey will be conducted to learn more about the improvement of remuneration in RCHEs. But before the completion of the survey, the Chief Executive has made a final decision to import some carers to work in subsidized RCHEs, which is not an appropriate move.

President, the winter influenza season is approaching. Although the Policy Address says that Hong Kong has high quality health care services, in reality, the health care services in Hong Kong are very stretched. Before the onset of the winter influenza peak, the accident and emergency departments in hospitals are so crowded that some patients need to wait for nearly 20 hours and the health care personnel are also exhausted. The shortage of health care personnel is of concern to all of us. I would like to particularly point out here that supporting staff are at the most junior level in the entire health care system and are also given the least attention. Their workload is constantly very heavy. According to a media report, each staff member of the supporting grade has to deal with 15 patients. However, since their salaries are not commensurate with the workload, the wastage rate is very high. In the face of the winter influenza peak, while the Government is allocating additional funds to health and medical services, it cannot overlook the junior level staff who are working very hard on the frontline. I hope that the Government can increase the allowances to frontline staff, quickly fill the vacancies in staff establishment and holistically review the remuneration structure of supporting grades.

President, I so submit.

MR TOMMY CHEUNG (in Cantonese): President, as far as education is concerned, the Liberal Party welcomes the full implementation in one go of all-graduate teaching force policy in public sector primary and secondary schools, so as to resolve the problem left over from history, and this is also a suggestion put forward by the Liberal Party for many years. The Government's response this time is a good step which will help to enhance the quality of teaching. We are even of the view that in the long run, the Government should also address the issue of pay difference between primary and secondary school teachers, because
it would only be fair to ensure equal pay for equal work. This can also encourage more competent and quality teachers to join the ranks of primary school teachers, thereby upgrading the qualifications of primary school teachers.

However, in general, the Liberal Party opines that the Government still lacks new thinking on education. Among the proposals put forward by the Liberal Party to the Chief Executive, the bolder one is for the Government to push for the abolition of the point rating system in local primary and secondary schools, and replace it with a grade rating system (i.e. grades A, B, C, D). In particular, such a system should first be implemented in primary schools. Undeniably, there will still be difference in ratings under the grade rating system, but it will minimize disputes arising from slight differences in scores, which will relatively help to reduce the pressure faced by students and give them more room.

We hoped that with such minor adjustment in the rating system, a step can be taken to change the learning culture of Hong Kong, so as to discourage the bad practice among parents of comparing the scores of their children, and cultivate the atmosphere where learning is not about achieving high scores. With this speech, we hope to openly appeal to the Government once again to give serious consideration to the Liberal Party's suggestion. If our suggestion is adopted, depending on its effectiveness, the next course of action can be decided.

President, for many years, we have also been urging for the introduction of an education voucher scheme for private independent kindergartens in a bid to offer assistance to parents from the middle class, and there is no exception for this year. The Liberal Party has reservations about the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme introduced by the Government of the last term, fearing that the Scheme will become something of a sugar-coated poison pill, resulting in a deterioration of the quality of pre-primary education, which will eventually force some parents to find another way out, something similar to the case of direct subsidy primary and secondary schools nowadays and a repeat of history and the same mistakes.

Private independent kindergartens not funded by the Government have moved in two opposing directions in recent years, with some of them being eliminated gradually, while others raising their tuition fees and moving towards the direction of quality education. This will undoubtedly reduce the choices for middle-class parents and impose a heavier burden on them. I wish to reiterate that the Government should restore the chaotic situation back to normal as soon
as possible by introducing pre-primary education vouchers for middle-class parents to subsidize their small children to study in private independent kindergartens. The advantage of an education voucher system is that the allocation of resources will be decided by parents, thereby allowing market forces to play their role and giving incentives for private independent kindergartens to enhance the quality of education.

President, the part of manpower resources this year is of great concern to the industrial and business sectors. Frankly speaking, apart from the policies on housing and land supply, other policies in the Policy Address this year have disappointed the Liberal Party to a great extent. The Government and the Chief Executive have kept saying that they could do nothing without land, and that the crux of all problems was the shortage of land. Similarly, manpower is the biggest asset for the industrial and business sectors of Hong Kong.

Many trades and industries are now facing manpower shortage, be it unskilled or skilled workers. There is a shortage of manpower, ranging from dish-washing workers in restaurants to nursing staff in elderly care homes, young people are reluctant to join the ranks of drivers of transport services, including buses, red minibuses and green minibuses. The recent incident involving Cathay Pacific has uncovered the shortage of network security talents in Hong Kong to cope with the demand for corporate services. If things are allowed to go on like this, Hong Kong will be plagued with problems, with its services and competitiveness being eroded.

Manpower shortage poses the biggest threat to the business sector. Unfortunately, the Policy Address this year has tilted towards employees at the heavy expense of the industrial and business sectors. Apart from importation of workers under the Supplementary Labour Scheme ("SLS"), there is nothing new about how to address the manpower problem, which is of utmost importance. We should bear in mind that many trades, industries and job types are currently not covered by SLS. Moreover, the complicated application procedures and limited number of imported workers approved under SLS render it completely ineffective. The Chief Executive has always said that we should take a great step forward in labour policies, but these policies should not be tilted towards employees and should be more balanced. The Government should act decisively to resolve the problem of acute labour shortage in Hong Kong, so as to give the sector relief from the heavy burden, or at least relieve the pressure of new labour policies on the sector.
Importation of labour is not something of a scourge, which, if properly formulated taking into account of our actual needs, will be beneficial to the overall economy and even to people's livelihood. In the 1980s and 1990s, the catering industry, helped by the importation of workers from other places implemented by the Government, was able to make the pie bigger, resulting in the increase of the number of workers in the industry from a few dozen thousand to over a hundred thousand. During the construction of Chek Lap Kok Airport, a large number of construction workers were also imported to meet the construction needs, as a result, the projects concerned were completed in time for the commissioning of the new airport in July 1998, which also stimulated the then stagnant economy to a certain extent.

Instead of dragging on incessantly, we should learn from past experiences mentioned above, seriously assess the manpower needs of different trades and industries as soon as possible, and formulate a specific and targeted plan for importation of labour after taking into account of the number of talents to be available from local education and vocational training system, so as to import foreign workers in a bold and decisive manner. Apart from grass-roots workers, we should also make greater efforts to attract expert talents to Hong Kong.

A perusal of this year's Policy Address reveals many visions proposed for Hong Kong, including developing Hong Kong into an international information and technology hub, consolidating and enhancing Hong Kong's status as an international financial, transport and trade centre, establishing Hong Kong as a centre for international legal and dispute resolution services in the Asia-Pacific region, and so on. At first glance, many development opportunities seem to be available for the young people of Hong Kong, but all of these will be nothing more than empty talks if the current lack of manpower as well as concrete policies and measures persist. These so-called visions may be nothing more than a dream.

Some Hong Kong people worry that the "rice bowl" of local people will be taken away by foreign workers, and they therefore resist the admission of talents. However, they should understand that the world is changing rapidly, and Hong Kong may not have suitable talents to cope with the latest development. If we continue to isolate ourselves, Hong Kong will go nowhere and lose the crucial opportunity to both generate synergy effects and strengthen our own advantages.
President, the business sector also attaches great importance to livelihood issues, but our position is that we should not move towards populism, welfarism or the norm of "getting the same pay no matter if one works hard or not". Instead, we should create a favourable environment for pursuing self-reliance in line with the Lion Rock Spirit, as well as more opportunities for upward mobility for the general public, with the aim of doing a good job in resource allocation. However, the Policy Address this year has failed to keep its balance by tilting towards employees, with a further erosion of the business environment of Hong Kong by many of its proposals and measures, a great disappointment to the business sector.

With the eruption of a trade war between China and the United States, many people have witnessed its aftermath and substantive damage to the economy of Hong Kong, which could be more serious next year. Nevertheless, the Policy Address only glossed over this issue without giving a detailed account of how the Government will be prepared for it to withstand the storm. On the contrary, the Policy Address has put forward a number of measures in one go, including the abolition of the offsetting arrangement under the Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") System, the extension of the statutory paternity leave from the existing three days to five days, the extension of the statutory maternity leave from 10 weeks to 14 weeks, and so on. For many small and medium enterprises ("SMEs"), the proposed labour measures may not be big deals individually, but collectively, they will be a heavy burden for SMEs.

At a consultation meeting organized by the Liberal Party for four major functional constituencies on the new proposal for the abolition of the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Dr LAW Chi-kwong, openly stated that the proposal would lead to an increase of 5.6% in staff cost according to the Government's estimation. However, he has kept "moving the goalposts" by correcting himself lately that the proportion should in fact be 2.2%, or even 0.66%. This does not really matter, because ever since the implementation of the minimum wage, I have noticed from the figures provided by the Government that it had often made wrong calculations, or had deliberately done so.

In fact, unless employers are prepared to have themselves imprisoned, once the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System is abolished, they will have to make provisions for all their employees and set aside additional funds for severance payment and long service payment. Hence, the impact will definitely
not be a mere increase of 2.2% as suggested by the Government. Despite government subsidy of about 50% for employers in the first three years, their burden will be increased in the long run, and the shrinkage of working capital will make their operation more difficult.

We have to bear in mind that many SMEs and micro enterprises are now struggling hard to operate their businesses with little liquidity, and it is simply impossible for them to have spare funds for this purpose. The Government has proposed the abolition of the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System in disregard of the fate of these enterprises. Employees are employers' greatest assets, but with the abolition of the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System, one can imagine that an employee employed by the same employer for more than 10 years will prefer to part with the employer so as to receive severance payment or long service payment. This course of action, which is detrimental to business operations, will be the biggest nightmare of the business sector. It will deal a serious blow to the service industry in the long run, more damaging than forcing us to fork out hundreds of billions of dollars now.

After all, the Government has failed to honour the conditions in its agreement with the business for the establishment of the MPF Scheme and require employers to offer additional retirement protection for employees, a sudden act of "moving the goalposts" in effect, and employers have to bear the burden of offering double benefits. This has resulted in a loss of trust among the business sector to the Government. When similar legislation is introduced in the future, even if the Government pledges that the interests of the business sector will not be harmed and nothing will be changed, the latter will no longer believe it.

The business sector must stress that the retirement protection for "wage earners" has in no way been swept away by the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System, and the contributions are still in their MPF accounts. Their retirement benefits are actually swept away by MPF administrative fees, which amount to tens of billions of dollars, and early withdrawal of MPF by employees who are below 65 and declare that they will no longer work. If the Government wishes to ensure that people will enjoy retirement protection when they get old, it should take action to tackle the problem of early withdrawal of MPF by employees, or try to recover the money from fund managers.
President, the business sector also wishes to end controversy by proposing the establishment of an "optimized fund pool", which will be accumulated with funds from the Government for making severance payment and long service payment. I will not go into detail as Mr CHUNG Kwok-pan will elaborate on this. However, I am afraid that more and more investors will be frightened away if the Government refuses to negotiate and continues to act like this.

People who want to start their own businesses or start-ups will also be discouraged by the high threshold, or they will move to other places with lower costs for development. My advice to the Government is that it should avoid going too far by introducing more policies that will increase the pressure on employers, otherwise a vicious cycle will be created at a time of global economic downturn, and Hong Kong will lose more of its advantages and resilience.

With regard to health care services, I wish to say a few words on the issue of health care manpower. The Policy Address has pledged that the number of health care-related publicly-funded first-degree intake places will be increased to 1930 in the next three academic years, and the capacity for relevant professional health care training will also be expanded. However, with an ageing population in Hong Kong, these are still not adequate to meet our demand. Although the Government is willing to advance the planning for the second 10-year hospital development plan, in the light of the problems with public health care services in Hong Kong, such long waiting time and acute tension between medical professionals and patients, the Government must determine to find solutions to these pressing problems.

Against this background, the Liberal Party has repeatedly suggested that we should follow the example of Singapore by admitting overseas doctors, and allow medical talents from renowned overseas medical schools to come and practice in Hong Kong. In particular, as a stop-gap measure, we should encourage children of Hong Kong parents, who have graduated from medical schools overseas, to return to Hong Kong by allowing them to practice without having to take any examination, moreover, they should be allowed to work in public hospitals after receiving training in Hong Kong. In this connection, President, I would like to declare that my daughter and son-in-law are overseas medical practitioners.

The Liberal Party is of course pleased to note that the Chief Executive has proposed to strengthen primary health care services and incorporate Chinese medicine into the health care system in Hong Kong, but in the long run, the
Government should address the imbalance between public and private health care services. The Liberal Party suggests that we should strengthen the cooperation between public and private sectors, facilitate the provision of medical examinations, laboratory and consultation services at discounted prices by private hospitals or medical centres for cancer patients in public hospitals with partial subsidy by the Government, actively encourage the patients who are financially better able to seek medical services through private health care system for early and speedy diagnosis and treatment, which will also help to relieve the pressure on public health care system.

Moreover, the Liberal Party agrees that the Hospital Authority should comprehensively review its means test mechanism for subsidy for drug expenses, but we would like to remind the Government that the drug registration process should also be expedited, which will help bring some expensive drugs used by patients suffering from rare diseases within the scope of subsidy.

Finally, I wish to talk about electronic cigarettes ("e-cigarettes"). The Chief Executive has made a sharp turn—perhaps it is not the Chief Executive but the Secretary who has made this sharp turn—by proposing a ban on e-cigarettes and related smoking products across the board, which seems to have obtained support from a majority of Members in this Council. In my opinion, this is a typical example of the dictatorship of the majority, which has deprived the minority of their rights. I cannot help but ask: should a democratic society really need to go this far?

Many things are hazardous, even religious belief can be hazardous, but shall they be banned completely? Excessive sugar intake is harmful, should this be regulated? Does the authority need to tell us at every turn how much sugar, salt or chocolate we can consume every day? I remember that 10 years ago, Prince Charles of the United Kingdom suggested a ban on McDonald's, the fast food chain, in the United Kingdom, so that children could eat healthier food. This suggestion of a total ban on fast food restaurants subsequently triggered a heated debate in the community.

Standing on the moral high ground is always easy. Nevertheless, Hong Kong is among the places with the longest life expectancy in the world, is it suitable for the actual situation in Hong Kong if the Government regulates people's way of living so strictly, like a babysitter?
I am a smoker. Since the smoking ban in workplaces imposed by the Government many years ago, I have witnessed a gradual tightening of the smoking policy in Hong Kong. It is beyond my expectation that, when the harms caused by second-hand smoke of e-cigarettes are, after all, less harmful than conventional cigarettes as far as passive smoking is concerned, under the lesser-evil theory, e-cigarettes should not be banned. To my surprise, the Government has made such a sharp turn by proposing a total ban on e-cigarettes, which, in my opinion, is a big step backward and a pathetic thing.

President, with regard to transport measures, I would like to talk about the proposal for the re-distribution of traffic among the three road harbour crossings and stress the Liberal Party's support for the proposal, which will be visibly more effective than past efforts which involved the Cross Harbour Tunnel and the Eastern Harbour Crossing only to tackle road traffic congestion.

We have to bear in mind that the operator of the Western Harbour Crossing ("WHC") can now increase the tolls at any time without the need to obtain prior approval from the Executive Council, and the tolls can be increased to as much as $190, which is permitted under the existing mechanism. However, the implementation of the proposal for the re-distribution of traffic among the three road harbour crossings will result in a near-freeze on the tolls of WHC at the level of $70 over a three years period from 2020, allowing a slight increase only. With subsidy from the Government, users will need to pay $50 only, and there is indeed a huge difference between $190 and $70.

We have to make it clear that under the proposal, what the Government is subsidizing is not WHC but users of the road harbour crossing. The Government has put forward this toll charging scheme after spending a lot of time conducting numerous scientific and data analyses, having considered a host of factors, and reaching an agreement with the relevant company. This is not a senseless move.

Different car owners have different views. Some of them want lower charges and do not care much about traffic congestion, while some others consider efficiency the most important factor and do not mind high charges, because time is money. The proposal for re-distribution of traffic among the three road harbour crossings will cater to the needs of different car owners. I hope Members will not vote against such a hard-earned agreement lightly as some details are open to further discussions. My fellow colleague Mr Frankie YICK
will elaborate on this issue and may present to us some possible enhancement options and even make recommendations. I urge the Government to negotiate with the stakeholders concerned as soon as possible for early implementation of the proposal for the re-distribution of traffic among the three road harbour crossings.

President, the Liberal Party welcomes the part of land policy in the Policy Address. Many of the proposal are consistent with the general direction of the Liberal Party, such as the introduction of the Land Sharing Pilot Scheme to release agricultural land with the cooperation of the public and private sectors, the planning of Lantau Tomorrow, the implementation of reclamation projects and the construction of artificial islands with a total area of about 1700 hectares. Besides, the Government should be commended for making reference to the development mode proposed by the Liberal Party of "according priority to transport infrastructure before housing development" and will give priority to infrastructure in the implementation of the Lantau Tomorrow Vision.

Nevertheless, the Liberal Party considers that the idea of according priority to transport infrastructure should not be applied solely to the planning on Lantau Island, but should be extended to cover all development areas. We believe that according priority to transport infrastructure is the solution to the long-standing problems of traffic congestion in certain districts of Hong Kong, it can also help to break the constraints on developing new areas. At the very least, this can help to reduce resistance and opposition from local community when a development proposal is submitted to the Town Planning Board for consultation, thereby expediting the pace of development.

Besides, the Liberal Party agrees that Hong Kong should speed up the pace of housing supply and set the target of tackling the problem of "sub-divided units" in particular, which have a very poor living environment. Hence, when putting forward our proposals concerning the Policy Address to the Chief Executive, the Liberal Party has already suggested relaxing the public-to-private housing ratio. We therefore consider it reasonable for the Chief Executive to finally decide to relax the said ratio to 7:3 for the Land Sharing Pilot Scheme and newly developed sites. However, we must stress that when the serious shortage of land and housing supply is alleviated, we should switch back to the current development ratio, and in particular, the Government should not neglect the need to develop land for commercial use.
President, although the Lantau Tomorrow Vision has attracted a lot of queries in the community, the Liberal Party is of the view that as long as the Government can explain clearly to the public and clear their doubts, the proposal will eventually have majority support. As a matter of fact, the Government has adopted a multi-pronged approach and formulated short, medium and long term measures to increase land supply in Hong Kong as far as possible, and this is a correct way of tackling the root of the problem of exorbitant property prices. I do not think the Government will give up developing brownfield sites after initiating the Lantau Tomorrow plan, because the two initiatives are not mutually exclusive and will take a long period of time to complete. We should not underestimate the difficulties in developing brownfield sites, and this is in fact no easier than developing the Lantau Island, because the relocation of brownfield operations is also subject to numerous objective conditions.

As for the project costs for reclamation, the Liberal Party is not worried as past experiences have shown that reclamation is a long term investment, and the reclamation costs can be recovered through land sales and the resultant economic and business activities. Moreover, Lantau Tomorrow is a planning vision which will take many years to realize and its phased implementation will enable timely adjustments to be made. It is absolutely impossible for our hundreds of billions of fiscal reserves to be exhausted in one go.

The Liberal Party suggests that once a concrete timetable has been drawn up, a special labour importation scheme should be formulated for public infrastructure works, under which workers will be imported for the implementation of various proposed public housing and infrastructure projects, in order to ensure the timely and even early completion of such projects to meet the housing needs of the people as early as possible.

President, although the Liberal Party thinks highly of the land policy as outlined in the Policy Address, it is a pity that the Chief Executive has failed to respond to the Liberal Party's proposal of setting up a fund for land and infrastructure development. According to our proposal, the Government should inject 30% of our annual fiscal surplus into the fund, which will be used exclusively for meeting the costs of reclamation projects and infrastructure projects in new development areas, so that we can expedite land supply and infrastructure development in Hong Kong. The Liberal Party hopes that the Financial Secretary will take our proposal into serious consideration.
As far as environmental issues are concerned, the Liberal Party does not consider the continuous expansion of landfills the proper way to address the waste problem in the long run. Nevertheless, it is well known to all that I oppose the imposition of prohibitive levies. Under the municipal solid waste charging scheme announced by the Government last week and the plastic bag tax which has been imposed for quite some time, fees are charged under the "polluter pays" principle. Our biggest anxiety is their ineffectiveness. In the end, members of the public have to pay but do not consider it important. Yet, the Government may use this as an excuse to increase charges, resulting in a continuous increase in charges. It is obvious to all that the Government has so far failed to assist the public in waste separation, and neither has it ensured adequate channels for recycling of local waste. As a result, most plastic bottles collected ended up being disposed of at landfills.

With regard to the waste charging scheme just announced by the Government, in my opinion, the Government should introduce reverse vending machines for plastic containers concurrently for public use to facilitate instant collection of relevant charges, and it should also undertake to provide free collection of food waste from residential, commercial and industrial sources. However, the devil is often found in the details. Moreover, as there will be a time gap between the implementation of the charging scheme and the provision of ancillary facilities for waste collection, I am afraid that the catering industry as well as the general public will have great reservations about the implementation details of the scheme. I always consider that scaremongering tactics for reducing waste do not work for the people of Hong Kong. In the face of the complicated environment issues, the Government should abandon its outdated mindset of favouring regulation, and should instead adopt an innovative and win-win approach to achieve its objectives.

The Policy Address this year has also mentioned about working with the food and beverage industry to promote using less disposable plastic tableware. The Secretary for the Environment must be lucky this time because under my coordination, members of the sector are willing to take one step forward to set an example. I will, together with the Environment Bureau, including the Secretary I think, and the three major fast food chains, launch a two-month campaign next Thursday to promote plastic-free takeaway, so as to encourage members of the public to go plastic-and-disposable-free for takeaway orders and stop using plastic tableware. The food and beverage sector is partnering with the Government this time, with members of the public being offered a complimentary
hot drink by the sector or a free set of reusable cutlery by the Government. This will definitely achieve a multi-win situation for it will not only bring benefits to the public but also help to cultivate a habit of green living.

As a matter of fact, education and publicity are of the greatest importance to the cultivation of a sense of commitment among the public to using less plastic products and there is no room for laziness for the Government. I hope that the Government will draw lessons from the launch of the campaign with the food and beverage sector this time for future reference in the formulation of policies on waste reduction, with a view to offering incentives in the form of tax concession or other financial support to the sector and members of the public, thus benefiting the three parties of the public, the sector and the Government at the same time.

President, green policy is the future trend, which must be supported by innovative technology. In the long run, Hong Kong needs to introduce and develop recyclable materials that pose no harm to the environment and can be a substitute for plastic, and encourage their use by relevant sectors and members of the public. As the Government is planning to develop Hong Kong into an innovation and technology hub, it should seize the opportunity and give funding support to research and development ("R&D") efforts in the development of a plastic substitute, or attract overseas R&D institutions to set up laboratories and manufacturing plants in Hong Kong. We may order mass production of the products once they are fully developed and put them on the market at competitive prices.

President, I so submit.

MR IP KIN-YUEN (in Cantonese): President, I will divide my speech on this year's Policy Address into three parts. First is about education issues. This will take up the bulk of my speaking time. Second is about more controversial issues including e-cigarettes and the Lantau Tomorrow Vision. Finally, I will express my view on the overall position of the Motion of Thanks and quote a survey conducted by the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union ("PTU") among its members.

President, this is the second Policy Address delivered by Chief Executive Carrie LAM. She put forth many of her views in it, including her view on education. According to various sources, this Policy Address is largely the
brainchild of Carrie LAM. I thus believe that this Policy Address can reflect her views on many issues, especially those on education. Based on the Policy Address she delivered, as well as her speeches made on different occasions, we feel that the new Government has a supportive attitude to education matters. This is very important.

When this Government assumed office, it earmarked $3.6 billion recurrent expenditure for the education sector, and a further $4.7 billion for this year, amounting to a total of $8.3 billion recurrent expenditure. According to our observation, past Governments rarely committed themselves with recurrent expenditures. They tended to provide one-off allocations instead if they recorded a surplus. We have repeatedly pointed out to the Government that one-off allocations will bring many troubles to the education sector which can benefit very little from them. The new Government's commitment of recurrent expenditures to address education issues is a welcome move. This shows a long-term commitment to education by the Government.

The funding items proposed in this Policy Address have specifically responded to aspirations of the education sector over the years, including those of PTU. These funding items include, first of all, implementing in one go the all-graduate teaching force policy in public sector primary and secondary schools; second, earmarking $500 million to rationalize the salaries for principals and vice-principals of primary schools and to improve the manpower at the middle management level in primary schools; third, providing public sector schools and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme ("DSS") with additional resources of $570 million each year to strengthen the administrative support for schools and their management committees; fourth, providing a new recurrent Life-wide Learning Grant with an annual provision of $900 million to public sector schools and DSS schools; fifth, injecting an additional $20 billion into the Research Endowment Fund; and sixth, providing $120 million additional recurrent expenditure each year as subsidies for about 4 000 students in each academic year to undertake designated self-financing sub-degree programmes that nurture talents to meet our social and economic development needs.

The funding items above are important and practical. They deserve positive comments. We hold that the Government should follow this direction to continue with the development of education and implement a two-phased strategy to improve education in Hong Kong. The first phase is to stabilize and
de-stress. This includes stabilizing the teaching force, helping teachers and students to alleviate their stress and stabilizing the school systems. This will put the entire system in a better shape for the second phase of the strategic policy.

The second phase is sustainable development. This includes enhancing the overall education quality and the education profession, and developing a diversified articulation pathway for the benefit of students and society. As a matter of fact, education should be developed continuously, but after a long period of torment, we need time to recuperate and strengthen our system again.

Education is a hundred-year plan that cannot be accomplished at a single stroke. We are not asking the Government to solve all education problems in Hong Kong in an instant, but past problems were very serious. The approach adopted by certain education administrators some 10 years ago put high expectations on frontline educators without giving them high level of support. With little support, these educators were expected to fulfil many expectations and requests. This has become a kind of oppression on educators and created a distorted ecology in which it was impossible for frontline educators to do a good job in such a "hot kitchen". I believe we still have a vivid memory of this situation.

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

Over the past few year, we have witnessed another phenomenon which was characterized by inaction. In those days, the Government had not done much on education, resting on its laurels. That said, the education system in Hong Kong has its merits, but if we maintain status quo, we cannot improve our education system.

Over the past 10 years or so, schools have experienced serious situation of "reduction of classes and closure of schools". Teachers had been distracted to handle many other duties and could not focus on teaching. The education sector and the community were full of grievance. We thus agree with this Government's approach after assuming office of giving staunch support to the education sector. I believe the work this Government should do … to a certain extent, the work has already been in progress … first, is to listen; and second is to provide sustainable support with a long-term commitment.
When Chief Executive Carrie LAM took office, we expressed our views to her. She fully absorbed the wisdom and views of the education sector and consulted the education sector. I think this is a very good approach. We have seen quite many changes. For instance, over the past year, the Government has improved the teaching staff establishment, subsidized students pursuing self-financing undergraduate programmes; disbursed a recurrent reading grant and air-conditioning grant for schools; expedited the lift installation works for schools without such provision; created a post called Special Educational Needs Coordinator; provided a social worker for each primary school; extended the "three-fold preservation policy" for secondary schools, etc. I believe these policies will win a high degree of support of the education sector.

Let me cite another example. When LEUNG Chun-ying was the Chief Executive, almost no additional university quarters were built during his tenure. The several hundred quarter places completed in his tenure were actually construction projects initiated by his predecessors, a great disappointment to the university sector. This Government, however, quickly obtained the funding after it assumed office and filled the shortfall of 13,000 quarter places. Of course, this was nothing more than making up the shortfall or "settling the debt". But the attitude of this Government towards education does contrast sharply with that of its predecessor. Moreover, the Chinese Extensive Reading Scheme Grant and the English Extensive Reading Scheme Grant were abolished for a while. In April this year, this Government announced the launch of a new and enhanced Promotion of Reading Grant for all public sector schools to make up for the insufficient support in this regard. This is a good approach as well.

So, against this new backdrop, I urge the education sector to pass on this strong support from this Government for education to frontline teachers and give them the same strong support in the handling of school administrative work, so that teachers can do a better job in teaching and resolve the problems that are now facing them. I hope that with the gradual changes of the ecology, teachers can focus more on students and better address various education problems. I believe this will become a positive cycle, and in turn society will give more support to by the Government for its support for the education sector.

Deputy President, I also need to point out that good policies may still have their inadequacies. For instance, a good policy should be accompanied by good implementation details. Regarding the all-graduate teaching force policy, we have strong feelings about it. The education sector in general welcomes the
policy. It is a matter of fairness. Teachers with same qualifications doing the same work should be given the same pay. But because this system has been distorted, with the result that many schools (especially primary schools) require elementary rank teachers to take up middle management duties, teacher cannot adapt to the change.

Hence, the first problem the Government must address is that in tandem with the all-graduate teaching force policy, the number of medium rank teaching posts in primary schools should be increased to tally with the posts in secondary schools. Generally speaking, secondary schools manage to straighten out this relationship but primary schools cannot do so at the moment. So, it is necessary to increase medium rank teaching posts in primary schools to solve this problem. If the Government does not properly take this step forward, it may turn a good policy into one that can be chaotic to primary schools. This is something we do not wish to see. The Government should not underestimate the impacts to be brought by this improvement measure. The Government, management committees and principals of schools must join hands and give thoughtful consideration to tackling these impacts.

In the process of implementation, we must also pay attention to the different situations that may arise in different schools. For example, how do we tackle the teaching staff establishment of special schools with combined levels? Some school deans also remind us that large-scale schools aside, how small-scale schools with fewer classes tackle the problems with their teaching staff establishment. These problems need to be followed up. Another point, which is also very important, is the need to expeditiously rationalize the establishment and remunerations for principals and vice-principals of primary schools; otherwise, primary schools may only be able to implement some of the policies, but not all of them. This will lead to another chaotic situation.

Deputy President, we need to pay attention to the details of some policies. We may already have a direction, but we also need a good policy to go with it. For instance, the Chief Executive stressed in the Policy Address … I were very attentive listening to her at that time … that we need a "caring" and "stable" education environment. I think these two points have grasped the greatest needs of the education in Hong Kong now. How to put in place a caring and stable education environment? How to translate it into the actual policy? I think the Chief Executive and those from the Education Bureau should think carefully how to do it properly.
Take the point of stability as an example. Chief Executive Carrie LAM made a point earlier when she gave a speech at an event organized by the education sector. She says the education system in Hong Kong does not need a complete makeover that hurts the muscles and bones of it. It just needs the right remedies to fortify its body and it can grow up healthy and strong. I agree with what she says. I think it is better not to have another ever-changing policy that turns everything upside down. But we must fortify our body and find the right remedies so that we can grow up strong and healthy.

In terms of stability, we are facing an enormous challenge. In the past decade or so, the authorities did not have the heart to face up to this challenge. Even if they did, they might not be able to do it. The challenge is the fluctuating population. This has a direct impact on education. But in fact, a fluctuating population and a low birth rate have been seen in many part of the world. Why has the education system in Hong Kong been so seriously affected? I think this is the question we should consider instead. If a pilot says when the plane encounters turbulence that the plane will be as unstable as the turbulence outside, then I believe we will not say that he is a good pilot. He must have different control skills to stabilize the plane, so that the plane will fly steadily no matter how strong the turbulence is. The same should apply to the education system.

The rebound of secondary one population is something that secondary school teachers most concern about because schools will then have to reinstate the school places again. However, it is projected that secondary one population for the 2024-2025 school year will drop again. Actually, such fluctuations in the population will continue to appear. How should we deal with it? Can the Government adopt a district-based approach on districts particularly prone to population changes? In fact, this problem is solvable. The key is a stable measure.

We also notice that the population of Hong Kong will drop and the extent of decrease varies in different districts. Many people in the education sector suggest that the class size should be reduced and the "three-fold preservation policy" for secondary schools should be adopted; or the small class teaching policy that has long been aborted be resumed. All these suggestions can stabilize the teaching force. However, the Government is of the view that the small class teaching policy should not be implemented across the board, but on the other hand, it abolished across the board the Intensive Remedial Teaching Programme. I think the Government should seriously consider whether it has double standards.
In order to stabilize the teaching force, the Government sometimes adopted approaches that are hard on individual schools. The "partly-enlarged class structure" is one such example. According to this class structure, the number of classes, for example four classes for each cohort of students, will be expanded to eight classes to meet a sudden increase in demand for school places in a certain school year, and the number of teachers has to be increased correspondingly. However, upon the graduation of the eight classes of students at Primary Six, the surplus teachers will be very worried, not knowing whether they can maintain their teaching posts. The Education Bureau should not "fold the bridge after crossing the river" by leaving these teachers fend for themselves. The Government should have a comprehensive approach to tackle these issues.

Deputy President, we need also to consider problems that we have overlooked. Let me briefly talk about the issues that this Policy Address has overlooked. First is the class-teacher ratio, which is an important issue. This ratio is a critical factor in the analysis of major obstacles and difficulties in the Hong Kong education system. The class-teacher ratio rose by 0.1% last year (That is, an increase of 0.1 teacher with the addition of one class of students). We hope that there will be continual improvement in this ratio. The problem hinges on the fact that teachers have to handle a lot of work, thus placing unbearable pressure on the education system, but manpower, on the other hand, has not been increased over the past few years. The system is subject to more and more pressure, but the energy of teachers has not been enhanced.

So, if we want to improve the education system, we must "reduce workload and enhance energy". In other words, we need to eliminate unnecessary pressure and enhance the class-teacher ratio. That is, we need to expand the teaching staff establishment, so that schools can have adequate teachers to cope with the mounting workload. As to what the workload consists of, I have explained it for many times and I will not repeat myself. However, Hong Kong has the worst teaching staff establishment when compared with our neighbouring places, such as the Mainland and Taiwan. So, if we want to do a proper job of education, we must "reduce workload and enhance energy".

"Reducing workload" is also applicable to students. The Policy Address this year has not touched on issues about students. Should the Government further alleviate the stress on students, the problem of TSA, etc.? Student suicide is a grave issue. I think these suicide cases only show the tip of the iceberg. Students lack a good condition, or a feeling of well-being. Can we
provide a happy and healthy childhood for them? In what ways can we do so? The Secretary has urged schools not to give too much homework to students, or change it to reading. I think these appeals are necessary, but not enough. We need more specific measures to help alleviate the stress on students.

Regarding special schools, they have to deal with issues such as the class limit, the training of teachers and headmasters, the issue of equal pay for equal work among primary and secondary education grades. The Policy Address has touched on none of these issues.

The biggest disappointment, I believe, is that kindergartens are not mentioned in the Policy Address. Kindergartens have been the most neglected issue. A pay scale for kindergarten teachers, which is of the biggest concern to us, has not been implemented. Other issues such as the absence of a Curriculum Leader, is also not addressed.

Regarding universities, the problem of "wandering teachers" has been a matter of great concern. We hope that the Government can review the preference for research over teaching, so that young teachers can have good development.

Also, I wish to talk about two other issues that are of concern. One is the Shine Skills Centre in Kwun Tong that will cease operation. It is fine that the Government wants to construct a civil service college, but the construction should not disrupt another programme or lead to its termination. Can the Government clearly tell us whether the Centre can continue to operate its programmes? No matter who operates these programmes, the students should not be affected, neither should their parents; and there should be a proper arrangement for the teachers as well. We certainly agree with and support the Government's efforts to make a seamless handover, but it should not rush to build the civil service college. Actually, there is now a Civil Service Training and Development Institute, and this new college is not something we cannot do without.

Regarding maternity leave, we welcome the proposed extension of the maternity leave from 10 weeks to 14 weeks in the Policy Address with immediate implementation in the Civil Service. But we hold that the new measure should also be implemented at the same time in aided schools or DSS schools (including kindergartens). Secretary Kevin YEUNG also brought up this point last night.
He said he would submit the related proposal at the end of this year. We hope that the new measure can be expeditiously implemented, announcement should be accompanied by speedy implementation.

Deputy President, there are many controversial issues and the first one is the ban on e-cigarettes. The Government indicated a few years ago that it would ban e-cigarettes and other related products. But its recent sudden change of tone from banning to imposing control has caused grave concern among the education sector and medical sector. The effectiveness of using e-cigarettes to quit smoking has not been proved. The design and publicity of these products target at young people. This will cause considerable problems. We thus welcome the proposed ban on e-cigarettes in this Policy Address. It shows that the Government is more determined to deal with this issue. We anticipate the early submission of the related legislation from the Government to the Legislative Council for early passage.

The Lantau Tomorrow Vision is another issue that has aroused much controversy and blemished the Policy Address. According to the Policy Address, the Government plans to reclaim some 1 700 hectares of land near Kau Yi Chau and Hei Ling Chau for the construction of artificial islands. It anticipates that 260 000 to 400 000 residential units will be built on the reclaimed land to accommodate a population of 700 000 to 1 100 000.

We certainly can initiate discussion on this proposal, but prior to this proposal, there is already the Task Force on Land Supply (“Task Force”) led by Mr WONG Yuen-fai, which has entered the final stage of its work. Why does the Government have to put forth a new proposal when the Task Force has reached its final stage of work? Why does the reclamation area in the new proposal far exceed the 1 000 hectares originally proposed by the Task Force? The public, as well as members of the Task Force, are astonished. In response to media questions, Mr WONG Yuen-fai, Chairman of the Task Force, said the Task Force was never aware of the idea of reclaiming 1 700 hectares of land until it was announced in the Policy Address. He is equally astonished, saying that 1 700 hectares are not the same as 1 000 hectares. We are thus of the view that there must be some problem with the consultation process, resulting in desirable consequences.

We are facing a pressing issue of land supply. As we all know, the demand for land for housing, for development of the whole society and for commercial development and for other purposes is very pressing. We need
short, medium and long-term strategies to cope with it. Reclamation is a long-term option. I hold that we can discuss this option, but the Government does not seem to have provided sufficient information for us. This will create many negative associations and these associations will then become worries. And these are genuine worries.

Many people raise the question about the overall costs of the reclamation, whether it will be as much as $1,000 billion, how much the connecting roads and sea sand will cost and how to deal with the rising sea level, environmental impact, etc. These unanswered questions have caused much concern. I believe the Government has some ideas about how to tackle them, but it seemed to have failed to let the public know more about the details, thus leading to our grave worry. Public concern and worry are genuine.

We therefore hope that the Government can take note of two points when it rolls out any policy even if it has a good vision and is well-intended. First, its vision and intent may not be shared by the public; and second, an appropriate consultation process is essential. Moreover, the Government should also be mindful of maintaining good communication with the people to encourage sensible discussion.

Deputy President, given that these proposals are very controversial, I invited members of PTU to conduct an internal survey on 19 October which ended yesterday. The results were then consolidated. The survey consisted of three simple questions.

First, to what extent PTU members supported the education policy proposed in the Policy Address. As we can see, their level of support was as high as 81%, a crystal-clear outcome.

Second, to what extent PTU members supported controversial proposals such as the Lantau Tomorrow Vision. Over 20% of the PTU member supported these proposals, accounting for about a quarter of the respondents; and 60% were against them with many of them expressing strong opposition against these proposals. These were their genuine views. One more point, and that is, we have collected the views of about 1200 PTU members. The survey is thus highly representative.
Lastly, the overall satisfaction level of the Policy Address among FTU members. About one third of them said that they were generally satisfied with it while about 40% said they were not satisfied. It is thus evident that they were positive, very positive indeed, about the education policy of the Policy Address. But they had a huge divergence in opinions about controversial proposals such as the Lantau Tomorrow Vision, which could be divided into three almost equal parts, with none of those who were neutral, satisfied and unsatisfied accounting for over 50%.

So, based on the survey above, together with the discussion and analysis conducted by the Executive Committee of FTU, I will abstain in the vote on the Motion of Thanks. But I hope that the Government will continue to implement the good proposals in the Policy Address. I will, as always, praise what is right and criticize what is wrong, and commend the Government for its good policies and urge it to right its wrongs. I so submit.

MR YIU SI-WING (in Cantonese): Deputy President, the Government's introduction of successive amendments to the Employment Ordinance in recent years is definitely understandable from the public's point of view, but employers, especially those running small-, medium- and micro-enterprises ("the SMMEs"), find it hard to cope with. The Government first proposed to abolish the offsetting arrangement under the Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") System. Then it sought to increase the duration of paternity leave from 3 days to 5 days. Soon afterward, it proposed to extend the paid statutory maternity leave from 10 weeks to 14 weeks. It may propose legislating for standard working hours in future. Employers will be daunted by such wave after wave of new initiatives.

At present, the most controversial issue is the abolition of the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System. Although the Government has made a financial commitment of $29.3 billion for providing the second-tier subsidy and will extend its period from the originally proposed 12 years to 25 years, the business sector is of the view that the Government is trying to wash its hands of the issue in the end and shift its responsibility to employers so that it will be off the hook then. The abolition of the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System may not bring much pressure on large enterprises, but SMMEs will feel a heavy burden in the days ahead. Moreover, given the complex nature of the proposal, many companies have difficulties in computation. The need to set up
designated saving accounts for this purpose will also entail additional corporate administrative expenses for them. As a result, many members of the tourism industry still have reservations about the Government's proposal.

Regarding the proposal to extend the statutory maternity leave by four weeks, at first glance, the Government's commitment to shoulder the additional salary costs will spare employers the additional costs, the extension of statutory maternity leave will make small and medium enterprises more difficult and burdensome in staff deployment in view of the general manpower shortage of these enterprises.

Deputy President, as the unemployment rate in Hong Kong remains at around 3% over a prolonged period of time, which is widely regarded as a state of full employment. Many industries are facing manpower shortage. This year's policy address points out the genuine manpower shortage and recruitment difficulties in certain sectors, however, it only mentions that the Government will help the subsidized elderly care service sector employ additional manpower and give a nod to the importation of carers from outside Hong Kong. As a matter of fact, the tourism sector also faces chronic manpower shortage for certain types of jobs, particularly the hotel industry. Some types of jobs in the hotel industry (e.g. housekeeping, catering, driving, engineering, etc.) have high turnover rates and recruitment difficulties. With the completion of an estimated over 10 000 new hotel rooms in the next two years, taking account of staff turnover, there will be a shortfall of nearly 10 000 hotel personnel. In spite of pay rises and enhanced employee benefits, the industry still failed to recruit adequate staff members. In this connection, the industry is going to commission an academic institution to conduct surveys on the hotel industry and collect relevant data for objective analyses in the hope that the public will understand the plight of the industry arising from recruitment difficulties.

The passenger transport industry also faces recruitment difficulties. According to government information, the average age of local taxi drivers is 58, while that of non-franchised buses (including tour coaches) drivers is almost 60. An "acute driver shortage" is an undisputed fact, partly contributed by the ageing problem among professional drivers and the recruitment difficulties.

Deputy President, Hong Kong International Airport ("HKIA") is one of the busiest airports in the world, which handles over 70 million passengers every year, ranking third in the world with the number of passengers still growing. The number of aircraft parking stands has increased by 20 in 2017 and will see a
further increase of 20 by 2019. Nevertheless, the availability of manpower for many types of jobs at the airport still fails to meet the demand. In October last year, the Airport Authority Hong Kong briefed the Subcommittee to Follow Up Issues Relating to the Three-runway System at the Hong Kong International Airport on the outcomes of a workforce survey on HKIA and pointed out that there were still 4,500 airport vacancies in 2017. According to the estimation by a trade union of airport ground staff in August this year, the current shortfall of airport ground staff is 12%, including drivers of light and heavy goods vehicles and baggage handlers. Despite the ongoing recruitment exercise, the negative growth in the number of ground staff who reported duty remains. Instances of delayed baggage delivery due to manpower shortage occur from time to time, which will affect visitors' impression of HKIA.

The Three-runway System at HKIA is expected to commence operation in 2024, which will increase the annual passenger volume to 100 million by then. Should we not start planning for the airport's workforce, the service quality of HKIA will definitely deteriorate.

Deputy President, the long-awaited Hong Kong Section of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge have commissioned successively in recent months and the number of visitors has also increased. However, major infrastructure facilities alone without supporting services will not enhance the international image of Hong Kong. On the contrary, the travel experience of tourists and their perception of Hong Kong will be negatively affected to a great extent. I hope that the SAR Government will take the problem of manpower shortage in the tourism industry and related service industries seriously and heed the views of the industries. On the premise of protecting employment opportunities for local people, it should face the reality and boldly put forward specific proposals for importation of workers in the light of the actual situations of different sectors and the need for prioritization, in order to facilitate the healthy and sustainable development of the service industries in Hong Kong.

Deputy President, I so submit.

MR GARY FAN (in Cantonese): Deputy President, in the speech I delivered yesterday, I criticized the Policy Address this year for tilting completely towards catering for the rough way of development adopted by the Chinese Communist Party, such as the Belt and Road Initiative and the Guangdong-Hong
Large amounts of Hong Kong's resources are poured into infrastructure projects, especially the construction of artificial islands with a total area of 1,700 hectares under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision. This is a policy aimed at burning a hole in our fiscal reserves in order to subsidize big consortia in both the Mainland and Hong Kong, leading to a depletion of the public coffers.

On the day before yesterday (that is, 6 November), Richard WONG of Our Hong Kong Foundation co-signed a statement with 36 other economists to express their support for the Government's proposal for constructing artificial islands under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision. They pointed out that the construction of artificial islands is a cost-effective option because the investment can be recovered with the proceeds from land sales, and according to them, this is a very smart choice to make. However, I have read through the whole statement and found that not a single word has been mentioned about the problems with constant cost overruns, project delays, wrong estimates, low returns, causing serious disturbance to people's daily life associated with various "white elephant" cross-boundary infrastructure projects undertaken by the Government, such as the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge. By adopting such an attitude, these scholars have neglected the heavy price for the community arising from infrastructure projects undertaken by the Government, failed to fulfil their responsibility as scholars to present arguments based on careful analyses, and dispensed with the spirit of critical thinking. Such an expression of political position characterized with "conclusion comes first" is nothing more than an endorsement for the rich and powerful, the Government, an attempt to drum up support for the plan for land reclamation for constructing artificial islands. These scholars, the SAR Government and the rich and powerful people of Hong Kong are actually breathing through the same nostril, a bunch of accomplices.

It has especially come to my attention that Mr Francis LUI and Mr LIU Pak-wai are among the co-signatories of the statement. Both of them were members of the Working Group on Long-Term Fiscal Planning ("the Working Group") established by the Government, and two reports were published by the Working Group in 2014 to scare the people of Hong Kong, which concluded that...
with an ageing population, a shrinkage in working population, an increase in government expenditures on such areas as social welfare, health care services and education, the Government would soon face the problem of a structural deficit. The Hong Kong Government has then cited the conclusions contained in these two reports to reject many requests for improving people's livelihood, including buying back the Link Real Estate Investment Trust ("the Link REIT"), implementing a universal retirement protection scheme, and so on. The Government claimed that these measures would result in an increase in its expenditures, which might eat into our fiscal reserves.

After four years in 2018, when the Government indicated its intention of using our fiscal reserves for land reclamation on a large scale for the construction of artificial islands, which will involve a number of transport infrastructure and system projects and will be equally a drain on the public coffers, the Hong Kong Government and member scholars of the Working Group have a sudden change of attitude and said instead that Lantau Tomorrow is a smart investment that will generate intangible social benefits.

When public money is spent on infrastructure, reclamation, construction of artificial islands, cross-boundary infrastructure, consolidating property hegemony and maintaining the high land price policy, the Government will not care about using $1 trillion. However, when we ask the Government to use public money for the people of Hong Kong and meet their basic necessities of life in terms of clothing, food, accommodation and transportation, it will scare the people by claiming that a financial deficit would soon be recorded. This is a case of favouritism and the contradictory arguments put forward by the scholars have antagonized the people of Hong Kong. There is indeed no better example than this to demonstrate the shamelessness of these scholars!

This Government as well as all pro-establishment Members and the scholars who have endorsed its unjust policies are very generous in spending money on infrastructure, reclamation and construction of artificial islands, but they are extremely tight-fisted to the people of Hong Kong who are living in great hardship, and it seems to them that an extra one dollar is too much. If things are allowed to go on like this, Hong Kong will not be able to address its deep-rooted social conflicts and resolve the problem of disparity between the rich and the poor, and the grievances among the people of Hong Kong will grow.
Given that the Government has failed to do its job well, I have emphasized in my amendment to the Motion of Thanks this year that the SAR Government should adhere to the principle of putting Hong Kong people first, shelve the reclamation project under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision for the construction of artificial islands, and use the fiscal reserves to improve people's livelihood, which include buying back the Link REIT and implementing a universal retirement protection scheme, thereby relieving the burdens of the costs of living of Hong Kong people, so that they will be given a chance to gasp for breath, and may even be able to live and work in contentment. The fiscal reserves of Hong Kong people should be spent on people living here, thereby alleviating people's hardship and relieving the burdens of the costs of living of the people, and this is the best social investment that we should make.

I notice that Secretary for Labour and Welfare Dr LAW Chi-kwong is now present in the Chamber, and I would like to respond to some viewpoints that he has made. When the Secretary attended a radio programme a few days after the publication of the Policy Address, some members of the public queried why the Government was willing to invest in reclamation projects for the construction of artificial islands, but was reluctant to commit itself to the implementation of a universal retirement protection scheme. The Secretary said in reply that land creation was a long-term investment, and the expenses thus incurred should not be compared with the financial commitment involved in implementing a universal retirement protection scheme. The Secretary opined that once a universal retirement protection scheme was implemented, a deficit would be recorded in the recurrent account from the beginning, and the problem would accumulate with an increasing deficit.

Secretary Dr LAW Chi-kwong's mindset is the same as what I have just described: While they are ready to loosen the purse strings generously when it comes to "dumping money into the sea", they consider it a burden and a deficit problem to provide the elderly of Hong Kong with a sense of security. How mean and heartless such a mindset is. This is a total disregard of the poverty situation of elderly people in Hong Kong. In my opinion, it is incumbent upon a responsible government to provide its people with basic retirement protection. Elderly people have worked hard for Hong Kong when they were young, and their efforts have contributed to the accumulation of our huge fiscal reserves, but upon their retirement, the HKSAR Government cannot even provide them with the most basic living protection. Worst still, public money will be spent on
reclamation projects and the construction of artificial islands with a total area of 1,700 hectares. The SAR Government owes justice to our elderly people, as well as those who have struggled hard for the development of Hong Kong.

Moreover, as emphasized by a number of community groups and scholars, if the community proposal for a universal retirement protection scheme is adopted, the collective savings made up of contributions from various parties will be put into a dedicated pension fund, which will not be entirely expenses. While "white elephant" projects implemented for the construction of artificial islands are fraught with risks, such as cost overruns, burden of debts, low returns, and so on, the community proposal for a universal retirement protection scheme is financially much more sound. If elderly people can lead a life with dignity, they will increase consumption and this will also be beneficial to the economy of Hong Kong. The Government's expenditure for this purpose may eventually be returned to our society, thus benefiting the Hong Kong community as a whole.

Buying back the Link REIT is another proposal which I have put forward in my amendment. It has been nearly 13 years since the listing of the Link REIT, during which the people of Hong Kong have witnessed various evil malpractices by the Link REIT, which included developing shopping malls and other facilities in a predatory mode of operation, and taking profits as the sole factor for renting out and refurbishing its commercial premises. In many private shopping malls which were sold to other investors by the Link REIT in recent years and were subsequently refurbished, small business operators are often required to pay higher rents, and some are even forced out of business. They are usually replaced by chain stores, which are selling high-end products and high-priced goods. The residents of public housing estates have been left in misery because they cannot afford to patronize some expensive restaurants or shops. There was even a piece of news last month suggesting that the Link REIT was planning to sell more than 10 of its shopping malls to the notorious Blackstone Fund for as high as $10 billion.

The senior executives of the Link REIT have also played financial tricks. Starting from January 2018, the Link REIT have repeatedly bought back its own shares, and have made a total of 67 share buybacks as at the end of August, involving an enormous amount of $5.6 billion. In doing so, the earnings per share will increase in terms of accounting, thus boosting the share price. Even its Chief Executive Officer, George HONGCHOY, has sold 1.5 million shares in August to cash in as much as $115 million.
The Link REIT is a typical example of hegemony and has done various evil things. Its commercial premises have been repeatedly refurbished to push up their values, and then sold to other investors. By playing financial tricks, its senior executives managed to boost up the share price, and even its Chief Executive Officer has bought shares again after cashing in. The buyers of some carparking facilities have sold them to speculators, making them tools for speculation. These former public assets held by the Government in those years have become irrelevant to people's livelihood. People are faced with high prices and less choices, and their life is getting worse, but what has the Government done in this respect? It looks on with folded arms and does not know what to do. It also turns a deaf ear to people's demand for buying back the Link REIT.

The Government argues that buying back the Link REIT is against the principle of fiscal prudence, and in this connection, I would like to discuss fiscal prudence with the Government. When it comes to the implementation of reclamation projects for the construction of artificial islands with an area of 1 700 hectares, the Government no longer upholds the principle of fiscal prudence, the so-called principle of "fiscal prudence" is just used to deal with the powerless in Hong Kong. The Government's concept of financial management is basically to transfer benefits to big consortia and helps the rich to rob the poor in total disregard of the plight of Hong Kong people.

I therefore urge the Government to buy back the Link REIT so that grass-roots people can afford basic living necessities again, which, together with the implementation of a universal retirement protection scheme, will help to relieve the burdens of the costs of living of Hong Kong people and improve their quality of life, rejuvenating hopes and motivations in the community. Such intangible returns and benefits are indeed more down to earth than the castles-in-the-air artificial islands which could become real some 20 or 30 years later.

Last but not least, the most crucial issue is the need to have a review of the population policy, which the Neo Democrats has all along been urging the Government to do. As far as land and housing problems are concerned, apart from speculation activities, population is also the crux of the problem. Population growth will definitely result in a greater demand for housing and land. The Government should conduct public consultation on the immigration policy of Hong Kong, and exercise the powers clearly conferred to the SAR Government by the Basic Law to vet and approve One-way Permit applications. Moreover,
the daily quota for One-way Permits should be reduced from 150 to 75, this is the ideal solution to the root of the problem. If the Government does not review its population policy and plug the loopholes in the One-way Permit system, the people of Hong Kong will see a continuous repeat of such problems as bogus marriages, forged documents, fake professionals, ticket scalping, local communities overcrowded with visitors and the pushing up of property prices.

Moreover, I also suggest the imposition of restrictions by the Government on the purchase of residential properties in Hong Kong by non-local individuals, so as to curb property speculation. The Government can make reference to the measures adopted in Australia and New Zealand: Firstly, prohibit the purchase and holding of second-hand residential properties by non-local residents and company buyers; secondly, require developers to set an upper limit on the percentage of non-local individual and company buyers when they launch first-hand residential properties for sale, so as to separate local demand from non-local demand in private residential property market. This will ensure an adequate supply of housing units in the residential property market for Hong Kong permanent residents to choose, and residential units will not be held for a long time by non-local residents or corporate investors for speculation, cashing in and profiteering.

Finally, I wish to stress that if we have fewer people, we will need less land. If we curb the demand for housing and land from non-local and overseas sources, there will be no need for us to implement reclamation projects and construct artificial islands. Hong Kong's fiscal reserves amounting to $1 trillion should be spent on the people of Hong Kong under the principle of "Hong Kong people come first", so as to improve people's livelihood, enable people to regain hope, help young people make their dreams come true and live and work in contentment without having to worry about a "substitution" of local population. Public money should not be used to implement high-risk projects, such as the construction of artificial islands or the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. We stay in Hong Kong, contribute to the development of Hong Kong, and endeavour to make Hong Kong an even more liveable city.

Hence, I will vote against the original motion and object to depleting the public coffers for the construction of artificial islands, which will (The buzzer sounded) … bring disaster to the next three generations.
MR LEUNG YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): President, the Chief Executive Carrie LAM used the slogan "We Connect" when she was running for the Chief Executive. She claimed that she would adopt a new style of governance and emphasized that she would follow an open and transparent principle of public participation and public consultation. However, it is a pity that she has been in office for two years but her new team and her various initiatives have reflected that her slogan was no more than a slogan. In reality, authoritarian chamber politics is the new style of governance.

The theme of this year's Policy Address is "Rekindling Hope", but I think the situation is just the opposite. It is in fact "suppressing hope". According to a survey conducted by the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, the public's rating for this year's Policy Address is only 52.8 points, down 6.1 points from last year. The ratio of dissatisfied respondents reached 28.8%, which is only slight higher than a passing rating. It is no wonder that the public are dissatisfied with this Policy Address, simply because of the Government's reluctance to allocate more resources to improve people's livelihood and make more achievements in this area. On the contrary, hundreds of billions dollars of people's hard-earned money will be poured into building 1 700 hectares of artificial islands, for which bonds may be issued to raise funds. It is tantamount to betting on the future of Hong Kong's next generation. Based on my observation over the past more than two years since the Chief Executive, Carrie LAM, took office, this Chief Executive is best at putting on façades by saying all the time that she "concerns about public opinion". But what happens actually? She "says one thing but does another". Last year, she set up a Land Supply Task Force in a pretentious way and launched a five-month big debate on land supply. She said that she would collect social opinions, but after staging a "grand show", it ended up being a fake consultation and a public relation gimmick. What I saw was that before the release of the Task Force's report, the Chief Executive had rushed to put forward such a massive reclamation plan whose scale is 700 hectares more than that proposed during the public consultation for no reason. Even Mr Stanley WONG Yuen Fai, Chairman of the Land Supply Task Force, said that he knew nothing beforehand. In the end, it is the will of the master that will override everything. As long as the policy complies with the will of the Central Government, public opinion can be ignored. From the Hong Kong Palace Museum in the West
Kowloon Cultural District, which the incumbent Chief Executive in her then capacity as the Chief Secretary decided by herself to build, to the Lantau Tomorrow Vision put forward today, the approaches have been in the same vein, which is characteristic of her arbitrary style. Moreover, she has been doing this time and again, making us doubt whether she does everything to please the Central Government.

The Palace Museum Incident is an obvious example. As for the projects related to Lantau Tomorrow Vision, it delivers to us a very clear message. This project is advocated and promoted by Our Hong Kong Foundation established by TUNG Chee-hwa, Vice Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. After this proposal was unveiled, we see that in addition to the strong support of the royalists in Hong Kong, even People's Daily, the Central Party newspaper, also voiced its support for this proposal. The line-up of supporters this time is comparable to that for a national project.

Undoubtedly, the Lantau Tomorrow Vision bears a banner saying that it is to provide more housing for members of the public to lead a comfortable life. But beneath the surface, it has chosen the hard way by abandoning other more economical, efficient and convenient means of finding more land for building housing units. Since reclamation is time consuming, it often takes 10 years or more before housing units can be built on reclaimed land. Moreover, taking the planning for transportation and community facilities into account, the proposal offers no relief at all to the plight of the struggling grass roots.

The Government has chosen to ignore public opinions. It would rather "pour money into the sea" than utilizing the same resources and manpower to improve such areas as labour, grass roots, disadvantaged and elderly. The Policy Address shows a lack of sincerity in these areas where strong support and attention from the Government are needed. For poverty alleviation and elderly care in particular, most measures are no more than a drop of water in the sea. There are only some minor improvements without specific and long-term planning.

As for the labour sector, we can see that policies in this area mentioned in the entire Policy Address are few and far between, showing a lack of both sincerity and determination. When compared with the East Lantau reclamation
project, which costs hundreds of billions of dollars, these policies are peanuts. Therefore, I will vote against the Motion of Thanks to express my dissatisfaction with the negligence of grass roots and labour issues in the Policy Address.

I will talk about labour issues first. Although the Policy Address has proposed some labour policies, which seem to have responded to some items advocated by the labour sector, including the introduction of 14 weeks of statutory maternity leave and the abolition of the offsetting arrangement under the Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") System, it is a pity that these are just empty talks. We see no concrete legislative timetable at all.

Regarding the abolition of the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System, we can see that the abolition has been procrastinated from the previous LEUNG Chun-ying Administration to the incumbent Government, and it is a pity that no specific time has been set for its implementation yet. More importantly, however, the entire Policy Address makes no mention of certain important policies which are closely related to grass-roots "wage earners", including legislation on standard working hours and annual review of minimum wage. I believe that this is because the Government dare not offend big businesses. As a result, many wage earners have to endure long working hours and low wages, thereby sacrificing their quality of life. While many wage earners are suffering from insufficient rest time, the Government makes high-sounding remarks in a seemingly righteous manner that it is promoting parent-child education and skills upgrading. This attitude is completely … How ironic this is?

Employers strongly oppose the arguments for introducing standard working hours by saying that the relevant policies will make it difficult for the businesses to operate and may even cause their closure. We have heard such scaremongering remarks many times. What is the truth? We have seen that Hong Kong's gross domestic product ("GDP") has been growing over the past few years, the unemployment rate remains very low and the number of visitors to Hong Kong is increasing. It shows that our economy has been improving, which has definitely created a favourable condition for legislating to protect more employees' rights and interests at this time. Take a look at what has happened in other countries. Regarding the reduction of working hours, we can see that such a move helps to increase productivity. For example, there are standard working hours in the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, Singapore and Japan, and these countries always stay in the forefront in terms of competitiveness.
As regards the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System, we can see that the MPF established then was a compromise to employers. In order to win the support of employers, the Government daringly reduced the rights and interests of employees by introducing the offsetting arrangement. However, according to our experience over the past 16 years, this arrangement has resulted in many harmful consequences for employees. It has not only weakened the function of the MPF for retirement protection, but also set up many obstacles. Even if we wanted to right the wrong now, it is difficult to solve the problem smoothly. As far as we can see, this is the aftermath of compromise.

In addition, the Government put forward the "draw the line" option for the abolition of the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System last year. It proposed to reduce the amount of severance payment and long-term service payment by phase. It would be reduced from two thirds of the annual salary to one half of it. A 10-year transition period was also proposed. The Government would provide $7.9 billion to subsidize employers. All these have shown that the Government hoped to make compromises which were based on weakening the employee rights in exchange for employer support. It is repeating historical mistakes. However, it is very strange that employers are still not satisfied and believe that these conditions still fail to meet their expectations. Therefore, the Government has to make some changes in this regard. This year's Policy Address has proposed some new options to extend the Government's second-tier subsidy period to 25 years, and the subsidy amount will be increased to $29.3 billion. Obviously, the Government takes great care of the business sector and compromises again. Although the Chief Executive has indicated that this is the ultimate solution and the Government will not compromise again, we have recently seen the business sector co-sponsoring a statement in the newspapers against the current proposal. I wonder if these circumstances will make the SAR Government surrender again and it is very worrying to us indeed.

On the other hand, the Policy Address has proactively raised the controversial issue of importing workers for the elderly care services sector in disregard of the opposition of the local labour sector. It is of course important for the elderly homes to have sufficient manpower. However, is the shortage of manpower due mainly to local labour and manpower resources shortage, or some other problems? Has the Government considered and studied it thoroughly? We consider that the income of private residential care homes is subsidized by Comprehensive Social Security Assistance ("CSSA"). The subsidy for each bed
ranges from $5,570 to $7,985. If land and construction costs are included, the monthly cost per person is as high as $30,000, which is a far cry from the cost of about $15,000 per place in the subsidized residential care home.

At the same time, private homes are self-financing. It is inevitable that they will hope to provide as many as possible places with as few as possible resources. Therefore, most of them are inferior to their subsidized counterparts in terms of living conditions or staffing. It is difficult for these institutions to improve their remuneration packages, making it difficult to recruit more staff. In fact, according to the Director of Audit's Report in 2014, the number of staff per 100 residents in subsidized residential care homes was 40.2 while the corresponding number for private nursing homes was only 16.3, a difference of nearly two times. Such manpower distribution has led to problems such as long working hours, high pressure and poor working conditions. As such, how can one be willing to enter this field? The Government has not taken this problem seriously in that it does not allocate additional resources to help private homes improve their services and solve the problem of manpower shortage. Instead, it has tried to divert our attention by proposing the importation of labour. This is a typical case of putting the cart before the horse. As a matter of fact, the Government may consider increasing CSSA payments in the short term so as to increase subsidies to private residential homes, and require the setting of salary and treatment standards for carers to attract more people to join residential care services. To ask others to provide good quality services with so little money would put them in a very difficult situation.

More importantly, the Government should fundamentally improve elderly services by promoting ageing in place. In fact, the number of elderly people who are admitted to residential care homes is … Living in institution is never as good as ageing in place. Therefore, many elderly people often wish to stay at home, which is better than staying in residential care homes. However, due to the lack of strong government support, the promotion for ageing in place is less than successful. Many elderly people have to stay in residential care homes, which has contributed to the problems of extremely bad environment and shortage of manpower. Therefore, on the one hand, we hope that the construction of subsidized residential care homes will be speeded up, and on the other hand, we also hope that the remuneration package of caregivers can be improved as much as possible.
In fact, the data of SWD show that from 2008 to 2018, that is, during the last decade, the number of subsidized residential care homes has increased from 143 to 162. Only 19 have been added in the past 10 years, with the number of places increased from 23,778 to 27,360, a net increase of 3,582 only. However, during the decade, the number of people waiting for their homes has increased by 13,743, a difference of 10,000 from the previous figure. Let us think about it. As this figure is so huge, should the Government allocate more resources and manpower to solve this problem instead of using so much manpower and resources to build artificial islands?

In fact, the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines before 2008 set out that the proportion of care and attention homes and elderly homes should be based on the population and should be 17 per 1,000 elderly people aged 65 or above. This standard, however, was deleted in 2008 and changed to "The provision of subsidized places for residential care homes should not be pre-set on a population basis. It should depend on demand, resources and availability of premises." This has not only made the Government lose its direction, but more importantly, with no indicators, the government departments seemed to have become blind flies not knowing what to do. Very often, they put these tasks aside and ignored them. Therefore, we have seen that the Government has done very poorly in terms of elderly services in the past and lags behind the actual demand.

Moreover, in respect of home care, the Policy Address has proposed an increase of 2,000 places to improve home services. It seems that the Government is very generous, but unfortunately, the waiting queue for this service has increased from 5,370 people in 2017 to 7,351 in 2018, with an average waiting time of 16 months. The increase of 2,000 places this year serves merely to recover the shortfall in 2017. It can only slow down the deterioration of the waiting list but cannot rectify the problem of insufficient service at all.

In the past years, although "elderly care" has never been absent from the Policy Address, year after year, the problems of carer pressure, poor quality of residential care and inadequate community support are deteriorating year by year. Therefore, in terms of improving people's livelihood and elderly services, if the Government does not abandon the policy thinking of "repairing and supplementing", in which it only knows that it can increase the number of service
places or service vouchers as a means of its elderly policy, and push the service to
market as well as outsourcing its responsibility for taking care the elderly, it can
never respond duly to the severe problem of population ageing.

As for poverty alleviation, the situation is even more ridiculous. When
she took office, the Chief Executive kept saying that she would try to improve the
people's livelihood. However, in the face of the serious problem of disparity
between the rich and the poor, the content of poverty alleviation actually only
took up two short paragraphs in the Policy Address. This is no different from
handing in a blank answer sheet. How can the public accept it? About
housing, although the Government has proposed to increase transitional housing,
its number has always been limited. For the grass-roots tenants, the most
important thing is to implement measures such as rent control and to normalize
the "N-no" allowance. However, the Government refuses to do so, making this
group of people continue to live in an unsanitary and unsafe living environment.

In addition, as regards the future CSSA system, we have been asking the
Government to conduct a review. However, the Government has been reluctant
to do so, making it impossible for the grass roots to improve the quality of their
living.

As I have just quoted, the survey conducted by the Hong Kong Institute of
Asia-Pacific Studies of The Chinese University of Hong Kong has pointed out
that this year's Policy Address was given a poor rating. The opinion poll of the
University of Hong Kong also found that with regard to the poverty alleviation
measures, the respondents' satisfaction with this year's Policy Address has drop
sharply from last year's 58.7 points to 45.6 points. Nearly half of the
respondents believe that the measures are of little or no effect on improving the
lives of low-income people.

Therefore, if the Government does not work harder in this respect, I am
worried that it will bring a serious crisis to the community. It will also cause
some bad conditions in the future and become a time bomb. Social conflicts
will suddenly erupt after they have accumulated over a long time, which is no
good for the Government's governance. Therefore, I hope that the SAR
Government and the Chief Executive Carrie LAM will intensify their efforts in
poverty alleviation, elderly care and labour issues.

President, I so submit.
MR WILSON OR (in Cantonese): President, as ever, I have taken the initiative to visit different housing estates in Kowloon East to hear the public's views on the Chief Executive's Policy Address following its release. A quick count shows that I have paid more than 10 such visits this year. In doing so, I was able to thoroughly listen to the public's comments on the content of this Policy Address of the SAR Government, which I believe is a good thing to do. I wish to take this opportunity today to voice public concerns and put forward our suggestions for improvement to the Government.

In this debate section, I will express my views on dental health, elderly welfare, residential care places and public markets, which are of concern to the public. I believe everyone knows that, as mentioned in the Policy Address, in order to benefit more elderly persons with financial difficulties, the Government will expand the target beneficiaries of the Community Care Fund Elderly Dental Assistance Programme in early 2019 to cover all elderly persons receiving Old Age Living Allowance ("OALA") by lowering the age limit from 70 or above to 65 or above. To be honest, this arrangement is well received by the community, and reflects the Government's acknowledgement of the elderly people's strong demand for dental services. An elderly person told me: "Wilson, my teeth are most important. If eating becomes an insurmountable challenge for me, I can hardly live a normal social life in other ways."

However, the Government may have overlooked a blind spot, that is, the said arrangement only caters for the elderly persons aged 65 or above who are receiving OALA. At residents' meetings, many elderly friends suggested to me that the Government should take a more thoughtful step to extend it to cover all elderly persons aged 65 or above. Our elderly friends are very understanding. They know that it is very difficult for the Government to do everything at a single stroke, but to be fair, their demand for such services is huge. Secretaries, as we all know, nowadays it costs almost $1,000 to fill a tooth, $10,000 for a dental crown, and even tens of thousands of dollars for a dental implant at a private clinic. Seizing this opportunity, I would like to take this opportunity to remind the Government that more needs to be done in this regard.

In addition to the dental assistance, which is of particular concern to the elderly, the Government should contemplate how to provide adequate dental care to the general public. Currently, only 11 out of the 18 districts have public dental clinics, offering outpatient services in only one to two mornings or
afternoons a week. Frankly, members of the public seeking services at these clinics are indeed left in misery as consultation chips are much sought-after. I quote from a report on "on.cc" the following words, which can also reflect the situation relayed to me at residents' meetings: "consultation chips for outpatient dental services are hard to come by". Secretaries, it turns out that seeking outpatient dental services is a really miserable task for many elderly people. They have to queue up from around 3:00 am, and only the lucky ones manage to get the chips. Things would be terrible if they got up at 6:00 am, because they would be unable to see the doctor then. This phenomenon mirrors the current general demand for dental care in the community. Not only the elderly but also the general public consider that the Government can do more and do better in dental care. I hope that the Government will, in view of the current situation, gradually extend the coverage to provide at least one dental clinic in each of the 18 districts. This goal is very pragmatic, which, if achieved, will make more time slots available for outpatient services, I believe members of the public will give a round of applause in admiration. I hope the Government will heed this suggestion.

Secondly, regarding the issue of providing more elderly home places, some colleagues mentioned earlier that the Government had all along adopted a policy that encouraged ageing in place. I have no objection to this and consider it worth exploring, but in reality there are many loopholes, shortfalls or problems, which hinder the support for or prevalence of ageing in place. On the other hand, many elderly friends told me that they would, for want of a less offensive word, die on the waiting list before getting admitted to an elderly home. Secretaries, there are actually numerous such cases in the districts and I come across them on a daily basis.

In the Policy Address, the Chief Executive said very clearly that many measures would be introduced. I am most delighted that the Government will purchase an additional 5,000 EA1 places. I see that the Government has really set its heart on this. We should give credits and comments where they are due. However, on the issue of providing additional elderly home places, can the Government be more decisive and active? It should give due regard to the current plight of the public and prevent pre-admission deaths on the waiting list for elderly homes. Moreover, regarding the process of elderly home construction, please help speed it up and enhance administrative efficiency.
Actually I do not want to read the following paragraph, but an elderly person keeps reminding me to tell the Secretary a matter that saddened him so much. In an earlier radio interview, Secretary Dr LAW Chi-kwong said that the time frame from planning to completion of an elderly home project involving public works would take eight years in the shortest case to 10 years or more in the longest. Hearing that, the elderly friend cried. This is a true story. Sometimes I wonder: Could the Government express the difficulties encountered in "rising to challenges" in a more humane way? The elderly friend got emotional after hearing this remark, which seemed to prove that no residential care places would be available before his death. Meanwhile, we suggest that the Government should expedite the procedures and enhance administrative efficiency, so that the elderly homes will be available sooner. This is what I want to express.

Moreover, there are two matters that the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong ("DAB") has been persistently raising for a long time, though not quite pleasing to the ear. That is, every time we met the Chief Executive or the Financial Secretary, we called on the Government to consider providing the Old Age Allowance, commonly known as the "fruit grant", to all our elderly friends as a token of appreciation. The last generation has sacrificed and done a lot for Hong Kong. To be honest, without their efforts, our generation would not have been able to enjoy the fruits of economic growth. Therefore, we should really respect our last generation and current elderly friends. In this regard, can we give them a little something, and offer some help, by making our elderly friends aged 65 or above eligible for the $1,000-odd non-means-tested allowance? Secretaries, this allowance is only $1,390. With a fiscal surplus, the Government should also find ways to give a helping hand, right? This is what I want to express on behalf of our elderly friends.

In addition, I would like to raise the issue of markets. I believe Members also know that I am particularly concerned about the issue of public markets. With the support of my colleagues in the Legislative Council, I am serving as Chairman of the Subcommittee on Issues Relating to Public Markets. This job enables me to gain deep insights into such situations ranging from the teeth-grinding tension between my colleagues at meetings, to the Government's allocation of $2 billion for market modernization, as well as the building of new public markets. To give the Chief Executive her due, she has indeed made a firm commitment this time to build more public markets in Tin Shui Wai and
Tung Chung, among others. However, members of the public often raise one question: What has the Government done after all the talking? Even for something as simple as the installation of air-conditioning systems, the Government works at extremely slow turtle speed. In this regard, will the Secretary give a thought to whether free reign should be given to the departments concerned?

DAB conducted a survey a few weeks ago, which provided the basis for us to express public concerns more effectively. The survey findings are very interesting in that more than 60% of the respondents patronize public markets—so please stop saying that nobody patronizes markets anymore—but they have expressed a lot of dissatisfaction with the environmental hygiene, business diversity and cramped conditions of the markets.

On this note, do you still remember that the Government has obtained funding approval from the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council? At that time, we rose to challenges and approved the addition of one Assistant Director post in order to set up a team to study the public market policy. Therefore, to be fair, can the Secretary deliver in this respect after creating the post and obtaining funding, so as to dispel public perception that the Government faces the issue of public markets with a "turtle speed" attitude?

Link Real Estate Investment Trust is getting awful and troublesome. Would the Secretary counterbalance it a little bit? I see that the Secretary is nodding now, which I thank him for, but I hope he can further supervise and urge the departments concerned to speed up the process. He has to speak out, otherwise the Chief Executive has to deal with it herself. Firstly, should the markets be modernized as soon as possible? Secondly, some model markets should be established. The installation of air-conditioning systems has been on the table for almost two decades. I remember having been discussing it since I was a District Council member, up till today when I am a directly elected Legislative Council Member from Kowloon East. After so much talking, we can only conclude that there is "nothing to write home about". I very much hope that the Secretary will do us a favour by following up on this matter and adopting again the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, which he is currently not using, on matters related to public markets. The Under Secretary once told me: "We are now dealing with the issue having regard to the community's
demand and actual circumstances. Do not worry too much. The problem is solvable." However, to be fair, up till now we have not yet seen any good development.

This debate session is dedicated to the policy area of "improving people's livelihood". I very much hope that the Secretary will keep these words in mind. I often stress: "One can never be the best, but always do better." If the Government is serious about its work, I think it should be committed to doing things right and fast, so that the public really find "something to write home about".

President, that concludes my speech for this session. I will further put forward my views on housing and land in the forthcoming fourth session. Thank you, President.

MS ALICE MAK (in Cantonese): President, in this debate session, I do not have much to say except a few points which must be raised.

First of all, Mr Wilson OR just mentioned that he was very pleased that new markets would be built, but regarding the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") … As proposed in this year's Policy Address, new markets will be built in Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung. While this should be a piece of pleasing news, there are problems with the selected locations and the existing market facilities. One example is that the two proposed new markets, as we can see, will not have cooked food centres. Another example is that the market to be built in Tin Shui Wai can actually bring convenience to people living in certain parts of Tin Shui Wai only. Those who live in Tin Shui Wai North are unable to benefit from this market because it is too far away for them. They would rather take the Light Rail Transit to Tai Kiu Market in Yuen Long than going to this new market. What is worse, ancillary facilities like the much-anticipated cooked food centre is nowhere to be found in this new market. We have waited for the Government to conduct consultation on the locations of the new markets for an entire year, believing that the Government would make final decisions on the relevant locations. However, it turns out that the locations concerned have been—I hate to say this but I really have to—decided behind closed doors. The Government was smug about its self-proclaimed brilliant idea, thinking that it would be applauded by the public upon announcement. Regrettably, the truth is
that the Government simply failed to understand the local condition as well as the views of the public, thus unable to produce the most desirable outcome in the eyes of the local residents no matter how brilliant the idea is. To me, it is evident that there are problems in communication.

Communication problems, however, have been exposed not only by the two selected locations. In June, the Government indicated that it would start the programme of modernizing markets under FEHD and, again, the programme was described as brilliant. Yet, as we later found out on the Internet, the monthly auction of vacant public market stalls has stopped since June. Upon enquiry, we learnt that all auctions of public market stalls were suspended for the implementation of market modernization, but FEHD had made no public announcement about it. Such communication practice comes with consequences which were fully reflected in the selection of locations for the two new markets. To the public, the locations concerned are not the most preferred ones as FEHD has made the decision all by itself without communicating with the public. Even for auctions, we would not have known the suspension of auctions for several months if we had not done a check online. When we further enquired when the auctions would resume, FEHD could not give a definite answer or a timetable, stating that it might be some eight or ten years later, or two years later at the earliest. There is simply no timetable or concrete planning. Nor does it have sufficient communication with the districts and society. Handling the matter in such a way, FEHD has turned the building of new markets—something which should have been welcomed and applauded—into what the Government considers brilliant but the public think otherwise. So, I really hope that the Secretary can relay our views to colleagues of FEHD, urging them to strengthen their communication with the public to gain some understanding of the districts and the public views.

Secondly, I wish to talk about the long-discussed project of District Health Centre ("DHC"), something said to be brilliant also. To begin with, there is great anticipation in Kwai Tsing District Council of which I am a member. Everyone hopes that this DHC will provide substantive services in various areas, such as outpatient consultation, physiotherapy, etc. However, the Government seems to have other plans. So, I think the Government really has to give some serious consideration to the project and stop being smug about its self-proclaimed brilliant ideas, or it will just fail to deliver what the local community needs most in the end.
Moreover, the purpose of building DHC is to carry out preventive work, in the hope of preventing members of the public from getting ill so that they will not require medical treatments. Actually, we have a suggestion for the Government, which we have also mentioned in the panel meetings. At present, there is a growing tendency of early incidence of stroke, and atrial fibrillation screening is a way to tackle it. We hope that DHC will provide this kind of screening services in the future. As DHC is set up for the prevention of diseases, we hope that services such as atrial fibrillation screening which is for the prevention of stroke can be added to the array of services provided by DHC, thereby reducing people's need to seek medical attention in hospitals due to illnesses. After all, the more the patients seeking medical attention in hospitals, the greater the pressure on the public health care system. So, this is what I hope DHC can do.

Furthermore, in respect of primary health care development, we hope that the Secretary will go further than only establishing DHC and formulate an overall plan for primary health care, especially manpower planning, which is of great importance. It is our hope that the Government will increase health care manpower in the long run and will not neglect the frontline supporting staff in the Hospital Authority ("HA"). Despite the Government's repeated promises to improve HA's manpower planning, these staff members have gained no benefit at all, moreover, their morale is declining. The underlying reason is that under the complex personnel system of HA, junior supporting staff are employed on poor terms and conditions, which have seen no improvement over the years. When other problems are improved but theirs are not, how can appropriate services be provided to patients?

Another issue is dental services, which was touched upon by some Members just now. I believe the Secretary is well aware of the "8020" target, which means that an elderly person should maintain at least 20 healthy teeth at the age of 80 as the World Health Organization advocated, but shame on Hong Kong because we fail to reach this standard. So, I think the Government should make multi-pronged efforts. On the one hand, it should increase the training places for dental care personnel so that there will be sufficient dentists; and on the other hand, it should consider introducing elderly dental care vouchers if it is unable to vigorously develop dental services in the public health care sector. This is actually a point that has been discussed for a long time and an idea that the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions ("FTU") has proposed for many years. I hope that the Government will consider it seriously. As found in the survey we conducted, some elderly people have not seen a dentist for four years and will not see one even if they have toothache because of the high expenses. Perhaps the
Government will then respond that they can use the Elderly Health Care Vouchers issued to them for dental care services. However, the Government should understand what people think. Just imagine the case of an elderly person with Health Care Vouchers amounting to $2,000. Well, the amount has been increased to $3,000 this year, and I hope to see another increase next year. Will he or she prefer spending several hundred dollars for regular dental check-ups at a dentist, or saving the Vouchers for times when he or she is ill? Hence, the Health Care Vouchers will not be helpful to the promotion of elderly dental health. If the Government really wishes to promote elderly dental health and to attain the "8020" target, it really needs to introduce elderly dental care vouchers for the elderly.

Furthermore, with regard to the support services for the ethnic minorities, FTU published the policy agenda on support for the ethnic minorities last year, putting forward some 40 policy proposals. We are glad that the Government has been receptive to our proposals in this policy agenda. For example, the Ethnic Minorities Steering Committee has been set up under the coordination of the Chief Secretary for Administration; and interpretation service will be enhanced. As proposed in this year's Policy Address, starting from the 2019-2020 school year, the Government will provide tiered subsidies to kindergartens participating in the kindergarten education scheme and admitting non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students. We consider it a welcome initiative because in the past, the sum of subsidy granted by the Government to kindergartens admitting eight or more NCS students remained the same whether there were 8, 18, 28, or 38 NCS students. And if the number of NCS students admitted was only seven, there would not be any subsidy for the kindergarten at all. But now, tiered subsidies will be introduced, meaning that the more NCS students a kindergarten admits, the more subsidies it can receive. We think this is a desirable approach and continuous improvement should be made. Meanwhile, since kindergarten is where children first come into contact with society and begin their education, we think the Government should keep promoting the curriculum of teaching Chinese language as a second language in kindergartens. Kindergartens should also be encouraged to employ more teachers and take on people of ethnic minorities as teaching assistant, so as to provide NCS students with a quality environment for learning Chinese language.

I so submit in this session. Thank you, President.
MR ANDREW WAN (in Cantonese): President, in this debate, I will focus on a number of related areas, including the three major areas concerning the public market problems that many Members are concerned about, environmental hygiene, especially rodent control, and labour matters.

President, the Democratic Party has always supported the Government in building new public markets. On the one hand, they meet the shopping needs of the people, on the other hand, they can tackle the issue of property hegemony by Link Real Estate Investment Trust ("Link REIT"), one of the "three big mountains" the Chief Executive Carrie LAM promised to deal with before she took office. Some Members have asked the Government to buy back the Link REIT. The Democratic Party does not oppose this option. However, we think that the faster and more effective way is for the Government to fulfil its due responsibility to resume the practice before 2009 and adopt the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines to build public markets on a population basis. This is the simplest, transparent and scientific method. The general public are not very clear about the planning criteria. In simple terms, there should be one public market stall for every 55 to 65 households. In other words, there should be about 40 to 45 stalls per 10,000 people.

Unfortunately, the Link REIT was successfully in its second attempt to be listed in 2005. As I have mentioned, the Government has coincidently tightened the number of public markets since 2009. Therefore, I think that the reason why the Link REIT can assume hegemony in today's Hong Kong is the result of the Government's cessation of building public markets in accordance with the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines. This practice of the Government has groomed the Link REIT's continuous expansion, which has led to an imbalance between market supply and demand. Why do I point this out instead of others? The reason is that the Government is still only making superficial efforts. Although the Policy Address has mentioned the implementation of a small number of commitments, such as the construction of the market at the lower level of the commercial building in Area 6 outside Tung Chung MTR Station next to Tung Chung Estate, President, it is unfortunate that the Government has not effectively fulfilled all its commitments.

As I pointed out earlier, the Government should make decisions based on objective criteria instead of honouring a little bit of its commitments because of the strong voice of the residents of Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung. Such top-down approach, which does not follow rules and criteria, is very poor. This
should not be the practice adopted by the Government. For example, Tin Shui Wai has a population of nearly 300,000. According to the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, at least 1,160 to 1,305 stalls are required. Based on the current average of the 99 public markets of large, medium and small sizes, there should be at least 3 large markets or 10 small markets in Tin Shui Wai if the demand of the district is to be met. The situation in Tung Chung is also very similar. The population of the district will eventually increase to 220,000. Therefore, at least two large markets or seven small markets are required. However, the markets being built by Tin Fuk Road in Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung MTR Station are only small markets.

President, if that is the case, I believe that even after the above mentioned markets are completed, the problem is still unresolved. Therefore, the Democratic Party solemnly demands that the Government should not adopt the tactic resembling "squeezing toothpaste" when fulfilling its commitments. Instead, it should take a really effective way to solve the problem by first, considering buying back the Link REIT, and second, providing the necessary facilities according to the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines again, this is even more important.

The Policy Address this year also mentions that this year's Budget has set aside $2 billion for the implementation of the Market Modernisation Programme and $8 billion for the provision of additional facilities, including the construction of public facilities and markets, covering a wide area. However, as long as we do some calculation, we will understand that the $2 billion is simply not enough as there are a number of market improvement projects. Moreover, the $8 billion is not totally dedicated to building additional markets. In view of this, how can we believe that the Government can properly solve the relevant problems?

We expect the Government to truly honour its promises and implement the "single site, multiple use" policy. Given the shortage of land, even officials from different departments of the Government have agreed to adopt the "single site, multiple use" policy in the provision of public facilities. However, it is surprising that the Government has not yet made comprehensive plans for redeveloping old-style markets, including whether they will be redeveloped in phases. The Policy Address only mentions that the markets will be refurbished and said that it will consider the phased renovation of the existing 99 old markets. However, the Government does not seem to have planned how this will be done.
Next, I would like to discuss the issue of rodent control in the area of municipal health under the purview of Prof Sophia CHAN, Secretary for Food and Health. In the past year or so, in view of the seriousness of environmental hygiene and rodent problems, I, together with my colleagues and superintendents of the Food and Environmental Hygiene, have inspected various districts in the New Territories West. However, looking at the entire Policy Address, only paragraph 249 mentions the rodent problem. The Government has stated that it has strengthened cross-departmental coordination and collaboration on this issue. The work has to be sustained and it depends on the support and cooperation of every citizen. President, this statement is too vague. Of course, we know that the Government has implemented relevant campaigns. However, according to my observation, the authorities still adopt old methods only, such as using rodent cages and rat poisons, to deal with rodents. However, everyone knows that rats have exceptional survival ability and are highly adaptable. According to some rodent experts, some mice have developed resistance to rat poisons, and even if the prescription is changed occasionally, its efficacy against rodents is still very limited.

At the recent policy briefing, I made recommendations to the Department. New Zealand has adopted a new method of killing rats by means of air pressure. The bait is first used to attract the mouse. When it approaches, it will be sucked into a special device and will be hit by high pressure and get killed in a short time with a more humane approach. This method works well and can reduce the "mice density" from 73% to 43% within two months and to zero in one year. I think this method is very desirable. The Department promised to consider trials in the community, but during my further inquiry, they seemed to say merely that they would consider and study whether this new method could be tested in the pilot areas. This is clearly a case of "language trick". However, I really hope that the Bureau will really consider our well-intended and constructive suggestions. This is not a new thing, not about landing on the moon, not to mention that China has already done so, right? This is no big deal. It has been adopted by other countries and it has been very effective. Therefore, I think that the districts, including the hardest hit areas in the New Territories West, can also be considered for trial. I hope the Secretary can consider this suggestion and give everyone a chance to see how it works.
As regards medical care, I will not discuss too much because Dr Helena Wong will speak on this subject later. I will only briefly talk about the New Territories West which I am more concerned about now. The situation in this area is more serious. Compared with the Asian or European cities at the same level as Hong Kong, the ratio of doctors to population in Hong Kong is still low. I believe the Secretary is well aware of this fact. The ratio of doctors to population in Hong Kong is only 1.9, Japan is 2.3, the United Kingdom 3.7, the United States 3.3, and Australia 4. In addition, the rate of wastage among doctors in Hong Kong is the highest, especially for physicians who have a turnover rate of 10%, with an average wastage rate of 5.4%. I believe that when the Government is unable to meet the needs of the community for medical staff, our medical services will be difficult to improve.

Of course, the Policy Address also mentions some distant promises, but I think that until now, the public are still very much looking forward to specific details. I hope that the Secretary can speak more in this Council in the future. In particular, she has to explain the $300 billion earmarked in the Budget for the 2018-2019 Budget. In addition to the current 10-year hospital development plan, the reserve will also be used for the second 10-year hospital development plan. In fact, we have been waiting for a long time. I hope the Government is not just saying without acting.

Of course, we understand that it is a long and time-consuming task and cannot be done in one go. It is for this reason that we hope that the Administration will tell this Council specific plans and measures so that the public can have a clear concept. At the same time, we hope that the Administration can expedite the progress. The Policy Address also mentions that the second 10-year hospital development plan for the next decade will "largely meet the projected service demand until 2036". For those of us who know how to read government documents, we can see at a glance that this expression is a bit far-fetched. Perhaps I am overly worried, so I hope that the Secretary can give more explanation about this in the future.
Finally, Deputy President, I would like to spend a few minutes talking about labour matters. As regards the Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF"), I will not say too much because I have stated my position on many occasions and I only hope that the Government will implement the abolition of the offsetting arrangement under MPF System as soon as possible. Although the Government is now making "extra input" again, I have seen many Members who represent the business sector still gnash their teeth and think that the conditions proposed by the Government are not good enough. I do not know how much the "extra input" will be when they eventually accept it. In fact, we have made concessions. We still remember that we asked Secretary Dr LAW Chi-kwong to set up a "fund pool" in the early days. But this is about the rights of wage earners. Therefore, we would rather be pragmatic to avoid procrastination. In many cases, when the Government wants to get things done, it will be quick, ferocious and accurate. An example is the land and housing problems, which I will discuss in the next session. But I do not know why it is always procrastinating when dealing with issues about MPF. For the sake of the rights of all the wage earners, I hope that the Government can be decisive and that the business sector can refrain from obstructing. Perhaps they still have other options, but I think that any option must take into account the overall interests of the community and should not let all interests go to the business side. Otherwise, the burden will be very heavy on one party but very light on the other, which is difficult for the community to accept.

Deputy President, I would like to discuss two points on labour protection. The first is about work injuries. The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge has been full of controversies recently with the recent overcrowding of tourists in Tung Chung. Many Members have made suggestions and hope that the Government will handle it properly. However, looking back at the past two years during the construction of entire bridge, this Council discussed the issue continuously. The number of serious industrial accidents in Hong Kong in 2017 was as high as 160, resulting in the death of 42 workers. The number of casualties was extremely high, only one spot behind the 43 deaths of 2000. Unfortunately, many industrial casualties happened on the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, which were widely reported by the media. The general feeling in the labour sector is that the opening ceremony of the bridge, officiated by President XI Jinping and the Chief Executive, is of course very happy, but the labour sector, including representatives of the pro-establishment and the democrats, are unanimously saddened by the casualties of workers. The
representative of the industry even called it the "Naihe Bridge" (the legendary demarcation between life and death). I believe the Secretary has also heard about it. This is not only an irony but also a call. I hope the Government can make improvements in this regard.

What worries us is that the Policy Address says, "the Government will strengthen the processing of employees' compensation claims with enhanced Claims Support Services". It is talking about the compensation for work-related injuries. In other words, the employers cannot shirk their duties. If there are casualties, they must make compensation or give more support to the families of the employees concerned. However, this is only a passive post-accident remedy. We hope that the Government can do more to prevent accidents, including the implementation of effective deterrent measures. Taking project delays as an example, the engineering sector knows that the delays in construction are subject to fines, which may amount to millions or even tens of million dollars. The longer the delay is, the more fines will be imposed. For contractors, money may be more important than life. Employee compensation may involve one million or several million dollars only, while the compensation to be paid to the Government will exceed this amount, right? Therefore, I have told the Secretary at the relevant Panel meeting that we hope the Government will increase the maximum penalty for employers when reviewing the relevant legislation, including the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance, to protect workers' interests, instead of making remedies retrospectively each time after an accident.

Finally, I want to discuss the outsourcing system. Deputy President, this Policy Address has undoubtedly made a bit of progress. Secretary Dr LAW Chi-kwong leads an inter-departmental working group to review the outsourcing system of the entire Government. This time he has included the weighting of wage level in the tender documents. However, this is not enough. We hope that wage level, which should account for no less than 25%, will be included in the criterion for technical assessment to protect the interests of workers.

Another suggestion of ours is that the Government should not only encourage its contractors to provide contractual gratuities for non-technical staff such as cleaners and security guards, but also require the relevant contractors to pay severance pay and stipulate the penalty to be imposed on the contractors should they evade severance payment.
I appreciate positively the Government's willingness to conduct a review this time. To a certain extent, this is tantamount to the Government's acknowledgment of its mistake. In other words, it admits the mistakes of previous Governments and acknowledges that the past "effective" and "money-saving" practices were actually based on the exploitation of workers' rights. The Government thought that it was a good thing to save public money but such practice was eventually criticized. For example, in the case of outsourced cleaners in the Hoi Lai Estate under the Housing Department, a labour dispute between the contractor and the cleaners emerged. In the end, the Government had to get involved and pay the money to settle the matter. After making a wide circle, it had to make the compensation eventually. I hope that the Secretary can learn the lesson.

Although the Government is conducting a review, what the Policy Address mentions is only directional encouragement. I would like to mention another example of a complaint about exploitation of employees: the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") exploits female swimming pool cleaners. Without adjusting the workload, their daily working time was deducted by 15 minutes, resulting in a deduction of 15 minutes of wages per day. In other words, their wages were reduced by five or six hundred dollars per month. For senior government officials or the Chief Executive, a few hundred dollars is not a problem, and the Chief Executive once gave $500 to a beggar. However, for the grass roots, $500 could cover the expenses for school books or transport of their children. I have made a complaint to LCSD and I hope the Secretary can have a look.

Why do I mention these things in the debate on the Motion of Thanks? This seems ironic. On the one hand, I applaud you for choosing the right direction. On the other hand, some government departments are "demolishing the director's signboard". When you are conducting a review, they "demolish your signboard" on the other side. It is really unreasonable. We not only hope that the Government can formulate a perfect policy but also hope that it can be implemented. A Policy Address which is written perfectly but cannot be implemented will not benefit the public.

Deputy President, my speech on this session ends here. Thank you.
MR HUI CHI-FUNG (in Cantonese): Deputy President, I wish to focus on issues concerning children's affairs, families and women in this session since they are closely related to education and social welfare policies.

In bringing forth our views in respect of the policy address and policy agenda, we focused on kindergarten education and family-friendly policies and hoped that the Government would make greater effort to provide assistance to families and children. The Chief Executive announced in the policy address that under the kindergarten education policy starting from the 2017-2018 school year, the amount of government resources allocated would increase substantially to improve the remuneration for kindergarten teachers, thereby alleviating the burden of parents and enhancing the quality of teaching. However, it is necessary for the Government to clearly explain to the public the truth behind the alleviation of burden on parents. In fact, only those parents whose children attend half-day kindergarten can benefit from the policy because their financial burden will be lessened.

The financial burden of parents can barely be relieved under the Government's subsidy policy for whole-day ("WD") kindergartens and long whole-day ("LWD") kindergartens, hardly comparable with those whose children attend half-day kindergartens. At present, 85% of local half-day kindergartens do not collect school fees but only about 65 WD kindergartens offer free WD programmes, accounting for only 10% of those kindergartens participating in the Free Quality Kindergarten Education Scheme ("the Scheme"). Apart from collecting school fees, the rates of increase in school fees of many WD kindergartens for this year are alarmingly significant. Among those WD kindergartens applying for increasing their school fees, more than half proposed an increase by folds. With a widening gap in school fees between WD kindergartens and half-day kindergartens, how many grass roots or not well-to-do families will still choose WD kindergartens for their children? If parents send their children to half-day kindergartens because no school fees are charged there, who are supposed to take care of their children before or after school then?

On child-minding services, this year's policy address indicates that the Government only sticks to the initiatives proposed in last year's policy address, namely to increase aided places by phases in the 300 standalone child care centres ("CCCs") in 4 districts to provide full-day services in kindergartens-cum-CCCs for children aged between two and three. Originally, the Government had planned to provide a total of 148 additional aided places together in Kwun Tong
District and North District in September this year; 100 places in Sha Tin District in March 2019; and 50 places in Kwai Tsing District in the first quarter of 2020. As set out in this year's policy address, however, the plan has been postponed and only until 2019-2020 will the increase in the numbers of places be materialized in Kwun Tong District, North District and Sha Tin District, whereas the timetable for increasing aided places in Kwai Tsing District has yet to be finalized. In other words, even if 300 places are added to the existing 747 places in the aided standalone CCCs, it is still inadequate to address the current acute shortage of child care services. Many parents are still in great difficulties.

The proposals put forth in this year's policy address have failed to meet the expectations in the community for setting up one CCC in each district throughout the territory, particularly when there are no government-aided CCCs in Kowloon West as well as the Hong Kong and Islands Region. I think it is unfair to the parents and children living in these areas since their needs have been neglected. The monthly fees charged by aided standalone CCCs range from $4,000 to $6,000-odd, with a median of about $5,500, which is beyond the means of those low-income families. Thus, we asked the Government to provide more financial support to low-income families. We expect that the Government can discern the demand for child care services in the community and examine closely the relevant figures and needs concerning child care services in various districts throughout the territory. It should compile statistics on the waiting time for various child care services in each district so as to correspondingly increase the number of aided places for each child care service area in each district.

As education policy also concerns children's affairs, I noted in particular that the controversy over TSA has not yet been resolved in fact. Although the Government seldom mentions it while claiming that the situation had been reviewed, and that many Members no longer speak of it, excessive drills for students are still seen in some schools in preparation for TSA. In addition, the problem of heavy homework persists with no signs of improvement. Therefore, we question why the policy address has not suggested that the Education Bureau should specify in its guidelines issued for secondary and primary schools that they should reduce the amount of homework for students and should not arrange excessive drills for students in preparation for tests and examinations.

Will the Government consider setting out "whether students are subject to excessive drills" as one of the major considerations in school inspections conducted by the Education Bureau for assessing a school's governance and
teaching approach? Besides, my bigger hope is that the authorities will promote among secondary and primary schools (in particular P1-3 classes) the practice in which students complete all coursework at school within the same day without the need to do any homework. These are major policy goals and issues that really matter to local school children. There are already a lot of discussions in the community and this Council had also discussed such issues during last legislative session. However, I am disappointed by the Government's failure to make any response in this regard during today's policy debate.

Deputy President, I will save time for the next debate session to speak in detail in response to the initiatives proposed in the policy address regarding the environment (in particular the proposed artificial islands in East Lantau), overall conservation and development.

That is all I have to say for this session. Thank you, Deputy President.

MR STEVEN HO (in Cantonese): Deputy President, in this debate session, on behalf of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong ("DAB"), I will speak on the matters related to the agriculture and fisheries industries as well as food safety and environmental hygiene. In summary, this Policy Address mainly focuses on the Lantau Tomorrow Vision and the Land Sharing Pilot Scheme. Of course, the former has drawn much attention in the discussion and I believe that Secretary WONG Kam-sing is also under tremendous pressure. However, is the agriculture and fisheries constituency extremely against the reclamation programme? In fact, an overwhelming majority of fishermen are waiting for the Government's next course of action. But the Government has to tell the agriculture and fisheries industries that after such programmes are launched, how the industries will be affected and what mitigation measures the Government will put in place. At many different meetings of the Legislative Council in the past, we have actually expressed our opinions to the Government. Much to our disappointment, we cannot find any mitigation measures or even direction in this Policy Address, and the people in the industries are highly dissatisfied with it.

It is fortunate that the debate on the Policy Address today is only a gesture of courtesy to show our gratitude to the Chief Executive's hard work, and we are not supposed to vote on each item or measure mentioned in it. Since there are
indeed many initiatives which are of benefit to the public and agreeable to the people in the industries and the community, as a gesture of appreciation, we will support this Motion of Thanks.

I reiterate that the Government of the Special Administrative Region ("SAR") must make some planning so that various departments can be coordinated in dealing with development planning and marine works, rather than letting each department work in its own way. Let me briefly illustrate here. At the Legislative Council meetings in the past, when I asked the Secretary for Development some questions about the agriculture and fisheries industries, he would say that they should be handled by Secretary Prof Sophia CHAN, or Secretary KO Wing-man in the last term of Government. However, when I approached Secretary KO Wing-man, for certain issues unrelated to him, he would say that I should approach the Development Bureau. I was treated like a "human football", being kicked around by them. And the issues concerned still drag on.

When the Government unveiled the Lantau Tomorrow plan in such a comprehensive way with the ambit of each department clearly marked and even with the boundary lines of the area of reclamation for us to discuss, it is hardly convincing that the Government does not know how serious the agriculture and fisheries industries will be affected. I hope that the SAR Government can learn this lesson. Even though I support the Motion of Thanks on this year's Policy Address, if the impact of the SAR Government's proposals on the industries is too heavy for them to accept, I will not hesitate to oppose the Government's proposals. If the Government wants to get one more vote of support, I hope that it can show its sincerity. I do not agree with Chief Executive Mrs Carrie LAM in saying that those against the reclamation programme do not have good justifications. Yes, they do have good justifications. I hope that the Government can clearly differentiate public opinions and messages. What we wish to raise is not sloganeering opposition but specific problems of immediate concern to us, because if we cannot resolve these problems, many fishermen will be forced to lose their livelihoods. When they move onshore, it is difficult for them to engage in other occupations. The Government is going to render the fishermen's work expertise and production skills that they have built up in their whole lives useless. When these fishermen move onshore, will they be asked to do the dishwashing jobs or fight for these positions with other people? This is unrealistic. I hope that Secretary WONG Kam-sing and Secretary Prof Sophia CHAN can understand our problems.
Some reporters ask me whether the constituency that I represent is the most affected by reclamation. They also ask for my views about the decline of the industries concerned. Reclamation is not the only reason and there are actually many other problems. The existing system also has many problems. Let me first put aside … I have to discuss the issues concerning the fishing industry, because the Policy Address particularly mentions fish culture zones. The Food and Health Bureau and the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD") have been looking for ways of transforming the fishing industry. It was a benevolent policy of LEUNG Chun-ying, the former Chief Executive, to set up the Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund a few years ago, and the Government has also conducted some studies on extending and increasing marine fish culture zones. Nevertheless, under the premise of increasing marine fish culture zones and setting up a fund, what we need to study are the exceedingly outdated agriculture and fisheries policies and ordinances, in which some provisions have not been amended for decades.

For instance, the Marine Fish Culture Ordinance has been subject to minor amendments after major amendments in 1980. It was last amended in 2002, at least 16 years ago, to the effect that Marine Fish Culture Licence holders are allowed to apply for conducting recreational fishing activities on mariculture rafts. In other words, Hong Kong citizens are allowed to go fishing on mariculture rafts. The Ordinance was amended as such because there was an outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome ("SARS") back then and the public had limited places to go. After the amendment, the public could then go fishing on mariculture rafts, and the business was lucrative that year. But since this amendment, there have been no other amendments to the laws or the Ordinance concerned to catch up with the global trend of marine culture. In fact, recreational fishing activities have brought rich profits in the United States and the value of output is at least 13 times more than that of commercial fishing. Why does Hong Kong not put some efforts in this aspect?

In Hong Kong, it is surprising that the provisions related to fishing on mariculture rafts only exist in the Marine Fish Culture Ordinance. This is basically fine, as Hong Kong citizens are still allowed to go fishing on mariculture rafts. However, according to the Ordinance, at least half of the fish culture zone must be used for fish culture purpose. Then should it be used for fish culture activities or for recreational fishing activities? It is difficult for fishermen to handle both kinds of activities. Hence, we have been suggesting amending and sorting out some ordinances so as to minimize conflicts between mariculturists and recreational fishing operators.
Why are there conflicts between mariculturists and recreational fishing operators? First of all, when people are conducting recreational fishing activities, there will be noises which will disturb fish. A noisy environment will disturb the fish. When the fish are disturbed, they will become skinny and will not gain weight even after being fed. When the fish are skinny, they cannot be sold. Secondly, Hong Kong tourists will also pollute the waters. When they are fishing, they will throw baits into the waters to attract the fish and the baits will pollute the seabed, thus affecting water quality. I hope that Secretary WONG Kam-sing and Secretary Prof Sophia CHAN can understand this situation.

Besides, I want to highlight that some regulations are unreasonably strict. One example is the colour of the sheds on mariculture rafts for keeping watch, which cannot be red or yellow but must be brown or green. Besides, the materials must be light-proof. Sometimes I need natural sunlight when culturing fish fry with new fish culture technology, but it took nine months for my application to be approved. How can our fishermen make any progress? When they see how difficult the situation is, they will really look for other directions or maintain some very traditional fish culture techniques, and this is not beneficial to the industry.

When various countries in the world are subsidizing the agricultural industry, I surely have considered whether Hong Kong needs to conduct a review to study the formulation of subsidy law, and whether Hong Kong needs to provide any subsidy to primary industries. As I have noticed, our country has a policy on the three issues of agriculture, the countryside and farmers, while the United States is frequently subsidizing the agricultural industry. But the Hong Kong Government said that when Hong Kong joined the World Trade Organization ("WTO"), it was clearly written that there would be no subsidy to the agricultural industry. It is basically fine, but the problem is that some subsidized agricultural products are being imported incessantly into Hong Kong in a barrier-free manner from other places in the name of free trade. I will illustrate with a simple example. How much does a chilled chicken cost? It is over $30. But the cost in rearing a chicken is much more than $30-odd. When I was in the Mainland, I asked how a chicken could be sold at such a cheap price of $30-odd. A chicken needs to be processed, defeathered, chilled and then transported to Hong Kong. How can a chilled chicken be sold at $30-odd only? The answer is in the provision of subsidies. At a wholesale market in Hong Kong, a chilled chicken can never be sold at this price. I thus hope that the SAR
Government can pay attention to this situation. In the example that I just mentioned, a chilled chicken can be sold at $32 at a retail stall and the cost covers rearing, transportation, renting a stall and the wages of the stall keeper. In Hong Kong, why is buying a live chicken so expensive? Because in Hong Kong, it is unable for us to sell at a competitive price and we can only rely more on quality. But in reality, even the chicken rearing industry is also under tremendous pressure as the existing chicken farms cannot be relocated.

As far as I know, the SAR Government is conducting a review on the amendment to the Ordinance concerned to study the possibility of allowing relocation of chicken farms. But even if the Ordinance is amended, are there places for relocation? At the beginning, we proposed to set up an integrated agricultural park in which there would be both livestock rearing and agricultural activities. Nevertheless, in either Phase 1 or Phase 2 of the Agricultural Park launched later by the SAR Government, no trace of the integrated agricultural park concept could be found. I hope that the authorities can reconsider this plan or provide a direction to livestock farmers, because even if the Ordinance is amended, the purpose can still not be achieved if there is no land to relocate the chicken farms.

I now turn back to the fishing industry. Earlier on, I mentioned about the reclamation issue and expressed our discontent against the Ordinance. I would like to discuss the registration system for local fishing vessels launched in 2012 by AFCD. In 2012, the Fisheries Protection Ordinance (Cap. 171) was amended by the Government with a very special provision to the effect that a fisherman was required to have his vessel registered under the registration system for local fishing vessels in order to obtain a capture certificate, or the Certificate of Registration of Local Fishing Vessel to be exact, before 14 June 2013. After the deadline, no application would be processed. This was because the authorities wanted to restrict fishing activities and they needed to know the number of local fishing vessels and their engine power. This approach is correct.

However, in order to apply for this Certificate of Registration of Local Fishing Vessel, on the day of registration, the vessel owner must have a valid Operating Licence. To the general public in Hong Kong, this requirement is also correct, because only a qualified vessel is able to obtain a licence and an unqualified vessel should not be issued a certificate. However, due to insufficient analysis and coordination between AFCD and the Marine Department ("MD"), the fishermen face difficulties in the process of obtaining the Operating
Licences. How to get a valid Operating Licence? First of all, we need to go through vessel survey, as we have to make sure that the vessel is safe before a licence can be issued. But which department is responsible for the survey? It is MD. Before the Lamma Island incident happened on 1 October 2012, MD laid down a requirement that the surveys have to be conducted at specific locations, which may be in Central or Tai Po, and are scheduled only once every month or even every three months at certain locations. If a fisherman falls ill or his vessel is suddenly damaged by a natural disaster on that day so that he is absent from that survey arrangement, he has to queue up for the survey again. Hence, the Operating Licences of some fishermen will expire under many circumstances, and they can only be renewed after the vessels have gone through the surveys. But due to the lack of coordination between the government departments, some fishermen are unable to apply for a Certificate of Registration of Local Fishing Vessel issued by AFCD. At present, there are a few hundred cases on appeal, and I hope that Secretary Prof Sophia CHAN can pay more attention to that.

Besides, I would also like to discuss the issue about operating a vessel, to which many people may not notice. The certificate for operating a vessel by a fisherman (or Local Certificate of Competency) is greatly different from the licence for driving a vehicle on land. A driving licence for a vehicle is renewable every 10 years. It is no big deal if a driver forgets to renew his licence, because he can still apply to the Transport Department for renewal within three years after the expiry date. In regard to the Local Certificate of Competency issued to a fisherman, it is basically for life. For instance, I got my Local Certificate of Competency at the age of 20, and I only need to renew it at the age of 65.

On my 65th birthday, after the birthday song is sung, my certificate for operating the vessel will be invalid. It is right, the certificate will be formally invalid on my 65th birthday. And then I will ask whether my certificate can be renewed automatically. But the answer is in the negative. I will need to attend another training course before taking the test again. In this example, in the 45 years from the age of 20 to 65, the fisherman is not used to renewing the certificate. On his 65th birthday, you tell him that his career as a fisherman has come to an end because he does not have a valid certificate to operate a vessel. In fact, a very limited number of one-off exemptions was granted some time ago, with the applications personally approved by the Director of Marine after
exercising his discretion. Nonetheless, there are fishermen who reach the age of 65 every year. Can I take a pile of applications for exemption and say, "These are the applications from the fishermen who reach the age of 65 this year. Could the Director give exemption?" I do not think that we can abuse the discretion of the Director in this way. Instead, the Government should coordinate better for this industry and do better publicity work for the arrangement for the renewal of the certificates for operating vessels.

In fact, I have vigorously done some publicity work, calling upon the fishermen to renew their certificates at the age of 64, but the Government has not done much related publicity work. Since MD has a fishermen database, I thus ask MD whether it can send letters to those fishermen who are approaching the age of 65, reminding them of the need to renew their vessel operating certificates. Members may be surprised to know that the telephone numbers registered by some fishermen with MD only have seven digits. How many years have the telephone numbers in Hong Kong been changed to eight digits? They were changed to eight digits when I was a primary student, but now the telephone numbers registered by some fishermen with MD only have seven digits. How long has the database not been updated? MD even fails to manage its systemic data properly. I suggest that Secretary Prof Sophia CHAN should review the situation and introduce the related policy so that the genuine fishermen who are unable to obtain the capture certificates due to various reasons can be issued with the certificates concerned.

The Policy Address also mentions the plans concerning the Agricultural Park and the fish culture zones. In order to go to the fish culture zones, we also need to operate a vessel. Otherwise, can we go to the mariculture rafts on foot? This is a big question. In fact, there are many other aspects about the agriculture and fisheries industries worthy of discussion.

The Government introduces the Lantau Tomorrow plan. If the Government really has to put this into practice, has it got any measures to mitigate the difficulties faced by the fishing industry? Can Hong Kong have a base for fisheries development or a fishing base? Given the large area involved in the reclamation proposal, can the Government offer more assistance to the fishermen so that the fishermen can have other modes of operation or more economic activities to make a living, thus reducing their reliance on fishing operations? If the fishermen must go onshore, can more kinds of economic activities be allowed in that area to help them make a living? This issue must be considered.
At the last Chief Executive's Question and Answer Session, the Chief Executive pointed out that allocation of land for a particular industry was a very significant decision and she had to be very cautious. Since the area of reclamation proposed by the Government was as much as 1,700 hectares, if it really wants to set up a base for fisheries development in order to give fishermen an opportunity to switch to other modes of operation, the Government can actually reclaim 1,701 or 1,702 hectares of land, with the additional 1 or 2 hectares of land being allocated for the setting up of a base for fisheries development. But I fail to see any direction from the Government in this aspect.

Let me return to the question that I mentioned at the very beginning. Are all the fishermen against the Government's reclamation proposal? So it seems. In fact, the Government should first find out clearly why the fishermen are against its reclamation proposal. This is due to the fact that the Government has not given them a way out in any of its measures. I thus hope that the SAR Government will exercise caution in either its reclamation project or the Land Sharing Pilot Scheme. In respect of the Land Sharing Pilot Scheme, it also has its problems. The Government is now inviting the people concerned to submit plans, and is in fact expediting their process in the acquisition of agricultural land and the change of land use. Anyway, I do not have too much time discussing this issue today. I just hope that the SAR Government can pay particular attention to this.

Since Secretary WONG Kam-sing is here, I want to reiterate one point. At present, many people are still spoiling agricultural land and engaging in fly-tipping activities, but the authorities have been ineffective in taking enforcement actions. Many farmers say that the Environmental Protection Department ("EPD") does not offer much help. The farmers have called EPD, asking it to send some officers to handle the situation, but the officers only went there a few weeks later. The officers once said that they would arrest the people concerned and asked the farmers to provide the licence plate numbers of these people. If a farmer sees them, he actually will want to catch them red-handed. But these people are usually big and stout or may have tattoos on their bodies, how can an old farmer overcome them? Is he supposed to risk his life fighting with them with his hoe? This is not feasible.

Therefore, even though with the legislation in place, the Government must also take into account the practical problems and feasibility of law enforcement. This is just like the frequent illegal fishing problem after the trawl ban was
imposed. The Government has imposed the trawl ban but is unable to catch those people involved in illegal fishing. The legislation has been made, but what people is it regulating? It is regulating the law-abiding Hong Kong citizens. In regard to the "bad children", the Government is unable to regulate them. This pie of the Government is meant for Hong Kong, but it is now eaten by the bad guys. Will those affected have grievances against the SAR Government? The answer is definitely in the positive.

I have spoken a lot about issues concerning the agriculture and fisheries industries, and I really do not have much speaking time left. I will discuss some issues felt more strongly by most members of the public. They may not notice some problems relating to the sea or agricultural land, but can directly feel the impact of many environment hygiene and food safety problems and thus may resonate better with my views.

The Policy Address suggests applying modern technologies to improve municipal services, including the introduction of machines and automation for trial use in street cleansing. One example is the 24 solar-powered compacting refuse bins ("compacting bins") purchased by the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") with $690,000 this year and they are placed in rural areas.

However, as we mentioned at the last meeting of the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene, the function of these compacting bins is really very mediocre. While some people choose not to use them, some compacting bins are even broken. How much does a compacting bin cost? It costs $30,000 each. If spending $30,000 can really resolve a community problem, I think it is still worthwhile. However, the technology adopted is not truly high technology. The most prominent part of this device is that the compacting bin will open automatically with a wave of the user's hand, and then the refuse can be dumped through a small hole. If the fill-level has reached 70%, the refuse will be compacted through the stored solar power. What are the technical elements? They are nothing more than a sensor-activated system involving the use of solar power.

I already saw similar technologies in Hong Kong when I was 10 years old, and it is old technology with new application for these compacting bins. But the expectations from the Hong Kong people may not be as simple as that, as we expect some modes of operation which can resolve more substantial social
problems. If the resources can be deployed through digitalization and new technologies, the result may be better. For instance, if we know that the bins of a certain refuse collection point in the rural area are already overflowing with refuse, we can deploy manpower to collect the refuse earlier so that it does not need to be left in the rural area overnight. What will happen when the bins are already loaded with refuse? People will then dump the refuse beside the refuse collection point. And what problems will this bring? Apart from attracting snakes, vermin, rats and ants, that area will also become the best place for meals enjoyed by wild dogs and wild pigs, thus leading to other more serious problems. Under the existing outsourcing contracts, the dates, time and frequency of refuse collection in a week are all specified. This is an approach adopted under a fossilized system which gives rise to some social problems.

Technologies should be people-oriented to help resolve the problem of piling of refuse that we are now facing. I often complain to Mr CHAN Han-pan about the refuse problem, because he is the directly elected legislator of the district where I live. I ask him why the refuse is always piled up higher than me at the refuse collection point in my district. At a certain time every day, a grab-mounted lorry will arrive at the refuse collection point at the entrance of the village where I live to grab away the refuse, in which there are many old furniture items dumped illegally. This is under the charge of Secretary WONG Kam-sing, as improper disposal of furniture and construction waste falls within his ambit. Anyway, while the refuse is being grabbed away, the ground is usually hardly hit by the grab bucket, and thus sometimes, there is road closure for maintenance carried out by the Highways Department. In fact, the problems of fly-tipping and road closure are all attributed to the design and systemic problem of the refuse collection point. Hence, the Government must resolve the problem in a targeted approach.

This is all about the refuse collection point. Actually, the paper that I read last time mentions not only the refuse bins, but also many other systems, including mini-mechanical sweepers. But the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department ("EMSD") has not issued too many licences in regard to mini-mechanical sweepers. Application for licence from EMSD is required for any mechanical device. Riding Segways on the Mainland is relatively easier, possibly because it is not legally regulated, but there are surely certain risks. Back in Hong Kong, Segways will be required to be tested by EMSD, and if they pass the test, there will be issuance of licences and payment of fees. This system has indirectly rendered the public unable to use Segways. The
mini-mechanical sweepers of the Government are also subject to similar regulation which involves complicated application procedures and a large sum of money. In other places, a mini-mechanical sweeper costs over $300,000, but in Hong Kong, it costs over $1 million. Hence, the Secretary really has to keep an eye on this situation.

My speaking time is really not enough. And now, I am going to talk about refurbishment of public toilets. As an international metropolis, Hong Kong has a population of over 7 million. It is densely populated and visited by lots of tourists. But the public really have difficulties in patronizing public toilets. DAB has inspected 13 male and female public toilets respectively managed by FEHD, the Urban Renewal Authority and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department in Central and Western District. It was found out that 60% of the public toilets had very wet and slippery floors, half of the toilets had odour problem due to poor ventilation systems. This situation is well known to the public. Many women never go to public toilets. They would rather wait until they get back home or go to the toilets of some mid-range to high-end shopping malls. Men will usually not use toilet compartments. They will at most use the urinals and then wash hands.

Why does this problem occur? Because the Government has been outsourcing the work with public money but without sufficient monitoring, and the contractor only casually finds some people, who may not be capable, to take care of the cleaning work in public toilets. It is fine so long as there are some workers employed to do the work, since public toilets are so dirty that not many people want to use them. We thus hope that the SAR Government can resolve the problem in this aspect.

It is my hope that the SAR Government can come up with a proposal and study its effectiveness. Was the SAR Government not concerned about the public toilet problem in the past? This is not true, but the problem is that the Government does not monitor the contractors sufficiently after outsourcing the project. The Government's outsourcing of work has given the public an impression that it has also outsourced its responsibility. Labour problem may also have an impact on this aspect, as the requirements in the staff contract are not so clearly written. The situation may be better at present, because some technology related terms and conditions are added to the contract, specifying that certain mechanical instruments need to be used. It is possible that the situation can be improved. However, I hope that the SAR Government can work out a
proposal as soon as possible and solicit views from the public, instead of working behind closed doors, repeating the mistake with the compacting bins. It should not waste any time and money again.

What I am going to say is related to my agriculture and fisheries industries, and that is about food safety. Since the public are particularly concerned about the food that they eat, ensuring food safety is the top priority of the Government. In the Mainland, the outbreak of African swine fever has not yet been contained, and the pig farms in Guangdong supplying pigs to Hong Kong may also be threatened. Although this has not yet happened, the confidence of the public in consuming pork is already affected.

The Secretary for Food and Health visited Beijing earlier and said that not any registered pig farms supplying pigs to Hong Kong were affected, to which I give my acknowledgement. But the Bureau is of the view that African swine fever is not a zoonotic disease which will spread to human beings and does not pose any risk to food safety of the community, to which I do not quite agree. This can be explained in a simple example. Some time ago, a tourist brought some vacuum packed sausages into Japan and African swine fever virus was found in that pack of sausages. Later, Korea and Taiwan also found African swine fever virus in the pork products brought in by tourists.

When the governments of different jurisdictions have stepped up inspection on pork products and even banned tourists from bringing pork products onto the plane, what has the SAR Government done? The Secretary says that food inspections are not necessary as pork products will not spread the virus to human beings. Then I have to ask: Why would the governments of Japan, Taiwan and Korea order to step up inspection? If I take out a sausage, in which African swine fever virus is found, to the Chief Executive and ask her to eat it, saying that the virus will not pass to her and she should feel at ease, is it all right? Even though nothing happens today, it does not mean that something will not happen tomorrow. More importantly, the sausages, after being brought into Hong Kong, will be circulated in the community. The wild pigs in Hong Kong are very smart. They will eat the leftovers from visitors in country parks, including pork chops, steaks and sausages. If the wild pigs have eaten the sausages with African swine fever, they will catch the disease and die, and then we will be free from troubles caused by wild pigs. So there are pros and cons about that. But this situation is certainly not what we want to see. Therefore, I suggest that the SAR Government must consider clearly how to inspect pork products.
In this session, I have voiced many of my views. But I want to leave five minutes for the fourth debate session to express our views concerning reclamation or the measures of the Development Bureau to the Secretary for Development. Deputy President, I so submit.

DR CHIANG LAI-WAN (in Cantonese): Deputy President, the Chief Executive mentioned in this Policy Address that "With our ample fiscal reserves, it is the Government's responsibility to use resources derived from the community for the good of the community, invest for the future." That's right and worth praising. But what is meant by "investing for the future"? Some people say that it is to develop a better society for the next generation. This is right. Some others also say that it means constructing more bridges, roads, etc. This is also true. Some even say that more land and reclamation should be found and done for construction of buildings. All of these are right. The most important thing, in my opinion, is that we let our next generation live in a society in which the care of the Government can be felt so that they have hope for the future. Only in this way can the Government be regarded as investing successfully for the future.

I have recently read the Survey on the Overturning Power of Chinese Youth in the Four Places of the Taiwan Straits, in which the "dream power", "driving power" and "execution power" of young people aged 18 to 35 in Taiwan, Shanghai, Singapore and Hong Kong are investigated. The survey shows that Hong Kong young people are obviously negative and conservative about the future. In all the above mentioned powers, namely "dream power", "driving power" and "execution power", their scores are the lowest among the young people in the four places. In other words, Hong Kong young people are negative about the future.

For the new generation to feel the Government's care directly, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong has all along proposed an initiative. We suggest that the Government should immediately consider setting up a New Generation Baby Fund if it really cares about the next generation and wants young people to truly enjoy the economic fruits and really feel its care. Our basic concept is very simple. Assuming that there is $1 trillion in the Treasury, 10% of the amount will be allocated to the next generation by setting up a reserve of $100 billion. When there is surplus in the fiscal year, a certain percentage will be allocated for the next generation. Is this reasonable, Deputy President? Everyone works hard. Is there any parent who
does not want to leave and reserve a little money for the next generation so that they can get help in case something undesirable happens? This is normal, right? We are very fair and therefore propose that contribution to the relevant fund be shared by both the Government and parents. For example, the Government is responsible for $2,000 and the parents are responsible for $1,000. Everyone contributes together and deposits money into the account of the New Generation Baby Fund. The money will be rolled over and used in the future if necessary, or even merged with the MPF. This idea is a comprehensive plan for building assets for the new generations from birth to their old age, with the aim to improve the chances of each participant in life, instead of having the poor the poorer and the rich the richer. We hope that by accumulating assets, the next generation will better understand career planning and chart their future so that they can feel the hope in life. This is what investing for the future means. If our next generation thought that there was no hope in the future, it would not mean anything even if the Government built more bridges, roads and artificial islands. Should they believe that there was no hope in life, they would be living nowhere even though they were dwelling in Hong Kong.

In fact, the funds we proposed are not new. They have been established in many regions around the world. For example, they are available in the United Kingdom, Singapore, Canada, South Korea and some other places. Singapore established a similar plan in as early as 2001, and so far, the participation rate reached 97%, which proves that the plan is very popular with parents and can provide sufficient support for the long-term development of children.

The New Generation Baby Fund I propose is actually a lifelong asset accumulation plan. It can also be used for education, medical care or even home ownership if and when required. As the Chief Executive has said, with ample fiscal reserves, it is the Government's responsibility to use resources derived from the community for the good of the community. I hope that the Government can invest in the future. No matter how much money the Government invests in building bridges and roads, reclamation and construction of buildings, some money should be saved up for investing directly in the next generation to give them hope. When they grow up, they will know that the Government has prepared an account with enough funds for them to do what they want. I hope that the Government can set up promptly the New Generation Baby Fund program which will support the long-term development of individuals.
Deputy President, next I want to talk about another matter which is about life. In fact, many of us ask, "What is the meaning of life?" Some people say that the meaning of life is to continue life; others say that the meaning of life is that it can be used to do something good for society; some even say that the meaning of life is to help those in need. This sentence is exactly what the Government often says, "Money should be spent on helping those most in need." But who are they and when is the best time to help people in need? The answer is here. I think the people we should help the most are the sick. When is the best time to help them? The answer is that when the sick are on the verge of life or death, or would rather die than live, waiting for the Government to give a life-saving straw.

For example, cancer is said to be a disease that makes people stand on the verge of life and death. The life of a person suffering from cancer depends entirely on the Government's medical policy. It depends entirely on how the Government can help him. With timely treatment, cancer is not a terminal illness. If effective treatment or even targeted medication is available, the recovery rate can be very high, even at 100%.

Take breast cancer as an example. The number of women diagnosed with this disease in Hong Kong is on the rise. In 2016 alone, there were 4,100 cases, that is, one out of every 16 women had breast cancer, which was a high rate. At present, there is no breast cancer screening in Hong Kong. Many women seek medical treatment only when they find that there are lumps in their breasts. They are already in Phase 2 or Phase 3, or even in the terminal phase, when they are diagnosed. They need surgery, chemotherapy and electrotherapy immediately. Those who are fortunate enough to apply for subsidy can take targeted therapy drugs. Those with a small amount of assets which just exceeds the upper limit will not be able to take targeted therapy drugs. They may have to sell their properties to treat cancer. In fact, I can say that when a woman thinks about selling her property, her health condition will definitely be aggravated by anxiety. To a woman, selling her property is like taking her life. Therefore, if these women can get treatment early, or can detect their breast cancer early, their chances of being cured are very high.

In many places, such as Singapore, Europe, the United States, Canada and 34 countries and regions around the world, breast cancer screening programs have been implemented already. Why is such plan not available in Hong Kong? In fact, the Government's cancer screening programs have been very successful.
Earlier, the Government launched a colorectal cancer screening program, and recently there is a cervical cancer screening program. All these are benevolent policies and good measures deserving our praise.

Let's look at the Government's colorectal cancer program launched earlier. As at 30 June this year, 76,359 eligible people participated in it. Do you know how many of them had positive results in the tests? 9,637 of them had, with 523 being diagnosed with colorectal cancer. These 500-odd people have had their life saved! In fact, they were not the only ones who had their life saved. Among the rest 9,000-odd people, most of them were found to have polyps which might evolve into colorectal cancer. Because of this plan, they had their polyps removed early. Therefore, this is a benevolent policy of the Government, and this plan may have indeed saved many people's lives. I hope that the Government can implement the breast cancer screening program as soon as possible.

Deputy President, cancer is killer number one in Hong Kong. In 2015 alone, more than 30,000 new cases of cancer emerged, and the disease accounts for half of the deaths each year. Is the current policy for cancer patients in Hong Kong sufficient? I am fair to say, frankly, that the Government is not doing enough. Therefore, we think that the Government should expeditiously consider how to strengthen the policy to support cancer patients. About the medical subsidy we often refer to, for example, only the Samaritan Fund and the Community Care Fund are currently subsidizing some "poor-enough" people to buy drugs. Those who are not too poor, that is, people who can still eat a meal comfortably or those who "have a shelter", are not qualified.

However, I am also very pleased that the Chief Executive mentions in the Policy Address this time relaxation of the threshold for the funding scheme and increase of the funding amount. But why doesn't she consider full funding? Why cannot she do that? Are any countries doing so? Some are, of course! You don't need to look too far away. Just look at the Mainland. More than 12,000 people are diagnosed with cancer every day in the Mainland, and these new cancer cases account for a quarter of the world's figure. Cancer patients receive full support from the state. Some members of the public tell me that their Mainland relatives who suffer from cancer are subsidized by the Government. The charge for rehabilitation medicine has been reduced from 1,000 Yuan per month to a little over 100 Yuan a month. There are 1.3 billion people in Mainland China and only 7 million people in Hong Kong, but the
nation's medical security is better than that of Hong Kong. Should Hong Kong make reference to the current efforts and policies of our nation on supporting cancer patients?

In July this year, a movie entitled *I am not the God of Drugs* was shown in the Mainland. The story is adapted from the true story of a real person. To put it simply, the story is about the protagonist who suffered from leukemia but could not afford the anti-cancer drugs in the Mainland. He therefore went to India to buy drugs at lower prices. After that, he began to purchase drugs for other patients. The country has been moved by this movie and thinks that this problem is indeed serious. Therefore, the Central Government has immediately launched a zero-tariff policy for imported anti-cancer drugs this year to encourage the import of innovative drugs. Special procurement of anti-cancer drugs has been implemented at provincial level. In recent months, 17 kinds of anti-cancer drugs have been included in the national basic medical insurance. I have taken a look at these 17 anti-cancer drugs to find out what they are. I find that in Hong Kong, half of these 17 latest anti-cancer drugs are not included in the Community Care Fund and the Samaritan Fund, not to mention those of the Hospital Authority ("HA"). As such, can the Government consider including these more common and newer anti-cancer drugs in the relevant funds?

I very much hope that the Government can increase resources and manpower to help cancer patients who are standing on the verge of life and death. I hope that the Government can consider setting up a special cancer fund to subsidize cancer patients to purchase clinically effective drugs that have been approved by doctors but not included in HA's drug list, to carry out tumor genetic testing for prescribing the right medicine, to receive Chinese and Western medicine collaborative treatment, as well as subsidizing non-governmental organizations engaged in anti-cancer work to run programs supporting the families with cancer patients.

After talking about cancer, the disease that places patients on the verge of death, I must talk about another ailment that makes one prefer death to life. I believe that everyone has heard of eczema and knows that severe eczema can cause the skin to itch so badly that one would rather die than live. Everyone can imagine the feeling of itchiness in the hands, feet or body after a few stings by mosquitoes. But have you ever thought about the day-and-night itching suffered by patients with severe eczema, who cannot fall asleep because of the serious itching? This is really painful. Earlier I read the news about a family tragedy
of three deaths in which an obedient daughter killed her parents and then committed suicide on Father's Day this year. The tragedy was caused by eczema. The young lady had just graduated from university and everyone said she was an obedient daughter. However, she felt like being bitten by ants all over her body every day. Her uncurable eczema caused her a mental breakdown. Preferring death to life, she finally left this world with her parents.

In addition, I recently watched a video on the Internet, which seems to be shot by the Government's radio media agency. I remember one of the heroines of the film saying that as long as someone would say they could cure her illness, she was willing to do anything, even to eat faeces. Do you know that at the moment I saw this, I really felt that this disease was very afflicting? Therefore, I very much hope that the Government can care about these eczema patients. Can specialist dermatology service be set up in public hospitals?

Deputy President, the cancer and eczema patients I mention today are actually cases I have directly contacted. Recently, I met another young female patient with eczema. She said she had thought about ending her life while holding her son on the window sill. Why? Because she was consulting a doctor who kept giving her steroids. Now she has lost 90% of her eyesight in one eye and has less than half of the normal sight in the other eye. She has nothing to treasure in her life indeed, and she has suffered insomnia for a long time. Finally, she called me and found my assistant. A young girl in her 20s who would actually ask a Member for help must be very desperate and has nowhere to turn to, I believe. She has been helpless. Therefore, after contacting her, I really hope that targeted therapy drugs are available for these diseases. Can the Government care more about those patients with severe eczema, who may prefer death to life because of the disease?

I have read the information of HA. Its expenditure on medicines has increased from $5.3 billion in 2014-2015 to $6.1 billion in 2016-2017. The increase is 15.4%. Therefore, we cannot say that the Government has not done anything. The Government has made some efforts but the expenditure on medicines only accounts for 10% of HA's total expenses. In comparison, the expenditure of some Western countries on medicines accounts for 20%. Should we consider substantially increasing the expenditure concerned? Or should we consider subsidizing research bodies in some tertiary institutions in Hong Kong to
try to develop new drugs that can help more patients who are on the verge of death and life? These are benevolent policies to bring hope of survival to the sick in Hong Kong, giving them the hope of life.

I so submit. Thank you, Deputy President.

MR VINCENT CHENG (in Cantonese): Deputy President, my speech in this debate session aims mainly at giving overall comments on the content of the Policy Address, in particular the livelihood measures in such areas as public health care service, labour and education.

The Chief Executive's Policy Address is 85 pages long, containing 322 paragraphs to propose more than 200 measures. It is arguably very heavy in weight, powerful in force and rich in content. Upon seeing on 10 October that the Policy Address was titled "Striving Ahead Rekindling Hope", I was deeply touched because it put me in mind of my slogan "Hopes and Beliefs" for the Legislative Council by-election campaign in March, which was based on my belief that as long as we embrace hope and optimism about Hong Kong, we will surely break through all kinds of obstacles and continue to move forward.

I see that most of the new measures proposed in the Policy Address zero in on livelihood priorities. While welcoming this approach, we are also glad to find that the Government has adopted some suggestions of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong ("DAB"), for example the Chinese medicine hospital under planning, the $2.5 billion Lift Modernisation Subsidy Scheme, the initiative to allow owners of the Hong Kong Housing Authority's subsidized sale flats with premium unpaid to sublet—of course, I favour letting over subletting—their flats to needy families, extension of the statutory maternity leave to 14 weeks, and exploration of the feasibility of introducing a salary scale for kindergarten teachers, etc. However, regarding the last-mentioned feasibility study, I hope that the Chief Executive will speed up the process and definitely make decisions after deliberation.

I feel obliged to say that the current Government is proactive. DAB's evaluation of this Policy Address boils down to these words: "It depicts the future and shows a commendable determination." In launching and implementing the measures, it should "listen with care and act with propriety".
First of all, I would like to generally talk about how this Policy Address is perceived by the community. In addition to reading the ratings given by many opinion survey agencies, I have organized residents' meetings and set up street booths over a period of time to listen to neighbourhood residents' views on this Policy Address. Many of them started off by saying that the Lantau Tomorrow reclamation plan, albeit good, is marred by its remote location and many years of lead time. So, can we find ways to shorten the waiting time for public housing and build more transitional housing to help the residents of subdivided units? Some residents mentioned that the waiting time for specialist services at public hospitals is very long, as Dr CHIANG Lai-wan said earlier, and many patients with serious illness have to wait many years for services. Elderly dental services are also inadequate. Therefore, there is still much room for improvement in various areas. As for the housing policy, I will talk about it later when I speak again.

Regarding public health care service, the shortage of health care staff is a fact. Residents have said that the current waiting time for cardiology services exceeds five years, and that for first appointments is one and a half years. Many hospitals have put it straight that if the patients cannot wait, they should see private doctors. However, we all know how expensive it is to see private doctors. Therefore, I expect the public-private partnership programmes under the Hospital Authority to enable faster and better cooperation between the public and private sectors, good use of the $10 billion fund for service delivery, extension of coverage to other chronic diseases, and referral of some patients to private health care facilities for specialist outpatient services. In this regard, I hope that the Food and Health Bureau will listen to the public's concerns.

Next, I will talk about issues of labour and employee protection. I believe that since the beginning of last month, many working families have also learned two pieces of good news. One is the extension of the statutory maternity leave to 14 weeks, and the other is the increase of paternity leave from three days to five days, which we discussed a few weeks ago. The proposal in the current Policy Address has changed the 40-year statutory maternity leave arrangement by increasing it from 10 weeks to 14 weeks, which has been advocated by DAB for many years. Therefore, I am very pleased that the Government has heeded good advice and acted accordingly. However, I hope that the Secretary will, in the next review, consider changing the maternity leave pay to full pay instead of just four-fifths, because the financial pressure on many working families is not small indeed.
On the other hand, the existing Employment Ordinance only protects employees against dismissal during pregnancy, but does not guarantee that their employment will not be terminated upon resumption of work. In the past, the Equal Opportunities Commission received many such complaints, some claiming that even if not dismissed, the employees would be relegated, or forced to resign by means of a deliberate reduction of workload, etc. Therefore, after increasing the statutory maternity leave to 14 weeks, the Secretary should also review the employees' rights and interests in this regard, which cannot afford to be neglected.

Yesterday and today, we heard quite a number of Members from the labour or business sectors mention in their speeches the labour sector's concern that with many employee rights and interests set to be granted by the Government, it would be even more difficult to engage the business sector in future. Meanwhile, the business sector has also indicated that as many different policies will be related to them in future, a blanket acceptance is hardly an option. Given that most companies in Hong Kong are small and medium enterprises, this will have a great impact on their business. I think both sides have a point. When this Council scrutinized last time the amendments to the Employment Ordinance for increasing the paternity leave, I mentioned that in some advanced regions with better employee benefits, such as some European countries and the United States, the increase of benefits for local employees is, in fact, often driven by government funding or social security funds. Therefore, the Government's role will be increasingly important. Nevertheless, I consider that the Government should not just provide funding, but also do a lot of coordination work, such as coordination between employers and employees, and step up efforts in publicity and education on family-friendly policy with a view to fostering mutual understanding and accommodation among members of the community based on the awareness that Hong Kong people are under quite some stress. As in the abolition of the offsetting arrangement of the Mandatory Provident Fund System, the Government is now putting in more resources in the hope that employers and employees will negotiate to reach a consensus as soon as possible.

Deputy President, coming up next, I would like to talk about education. In my election platform, I proposed to "improve education and let children grow up happily". The Chief Executive has launched a number of new initiatives this time, including some all along advocated by DAB, such as introducing a grant for extra-curricular activities, i.e. the Life-wide Learning Grant, exploring the feasibility of introducing a salary scale for kindergarten teachers, and allocating resources to address the phenomenon of unequal pay for the same work among
principals and vice-principals of primary and secondary schools—This proposal has been accepted by the Chief Executive, and the Government will allocate an additional $500 million to rationalize the salaries. In the past two policy addresses, there were many education policies. This year, the all-graduate teaching force policy will be implemented in primary and secondary schools and more career progression pathways will be offered to primary school teachers. All these are good measures and policies, which can also relieve the pressure on many in-service teachers.

Education is a key area for nurturing our next generation, the quality of both teaching and learning is equally important. In addition to the needs of students, teachers' remuneration, stress and workplace environment, etc. should also be sorted out. The Government is undoubtedly putting in a lot of resources. We are also glad to see it launching a number of new initiatives, particularly those addressing the pressure on teachers and principals, among others. At the same time, we have also seen a number of education reform and review exercises in the pipeline. I have also noticed that the Secretary for Education mentioned last night that the authorities will review the secondary school curriculum, explore ways to strengthen STEM education, and finalize a number of education policies. In fact, this will, in effect, increase the pressure on the education sector.

Therefore, I am particularly concerned about how to relieve the pressure on the education sector, including teachers and students, such as ways to reduce students' homework or let students finish their homework at school as far as practicable. To be honest, this issue has been discussed for many years, but no headway has been made so far. The Chief Executive said in paragraph 155 of the Policy Address: "We are delighted to see more schools designing meaningful and interesting homework based on school contexts and student abilities and allowing more room and time for students to develop their personal interests." However, what exactly should we do to achieve this goal? The Secretary for Education said in his speech last night that the authorities were considering letting students genuinely enjoy long holidays, such as Christmas and Chinese New Year, by not requesting them to do so many mechanical copying exercises or homework drills. However, how can this be achieved in reality? Would they simply issue guidelines again and consider their job done? As for specific measures, I expect the Education Bureau to provide us with more concrete methods.
Here, I would like to share with you a book that I recently began reading. This book, called *Teach Like Finland* and authored by Timothy WALKER, lists "33 simple strategies for joyful classrooms". It is often said that education is well established in Finland, which ranks among the highest in the world for innovative education, so I would like to find out from this book what exactly the strategies are. Two of them, I think, are quite eye-catching: first, "schedule brain breaks"; second, "recharge after school".

What does it mean to schedule brain breaks? That means to increase students' recess time at school. According to the Finnish example, both students and teachers get a 15-minute break for every 45 minutes of class. Many experts have said that students can be more focused after a short break. Meanwhile, students are also allowed to choose what to do after class. They can choose either to do something or not to do anything. In addition, there is also the option, among others, of letting higher-level students lead the lower to play, so that they learn from playing games while the teachers can seize the opportunity to take a break. How about Hong Kong? I think little has changed throughout all the years, from my childhood when there were only classes and classes between 10-minute recesses, up to nowadays when our children keep attending classes and doing homework at home after school until 11:00 pm or midnight. I believe it is imperative to find ways to help students and parents reduce stress.

Another point is to recharge the body and mind after school. I would like to talk about teachers first. According to the pedagogical standards for schools in Helsinki, students attend only about 24 hours of class per week, with breaks deducted. How about Hong Kong? My calculation shows that the class time amounts to 40 odd hours. In fact, I am quite sure that it is more than 40 hours. Teachers arrive in school as early as 6:00 am or 7:00 am, and can hardly leave before 8:00 pm or 9:00 pm. Neither teachers nor students can rest. Therefore, it is utmost important to find ways to ease the pressure in this respect, so that teachers and students can really recharge their body and mind after school.

Let us get back to the situation of Hong Kong. We eagerly look forward to the education-minded Chief Executive's introduction of some encouraging incentives and measures to afford students more time to think. No matter learning astronomy and geography, or experiencing more different things, they are better than endlessly attending classes. The most important point is to create joyful classrooms where teachers enjoy teaching and students enjoy learning.
In addition to alleviating their study pressure, we should also address their financial pressure. As a parent, I spend a hefty sum every year on textbooks, school uniforms, and now many extra-curricular activities, which put huge pressure on parents and students alike. Therefore, I am eager to know if the Chief Executive can regularize the fee exemption for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination after it is granted in 2020. Another possibility is the exemption of students from loan interest under the means-tested schemes to relieve their pressure after graduation from university. Of course, the most straightforward method is to increase the child allowance for salaries tax, which I hope can directly reduce parents' burden of educational expenses.

Lastly, Deputy President, I have recently talked with some educators. They said in unison that the Government was willing to put more resources into education in the past few years, which was a good thing because it could alleviate the pressure on many teachers, give them some hopes, rekindle their aspirations and enable them to plan the next step. It was also a good thing for students. However, we still have to consider that, apart from the alleviation of pressure on teachers following the allocation of resources, many different things will surely emerge, including the launching of many different courses, after-school activities, new things to learn, etc. In fact, this will also become, in effect, a new pressure on students and teachers. In the analogy with a meal, while there was only barbecued pork to eat in the past, now the table is full of different dishes, so will the students absorb the nutrients they need, or eventually become fatties? Regarding this point, we really have to give some thought to how we can channel such educational resources, once available, to where they are needed, so that they also stand students, teachers or others in good stead for personal development. In this regard, the Education Bureau should set up a good system to review the implementation of these resources in due course.

In concluding my speech, I hope that the Chief Executive will continue to work with different stakeholders to properly implement the measures proposed in this Policy Address. I will speak again later on the housing policy. I so submit.

MR CHAN CHI-CHUEN (in Cantonese): When one opens this year's Policy Address, one can see the phrase "Striving Ahead". The so-called "Striving ahead" actually means moving ahead obstinately and autocratically. As long as she, Carrie LAM, has made her decision, she need not consult and discuss with anyone else. She allows no negotiation because she thinks that her way is the
best for Hong Kong people. All matters, ranging from major ones as large as the Lantau Tomorrow Vision, a reclamation project involving 1 700 hectares of land and trillion-dollar, to the minor ones such as the comprehensive ban on e-cigarettes that I am talking about in this session, demonstrate her administrative hegemony in moving ahead obstinately, autocratically and wilfully.

The policy areas of this debate session include health care services, so I will speak on the policy of a total ban on e-cigarettes first. The comprehensive ban on e-cigarettes is launched without any announcement in advance. It was disclosed to the media only one day before the publication of the Policy Address, in which a comprehensive ban on e-cigarettes and other new smoking products is proposed. It is implemented even ruder than the Lantau Tomorrow Vision as the latter has at least gone through a fake consultation with the deceptive Task Force on Land Supply. However, the Secretary has completely banned e-cigarettes with zero consultation.

In paragraph 182 of the Policy Address, it is pointed out that the Government proposed to legislate for the regulation of e-cigarettes in the middle of this year. At that time, everyone understood that the regulation on new smoking products would be implemented in the same way as the ban on traditional tobacco products through taxation, prohibition of sales to persons under the age of 18, advertising and other means, which were also considered reasonable and justifiable. As the issue might be about the degree of stringency of the regulation only, there was not much reaction from different walks of life and no one publicly stated that they opposed the legislation firmly. Conversely, Secretary, if the Government stated on the same day that the proposal put forward by the Government included a comprehensive ban on new smoking products, I believe that the response of the community would have certainly been greater.

I asked the Secretary at the briefing session of the Policy Address what had happened in the few months between submission of the document by the Secretary in the middle of the year on regulating e-cigarettes and the announcement of comprehensive ban on smoking published in the Policy Address. I also asked what breakthrough had been made in scientific researches and what authoritative research results had warranted a complete reversal of the Government's policy direction from regulation to comprehensive ban. The Secretary was unable to give any answer at the time to show any coruscating developments and phenomenal changes.
There are of course many studies, as well as diverse opinions. It has been pointed out in some studies that emerging e-cigarette products should be banned as they make it easier for young people to get in touch with tobacco, which is harmful to them. However, other studies suggest that people who smoke traditional cigarettes may switch to e-cigarettes in order not to affect others or themselves. This can be said to be a mitigation. We may have disputes about different research results, but one thing we cannot disagree is that the harm caused by traditional tobacco products in general is far greater than that inflicted by the electronic cigarettes. So why has the Government never planned a total ban on smoking? Why is it necessary to ban the emerging e-cigarette products completely now? Some people have compared this practice to not prohibiting the use of real guns, but instead prohibiting the use of air guns and toy guns.

When it comes to metaphors, we have to mention LEUNG Chun-ying, the former Chief Executive, because he has proposed a very strange metaphor, saying that "Hong Kong independence" is like e-cigarette. This is really the worst junk metaphor. If "Hong Kong independence" is really like e-cigarette, what are traditional cigarettes? Will they destroy the entire country? According to LEUNG's metaphor, why does the Government not ban traditional cigarettes, which are worse than "Hong Kong independence", but allows it to keep on jeopardizing the country and its people instead?

When it comes to the smoking ban policy, why do we not ban traditional cigarettes but prohibit e-cigarettes only? The reason is very simple: The Government dare not do so and cannot do so. Once the Government tries to ban smoking completely in Hong Kong, there may be riots. Secretary, will you ask the Security Bureau to ban smoking in prison? I bet that you dare not do so, let alone prohibiting smoking all over Hong Kong.

However, e-cigarettes are different. What logic is this? Ladies and gentlemen, why has the ban on e-cigarettes been linked to "anti-Hong Kong independence"? I was initially puzzled, and later I pondered over it. After reading the articles they wrote, I finally figured it out. Even if a Hong Kong person advocated "Hong Kong independence" and was accused of violating the Basic Law, he could not be arrested as long as he had not violated the law. However, for a foreign journalist who presided over a forum, even though he has not violated the law, you have the right not to grant him a work visa and you need not give any explanation. Therefore, even if it is unreasonable, we can do nothing about it.
I am one of the few Members who strongly oppose the total ban on e-cigarettes. This is entirely based on principles and reasons. I am not a smoker myself and I have no interest in the trade. I know that many Democrats support the ban. But everyone must think about this: Is there any difference between supporting the Government's total ban on smoking without considering the reasons and principles because of the purpose, and the pro-establishment camp's supporting the Government's refusal to issue work visa to the Vice Chairman of the Foreign Correspondents' Club without justification by claiming that the Government has acted with the good intention of "anti-Hong Kong independence"?

Supporting a total ban on e-cigarettes means supporting Carrie LAM's patriarchal dictatorship under which anything considered harmful to the youth has to be prohibited comprehensively. When e-cigarettes are banned today, soft drinks and foods with high-sugar, high-oil and high-fat contents can be banned tomorrow. When such bans can be imposed for the sake of everyone's physical health, the publication of certain books, newspapers and other stuff can also be prohibited for the benefit of your ideological and mental health. Therefore, I insist on opposing the total ban on e-cigarettes.

**MS CLAUDIA MO (in Cantonese):** This debate session, which is attended by the Secretary for Food and Health, covers food safety and environmental hygiene. I find it rather ironic that animal rights discussion is related to the Food and Health Bureau ("FHB"). This is due to the fact that the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department ("AFCD") is placed under FHB, though issues concerning wild animals are actually more related to the Environmental Bureau.

Please do not feel surprised if I praise Carrie LAM, for she has done something commendable. We met not long after she took office. My impression of her at that time was that she was very busy and had to do a lot things. She believed that before human issues had been properly dealt with, how could we care about animal issues? Animals would be left to fend for themselves. Such was my impression of her then. But now, she has outperformed LEUNG Chun-ying as she has done something, though still not enough, which I can take for the time being as something is better than nothing. As far as animal rights are concerned, the most important principle is that we should voice for animals as they cannot voice for themselves while human beings will fight for themselves if they are treated unfairly.
I said just now that when I first discussed animal rights with Carrie LAM, she considered this kind of issue very much detached from everyday life as we should focus on human beings first. Similarly, animal issues are discussed within the scope of food safety. But does it mean that we eat cats and dogs? Animal issues are also environmental hygiene issues, which is understandable as excreta of cats and dogs is involved. The Government always looks at animal issues from the angle of health and human beings.

But Carrie LAM is willing to learn and is learning fast. In a question and answer session in this Council, she said, on her own initiative, that, "I know they are 'animals', not 'pets'." Recently, in the press conference held after the delivery of the Policy Address in this Council on 10 October, she was asked about the relationship between the Executive Authorities and the Legislature. If my memory serves me right, she cited the issue of animal rights as an example, saying that the demands raised by Members in this respect had been responded to by the Government. The Government has done its bit though it is definitely far from being adequate. We can take it for the time being, which is better than nothing.

First, the Road Traffic Ordinance should be amended to stipulate that in future accidents involving a cat or a dog being hit by a vehicle, the driver must stop the vehicle and report the accident to the Police. Then, can wild pigs and monkeys be covered in the relevant amendment? They are being bureaucratic with regard to this suggestion. But now I put my faith in FHB first. According to the Bureau, the legislative amendment will be presented to this Council in the first quarter of next year and hopefully it will be passed as soon as possible.

The second ordinance which should be amended more quickly is the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap. 169) ("the Ordinance"). As a matter of fact, the issues concerned have been brought up for quite some time and were also raised with the previous Secretary for Justice for discussion. But in the end, the Government was non-committal about this matter. We now have to continue discussions about the need to raise the penalty. A few days ago, in a meeting with the responsible officers from AFCD, I received from them a pleasant message. Under the existing Ordinance, the Police cannot arrest a person suspected of inflicting cruelty to animals without the proof of evidence. But after the legislative amendment, the officers concerned—including officers from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals—can give a warning to the animal owner upon receiving a complaint, if the officer concerned does see in
an on-site inspection, say, a dog on too short a leash or being exposed to severe sunlight on a roof top without being given adequate water supply. If no improvement is made subsequently, criminal prosecutions may be instituted against the owner concerned. Such an improvement is really good.

Moreover, a person with previous bad records of cruelty to animals will be denied to right to adopt an animal, let alone to buy one, as he is unreliable. Obvious, further consideration of the details of the proposal is still required, this is, after all, better than nothing. I hope that the amendment to the Ordinance can be further refined. And it will certainly be very delightful if the amendment can be passed by the Legislative Council during Carrie LAM's current term of office.

Finally, I must give a thumbs up to AFCD. When the Macau Canidrome was closing down, it was said that about 600 greyhounds faced an uncertain fate. Eventually, we are grateful to AFCD for exercising discretion to allow Joy, one of these canines, to find its new family in Hong Kong after undergoing quarantine and inspection. AFCD has really done a good job. This is not directly related to the Policy Address but to me, this is the most pleasant, or almost the only pleasant message, in the entire Policy Address. Thank you.

MR JEREMY TAM (in Cantonese): Deputy President, in the third session of the debate, I would like to talk about matters including the medical structure and equipment in emergency rooms.

First of all, I would like to point out that there is a shortage of primary medical services in Wong Tai Sin and Kwun Tong Districts. In addition, the problem of population ageing in these two districts is the most serious but the medical system there is overwhelmed. Therefore, I am very pleased to see that the Government has selected Kwun Tong as the district for the second District Health Centre Pilot Project. I hope that the relevant authorities will implement it promptly.

The main function of a District Health Centre is to prevent diseases and support chronic disease patients in the community. For treatment of diseases, it is still necessary to rely on hospitals. How do the two work together? In fact, emergency services are available at the United Christian Hospital only in Kowloon East at present. The Government has often said that emergency services can be provided after the completion of the Kai Tak Hospital, which I
understand. However, the community in fact needs some 24-hour outpatient services, or at least longer evening outpatient service. This is also good for the medical system. Many people have to go to the Accident and Emergency Department ("A&ED") for treatment during the holiday or weekday after clinics are closed. When outpatient service is not available, the A&ED is under great pressure unnecessarily. It is definitely a good thing if the Government provides such 24-hour outpatient service in the local community.

I believe that the Secretary knows very well without my saying that the cost to provide outpatient service at A&ED is actually very high. When the public use the facilities of the A&ED, they may only be treated for minor ailments such as fever or colds, and the resources are seriously mismatched. I think that the Health Centre can barely cope with this urgent need but it cannot solve the above mentioned problems.

Another problem we have now is whether the SAR Government has any plans to increase the proportion of hospitals in Hong Kong in the face of increasing medical needs. In fact, it is not just for Kowloon East. Will the Government consider drawing up a comprehensive scheme for all hospitals in the territory to tie in with the Hong Kong 2030 Planning Vision and Strategy in response to the ageing population and increase of the population to over 8 million? Will it present a vision for us to yearn for? I cannot see it for the time being.

I want to talk about another thing. I must thank the authorities for the treatment of unfortunately abortuses of less than 24 weeks' gestation. I once again thank the SAR Government for adopting administrative means to solve the problem. I would like to thank in particular the Secretary for Food and Health, the Deputy Secretary and the Political Assistant, and the relevant staff of the Hospital Authority for their coordination and cooperation. This will pave at least one way out in the first quarter of next year.

Deputy President, please allow me to take a moment to add that there is no way to properly handle the remains of abortuses of less than 24 weeks' gestation. If the victim has a religious belief, it may be assisted by a religious group, such as having them buried in the angel garden in the Catholic Church. If the victim believes in other religions, such as Islam, there are other ways to deal with it. However, the remains of stillborn abortuses cannot be cremated because the law stipulates that only a foetus of more than 24 weeks' gestation can be considered as
a human being, which can be cremated in the cremation system of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. Therefore, the parents of abortuses in the past were very pitiful. They could not properly handle the remains of their stillborn abortuses of under 24 weeks' gestation after such pain of loss.

The Administration is now dealing with this problem by administrative means, including arranging a place for burial or ashing at the Wo Hop Shek Cemetery. However, it has no intention to amend the law to make the remains of stillborn abortuses of under 24 weeks' gestation legal human remains. We believe that the current solution is not flawless. I fully agree to deal with the problem with the so-called "shortcut" or short-term measures. I also thank the SAR Government for making this change. However, I think there is a need for formal amendments in the future to make things more reasonable.

As for grief counselling, after encountering a miscarriage, very often, it is not only the mother but also the father who experienced the pain. The grief counselling available to them at present is definitely insufficient. I hope that the parties concerned can make more efforts.

As I mentioned earlier, the remains of abortuses of less than 24 weeks' gestation in the past could not be properly handled. Eventually, they can be handled now, but that can help only those parents who want to deal with the remains of their abortuses. Some parents do not want to deal with the remains concerned, perhaps because they are bewildered and perplexed at the time, not knowing what to do. They leave the Hospital Authority to handle the remains. In such cases, it is absolutely inappropriate to go on treating the abortus remains as medical waste, which would be dumped at landfills. An aborted baby is a life after all, and the government should adopt some administrative measures to handle in a more humanistic manner the remains of aborted babies whose parents do not want to deal with by themselves.

I know that the relevant authorities have conducted research in this regard and hope that there will be some progress. Simply put, we should give peace to both life and death because an aborted baby is a life after all. We must respect life and should not transport the remains of a life to the landfill. This should never be allowed. Therefore, I hope that the Government will implement relevant measures as soon as possible.
We will at least see that the Chinese permanent cemetery will start to provide the relevant service in the first quarter. In addition, the Wo Hap Shek cemetery can also allocate space to provide such service promptly. As the remains of an abortus are small and different from adults, the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department needs to purchase additional cremators specifically for abortuses. I hope that these devices can be put to use as soon as possible, and I hope that Hong Kong will no longer adopt inhumane practices to deal with remains of miscarried babies or their foetuses. Such practices, I believe, are not what Hong Kong people want to see it, and the resource input required for this purpose is relatively small.

I so submit in this session. Thank you, Deputy President.

DR HELENA WONG (in Cantonese): Deputy President, let me first talk about maternity leave and paternity leave, and then touch on the work of the Food and Health Bureau.

We are very pleased to see that the Government has proposed to increase the statutory maternity leave from 10 weeks to 14 weeks in this year's Policy Address. This is also a policy that the Democratic Party has been fighting for over many years. We hope that the relevant legislative work can be completed as soon as possible.

In addition, in respect of paternity leave, the Legislative Council has also passed the Employment (Amendment) Bill 2018 last month to implement the increase in paternity leave from three days to five days. The Secretary for Labour and Welfare should be very clear about the Democratic Party's platform. We have been proposing this policy for many years and hope that employees can have seven days of paternity leave. Although during the debates at the Bills Committee and the Legislative Council, members from the democratic camp have proposed amendments to extend the paternity leave to seven days, or I have proposed an amendment to automatically increase the paternity leave from five days to seven days after one year, unfortunately, the Government and the pro-establishment Members did not support our amendments. We have to wait for some more time. I hope that the Secretary for Labour and Welfare can promise to promptly review and implement the seven-day paternity leave following the implementation of the five-day paternity leave.
In fact, maternity leave and paternity leave are also family-friendly policies. We hope the Government can step up its efforts in this regard. Yet be it maternity leave or paternity leave, the Government has still left behind some "loose ends". We hope the Government will review the rate of maternity and paternity leave pay later. For years, maternity or paternity leave is paid only up to four-fifths of the salary, the demand for full paid is not yet answered. The Democratic Party hopes to see a better version of the family friendly policy so that the working class can get full pay while taking maternity or paternity leave. The fact is, the expenses of a family welcoming a new baby would greatly increase. We do not want a household to experience financial difficulties just because they are taking maternity or paternity leave. I hope the Government can look into the matter. If the employers have great concern, can we consider Government subsidy or financial assistance to cover the remaining 20% of the salary. The Government has also adopted this model in the arrangement for the additional four-weeks' statutory maternity leave pay. We often hear Chief Executive "Lam Cheng" say that "money is not a problem". We hope the Government can really spend money on the general public—families with newborn babies, so as to give them adequate assurance and support. I really hope that the Government can eventually put in place this proposal.

Regarding the work of the Food and Health Bureau, I mainly want to talk about a few things. For the several measures introduced by the Food and Health Bureau, like those on food safety or columbarium facilities in recent years, I have participated in related work. The Private Columbaria Ordinance has already come into effect, but we know that the licensing conditions are quite harsh for applicants. It seems that not many private columbaria can meet the licensing requirements and obtain a licence. This is the information I got before the summer holiday, but I am not sure if there has been any new progress now. Bereaved families are now facing great difficulties and are forced to wait in line. In the past when money was more readily available, the public had the ability to buy private niches. But since many private columbaria have yet to be licensed now, many niches cannot be bought or sold at all. Therefore, the public is experiencing the hardest time. It is hoped that the Food and Health Bureau can deal with the licensing of private columbaria as soon as possible.
Besides, in the case of public columbaria, the Government has already earmarked a number of sites in various districts many years ago, but their implementation was still pending in many areas. I think that the most important thing is for the Government to set a timetable on the supply of public columbaria and confirm the provision of niches at designated sites as scheduled. Whether it is housing for the living or housing for the dead, we do hope the Government can live up to the needs of the society to avoid interruption of supply. Of course, I have also criticized Food and Health Bureau's new measures of setting a time limit to the use of a public niche—an initial interment period of 20 years. If the niche is not extended on payment of a sum, the ashes would be removed from the niche. I think this policy has not gone through genuine public consultation. It is implemented after being given the green light by the District Councils only. The Democratic Party expresses its opposition to this measure.

For health care services, the Government has committed in this year's Policy Address to enhance primary health care services, saying that general medical and health work should not be left to be handled by public hospitals alone because they are already overburdened. The Democratic Party has always supported the Government in substantially subsidizing primary health care services. The idea is "preventive treatment", i.e., to take precautionary measures before a disease develops or before a minor disease turns into a serious one, so as to enhance public health. Otherwise, many ensuing problems will arise in the face of our ageing population. However, in terms of general primary health care services, apart from the emphasis on primary health care in words, I have yet seen any genuine financial commitments, i.e. any undertaking. The Government's present statement is, in fact, something that has existed more than 10 or 20 years ago. Such report had been published before Carrie LAM became the Chief Executive, saying that the Government would do this and that. Even so, it is still said that District Health Centres ("DHCs") would be tried out in various districts. The reason why Kwai Tsing District is chosen now might probably be due to the presence of some groundwork there. I have no objection to Kwai Tsing District being chosen as a pilot spot. The Government has now opted Kwai Tsing District as the first pilot spot to launch district-based primary health care services. A government subsidized service network would operate at the district level in the form of medical-social collaboration. Tendering work is in progress to see which NGO or organization is willing to undertake this important public mission of promoting district-based primary health care services. The Government's version is to pool resources to deal with the most common diseases and other chronic diseases that consume a lot of medical resources, encourage target people
to identify health problems in the early stage, manage specific chronic diseases, and enable the public to continue their rehabilitation in the community through assistance from medical service providers.

It is understood that the Government is going to replicate the DHC in every other district in the future. I have also heard the Secretary mentioned that DHCs would be set up in the 18 districts throughout Hong Kong. I appreciate Government's need to conduct some trials, that's why a pilot scheme is introduced in a single district first. Nonetheless, I see things differently. It is because it might take three years or so to just try out the proposal in Kwai Tsing District alone. I have no idea about the actual plan, would the Government try for one year, two years or three years? Why can't we consider an alternative approach to have two or three models of operation rather than just having the Kwai Tsing DHC model? Can we find different NGOs to try out different models, plus a so-called "government-led" model, and experiment with several models at the same time? In this way, comparisons can be made after a period of time. Otherwise, if there is only one Kwai Tsing model and that model is found undesirable later, will the Government be obliged to spend another few years trying another model? I find such delay very unproductive. In fact, the Government is not short of resources now. If resources are available and if you want to do experiments, you should do ABC, A, B, and C, and compare different models done concurrently. One model can be NGO operating in place of the Government, or different NGOs can try out different models. Still, the Government can discuss with the professional team responsible for health care the possibility of a bottom-up model, i.e., an operation model proposed by the team.

The Secretary might know that a seminar on primary health care was held at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in early October, during which I have also talked with different professionals. I suggested that they should propose some models to the Government for consideration. Nonetheless, it seems that the Government does not have room to gather folk wisdom. In this connection, I hope that the Secretary can consider discussing with the medical professional team to see if they will propose an alternative model which is equally effective in providing primary health care services.

What about the Government itself? Although many people scold the Government, saying that things could hardly be done in the hands of the Government who will only screw things up. So, it is better for the Government
to leave it or let others do it—the wet market is an old problem that has been said for decades. However, I still believe that the Government is the most important institution responsible for public administration and public services. Therefore, the Government should identify another experimental model and consider forming a team led by the Department of Health ("DH") to pool various government personnel, including doctors, dentists, nursing staff, pharmacists, dieticians, physiotherapists, etc. These personnel have always existed in the government framework; if their number is insufficient, the Government can recruit more. The Government can even include optometrists, administrators and social workers in the team. In fact, the concept of primary health care services that has been said so far is also people-oriented; it is not based on a single Western medical practitioner, but on the holistic health of the general public. Therefore, the Government can gather people from different professions to enhance the well-being of the citizens in a collaborated manner. There should be one or two community-led models—I certainly hope that there will be more than one—which are bottom-up in nature. The model adopted by the Government now is to entrust NGOs to provide services in the designed mode. Can the Government try to adopt a DH-led model to see if better efficiency will be achieved in this way? Or let the general public be the monitoring party to check which model is more pleasing to them?

Well, if there are two or three models for comparison, one can see in two to three years which service model is the most efficient. Then using this as a blueprint, the model could be duplicated in the other 18 districts. As a social science academic, this is the option I hope the Government can consider when dealing with this problem. In my opinion, the Government should not just wait for years pending the results of the trial scheme in the Kwai Tsing District prior to full implementation of the scheme. I think we should try other models at the same time and then make a comparison of them.

In addition, regarding medical health services, I have just heard that the Government intends to deal with some chronic diseases first. The Government has always stressed that stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, fall prevention, etc. are regarded as elderly diseases, and it is concerned about the health problems of older people or health problems that emerge after middle age. I think we must take care of that seriously. But in my view, if the Government really wants to provide primary health care services, the main service target should not be limited to high-risk or elderly patients. Of course, they should be
covered, but primary health care services should start right from the moment of birth. Therefore, the Government seems to have lost its focus on service provision and has not given due consideration to the needs of the young.

Let me give you an example. For visual examination, DH not only offers visual screening test for pre-school children, vision examination is also included under the annual student health services currently provided for primary and secondary school students. However, I have heard that some professors of Optometry criticized that the Government seems to be lagging behind the Mainland in the eye care work for children. At present, the eye and visual examination for infants and young children in Maternal and Child Health Centres is only done once before a child enters school at the age of four. The examination, which is not a comprehensive one, is only done by nurse. It is not until Primary Six that colour vision is checked.

However, looking at the situation on the Mainland, their approach is actually very proactive. A professor of Optometry reminded me that a "31.8" notice was issued on the Mainland this year. What is the "31.8" notice of 2018? Well, it is the Notice on "Integrated Prevention and Control Programme Against Myopia in Children and Young People" published by eight departments like the Ministry of Education and the National Health Commission on 31 August this year. This Notice is an important directive of General Secretary XI Jinping on students' myopia problems, and some instructions have been given. This notice is very detailed. I have read the detailed description written on it and I think it is worthy of promotion by DH at the district level. One crucial point was pointed out—to provide eye and vision health checks for children between the ages of zero and six each year. A myopia ratio for children between the ages of zero and six should be made in order to prevent myopia, with set targets to reduce the myopia ratio to a very low level. Therefore, if Hong Kong only assigns a nurse to do a simple check when the child reaches the age of four, it seems that we are worse off than the Mainland. Hence, I hope that the Secretary will consider this issue.

As for the National Health Service in the United Kingdom, regular eye examinations are available from birth until the age of 16. Therefore, whether it is the United Kingdom, Australia or our China, the provision of thoughtful primary health care services is not limited to the elders. The work should start from infancy and early childhood, while children's eye care should be covered as
well. Of course, we cannot rely on the Food and Health Bureau to do all this alone, the Education Bureau must also think about how to implement it. School-wise, we know that schools on the Mainland will also lead students to do routine eye care exercises twice a day and schools are obliged to do well in this regard. Therefore, I sincerely hope that the Food and Health Bureau will not overlook vision examination when it comes to provision of primary health care services, let alone the importance of identifying as early as possible visual problems that children might encounter and providing assistance accordingly. The key is early identification of potential problems and provision of prompt treatment, which tallies with the spirit of providing primary health care services.

Regarding food safety, we know that the Government has done a lot in recent years. However, the Democratic Party expressed concern about the Government's relaxation of the ban on foods from five prefectures near Fukushima, Japan. We know that the Centre for Food Safety has found that some foods without a health certificate have entered Hong Kong. In this connection, we hope the Government can enhance its gatekeeping role.

As for the hairy crabs, they are in season now. Many people have asked me, "Dr WONG, what is the quality of hairy crabs this year?" The Government has stated that regardless whether the hairy crabs are imported from Taiwan, South Korea or the Mainland, it is fine as long as they have got health certificates. However, we heard that the hairy crabs sold in Taiwan recently have been found to contain excessive dioxin. We hope that the Secretary can clearly state what the Government has recently discussed with the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine and what new preventive measures are in place, so that hairy crab lovers can consume with peace of mind?

I so submit.

**DR PIERRE CHAN** (in Cantonese): President, as a representative of the medical sector, I will focus on the Government's work in the policy area of health care services in this session. I will first talk about where the Government is doing fairly well.

First of all, the medical and education sectors are glad to see that the Government is willing to accept our suggestion to ban the import, manufacture, sale, distribution and advertisement of e-cigarettes and other new smoking
products instead of legislating for their regulation, thus getting back to the original intention of banning e-cigarettes that we expressed two years ago. This is just the beginning, because the initiative has just been put forward orally and yet to be implemented, pending discussion by the Legislative Council, with much wrangling expected in the Bills Committee. The Government has to elaborate more clearly on the benefits of this policy to the health of Hong Kong people at large, particularly young people, in order to address public concerns and show its determination to enact legislation.

Secondly, it is about primary health care. In addition to setting up the first District Health Centre in Kwai Tsing District, which can be commissioned around the third quarter of next year, the Government has indicated that it has already identified suitable locations in Kowloon and the Eastern District to set up District Health Centres. While agreeing with this plan, I have to remind the Government of a few points. First, this document in my hand, which is provided by the Government, presents what I call "primary health care without family doctors in the Core Centre and Core Team". Second, there are actually 7,000 general practitioners and 400-odd family specialist practitioners in Hong Kong. Why do I mention this? Our discussion on primary health care and preventive treatment of diseases is indeed nothing but armchair analysis. Who have actually rolled up their sleeves to see patients? I can tell you with certainty that I have, because I am a specialist in gastroenterology and hepatology. Just this morning, I did 20 diabetes outpatient consultations and an inpatient ward round. What are my duties? The main objective of my duties is to prevent members of the public and patients from having stroke, heart disease, kidney disease and foot ulcers. I asked each patient in the clinic: "Have you pricked your finger?" The reply was "no". "Have you ever experienced any symptoms of low blood sugar at home?" The reply was "sometimes". "Your glycemic index is not so good. Have you avoided unsuitable foods or taken enough medicine?" The reply was: "Sometimes I do not take medicine because there is no time or I have to drive." We do these jobs every week, actually getting our hands dirty and rolling up our sleeves. These are the jobs to prevent disease.

The thing is, some colleagues have told me that the influenza surge has not yet peaked but the ward is already full. Why? First, currently many non-Hong Kong people come over to see doctors. Secondly, many other diseases are preventable but we have not done a good job in prevention. For example, every day of every week we receive stroke patients, cardiac patients in need of angioplasty surgery, and patients in need of renal dialysis. Then the patients and
their family members may ask us: "Doctor, why does a stroke happen? Why me?" We repeat our words like a tape recorder every day, just like the way government officials do, but we explain to patients in a humanized way, saying that it is because of smoking, high blood pressure, diabetes and improper control of cholesterol. The patients have evidently taken medication and seen doctors, according to their words, but they have not achieved proper control. In the ward, even if the stroke or cardiac patients have the habit of smoking, we will help them recover. And so, during the outpatient consultation following the inpatient ward round in the morning, we will tell the patients: "Before a stroke strikes, please give some serious thoughts to your need for proper primary health care and preventive treatment of diseases." We say these words every day.

According to the data on Key Performance Indicators of the Hospital Authority ("HA"), only half of the diabetes patients keep their condition under good control, despite the untold resources we have put in. There is constant discussion about primary health care and preventive treatment of diseases, but how many people support those of us who actually get our hands dirty? To take the heart disease that I mentioned just now as an example, some smoker patients have fallen off the non-smoking wagon after undergoing three angioplasty surgeries in the wake of a heart attack. Why are we so concerned about e-cigarettes? It is precisely because of the fairness and justice that everyone talks about, or similar reasons. Who will clean up the mess? The answer is us. I hope the Government understands that while it is easy to talk about primary health care in words and on paper, it is imperative to make good use of valuable human resources to provide the public with truly appropriate primary health care services.

Regarding disease prevention, I welcome the Government's initiative to introduce free HPV vaccination to school girls of particular age groups. I believe this will effectively prevent cervical cancer and ensure sufficient HPV vaccine supply for girls of eligible age in Hong Kong.

As far as the vaccine is concerned, notably a number of different situations have come up over the past six months to one year, including the depletion of HPV vaccine stocks by people from outside Hong Kong, adoption of unfair trade practices by some intermediaries, and emergence of parallel imports and counterfeit goods in the market. In just a short couple of days, my office received 300 to 400 requests for assistance, and had to respond to them one by one. They asked about what to do when, after the first jab, the second one was
not available. Could it be that society is to blame? If the vaccine is covered by the Government's scheme, I can be sure that girls or women of eligible age in Hong Kong will get enough vaccine. I would like to also tell you that not all women are suitable for vaccination. Only those of a certain age cohort are.

In addition to HPV vaccination, we are working very hard on seasonal flu vaccination, but despite our best efforts, there are always people who make such remarks as "vaccination is useless" or "the vaccine contains heavy metals". I hope that the Government will actively respond to such public doubts, thus enhancing disease prevention in the community and reducing the use of public hospitals during the peak season. In fact, I have to praise the colleagues in different departments, including hospitals, the Department of Health and HA. Earlier on, when I was on my way to this meeting, a nurse colleague asked if I had been vaccinated against influenza. I said that I would get vaccinated later. She asked: "When will you get vaccinated? Let's make it today." I asked: "At what time today?" She agreed that I should receive a flu jab from her after going back at 3:00 pm to do a colonoscopy on a patient. I just wish to tell you all that our colleagues are working very hard on real stuff, instead of playing armchair generals. However, I can tell you all that the percentage of vaccination coverage is not high, because Hong Kong people have a choice.

In addition, I would like to point out that not all cancers are suitable for screening. For example, we use HPV vaccination in the hope of reducing the chance of cervical cancer. There are Woman Health Centres in Hong Kong to perform cervical smears for members of the public, but the utilization rate is not high.

For the screening of colorectal cancer, we are now using the fecal occult blood test instead of vaccination or other methods. Why? The reason is that, thanks to experiments and experience, we have learned that not all diseases are suitable for screening, because the screening on some diseases may unnecessarily prompted doubts and examinations.

For example, I saw a patient last week, who held a report indicating that his liver cancer index had risen slightly, but the report was made 10 years ago. During these 10 years, examinations had been constantly conducted to ascertain whether he suffered from liver cancer, but the findings were negative. Now that I follow up his case, I told him that he should not have been tested for liver cancer index in the first place, because he did not have liver cancer. I explained to him
that just because the liver cancer index was slightly on the high side, he had received five to six ultrasound scans, three to four computer scans, and magnetic resonance scans during the treatment process with a view to assuring him that he did not have liver cancer. This is exactly a waste of our time and the reason why we have so much work.

External laboratories conduct tests for cancer indices, but I wish to point out here what a cancer index is for. When a person is diagnosed with cancer, we use the cancer index to see if he will return to normal after surgery, how effective the treatment is, and whether his cancer has relapsed. In the past 10 years, the tests for cancer indices have caused considerable worry to patients, prompting them to receive many scans afterwards. Now the method I use is to stop everything. I reassured him with confidence that he had no liver cancer and did not need to continue this way. After 10 minutes' talk with him, he expressed gratitude to me.

The problem I found is that various screenings and examinations have been going on with no end in sight, but when no evidence of disease is found afterwards, it is eventually my turn to clean up the mess. Why do I have so much work? I have you to thank for that.

President, I have just mentioned various policies that promote good governance. However, many of these measures are mainly targeted at specific groups. The beneficiaries are still quite limited. Why do I say that it promotes good governance? Good governance is not in the same league as virtuous governance, not just in terms of the breadth and depth of policy, but also in terms of vision. Only policies with foresight and sincerity that provide for the long-term well-being of the public and constantly benefit the public health can be described as promoting good governance. However, I find this Policy Address sketchy on the support for public health care services and the precautionary measures for the long-term health of Hong Kong people at large.

In fact, Prof YUEN Kwok-yung, Dr David Christopher LUNG and I have written articles and proposals on this issue, and met with the Chief Executive and the Financial Secretary. I know that, with its surplus, the Government will make some large-scale investments down the line. This is the best opportunity. As economy may reverse, Hong Kong will not consistently run a surplus. It is exactly because I have noticed this situation that I propose to prepare for all eventualities by setting up some funds to make constant and adequate preparation
to address the long-term health care problems in Hong Kong for the sake of public health. If we are not prepared now, when the economy reverses in the future, we will need to cut expenses or implement the "0-1-1" programme, and then some of my proposals cannot be taken forward, or even have to be reduced. Nevertheless, this Policy Address has not responded to any proposals, nor even made any preparation. I am worried about the soundness of the future health care system.

To quote an example, regarding the means test mechanism for financial assistance on patients' drug expenses, the Government only proposes to lower the patients' out-of-pocket spending, without having accepted the recommendations from patient organizations, patients, Legislative Council Members or even us. We proposed to set up a $10 billion support fund and make use of its interest to support the medical expenses associated with uncommon diseases. With an annual interest rate of 2.5%, the sum will be $250 million per year, which is really remarkable. It can be used to support patients with uncommon diseases, including rare diseases and terminal cancers, so as to mitigate the heavy financial burden on Hong Kong patients and their families due to the long-term use of expensive drugs and the payment for diagnosis and examination.

Why do I say so? At present, some medicines for uncommon diseases and expensive drugs are often found in an unfavourable position in the approval mechanism because they may not be so effective as certain drugs, nor comparable in cost-effectiveness to certain highly effective drugs, such as hepatitis drugs, but their cost reaches up to millions of dollars, like a fraction with a small numerator and a large denominator. Just think, what will be the result? The differences are evident in each approval process of the Community Care Fund ("CCF"), overseen by the Secretary for Labour and Welfare, or HA. I found problems with the approval mechanism, so I suggest that an additional capital injection is essential, otherwise every patient will have to kneel down to beg for subsidy in every application for assistance, which is not a long-term solution. This is one of the problems.

Here comes the second problem. When I worked as a doctor 20 years ago, I pushed for buying blood pressure and cholesterol drugs for patients. Back in those years, each pill cost $10, so the expense amounted to $300 per month and over $3,000 per year. I kept doing the rounds and exhausting all words to advocate for patients' interests. As there was no mechanism in HA for the supply of self-financed item drugs, if these drugs had not been bought, the
doctors could not use them. That was what happened 20 years ago. Fast-forward to today, and we have a regularly high consumption of blood pressure and cholesterol drugs. Patients have already benefited from it, at no cost. The price of each pill is a few dollars or tens of cents. You might say that the pills were so expensive 20 years ago that each cost several dollars.

Ten years ago, when I was working on some cancer treatments, I discussed with the patients that there were many new target therapy drugs at the time, which cost $20,000 to $40,000 per month. I had responsibility for informing patients of such options, but the problem was that the Government and HA were not responsible for them. The only merit was that we had a self-financing mechanism and safety net called "Self-Financed Item", which could be used in certain cases so that the patients were spared from referral to a private hospital for treatment because of the unavailability of drugs. The only merit was that HA could give patients choice, but please listen carefully for the price: It varied from $20,000 to $40,000. We had to make exhausting lobbying efforts and apply for assistance from various funds (e.g. CCF) on behalf of the patients. We did not know why we had to do these jobs. Fast-forward to today, and I have become a Member of the Legislative Council. How much do I have to raise now? Some drugs for rare diseases and cancers cost $1 million, $2 million … What is going wrong? What have I noticed? Drugs are ever changing and we are unable to afford the prices dictated by pharmaceutical companies. On the one hand, we have to raise money to help the grass-roots patients in need, but on the other, we have to face very high prices.

I hope that the Government and the Secretaries can give a serious thought and understand that we have a way to deal with this problem. I am not trying to stifle our business environment, which I also agree is very important to Hong Kong, but who can afford millions of dollars a year of drug expenses? How can one raise enough money for the drugs? Some countries have adopted such a practice as introducing competition. Alternatively, given that every drug to be imported into any country or region, including Hong Kong, must be registered, the Department of Health can apply conditions of registration. My question is: as some drugs carry an exaggeratedly expensive price tag, and we need to deal with them, otherwise the drug manufacturers will quote a price of $5 million and then it will be paid by CCF, what should we do?

This is precisely the second problem. That is, on the one hand, we have to help patients find resources or new drugs, but on the other hand, prices are rising from, for example, $20 as said earlier, to $20,000 and even $2 million. That is
my personal experience. What should I do about it? What I will tell other patients next time, or I will say next time standing here, may be $10 million. Could you tell me what to do about it? Therefore, I hope that the authorities will, in addition to the Chief Executive receiving letters and raising enough money, ruminate about the necessary regulation and response in relation to some super-exaggeratedly expensive drugs. However, for the time being, the Government shows an unwilling attitude and fails to deal with it, so I express disappointment here on behalf of the patients.

Let us take the role of genetic recombination in the medical development as another example. Despite the fact that the Chief Executive has accepted the preliminary recommendations of the Steering Committee to promote innovative scientific research and conduct a genome sequencing project, the proposal put forward by Prof YUEN Kwok-yung and me have, in fact, advocated the establishment of a fund called "Cutting-edge Medical Technology Fund". Why? It is because, as the saying goes, "an army marches on its stomach". We have many suggestions, for example allocating additional resources to purchase cutting-edge medical equipment to help the public, so that people from different walks of life can benefit from the accessibility to the latest medical technology. We have also proposed a quality medical service scheme, but it has not been adopted either.

Let me cite an example. The Secretaries in attendance, the Government or we ourselves know full well that each procurement process entails many rigorous procedures, such as staff recruitment and purchase of machines, which may take two years to go from sourcing to approval application, tendering, and then purchase of the machines. If I paid for an iPhone two years ago but owned it only two years later, which model do you think it would be? Let me tell you something: all the instruments purchased for our hospitals are old models. All of them are products of the last generation. They cannot catch up, because there are too many application procedures. The instruments we buy are hardly the advanced ones. The manufacturer might give us a stock item of the last model and say that the timing is just right. We cannot handle this situation, so it is indeed still necessary to figure out a solution. Are our Government and the policies really facilitating innovation, or stifling its potential?

Science and technology are advancing at such a rapid pace that most people have no chance to benefit from them at all. They can only wait and hope. I wish to tell the Government that, in fact, you chant slogans every day advocating
innovation and technology and smart cities, but if you cannot really help the people, these empty slogans are meaningless no matter how loud they are. Let me cite an example related to innovation and technology. I take the MTR to work every day. If I want to know how long it would take to go from Admiralty to a certain place, I can check it on the mobile phone. Yesterday, I rushed to Kowloon Bay to join a football match. Which means of transport would be the fastest to use? As it was approaching 7:00 pm, there would be traffic congestion. Which was ultimately the fastest and most reliable way to go there? I opened Google to search for the answer, and then it suggested that I should go through the Cross-Harbour Tunnel. While I was waiting to enter the Cross-Harbour Tunnel, it suggested otherwise that it would be faster via the Eastern Harbour Crossing. Accordingly, I went through the Eastern Harbour Crossing and arrived just on time. Why do I say this? It is because, amid traffic congestion, I was not sure if it would be faster to take the MTR, but the problem is that while we are talking about innovation and technology and smart cities, the data of railways and buses can neither be made public nor exchanged. It is impossible to compare simultaneously whether it is faster to drive or to take the MTR to Kowloon Bay. I do not foresee that this problem can be resolved in the next five years.

Regarding the measures for sustainable development of the health care system, the Government revisited the second 10-year hospital development plan. It only talked about infrastructure, such as additional beds in hospitals and better teaching facilities in medical schools of universities, but ignored staffing expenditure. Just so you remember, the financial data of the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau show that, in the past two decades after the handover, the Government did cut back on the recurrent health expenditure in 2003-2004, 2004-2005 and 2005-2006, and reduce HA's funding in 2016-2017. Notably, the "0-1-1" programme was launched to cut medical expenditure in 2011, when the social economy, stock market and property market were booming. HA and I had to come up with every possible way to ride it out with the reserves. The expenditure was cut even at times of a thriving economy. Now, against the backdrop of a trade war between China and the United States right before our eyes, coupled with fluctuations in the economic cycle, I foresee that the Government will repeat the same mistakes in health care or overall expenditure.

As the Government's revenue and expenditure are affected by changes in the environment and economy within and outside Hong Kong, a corresponding adjustment is necessary. I graduated right in the era 20 years ago when the
overall expenditure, including health care, had to be cut and it was impossible to employ all the medical graduates. Most of my classmates and doctor friends could not work in HA or have their contracts renewed. Why are there insufficient doctors today? The cause is the then "voluntary retirement packages" and 50% pay cut. I was one of those who still stayed behind taking a 50% drop in salary. Today, I still insist on working in public hospitals, only to provide outpatient services not in my area of specialty. Why? Is it because of responsibility or love? What does the Government think? Under such great pressure, I have come off worse than others in terms of remuneration and salary increment. Has the problem been resolved?

I hope everybody understands that the purpose of Prof YUEN Kwok-yung and I urging the Government to consider our earlier proposal to set up a $10 billion-fund for stabilizing public health care provisions is that we can draw $1 billion or so from the fund to ride out two cold winters at times of economic downturn, knowing that the Government will cut our expenditure then. We have seen a cut in public health care expenditure in four or five years out of the past 20. During that time we would not cut services, but the only way out was to reduce manpower and salary, implement "voluntary retirement packages", and refrain from recruiting new staff, which were the most effective ways to reduce expenses. Therefore, what we propose is to make use of the surplus to set up a fund and save for rainy days. In fact, I foresee that the rainy day will come in the next 5 or 10 years.

Outside the realm of the funds, the Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme ("VHIS") has been a subject heatedly discussed with expectations for many years. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly indeed, our expectations have once again fallen short. The Government has proposed to provide tax deduction under VHIS, without mentioning a word about setting up the High Risk Pool and sharing the cost with insurance companies for the insurance coverage of high-risk individuals. In this way, it is absolutely impossible to alleviate the long-term pressure on the public health care system. In fact, sitting in the same boat, both doctors and patients are extremely worried and dissatisfied about this situation.

The relegation of VHIS from a promising scheme to a thing of the past represents a problem with the Government's governance ability. Had the Government been able to stand firm in negotiations with large consortia and big corporations, upholding the indomitable Lion Rock spirit, how would VHIS have ended up neither fish nor fowl today?
I have quoted examples from the domain of public health care to make myself clear. The annual public health care expenditure is in the tens of billions of dollars, between $50 billion and $60 billion. Think about it: 20 years ago, when we talked about health care financing, how could we raise $10 billion to spend on health care? Who would give you $10 billion per year? Philanthropists? The top rich? No, they would not. Funds of sorts? No fund could give you $10 billion every year. Well then, can insurance do the job? It can, marginally. However, if you ask for my opinion on this issue, I think that ultimately it should be incumbent upon the Government to take on public health care responsibilities. The Government is the largest structure to protect and insure the people of Hong Kong. It is high time to make it happen. In a nutshell, we need to have a safety net with which our public health care system will underwrite the shortfall regardless of whether the beneficiaries are rich or poor and whether they hold an identity card or not. This is what a safety net should be like.

As regards mental health policy, apart from mentioning the introduction of a public education initiative and the provision of support for ex-mentally ill persons, so far the Government still fails to give a detailed account on how to coordinate the Integrated Community Centres for Mental Wellness and district-based Health Centres.

I suggest that the Government should encourage non-governmental organizations to carry out innovative work in various districts, such as introducing a mutual support scheme modelled on foreign examples to tentatively match retired elderly people with young people troubled by family problems. Only more creativity in policy making can help the increasing number of psychiatric patients improve their condition and reintegrate into the community as soon as possible.

Generally speaking, the Government's current initiatives in the policy area of health care services are meritorious in part but extremely lacking in precautionary awareness. Therefore, I still have reservations about this Policy Address, and hope that the Government can heed good advice, remain vigilant about risks and be well prepared.

President, I so submit.
MR SHIU KA-FAI (in Cantonese): President, this debate session mainly concerns improvement of livelihood, involving health care services, food safety, labour issues, elderly services, women and children affairs, some welfare affairs, and so on.

I will begin my speech by focusing on health and food safety issues. First, I wish to thank the Food and Health Bureau. I know that the Bureau has always attached great importance to the health of Hong Kong citizens. And, thanks to the efforts of all health care workers who labour behind the scenes, Hong Kong has the longest life expectancy for both men and women in the world. I believe that this must have been the result of the efforts of the present and previous Directors of Bureaux and their colleagues. However, as I have often said, everything has two sides—a good side and a bad side. Of course I believe that long life expectancy is not a bad thing. Everybody wants to have a long and healthy life. However, I believe Hong Kong citizens also need to know what we must pay for long and healthy lives.

In recent years, the Food and Health Bureau has been very strict in food safety and food tests. This is good for the reputation of Hong Kong. I am talking about the good side. What about the bad side? We all know that, in the past three years, if we wanted to eat fresh chicken meat, local live chickens have been the only option and their Mainland counterparts have been absent from Hong Kong for more than three years. The Food and Health Bureau has always said that it has not banned the importation of Mainland live chickens into Hong Kong. This year's government reports concerning live poultry also support continued supply of live chickens. Why have Mainland live chickens not been imported to Hong Kong for three years? Why can we only eat local live chickens? Is it not good to eat local live chickens?

This is of course not true. Some of our friends think that local live chickens are particularly tasty. However, the price of a local live chicken is about $200 to $300, while a Mainland live chicken costs, to my knowledge, only about $70 to $100. In fact, Hong Kong people have been deprived of the option to buy a Mainland live chicken for $70 to $100 for already three years. How many Hong Kong people have not been able to eat live chickens because of the high prices? By how much must their monthly expenditures be increased before they can afford to eat live chickens? I believe we should think about these questions.
I also want to talk about hairy crabs, which, we all know, are a traditional food in Hong Kong as well as in our Country. In the past couple of years, Hong Kong citizens have also questioned why it has become more difficult to import hairy crabs. In fact, a batch of Mainland hairy crabs have already arrived in Hong Kong via a transit place. I welcome the arrival of this batch of more than 20,000 hairy crabs.

However, it is already early November now and the hairy crabs season will end soon. Why do Mainland hairy crabs need to be imported to Hong Kong via a transit place? What problems will be caused by importing these crabs via a transit place? As consumers of hairy crabs, we probably have a rough idea of their prices. A hairy crab weighing four to five taels used to be priced at upwards of $100. This year, the price for a hairy crab of similar weight will cost more than $200. Importing hairy crabs via an intermediary transit place, air transport costs will be increased two or three folds. Governments of the transit places will incur additional costs of $20,000 to $30,000 for food safety tests. Why is it necessary to import hairy crabs via a transit place? What has caused this awkward situation?

When the Food and Health Bureau set up food safety standards to protect the health of Hong Kong citizens, I hope that the Bureau will balance the needs of business and the citizens. If food safety standards are set at too high a level, the two above mentioned situations will arise in the end. The Bureau advocates reducing the intake of salt and sugar. Stir-fried rice noodles with beef should thus be avoided. Rice noodles with stir-fried pork ribs in black bean and chilli sauce are also deemed to have a high sodium level. Actually, I wish to ask the Bureau how long it wants Hong Kong people to live? We will all go to heaven some day. If the Bureau wants the people to live an eternal life and, as a result, give us less and less choices, I will tell the Secretary that I will come forward to oppose this. So, I hope the Bureau will think clearly when it formulates its policy.

The Chief Executive has taken a sharp turn in policy by proposing to put electronic cigarettes and heat-not-burn ("HnB") cigarettes under regulation. I wish to point out that I believe smoking, drinking, football betting and horse racing betting are all bad habits. Is Hong Kong going to forbid all of them? This is what the controversies are about. In June, the Government said that it would regulate electronic cigarettes. I believe many of my friends who were electronic or HnB cigarette smokers were very happy when they heard about this.
They had written many letters to tell me that they had not been able to buy HnB cigarettes for more than one year. But now they would be very worried about being arrested. They hoped that the Government would provide them with lawful access to one more choice.

I dare to bet that over 90% of Hong Kong people cannot distinguish between electronic and HnB cigarettes. They are confused about these two being the same thing. One week before the delivery of the Policy Address, many health care and education organizations expressed their views on television or in other types of media. They even used some primary school students and small children as examples to show that 12-year old students were already smoking electronic cigarettes. This has instilled fear among Hong Kong people that small children are being poisoned by electronic cigarettes. However, what is the real picture of electronic cigarette smoking among Hong Kong people?

In the past, the Government has never regulated and restricted the sale of electronic cigarettes in Hong Kong. Electronic cigarettes have been sold in shops as toys for more than $100 each. They are also available in stationery shops. These electronic cigarettes may not contain liquid and their users just inhale. Were the education and health care workers who came forward with the children telling the truth? Yes, they were indeed telling the truth. Electronic cigarettes are so inexpensive and subject to no regulation. Most people do not know much about the ingredients of electronic cigarettes. Children would simply consider them nothing more than a toy.

Had the Government regulated electronic cigarettes from the beginning by forbidding their sale to those under the age of 18, the situation would have been the same as that of traditional cigarettes. The smoking population of Hong Kong, close to 10% of the total population, is among the lowest in the world. I believe the number of cigarette smokers among Hong Kong students is even lower, because traditional cigarettes are very expensive in Hong Kong. Moreover, electronic cigarettes are not regulated, resulting in more children using them. The Government has all along not regulated electronic cigarettes, but now it intends to take a sweeping approach by banning electronic cigarettes, contributing to the present situation.

The greatest problem is that the Government, in addition to electronic cigarettes, also wants to forbid HnB cigarettes. HnB cigarette smokers will be holding an egg-shaped object or a long object to inhale. One will not see any smoke coming out and there will not be much smell. There are many examples
in foreign countries claiming that HnB cigarettes are actually a tobacco product that can reduce harms and cancer-causing substances of traditional cigarettes by over 90%. This is what they told me.

I do not know which reports on which the Bureau has based for its conclusion that electronic cigarettes will cause even greater harms and thus more sinister. I dare not judge, because I am not a professional in this matter. However, HnB cigarettes and electronic cigarettes are two completely different products. Children cannot even afford to buy traditional cigarettes, let alone HnB cigarettes which are priced at $70 to $80 a packet?

Before the delivery of the Policy Address, these two groups of kind-hearted friends of ours advocated forbidding cigarettes, but their target was electronic cigarettes. Why are HnB cigarettes muddled up? These two are actually different products. In fact, many people who used to smoke traditional cigarettes in foreign countries have already switched to HnB cigarettes. Reports in Japan point out that after the introduction of these new tobacco products, the traditional cigarette market in Japan has shrunk by 30% in two years. Many smokers have abandoned traditional cigarettes, pointing to a trend in this direction.

Now, the Government has proposed a ban on these two kinds of tobacco products, but traditional cigarettes will not be forbidden. Such a move is hardly convincing. HnB and traditional cigarettes are actually very similar products, except that HnB cigarettes are not burnt. If burning may release many cancer-causing substances, HnB cigarettes, which are not burnt, will produce less cancer-causing substances. Why do we not allow Hong Kong people to choose for themselves? I am not standing on moral high ground, but should the Government consider this matter purely from the angle the health of the people and thus deprive Hong Kong people of the right to choose?

I agree that the Government only needs to strictly regulate electronic cigarettes. I do not know what ingredients these electronic cigarettes contain, but if the regulation applies to people over 18 years of age, we will need to know what the ingredients are. People under 18 should be completely forbidden to smoke electronic cigarettes. I fully support this. However, as for adults, why not let them choose for themselves? Will this lead to the smuggling of contraband or even counterfeit cigarettes in the future? I believe the Food and Health Bureau must also seriously consider these questions.
The next subject I want to talk about is the Consumer Council ("the Council"). The Council may not be under the Food and Health Bureau, but I know they work closely together. In fact, the Council is a highly regarded organization in Hong Kong. In the past, it has often reminded the people of the hazards of electric leakage or fire of some products, or the impact on health after consumption of some food. I salute and thank the Council for its reminders to Hong Kong people, which make them know more about the hazards concerned.

However, in recent months, many friends in the business sector have conveyed their views to me. The Council has conducted quite a number of product tests and comparisons. Earlier, it compared mattresses and claimed that low-price products might be better than more expensive ones. It has also said that lower-priced face masks are as effective as higher-priced ones, and so on. It is certainly a good thing for the Council to help people choose products that are inexpensive and good, but I actually have some queries. I wonder how the Council set its standards? Regarding mattresses, are lower-priced mattresses necessarily better than higher-priced ones? How do we assess the values? Face mask tests are another example. Some face mask products may have 10 strong points, while some others may only help users moisturize. If only the level of moisturization is compared, the two groups of products may be the same. While the lower-priced products are effective in moisturization, the moisturizing efficacy of the higher-priced ones may be more or less the same, but the higher-priced products may have other functions like tightening skins.

People will conclude after hearing about these tests that the higher the prices, the worse the quality will be, and the higher the technology level, the worse the product will be. Such conclusion may not be fair to some of our friends in the business sector. I hope that, when the Council conducts this kind of comparisons, it will also give clear explanations. This is because some products may have more than one function or strong point. For example, a knife may look beautiful and feel good to the hand as well. In fact, there are many different marketing and promotion strategies for products. I think the Council should try its best to hold fast to its original mandate when introducing products. It should not let the people feel that they are interfering with the business environment of Hong Kong.

The Secretary for Labour and Welfare has left this Chamber. It is now already past 2:00 pm. He also needs to have lunch. I will speak briefly on this area, because my Party Leader has already returned to the Chamber. He will speak later. I believe he will use most of his time to talk about this area.
Regarding the labour policy of Hong Kong, people hope that they will have higher wages and more leave days. This is what I also hope for, but how will these not weaken our competitiveness so that there is room of survival for doing businesses in Hong Kong? How can we be comparable with the countries, cities and places around us without being eliminated or falling behind? Our competitiveness ranking is on the decline, a direct result of our policy. Labour policy is a very important factor. The factors which need to be taken into account when doing business range from rental, manpower and goods costs. Rents in Hong Kong are exorbitant. I will talk about this in detail when I speak on Lantau Tomorrow Vision later.

Labour costs have made it very difficult for Hong Kong people to do business. Secretary, what I am not talking about is a single labour policy, but a whole package of labour policies: increasing paternity leave from 3 days to 5 days, increasing statutory maternity leave from 10 weeks to 14 weeks, revising standard working hours and leave days for "blue-collar" and "white-collar" workers, as well as abolishing the offsetting arrangement under the Mandatory Provident Fund System which is what the business sector is most worried about. Implementation of this policy by the Government could lead to "massive business closures". Some members of the business sector have said that out of fear of the Government, they will change to a contract system of employment and scale down their businesses.

We agree with the need to ensure retirement protection for the labouring class. However, is it necessary for the whole business sector to be involved? Mr CHUNG Kwok-pan has always been proposing that a "fund pool" be set up. We can discuss this from the angle of mutual benefits. I think that the Secretary should seriously consider this proposal.

I so submit. Thank you, President.

MR CHEUNG KWOK-KWAN (in Cantonese): President, this debate session covers the policy areas of family and children, and education is closely related to family and children. Hence, in this debate session, I will share my views on family and children, as well as policies related to education.
President, in the part on the education policy of the Policy Address, the Chief Executive reiterates two statements that she said in the past, and they are, "the Government's expenditure on education is the most meaningful investment in our future" and "we should treat our teachers nicely".

According to the Chief Executive, these two statements have earned wide support from the education sector, and that the statements will become the guiding principles of the SAR Government for handling education matters. Undeniably, this Government has devoted substantially more resources on education policy; and in all fairness, the Government does manage to stabilize the education environment.

If we make a causal count, we will find that a substantial amount of education resources has been devoted to teachers and principals. These measures include having increased the teacher-to-class ratio for public sector schools by 0.1 across-the-board and provided around 2 200 additional regular teaching posts. Moreover, the Government has allowed aided secondary schools with surplus teachers arising from the reduction of secondary one classes in the past few years to relatively extend the retention period for the surplus teachers concerned until the number of overall secondary one students rebounds steadily. And the Government has also pledged that it will work together with schools to tackle the issue when the same situation arises in the future due to decline in the number of Primary One students, and prevent teachers from losing their jobs.

Besides, the Government has also rolled out a number of measures. For example, it will allocate an additional funding of $1.5 billion to implement the all-graduate teaching force policy in public sector primary and secondary schools. This is what we are more concerned about under the part on education policy of this Policy Address. Several Members held press conferences immediately after the Government's announcement of the all-graduate teaching force policy that I just mentioned. They said that the measure was infeasible, since the Government would then have to tackle issues like rationalizing the salaries for principals and vice-principals and improving the middle management in primary schools. This was because after the all-graduate teaching force policy was launched, there would be a need to increase the middle management manpower. In fact, the Government has already earmarked $500 million recurrent allocation in this Policy Address for this purpose and additional resources of $570 million
each year for public sector schools and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme ("DSS") to strengthen their administrative support and reduce the school administrative duties of teachers.

The series of measures I just mentioned all seek to positively address the livelihood of the teaching staff in the education sector, rationalize their pay scale and salaries, as well as alleviate the administrative workload of school principals and teachers. School principals and teachers play a critical role in the education sector. They are also important stakeholders. The large resources injections by the SAR Government to address their problems are thus important in improving the education quality. These proposals have earned the support of Members as can be seen from the fact that Members of different parties and groups in the Legislative Council have voiced no strong objection to the allocations and new resources for education over the past two years. I believe this is what we all have expected.

However, as parents in this society, I cannot help but ask whether improving the salaries and remunerations of principals and teachers and addressing their livelihood issues are the only work we can do to reform the education system and provide better children education? What kind of an education system and reform do we need? We often say that we want our children to happily enjoy quality education. I believe the SAR Government is well aware that money alone cannot get rid of all the drawbacks of the present education policy, especially the unhappy learning experiences of our children. Can the measures make the education system better? As far as this question is concerned, a spending spree is definitely not an adequate answer to the problem.

President, are many parents actually feeling very dissatisfied with the education system? Perhaps, I should not use the word "dissatisfied". But I believe I can say that they do not quite trust the education system in Hong Kong. Many parents think that children are subject to immense learning pressure, and schools, especially public sector schools, count too much on drilling and recitation as the way of learning and give children too much homework. They also think that the school syllabus is detached from the skillset required for their children's future work and is unable to properly prepare them for the future competition and development.
Of course, in past discussion on this issue, we often heard public officers of the Education Bureau deny this as true. They said that the system has many merits and has no problem. But facts speak louder than words. Why? If we look at the Primary One and Secondary One admission, we know how society and parents think about the education system.

At times of school enrolment, we often see parents fight for a place at international schools and DSS schools for their children. I believe any parents who have the experience of school enrolment for their children understand what I am saying. These parents have told society and the SAR Government with their action that they disapprove of the education in public sector schools and believe other better education models are better. I think their action speaks louder than words. The problems with the education policy are indeed far too deep and wide; and with the limited time today, I will only focus on three of them.

First, I wish to talk about homework. We often say that a healthy development of a child should, in addition to schooling for knowledge build-up, include time for rest and games. Not only will this allow them to relax, but also develop their mental capacity. Many past studies have found that we need to give children more room. But what about the actual situation now? In my conversations with parents at each district visit, they often look very worried especially when we talk about children who just started their Primary One or Secondary One education. Why? They say that drilling is common in many schools. A parent told me earlier that his child just enrolled into a school in Eastern District studying Primary One and was subject to immense pressure because his child had more than 10 pieces of homework every day. His child, together with the mother who accompanied the child, had to spend time after school to do the 10-odd pieces of homework. Apart from the time for meals and bath, the child simply did not have time for rest and games. This is the situation many parents have to face now.

Certainly, there are some parents in society who hold a more conservative or traditional view on education. They believe that children should sit tight and learn, and only by studying hard from morning till night will they be able to acquire knowledge. But should this be the way Hong Kong train its future talents? Society now is different from the old days. We are not sitting for the imperial examination and we no longer need to recite the Four Books and the Five Classics of Confucianism. Society now does not need people who can only
recite books like a robot. If we need to know hard facts, we can find out the answer anytime with our smart phone or on the Internet. We need talents who are knowledgeable and with a vibrant and innovative mind.

Hence, I hope that the SAR Government can be resolute in reviewing the homework policy now, look into and practically tackle the problem of excessive homework and stop the culture of excessive competition. Moreover, do we really want our children to have so many tests and examinations in every school term? Is this the only means in this education system for schools to test children for their ability and study progress? I truly hope that apart from injecting a few billion dollars, or even over ten billion dollars, of additional resources on education every year, the Government can also make an effort in these areas and demonstrate its determination to improve our education system.

President, the second point I wish to say is not about homework, but about the role parents play in education. To educate children properly, children have to work hard themselves and schools have to do a proper job of education … Of course, we see many school teachers and principals are working very hard, but it is also very important that parents play a supporting role inside or outside school if we want children to have a good development. I notice a phenomenon in traditional prestigious schools that people compete for a place. That is, the parents also participate in the school activities. This is important. Many parents not only help in monitoring their children's schoolwork, but also in extra-curricular activities in schools. Hence, parents play an irreplaceable role in the education of their children. They play a key role.

The Chief Executive pledges in this Policy Address an additional recurrent expenditure of about $30 million from the 2019-2020 school year onwards. The additional resources are allocated to the Federations of Parent-Teacher Associations and the Parent-Teacher Associations ("PTAs") of schools for organizing more parent education programmes or activities. It is certainly a correct and good direction that the SAR Government recognizes and supports parent education. However, my past observation is that the way which Education Bureau officials promote parent education is too conservative and the format is very rigid.

I have communicated with many PTA chairmen and members, asking them how PTAs organize their annual activities. They say that they are given several thousand to ten thousand dollars every year by the Government to organize a tea or dinner gathering or a seminar. The content is the same every year. These
are the activities organized by PTAs every year. The format is rather boring and parents show up as a matter of rituals. In fact, educational activities for parents do not need to be in the traditional format of a sermon-like talk. These activities should encourage participants to think, so that the activities can become a family activity for both parents and children. Why do I say so? Recently, a PTA chairman recommended a musical suitable for the whole family to me. It promotes parent education with elements of children-family relationship. The performance is lively and the conversation funny. The story aptly reflects what is going on in society. How? For instance, there is a heated scene in which the parents get angry when they urge their children to do homework. I believe school-age children in every family have seen their mothers get angry. I believe as the man in the family, fathers should know what to do at this moment. We had best remain silent, sit aside and not involve in this "family's internal affair" or interfere with how our wives teach our children to do homework. Indeed, a mother is often under great pressure when she teaches her children homework, how to learn or takes care of them. As a father, I often want to play with my children when I return home. But if it happens to be homework time, I will not disturb them, especially when my wife starts to become emotionally disturbed.

There are other interesting scenes in the musical, such as children having stomach ache, losing their temper, getting out of control and insomnia before examinations. I do not know how many parents can identify with these experiences, but these are a true reflection of the school life now and the parent-children interactions. The audience, that is, the parents and children, can see themselves in many scenes in the musical. The aforementioned PTA chairman told me, some parents had tears in their eyes as they could identify themselves with the characters. The musical is deeply educational. Through the scenes in the musical, parents learn unwittingly how to love their children the correct way and how to get along with the children in the correct attitude when they teach them homework. This is the kind of parent education we wish to see.

If the television programme Police Magazine can be presented in such a lively and funny way and those experienced actors and actresses can become so popular, and if the newly-created mascot "Anyone" of the Fire Services Department can become a beloved character that gets the attention of society, and if "Big Waster", the character that is used to promote conservation strategies, has made a deep impression on the public, why can we not keep abreast of the time and be more up-to-date with society when we reform education and promote parent education?
President, the last point I wish to raise, and in fact I have talked about it for many years, is the "matchbox school premises". The SAR Government has been financially well-off in recent years. As I just said, the resources allocated for education amount to a few billion dollars and even over 10 billion dollars. But we cannot help but shake our head when we see the unresolved problem of "matchbox school premises" that has existed for many years. Hong Kong is a prosperous cosmopolis. The problem is indeed a big irony. The Government has a large fiscal surplus, and it says that it is willing to solve any problems that can be solved by money. But we still cannot find a solution to the "matchbox school premises". We insist on trying to address this problem when we discuss the education policy. We will not remain silent or avoid talking about this problem. We hope that the SAR Government can face this problem squarely and have courage to deal with it in its upcoming education policy reform.

Certainly, the crux of the problem with the "matchbox school premises", apart from money, lies in land. Land is not only closely related to our education policy, but also other livelihood issues in Hong Kong. I will thus talk about this problem again later when we come to the debate on land issues.

President, on the whole, the Policy Address is able to deliver in improving the salaries and remunerations of the teaching force and alleviate their workload. But in my opinion, it still has some room for improvement in addressing such old issues as how to improve the student learning problems and the "matchbox school premises". I anticipate that the upcoming Budget and the next Policy Address will touch more on these issues.

President, I so submit.

MR CHUNG KWOK-PAN (in Cantonese): President, before the meeting was suspended last night, Dr LAW Chi-kwong, Secretary for Labour and Welfare mentioned that I might bring up the issue of importation of labour. However, Mr Tommy CHEUNG has already expressed his views on this matter, and therefore I am not going to elaborate on this now.

I believe that communication is very important. Two weeks ago, I exchanged views with the Secretary on the matter of importation of labour. Then I came to understand that the Labour and Welfare Bureau is not the only bureau that is involved in the importation of labour. Indeed, only after other bureaux have formulated the relevant policies can the Labour and Welfare Bureau
open the gate. For instance, matters relating to construction workers have to do with the Transport and Housing Bureau and the Development Bureau. The Labour and Welfare Bureau can only proceed after the two bureaux have said that there is a need to import various types of construction workers and skilled workers, and have formulated the relevant policies accordingly. It is therefore unfair to put all the blame on the Labour and Welfare Bureau, accusing them of refusing to import workers and thereby causing shortage of labour. After communication, we have now obtained a clear picture of the situation, and therefore I certainly will not lay the blame on the Labour and Welfare Bureau only. We may also have to discuss with the Transport and Housing Bureau, the Development Bureau, and the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau in dealing with the shortage of labour. It shows that communication is very important.

However, the Secretary should not hide behind his computer screen when communicating with us or responding to the questions raised by the small and medium enterprises ("SMEs"). The Secretary should be aware that more than 150 cross-sector business associations representing SMEs have recently voiced their objections against the abolition of the offsetting arrangement under the Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") System in a high-profile manner. I hope that the Secretary will spare some time to discuss with them personally as soon as possible instead of responding behind his computer screen or through the media. It is an unhealthy and impractical approach which cannot bring about any solution.

Coming back to the Policy Address, paragraph 205 states that the proposal to abolish the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System is "for the purpose of enhancing employees' retirement protection". Retirement protection concerns the whole society. Why the responsibility should be borne by the employers? Even employers themselves may not be able to know how their own retirement life would be or secure their own retirement life. If so, how is it possible for them to cater for the future retirement needs of all their employees? It is therefore unfair to place the responsibility for retirement protection on the employers.

Secretary Dr LAW said that abolishing the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System will lead to a 5.6% increase in labour cost. Let me make a simple calculation. The Secretary said that even primary school students would not think in this way, but it is some simple mathematics that can be understood by primary school students. If the cost increases by 5.6%, how much will it cost in one year? If 1% is equivalent to about $6 billion, then the cost for one year will
be $6 billion multiplied by 5.6, amounting to $33.6 billion, and will amount to $840 billion over 25 years. The resulting $840 billion is a fact, but other variables, such as annual salary increases and inflation, have not yet been included in the calculation. Now let me apply an average compound annual growth rate of 3% for a period of 25 years. Well, I do not mean to scare everyone, but an increase of 5.6% will involve an astonishing amount of more than $1,700 billion.

The Secretary will certainly argue that it is not a proper way of calculation because no employer will not dismiss any employees in 25 years, and some employees will resign on their own accord without having to utilize their MPF contributions for offsetting purposes. In addition, large enterprises with sufficient resources can afford the relevant expenditure when they dismiss their employees, without the need to utilize MPF contributions for offsetting purposes. Therefore, 5.6% is not an accurate estimation.

Let me reduce the estimation a bit to 2.2% and make a simple primary-school-level calculation again. $6 billion multiplied by 2.2 for a period of 25 years will amount to $330 billion. If a compound annual growth rate of 3% is applied again, the total amount will become $880 billion, which is also an astonishing figure. However, the Secretary might disagree again. Therefore, instead of 2.2%, let me further reduce the percentage to 0.8%. Even so, $6 billion multiplied by 0.8 for a period of 25 years still amounts to $120 billion. If a compound growth rate is applied again, the total amount will surpass $200 billion. In other words, no matter how much the percentage is reduced, the labour costs involved will also be an enormous amount, and I believe the Secretary will give his comment later.

Today, the Government proposed that a subsidy of $29.2 billion will be sufficient to cope with the need. I can say with absolute certainty that such proposal cannot solve the problem. In addition, 5.6% is an actual figure, because in any case, financial provisions must be made in the corporate financial accounting. That means whether it is $840 billion or more than $1,700 billion, financial provisions must be made in financial accounting practice, but it is another matter as to whether they will be utilized.

It gives an impression that the business sector is insatiable and asks for more even though the Government has promised to commit $29.2 billion already. Indeed, the business sector has no intention to ask for more. I dare to say that if
the Secretary is willing to set up one single account, instead of setting up 300,000 accounts, we can give up this $29.2 billion. Why is that so? What the Government requested is that employers should make an additional 1% contribution, which involves $6 billion a year, but indeed only $4 billion is used for offsetting purpose per year. Therefore, $6 billion would be more than sufficient to cover the offsetting and government subsidy is not needed.

But the Government is expected to share the responsibility. Why? It is because the Government undertook that an offsetting arrangement would be available when the MPF legislation was enacted in 2000, and therefore it has the moral obligation to share the responsibility. We only need half of that $29.2 billion, and the Government can spend the remaining $15 billion on other labour benefits, instead of using it to subsidize the business sector. I will talk about such labour benefits later.

As a matter of fact, employers have accrued certain amount of funds in the existing MPF accounts for offsetting purpose already. Yesterday, I did not have the opportunity to comment on the youth policy or future development of young people. The Government encourages young people to start their business, and many people also want to set up start-ups. However, frankly speaking, the reality is that the startup failure rate for many young people, and indeed not only young people, is over 50%, and the success rate ranges from 20% to 30% only. If some young entrepreneurs end up in failure and close their business after five to six years following the enactment of the legislation, only at the point of closing down will they be able to find out the exact amount of severance payment ("SP") or long service payment ("LSP") they have to pay the employees, although there is a formula for calculating the payment. In fact, the formula provided by the Secretary is very complicated. It was proposed that in the first three years, the Government would subsidize 50% of the payment, and the subsidy would be progressively reduced starting from the fourth year. In other words, employers would receive subsidy based on a certain subsidy rate for employees employed in the first three years, and receive subsidy based on a different subsidy rate for employees employed in the fourth or fifth year. Employers will certainly figure out how much they have to pay in the end, but what worries businessmen most is uncertainty, which makes them unable to calculate the final amount in advance and set the budget.

When the preliminary proposal was put forth for discussion in March, the Secretary exchanged views with members of major chambers of commerce, as well as associations formed by large enterprises and SMEs. I have also
participated in many discussions. The overall view was that the proposal was complicated, and it was difficult to calculate the exact amount of SP and LSP. That was the mainstream opinion put forward by the business sector to the Government. However, the so-called finalized proposal that is being put forth now is similarly complicated. The only difference is that the subsidy period has been extended and the amount of subsidy has been increased, but the calculation method is equally complicated. The business sector only asks for a simple, clear, and easy-to-understand formula, but the formula remains unchanged. Why doesn't the Secretary listen to the opinions of the business sector? What we want is only a formula that is simple, clear, and easy to understand. Under such circumstance, the SAR Government gives the impression that its only concern is to secure enough votes.

I would like to reiterate that fact that the business sector understands that the abolition of the offsetting arrangement is inevitable, and they will accept the reality that the relevant legislation will be enacted. Nonetheless, the main issue is that the calculation method and the policies concerned have caused resistance among many SMEs.

Everyone sitting in the Chamber wants to work out a solution. In particular, the pro-establishment camp does not want to get the Government into trouble. Neither do we wish to prolong the debate on this controversial social issue. We simply want to work out a solution. A better version of "fund pool" proposal has been put forth by 155 business associations. Why doesn't the Government take it into consideration? This proposal is accepted by the labour sector, most of the business sector, and the SMEs. Why doesn't the Government consider the proposal and resolve the issue together with them? It is a feasible solution. Why does the Government insist to hard-sell its own proposal? SMEs are very dissatisfied with the proposal, and even if the proposal is passed, the business sector will oppose it. However, the "fund pool" proposal is likely to gain their full support, and everyone will be happy if it is adopted. Why doesn't the Government do something that will make everyone happy, but attempt to push through its own proposal?

The Government said if the business sector does not understand the proposal, it can explain to them. There are about 300 000 SMEs in Hong Kong. Can the Government explain the details to every one of them? The "fund pool" proposal is straight forward and easy to understand. Why doesn't the Government cooperate with the business sector to work out a solution, but insists
that its own proposal is the finalized one? Why does the Government think that it is sufficient to secure enough votes and disregard the views of the business sector?

Returning to the Policy Address, it has indeed covered many aspects of employees' benefits and support, such as enhancing the employment support programme as well as the community care and support services, poverty alleviation, supporting persons with disabilities, ex-mentally ill persons, and ethnic minorities, and extending the old age living allowance. All these are good initiatives, and I absolutely support them. Is the entire Policy Address undesirable? The Policy Address certainly has many merits, but the reason why I criticize it is that Mr Edward YAU, the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, pointed his finger at me yesterday. I would like to tell you that many senior officials, or even some of the Members, do not have any experience in doing business, and they do not understand what is happening to the global business environment. They are armchair strategists who talk about theories only. Please take a look at the real world. It is said that "one cannot feel the pain because the needles are not piercing through his skin". Their skin has never been pierced through by those needles. Many enterprises are suffering from loss of business in the face of the trade war, coupled with more employment benefits and rise of interest rates. All of these are needles piercing deep into the skin of members of the business sector.

Please be assured that members of the pro-establishment camp will not say anything to do harm to the Government.

I so submit. Thank you, President.

MR LUK CHUNG-HUNG (in Cantonese): President, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare is now present. I also listened to his reply yesterday. According to the Secretary, the wealth disparity in Hong Kong is improving, and speaking particularly of grass-roots workers whose earnings are in the lowest decile group, the rates of increase in their wage levels have been higher than those of the overall average levels over the past periods, especially after the implementation of the minimum wage. This explains why he thinks that the wealth disparity is narrowing down. This is one side of the story. But does this mean that significant progress has been achieved? I hope the Secretary will not be complacent.
Hong Kong ranks seventh in the global competitiveness report published by the World Economic Forum recently. But its score in labour aspect is zero. I believe that it is unacceptable to the Secretary as he must be wondering why the score is zero even though he has made tremendous efforts, and the SAR Government is not without any merits. I hope that this score will not dampen his confidence, determination or will. While he may think that this score may not be quite so fair, he should understand that even though Hong Kong is an economically advanced region, it lags far behind other countries in the protection of labour welfare. I hope the Government, especially the present-term Government, must see to it that Hong Kong honestly lags far behind in labour rights and interests, and its Gini coefficient remains as high as 0.539.

When meeting with HAN Zheng, Vice-Premier of the State Council, during our recent visit to Beijing, we already emphasized over and over again that Hong Kong's deep-rooted conflicts were after all a reason why workers were deprived of any protection of their rights and interests and also why social distribution was unfair. Actually, the protection of labour rights and interests can ensure social harmony. And, as the foundation for realizing fairness and justice, it is likewise a manifestation of social progress. Here, I wish to tell the Secretary for Labour and Welfare to keep his chin up. His "kitchen" has already prepared various dishes. I hope he can serve the dishes onto the dining table in a timely and expeditious fashion for the enjoyment of all employees as they have waited too long.

I will speak on several labour issues. First, we welcome the Government's introduction of certain measures for improving the outsourcing system. The Government's outsourcing system has come under criticism all along. We always reprimand the Government for setting the first example of an unscrupulous employer and taking the lead to adopt the practice of "the lowest bidder wins", bring down wages and shirk its responsibility. All this has given rise to defaults on severance payments and long-service payments, wage reduction at the change of contracts and also appalling working conditions for employees. The Government is the origin of all such problems after all, so it must resolve them itself.

The Policy Address puts forth some proposals, one example being the eventual change of the "price" and "technical" weightings in tender evaluation to 50% each. Even though this still falls short of our proposed weightings of 70% and 30% for "technical aspect" and "price" respectively, it has still marked some
progress in a way. Besides, the Policy Address also proposes to set the
weighting of a contractor's scores in "employee benefits" and "remuneration
packages" at one-fourth (or 25%) of the technical factor (meaning 12.5% of the
total each), to grant a contract-end gratuity at a rate of 6%, and to pay wages of
1.5 times the normal wages to non-skilled workers who are required to remain on
duty when Typhoon Signal No. 8 or above is hoisted. These are the areas with
which we are satisfied.

All along, the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions ("FTU") has been
striving to improve the fringe benefits for outsourced workers. In Hong Kong,
there are some 50 000 outsourced workers in the Government. Owing to ripple
effects, the number of affected workers will not be limited to 50 000. My
Member's motion on "Expeditiously conducting a comprehensive review of the
Government's service outsourcing system" was passed with the majority support
of Members during the present term of the Legislative Council in February 2017.
Afterwards, we have dealt with countless labour disputes arising from the
Government's outsourcing system, and they involve Tin Heng Estate, Oi Man
Estate, Po Tat Estate and On Yam Estate managed by the Housing Department.
I have given only a few examples. We have also seen many incidents involving
government departments, including the Food and Environmental Hygiene
Department and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, and also statutory
organizations such as the Hospital Authority and the Airport Authority.

But I wish to say that the relevant enhancement measures still have much
room for improvement. The crux of the matter lies in the Government's
willingness or otherwise to transform its mentality. I still remember that when
we requested the Secretary to stipulate that the wage levels under a new contract
must not be lower than the old contract level, the Secretary argued that this had
nothing to do with the outsourcing system while also asserting that this was a de
factual stipulation of the wage level. Why is this arrangement infeasible? The
adoption of this arrangement in some government departments is proof that it is
feasible. For instance, when signing a new contract on outsourcing tunnel
services each time, the Transport Department will assure employees that their
wage levels under the new contract will not be lower than the old contract level.
In my view, it will not violate the objectives of the outsourcing policy, and I hope
the Government can include this arrangement into the relevant review again as a
means of improving the protection of outsourced workers. Besides, this can
likewise serve as an indication that the Government has true commitment for
outsourced workers, rather than outsourcing its responsibility altogether after contracting out its services. This is not something that we wish to see and a responsible Government should do.

We think that in the long run, the Government should reduce its outsourcing of services. If the Government must bear so much responsibility after outsourcing its services, it had rather adopt the direct employment mode and try it out at pilot locations for comparison purpose, so as to enable people to see the differences between the two. Can the Government consider the idea of adopting direct employment instead for those non-skilled jobs (such as cleaning workers and security guards, generally speaking) at some housing estates, government departments, parks and facilities, so that people can judge whether this arrangement is better than the current outsourcing arrangement? The two arrangements may not be greatly different from each other in cost expenses. Besides, while it appears that the Government can reduce some wage expenses by outsourcing its services, contractors also need to make money. This shows that money is also involved. Moreover, as the Government has emphasized over and over again, cost saving is not a reason for outsourcing its services. This is a very important point. As cost saving is not a reason, the Government should immediately consider or study the idea of reducing its outsourcing of services and increasing the adoption of direct employment. We also welcome the proposal of paying wages of 1.5 times the normal wages to workers who remain on duty during typhoon attacks. But cleaning workers and security guards are required to carry out a great deal of follow-up work after typhoon attacks. In that case, can the authorities offer a hardship allowance to those workers who are required to work for a certain period of time after typhoon attacks?

We have also requested the Government to set up a leave compensation system. Particularly, at the change of contracts, an overwhelming majority of employees will choose to work at the same place. Nominally, they have a different employer because of the change in service contractors. But actually, they are serving the same Government and people. Nevertheless, all their years of service are not counted. Many entitlements are based on years of service. And one of the entitlements which an employee can directly enjoy is annual leave. Can the Government put in place a leave compensation system, so that employees with long years of service can receive annual leave compensation from the new contractor at the change of contracts?
Second, I wish to discuss the abolition of the offsetting arrangement for the Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") System. Soon after the introduction of the MPF legislation, Ms CHAN Yuen-han, a Member from FTU at the time, already proposed an amendment because we did not want to see the implementation of the offsetting arrangement. But even today, we can still notice frequent hindrance from some Members of the business sector (such as Mr CHUNG Kwok-pan, who has just risen to speak) and their deliberate attempt to confuse one concept with another. For instance, he likes to use "expenditure" when he is actually talking about "fiscal provision" and keeps intimidating people with his assertion that massive layoffs will result. I hope that such intimidation and deliberate attempts to confuse the relevant concepts will not hinder the Government's legislative progress. In our view, even though it cannot be said that the proposal on abolishing the offsetting arrangement this time around is perfect—I must emphasize that it is not perfect—the labour sector still finds it acceptable. Certainly, we will welcome any greater efforts from the Government. But more importantly, the Government must act fast.

Over the past 10 years or so, over $36 billion from MPF contributions has been used for offsetting long-service payments every year, and the amount is growing at the rate of $4 billion or $5 billion a year. This means that with one year's delay in the abolition of the offsetting arrangement, a few billion dollars from employees' MPF accounts will be used for offsetting purpose. So, legislating for the relevant arrangement is a battle against time.

I strongly hope that the Secretary can complete the drafting of the relevant statutory provisions as soon as possible and strive to present its proposal to this Council for First Reading within the present term of the Legislative Council—within 2019—and then for Second Reading. I believe the relevant legislative proposal can be passed in the Chamber with sufficient votes, and I do not believe that any Member will be so unreasonable to put up hindrance by filibustering. The Government should not delay the handling of this matter until the next term of the Legislative Council. If this should happen, the present-term Government will only be able to secure the passage of the relevant legislative proposal but fail to implement it and must instead leave it to the Government of the next term. Any task within the present term should be completed within the present term. The previous-term Government led by LEUNG Chun-ying already completed half of this assignment. The present-term Government only needs to complete the remaining half, and there is no reason why it should leave it for the Government of the next term. I hope the Secretary can "turn up the
flame", so that he can finish cooking the dishes more quickly. The Government honestly must not delay the handling of this matter any further, and the business sector should not put up any hindrance either.

After the abolition of the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System, many issues still remain outstanding and will continue to come under criticism because after all, MPF is one of the most important pillars of retirement protection. In the case of lowering MPF fees and the progress of implementing eMPF, for example, has the Government conceived any ways to mandate MPF trustees to reduce their fees after the implementation of eMPF? Hong Kong is an advanced international financial centre. But the fees charged by retirement funds are the highest in the whole world. This is really inexplicable. If our fund pool is small and the system is not that sophisticated, such high fees are naturally inevitable. However, as Hong Kong is an international financial centre, it naturally follows that it should be well-versed in the relevant aspects. How come Hong Kong charges the highest fees? I honestly find this very perplexing.

As the next step, the Government will conduct a review of the fund portfolios under the Default Investment Strategy ("DIS"). I strongly hope that it can pick up the pace of its first review instead of leaving it until 2020. The second point concerns the review direction. The existing DIS is honestly a bit helpful in bringing down the relevant fees. But the cap of 0.95% for overall fees is honestly on the high side. I hope the Secretary can foster the lowering of MPF fees, so as to increase MPF returns and refine its retirement protection function.

The next step following the abolition of the offsetting arrangement is to expeditiously conduct studies on the full portability of MPF. The full portability of MPF can increase the flexibility in choosing MPF schemes and market competition. This can in turn reduce the relevant fees and improve returns.

The last point is even more important. Speaking of the commitment for retirement protection, should the Government seriously consider the feasibility of the integrated retirement protection proposal without an asset test as put forth by FTU in view of its substantial fiscal surplus? The Government may think that what I am going to say sounds unpleasant to the ear. We think that the public annuity scheme and the Old Age Living Allowance ("OALA") are both desirable. But these two schemes are unable to replace a due retirement protection system without an asset test. It can serve as a manifestation of our respect for elderly
people and also a guarantee for their basic livelihood needs. We do not want to see that people with financial discipline or those without much savings who are not eligible for OALA are penalized under a retirement protection system. This is something that we do not want to see.

I will discuss occupational safety and health in the third session. The Policy Address has likewise touched on occupational safety and health, including enhancing rehabilitation services for workers injured at work and the Claims Support Services, introducing new procedures for following up sick leave and case screening, and strengthening the enforcement of the Employees' Compensation Ordinance ("the Ordinance"). We welcome all such initiatives, particularly the Claims Support Services. The reason is that it can resolve work injury cases in dispute. But we think that it is still not enough as it is just a band-aid solution without addressing the crux of the problem.

In the case of work injuries, for example, the various trade unions under FTU often receive requests for assistance in work injury disputes where the employers involved allegedly refuse to accept liability for work injuries. While the existing Ordinance has offered protection to employees, it has come under many constraints in the course of implementation. For example, the Labour Department ("LD") may issue a Medical Clearance Notification to an employer only if the latter agrees and acknowledges that the incident is a work injury accident and he admits his liability. But in case of disputes where the employer, for example, denies liability and the existence of an employment relationship, or argues that the employee was not injured at the workplace, the worker will be plunged into great miseries as he will not get any wages due to his absence from work and he must lodge a complaint with LD personally. Besides, since LD can only invite employers to negotiations owing to its lack of any arbitration power, the situation is like a rat trying to pull a turtle—with nothing to begin with.

Speaking of LD's roles, I know that LD officers have worked very hard, but employers sometimes consider them to be "toothless tigers" and therefore have no fear for them. In the end, the case can only be handled through the legal proceedings of court arbitration. Employees have to go through cumbersome procedures, bear immense financial pressure and withstand stressful mental and physical ordeals. All this is very unfair to injured employees.

Besides, even if an employee wins the case in the end, his employer very often is not required to bear any additional cost or penalized. Despite his denial of liability before the commencement of the lawsuit and also the Court's final
judgment that he is truly liable, the Court will not impose any additional penalty at the end of the day. Furthermore, employers may put up delay of several months at LD alone and only admit liability at the last moment, not to mention the delay in the course of legal proceedings. In this period of several months, employers are not required to bear any liability. Employers who are familiar with the mentality of workers may feel that there is nothing to fear as they know that employees also want to avoid trouble. So, in their conjecture, employees will not lodge any complaint with LD. Therefore, we think that in the future, the Government should examine and enhance LD's roles and allow LD to formulate an arbitration mechanism which is less cumbersome than court proceedings, so as to assist in determining liability in work injury incidents.

The second point is that the penalties under the current occupational safety and health legislation are too lenient, and it can be said that they lack any deterrence whatsoever. The script written by my personal assistant for me even points out that the fine imposed in certain summons cases is simply "as insignificant as ant bites, which simply cannot produce any itchy or painful feeling". And, LD is even lax in law enforcement. After going through some information presented by the Government to the Legislative Council, we have found that in 2017, for example, the fine in summons cases involving a breach of the occupational safety and health legislation was $10,500 per summons on average. This amount was already an increase over previous figures, which were even smaller. Nevertheless, this is still a very, very small fine.

It is a serious offence to breach the occupational safety and health legislation. But offenders are merely fined $10,000. To contractors who are awarded works projects worth hundreds of millions of dollars, this amount is simply a drop in the ocean, and they will not take it seriously. The fine in incidents involving the construction industry is even smaller, and it merely stands at $10,000. In summons cases involving fatal incidents, the fine merely amounts to $21,000 even if human lives are involved. I do not wish to ask if a human life is merely worth such a low value of $21,000, and I know that the Government is likewise aware of the problems with the existing penalties. That said, what is the review progress? When will it amend the relevant legislation? In particular, on the issue of liability, the provisions on general duties under the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance are plagued by major loopholes at present because the prosecution must prove the presence of deliberate negligence on the part of the employer as the prerequisite for a possible prison
sentence on the latter. How difficult will it be to prove the presence of deliberate negligence on the part of employers? In the face of this serious loophole in law, we urge the Government to fulfil its promise of plugging the loopholes in law as soon as possible and present the relevant legislative amendment proposals within the present term.

When it comes to work injuries, we wish to include the element of work injury rehabilitation into the Ordinance and refine the existing wage payment at only four-fifths of the daily wages and the disbursement of a maximum of $300 as medical fees. The current Ordinance only provides for monetary compensation. And even if we know that LD has joined hands with the insurance sector and introduced the Voluntary Rehabilitation Programme ("VRP"), participation in VRP is not a compulsory requirement after all. Besides, employees are worried that they will be forced to cancel their sick leave after participating in VRP. Therefore, the Government should provide additional resources to employees through enacting legislation, so as to meet their early rehabilitation needs. As Members all know, the short period after the occurrence of work injuries is a golden period for rehabilitation. Employees' early receipt of the relevant treatment during this period, including physiotherapy and occupational therapy, will be greatly beneficial to their chance of recovery. We hope the Government can enhance its work in this respect.

The setting up of a central occupational insurance compensation fund is likewise a demand put forth by the labour sector over all these years. Very often, an employee may not necessarily be in a conventional employment relationship when sustaining work injuries or occupational diseases. And at present, employees without an employment relationship are not entitled to any protection. We hope that a central fund can be set up to resolve this loophole. Besides, the Government also needs to review employers' liability for employees with occupational diseases. I have also discussed this issue.

On lower limb disorders, the Policy Agenda states that the authorities will "[f]urther reduce employees' health risks associated with standing at work through issuing new guidelines, promotional visits and inspections". President, I now remain standing as I speak. But I will only speak for half an hour at most, so I will not be at high risk. But many employees (especially those in the retail industry and service industry) have to remain standing at work all day long. What should they do then? FTU thinks that the formulation of guidelines is
based on good intentions. But the contents of such guidelines and LD's efforts in implementing them must be comprehensive, so that employees can benefit. LD must not let such guidelines degenerate into empty talks.

The HKFTU Occupational Safety and Health Association has conducted a questionnaire survey on lower limb disorders among employees. It has found that over half of the service industry workers have suffered from lower limb varicose vein diseases of varying degrees due to prolonged standing at work. The medical sector has already proven that prolonged standing has an indispensable relationship with lower limb varicose vein diseases. The existing guidelines are of an encouragement nature, and they do not require strict compliance among employers. An employee who is so unfortunate that he cannot go to work due to musculoskeletal disorders or pain (resulting from lower limb varicose vein diseases, for example) will be deprived of any due protection of his labour rights as musculoskeletal disorders are not included in the existing scope of occupational diseases. We hope that such diseases can be included in the scope of occupational diseases. Besides, the relevant guidelines do not cover those job types which require prolonged standing, such as chefs, receptionists in Chinese restaurants, stock keepers, ground support staff and teachers.

We propose to stipulate in law that in cases where an employee suffers from lower limb disorders as a result of his employer's failure to put in place effective measures, LD may prosecute the employer under the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance and require the employer to bear the consequence and liability. We also hope that the Government can formulate clear guidelines on prolonged standing while also drawing up guidelines on rest time. One example is to require employers to provide rest time at fixed intervals for employees who have remained standing at work for a certain period of time.

As we have pointed out to the business sector before, it is not necessary for salespersons in the retail industry to remain standing in order to provide quality services, and even if they remain comfortably seated during their conversations with customers, they may likewise complete transactions. Why should they refuse to implement this arrangement? The reason is the absence of regulation. Employers may think that it is best to remain standing, and this explains why they require employees to remain standing throughout their working hours. Prolonged standing has honestly driven employees crazy, so to speak. The Government should include lower limb disorders (such as knee osteoarthritis, lower limb varicose vein diseases and plantar fasciitis) into the scope of occupational diseases.
I have just brought up various issues concerning labour rights and interests. I am a Member representing the labour sector, and I have heard many Members mention the Lantau Tomorrow plan in their speeches. Actually, I for one strongly support this plan. As a member of the labour sector, I do not think Members should set the Government's investment in the Lantau Tomorrow plan against its expenditures on social welfare and people's livelihood. The opposition camp has reprimanded the Government, saying that it refuses to spend money on labour welfare, social welfare and health care. This is actually a pseudo-proposition aiming to deceive people with the assertion that the SAR Government possesses substantial fiscal reserves. Second, even if the reclamation project under the Lantau Tomorrow plan will incur an expenditure of some $100 billion, Members should know very well that the Government will be more than able to cover the costs with its land sale revenue.

More importantly, the plan proposed by the Government is about the building of an integrated development area embracing economic activities, job opportunities and housing, and it can provide 340,000 permanent job positions. I believe that this will do much help to Hong Kong's diversified development of industries and job opportunities and also to employees. Besides, labour rights and interests are not solely about employment protection or the protection offered by labour legislation. Our bigger hope is that they can find their ideal homes after working so hard, which will be their drive and motivation to work. Am I right? Economic development, job opportunities for employees, industry upgrading, and also the provision of living space and community space all require land. As rightly asked by Andy LAU, how can Hong Kong see hope? We need a vast area of land. True, some will say in rebuttal that brownfield sites, agricultural sites or golf courses can be used; but then I think a multi-pronged approach must be adopted for the creation of land.

I am delighted to see the Government's determination to find more land. The present-term Government is completely different from the Government of the previous terms in style, in the sense that the Government of a former term turned a blind eye to various problems, whereas the Government of the previous term gave me the feeling that it had the intention but lacked the ability. This is rather regrettable. But in my view, the present-term Government has the intention and also the ability to find more land, and it also dares to confront developer hegemony. Members know very well that if the Government possesses a reserve of lands amounting to over $100 billion, developer hegemony will not be that fierce. Under the Land Sharing Pilot Scheme, for example, the Government
will bargain with large property developers engaging in land hoarding. By that time, as developer hegemony becomes less fierce, people and the Government will be better able to bargain. This point alone can already serve as the ground for my affirmative vote on the motion of thanks regarding the Policy Address.

I will spend my remaining speaking time on discussing transport issues in the next session.

Thank you, President.

MR CHAN HAN-PAN (in Cantonese): President, I would like to put forward a few comments on the health care services under the new Policy Address. In particular, I would like to take this opportunity to share with the Secretary my views on the provision of Chinese medicine services.

First of all, it is about the development of Chinese medicine services in Hong Kong. This year's Policy Address stated that the SAR Government would confirm the positioning of Chinese medicine in the development of medical services in Hong Kong. I was very delighted at hearing these words. The Government has finally confirmed its positioning in the development of the public health care sector in Hong Kong. However, after taking a second look, it is only confirming its positioning in the development of medical services, not public health care services, in Hong Kong. On second thought, "Chinese medicine" has always been there in our health care system. Why should we confirm its positioning in the local health care system again in the Policy Address? It has been, by and large, a part of it.

For many years, what the Chinese medicine industry has been fighting for is their position in the public health care system. Yet this Policy Address opted to use these vague wordings, drawing a red herring across the path. The authority has avoided using "public health care", instead they just utter "confirming its positioning in medical services in Hong Kong". My euphoria was short-lived. Later when I talked to the Industry, I said the Industry was at first rather excited after reading the Policy Address, but soon they returned to calmness. On second thought, there is actually no progress at all. Of course, I do not know if the Government will have any follow-up measures. Still we hope to take this opportunity to make it clear to the Government that manpower is
what is most needed in our health care system. Given the overstretch of our health care system, Chinese medicine could be of help in the treatment of many diseases.

According to the figures of the Food and Health Bureau, a total of 9 900 Chinese medicine practitioners were registered in Hong Kong in 2016, comprising of 7 262 registered Chinese medicine practitioners and 2 647 listed Chinese medicine practitioners, with a majority of them practising in the private sector. However, as far as Western medical practitioners are concerned, 51% of them are working in the public health care sector compared to just 12% of their Chinese medicine counterparts. In other words, an increase in the relative ratio can actually alleviate the pressure on the waiting time of the entire health care system.

At present, we have a large group of Chinese medical professionals who are untapped, unused. Besides, graduates of Chinese medicine both from the Mainland or local universities each year encounter considerable difficulty in finding a job after graduation. In the Policy Address, it is said that the Government would subsidize certain Chinese medicine services, including subsidizing Chinese medicine outpatient services and inpatient services. It is certainly a good thing to provide further subsidy for outpatient services. Nonetheless, we still have not seen any defined role of Chinese medicine in the public health care system. As I have seen nothing this time, I hope that the Secretary will find a chance to explain to us later on what is the status of Chinese medicine in public health care. It should have a position in the health care system, so I think the wordings really have to be made explicit. Therefore, I hope the Secretary will take a good look at this "Public Chinese Medicine Service" card. I believe all members of the public would like to have access to this service.

At present, consultation fee charged by a Chinese medicine practitioner may be around $100, but the cost of medicine is several hundreds. Whereas for Government outpatient consultation, only tens of dollars are charged. Therefore, if a person seeks Chinese medicine treatment, the medical expenses are actually quite high. In the end, perhaps only the well-off can afford Chinese medicine practitioners.

The second item is about HPV vaccination against cervical cancer. It is also proposed in the Policy Address that starting from the 2019-2020 school year, the Government will give the first dose of HPV vaccination to school girls of
Primary Five for free, while the second dose will be administered when they are in Primary Six. I think this is a very good start worthy of support and appreciation. It is because among many cancer diseases, cervical cancer is preventable with vaccine. After vaccination, the chances of infection or proneness to cervical cancer will be greatly reduced. Yet let us think about it again. This plan is to introduce HPV vaccination to school girls of Primary Five, what about those at Primary Six? The Primary Six students are not covered under this vaccination plan. How about those at Secondary One who are also excluded?

Therefore, the DAB suggests that the Government should enhance the HPV vaccination plan. But how? We propose to start with the first dose of vaccine for all school girls, primary and secondary, in the 2019-2020 school year and then administer the second dose in the following year. Then, three years later when all school girls will have received the vaccination already, HPV vaccination to school girls of Primary Five only can begin as a cap will already be there. In this way, a girl will not lose the chance of vaccination just because she is promoted to Primary Six. Otherwise, if most parents have to arrange vaccinations for their daughters outside school, due to the shortage of vaccines, or the need for financial assistance or the short supply of vaccines after the first dose, the second dose is harder to manage. Therefore, we hope that the Government can cover all schoolgirls under the HPV vaccination funding scheme so that all secondary and primary schoolgirls are protected.

The third item that I want to tell the Secretary is about the shortage of health care manpower and their working condition. In fact, we trust that most of the health care personnel in the public health care system are hardworking. Many of them have told us that there is a prevailing problem in the public health care system in Hong Kong, i.e., "rewarding the lazy and punishing the hardworking". Hospitals with relatively poor service performance are usually avoided by the public; while hospitals with remarkable performance are cramped with patients. As a result, the workload of less popular hospitals has declined, while that of reputable hospitals has increased instead. This is unfair. Everyone has to go to work, some have to work overtime day and night, while some are very relaxed with very little work.

Although there is a saying that "the capable ones are always busy", apparently the present situation is distorted to become "the capable ones are overstretched". This is not a good thing because it will drive some quality health care personnel to switch jobs, such as switching to the private medical
system. The remaining staff will have to share the duties of their outgoing colleagues, resulting in a vicious circle. I believe this is not what the public want to see.

I also believe that the staff working in the public health care system are professionally recognized and there should not be much disparity in their capabilities. I think what matters is the working attitude. To cultivate the right working attitude and promote the initiatives of the staff, we need a reward system. Therefore, the Government should stop any penalty system. Instead, we hope that the Government will encourage staff initiatives through the implementation of some reward schemes, putting incentives in place of penalties. For example, if they perform well and work a lot, they will be rewarded with better opportunities for promotion, thus improving the situation of "the capable ones are overstretched".

Only when capable staff are promoted, appreciated and paid better, will they be keen to stay in the public health care system. And as long as they are willing to stay, the public health care sector will not face manpower shortage. Therefore, this vicious circle must be broken. In the face of manpower shortage in the public health care system, we hope the Government can carry out some pilot projects to tackle the problem or launch some plans to recognize personnel with outstanding performance. Of course, these initiatives must be practical, and if they have to be practical, some expenditure is inevitable. Therefore, I hope that the Secretary can bring more positive energy to the public health care system so that the public can enjoy better medical services.

Apparently, public health care cannot cope with all patients. What should we do then? In the past, I have repeatedly made proposals to the Government time and again, such as public-private partnerships, with ophthalmology in particular. The "Cataract Surgeries Programme" ("CSP") is doing extremely well. Cataract patients in the public health care system used to wait for a long time before cataract surgery was performed. Since the launch of the public-private partnership programme, the elderly do not have to wait long for a cataract surgery now.

The outcome of CSP is so satisfactory. I hope the Government can extend it to other ophthalmological specialist services because the current waiting time for ophthalmological treatment is terrible. It usually takes more than 50 weeks, or even 114 weeks for some cases. This is over a hundred weeks of waiting
time. Let's see what is happening to less serious or urgent cases—actually the degree of urgency is determined by a general practitioner. The doctor will ask, "Eye problem?" The patient said, "Yes, doctor. My eyes are uncomfortable. Can you write a referral letter for me?" So, the doctor will write "eye discomfort". Then the patient will take this referral letter to the specialist clinic to wait in line. Everyone who goes there has uncomfortable eyes, everyone of them has to wait for 114 weeks. During the course, one's condition may deteriorate and develop symptoms such as glaucoma, or problems with the retina. These diseases that require early treatment may worsen during the waiting period. Therefore, I hope the Government will widen the scope of public-private ophthalmological services, to extend "CSP" to other specialist services.

Perhaps the Government has an old thinking that if many public-private partnership programmes are implemented, many doctors will switch to the private medical system at times of booming business. The reality might not necessarily be so. We should consider the issue from another perspective. If the caseload is reduced, doctors would not have to rush through their consultation section, resulting in an improvement to their working environment, their desire to stay in the public health care system will be stronger. Therefore, our current goal is to help health care personnel in the public health care system to reduce their stress as far as possible and the public to obtain services from external sources.

Another area is psychiatric specialist services. There are now about 300 psychiatrists in Hong Kong, equally split in the public and private sectors. However, as everyone knows, the number of psychiatric cases is rising continuously. I also hope that the Government will consider implementing some public-private partnership programmes to improve the backlog of psychiatric cases in public hospitals. Sometimes treatment of mental illness just cannot wait, and urgent treatment is required when the illness strikes. Nonetheless, public psychiatric clinics are closed on Saturdays and Sundays. If a patient needs treatment then, he has to turn to a private doctor. Therefore, there is a real need for public-private partnership services in this area. I hope that the Government will consider public-private partnership in psychiatric services. I have recently exchanged views with some concern groups on mental health and they have put forward a number of proposals. In this regard, I will ask a question in Council and hope that the Government can provide me with the answer. I had better not go into the details here.
The other is about elderly welfare. Although I have pursued the Chief Executive for this in this Council, since the Secretary for Labour and Welfare is present today, I would like to speak again on behalf of the elders in Hong Kong, demanding non-means tested "fruit grant" to elderly aged 65 and above. I have suggested this with the Chief Executive before, she said that it is not possible as it involves a lot of money—the public coffers are inundated, Madam Chief Executive—and there are already many different elderly benefits available to those 65-year-old. We all know that elderly people aged 65 or above can enjoy the $2 fare concession in public transport. They might be retirees who have stepped down from their jobs, then a means test is awaiting them. In fact, it is not surprising that a 65-year-old has some savings. When our society gives them a small amount of living expenses or tea money, it is also a token of respect for them. Why do we call it "fruit grant"? It is because we want to recognize their decades of hard work to our society and grant them a little money to enjoy tea or buy fruits in return. Why do we apply such criteria to the 65-year-old elders? Is it because they have got some savings after decades of hard work so they are deprived of such a small token of appreciation? I think this is not proper. Therefore, I hope the Secretary can consider my suggestion.

Today, Mr WONG Kam-sing, who is also the Acting Chief Secretary for Administration, is present at the meeting. I also want to talk about the issue of waste collection and waste charging. My party member, Mr Steven HO, mentioned earlier that there is a rubbish hill at his doorstep, which piles up to almost two metres high every day. For words coming from a Member, someone must conduct a fact check. I have verified what he said. I have taken a photo of the rubbish hill at his doorstep. From this distance, I am not sure if the Secretary can see the photo on my hand. This rubbish hill is indeed over two meters high, taller than Mr Steven HO who is already a tall guy. Why is this rubbish hill so high? The main reason is that he lives in the rural areas. In recent years, many people have moved to live in rural areas, but our refuse collection system is not enhanced and there is much room for improvement. I know that the relevant department is doing a lot of work, including the introduction of smart waste containers with compression function. Mr Steven HO and I have held a press conference earlier to talk about the repeated malfunctioning of the infrequently used smart waste containers. With my background as "an engineering boy", I am "tempted to have a try". Should I find a solution for the Secretary to see how the waste collection system can be improved. I hope I can offer some good suggestions for the Government's consideration later.
Well, why are we talking about waste collection? I have to tell the Acting Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr WONG Kam-sing, that it is because the Government has recently proposed a waste levy. In fact, I am not confident enough to support this proposal up to now. I would like the Secretary to take a look at this photo. This is the rooftop of an old building in the urban area. This might be garbage discarded by "partitioned rooms" tenants during relocation. They might have lived on the upper floors. If they want to dump some garbage, the roof is just two floors up while the refuse collection point ("RCP") is four floors down. Moreover, they have to walk down to the street to reach the RCP. So obviously, they prefer to take the refuse to the rooftop. Day after day, this rubbish hill is formed. I can tell the Secretary that among this heap of rubbish, there are several refrigerators—of course I dare not poke into it—and also washing machines and various sorts of household waste. Due to our community environment, this is what an RCP looks like. There are many such corners in the urban area. Under these circumstances, basically we do not know how the Government will implement the waste charging scheme. What I worry most is that our recycling system or operation is still unsatisfactory. We have yet cultivated this habit but the Government is talking about levy. This is not only about imposing levy, but also about indiscriminate waste dumping by the public—the problem of casual littering and convenient waste dumping. Consequently, it makes me worry that someday in the middle of the night, someone may dump more on top the two-metre high rubbish hill at the doorstep of Mr Steven HO, and he finds no way to get out of his house.

Therefore, before the Secretary launches some new projects, I hope he would first consider their achievability instead of desirability. If waste recycling is achievable, then tell us how it could be done and how we can prevent people dumping waste in these rural areas and at rooftops of certain old buildings. Until I have seen these measures, I really dare not support the Government's proposal to implement waste levy. I also hope that the Government will do sufficient preparatory work before launching such programmes. We do not say no to all the work carried out by the Government. Nevertheless, on this particular matter, I hope its implementation could wait until our refuse collection system and recycling system are in smooth operation and under monitoring. Otherwise, a city besieged by garbage is not impossible.

President, I will say this much in this session. Thank you, President.
MS YUNG HOI-YAN (in Cantonese): President, the Policy Address this year announced the proposal to extend statutory maternity leave from 10 weeks to 14 weeks and let all civil servants enjoy this benefit from 10 October onwards. For many working women, this is a very good start. I welcome the Government's continued efforts in improving and strengthening the protection for the rights of female employees, including constantly reviewing the statutory maternity leave arrangement in Hong Kong, and gradually extending the statutory maternity and paternity leaves in accordance with the actual development of society and the economy. This is also the direction that I have been striving for together with my party.

The Government is planning to shoulder part of the salary expenses in relation to the additional four weeks of maternity leave. I believe that this will provide incentive for the commercial sector to support the extension of statutory maternity leave. However, the Government should discuss with employers the implementation details in this respect and take account of its implications for the commercial sector, particularly in view of the fact that the commercial sector is now coping with payment of the Mandatory Provident Fund contributions, they will have to face additional expenses to be arising from such measures as Voluntary Health Insurance as well as extension of statutory maternity and paternity leave. Are these measures affordable to small and medium enterprises? In my opinion, the Government should calculate the amount of extra costs arising from the extension of maternity and paternity leave before discussing with the commercial sector how it will shoulder the additional expenses.

After talking about childbirth, let me move on to child care. President, the new Policy Address unveils many new measures to strengthen child care and development, including the enhancement of manning ratios for qualified child care workers serving in child care centres, the provision of social work services to 150,000 pre-school children and their families, the provision of after school care services for children aged three to six, and so on. However, the Policy Address does not say much about infant care provided for those aged zero to three. Hopefully, the Government does not neglect their needs.

I met with representatives of the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children late last month and exchanged views with them on policies and measures relating to children contained in the Policy Address. We agree that the Government should strengthen the care, education and training for infants aged zero to three.
The development of infants during their first three years is very important indeed. Education and care at this stage will affect the growth and development of their brains and lack of proper education may affect the speech development of a growing child. Therefore, the Government should review afresh the existing policies and guidelines.

In Hong Kong, policies relating to child care cover those aged zero to six. But since the announcement of the "Free Quality Kindergarten Education" policy in 2016, the focus has apparently been shifted to the education and care services for children aged three to six. This has further widened the gap between services targeting children aged zero to three and those targeting children aged three to six, in resource allocation and subsidy.

With only 12 subsidized independent child care centres offering approximately 740 day care places in Hong Kong, equivalent to 1 place for almost 77 babies. Day crèches are not available in six districts, namely the Southern District, the Islands District, Kwun Tong, Wong Tai Sin, Sai Kung, and Tai Po. According to many parents, they have to wait for more than 20 months before getting a place, by then their babies are almost two years old. This is not good, which has proved the undeniable fact that the provision of child care centre services cannot meet the demand. The Government has the obligation to improve the current serious imbalance between supply and demand in this respect. I hope that the Government will further enhance community child care service so as to provide more support for dual-income parents.

President, the Policy Address has mentioned the adjustment of manning ratios in child care centres, but under Labour and Welfare Bureau's proposal, the manning ratio in child care centre for infants zero to two years of age is adjusted to 1:6, which is still trailing behind other countries. Although I have heard the remarks of the Secretary on different occasions that Hong Kong should not be compared directly with other countries, I still believe that our standards should be raised a bit as Hong Kong people deserve better services. I hope that in addition to increasing manpower, the authorities will strengthen the promotion of regularization and professionalization of child care services, improve the remuneration and benefits for child care workers and enhance the training provided for these workers.

After children, I now turn to elder services. With an ageing population in Hong Kong, the demand for elderly services will only go up. As children, they have to wait, I mentioned the wait for child care centre services just now. As a
matter of fact, after birth, children in Hong Kong have to wait for everything from a place in nursery, kindergarten, primary school, and university to a place in residential care homes for the elderly when they get old. As many Members have pointed out today that many elderly people may not be able to get a place in residential care homes before they pass away. Demand for residential care home services exceeds supply, which is more serious than the problem of child care centre services. At present, many elderly persons have to take care of another elderly person or the spouse at home, putting them under heavy pressure both physically and mentally. The community support provided by the Government to carers is also inadequate. The New People's Party has therefore suggested that the Government should provide funding for setting up a fund for ageing in place which will subsidize voluntary organizations and social enterprises in the development of private networks for ageing in the community. The proposal has not been adopted in the Policy Address this time but I hope that the Government can give it a second thought and study the implementation of our proposal with a broader vision and mindset, so as to provide more comprehensive support for ageing in place as that the elderly people can enjoy life.

When it comes to livelihood issues, I must talk about public markets. President, the enhancement of the management of markets and the containment of the dominance of Link Asset Management Limited ("the Link") is an important issue about which I have all along been very concerned. Some of the markets under the Link have been sold, for instance, the markets at Sun Tin Wai Estate and Sun Chui Estate. Let us talk about the former first. The vacancy rate of the Sun Tin Wai Estate market is now close to 100%. After its commercial tenants have been forced to leave, the entire market faces an uncertain future. There was a market at Sun Chui Estate but it has been turned into a branch of a restaurant chain after its commercial tenants were forced out. The market at Sun Chui Estate used to serve not just residents of that estate but also those living at Greenview Garden and Golden Lion Garden. The Government said people could go shopping in the nearby Lung Hang Estate, but I cannot believe this is a general principle adopted by the Government.

The Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines ("Planning Standards and Guidelines"), which was first published in 2009, has since been modified and amended. The Planning Department now says that the building of a new market will be considered on individual merits. Factors to be considered include public resources, composition of population, community needs, whether public or private market facilities are available in proximity, and so on. After the
formulation of the Planning Standards and Guidelines, the Government complies with it but some private market operators do not. So what should we do about it? Whose example should we follow? According to the Government, there are guidelines for planning. But if a private market closes down and the entire area will be without a market, the Government will say that there should have been a private market which does not operate. Who enforces the Planning Standards and Guidelines? Does it still serve as a set of criteria? Regarding land lease and the criteria set by the Lands Department and the Planning Department, I very much hope that the Government will review afresh how to strictly enforce the criteria, including how to request private market operators to comply with the criteria. I talked about many problems in Tai Wai just now. Of course we hope that the Government will implement the "single site, multiple use" policy by constructing more government buildings or what were called municipal complexes, but nowadays many government buildings do not have markets. The long-awaited government building in Tai Wai, which we have fought for a long time, may not have a market according to the Government. I do hope that the Government will consider again setting up a market and a cooked food centre at the government building in Tai Wai.

The Policy Address this year of course has proposed to implement certain policies relating to markets and to build public markets in Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung. I welcome the Government's construction of more new markets and hope that it will decide on the sites of these two markets as soon as possible. Meanwhile, I also hope the Government can expeditiously identify sites for building public markets in Tseung Kwan O and Kwu Tung North areas and consult the district councils concerned, local organizations and residents more frequently during the process, and make speedy decisions regarding the locations. We can see that a single market in Tseung Kwan O is not enough as Tseung Kwan O covers an extensive area and it is a 10 to 20 minutes drive from Metro City to LOHAS Park, a single market is not enough. After implementing the plan to build a market, I hope that the Government will review the overall planning in Tseung Kwan O to determine the number of markets needed to be built there as building one market is definitely inadequate.

President, housing and transportation are two major issues most closely related to people's daily life. I certainly support the Government's decision to adjust the public-private housing split from 6:4 to 7:3 and the continued construction of more public housing units to facilitate the early allocation of public housing units to households in need. I believe that each and every
citizen, including all the Members who are present here, would like to live and work in contentment. Does the allocation of a public housing unit or the purchase of a private residential unit ensure a life in contentment? Many owners of private properties will say: No.

President, I have received many complaints from people in recent years, saying they have saved every penny possible to buy a property but their nightmares began right after they took possession of the flat. The construction quality of many new buildings has been very poor, with many problems appearing after being occupied for three to five years, ranging from cracked external walls, leaking pipes inside and outside of flats, leakage around windows' opening and rusty aluminium-framed windows. Newly occupied flats also require numerous remedial works. If you call the Joint Offices for Investigation of Water Seepage Complaints, in most cases, they have failed to trace the source of water seepage. Why have they failed to do so? The Government still resorts to the old way of using colour test paper or colour water to detect the source of water seepage. The Government then replied that there were three pilot sites where new technologies such as infrared were put to experimental use for testing the source of water seepage. The entire New Territories East does not fall under any of these pilot sites, given there are only three pilot sites throughout 18 districts. I hope that the Government will adopt a new mindset and employ new technology to enhance the work efficacy of the relevant department. Of course, the water seepage problem mentioned just now has caused great distress to many property owners and many small property owners have asked me to reflect their plight to the Secretary. Hopefully, the Government will face the problem of poor quality of private buildings head-on and bring back justice to these property owners.

Regarding buildings, we are all concerned about lifts safety. Accidents involving lifts have happened frequently in recent years, according to the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department, there have been five accidents involving lifts in the first half of this year while the total number for last year was eight. About 80% of the 60 000-plus elevators throughout Hong Kong fail to meet safety standards and about 30 000 old elevators are more than 20 years old. We can see a policy in the Policy Address this year for the enhancement of lifts. Modelling on the Operation Building Bright 2.0 Scheme and the Fire Safety Improvement Works Subsidy Scheme, the Government will allocate $2.5 billion to launch the Lift Modernisation Subsidy Scheme. We are highly supportive of this scheme and hope the Government will announce the details as soon as
possible. We also hope that ongoing works or those for which tender has been awarded before the delivery of the Policy Address will be included in the scheme. Private buildings are certainly eligible to be covered by the Lift Modernisation Subsidy Scheme. But as the problem of ageing lifts in the Tenants Purchase Scheme estates is also quite serious, I hope that the coverage of this scheme can be expanded to include the buildings under the Tenants Purchase Scheme to protect people's safety.

The Government wants to improve people's livelihood. But Hong Kong people have a low score in happiness index. Why? I went to a concert by Jacky CHEUNG but the tickets for the finale, which costed $980 originally, were offered for resale for almost $10,000. Regarding how to improve people's livelihood, I hope that the Government can start with some trivial and fundamental issues, so as to raise the happiness index score among Hong Kong people.

I met with representatives of the performing industry yesterday and noted this problem. I hope that the Government can face the problem of ticket scalping head-on and eliminate such activities. I also noted that the Government in the United Kingdom had outlawed the use of bots to buy up tickets. I hope that the Special Administrative Region Government will study this approach. If it is found to be applicable to Hong Kong, legislation in this respect should proceed at a quick pace.

President, I so submit.

MR HO KAI-MING (in Cantonese): President, we will discuss livelihood issues in this debate session, and after reading through the whole text of the Policy Address, in respect of livelihood issues, my impression can be described as the saying "the key to one's success is also one's undoing", which the Secretary may not fully grasp. Frankly speaking, the economic miracle of Hong Kong was indeed due to the system left by the British administration. The high overall efficiency of Hong Kong society can be attributed to the fact that the British administration has created a certain degree of civilization and an economic miracle for Hong Kong during its colonial era, but "this key to our success also causes our undoing", which is also the crux of our livelihood problem.
The British rulers were being "stingy" when they established Hong Kong as a city with a low cost approach, with minimal government intervention and minimal costs in both town planning and manpower planning, so as to reduce expenditure as far as possible. I wonder if Secretary Dr LAW will respond to this point later, since he after all is an expert in this respect. It is alright for you to leave the Chamber now, it is not necessary for you to listen to my entire speech. With regard to this legacy from the British administration, has any significant change of principles concerning livelihood issues been made in Hong Kong after the reunification? I do not see any significant change of principles in this respect, which has made Hong Kong lag far behind other overseas countries and the Mainland in both manpower planning and town planning.

Another major problem is that although the British rulers regarded Hong Kong its colony and, to put it bluntly, a place to plunder, they still made the necessary investments in order to make money. However, after the reunification of Hong Kong, the Government's overall logic of thinking has basically remained unchanged, following the beliefs of the colonial government in the absence of guiding principles, resulting Hong Kong being stereotyped without major changes after its reunification with China in 1997. Frankly speaking, Hong Kong has undergone no major reform after 1997, how can improvements be expected under such a circumstance?

Hence, I will then speak on the policies in two areas, namely the family-friendly policy and the policy on food and environment. These two areas can clearly reflect the many problems plaguing Hong Kong due to the lack of change of principles. The colonial government only focused on making money, hoping to plunder as many resources from Hong Kong as possible for its parent companies in the United Kingdom, but after the reunification, should we call Hong Kong our home, should the accordance of priority to the interests of Hong Kong people and their well-being be made the guiding principle of the Government? This is the core issue of the two policies that I am going to discuss.

With regard to the family-friendly policy, Ms YUNG Hoi-yan has just now pointed out that Hong Kong is nowhere in comparison with other overseas countries, it seems to me that a Secretary has responded in this respect. However, does Hong Kong really fare so badly in comparison with other countries? I do not think so, is the low tax regime adopted in Hong Kong the reason for the Government's inaction? I believe the major difficulty encountered
now is that Hong Kong has followed the past economic pattern which cared little about the well-being of Hong Kong people because, as I have mentioned just now, this was not what the then government worked for.

Nevertheless, after the reunification, when Hong Kong is now administered by Hong Kong people, should we continue to adopt the same pattern to administer Hong Kong? As a city, Hong Kong is no longer a temporary shelter for us, but a place we call home. Our parents came to Hong Kong several decades ago, perhaps to flee the turmoil of wars or for other reasons, and they may harbour the thoughts of an eventual return to their places of origin and a glorious homecoming one day. However, people of the current generations have already settled down in Hong Kong, and this is also the core reason why we Hong Kong people have different expectations of their government. We therefore consider that the respective numbers of days of paternity leave and maternity leave are inadequate, and changes should be made. This aspiration stems from our belief that Hong Kong is our home and we expect ourselves and our next generation to live permanently here. We therefore call for improvement in this respect.

People in many other places in the world and even in Mainland China enjoy more holidays than us in Hong Kong. Take my wife as an example. She is now undertaking a doctorate degree programme in France, where there is a large number of holidays that is the envy of Hong Kong. She has just returned to Hong Kong to spend her Halloween holiday here for more than a week, but we in Hong Kong do not even have a day's holiday for Halloween. Besides, she is also entitled to two weeks' holiday during Christmas, two weeks' winter vacation, two weeks' holiday during the Spring Festival and two months' summer vacation. If children and even the general public in Hong Kong are entitled to such a large number of leave days, will they still be full of grievances?

It can thus be seen that Hong Kong is actually lagging far behind other places in this respect. Secretary WONG Kam-sing is working very hard, and it is definitely not a good thing for him to lose even more weight. Hence, there is a limit to human ability and people, foreigners or Chinese people alike, will definitely have aspirations for their well-being and joy, while holiday is only one of their aspirations. The number of general leave days in Hong Kong is very few indeed, not to mention menstrual leave or other leaves available in other overseas countries, and this is one example in this respect.
Another example is the fact that the Government only adopts an encouragement approach in promoting the family-friendly policy. The incentive scheme launched by the Labour Department ("LD") to promote the family-friendly policy has been in place for many years, and our colleagues in LD have been working very hard to successfully solicit participation in the scheme of several hundred enterprises. However, the Secretary should know very well that there are hundreds of thousands of small and medium enterprises and micro enterprises in Hong Kong, and has the number of participating enterprises of the scheme accounted for 1% of the total number of enterprises in Hong Kong? With the Government's encouragement only approach without a firmer attitude in enhancing its family-friendly policy, I wonder how many enterprises are willing to respond to its appeal? Is the Government's approach reflective of its incapability or inaction? I believe this touches on a matter of major principle.

Take paternity leave as an example. Why does the Government not extend the duration of paternity leave and even maternity leave? LD has been emphasizing in the past that as far as the aspiration for childbearing was concerned, the Government's objective was to avoid dampening it. In other words, it would avoid taking any measures which would cause people to give up their aspiration for childbearing, and this was the major guiding principle. However, let us think about it: Apart from India, are there any countries or places in the world where the government adopts the objectives of not lowering the fertility rate as its guiding principle? The governments of many places in Mainland China and other countries in the world are keen to encourage childbearing in the face of ageing population, so as to increase the quantity of the labour force and the number of people in the next generation, thereby ensuring the active social mobility through improvement in labour force. Yet, this is not the case in Hong Kong, and I reckon that this could be attributed to the fact that we have followed the guiding principle of the colonial government.

If we make no change to this guiding principle, the enhancements to paternity leave and maternity leave will be implemented at a very slow pace, and even with the provision of baby-friendly hospitals, other supporting measures will be hard to come by. This is the result of the overall guiding principle adopted by the Government, and is this what we really want? It is of course not my intention to completely deny the efforts made by the Government, and we do see some gradual and slow improvements in this respect. For example, a proposal has been included in the Policy Address to extend the duration of maternity leave to 14 weeks, a requirement for the provision of additional babycare facilities and
lactation rooms has been imposed in the sale conditions of Government land sale sites, measures have been implemented to encourage breastfeeding, and all these are slow and slight improvements. However, if we make no change to the major and basic guiding principle, how can we bring about bigger changes? This is indeed a mission impossible.

Since the Chief Executive, as a woman, intends to devote more efforts to promoting women's welfare and the family-friendly policy in the Policy Address, should changes also be made to the above mentioned principle? The Secretary should seriously consider whether such a guiding principle should continue to be adopted for the implementation of the family-friendly policy. Should the issue not be solely regarded as a matter of employees' benefits and achieving a balance between the interests of the business sector and those of the labour sectors would be good enough? We should bear in mind that it is the common wish of many cities in the world to increase their fertility rates.

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

I mainly wish to point out that the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions does not object to the present proposal concerning maternity leave, under which the duration of maternity leave for female employees will be extended by four weeks, and this is after all a good thing to see the Government finally effect some changes to the policy which has remained unchanged for the past 40 years. However, can the Government adopt some more measures to encourage childbearing after the implementation of the proposed extension? For example, should we regard childbearing as a kind of illness? If this is not an illness, why should maternity leave be regarded as sick leave as female employees taking maternity leave only receive pay at a rate of four fifths of their wages? When my wife was pregnant, she did look unwell and often felt like vomiting. Nevertheless, childbearing is not an illness but a sacred mission of women for the continuation of mankind, so why is one fifth of their wages deducted for taking maternity leave? I really fail to understand the rationale behind, but I know the Government will give us all sorts of excuses and argue that this is the established policy. However, as a government which encourages childbearing, should some principles be changed?
Moreover, the Government suggested a monthly wage of $50,000 as the cap, under which an employee with a monthly wage of $50,000 or above would be partially reimbursed while an employee with a monthly wage of $50,000 or below would be fully reimbursed, can Government take one more step in this respect? With regard to full-paid maternity leave, can the Government commit more after the implementation of the proposal to extend the duration of maternity leave? I fully understand the point presented by the Secretary yesterday. As for female employees with a monthly wage of over $100,000, or female Secretaries who are of childbearing age and are earning a monthly wage of as high as $300,000, should the Government spend a huge sum of public money on subsidizing their maternity leave pay? This is certainly one point we should take into consideration, but it is also a matter of principle that the Government should address if it wishes to encourage childbearing. It may consider providing additional financial allocation after extending the duration of maternity leave this year for the implementation of such measures as full-paid maternity leave and the provision of different allowances to encourage childbearing, because other places also provide similar allowances for women of childbearing age.

We of course hope that the Government will extend the application of such measures to cover paternity leave. As long as the Government is willing to shoulder the financial commitments, I believe that the business sector will be less upset. They can of course still come up with different excuses to oppose the idea of extending the duration of maternity leave, and as we have learnt from radio broadcasts, there are all sorts of excuses even though the Government is willing to provide allowances in this respect. However, in a city which needs to boost fertility rate, we should address the problem. Therefore, I hope that actions would be taken as soon as possible after the duration of maternity leave has been extended, so as to implement more different measures of a wider range to promote the family-friendly policy.

There are other problems which involve not only money, such as the introduction of a protection period of postnatal employment which we hope for. I have handled several such cases, and in a more classic case which I handled before 1 May this year, an employee was dismissed immediately after she gave birth, in fact, this was what her employer always wanted to do. Should we worry too much? Should the problem be handled this way if we really call Hong Kong our home, and if the Government genuinely gives priority to the well-being of Hong Kong people? I hope the Government would make some improvements as far as this major principle is concerned.
In the Policy Address this year, I think that the saying "the key to one's success is also one's undoing" happens to another policy area for which the Government has followed the stingy practice of the colonial government in dealing with livelihood issues, and that is the provision of public markets which is closely related to the daily life of the general public. The current-term Government has finally commenced the construction of public markets in new towns, including Tin Shui Wai, Tung Chung, Tseung Kwan O, and I hope Ma On Shan will be the next place to benefit from this initiative. This is certainly welcome news, but in some developed areas, the services at the markets there are in fact, to put it bluntly, "terrible" and "disastrous".

The Link Asset Management Limited ("the Link") is definitely to blame, because when the Government divested its facilities to the Link, the contract terms were too vague and tolerant, leaving too much room for exploitation and profiteering, and leading to poor performance of some divested retail facilities even after they have been repeatedly resold. However, there is no way for us to reverse the situation, because there is now no more Government land nearby, and the Government simply cannot interfere. According to the original design of the Housing Department ("HD"), one public market would be provided for the use by the entire community, and there is no need for the Secretary to frown on hearing this, because we can work together to find out the way to resolve the problem. A single market in an entire community will tend to develop into a monopoly, and how can we solve the problem? This is indeed a highly difficult task.

We are very happy to see that the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") has finally implemented the Market Modernisation Programme, but while the benefits are yet to be seen, harms have been brought about first, because in order to implement the Market Modernisation Programme, FEHD has started taking certain actions in existing markets. Before I go on to discuss the Market Modernisation Programme, let me first talk about the proposal to retrofit air-conditioning systems at existing markets, as this is in fact a long-standing problem which has haunted us for over 10 years since I was working as an assistant. Can the installation of air-conditioning systems ensure better business? It is in fact not necessarily the case.

Secretary, I visited Yee On Street Market in Ngau Tau Kok, Kwun Tong, two days ago after attending a District Council meeting. Of the 138 public markets provided in Hong Kong, only 41 have been retrofitted with air-conditioning systems, and Yee On Street Market is one of them, but it is a bit
puzzling that the market is very quiet with very few customers. The market, which is near a busy market on Shui Wo Street, is very quiet. The small business operators in the market have been able to survive thanks to their own ways of doing business. Nevertheless, due to recent intervention from the Office of The Ombudsman, FEHD has suddenly taken stringent actions against these small traders.

This market has operated for 20 years, but strict enforcement actions have never been taken, and neither have the terms of the tenancy agreements been strictly enforced. However, intervention by the Office of The Ombudsman has prompted immediate enforcement of the tenancy terms. For example, in addition to selling clothes, tenants of stalls designated for sale of non-food-related dry goods also provided alteration service, which was needed by the general public. However, according to enforcement officers, commercial tenants can sell goods only, other services are prohibited. As a result, alteration service is prohibited. Besides, as hardware stores can sell hardware goods only and key duplication is a kind of service which should be banned. All these are genuine cases.

This is really a typical case of "while the benefits are yet to be seen, harms have been brought about first", because the market itself is already very quiet, not to mention such actions. Moreover, the officer concerned told the affected business operators in an unfriendly manner that they were free to find new shops if they wished to enjoy a higher degree of freedom in running their business. I wonder if the implementation of the Market Modernisation Programme has made it necessary for FEHD to tackle the relevant issues with such measures. We understand that there are many different reasons behind the poor business of existing markets, and it is true that their commercial tenants are not good at running business, but the question is that these services are genuinely needed by the general public. Who does not need alteration service and key duplication service? Should these services really not be provided in these markets? I believe that the aforementioned reflects the bureaucracy and rigidity of the Government in handling certain issues.

Speaking of the overall public market policy, take the installation of air-conditioning systems for example, many projects are stuck in one point only: No one will object to the installation as long as commercial tenants are not required to pay electricity charges in connection with the air-conditioning systems. There are a lot of technical problems, but I do not think any
commercial tenants will object to the installation if they are not required to share the electricity charges concerned. Will the installation of air-conditioning systems benefit commercial tenants only? This is definitely not the case, because public markets provide services to the public and the residents. Is the Government not willing to lend a helping hand to small business operators, but ready to assist big consortia? These commercial tenants are running their business on a shoestring. After paying a monthly rent of $1,000 odd, they operate their business which meets the daily life needs of the general public. Their small business is operated according to free market principles. Is the Government really in such a difficult situation that it must collect electricity charges in connection with the air-conditioning systems, which has resulted in zero progress in the implementation of the policy which has been under discussion for over 10 to 20 years?

The Government has insisted on obtaining the consent from 85% of the commercial tenants concerned. Even though the threshold has since been lowered to 80%, only 10 to 20 public markets have been retrofitted with air-conditioning systems. Is it really necessary for the Government to adhere to this threshold so strictly? As a result, members of the public are forced to give up cheaper choices, and turn to patronize service providers charging relatively higher prices. Is this absolutely necessary? Is it necessary for the Government to adopt the guiding principle of cost recovery, would it be possible for the Government to treat the extra costs as its expenditure to offer support to the people? What should be the policy positioning in this respect? If the Government does not effect change to its major principle, its thinking will always favour one side.

The management of public markets by FEHD is already very bad, but some government departments are even worse. Take HD for example, the public markets in old housing estates which are under the management of HD are in appalling conditions. As all new markets under HD have been outsourced, their rents are very high. However, the old markets concerned are very quiet as if there is no business operation there. Are these markets available resources? As these are also government resources, can the Government centralize their management to meet the basic daily needs of the people? I understand that the objective of HD's market policy is to provide a public market to serve the residents of the housing estate concerned, while public markets under FEHD are provided to cope with the people's needs in the relevant district. However, as we
are now facing a common enemy, that is, privatized markets which charge high rents and eliminate services that cannot make profits for them, can we consolidate all public resources to fight them?

As both the Acting Chief Secretary for Administration and the Secretary are present now, will consideration be given to handling the issues altogether? Otherwise, after the divestment of assets to the Link and the resale of such assets by the Link, in line with contract spirit, there is nothing we can do or force them to do. Therefore, although the Government, the Secretary and even the Director may have high expectations of the Market Modernisation Programme, I hope the sum of $2 billion reserved for the purpose will not be left unused after two elections have been held, because I am afraid that the longer the delay, the greater the chance of the fund earmarked being left totally unused. It is hoped that the Government would exercise greater flexibility when handling certain policies instead of pursuing cost-effectiveness only, they should be regarded as commitment and support to the people. If we can adopt such thinking, many problems can be readily resolved.

Hawker control is another problem. In many different places, hawking activities can provide people operating on a small capital with an opportunity to start their own business. The Central Government also encourages startup by all. Engaging in hawking activities is one of the channels for starting one's own business. These activities can also reflect local characteristics, but Hong Kong has done nothing but stifle their development. The number of hawker licences has already decreased by over 800 from 4 330 in the past to the current 3 464, and with the suspension of the issuance of such licences since the 1970s, their number will only keep declining. Are we really going to eliminate the hawker trade, which is conducive to entrepreneurship and full of local characteristics?

With regard to the declining number of hawkers, I keep pondering over the issue and can think of only one reason. It definitely has something to do with the impact on cityscape, but it is also due to the fact that the Government has followed the principle adopted by the colonial government for city administration with minimal cost, so as to improve cityscape with the least possible manpower resources. Simply put, a reduction in the number of hawkers enables social improvements with minimal cost. However, do we need to adopt such a practice now? Should we establish a platform for grass-roots people and young people to start their own business?
According to the results of a questionnaire survey we conducted two months ago, as many as 30% of the respondents considered hawker trade an opportunity for grass-roots people and young people to develop and start their own business, while more than 50% of the respondents opined that the Government should re-issue hawker licences. Of course, the re-issuance of hawker licences will not be as simple as what we have done in the past. It is hoped that certain restrictions and regulations should be removed. For example, should hawkers selling sandwiches on the street be required to obtain a food factory licence? Should a food factory licence be issued for premises with an area of 60 sq ft or above only? I think these are the issues that we should take into consideration.

Nevertheless, FEHD is a relatively bureaucratic and rigid department. Two days ago, we were finally able to arrange a meeting between frontline personnel of the Joint Offices for Investigation of Water Seepage Complaints and officials from two Policy Bureaux and three government departments. Frankly speaking, I do not understand why the Food and Health Bureau has acted so passively in handling the matter and let the Development Bureau in the driving seat. As a matter of fact, frontline personnel of FEHD are serious about assisting the general public in mitigating a common household problem, they have relayed many operational problems to the Bureau, but have not received positive response. I understand that a review team has already been set up to deal with the problems, but are there really so many difficulties that not enough solutions have been found? I do not think so.

Just like the Policy Address this year, the Government has finally formulated a policy which can break through the bottleneck, breaking away from its past practice of following the management pattern adopted by the colonial government and that is the Lantau Tomorrow, a mega investment project. I may get carried away with such remarks, in fact, although the former colonial government regarded cost saving as the most important consideration, it would not hesitate to make investments when it faced a bottleneck problem, which is proved by some old maps.

Deputy President, this is an old map which I have found on the Internet, and the area shaded in pink is the land created through reclamation all these years. As a Member returned through direct election in the Kowloon West constituency, Deputy President must be aware that all land in the west of Shanghai Street was actually created through reclamation and I was born in a reclamation area. Whenever there was a bottleneck in economic development,
the former colonial government would take practical measures to resolve the problem. The Government is now seeking to address our problems again through reclamation, and I think what is lacking now is a clear illustration of what exactly will members of the public get in return after the completion of the reclamation projects. If the Government can give a clear illustration of what the people will get and how their living environment will improve after the completion of the reclamation projects, I am sure the public would welcome these projects.

For example, if it is expressly said that the Home Ownership Scheme units to be built in the new reclamation area will be sold at a price of only $2,000 or less per square foot, while the price per square foot for the private residential units there will also be in the range of $4,000 only, and a promise will be made that the rent of public housing units there will be $1,000 only, I believe the general public will give strong support to the implementation of the reclamation projects. By doing so, the public's distrust or doubts about the reclamation projects can also be removed.

Hence, as a Hong Kong resident who grew up in a reclamation area, and a District Council member serving Kowloon East, which is also a reclamation area, I think what is lacking now is just a clear explanation, which will enable the public to know the benefits from the Lantau Tomorrow plan. I would like to tell the officials of the bureaux concerned that if a clear explanation could be made in this respect, I believe that Hong Kong people would very much welcome the implementation of the reclamation projects.

Deputy President, my speech in this debate session ends here and I so submit.

DR FERNANDO CHEUNG (in Cantonese): Deputy President, I will first talk about the Civil Service College.

Paragraphs 24 and 25 of the Policy Address touch on the Civil Service College. This is actually unrelated to labour and welfare, but as we all know, the site for the Civil Service College is now the location of a school providing post-secondary vocational training and learning for disabled persons. The school will have to be relocated to vacate the site for constructing the college. This matter was revealed on the day the Policy Address was delivered.
The matter is not explained in the Policy Address. But this school, the Shine Skills Centre ("SSC") in Kwun Tong operated by the Vocational Training Council ("VTC") issued a circular to its students on that day, informing them that the school would be closed in the fourth quarter of 2021. It used the words "cease operation", and the school will be relocated to another place. There is no further details in the circular, except that SSCs in Pokfulam and Tuen Mun will not be affected. Any students who is mid-way through a programme at SSC Kwun Tong may consider transferring to the other two SSCs to study.

The Secretary came forward to pacify the public after the matter came to light, saying that not need to worry as SSC Kwun Tong would be relocated and reprovisioned. But it sounds strange. I asked Mrs Carrie YAU, probably the highest rank person in VTC, for more information. She said they were informed by notice in writing only in September by the Bureau ... I mean the Labour and Welfare Bureau, and Secretary Dr LAW Chi-kwong is now present ... that SSC Kwun Tong would be closed in the fourth quarter of 2021 and the land would be returned to the Government; but they were not informed of the future location of the school.

This is strange. The school is asked to cease operation and return the land but the school is not told where it will be relocated. Rumour has it that there will be an integrated vocational training centre funded by the Social Welfare Department ("SWD") and operated by a non-governmental organization ("NGO"). I believe Deputy President is aware that VTC is not an NGO, but an academic institution under the Government, and it is also not funded by SWD, but it has been funded by the Labour and Welfare Bureau. To me, the Secretary seems to be playing with words reminiscent of hypocrisy. He said the school would be reprovisioned but actually it would be closed down.

When asked what services the new school would provide, the Secretary said reassuringly that there would be a seamless transition. Since the school programme is of a two-year structure, students who are admitted in the 2020 school year will be affected by the relocation in 2021. The Secretary said the two-year programme could be condensed into one year, but he could not provide any information on any new bridging programmes after the one-year programme. As to where SSC Kwun Tong would be relocated, the Secretary said the school would be relocated to a place even closer to the city centre than its original location. But again he was unable to provide further information.
The repercussions of this matter have lasted one month. Everyone is very concerned. If your child is studying in a primary school and the school is suddenly notified by the Government that it will cease operation in three years and the land will be returned, but then you are asked not to worry because your child can have a seamless transition by shortening the four-year curriculum into two years, you will probably ask where the school will be relocated, what the new programme is about and what organization will take up the operation of the new school. But the answer you get is that they do not know. The Government cannot tell you now because it cannot fabricate some information for you; the information does not exist and that is why it cannot tell you.

Deputy President, this is strange indeed. In order to redevelop a place, one must consider the people in the area that will be affected. These people can be those living there, or going to school or work there, or operating business there. Should they not be the first ones to be informed? They should be informed of and be consulted on the plan. Now, the Government only pacifies them, saying that there will be a plan to rehouse them. As such, they certainly will tell the Government that this is not what the students need. These students cannot complete their two-year study in one year. This is impossible to them. They need more time.

We are talking about disabled students here. Many of them have mild intellectual disability or autism, and some have physical, hearing or visual impairment. It is not funny to ask them to complete their two-year study in one year. What will the new programme consist of? If the programme will not be shortened, will there be any bridging programmes? The Government does not tell them either. The Government does not even show basic respect to them. Does the Government want to treat these students like goods, or second-class students, that can be kicked around at will? Does the Government want to eliminate any obstacles that stands in the way of the Civil Service College? Is it so? Will the Government disregard this school that has been located at the site for over 50 years?

Frankly, I know some retired civil servants who were trained in this SSC. They graduated there. Does the Government regard these disabled persons as second-class citizens? After picking this location, the Government just asked the students to leave and told them they would be informed of the future arrangement at an opportune time. What kind of an attitude is this? How could the Government behave like this? What a government!
The Secretary's justification is that the Policy Address has to be kept secret until the day of delivery, and that the Government has now informed the public three years in advance of the school closure, so there should be ample time. Is this service attitude still acceptable today? He does not even show basic respect. Then he went on saying that civil servants needed a college, so would the school providing education for disabled persons please give way. Does the Government have no land? The Government prefers this location just because it is next to the Kwun Tong MTR Station and is easily accessible. Do the disabled students now using the place not need an accessible location?

The Government says that it will provide a location closer than the city centre for the disabled students, but it does not say exactly where. The Chief Executive mentions in the Policy Address that she will set up an advisory board for the construction of the Civil Service College. One of the tasks of the advisory board is to prepare for the construction of the new college. The Government will set up an advisory board simply for constructing the Civil Service College, but it did not consult the students who will be asked to leave to make way by the construction project. What kind of a government is this? Is the Government blind and cannot see things clearly? Or is it that the Government's values have been unconsciously revealed in this incident?

This is the priority of the Government. Disabled persons cannot manage their study; even if they complete their study, they cannot find any work. So, would they please give way to the civil servants. The civil servants are more important. They have to lead society forward. They have to learn many things, including national studies and the thoughts of XI Jinping. The Government can pick any place for constructing the Civil Service College. Would the disabled persons please give way. The Government will make other arrangements for them. It has its own planning. Anything it thinks feasible is feasible. Is this the new governing mentality of the Government? To date, the Government is still unwilling to disclose any information. What a government! Just wait and see what additional information, if any, Secretary Dr LAW Chi-kwong will tell us about this matter at the meeting of the Panel on Welfare Services on 12 November.

Deputy President, a major highlight of the entire Policy Address is the Lantau Tomorrow Vision. This grand plan of reclaiming 1700 hectares of artificial islands will have an immense impact on Hong Kong and it will decide our future development. Our future hinges on the success or failure of this
grand plan of 1 700 hectares of artificial islands. The questions of whether Hong Kong people have space to live, whether our economy can develop sustainably and whether we have space for welfare facilities hinge on the East Lantau Metropolis. It is appalling enough that the Government proposed in the "Hong Kong 2030+" to construct a 1 000 hectare artificial island, and now it even plans to scale up the reclamation by 70%.

Deputy President, I do not know why Carrie LAM has such a grand vision; and I do not know why her thoughts about the natural environment are so utilitarian, treating it as her tool. She does not respect the natural environment, as if it exists only for our exploitation. She only regards the economy and the development of Hong Kong as important. She can build something amid the natural environment and transform nature; otherwise, she thinks that there is no way out. The worst of all is that she acts by her own will. How invincible she is!

But Deputy President, I do not see that she shows the same resolution in meeting the basic livelihood needs of the grass roots. Does she have a vision for long-term care services? You can easily find a care home with poor services when you walk on the street. Frankly, residential care homes for the elderly or for persons with disabilities are the final destination for Hong Kong people. Any family member, or anyone of us here, may have to face this final destination. When we get old and become less and less productive and healthy, and when we can no longer take care of ourselves, or if we fall or get sick and are hospitalized but are discharged before we are fully recovered, what can we do if everyone in the family has to work and cannot take care of us? What options do we have?

Are our community care services strong enough to meet the objective of "ageing in place" that the Government has advocated for decades and let elderly people spend their twilight years at home? Can elderly people who cannot take care of themselves but wish to live at home actually do so instead of staying in care homes? Do they not need to wait for home care services? Do they not need to wait for places at day care centres? How long do they need to wait for an assessment appointment? How long do they have to wait after the assessment? How long do we have to wait? We have to wait by years, or by months the soonest.

Then, during these years and months of waiting, who will take care of these elderly persons? Do their family members have to make a sacrifice and quit their jobs, thus making the elderly persons feel very guilty? Can this solve the
problem? Or, should they choose the simplest option and send the elderly persons to care homes? That is why Hong Kong has become the world number one among all advanced places in the proportion of people living in care homes. People aged over 65 who are living in a care home account for 7%. No other places in the world has more elderly persons living in care homes then we have. What is all this talk about "ageing in place"? Do not fool us please.

The Government has called for "ageing in place" for years, but we only see more and more care homes in Hong Kong. The Secretary asks us not to worry, saying that care homes are constructed at a very slow pace. But he is talking about subsidized care homes, and the number of private care homes is growing rapidly, accounting for 60% to 70% of all care homes. After all, this is a business. The requirements for these private care home are not stringent. At present, a private care home is only required by law to maintain a nurse-to-resident ratio of 1:60 at night shift. Would the Secretary please send his mother to a care home first. How could he accept such a standard under the law? The ratio is 1:60.

Now, after years of our lobbying, the Government is forced to establish a committee and I am one of the committee member. But I was furious at the meeting. I urged the Government to increase the area of floor space per resident, but the officials behaved as if they had a toothache; then I asked for increasing the manning ratio, they again behaved as if I were taking their lives. And then the Secretary started to play with words. When we asked for a substantial increase in manpower, he said that under existing law, only a slight increase was required. But the point is, the requirement under the law is too low, because the law has not been reviewed for 20 years.

Why does the Government have to treat elderly persons so poorly in every single matter? Where has the Government's vision gone? How come the Government does not talk about its vision on this matter and only says that all elderly persons can be looked after by their family members? Perhaps, the vision of the Chief Executive is to import 600,000 foreign domestic helpers to Hong Kong. She has made it clear that we now have some 300,000 foreign domestic helpers, and there will be 600,000 in the future to solve the problem of long-term care in Hong Kong. If we are still unsatisfied, we can send the elderly persons to live on the Mainland. Hong Kong is an international financial hub and commercial city. There is no place for the disadvantaged because the cost is too high. Will the Government set aside the 1,700-hectare Eastern Lantau for the disabled and the elderly to live? Do not joke with me please.
According to some economic academics, the artificial islands will make a profit. Even the pro-establishment camp echoes and says that the project will make a big fat profit. Will it be used to accommodate the elderly? Do not be silly. The Government has been making profits from reclaiming land. It pours $1,000 billion into the sea and it will probably get $2,000 billion in return. The calculation is easy. Back in those year, it was the same group of academics who objected universal retirement protection; it was them who supported the Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme, which has led to the need for the SAR Government to provide $30 billion to patch things up. These academics have been colluding with the Government. They all have vested interests and totally disregard Hong Kong people. Everything is money-related. So, the Government's vision is to rely on foreign domestic helpers.

A recent survey conducted by an organization finds that 30% of the foreign domestic helpers are employed to take care of singleton elderly or elderly doubletons. We have over 300,000 foreign domestic helpers. In other words, almost 100,000 of them are employed to specifically take care of elderly singletons. What problems are involved here? Do these foreign domestic helpers know how to take care of elderly persons? The Government defends that there is a new programme to train foreign domestic helpers and teach them how to take care of elderly persons. But how many places are there in the programme? Only 300 places.

The Government says it has already done its part and provided a programme to train the 300,000-odd foreign domestic helpers. But the programme can only train 300 foreign domestic players to take care of elderly persons, and the Government thinks that it has done its job. It is the same every time. When you question the Government for not doing its job, it will then do a little, just a little, to defend itself. These high-ranking and well-paid officials will tell you that they have done their job. Hong Kong has everything, just that everything is insufficient. But this is not their concern. As the Government, they will say that they have done their part, blaming insufficient resources, so that only those with the greatest need will get the help. If you can get it, that is fine; if not, your fate is decided by a ballot system. That is it. What an easy job.

With the continuous high land price and low tax rate policy, the Government continues to get rich, while the people continue to do low pay jobs and work long hours. They cannot catch up with the inflation rate or buy a home. But it is not the business of the Government. Now, the Government
even focuses on home-ownership, thus making the queue for public housing longer and longer. But again, this is none of its business. All in all, the Government will do as far as feasible. Deputy President, the Government will definitely do as far as feasible … Matthew CHEUNG's favourite words are "do as far as feasible", "as far as possible" or "our work will definitely meet the required levels", "the disciplined services are all professional and decisive". How awesome. The Government is always free of faults and everything is done for you to see.

Moreover, the Policy Address also mentions that imported workers are the answer to the problem of labour shortage. Honestly, we do have a problem of labour shortage. Some organizations have tried every means but failed to recruit sufficient staff. But the point is what salaries are they offering? The pay is so low that we are now asking them to increase the entry salary of the workers by two points, and if they still fail to recruit sufficient workers, they can import workers. Has the Government tried to find out where these organizations used their money? Do they use the money on the workers? Of course not. I have received numerous complaints claiming that these organizations used the money to line their own pockets. These NGOs … I am not talking about private care homes, but Deputy President, I am talking about NGOs which have requested to import workers. What is the work condition of these imported workers?

Recently, 10 imported workers at the Wing Kwong Care Home for the Elderly stepped forward and complained. They are very brave and I must commend them for their courage as I am afraid they cannot come back to work in Hong Kong again. Because of their action, we asked the Labour Department to help them find another job while an investigation was in progress. It turned out that no other job could be found for them and they all left Hong Kong now. Their speaking up was not able to help them because they had paid their Mainland agency more than RMB20,000, so they were already in debt before coming to Hong Kong to work. The 300 000-odd foreign workers are facing the same situation. They are paid at market salary but they have to return $3,000 to their agents every month. They do not have any holiday. At most, they can only return to their home towns a few times a year for a few days, and for the rest of the year, they have to work from Monday to Sunday. They may even have to work on a 24-hour shift when necessary.

Rumour has it that the condition of the so-call boarding house is so poor that two persons may have to share the same bed to save costs because they have to take an alternate 12-hour shift. The boarding house is close to the care home
so that they can be summoned to work anytime. They are the "shadow workers". Deputy President may not know what is a "shadow worker". Some care homes have less workers than they have officially claimed. When the authorities come for a check, these care homes will immediately call these "shadow workers" even during their off hours to come to the care homes. The Secretary is a smart person. Does he not know about this? Does SWD not know about this? They make site visits every day. One care home is checked at least seven to eight times a year. They know all these tricks and malpractices, but they make compromises and tolerate them. They condone the tying up of elderly residents by care homes.

Recently, academics from, among others, the University of Hong Kong and The Hong Kong Polytechnic University published a research study on subsidized care homes in an international journal. They find that restraints are applied to 70% of the elderly residents. Deputy President, it is 70%; 70% of the elderly residents in care homes, I am talking about subsidized ones, are subject to different extents of physical restraints. The Secretary is a scholar. He should know about this; otherwise, I can give him a copy of the international journal for reference.

The conditions in private care homes are even more appalling. I can tell you that on the whole, the situation in care homes for people with disabilities is worse than that of care homes for the elderly. We discovered that some elderly persons are tied up when they are going to toilet or sleeping. I saw it with my own eyes. I still make frequent visits to care homes. I patrol around like a ghost buster. Many care homes do not allow me in with the reason of privacy. They see me like seeing a ghost.

Hong Kong is a 21st century city. Why do I have to apply for a care home place for my daughter? Because you will have to wait for 17 years for a place. By that time, I already age 78. I do not know my health condition at that time. If I do not make an application in advance for my daughter now, am I a little irresponsible? Although I will not send my daughter to a care home, not even on the day I die, I truly do not know on which day I will die. I do not know on which day I will no longer be able to take care of my daughter.

It is really sad that something like this could happen in Hong Kong. If I lose self-care capacity, or if I have dementia like Prof Charles KAO, and I want to find a suitable day care centre, I will have to pay for it myself. I do not know
if I can afford some $500 a day to stay in the day care centre. To date, the Government refuses to set up a day care centre for dementia. I do not know if I can wait for a place in a care home for the elderly. Even if I can, I do not want to live in it. But I know that if I do not live in a care home, I will become a heavy burden to my family. Who will take care of me? Should I employ a foreign domestic helper? Can they take care of me? Why are Hong Kong people doomed to such misfortune? Hong Kong is so rich that it can build a 1 700-hectare artificial island in the middle of the sea, but it has no money to satisfy these basic needs.

I am yet to talk about the medication for cancer and rare disease patients, and how backward our elementary medical services are. After each medical check-up, one has to wait for years for the next check-up. If a patient needs to receive some basic tests, MRI or CAT scan to assess the status of his illness, he probably has to wait for years, and by that time, he would have already died. In other words, we need to rely on private medical services. But what about the poor people? They will have to queue for public medical services.

How come things turn out like this? Does the Government not have a priority? They focus only on the Lantau Tomorrow dream. The aged, the vulnerable and the disabled in Hong Kong are doomed. If these people get sick, or need a targeted therapy or other expensive drugs, they need to count on the Chief Executive's sympathy. It is because the Chief Executive sympathized with the small children with Spinal Muscular Atrophy and came out to receive their petition that these children can get the medicine for their disease. Other patients can only wait.

Deputy President, no matter be it the Government's elderly dental services, long-term care services, basic care services for the disabled, or the services my daughter needs at day activity centres, there is a long queue. In North District, services are now available for those who submitted applications in 2010 and in Tai Po District, it is those who submitted applications in 2009. People with serious physical or mental disabilities often need to receive training at these centres after their graduation from special schools. But they have to wait for eight years for a place in day centres, or more than 10 years for residential centres.

The Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge has broken several world records. How great it is. The Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, the third airport runway and the future artificial islands are all record-breaking
mega-projects. But the elderly, the vulnerable and the disabled, who are the weakest groups in Hong Kong, have also made a record in waiting for basic services. I have never seen anything like waiting for more than 10 years for a public service.

But Deputy President, Secretary Dr LAW Chi-kwong is smart. He keeps saying that the harder he tries the further he lags behind in service provision, and that it can easily take 10 years to build care homes, so the Government cannot do anything about it. He is only paying lip service. This is the situation now. The services are getting worse. The Government just pays lip service and then calls it a day. We have no alternative but count on the Lantau Tomorrow Vision, hoping that a few hectares of the 1 700-hectare artificial islands will be reserved for the elderly, the vulnerable and the disabled in Hong Kong, so that they can continue to "shine", to be restrained and be taken care of under a 1:60 manpower ratio.

MR KWOK WAI-KEUNG (in Cantonese): Deputy President, the theme of the third debate session is "Improving People's Livelihood".

Deputy President, in my opinion, if we want to improve people's livelihood, our policies must demonstrate love, responsibility, vision, and timeliness. Why is that so? It is because the SAR Government gives a general impression that it is very slow in taking action. I am not pointing my finger at the current-term Government only as this is a common shortcoming of all previous-terms and the current-term Governments, that is, making no decision after deliberation and taking no action after making a decision. This has been the situation of the past more than 20 years. This allegation is not unsubstantiated. As a matter of fact, we are falling behind other countries instead of leading them in coping with housing supply, land supply, property prices, rent, talent training, innovation and technology, and environmental protection. The Government really needs to take a leading role if it is going to improve people's livelihood.

Our Government has always followed the principle of "big market, small government", but if we leave everything to market mechanism, it means leaving everything to luck. As we all know, the driving force of free market is making profits, instead of resolving social problems. The driving force of the market is very clear, but what is the driving force of the Government? It should be love, responsibility, vision, and timeliness that I just mentioned. In my opinion,
though Lantau Tomorrow proposed in the Policy Address will inevitably involve some social costs, it serves to resolve a long-standing problem and sets a vision, looking ahead to 20 years from now. I therefore deem it worth supporting.

Now let us return to the issue of electronic cigarettes ("e-cigarettes"). Being the first Member who brought up the issue of e-cigarettes in this Council, I am bitterly disappointed at the whole development of the situation. Why is that so? I brought up the issue of e-cigarettes in 2014, and then the Administration proposed a total ban on e-cigarettes in 2015. I have to be fair and point out the fact that the Government was the first to propose a total ban. However, after the proposal was put forth, some Members queried whether the Administration had any information on hand, and whether any laboratory tests had been conducted. They also asked whether the Administration had any information to substantiate its enthusiasm in imposing a total ban other than the reports published by the World Health Organization. At that time, the Administration said that it had none, and that no laboratory tests on e-cigarettes had been conducted. Back then, heated tobacco products ("HTPs") were not available yet. All Members, irrespective of their political parties or groupings, therefore urged the Administration to carry out more research. It took the Government three years, from 2015 to 2018, to carry out the research before presenting the information, and then it proposed a partial regulation instead of a total ban. In this way, the Government gave the impression that it was rather indecisive. Meanwhile, during these three years, the business of e-cigarettes thrive. E-cigarettes are now sold in stationery stores, and specialty stores targeting adult customers have been open. Those e-cigarette stores are like supermarkets, offering e-cigarettes of different categories and flavours. Some retailers have already signed tenancy agreements, and some have stocked up a lot. In fact, it is very difficult to impose regulation at this point.

I am not sure whether the Administration is making fake movements to trick the opposition camp, as if trying to trick the opposing team when playing basketball, expecting the opposition camp to raise objection when a partial regulation is proposed, and then the Administration could put forward a counter proposal of a total ban. If it were your intention, you had done a great job because you had achieved your goal. The opposition camp is bound and has no more room for manoeuvre but can only support a total ban. As the first Member who raised this matter, I think that timing is the most important consideration. This is what I meant by "timeliness". Indeed, many changes have been seen in
the e-cigarette market in the last three years. The business of e-cigarettes thrived and there was the emergence of HTPs. I believe that from the perspective of public health of the whole community, a total ban is the most ideal. The Chief Executive should have been more determined to impose a definitive ban on e-cigarettes, but you have delayed making the decision and consequently caused a lot of obstacles, including those brought by the market environment I mentioned just now and by those business activities that are underway. I hope that you will try your best to overcome these obstacles. As a matter of fact, in the last 30 years, the tobacco control measures yielded positive results and the smoking population showed a gradual decline. However, I must make it clear that new products will always attract new smokers.

Therefore, I hope that the Administration will not take us to ride the roller-coaster by proposing a total ban in the beginning and then turning to partial regulation afterwards, and now proposing a total ban again. I hope that the Government will expedite the relevant legislative process and stop dragging on, otherwise, there will be more obstacles. I hope that you will complete the legislative procedures to ban e-cigarettes completely as soon as possible.

Then I would like to speak on welfare portability. The Policy Address mentioned that under the Guangdong Scheme ("GDS") and the Fujian Scheme ("FJS"), elderly people who reside in the two provinces are entitled to "fruit grant" only. Indeed, when the Old Age Living Allowance ("OALA") was launched in 2013, the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions ("FTU") already proposed to have OALA covered in GDS and FJS as soon as possible. This Policy Address has proposed a similar measure, but the question is when it will be implemented. The system is in place, and the elderly people have made their decisions. It is unlikely that any elderly people will move to the Mainland just for receiving an extra amount of OALA. Instead, the point is how to allow the Hong Kong elderly who are already residing in the Mainland to receive OALA as soon as possible. As we all know, our country is developing rapidly, and the cost of living keeps rising. If you do not improve the life of the Hong Kong elderly people who have already moved to the Mainland as soon as possible and enable them to receive a higher amount of OALA, their quality of life in the Mainland will not be assured and their living standards will decline. I hope the Administration will quicken its pace, expedite the process, and implement the proposal in a timely manner.
In addition, I feel compelled to raise another issue, which have also been mentioned by some Members earlier on. Elderly care is not just about money, but also about services. It is well known that the progress of the construction of Government's residential care homes for the elderly is very slow, and even a deity cannot resolve the situation. What we need is land. Again and again, land supply is the key to resolve many issues. I understand that you are not a magician who can solve the difficulties right away. The point is that when the inadequacy of residential care services and places for the elderly is well known, why are other remedial measures not implemented actively? Several members have spoken on "ageing in place". How much effort has been exerted in this area? Is that sufficient? Is there any plan to cater for a growing elderly population? I hope the Government will set its vision in this regard.

After all, it is understandable that to improve people's livelihood, there are many issues to be addressed and many aspirations to be met. But it is the Government's responsibility to meet these aspirations and address these issues. I therefore emphasize once again that I hope the SAR Government will show the public its determination and commitment, its love and responsibility for the community, its vision, and timeliness in its actions, so as to make our city a truly liveable city.

Deputy President, in the next session, I will speak more on housing and other aspects of life regarding the topic of Liveable City. My speech for this session will end here. Thank you.

MR KWONG CHUN-YU (in Cantonese): Deputy President, the theme of this debate session has something to do with the provision of social work services in kindergartens, which we have all along been very concerned about.

Members may have noted that this year's Policy Address has finally touched on the provision of social work services in kindergartens. In fact, the heartbreaking "Lam Lam incident" took place early this year which was also discussed by this Council. I have very deep feelings about the incident because we had received the views of Lam Lam's classmates and other parents at the time and they all said that no more such instances should happen. Later on, many parents even helped organize a public procession to voice their unanimous call for introducing social work services for kindergartens.
As the matter developed to a later stage, the Secretary finally said that social work services will be introduced. However, Members of this Council and the Secretary were much divided over staffing arrangements. Following rounds of negotiation and mediation, progress has been made in that a pilot scheme is being launched. I once asked the Secretary at another meeting if he had good memory, he replied that his short-term memory was not very good. I went on to ask if he was able to memorize hundreds of people's names and he replied in the negative. That being the case, why do the authorities require one single social worker to take care of hundreds of kindergarten pupils? We certainly understand that any pilot scheme may have a lot of teething troubles, but we do hope that this three-year pilot scheme on social work services, which is funded with an allocation of $500 million from the Lotteries Fund, can provide social work services to about 150,000 pre-primary children in 760 subsidized/aided child care centres and kindergartens in Hong Kong and their families.

Ladies and gentlemen, social work services are essential as many parents of children attending kindergartens and those who are concerned about Lam Lam's case have pointed out that the incident was not the first of its kind. One night last year has left me with the deepest impression when a video clip featuring a man crazily beating a child was extensively circulated on Facebook and since the most resourceful netizens could figure out where the incident took place, so I went over to Lok Wah Estate in the early hours of that morning to find out what had happened. I was worried at first that they might have got the wrong location until I arrived at the scene at about one or two o'clock in the morning and found that it was true. Although what had happened was different from what we have imagined, and the video clip in question was later discovered to be only an old footage, it has already got on the nerves of the community because young children are vulnerable who may not be able to speak up for themselves. In fact, in formulating policies for the protection of the disadvantaged, the Government should give thought to how to protect the disadvantaged and those who are unable to speak up for themselves in order to safeguard their rights. Paying lip service is easy, but taking actions through certain mechanism is what really matters. Introducing social work services to kindergartens may be a starting point, but how useful can it be given the ratio of social workers to students is 1:400? Under the currently proposed pilot scheme, the work will be made more difficult as every social worker has to visit four or more kindergartens. Secretary, I am also a social worker. If the current scheme is on a trial basis and additional resources will be allocated when everything is on track for full implementation, it
is imperative that the authorities should inform the public of the specific details of the scheme particularly when its aims are to prevent the recurrence of similar tragedies. Otherwise, those frontline social workers will be rushed off their feet then.

(THE PRESIDENT resumed the Chair)

On the other hand, I would like to remind the Government of its unfulfilled commitment on behalf of another vulnerable group which we are also concerned about, namely people with disabilities ("PWDs"), as the Policy Address seems to have failed to address the licensing issue of residential care homes for persons with disabilities ("RCHDs"). Two years ago in 2016, questions were put to the former Secretary here in this chamber following the exposure of the "Bridge of Rehabilitation Company Incident". According to him, there were more than 300 RCHDs in Hong Kong, most of which were operated with a certificate of exemption. At that time, the former Secretary said in no uncertain terms that the Government would take forward full licensing within three years. Time has flown and it has been almost three years since then, but the Policy Address did not say much about this subject. As we all know, the "Bridge of Rehabilitation Company Incident" is a case involving the head of the company being suspected of having sexually abused a resident of the RCHD, which exposed huge problems in the management of the RCHDs and subsequently brought to light the fact that most of the RCHDs were operated with a certificate of exemption rather than a formal business license, it is the Social Welfare Department which allows them to continue to operate subject to certain conditions. This is not a proper management approach and all RCHDs should be required to apply for an official licence in order to facilitate better regulation. As the former Secretary had promised in no uncertain terms to fulfil the commitment within three years and the three-year period is nearly over, it is time for us to remind the Secretary of the Government's unfulfilled commitment. I hope that the Secretary will pay more attention to this issue and prove to society its genuine concern for the service quality of the RCHDs by taking specific action.

Regarding those who are unable to speak up for themselves, I went through all the chapters of the policy address. Fortunately, the chapter on improving people's livelihood is under the purview of the Secretary for Food and Health Prof Sophia CHAN and so I can talk about matters concerning animal rights. In
fact, we are gratified to see animal rights slowly become an issue of concern to this Council in the last couple of years. To be honest, if we talked about animal rights a few years earlier, it might not be significant enough to be taken as an issue or cause for concern. Nevertheless, in recent years, especially when this issue has been mentioned in paragraphs 283 and 284 of the current Policy Address, many people hope that the Government can do something more in this respect. I would like to, however, bring to the attention of Secretary Prof CHAN in the first place an infuriating incident that just happened this week. There used to be a cave in a housing estate in Tsing Yi occupied by a cat family of five members. Everyone in the neighbourhood knew that there were cats living in the cave, but it is learned that the estate's management office proceeded to seal the cave allegedly at the request of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") for rodent disinfestation. Some members of the public had reminded the staff member of the management office of the possible presence of cats inside the cave, but according to my understanding the staff member concerned simply ignored what was told and proceeded to seal the cave. Subsequently, the incident continued to ferment and the cave was eventually unsealed one or two hours after being sealed. On learning the news, I went over there. What a strange scene! I saw a cat staring at me from inside of the cave when I tried to look into the cave. Maybe it just showed itself up to seek help because it knew that the "Councillor for Cats" had come.

This is a sad story, but let us put this matter aside for the time being and talk about the relevant mechanism and society's attitude first. If we subscribe to the view that animal lives are valuable too, it was unacceptable for the staff of the management office to show such a careless attitude by sealing the cave at the request of FEHD despite knowing that the cave was home to five cats and having been reminded that there might be cats inside the cave (which was later proven when the cave was subsequently unsealed). Such attitude is definitely unacceptable particularly in the wake of our growing concern for animal rights. And so, Secretary, there are actually a lot more animal issues worthy of exploring in the days to come.

Paragraph 283 of the Policy Address states that the authorities will study in what way should the penalties for committing cruelty to animals be stepped up early next year. I really want to tell Members that the penalties set out in the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Ordinance (Cap. 169) ("the Ordinance") are already out of date. Let us ask ourselves how can three years' imprisonment and a fine of $200,000 be of much deterrent effect? Meanwhile, the fact that the
court has never handed down the maximum penalty to offenders convicted of breaching the Ordinance has resulted in repeated cases of cruelty to animals in society. This will lead to the spread of an undesirable ethos across all quarters of society if we still do not do anything to stop such cases from happening, where bullying small animals will gradually escalate into bullying people in the end. Hence, the authorities must take early action in this respect.

In view of the above, Secretary, we hope that the review to be conducted early next year will put forward stronger and more powerful measures, preferably by enhancing the deterrent effect of the penalties while revisiting the feasibility of establishing animal police, which of course, falls within the remit of another Policy Bureau, but I still wish to mention it here. I hope that the Secretary can listen to our views and act accordingly where appropriate. Why do I consider that we have finally made small progress in our fight for animal rights this year? It is because at least 22 police districts have set up designated teams to carry out investigations into cases of cruelty to animals. In the past, it all depended on fate whenever there was any incident involving animals. Why? It was because if the case took place in a police district without any designated teams to carry out investigations into cases of cruelty to animals, we might not get any reply even if we wrote to the District Commander. And we would only get a brief reply if we made further enquiries. However, when a number of police districts have set up their own designated teams, this implies that animal rights have finally begun to be taken seriously.

Yet, this is not enough. The proposal to establish animal police is only one of the various options jointly advocated by members of the public which we hope to materialize. Along with the review to be conducted on the Ordinance which I have mentioned just now, the idea has also been translated into the "Animal Watchers" Scheme as stated in length in paragraph 284 of the Policy Address. The Government has made clear that the Scheme will be implemented in the coming year, but relevant details, which fall out of the scope of discussion for this debate session, have yet to be disclosed. For whatever reason, however, if this Council begins to take kind treatment of animals seriously, it signifies the progress of the city and a proof of Mahatma GANDHI's wise saying which I have quoted time and again: "The greatness of a nation can be judged by the way its animals are treated." I hope that the Secretary can pay more heed to public opinion in the future, particularly in the conduct of the review.
In addition, I would like to add a little bit to the aspect of providing room for animals. At present, new things have appeared in society, including the sharing of parks, which owe much to the coordination efforts by relevant departments and enable animals to enter our community. I will leave it for the next debate session to continue following up on this issue with the Home Affairs Bureau then.

Now, I come back to the issues concerning vulnerable groups. In fact, my speech has been closely linked to those who are unable to speak up for themselves. I want to discuss an anger-provoking event, namely the "Shine Skills Centre Incident" ("the SSC Incident"), which might have been mentioned by Members just now. Only when the Chief Executive announced in the Policy Address the construction of a civil service college did we realize that the services provided by SSC was about to be "eliminated". We have discussed this at the meeting of the Panel on Welfare Services and a special meeting will be held later. However, I have a question: How come the Policy Address would have presented such a deplorable picture of driving away the PWDs using SSC's services to make way for the construction of a civil service college at the premises? The Secretary has repeatedly stressed that services will be reprovisioned, but is reprovisioning of the services required to be preceded by "elimination of the services"? What will happen to the 300 service places provided by SSC? This is also an issue of concern.

I remember having received the requests for assistance from the teaching staff of the Centre a day or two after the release of the Policy Address. They are very worried, not about losing their jobs, but about whether the PWDs within the entire Kwun Tong District will have to travel to other districts to attend training classes upon relocation of the Centre. They are worried because they have been showing concern for the vulnerable groups for years. Actually, this arrangement for attending classes from Monday to Friday has been proved effective and the number of applications for this year has exceeded the quota. This serves to prove that the services of the Centre have been well recognized in the district. That being the case, how come the Centre is set to be "eliminated" upon the release of the blue-cover Policy Address? This is worth our pondering. How can it be the case in which we speak about caring for the disadvantaged on the one hand while not giving them the chance to express and relay their own views on the other? We are very disappointed by this. Of course, we can follow up this matter on other occasions, but we still hope that the Secretary can work harder. After all, we do not want to see the authorities provide only simple
information on 20 November. We expect the Government to tell us clearly whether relocation of the Centre means "elimination", which should never happen. Is the civil service college more important than a training centre for PWDs?

Talking about vulnerable people, I now turn to Secretary Prof CHAN again. Please excuse me, Secretary Prof CHAN, for I am very concerned about the issue of rare diseases and have received requests for assistance from many rare diseases patients. We know that at the beginning, the procedures of enlisting relevant drugs on the Drug Formulary were discussed at meetings of the Panel on Health Services and only until recently has some progress be made (probably about spinal muscular atrophy ("SMA")), that is, a consensus has been reached among the Government, pharmaceutical companies and patients. We have noticed that the Government would take corresponding actions only when there was a disease that aroused attention in the community. What we have to deal with now is the situation faced by several or even hundreds of different patients. I have just received another case in which a patient suffering from a rare disease known as pulmonary fibrosis called for help. In summary, he is suffering from a rare disease and there are about 300 such patients in Hong Kong. The monthly expenses on drugs amount to $23,000 and the drugs taken are manufactured in Europe. Despite the capping of the drug expenses thanks to the concessions offered by the pharmaceutical companies, the expenses are still exorbitant. Assuming that he, who is already 70 and has long been waiting for the Government's support measures, has to pay some $10,000 a month out of his own pocket for medication, it is natural for him to ask: How is the Secretary going to spend the $500 million currently earmarked? And how should they prepare for? It is November now and only by December will there be any further news. There must be something that can be done before then. At the present moment, they are so worried as they still have no idea about what the situation will be like. What can we do in order to allay their concerns or give them a ray of hope then? Well, it all hinges on the Government's policies. That is to say, let them see that the Government does care about them and public resources will be spent on them.

Now, let us come back to the procedures of enlisting relevant drugs on the Drug Formulary. I may not be the most professional in this area, but different people have relayed to me that getting a drug enlisted is indeed a very slow process since the drug must first go through clinical trials abroad and only when the patient recovers a few years later upon being administered the drug can the
process be initiated: Permission of the Department of Health must first be sought before the drug can be brought to Hong Kong, and then it should gain the Hospital Authority's endorsement for inclusion into the hospital cluster system. It takes more than 30 months in total for the entire process to complete. The process is terribly slow, during which some of the patients awaiting the drug may have returned to the heavenly home. Is this something we wish to see? Or do we really need to put in place a pragmatic policy? I do understand that commercial operations are involved in the process, but can the pharmaceutical companies also play their part for Hong Kong? This actually hinges on the policy adopted by the Government to enable the public to know that it cares this groups of patients.

The example of SMA gives them a ray of hope and it is something that we really cherished. I just hope that in the future, we no longer need to bring up every case of rare disease to arouse attention in the community so that the Government will give permission for enlisting the drugs on the Drug Formulary one by one or provide subsidies. Secretary, that is not the best approach. We hope that the Government will treat patients kind-heartedly in future.

In addition to rare diseases, the development of cancer strategy, which was discussed by the Panel on Food Safety and Environmental Hygiene ("the Panel") last year, is finally mentioned briefly in this year's Policy Address. President, I was not familiar with this area at first and only when some cancer patients approached me for help did I realize it. Later on, I found that the authorities only provide very little support to cancer patients. As a matter of fact, when a person suffers from cancer, the whole family will accompany all the way, which is no easy task at all. Nevertheless, they will suffer even more and become much worried if the Government fails to show them the clear path of treatment in formulating relevant policies, starting with the implementation of precautionary measures, then the procedures of enlisting drugs for treating cancer and finally treatment at a later stage.

In my opinion, the Government will rightly fulfil its obligation if it can be open-minded and formulate strong and powerful long-term development strategies for rare disease patients and cancer patients, which will bring hope to them. Yet, there is only brief mention of the issue in this year's Policy Address, and I do not see that the Government intends to vigorously take forward the development of cancer strategy. It will only occasionally take some follow-up
actions in relation to a particular case, such as the case of SMA which I have mentioned just now. Thus, the Government should step up efforts in the future to do something more in this regard, especially in implementing precautionary measures which I have mentioned just now.

In fact, many community groups have made certain recommendations to the Government, such as adopting "atrial fibrillation" screening, which is used to diagnose and prevent cancer or prevent stroke. Or can we step up efforts in other areas? Just like the topic of "stroke prevention" which I have suggested for inclusion in the Panel's meeting agenda as a priority item for discussion? In fact, it is not easy, but let us think about if the authorities aim wholeheartedly at providing sound primary health care in the community, it will eventually pay off because this can help ease the Hospital Authority's burden as well as the burden on government health care expenditure. After all, we must attach great importance to people's health indeed if we genuinely wish to improve people's livelihood. The Government should not speak empty words without taking concrete actions.

In fact, a lot of issues are closely related to the disadvantaged, one of which is about places in residential care homes for the elderly ("RCHEs"). Well, I dare not challenge the Secretary when it comes to numbers and figures as he often cites many numbers and figures, but never mind, I have already jotted down the relevant figures. The Government must recognize squarely the fact that the supply of places in the RCHEs has significantly fallen short of the demand since the number of RCHEs is becoming increasingly inadequate.

We have worked out and put forth the proposal of "Building 100 residential care homes for the elderly in a decade" because we worry that if we cannot build 100 RCHEs within 10 years' time, the queue for places in RCHEs will only get longer and longer. Although the Government keeps making use of the Community Care Service ("CCS") vouchers for the elderly to "push away" residents of RCHEs, CCS vouchers did not guarantee similar service for them and they will end up being moved from pillar to post in most cases. This kind of arrangement is poor because I have found that several thousand elderly people may have returned to their heavenly home every year while waiting their turn in the queue. This is actually not what we hope to see. I have profound feelings in this regard as I did come across a case recently in which I called an elderly
person who had been waiting for a place in the RCHE to see how things were going, but only to learn of the news that he had already passed away and returned to the heavenly home. Sometimes, I just wonder what I can do. I cannot help feeling sad for their miserable stories because I really do understand their anxiety and helplessness in the fact of the Government's inaction. When will the problems be eventually resolved? Besides, just as the Secretary has said, the elderly population in Hong Kong is growing. What should we do then?

All along, what the Government should do is to make every effort to narrow the gap between supply and demand in respect of places of the RCHEs. However, the Government has taken another measure, namely to increase the number of CCS vouchers for the elderly issued under the Pilot Scheme on Community Care Service Voucher for the Elderly ("the Pilot Scheme") by 1,000 to a total of 7,000 in the hope of letting the market solve the problem. Nevertheless, should the Government still not step up efforts to increase the supply of public services and expand the scope of services of the public sector or increase the civil service staff cost, we are very worried that the Government is only shifting the problem to the private sector instead of tackling its root causes.

Therefore, in the days to come, it is crucial whether elderly care services and the services provided for vulnerable people will be included in the Government's future blueprint since we all know that according to the Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines, the space reserved for social welfare organizations is extremely inadequate, leaving a lot to be desired. In view of this, will the Government make better arrangements for social welfare land use as early as possible in its planning for some major new development areas (such as Hung Shui Kiu and Yuen Long South that cover extensive areas of land) later on? This deserves serious consideration by the authorities.

The discussion in this session concerns people's livelihood, and I want to point out that there are many voices in society that we should heed attentively as they come from vulnerable groups. It may not be possible for them to take to the streets or submit written petitions to the Secretary. We are more concerned about PWDs. We put a proposal to the Government for the introduction of health care vouchers for PWDs earlier on, and so we hope that the Secretary will consider afresh our proposal and draw reference from the operation of health care vouchers so that subsidies can be provided to some PWDs. The proposal sounds
massive in scale, but it should be able to help PWDs in view of the experience of the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme. Its success hinges on the determination of the Secretary.

In this session, President, I wish to elaborate on the various beneficiary groups which I have mentioned just now. I even feel like asking this question: Is it possible that animal rights is included as one of the debate themes in next year's debate session? I once worried that I might not have the opportunity to discuss the issue in this debate session because the presence of the Secretary is required for speaking on this topic. In brief, the various vulnerable groups which I have mentioned just now are in desperate need of help. I hope that the authorities will act in accordance with our expectations and come up with ways to improve the current situation of those people.

Actually, there is only brief mention of vulnerable groups in the current Policy Address, giving them a small ray of hope, Secretary Prof CHAN, the handling of abortuses is that small ray of hope and nothing else. What is meant by "abortuses"? Not long ago, we lent a helping hand to a woman called Lam Lam, who unfortunately suffered a miscarriage in her pregnancy. Nevertheless, her miscarried foetus would be treated as medical waste under existing legislation. Lam Lam, heartbroken by such practice, came to us for help. Her case made us realize that the term "abortus" is not clearly defined in the laws of Hong Kong. That explains why there was no way the Hospital Authority could help in the past even if it wanted to since abortuses would be sent to landfills under existing legislation.

Consequently, we kept making requests to the hospital for retaining the miscarried fetus until the delivery of the Policy Address, which finally mentioned that there will be new initiatives for handling abortuses. According to my understanding, the Government will make arrangements for handling miscarried fetuses, such as machinery cremation and garden burials.

I have been so deeply moved because I have met the mother in person. Later I came across media reports about her story under a very inspiring title: "A trapped angel". Actually, I did not understand at first that it would break the heart of a mother if the remains of her miscarried baby were disposed of as waste. Yet, what the Government can do for the time being, at most, is to make better
arrangements for handling abortuses. Starting from early next year, the authorities will adopt other means so that abortuses will no longer be sent directly to landfills in future.

Apart from this, I really cannot find any more initiatives that will cheer up vulnerable groups. Hence, I hope that several Secretaries present will, instead of pursuing unrealistic goals, heed people's voices and make more down-to-earth efforts in the days to come.

President, I will speak on different themes during other sessions. I so submit.

DR ELIZABETH QUAT (in Cantonese): President, as the Secretary is present in the Chamber, I would like to speak on health care services in this session.

When it comes to local health care services, many people, especially the elderly, hope that the Government will increase the number of government dental clinics. In many districts, there are no government dental clinics, but many elderly people are suffering from dental problems, such as toothache and tooth loss, and they are in need of dental treatments like dentures and dental implant. I therefore hope that the Administration will consider providing government dental clinic services to residents in all districts.

The public also anticipate that more evening outpatient services will be provided in various districts. There are nearly 680 000 residents in Sha Tin, which is the most populated district in Hong Kong. However, there are only two evening general outpatient clinics in the district providing services from Monday to Friday. The current services are indeed insufficient to meet the demand. Unfortunately, the issue is not addressed in the Policy Address. I hope the Government will provide more evening outpatient services in all districts, especially in Sha Tin District.

In addition, the shortage of health care manpower has been a long-standing problem and remains to be resolved. Due to the shortage of health care manpower, the waiting time in local public hospitals is getting longer and longer. Taking the Prince of Wales Hospital in Sha Tin as an example, the medical inpatient bed occupancy rate is 121%, which is the highest in Hong Kong.
Indeed, the waiting time for all medical services is very long. Does the Administration have any plan to address the situation? It is said that more doctors and nurses have been trained, but the wave of "exodus" of doctors is continuing. I hope that the Secretary will pay special attention to the "exodus" of doctors, especially that of experienced doctors.

Not long ago, a senior doctor told me he was particularly worried about the turnover rate of oncologists. There are 30,000 new cancer cases in Hong Kong per year, and the number of attendances of cancer patients in public hospitals is 410,000. However, the total number of oncologists in public hospitals throughout the territory is less than 200. In fact, there has been a mass "exodus" of experienced doctors from public hospitals to join the private sector, leading to a vicious cycle, that is, with relatively fewer doctors in public hospitals, the workload of the remaining doctors is becoming heavier, resulting in fewer people wanting to join the public sector and more doctors there wanting to leave. Does the Secretary know that public hospitals are caught in such a predicament? What will the Administration do to address the issue?

With an ageing population in Hong Kong, the number of cancer patients will continue to rise. What are we supposed to do with such limited number of oncologists? Several oncologists whom I know personally have left the public hospitals and joined the private sector recently. They told me they were willing to reduce their charges to care for more patients. Will the Government consider public-private partnerships so that the workload of treating cancer patients can be shared by private doctors? If nothing is done to address this problem, patients will have to wait for a long period for diagnosis and examinations, causing delays in medical treatment.

Speaking about cancer, I would like to say that I have always been concerned about breast cancer, and I hope that the Government will exert more efforts in the prevention and treatment of breast cancer. In 2016, there were 4,100 new cases of breast cancer in Hong Kong. Over the past two decades, female breast cancer cases diagnosed in Hong Kong have tripled, and the incidence rate has doubled in the past decade. One out of every 16 women was suffering from breast cancer. We have the highest prevalence rate of breast cancer in Asia. At present, at least 34 countries or regions around the world have population-wide breast screening programmes in place, but it has not yet been implemented in Hong Kong. I am pleased to see that the Policy Address this year proposes to carry out a study to review the possibility of implementing a
population-wide breast screening programme in Hong Kong. I hope that the Government will take real action instead of paying lip service only and set out to offer breast screening service to all women aged 40 or above to ensure early diagnosis and reduce the mortality of breast cancer. In addition, I also hope that the Government will allocate more resources to cater for the needs of breast cancer patients and shorten their waiting time so that they can receive timely medical treatment, and also provide more support for breast cancer patients and their family members.

On the other hand, I find that many women in Hong Kong are still very reluctant to undergo breast examination or gynaecological check-ups, perhaps due to shyness or reluctance to face their conditions. It is therefore very important that the Government should step up publicity efforts to promote health awareness among women and strengthen public education in this regard, encouraging women over the age of 40 to attend gynaecological check-ups on a regular basis. I hope that the Secretary will step up efforts in this area. We are also pleased to see that the Policy Address proposes introduction of free HPV vaccination to school girls of Primary Five and Six in Hong Kong. We welcome this proposal because it is a goal that we have been pursuing for many years. However, I hope that the free vaccination programme will not only cover Primary Five and Six girls because students of secondary schools and even universities also need HPV vaccination. In view of the fact that some countries and regions have implemented some one-off vaccination programmes, I also urge the Government to consider implementing a one-off free HPV vaccination programme to all female students of secondary schools and universities in Hong Kong so that they will be protected against cervical cancer. Currently, there is a shortage of HPV vaccine, and even local university students find it difficult to get a jab. Money can no longer be a guarantee of adequate supply. Therefore, I hope that the Government will carry through its benevolent act to the end by implementing a one-off vaccination programme for all women of the relevant age in Hong Kong so that they will be properly protected in this regard. In addition, I also urge the Government to provide free cervical cancer screening programme for all women of the relevant age in the future so that women will be benefited from more services.

Now I would like to speak on the issue of fertility. I have frequently expressed the hope that the Government will formulate more policies to encourage child birth. Women in Hong Kong tend to get married and give birth at a later age. At present, the waiting time for receiving fertility treatment in
public hospitals is 18 months. On the other hand, the private sector is charging some $100,000 to $200,000 for a single treatment cycle, but the first cycle could fail, and it may take three or four cycles for a woman to get pregnant. The cost can reach hundreds of thousands of dollars. If this is the case, many families will not be able to afford the high expenses and may choose not to bear children. Therefore, we hope that the Government will provide support to couples in need. Furthermore, some countries have already set up egg banks, so that young women can have their eggs frozen and use them in the future to bear children. Research in this area should also be carried out in Hong Kong, and I hope the Government will take this into consideration.

As the Secretary for Labour and Welfare is present today, I would like to speak on other issues as well. I welcome the proposal put forth in the Policy Address to extend the statutory maternity leave. In fact, I have debated with the Secretary on several occasions, expressing the hope that full-pay maternity leave can be provided without a cap of $50,000. I also hope that future statutory paternity leave or maternity leave will be granted with full pay, and that women suffering from miscarriages can also be covered.

In addition, I also want to speak about rare diseases. Secretary, we do not know how many people are suffering from rare diseases in Hong Kong and how many types of rare diseases exist in Hong Kong because we do not have a database on rare disease, and consequently, it is difficult to help patients with rare diseases effectively. Setting up a database on rare disease therefore remains one of our major aspirations. Here, I urge the Secretary to request the Hospital Authority to open up its data, including data on rare diseases and other health data, as soon as possible so as to facilitate treatment of and medical research on rare diseases. Given that Hong Kong has an edge for developing biotechnology, opening up these data will facilitate development in this area.

Besides, can the Administration speed up the introduction of new drugs? When will the eligibility threshold for the Community Care Fund be lowered? We are still waiting for good news from the Government.

Now I want to speak on the issue of rodent infestation that will intensify the spread of infectious diseases. In recent years, the problem of rodent infestation has become very serious in Hong Kong. Not only are rodents bigger than cats now, but they are also intruding our homes. Secretary, please take a look at this picture which shows a single glue trap that has caught six rats. Isn't
it scary? Rats can intrude residential units that are located as high as 30th floor! The situation is unacceptable. The Secretary said that new technology and techniques will be applied in rodent control. However, the reality is that only some outdated methods, such as rat baffles and highly toxic rodenticides, have been applied in addressing rodent infestation in the community. Meanwhile, our litter bins were all uncovered, and some of them even have broken holes. I once saw a rat jump into a litter bin from above. After enjoying a full meal, it left through a hole at the bottom of the bin and ran around in the streets. There are rat holes everywhere in the city. Are we supposed to search through each of them? In fact, these are very outdated rodent control methods.

I have done some research in this regard. Taking New Zealand as an example, 12 years ago, a technology named "A24" had been applied as a non-toxic method to eradicate rodent infestation. The effectiveness of such technology was demonstrated in a park, and all rodents were gone in one year. Please note that it was done 12 years ago. Moreover, there is also the suggestion to kill rodents using ultrasound technology. In other countries, big data is used to detect the location of rat holes accurately, and then dry ice is put into the holes to suffocate the rats. While in some places, rats are given sterilization drugs to make them infertile. In fact, there are many rodent control methods available, but Hong Kong is still using the old methods only. When will the Administration introduce new methods to eliminate rodents that are intruding our homes and infesting our streets? Rodent infestation has extensive consequences. I hope that the Secretary will address the issue in full steam and stop dragging its feet.

Apart from rodent infestation, I am also very concerned about public markets. The Government has finally set out to install air-conditioning system at Tai Wai Market in Sha Tin, but the market tenants who had waited for this for many years still have to tackle another difficulty. The installation works of the air-conditioning system will last for several months, during which the tenants will not be able to operate their business, but the Government only grants them a two-month rent waiver. As a result, tenants who live from hand to mouth will suffer substantial losses. When we discussed the situation with representatives from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, they said they were working according to established guidelines. Nevertheless, those guidelines have not been revised for decades. If the Government really wants to help the tenants, isn't it necessary to make those guidelines keep pace with the times?
What we demand is an extension of the rent-free period for these tenants, and that the air-conditioning charges payable by tenants in the future should cover their own stalls only, excluding common areas of the market. Ex gratia allowances should also be provided to tenants to help them tide over the difficulties. I believe these are very reasonable demands. If the Government fails to handle the installation of air-conditioning system in Tai Wai Market properly, other markets will encounter similar situation when installation works of air-conditioning system commence in the future.

Tai Wai Market will be installed with an air-conditioning system soon, but what about the market in Sai Kung Town? I am not sure if the Secretary has ever been to the market. If not, we can arrange a time to visit the place together. The interior of Sai Kung Market is extremely hot. There is no air-conditioning system and no elevator. It is impossible for the elderly people to walk up the stairs to do their shopping. Without an air-conditioning system, it is also difficult for the market tenants to run their business. As a result, the market has almost become a warehouse. Therefore, I hope that the Administration will not waste its resources and install an air-conditioning system in the Sai Kung Market as soon as possible. In fact, it is pretty good if there is a public market nearby, even if there is no air-conditioning system. In districts like Tseung Kwan O where there is no public market, the situation is less desirable. Commodity prices in Tseung Kwan O are almost the highest in Hong Kong, and therefore the local residents hope that the Government will construct a public market in the district. We also hope that the Secretary will not forget Tseung Kwan O and provide a market for the residents in the area.

The responsibilities of the Secretary also cover policies on animal welfare. I am also pleased to see that promotion of animal welfare and the commitment to amend the legislation relating to animal welfare are included in the Policy Address. I am very glad that the Administration agrees to enact specific legislation for animal welfare which I proposed earlier, and that it is going to introduce the concept of positive duty of care of animals into the principle legislation. I hope the Government will make the relevant amendments as soon as possible.

As for protection of endangered animals, the Government finally set out to legislate for banning ivory trade during the year. Looking forward to the future, I hope that the Government will also address the problem of some endangered species being used for manufacturing Chinese medicines for sale. For instance,
some Chinese medicines that are available for sale in Hong Kong contain pangolin scales, bear biles, and ivory, which are all body parts of endangered animals. Extraction of bear bile from live bears is a very cruel and barbaric practice. I have raised this issue in the Council, but the Government said that bear bile is irreplaceable in its medical effects. However, I have consulted a number of Chinese medicine practitioners and scholars. They all disagreed and said that bear bile can be replaced by other ingredients which can also produce the effects of clearing heat, detoxicating, improving vision, killing worms, and haemostasis. Therefore, I hope that the Government will look into the matter carefully and stop such cruelty to animals, instead of insisting that no substitutes can be found.

Environmental protection is closely related to the protection of animals. As the Secretary for the Environment who is also the Acting Chief Secretary is present today, I would also like to speak on some environmental issues that we concern about. The Secretary said the Administration will definitely go ahead with waste charging. However, if the Secretary fails to resolve the environmental pollution and hygiene issues arising from illegal disposal of waste and inadequate support measures for waste recycling, we are worried that the relevant scheme may be counterproductive, affecting the daily life of the general public. There is opposition in the community, and so I hope that whether it be implementation of the waste charging or promotion of proper recycling of regulated electrical equipment, the Secretary must first convince the public that the Bureau has the ability to resolve these issues before submitting the relevant bills to this Council.

On the other hand, we are also worried about the environmental pollution caused by plastics. The Government has indicated that it will gradually tighten the regulation of plastic waste, but when will it come up with a schedule for going plastic-free? We are still waiting for it. Apart from the issue of plastic waste, I have repeatedly brought up the issue of microplastics in the Council meetings. Many countries have legislated against the sale of products containing microplastics, but when will similar regulation be implemented in Hong Kong? I hope the Bureau will respond to our request.

In addition, energy saving and emission reduction has always been our goal. We have been debating on the promotion of electric vehicles for a long time. When more quick chargers for electric vehicles are provided in other cities to encourage the use of electric vehicles, but Hong Kong seems to be
running contrary to this trend. I think the Secretary should explain to the public the overall policy of the Administration in this respect. On the other hand, we know that a lot of food has been wasted. A proposal was put forth earlier to legislate for food donation in Hong Kong to discharge food donors from the legal liabilities that might arise from recipients falling sick after consuming the donated food. We hope that the Government will give thought to this proposal. Furthermore, the Policy Address does not address the issue of light pollution, and the Secretary has not dealt with this issue for quite some time. Therefore, I would like to take this chance to remind the Secretary that the problem of light pollution has not been resolved yet. We are still receiving many complaints in this regard.

Regarding renewable energy, I very much welcome the Government's initiative to develop renewable energy and facilitate the introduction of Feed-in Tariff by power companies. However, some industry professionals have told me that Hong Kong does not have sufficient technicians to handle the installation of solar panels for companies. Therefore, I hope the Government will train more technicians and recognize their professional skills, such as issuing professional certificates to these technicians, so that members of the public can find qualified persons to carry out the installation works. Otherwise, the good policies of the Government may end up doing a disservice to the public when no qualified persons are available to carry out the works and members of the public may suffer from loss of money as a result.

President, my speech in this session ends here and I will speak again in the next session.

MR WONG TING-KWONG (in Cantonese): President, in the first debate session on the Motion of Thanks, I spoke on the future direction of the development of Hong Kong. We are now in the third debate session, and I want to talk about a major life or death issue for some 100,000 micro, small and medium enterprises ("MSMEs") in Hong Kong, and that is the abolition of the offsetting arrangement under the Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") System.

Chief Executive Carrie LAM puts forth in the Policy Address this year a so-called ultimate proposal on the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System. Under this proposal, the Government will extend the subsidy period from the original 12 years to 25 years with its financial commitment increasing from the original $17.2 billion to $29.3 billion. On the surface, the SAR Government
seems to be making a bigger commitment in abolishing the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System, and MSMEs which bear the brunt of the abolition should appreciate the Government's painstaking effort and accept the proposal. But, as the representative of MSMEs, I wish to say a few words to the Chief Executive and the Secretary here. Sorry, MSMEs could not possibly take it.

Here, I must stress that the sector supports offsetting severance payment ("SP") and long service payment ("LSP") with MPF benefits. We understand the purpose, just that we are strongly concerned about the so-called ultimate proposal of the Government. Despite the fact that the subsidy period and amount are substantially enhanced, the new proposal still has a critical issue unresolved. Employers have to pay an enormous amount of SP and LSP in 25 years' time. This will deal an unbearable, or even lethal, blow to MSMEs.

To begin with, under the existing practice which allows employers to use their 5% MPF contributions to fully offset SP and LSP, two thirds of the employers still need extra money to pay the outstanding SP and LSP. Under the new ultimate proposal, employers need to set up a designated savings account with 15% of the total staff wages, but still, how could employers rely on the savings in this account alone to settle SP and LSP? This is simple mathematics. I really do not know how this could work. I really do not know.

Certainly, if the enterprise is big enough and with a large number of employees, and only one or two of its employees will retire soon, the employer should be able to juggle with the SP and LSP using the money in the designated savings account and the subsidy of the SAR Government. But the amount of subsidy will be gradually reduced after three years. The Government's commitment will gradually diminish while the enterprise's commitment will gradually become heavy.

For example, at the end of the 25-year subsidy period, an MSME with only four staff members who have long years of service, one of them will retire soon. The LSP for this employee already reaches the $390,000 ceiling. After deducting the money in the designated savings account, the employer still has to pay $100,000 or more to make up the outstanding LSP. If the MSME closes down due to mismanagement and has to dismiss all four employees, how much money does the employer need to pay for SP after deducting the savings in the designated savings account? This is a difficult calculation, but the amount is approaching $1 million.
MSMEs cannot afford these sudden contingent liabilities. MSME employers under a liquidity crunch are concerned that they may be criminally liable to any default on SP and LSP. But according to my conversation with the Secretary yesterday morning, the Secretary solemnly denied any criminal liability for default payment. I hope the Secretary can later clearly tell society that employers do not have to bear any criminal liability if they cannot afford the payment. OK?

Hence, I wish to reiterate that employers appreciate that the employee side wants to improve their benefits so that salary earners can have better and more comprehensive retirement protection. Employers are willing to make the biggest possible commitment, provided that the new commitment is affordable to MSMEs; otherwise, MSMEs will be in dire straits. This will not do any good to society and the employee side.

The Hong Kong Chinese Importers' and Exporters' Association ("HKCIEA"), which I belong to, and the Hong Kong Business Community Joint Conference ("HKBCJC") which is made up of over 150 trade associations, propose to adopt an enhanced cash pool option. Under this proposal, the Government will make a one-off injection into the cash pool and employers will make an extra 1% of monthly contribution into the pool. According to estimates on the total salary expenditures in Hong Kong now, an annual amount of the 1% extra contribution is about $5.4 billion; and according to the data of the past three years, about $3 billion, $3.35 billion and $3.85 billion were offset for LSP and SP respectively. They believe that under normal circumstances, their 1% contributions, together with investment returns from the cash pool savings, should be adequate to solve the MPF offsetting problem.

The proposal will not undermine any rights and interests of employees. Also, it can eliminate the financial burden and worries of MSMEs in connection with the sudden need to pay a large sum of SP and LSP. Moreover, the Government can contribute less into the cash pool. The proposal is indeed a triple-win arrangement to the employee, the employer and the Government.

Certainly, the Secretary turned down the proposal earlier, saying that the enhanced cash pool option may have a moral hazard of abuse. But I wish to say that HKCIEA and HKBCJC have introduced a mechanism against abuse for the proposal. For example, employers are only allowed to claim 80% of their SP and LSP expenditures from the cash pool and they have to pay the outstanding
20% themselves. In other words, employers are also required to pay money. Besides, after dismissing an employee, the employer concerned will not be allowed to make recruitment for the same post within a short time to plug the loophole of abusing the cash pool and eliminate the potential moral hazard.

The Government's proposal to abolish the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System is, according to what the Chief Executive said earlier, the ultimate proposal. There will not be any compromise or delay. I hope Mrs Carrie LAM can consider carefully and change her mind. I know that the Chief Executive and the Secretary also wish to have the proposal passed within the term of this Government, so as to tackle the problem of the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System that has haunted us for years. The sector has voiced out their concerns but they do not mean to deliberately create an obstacle or stall the Government. The abolition concerns the life or death of all MSMEs in Hong Kong. I thus hope that the Bureau can take our concerns into consideration.

In fact, major trade associations of MSMEs, including those of different industries and small and medium enterprises, are very supportive of the enhanced version of the cash pool proposal; and other major trade associations have no strong opposition against it either, or at least I have not heard any strong opposition from them. We will be very glad if the Chief Executive and the Secretary are willing to adopt our view and change to our enhanced version instead of their ultimate proposal that they have been insisting. And we do not need to spend a lot of time on the discussion and we can smoothly complete the legislative work within this Government term. This move, while being more convincing to MSMEs, is more honourable than a forced passage of the ultimate proposal after securing enough votes in disregard of the survival of MSMEs.

Last but not least, I sincerely hope that the Chief Executive and the Secretary can understand the worries of MSMEs and consider their affordability, and do not wilfully force the ultimate proposal through this Council and force MSMEs to accept it. I so submit and support the Motion of Thanks and oppose the Government's offsetting arrangement.

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

(No Member indicated a wish to speak)
PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): If no Member wishes to speak, I will invite the three public officers to speak. On the basis of the 15-minute speaking time for each officer, they may speak for up to a total of 45 minutes.

CHIEF SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATION (in Cantonese): President, I thank Members for having delivered their speeches just now in this session of the debate on the Motion of Thanks that covers various policy areas under the theme of Improving People's Livelihood. I will respond to matters relating to areas concerning alleviating poverty, enhancing support for ethnic minorities ("EMs") and children affairs, while the two Secretaries will speak on respective policy areas under their purview.

**Alleviation of Poverty**

Poverty alleviation is an important part of the Government's efforts to improve people's livelihood. In the past few years, the Government has spared no effort in introducing various policies and initiatives benefiting different groups in need. Among the initiatives implemented by the current-term Government to tackle poverty and support the disadvantaged in more than a year's time since it took office, including increasing significantly the Low-income Working Family Allowance, introducing the Higher Old Age Living Allowance ("OALA") and launching the life annuity scheme named "HKMC Annuity Plan" run by HKMC Annuity Limited ("HKMC\textregistered"). These initiatives are meant to provide substantive support to those people and families in need and the relevant work has begun to bear fruits.

In conjunction with the efforts to take forward poverty alleviation work, the amount of public resources allocated has also increased substantially as illustrated by the constant surge in the Government's social welfare expenditure. The recurrent social welfare expenditure will reach HK$79.8 billion in 2018-2019, representing a significant increase of 86% from that of the 2012-2013, and accounting for 19.6% of the total recurrent government expenditure.

We are committed to taking forward initiatives for alleviating poverty and improving people's livelihood to improve the living standards of the poor and the disadvantaged. According to the 2016 Hong Kong Poverty Report, the benefits provided in 2016 under the Government's policy of recurrent cash intervention had lifted some 360 000 people out of poverty, reducing the poverty rate by 5.2%.
The current Government will continue to explore and implement more poverty alleviation initiatives in accordance with the Chief Executive's philosophy of improving people's livelihood, namely the principles of pro-child, pro-family, pro-work and pro-user. We noticed some comments that the Government's efforts on poverty alleviation set out in this year's Policy Address are not enough. We wish to make clarifications here in response to such unfair comments. Actually, this year's Policy Address is rich in content, proposing a lot of initiatives aiming to improve people's livelihood across different domains, including health care services, labour welfare, family support, children affairs, support for ex-mentally ill persons, strengthened support for EMs and elderly care services. A great deal of new resources will be injected in connection with these initiatives. Emphasis is laid on catering for the needs of different groups in a holistic manner. We should also focus on improvement of services and support measures instead of stressing the provision of financial assistance. This year's Policy Address has set in the right direction in terms of the initiatives to tackle poverty and support the disadvantaged while putting in place relevant measures. I hope people from all quarters of society can go through in detail the relevant contents of the Policy Address. The two Secretaries will also explain to Members the new measures concerned later.

The Commission on Poverty ("CoP") is the key policy tool in tackling poverty. The new term of CoP was just established in July this year and has commenced work. As the Chairperson of CoP, the Chief Secretary for Administration will keep in close contact with members of CoP, the social welfare sector and other stakeholders to explore the poverty alleviation policy and further promote cross-sectoral/cross-profession collaboration and take forward the work of the Community Care Fund and the Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Fund.

*Strengthening Support for EMs*

Next, I would like to give an account of the measures set out in the Policy Address for strengthening support for EMs. EMs are members of the Hong Kong family and many of them have already had their roots in Hong Kong for generations. At present, there are more than 260 000 EM people in Hong Kong, accounting for 3.8% of the local population.
The Government is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for the EMs and facilitating their integration into the community. In 2014, a series of support measures covering areas of education, employment, interpretation, translation and community outreach were launched. Although such measures have begun to bear fruits, some EM people still have difficulty adapting and integrating into the community owing to language barrier and cultural difference. Taking account of the increasingly diversified needs of the EMs, it is necessary to strengthen our support for them.

The Steering Committee on Ethnic Minorities Affairs ("the Steering Committee") under the chairmanship of the Chief Secretary for Administration was established in the middle of this year to enhance policy coordination within the Government and promote cross-bureau and inter-departmental collaboration. In the past few months, the Chief Secretary for Administration and members of the Steering Committee proactively reached out to EM community groups and stakeholders to listen to their views. Having considered their views, the Government will earmark over $500 million in 2019-2020 to address the different needs of the EMs in the areas of education, employment and social welfare in order to strengthen support for them. Meanwhile, the Government will also promote cultural sensitivity and social inclusiveness in society and within the civil service.

On education, enabling learning effectiveness of the younger generations of EMs is the key to helping them integrate into the community. The Education Bureau will continue implementing the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework ("the learning framework") and monitoring its implementation. Moreover, the Education Bureau will continue commissioning post-secondary institutions to provide school-based support services for kindergartens, primary and secondary schools admitting non-Chinese speaking ("NCS") students in the three school years from 2019-2020 to 2021-2022, so as to enhance the professional competency of teachers. In view of the learning needs of NCS students, the school-based curriculum, learning and teaching as well as assessment arrangements will also be adapted with reference to the learning framework, so as to allow these students to learn Chinese more effectively.

In addition, the Government will also strengthen support for the NCS kindergarten students and NCS primary and secondary school students with special educational needs. Starting from the 2019-2020 school year, the
Education Bureau will provide a five-tiered subsidy for kindergartens joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme based on the number of NCS students admitted so that these schools can provide more appropriate support for their NCS students, thereby assisting them in learning Chinese, fostering a diversified culture and building an inclusive environment. The Education Bureau will provide additional resources to support the NCS students with special educational needs in public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools and facilitate the NCS students' learning of Chinese History in secondary schools.

Employment is the best way to facilitate EMs' integration into the community and their upward social mobility, and so one of the Government's key initiatives is that the Labour Department will enhance its manpower support to launch a pilot programme in conjunction with non-governmental organizations ("NGOs") to provide employment services for EM job seekers through a case management approach. To cater for the needs of the EMs, the Employees Retraining Board will also expand its Chinese language and industry-specific training courses and allow for more flexibility in the eligibility criteria for course enrolment. As the biggest employer, the Government will review the Chinese language proficiency requirements of different civil service grades on an ongoing basis. It will take a further step to encourage more EMs to join the civil service through outreaching efforts, recruitment exercises and providing a short-term internship programme in the Government for EM university students.

The Social Welfare Department ("SWD") will commission NGOs to set up dedicated outreach teams to actively approach needy EMs and assist in their access to mainstream welfare services, and will enhance its prevention and support services for EMs in combating domestic and sexual violence. SWD will also set up specialized EM units in five Parents/Relatives Resources Centres for persons with disabilities, and increase the resources for Special Child Care Centres as well as Early Education and Training Centres.

The Home Affairs Department ("HAD") will organize more district-based activities to encourage interaction and exchange between the EMs and local communities. HAD will also strengthen the services of the support service centres for EMs to enhance social inclusion. The disciplined services will also enhance interaction with EM children and youngsters through their school-based outreach programmes and the Junior Police Call's activities.
To ensure equal access to public services by the EMs, HAD will enhance the interpretation and translation services provided by the CHEER Centre, including introducing new services in Vietnamese. The Government will also refine the Administrative Guidelines on Promotion of Racial Equality to ensure their application to all government bureaux, departments and related organizations providing services for EMs. Besides, training on cultural sensitivity within the civil service will be strengthened.

The Steering Committee will monitor the implementation of various support measures and maintain communications with the stakeholders.

*Children affairs*

The Government is deeply concerned about the healthy growth of children, both physical and psychological. The current-term Government set up the Commission on Children ("CoC") in June this year with cross-bureau and departmental representation, and has engaged child concern groups to address in a focused manner the issues that children face while growing up.

CoC, with the Chief Secretary for Administration as the Chairperson, will be an ongoing, action-oriented, responsive and high-level body, of which the target group will cover children aged below 18, with a focus on children aged 14 or below. CoC provides overall steer, sets policy directions, strategies and priorities, as well as drives and monitors bureaux/departments to take forward policy initiatives related to children.

According to CoC's initial work plan, priority is given to holding focused discussions on a range of children-related items, including children with special educational needs, EM children, children's health and children at risk (including domestic violence and child neglect), the mechanism for dealing with absentee students, and children participation as well. The feasibility of developing a central databank on children and children-related indices will also be explored.

Since its inception, CoC has held two meetings to discuss various crucial subjects related to children's growth, including the long-term development of child care services, further enhancement of pre-school rehabilitation services, children's playtime, outdoor playgrounds and educational support for EM children. CoC will, through the four Working Groups to be set up, deal with
respective work areas, namely research, public participation, public education and publicity, matters concerning children with special needs, and child protection affairs, thereby allowing members to conduct more in-depth discussions on and draw up concrete recommendations for specific subjects. And later, the Secretary for Labour and Welfare will elaborate on the specific government measures targeted at children's development and support services.

With these remarks, President, I earnestly urge Members to support the 2018 Policy Address. Thank you.

SECRETARY FOR FOOD AND HEALTH (in Cantonese): President, I am grateful to the Members for making comments on the Policy Address with regard to medical services, health, food safety and environmental hygiene in the panel meetings held earlier and in the debate today. Many Members welcome the new policy initiatives that the Government put forward in 2018. I will now respond to their views by areas.

On medical services and health, we will, in the forthcoming year, continue to focus on six major policy areas and allocate resources to them. These include sparing no efforts to promote primary health care services, promoting disease prevention/control, proactively developing Chinese medicine, strengthening health care services, ensuring the sustainable development of health care system, and continuously enhancing the regulation of public health.

Many Members are highly concerned about primary health care services and its development in Hong Kong. They have provided a lot of valuable comments in this regard. Primary health care is the first level of care in the entire health care system. It is necessary for us to provide within the community primary health care services that are comprehensive and coordinate with various sectors, with the view of enhancing the level of public health, shifting the current focus of health care services away from providing treatment and reducing the unnecessary use of hospital services. We have identified the location of the first pilot site in the Kwai Tsing District and the service will be put in place in the third quarter of 2019. Apart from Kwai Tsing, we plan to set up Health Centres in government properties in Kwun Tong and the Eastern District, and hopefully extend the service to the rest of the 18 districts in Hong Kong. District Health
Centres ("DHC") are generally funded by the Government. Through public-private partnership, the centres will provide district-based primary health care services.

Some Members asked if the Centres will provide actual services and certainly they will. I hope the services can enhance public awareness of disease prevention and their ability in self-management of health. The Centre will focus its services on the first, second, and third levels of prevention, including health promotion, health evaluation, management of chronic diseases and community rehabilitation service. DHC will be a hub. Prof Joseph LEE reminded us just now that neither consultation service nor physicians will be available at DHCs and this forms part of our conception. However, if we find that it is necessary for a patient to consult a family doctor, especially a private family doctor in the district, after evaluation, we will provide the referral. A family doctor can also refer a patient to DHC for other preventive or chronic disease management services if need arises. As for the timetable, we hope to assess the overall condition expeditiously after the establishment of the first centre. We are now identifying sites in the other 17 districts in an effort to set up DHCs throughout the territory as soon as possible.

Needless to say, tobacco control is a task that we have been working on. The most remarkable new tobacco control measure this year is the Government's forthcoming presentation of a legislative amendment in the current legislative year to prohibit the import, manufacture, sale, distribution and advertisement of electronic cigarettes and other new smoking products. Since we proposed to enact legislation for the regulation of electronic cigarettes and other new smoking products in the middle of the year, we have heard of concerns from the medical sector, education sector, parents and many other people. They are worried that if electronic cigarettes and other new smoking products are only regulated and their sale is allowed with restrictions in the market, the measure will be inadequate in protecting public health, on top of bringing about very negative impact on children and adolescents in particular. After weighing the pros and cons of a regulatory approach as opposed to a full ban, we have decided that the protection of public health is the prime consideration and we have to ensure the achievements of our tobacco control efforts will not be wasted overnight. I am grateful to Members such as Mr IP Kin-yuen and Dr Pierre CHAN for their support of our work in this respect. We of course have listened to the comments made by other Members and will spare no efforts in tobacco control.
We all share a concern for the strategies in preventing and controlling cancer and other non-infectious diseases. With active implementation of such measures as promotion of healthy diets and physical activities, reduction in alcohol and tobacco-related harms and strengthening of the health care system, we strive to meet various indicators put forth in the Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-communicable Diseases in Hong Kong.

Moreover, we draw references from World Health Organization's recommendations and international practices with a view to mapping out in 2019 strategies related to cancer prevention and care services for the period between 2020 and 2025. Starting from the 2019-2020 school year, we will introduce free HPV vaccination to school girls of particular age groups as a public health strategy for prevention of cervical cancer. This is a suggestion made by the Scientific Committees. We understand that some Members also have other suggestions but we will stick to the age group and timetable specified by the Scientific Committees for the forthcoming human papillomavirus vaccination programme.

As far as breast cancer is concerned, as mentioned in the Policy Address, a government-commissioned study to identify risk factors associated with breast cancer for local women is expected to be completed in the latter half of 2019. The Government will closely monitor the scientific evidence and outcome of the study to review what type of screening is to be adopted for women of different risk profiles. Just now Dr Pierre CHAN pointed out that screening may not necessarily be applicable to all kinds of diseases or cancers. As there are also risks associated with screening, we need to adopt an evidence-based approach and will continue to pay attention to scientific data in the world. The Scientific Committees have all along been monitoring the diseases to identify those which call for early screening.

We all concern about mental health. After the delivery of the Policy Address last year, we have enhanced mental health services on all fronts, including mental health services for adolescents. Promotion on mental health and survey research on mental health will be launched successively. Prof Joseph LEE are concerned about manpower issue regarding psychiatric nurses and we will continue to make enhancement in this regard.
As for the positioning and development of Chinese medicine, we have done a lot of work over the past year. Apart from the setting up of a dedicated group for the development of Chinese medicine, the Policy Address has suggested incorporating Chinese medicine into the health care system in Hong Kong. Also suggested are the formulation of a holistic Chinese medicine policy, allocation of more resources to subsidize selected Chinese medicine services, including a plan for Chinese medicine hospital, the transformation and service upgrading of the 18 Chinese Medicine Centres for Training and Research to increase the provision of government-subsidized outpatient services, and the further development of government-subsidized inpatient services providing Integrated Chinese-Western Medicine treatment in defined hospitals under the Hospital Authority ("HA"). Moreover, the Government has also established a $500 million dedicated fund, which is expected to commence operation in the first half of next year, for promoting Chinese medicine development.

Many Members are concerned about how we are going to enhance health care services, including drug subsidies and support for patients of uncommon disorders. About drug subsidies, HA has commissioned a consultancy study to comprehensively review the existing means test of the Samaritan Fund and Community Care Fund Medical Assistance Programmes. The relevant review is close to completion. Based on the findings of the review, we suggest modifying the calculation method of the annual disposable financial resources of patients by lowering the contribution of assets that has to be calculated so as to lower the patients' out-of-pocket spending. We will also revise the definition of "family" for the purposes of financial assessment, so as to relieve the patient families' financial and emotional burdens.

We have also done a great deal with regard to supporting patients of uncommon disorders. The scopes of the compassionate programmes on the use of drugs and the subsidy scopes of the Community Care Fund and the Samaritan Fund on the relevant drugs as registered by the authorities have all along been expanding. In a meeting held in June, the Commission on Poverty endorsed the expansion of the Ultra-expensive Drugs Programme under the Community Care Fund to cover a drug for the treatment of spinal muscular atrophy. HA understands people's wish to have self-financed drugs included in the scope of assistance. HA has its own established mechanism but it also understands the demand in this respect and thus has expedited the processing of relevant procedures.
About the handling of abortuses, we fully understand that parents need proper arrangement in this respect, including counselling service and a burial or cremation which should be decently held as much as possible. In this connection, we have implemented several administrative measures to take forward the current task.

A number of Members look forward to the sustainable development of the current medical system and some would like to know more about the hardware, that is development plans of hospitals. The previous-term Government has set aside $200 billion for implementing the first 10-year hospital development plan. The present-term Government has also set aside $300 billion for the relevant purpose, so as to implement the second 10-year hospital development plan. Under the second 10-year hospital development plan which involves about $270 billion, a total of 19 projects will be covered, providing 9,000 additional beds. The remaining $30 billion will be used for renovating clinics under the Department of Health and upgrading of the teaching facilities in universities, as we have to increase the manpower of health care profession.

We are highly concerned about the manpower of health care profession. We will increase the number of places and training capacity and to implement short-, medium- and long-term measures, and the relevant work has been implemented especially in terms of public services. For instance, in the 2019-2020 to 2021-2022 University Grants Committee triennium, the number of health care-related publicly-funded first-degree intake places will increase by over 150 from about 1,780 to about 1,930, including 60 medical, 60 nursing, and 30-odd dental, physiotherapy and optometry places.

We have earlier earmarked $10 billion to the Public-Private Partnership Programme and will continue to take forward the programme. Voluntary Health Insurance Scheme is a means for alleviating the long-term pressure on public health care system. In future, we will continue to improve the regulation of public health, which includes promoting the establishment of the Office for Regulation of Private Healthcare Facilities and enacting legislation for regulating medical devices and advanced therapy products. We are also following up on the Report of the Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development which was published in 2017. We have invited regulatory bodies to submit concrete proposals on regulation and development of health care professions.
On environmental hygiene, food safety and agricultural and fisheries development, we have all along been determined in improving our cityscape and will adopt a multi-pronged approach to enhance environmental hygiene and cleanliness. On top of additional resource allocation, we will explore the expanded use of innovation and technologies. Just now, a number of Members hope we can put in more efforts, especially more new methods in the disinfestation of rodents and mosquitoes and the improvement of cityscape. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department ("FEHD") is now carrying out a full review of existing measures and will make considerable improvement.

Regarding public toilets, FEHD is planning to renovate 23 public toilets in the vicinity of tourist attractions.

Many Members have expressed their grave concern over public markets. Apart from new markets in Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung to be built, some Members also look forward to our timely examination of standards in planning in the other aspects and ask whether new markets need to be built. We will press full steam ahead with the $2 billion Market Modernisation Programme, which is also one of the projects we have been implementing. With regard to new markets, our preparation is in full swing for the consultation exercise.

On burial services, some Members expressed their hope for us to speed up the licensing process for private columbarium. We are now processing more than 300 applications for specified instruments from 140 or so private columbaria. We will issue the licences shortly after the completion of work.

Food safety, an area of vital importance, is another concern of ours. Last year, FEHD set up a dedicated team to consolidate and upgrade its information technology system and to rationalize and supervise work flow in phases, with a view to enhancing its capability in the regulation and control of food safety, handling of incidents relating to food safety, risk evaluation and source tracing.

Many Members are also concerned about promoting animal welfare. We are going to conduct a public consultation on the relevant legislation, such as the provision on the penalty for cruelty to animals. Moreover, we have also worked on amending the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374).
Sustainable development in fisheries and new agriculture policy are also highly important. We have listened to the comments made by Mr Steven HO who suggested providing relief measures to fishermen if reclamation is to be conducted. We will take note of this. We now have suggested issuing new marine fish culture licence and will follow-up on the entire administrative measure. Furthermore, the Sustainable Fisheries Development Fund set up in 2014 have approved more than 10 projects which involve more than $50 million.

On agriculture policy, we will fully implement the New Agriculture Policy. About agricultural parks, the Government has vetted the comments received on the works on agricultural parks. Funding application for phase one construction works of the agricultural park is expected to be submitted to the Legislative Council within the current legislative year.

The Sustainable Agricultural Development Fund has approved seven general applications and subsidized approximately 200 farmers to buy mechanical tools, involving about $85 million of subsidy.

President, I hope Members will support the various measures on health, food safety, environmental hygiene and so on. We will continue working with the Legislative Council and the general public to improve the health care mechanism and food safety in Hong Kong. With these remarks, President, I implore Members to support the original motion. Thank you.

SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND WELFARE (in Cantonese): President, I thank various Members for expressing their opinions. Although many of them are criticisms, we will also listen carefully. Due to time constraints, I would only focus my response to the views and questions of Members.

I would first talk about labour issues. I heard some Members say that we were neglecting labour interests, but I also heard some Members say that we favoured employees. We will listen to the views of both sides.

Two Members, Mr Frankie YICK and Mr YIU Si-wing, mentioned that the series of initiatives for improving labour welfare put forward by the Government would put enterprises under more pressure, and they also mentioned the possible problems brought by these measures which will be implemented shortly.
Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung also pointed out that we lack a timetable. I would like to take this opportunity to give a response, so that Members will understand that this series of improvement measures for labour welfare will be launched in sequence.

In regard to the increase of paternity leave from three days to five days, we hope that it can become effective as scheduled by the end of January 2019.

In terms of statutory minimum wage, we actually know that it is subject to a biannual review. The Government has already received the report from the Minimum Wage Commission and will make a decision shortly. Our target is that the adjustment can be effective from May 2019 onwards and the next adjustment will be in May 2021.

Concerning the extension of statutory maternity leave, our target is that the bill concerned can be submitted to the Legislative Council by the end of 2019. If the bill is passed by mid-2020, it will take about two years to be implemented. In brief, the arrangement to extend maternity leave will only be effective in 2022 at the earliest.

As regards the abolition of the offsetting of severance payments and long service payments against the accrued benefits arising from employers' contribution to Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF"), the work is more complicated and the bill takes time to be drafted. Hence, there is a very low chance that the bill concerned can be submitted to the Legislative Council for scrutiny and have the deliberation work finished within this term of Legislative Council by 2020. That said, I would take this opportunity to appeal to the Legislative Council to support our proposed creation of a Chief Labour Officer post in the Labour Department so that the work concerned can be commenced.

Since a lot of Members have expressed their views on the abolition of the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System, I do not think I can respond to individual views in detail in such a limited space of time. However, I believe that Members can understand the situation. For instance, some people say that in 25 years, the additional cost to enterprises will be $840 billion. But on the other hand, the same group of people also say that only if there is an annual contribution of $6 billion, it will be sufficient to pay the severance payments and long service payments in future. When the annual contribution of $6 billion times 25 is $150 billion, why will the enterprises have to bear an extra cost of
$840 billion while $150 billion will be sufficient to pay the expenses? I do not have time to resolve this mathematical paradox. But if Members believe such analysis, I think that it will easily lead to discrepancies.

It is true that there are actually many different options for the abolition of the offsetting arrangement under the MPF System, but no option is perfect to both employers and employees. We can only choose from these options and identify what we consider the most suitable one which can serve the best interests of both employees and employers. The option identified by the Government from many options at present is the one which will have the least impact on the business environment and bring the least burden on employers.

Mr CHUNG Kwok-pan mentioned the importance of communication. Since he may not be able to listen to what I say in this Chamber today, and I believe he may not read the Official Record of Proceedings of this meeting either, we have already arranged to meet the Liberal Party so that we can really sit down and discuss the matters concerned.

Another topic raised by many Members is statutory maternity leave. Not a few Members, such as Mr Vincent CHENG, Dr Helena WONG and Dr Elizabeth QUAT, mentioned the existing daily rate of statutory maternity leave pay which is four fifths of an employee's average daily wages. On many occasions, I have said that in most labour laws, the legislative principle and intention has been to set a minimum standard through legislation. Of course, it is very welcome that employers can treat their employees better. Under existing laws, no matter whether it is statutory maternity leave, paternity leave or sick leave, the rate is four fifths of an employee's daily wages, but I also welcome full pay granted to the employees concerned by employers.

Mr HO Kai-ming is concerned whether a pregnant Secretary can enjoy fully paid maternity leave. This is a possible scenario in the future and I believe she will be treated the same as other civil servants.
Besides, some Members talked about the Government's review on outsourcing services, especially on the arrangements for non-skilled workers, and Mr Andrew WAN particularly mentioned the issue of end of contract gratuity. Anyway, I would like to give a definite message to Mr Andrew WAN here that after 1 April next year, the arrangement about end of contract gratuity will become a requirement, leaving no room for "manoeuvring".

Another labour related topic is importation of labour. Both Mr Tommy CHEUNG and Mr YIU Si-wing touched upon the demand for labour. It is fortunate that Mr CHUNG Kwok-pan's speech has already responded on my behalf about how to handle this importation of labour issue. Members can ask Mr CHUNG Kwok-pan or listen to the recording concerned for the Government's views in this aspect. If Members want to discuss these questions, they can discuss with the Policy Bureaux or government departments concerned.

In terms of social welfare, first of all, I would like to respond to Mr SHIU Ka-chun who quoted from the latest report of Oxfam our welfare expenditure as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product ("GDP") in 2003. I think sometimes during policy discussion, the usage of some appropriate, reasonable comparisons or analogies can facilitate a rational discussion. But he just chose the figure in 2003 when Hong Kong was at its worst economic state. Back then, both government income and GDP were low. If we calculate the percentage of welfare expenditure against those figures, it will not be a sound comparison.

The percentage back then has been a concern of the Government in previous terms, but surely not a concern in the current term. Government revenue or economic cycle have their highs and lows, but it is almost impossible to reduce welfare expenditure. When the government revenue is low during a year of economic recession, the percentage of welfare expenditure will obviously be very high. Hence, we should not use the percentage in 2003 for comparison.

That said, I believe that with the development pace concerning government measures, especially the growth of welfare expenditure in comparison with the growth rate of other government expenditures, we do not need to wait too long before our welfare expenditure as a percentage of GDP exceeds the percentage in 2003. But for the sake of a rational discussion, I hope that Members will look for some comparable data.
Nevertheless, in the review of welfare expenditure by the current term of Government, welfare expenditure in a broader sense can include the expenses in health care and education. But for many other expenditures, the incumbent Government regards them as investment expenditures in its review, such as the expenditures on primary health care under health care services. On the welfare level, child care services or services to pupils with some special educational needs, especially support to young children, are very obviously investment expenditures which can help increase the productivity of society and reduce government expenditure in the future. Therefore, we will do our utmost in this regard where possible.

In terms of child service, many Members mentioned inadequate provision of child care centres. It is an undisputable fact that child care centres are inadequate. At present, we only have 700-odd places in child care centres for children from zero to two years old, and that figure is woefully small indeed in comparison to 50,000 to 60,000 newborns each year. However, we do not have a magic wand to conjure up some child care centres immediately. The locations of certain child care centres are also undesirable as they are not easily accessible. Hence, we will continue to work hard to identify suitable locations and offer more child care centre services to provide the support needed by families.

Apart from quantity, we will also enhance the quality of child care centre services. Of course, some Members mentioned that the charges of child care centres are rather high, which is known to all of us. Due to time constraints, I can only raise two points here: First, at present, we have a Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme in place to help grass-roots families, and the highest level of subsidy can cover full school fees with the extra charges concerned payable by the Government on their behalf. Of course, we offer different proportions of assistance. This Policy Address also says that we will raise the subsidy level of child care centre services to alleviate the financial burden of parents. This increased level of subsidy can thus also help the middle-income or middle-class families.

Besides, the Policy Address also says that we will raise the incentive payments for home-based child carers in the hope of strengthening and increasing child carer service. And we will also step up the training for home-based child carers.
As also mentioned in the Policy Address, we will study the issue of after-school care services for kindergarten students. In due course, I will also mention a special scheme that we are going to promote, which also covers some child care centres. Mr KWONG Chun-yu is concerned about the Pilot Scheme on Social Work Service for Pre-primary Institutions which will be launched in February next year. This scheme will provide social work services in three phases for more than 700 subsidized institutions. For our goal, we hope that one social worker will serve two kindergartens at the most.

Prof Joseph LEE advised that the laws related to residential care homes should be reviewed. In fact, the work is now in progress and we hope that the review can be finished by the middle of next year.

Nonetheless, I would like to correct a piece of information. The occupancy rate of residential care homes under the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme is not on the low side. The rate was 97% in 2016-2017. As regards the issue about inadequate places in the homes for the elderly, I can only say that we do not have a magic wand. In regard to the Democratic Party's suggestion, as mentioned by Mr KWONG Chun-yu, of building 100 residential care homes in 10 years, we will try our best. But in respect of Mr Alvin YEUNG's suggestion of providing over 6,000 places each year for six years in a row, this is beyond our ability.

Deputy President, due to time constraints, I so summit and hope that Members can support the motion.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): The third debate session ends.

DEPUTY PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): We now proceed to the fourth debate session. The debate theme is "Liveable City".

This session covers the following nine policy areas: Housing; Development (planning, land supply and works); Transport; City Management; Environmental Affairs; Conservation; Arts and Culture; Sports; and Safe City.

Members who wish to speak in this session will please press the "Request to speak" button.
MR JEFFREY LAM (in Cantonese): Deputy President, recently, the very two words that have made the biggest splash must be Lantau Tomorrow. In the second Policy Address she delivered, the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie LAM, proposed the unprecedented reclamation plan Lantau Tomorrow, which will provide more than a thousand hectares of land not just for housing over 1 million population, but also for development as a new transport hub that links Lantau Island, Tuen Mun and Hong Kong Island, and as a brand new core business district in Hong Kong. I find this proposal innovative, audacious and far-sighted. Barring the unexpected, Lantau Tomorrow will be the largest development project in Hong Kong's history, offering an economic lifeline that can elevate Hong Kong to new heights of development in the coming decades.

There is no denying that Hong Kong's housing problem is deep-seated. Over the years, Hong Kong's land development has been far too slow to catch up with the overall development needs, as a significant amount of new land is needed to support economic development, housing, transport, social welfare, elderly care, culture and recreation, among others. Various existing problems, such as high property prices, long waits for public housing and young people's remote prospects of home ownership, have to be effectively resolved.

The Policy Address put forward the Lantau Tomorrow project, which I believe is a viable plan. The Hong Kong 2030+ Study pointed out that in the long run there would be a shortfall of at least 1200 hectares of land in Hong Kong. According to the Government's Lantau Tomorrow idea, artificial islands totalling 1700 hectares will be constructed in phases. If implemented, it can basically meet the long-term housing needs of the public and, in addition, provide land for the development of different industries, thus enhancing Hong Kong's competitiveness.

Deputy President, in fact, reclamation is the most sensible choice among so many land supply options, because it can provide large areas of land for flexible planning, obviating the rezoning procedures and such issues as land resumption, demolition and compensation. Experience from the third airport runway suggests that, as long as there is a specific plan, four years of reclamation plus four years of construction work can bring it to fruition. The Government should expedite the implementation while there is a fiscal surplus, because the earlier it is implemented, definitely the less it will cost.
Some people worry that the whopping $1 trillion cost of such a large-scale reclamation project would be akin to dumping money into the sea. In fact, this worry is excessive and unjustified, because the cost for any large-scale project will definitely be paid in installments according to the progress of the work. If we take, for calculation purpose, several tens of billions of dollars per year for a period of 20 years, will our public coffers be drained? Definitely not! Besides, from a long-term perspective, the proceeds and economic benefits of land reclamation must be far more than the project cost. Some people with ulterior motives keep exaggerating the construction cost of the artificial islands without factoring in the future benefits to Hong Kong. I think they are downright short-sighted and alarmist.

Deputy President, ever since news broke that the Government would carry out reclamation on Lantau Island, the opposition camp has displayed its usual attitude of saying "No". They seem to have forgotten that over many years Hong Kong has relied on reclamation for its development, which is true of bustling commercial areas, new towns housing over 1 million population, and the new airport that Hong Kong is proud of, among others. Sha Tin, Tuen Mun, Tai Po, Tseung Kwan O and Tung Chung are all reclaimed land. As for the land stretching from Tsim Sha Tsui East to the Olympic Station at West Kowloon, and up to Mei Foo, where did it come from? It was also created by reclamation. Notably, many core areas and important landmarks in Hong Kong, including Central, Wan Chai North and Hong Kong International Airport, all came from reclamation. I remember that the Rose Garden Project proposed years ago was widely slammed as a "white elephant" project because of its huge $200 billion budget. History has proved that this enormous investment has become an important indicator of Hong Kong's competitiveness.

Deputy President, the new Policy Address has taken as its theme "Striving Ahead Rekindling Hope". Given that the Government has put forward major short-, medium- and long-term goals in respect of housing land, I also hope that Hong Kong can really forge ahead. In addition, it is imperative for deliberations to be followed immediately by decisions, and further followed by immediate actions, leaving absolutely no room for procrastination. The Lantau Tomorrow project outlines a blueprint for the future development of Hong Kong. If implemented, it can resolve the long lasting problem of land supply shortage in Hong Kong, thus achieving a triple-win situation for the Government, the business sector and the public. Therefore, the Government should proceed to conduct a range of assessment, research and preliminary work as soon as possible.
Deputy President, Lantau Tomorrow is currently only at a preliminary concept stage. Members of the public can discuss it and express their views from different angles. The SAR Government should also listen carefully to them and put forward justified and specific proposals to address public aspirations. Only in so doing can it make this project more responsive to public sentiment and more feasible.

Of course, apart from reclamation, the Government should continue to take a multi-pronged approach in seeking to provide land in a short period of time. I hold that both idle agricultural land and brownfield sites should be developed as soon as possible. At present, different stakeholders in the New Territories, such as the rural gentry and developers, hold an ample amount of agricultural land reserves. It has been reported that the major developers alone are already holding almost a thousand hectares of agricultural land, which is equivalent to triple the site of Kai Tak Development Area. The Government can, under a new mindset, develop the relevant agricultural land for different land uses through the public-private partnership approach.

Speaking of public-private partnership, some people may immediately associate it with government-business collusion, so they have all along shied away from talking about it. In fact, as long as there is an open and transparent system under which developers have to pay the land premium, provide compensation and arrange relocation according to strict procedures, and the Government can impose additional conditions on developers through a statutory mechanism, requiring them to provide ancillary facilities such as schools, parks and hospitals, I believe that such a system can help address concerns of the community.

The Government should also consider releasing brownfield sites for short- and medium-term residential housing supply, because as many existing brownfield sites are close to developed areas with transport, road, sewage disposal and other facilities, the potential sites can be turned into disposed sites in a short period of time, provided that the Government's sights are set on such planning. Of course, as we often say, the Government should proactively provide good transport supporting facilities to enable better development of an area, instead of rigidly adopting a numbers-only approach to calculate the number of people moving in from nearby areas before providing such facilities. It is high time to change this thinking.
Deputy President, land supply is undeniably a major challenge for Hong Kong. I hope that all sectors of the community can pool their collective wisdom to devise good strategies to identify land for housing development. Government departments should also study the feasibility of various proposals with professionalism and neutrality to mitigate the public's concerns and hardships.

Next, I would like to talk about the pressing issue of labour importation. Over the past year since the Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie LAM, took office, the Government has already invested in a number of infrastructure projects. Together with the newly announced Lantau Tomorrow project, they will offer significant business opportunities that benefit all trades and industries in the community.

However, the shortage of talent and labour has plagued many industries. In order to prevent Hong Kong's economic development from being caught in a bottleneck, it is imperative for the Government to properly deal with the issue of human resources and introduce labour from other places, including various types of talents and workers, according to industry needs.

Hong Kong's current policy on labour importation is quite outdated. Despite a persistent shortage of labour and a constant wage growth, the construction industry can hardly attract local young recruits, thanks to the exceedingly tough working conditions. This problem has also played a part in fuelling the property price hike.

In addition, with an increasing public demand for housing, a significant amount of manpower is needed to build residential units. Even if the Government provides flour, i.e. land supply, there have to be enough bakers to make bread. This is also a matter of urgency.

Some people have pointed out that the business sector has proposed to import labour from other places with the aim of saving cost. I actually do not agree with this notion. The reason is that the employment of an imported worker entails not just the payment of a basic salary, but also a variety of obligations, such as liaison with the intermediary, arrangement of transport and accommodation, and acquisition of visas and insurance. In the face of competition from Macao and Singapore, the wages offered to imported workers should not be too low. I believe that many employers would rather not go to the trouble of applying for importation of labour unless absolutely necessary.
Deputy President, I would like to also emphasize that the main purpose of importing labour is not to compete for jobs with local workers, but to promote the overall social development of Hong Kong by preventing delays to works, which affect people's livelihood. On the contrary, the importation of labour can afford Hong Kong more time to expedite housing supply, thus alleviating the pressure from the persistently high property prices, and enable Hong Kong to seize development opportunities, speed up infrastructure construction and upgrade public services.

Therefore, I hold that the Government needs to deal with labour issues at a macro level to prevent a succession gap in future infrastructure projects. The Government should take a decisive step forward to import labour according to the actual industry needs provided that both quality and safety are not compromised in the industry concerned.

In fact, during the construction of the new airport years ago, Hong Kong imported a large number of workers to work on the artificial airport island under closed management. I think the Government can also import labour in a bold and decisive manner specifically for such projects as government works, public housing development and Lantau Tomorrow.

Deputy President, Hong Kong can no longer tolerate delays. Since the Policy Address has indicated that importation of labour will be considered, we should muster our courage to put it into practice. I hope that all sectors of the community, including the labour sector, are willing to explore the proper ways to import labour on the premise that priority is given to protecting the rights of local workers, so that the Government, the labour sector and the business sector can achieve a triple-win situation.

Deputy President, I so submit.

MR LEUNG YIU-CHUNG (in Cantonese): Deputy President, the housing problem in Hong Kong has been serious. Since the era of TUNG Chee-hwa, all the previous Governments said that great importance was attached to housing problem, housing has become an essential part of the policy address every year. However, it often turns out to be a case of saying one thing and doing another. As a result, the housing problem we are facing today is that private property prices are on the rise, and so is the waiting time for public housing.
Chief Executive Carrie LAM also regarded housing problem as a very important task when she took office. Unfortunately, for two years since she has taken office, in what way has this problem been alleviated? According to the latest forecasts of the Hong Kong Housing Authority ("HA")'s Public Housing Construction Programme ("PHCP") for the period 2018-2019 to 2022-2023, the production of public rental housing ("PRH") units and subsidized sale flats ("SSFs") each year is less than the average annual public housing production of 28,000 units for the ten-year period in the Long Term Housing Strategy ("LTHS"), with the total production for 2022-2023 being only 14,400 units, attaining just half of the LTHS's target. Meanwhile, the number of people waiting for public housing is ever-increasing. There are as many as 268,500 applications with the latest average waiting time of 5.3 years, which sets a new record high.

In my opinion, the long-standing housing problem lies in the imbalance between the supply of public housing and that of private housing. The Government does not dare to sacrifice the interests of the developers by resuming the over 1,000 hectares of idle agricultural land hoarded by the developers in the New Territories, nor is it willing to resume the golf course site that has been leased to the rich people at a very low price for their pleasure. On the other hand, the tens of billions of dollars of land revenue every year is used for the "white elephant" construction projects. This time, the Policy Address has also made concessions to private developers in land and housing allocation by proposing the Land Sharing Pilot Scheme, which promotes public-private partnership. Most of the committee members under this scheme are representatives of the engineering sector or the developers, which gives the impression of sharing of advantages among cronies and friends, arousing the suspicion of backroom deals.

Deputy President, in respect of the shortage in housing supply, we know that housing construction takes a long time. The Government suggests today that we need to draw up a long-term plan if we want to solve this long-standing problem, and the housing problem can be solved by building an artificial island with an area of 1,700 hectares under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision plan. Deputy President, we do need to solve the problem in the long run, but for the immediate issue, what short- and medium-term solutions do we have in the face of the over 200,000 applications for public housing on the Waiting List? Most importantly, should the Government provide some assistance to the people who currently live in unsatisfactory living conditions or formulate policies to solve the problem they face?
Since the previous-term LEUNG Chun-ying's Government, we have been conducting continuous discussions on an important issue, i.e. whether tenancy control should be introduced to help the people who are now living in the subdivided units. However, it was unfortunate that the previous-term Government had refused to deal with tenancy control and formulate policy in this respect. The current-term Government has also indicated that it would not intervene private rental market. Such iron-hearted attitude is really disappointing.

Deputy President, this so-called "Lantau Tomorrow Vision" talks about objectives more than two decades from now. According to the projections of the Census and Statistics Department, however, the population of Hong Kong will reach its peak in 2043 with an increase of about 880,000 and is expected to fall thereafter. Regarding the development of the East Lantau Metropolis, if the existing idle land resources are utilized for housing construction, we believe that the supply of housing will exceed population's need by then. In this case, do we still need to put in a lot of resources, manpower and land for the long-term development plan now instead of implementing solutions to solve the current difficulties of the people? In fact, the Land Supply Task Force set up by the Chief Executive has never requested for the supply of 1700 hectares of land. They only propose to reclaim 1000 hectares of land. No matter whether reclamation is a good idea or not, such difference is really too big. Why should we do this? Even Jasper TSANG, a member of the pro-establishment camp and the former President of the Legislative Council, regarded it as a plan originated in secrecy, which was more than he could bear, he subsequently voiced criticism. Therefore, I think the most urgent thing to do now is not to discuss the reclamation of an artificial island for the future. Why do we not adopt some direct and effective ways, make use of the existing agricultural land owned or hoarded by the developers or even land such as brownfields, to solve the current situations? We believe that if the Government moves in this direction, the efficiency and speed of housing construction will be far better than those on the artificial island plan.

Carrie LAM once said that she preferred not to invoke the Lands Resumption Ordinance for the resumption of land. I do not know why she would say so. Nevertheless, recently I noted that the Government had resumed a piece of private land in the urban district by invoking the Lands Resumption Ordinance. Since it is possible to invoke the Lands Resumption Ordinance for
the resumption of land, why do we not resume the agricultural land of about 1 000 hectares hoarded by the developers in the New Territories for development? Furthermore, as I mentioned just now, we calculate that there are another 1 300 hectares of brownfields in the New Territories. Coupled with the 200-hectare golf course site and the 2 700 hectares of idle military sites, all together, we have indeed plenty of land for housing construction. However, the Government disregards these options in favour of grandiose plans by going ahead with some "white elephant" projects, which is simply an act of putting the cart before the horse and fails to meet the imminent needs. In my opinion, what the Government does really lets the people who are facing housing problem down.

Moreover, we wonder if this so-called East Lantau Metropolis development plan can really satisfy the urgent needs of the people. On the contrary, I do not think that this is the main consideration, which may be to please the Communist Party of China by taking forward big projects. I think that the current-term Government should not act this way. The Government should face the reality and care more about the current situations of the people and do more to meet their pressing needs.

I think there are several tasks we can do now. First of all, the immediate introduction of tenancy control will put people living in the subdivided units under the protection of a reasonable level of rents. Moreover, medium-term transitional housing should be provided. Of course, the Government said that it has started to revitalize some industrial buildings as transitional housing. This is not bad, but how many resources has the Government put in? Many people think that revitalization of industrial buildings is not the solution. Can the Government make extra efforts to build more temporary or transitional housing on Government land to meet the needs of the residents who have been waiting for public housing for too long? This is the most important point.

Therefore, Deputy President, while I strongly oppose the Lantau Tomorrow Vision plan, I hope that the Government will pay more attention to the short- and medium-term housing needs at present, instead of merely focusing on putting in so many resources for long-term development.

Deputy President, I so submit.
MR CHAN CHUN-YING (in Cantonese): Deputy President, the focus of the 2018 Policy Address is housing policy, which is a long-standing problem of Hong Kong. In recent years, the persistently high property prices in Hong Kong are way beyond the public's affordability and have gradually become a social problem. The main reason for the high property prices in Hong Kong is insufficient land supply, which has also seriously restrained our economic development.

The Policy Address has put forward a number of short-, medium- and long-term measures to boost land supply in Hong Kong, such as introducing the Lantau Tomorrow Vision, studying the construction of artificial islands through reclamation, developing brownfield sites in the New Territories, introducing the public-private sector development policy as manifested in the Land Sharing Pilot Scheme and providing transitional accommodation through revitalization of industrial buildings. The most important among them is of course the implementation of the Lantau Tomorrow Vision which involves conducting reclamation studies for boosting land supply in the long run. If this major measure can go ahead, it will bring in hundreds of billions of dollars of investment and become a new economic growth point in Hong Kong.

In fact, over the years, Hong Kong has the experience of reclaiming a total of 7 000 hectares of land, and its technical and safety levels in reclamation are undisputed. For a project to construct an artificial island through reclamation, it only has to go through one review of the environmental impact assessment ("EIA"), one exercise of traffic planning and one lawsuit or otherwise. It can achieve twice the result with only half the effort. However, if the few hundred buildings on the artificial islands are constructed on the agricultural land and brownfield sites of the New Territories, 10 buildings here and eight buildings there, the Government will have to face a few dozen EIA reviews, lawsuits and traffic projections. This protracted process will slow down the pace of building construction, thus ending up getting half the result with twice the effort.

Deputy President, according to the Secretary for Development, concerning the proposed reclamation of 1 700 hectares of land under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision, the Hei Ling Chau proposal with 700 hectares of land is still visionary without a timetable for implementation, while the Kau Yi Chau proposal with the artificial islands of 1 000 hectares is more concrete, a proposal well thought out by the Government after tremendous efforts, and Kau Yi Chau is an ideal site for reclamation.
In regard to the financial analysis on the reclamation proposal, there are projections respectively made by the experts supporting the proposal and those opposing it. Based on my more than 20 years of banking experience related to project loans and syndicated loans, I would also like to do some calculations to the public.

According to the projection of the Government, excluding the infrastructure cost, the reclamation cost is estimated to be between $1,300 and $1,500 per square foot, very close to the cost of resuming land at $1,350 per square foot. According to the estimation of Our Hong Kong Foundation earlier, the additional infrastructure cost for reclamation will be about $650 per square foot. In other words, taking into account the infrastructure cost, the total cost of reclamation will be about $2,150 per square foot at a maximum. In order to avoid confusing the public with the calculations based on today's value and on the value after a decade, all my calculations will be based on the value of 2019. The total reclamation cost of 1 000 hectares of land will be about $231.4 billion.

During a media interview, Secretary Michael WONG said that on this reclaimed land of 1 000 hectares, more than 100 hectares might be allocated for commercial development, providing a floor area of 40 million sq ft. According to the estimation of Our Hong Kong Foundation, 9% of the 1 000 hectares of reclaimed land, based on the plot ratio of 5, can provide a floor area of 48.45 million sq ft for private residential development.

I shall take reference from the accommodation value of a commercial site at $13,000 per square foot and the accommodation value of a private residential site at $17,776 per square foot at Kai Tak in May this year. If I take 40% off from the above value, my projection on the proceeds from land sales will be as follows: For commercial sites with a total floor area of 40 million square foot available for sale, the price will be about $7,800 per square foot and the proceeds from land sales will be $312 billion. And for private residential sites with a total floor area of 48.45 million square foot available for sale, the price will be $10,666 per square foot (this level is similar to the price of the cheapest residential site at Kai Tak which was sold in December 2016 at $10,220 per square foot, and the discount rate is 74% when compared with a runway site sold yesterday at $14,500 per square foot) and the proceeds from land sales will be $516.8 billion.
In other words, excluding the public housing sites and the proceeds from land sales for all the industrial land sites on the reclaimed land and only taking into account the proceeds from land sales for the floor areas of commercial and private residential sites, the Government can reap $828.8 billion. Nevertheless, the proceeds from land sales cannot be materialized till 2030 at the earliest. Assuming that the inflation rate is 3% per year, the proceeds from land sales should be adjusted to $598.7 billion when discounted to the value of 2019.

We can thus understand that if we compare in present value, the total cost of 1,000 hectares of reclaimed land will be $231.4 billion. If we only take into account the proceeds from the floor areas of commercial and private residential sites, the Government can get back $598.7 billion, with a net profit of $367.3 billion. The revenue will be 2.59 times of the total cost, with a break-even point at 38.65%. That means when we calculate at 40% off the peak accommodation value of the site at Kai Tak, the project will only be loss-making with a further drop of over 61.35% in the value.

Nonetheless, as we also learn that many large-scale infrastructural projects experienced cost overruns in recent years due to various reasons, cost overrun should also be taken into consideration in the projection of the project. Assuming that the reclamation project is over budget by 50%, the total cost will increase from $231.4 billion to $347.1 billion, but there will still be a net profit of $251.6 billion. With that $251.6 billion, I also have to take into account the implementation of the reclamation project for the other 700 hectares of land and possible cost overrun. When the total cost is adjusted to $243 billion, it is still below the net profit of $251.6 billion. From the above figures, we can see that the revenue generated from the reclamation of 1,000 hectares of land alone is enough to cover the cost of reclaiming 1,700 hectares of land and a possible cost overrun of 50%.

If the financial aspect is the main worry of society concerning the Lantau Tomorrow Vision programme, the above estimations can explain its financial feasibility. As pointed out in the community, full investment from the Government is not the only option, there are many other options to resolve the funding issues, such as issuing bonds for public subscription, and even listing of the project.
It is simply unthinkable for those against the reclamation under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision to liken it to pouring money into the sea. The total cost of reclamation is projected to be $231.4 billion. If this sum of money is not used in reclamation for islands but is put into the Exchange Fund for generating some interests, calculating with an annual yield of 5%—it is in fact optimistic to have a yield of 5%, because with an exceptionally good performance of the Exchange Fund last year, the rate of fee payment in respect of the fiscal reserves is only between 4.6% to 5% this year, and the annual yield is merely 2% after the deduction of 3% inflation—by 2030, this sum of money can only generate an income of $56.3 billion for us.

By comparison, the socio-economic benefits from the investment in reclamation for islands under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision are conspicuous and indisputable. Singapore, a familiar place to Hong Kong people, has been engaging in nonstop reclamation projects over the past 50-odd years and 14,000 hectares of land have been reclaimed, which is eight times of the 1,700 hectares of land under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision. If reclamation projects are like pouring money into the sea, why is the Singapore Government still doing it untiringly and persistently?

I would like to emphasize that reclamation land has a value which is much higher than its cost and more than enough to cover all the infrastructural expenditures. As the land value in Hong Kong is generally rather high, the Lantau Tomorrow programme developed by the Government will not lose any money but may bring substantial financial benefits to the Treasury. It is estimated that the total cost of reclaiming 1,000 hectares of land will be paid in at least five annual instalments (some Members also guessed earlier that it would be paid by 10, 20 or 30 annual instalments), and only $46.3 billion will be needed each year. Financially speaking, this will not impose a heavy burden on the SAR Government.

The Lantau Tomorrow programme is actually a vision that spans over the coming 20 to 30 years. In addition to resolving the housing and land supply problems of Hong Kong, it can also provide a quality living environment to the general public and create numerous business opportunities for the sustainable development of the Hong Kong economy. Its implications are far-reaching.
First of all, it will provide the land needed for housing development. The ever-increasing residential property prices over the years in Hong Kong have already gone beyond the affordability of the public. Although the Government, in both last term and the current term, has been making strenuous efforts to increase land supply through short- and medium-term measures, it is out of its wits in dealing with the problem of increasing land supply in the long run. The target of supplying about 18 000 private housing units each year is now basically attained, but in terms of public housing, the public housing projects in the coming five fiscal years can only provide about 97 500 housing units, far below the original target of 140 000 housing units. After these five years, the production may even be lower. In terms of demand, as at the end of June this year, the number of public housing applications already reached 268 500, and an applicant generally needs to wait for more than 5.3 years before being allocated a flat, deviating from the Government's target of three years.

Facing a keen demand for housing but a shortfall in land supply, is there any good solution to the problem? The Policy Address puts forward the Lantau Tomorrow Vision, under which some artificial islands can be built for the planned construction of 260 000 to 400 000 residential units, 70% of which will be public housing, amounting to 182 000 to 280 000 public housing units. This measure can provide the land needed for the construction of public housing units urgently needed by grass-roots citizens.

Besides, this measure can also help break through the bottleneck of land supply in Hong Kong, and provide land to various trades. In recent years, residential development is not alone in facing insufficient land supply, this problem has also been seriously affecting the development of other different trades. If the Lantau Tomorrow Vision can be materialized, apart from developing residential buildings in East Lantau Metropolis, we can also develop commercial buildings with a total floor area of 40 million sq ft, which can be Grade A offices as well as premises for various purposes like education, creative industries, convention and exhibition industry, health care, innovation and technology industries, and also sports. When the land demand in these aspects can be greatly relieved, new energy will be injected into the economy and society of Hong Kong.

Besides, this measure can also improve the living environment of all people Hong Kong and enhance our economic efficiency. All along, Hong Kong has been well-known for its high density development, with only 24% of its gross
land area being developed land, and a high population density of 27 400 people per square kilometer of developed land, doubling that of Singapore and London. Compared with other cities, the living space and community area per capita in Hong Kong are relatively low, with only 170 sq ft of living space and 76 sq ft community area. The living environment is rather poor. The direct impact of a dense population is the increasingly serious traffic congestion problem. Since people have to spend more and more time on transport, especially during morning peak hours, the efficiency of economic operation will be seriously affected. Therefore, if East Lantau Metropolis is developed, more space will be available to Hong Kong, and the infrastructural investment in railways and roads will also help improve the living environment and enhance the efficiency in commuting.

Finally, the Lantau Tomorrow Vision can bring new opportunities to various trades. From the blueprint of the Lantau Tomorrow Vision, we learn that if the Government goes ahead with various artificial island, railway and highway projects under East Lantau Metropolis development in the future, not only will it have to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in land formation and infrastructural works, but it will also have to develop tens of thousands of housing units, a large number of Grade A commercial buildings, emerging industries, as well as community facilities. From the study stage to its completion, the Lantau Tomorrow Vision will involve mega investment and development projects worth hundreds of billions of dollars, tens of thousands of employment opportunities, especially professional positions, and will bring new opportunities to all sectors.

With these remarks, Deputy President, I support the Motion of Thanks as well as the Lantau Tomorrow Vision.

MR LAM CHEUK-TING (in Cantonese): Deputy President, before I respond to the transport policies in the Policy Address, I would like to first respond to some comments made by Mr Jeffrey LAM. I consider him quite courageous and insightful because he has told the truth.

He said that when the new airport project was proposed, it faced a thousand accusing fingers and some even said it was a "white elephant" project. When we look back today, the construction of the new airport has proven to be of great importance to Hong Kong. I fully agree with what he said. Then he used this example to justify his support for the Lantau Tomorrow Vision project. Why
should I praise him for being courageous to make such remarks? In those years, the loudest voice of objection against the new airport project came from Mr LU Ping, the then Director of the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council. Do Members remember this part of history? He said the project would drain away Hong Kong’s fiscal reserves. He asked three times successively, "What should we do?". Subsequently, when the proposal was put to a vote at the then Legislative Council, pro-establishment Members such as Members belonging to the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong ("DAB") and the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions voted against the construction of the new airport project. For that reason, I consider that Mr Jeffrey LAM has spoken up for justice by telling the truth this time around. In those years, those who voted in support of the construction of the new airport were mainly Members of the pro-democracy camp. Because we considered the construction of the new airport was important to the long-term economic development of Hong Kong, therefore we supported the relevant project.

Deputy President, I now return to the subject under discussion, which concerns transport policies, as the Secretary is waiting for my comments on this subject. First, I note that it was said in the Policy Address that the Shatin to Central Link ("SCL") should be commissioned as soon as possible. I hope the Government will put aside this thought. I am not saying that the commissioning of SCL is not important, but the project quality is more important. We should not strive for an early commissioning in disregard of some pressing problems with project quality. Everyone can see that the SCL project has been plagued with a series of scandals, include the cutting short of steel bars and failing to conform to the technical drawings. Such scandals have been exposed one after another. What the Government should do now is to grasp the seriousness of the quality problem of the SCL project, to put in place remedial measures, to thoroughly look into the causes of such incidents and to determine the people who should be held responsible.

While the SCL project should continue, we should ensure that these problems must be looked into in every detail and the project will be carried out and completed under close supervision and in accordance with the laws of Hong Kong as well as project criteria, instead of pressing for a hasty commissioning of the SCL project. Many New Territories East residents told us that they had waited for such a long time. The SCL project was delayed time and again
following the discovery of monuments and war time bombs. But they want a railway line which will make them feel safe without worrying about steel bars being cut short and the tunnels collapsing during their daily commute. A project of good qualities should not have such problems.

Secondly, Deputy President, I wish to speak on the Government's proposal for rationalization of traffic distribution among the three tunnels. First of all, we consider that the fare increases for the Cross Harbour Tunnel ("CHT") in Hung Hom and the Eastern Harbour Crossing ("EHC") are too high and many Kowloon East and New Territories East residents who often use EHC consider the increase unreasonable.

Besides, we are also concerned that the proposal will ultimately cause traffic congestion at the Western Harbour Crossing ("WHC"). If all three tunnels are congested in the future, are we going to rely on the water-taxi service as proposed by the Government if we need to go to Hong Kong Island to attend some urgent matters? I am not sure if we can do that. Will the water-taxi service be a speedier option? Will we have to wait for a long time just like what is happening at the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge? We have no idea at all.

Moreover, we consider that the Government's proposal for rationalization of traffic distribution among the three tunnels is more or less a stop-gap measure. As a matter of fact, what Hong Kong is facing is more than the traffic congestion of three tunnels. I have pointed out many times in the past that if we look at the figures, the growth in the number of private cars in the past decade was too rapid. In 2006, there were 360 000 registered private cars in Hong Kong. By 2017, there were 552 000, an increase of more than 50%. However, the growth in urban roads was only a single digit percentage, while the number of vehicles has kept on growing infinitely. Just as the famous remark by Secretary Frank Chan, "Young people like to buy cars so that they can let their bodies and souls wander around". If such infinite growth is left unchecked, the traffic congestion will get worse no matter how we rationalized traffic distribution among the tunnels.

For that reason, we hope that the Government will consider the transport policies from a holistic point of view, instead of saying that it can do nothing if the current proposal for adjusting the tolls of CHT and EHC to $40 and that of WHC to $50 is rejected, before a decision can be made, we will have to bear the traffic congestion until 2023 when WHC will be taken over by the Government.
I hope the Government should not take this attitude. Should we try to see if there is any other feasible option? At present, various options have been put forward in the community. DAB and the democratic camp have also proposed some options, should we discuss them first? Mr CHAN Hak-kan is smiling. Even if the Government is not going to seek the support of the democratic camp, at least it should seek the support of the party that Mr CHAN Hak-kan belongs. Should the Government take such attitude?

The Government may argue that the projection is based on the most advanced statistical technology analysis and its proposal is the only way to achieve a proper traffic distribution among the three tunnels so that the traffic will not become over-congested. Are the Government's projection and traffic flow evaluation techniques really so accurate and precise? At present, the dual two-lane carriageway at Tai Po Road—Sha Tin section has been heavily congested over the years, but the Government only seeks funds from us for the widening works several months ago. The Government should have known very early about the population growth in Tai Po, Fan Ling and Sheung Shui. It should have been able to make projections on the flow of vehicular traffic and cross-boundary vehicular traffic. If the Government has been so resourceful, it should have come to present to us the funding request for the road-widening project 10 years ago, instead of doing it now, which still needs 7 to 8 years to complete. Mr CHAN Hak-kan, do you agree with that?

As that road section has been congested for some years, very few people will believe that the Government's projection techniques are very accurate and precise. Experience tells us, the Government's planning has been delayed for many years before the project is proposed, which will take quite a long time from the planning stage to project commencement and completion. For that reason, we are not saying that the Government's data are of no reference value, but we will not treat them as the golden rule and we will definitely not consider them 100% accurate.

Lastly, I remember the Chief Executive, Carrie LAM, stated in her election manifesto that she would consider using the Government's dividends from the MTR Corporation to relieve the fare burden of commuters. In 2016, the Government received $4.8 billion dividends, but it only allocated $2.3 billion as transport subsidy. Why have the Government discounted its commitment by not allocating more dividends to benefit more people? Carrie LAM only honoured half of her commitment in her election manifesto. In view of the fact that the
MTR Corporation will make more profits, the dividends to be received by the Government will rise to as much as $5 billion in the future. For that reason, the Government should not honour its commitment by half only and pocket the more than half of the dividends while only using the remaining parts to subsidize the commuters. In fact, the Government can do more. Since there is a sizable surplus in the public coffers, the Government should not be so tight-fisted.

The Government always claims that its projection is very accurate. Let me cite the passenger volume of the Hong Kong section of the Express Rail Link ("XRL") as an example. In 2015, the Government said that the daily patronage of XRL would be 109,000. The Government did say that the daily patronage would be 109,000, I am not fabricating this figure. The Government later found something wrong and adjusted downward the daily patronage to 80,000, with a peak daily patronage of 90,000. However, let us take a look at the actual operation now, the daily patronage on ordinary days was only 30,000 to 40,000, while the figure during the peak period of the golden week was a little more than 70,000, a sufficient to proof that the Government tended to be too optimistic or idealistic in its assessments for infrastructure projects. I am not saying that the Government has deliberately told lies or exaggerated the facts when it submitted funding requests to the Legislative Council in order to cheat us. However, the public have seen the consistent downward adjustments in the Government's forecasts. These are too obvious to the discerning eyes of the public. We hope that the Government should not regard its projections the most sacrosanct and authoritative. It should not be the case. The Government should listen to public views.

I also wish to talk to Secretary Michael WONG about the Lift Modernisation Subsidy Scheme. I hope that he would be more attentive to that because many bid-rigging syndicates in the community are ready to take advantage of the opportunity. In addition, regarding the bid-rigging problems concerning the maintenance of buildings, the Urban Renewal Authority ("URA") needs more resources and I thus hope that Secretary WONG can provide URA with more support. We hope that in addition to assisting the public in the tendering process, the Government will take an extra step by offering a helping hand to the public in the examination of tender documents and acceptance inspections upon the completion of the works concerned, in order to ensure that the works are in compliance with government as well as contractual requirements? This will help the entire building maintenance sector to raise its ethical and quality levels, which will benefit the people of Hong Kong.
Finally, I wish to thank the frontline staff of URA for providing valuable advice and help to many home owners of housing estates, particularly in how to prevent bid-rigging practice. They have really helped a lot of small property owners in recent years. I hope that various government Policy Bureaux will continue to work hard for the Hong Kong community and the public. Deputy President, I so submit.

MR CHAN HAK-KAN (in Cantonese): Deputy President, in this debate session, I wish to speak on four areas, namely development, transport, environmental affairs and safe city. If I am asked to give an overall comment on the Chief Executive's 2018 Policy Address, I will use the expression describing the expectations that we, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong ("DAB") have on the Policy Address. By this I mean the initiatives set out in the Policy Address all show a determination to stick to the right direction and the courage to act. Why do I say so? In particular, the Chief Executive has resolved to address the problems of land supply and housing. Secretary, on various occasions, there have been debates about the most important item in this Policy Address, Lantau Tomorrow Vision, and it is one of your key tasks. Here, let me reiterate that DAB supports the reclamation project concerned, but we also consider it necessary for the Government to address the existing problems relating to environmental protection and the development of fisheries industry. We hope that the Government will minimize the relevant impacts and provide solutions and alternatives for the long-term development and livelihood of fishermen.

When comparing New Territories East with New Territories West, I find that Secretary Michael WONG seems to show special favour to New Territories West as there is the Lantau Tomorrow plan there and a number of development projects will be carried out in Hung Shui Kiu, Yuen Long, in the future. In contrast, it appears to me that New Territories East is neglected by you, Secretary. I have read the part about the planning and development of North East New Territories in the Policy Address. So, how many characters (excluding the punctuation) are there? Only 89 characters, not even 90. Besides, as stated in the relevant part, the Government will merely consider, review and commence the relevant preparation work. Actually, the development of North East New Territories is also an important source of land supply, but yet it looks as though the Secretary has made no long-term preparation in this regard.
Moreover, as we can observe, in the coming year, the Government will begin land resumption in areas such as Kwu Tung North for the development of North East New Territories. But what about the previous promise the Secretary made to the local residents about minimizing the relevant impacts? It seems that the Secretary has failed to deliver. Let me cite an example. Earlier, many pan-democratic Members expressed concerns over the residential care homes for the elderly at the Dills Corner Garden which the Government had promised a seamless transition for its reprovisioning before. Now, the construction of the new residential care complex for the elderly will only be completed in 2023, and so, the elderly have to move to another residential care home first and then move again to another, like the three moves by Mencius' mother. As such, would the Government say it has fulfilled the previous promise?

Another example, well, I have to thank Secretary Michael WONG because last year I told him about my visit to some villagers living in squatter huts converted from chicken coops or pigsties, and then today, the Government has made a promise to put in place a new registration system. As long as these people have registered themselves as squatter occupants, they will have the opportunity to be allocated a public housing unit in the future. For this matter, I have to thank the Secretary. However, another problem has arisen. These residents worry that the Squatter Control Offices of the Lands Department will tell them upon their registration that their huts have unauthorized structures and alternations here and there. In the end, their huts will be demolished before they are allocated a public housing unit. In this connection, may I ask the Secretary to explain to them personally in his subsequent reply, so as to give them peace of mind? So, this is the first point.

(THE PRESIDENT resumed the Chair)

Secondly, Secretary, apart from residents living in squatter huts converted from chicken coops or pigsties, I also spoke to you about people living in houses converted from containers on the last occasion. Some of these people are single parents and some are chronic patients. After all, only poor people will live in these places. So, how can these people get allocated a public housing unit? Can the Secretary please tell us whether the Government has come up with anything to help them?
Concerning development and housing, the Government has actually made significant policy adjustment by raising the existing public/private split for the supply of housing units from 6:4 to 7:3. President, I agree that more public rental housing ("PRH") units should be made available to Hong Kong people, but the Secretary should bear in mind that an overly high proportion of public housing in the relevant ratio may result in a repeat of Tin Shui Wai’s case. In those years, the public/private split for the supply of housing units in Tin Shui Wai was 75% to 25%, thus making it a densely populated area without sufficient community facilities. It is really necessary for the Secretary to consider carefully how to strike a balance, so that more public housing units can be made available for people and, at the same time, there will not be a repeat of Tin Shui Wai’s case.

Of course, people living in the New Territories still have to go to the urban areas for work and at present, most of them rely on MTR to commute to work. As Under Secretary Dr Raymond SO is present here, I wish to do some maths with him. If people are asked which two large private institutions are the most detestable, it is probable that one is Link Real Estate Investment Trust and the other one the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL"). Under Secretary, the present performance of MTRCL can be described as deplorable, which has affected people's daily lives and caused an accumulation of resentment among the people. For instance, the previous service disruption of four railway lines, and the successive incidents of passengers falling onto the track of East Rail Line have exasperated many commuters relying on East Rail Line. Also, as we can see, MTR incidents have almost become the order of the day, and so have the amends MTRCL made. What is worse, it made amends in a sneaky manner. I mean, while those incidents happened on weekdays, it chose to offer discounts and rebates on Saturdays and Sundays, making it difficult for wage earners to enjoy the concessions. So, I wonder if MTRCL really has the intention of making amends for its poor performance or it just tries to pacify the public half-heartedly? It would be unacceptable if MTRCL was so mean.

I often describe residents of New Territories East as second-class passengers in respect of railway service. Not only are the fares expensive, but the train compartments are also constantly packed to capacity. To make things worse, incidents always occur on the East Rail Line. Besides, many of the promises MTRCL and the Under Secretary gave us have gone unfulfilled. Is it not true that the Northern Link has seen no progress? Secretary, you do not
have to be pop-eyed. When was the Northern Link proposed? It was proposed in the rail development strategy in 2000. Last week, I asked Secretary Frank CHAN when the implementation of the Northern Link could be confirmed. The Secretary replied that the Government had to conduct consultation and studies. From 2000 to 2018, we have been waiting for 18 years. If we still have to wait until consultation and studies have been conducted, does it mean that we have to wait for another 18 years? Probably, today's wage earners will have already gone into retirement by then.

Second, MTRCL has promised that screen doors will be installed along East Rail Line. This is the fruit of the signature campaigns and petitions launched by a number of District Council members and the local community. However, nothing further has been seen about the installation of screen doors until now. Why? Because it is affected by the Shatin to Central Link ("SCL"). If this is the case, will the project of installing screen doors along the East Rail Line fall through, standing no chance of being carried out, given that the date of commissioning of SCL remains unknown as some Members just said?

Under Secretary, speaking of SCL, there is actually one more issue which we repeatedly mentioned. The existing signalling system can basically manage 20 train trips per hour. According to the Government, after the commissioning of SCL, the East Rail Line will reduce the train configuration from 12 cars to 9 cars. It is said that the number of train trips can be increased from the existing 20 trips per hour to 27 trips per hour after the upgrade of the signalling system. Though there appears to be seven more trips, can it resolve the current problem of overcrowding on platforms? Let us do a simple calculation then. There are 20 trips per hour and each train is comprised of 12 cars, so there are 240 cars operating in an hour. Under the new signalling system, there will be 27 trips per hour but the train will only be comprised of 9 cars. That means there will be 243 cars after the launch of the new signalling system and the reduction of cars. From 240 cars to 243 cars, there is only an increase of three cars. So how can it possibly solve the problem of overcrowding on platforms at present? Moreover, the present calculation is based on the ideal condition that passengers are boarding smoothly when the train arrives. Have they taken into account possible situations where passengers are obstructed or some incidents happen? Actually, if these situations arise, the problem of overcrowding on platforms will only get worse instead of being solved.
Certainly, we have proposed to the Government the adoption of what we call long/short train arrangement, i.e. those cross harbour trains will be 9-car trains whereas those not going across the harbour will remain 12-car long. In this way, the existing congestion problem can be solved. After all, not everyone needs to cross the harbour, right? Nevertheless, the authorities refused to do so and stated that their arrangements would definitely be fine according to their professional calculation. President, today, we will put on record their claim that in the future, the congestion problem can be solved by the signalling system and the 9-car trains. Let us wait and see whether reducing the number of cars can solve the present congestion problem after the commissioning of SCL. Of course, I very much hope that the method adopted by the authorities will work, proving the authorities right and me wrong.

Finally, as regards transport, I wish to say something about the proposal now put forward by the Government to rationalize the traffic among the three tunnels. From my perspective as a resident in New Territories East or as the Legislative Council Members representing these residents, it comes as a great disappointment. Definitely, I support the rationalization of traffic in principle, but it should not be attained by just reducing the tolls of the Western Harbour Crossing ("WHC") and increasing those of the Eastern Harbour Crossing ("EHC") and the Cross Harbour Tunnel ("CHT"). This is simply not going to help residents in New Territories East. Nor can it solve the present problem of traffic congestion. To rationalize traffic among the three tunnels, there is actually a very simple way. The Chief Executive often says that money is not a problem, but as far as the issue of rationalizing traffic among the three tunnel is concerned, the crux of the problems lies in money. The target can be attained if the Government asks WHC to reduce its tolls in exchange for government subsidy. Under Secretary, you have made it very clear that the Government will subsidize WHC. But the truth is that the Government will increase the toll of CHT from $20 to $40 and that of EHC from $25 to $40. In other words, it will be the motorists who will subsidize WHC. Will the Government dig into its own pocket? I do not know. So, Under Secretary, you should think about it again. Also, as some Members said earlier, the Chief Executive always welcomes discussions. Please do not tell us that it is a take-it-or-leave-it proposal, rejecting it means everyone will have to bear traffic congestion together. This is just not acceptable.
President, another key area covered in the Policy Address is related to the Environment Bureau. This year, the Environment Bureau will introduce waste charging. While I do support it in principle, I do not quite agree with two points raised by the Secretary. First, the Secretary stated that effective implementation of waste charging hinged on publicity and education; second, the Secretary described waste charging as the "locomotive" of waste reduction. Well, I am not saying that the Secretary is wrong. It is only that I have a different view. I think that the implementation details of the waste charging scheme is the key to its success. Doubtlessly, both education and publicity are important, but they are only the software. If there is only software without supporting hardware, it will still be doomed to failure.

One example which I often cite is the "four categories of electrical equipment and one category of computer products". The Secretary stated that the scheme went smoothly, but yet we see refrigerators and televisions being illegally dumped on rear staircases, at the roadside, and in rural areas every day. Why does this happen? The failure to achieve seamless transition is to blame. With no spare space at home, people just discard the used electrical equipment outside. The waste charging scheme which is about to be launched now covers a much wider scope than the "four categories of electrical equipment and one category of computer products". At present, it is a common scene that bags of waste being illegally dumped on the street. For example, as Mr CHAN Han-pan constantly mentioned, aside from the garbage people disposed of, renovation waste is also placed everywhere on the roof tops of the tenement buildings in the old districts, but the authorities are unable to enforce the law. Therefore, in the absence of good supporting measures and well-thought-out implementation details, this policy may still end up in failure. What is more, 40% of the domestic waste in Hong Kong nowadays is food waste. What can we do to help people to recycle food waste? The Under Secretary may reply that the authorities will build an additional food waste plant in Sha Ling later and presently, there is already one in Siu Ho Wan. But will this solve the problem? If not, it just means that people are forced to pay the relevant charges.

According to the Secretary, waste charging is the "locomotive" of waste reduction and recycling, but, in my view, waste charging and the relevant supporting measures should be two separate trains instead and they should run in parallel. As I can recall, Secretary WONG Kam-sing attended a television programme recently. In his response to the reporter's query about the supporting
measures for waste charging which, as the reporter claimed, many Members considered to be unready, the Secretary stated that he was aware of it, but then places like Taipei, Singapore … when Korea introduced waste charging 20 years ago, it did not have comprehensive supporting measures either. Of course, there is no problem learning from others' strengths, but our decision to launch waste charging is not something coming out of the blue. The Under Secretary has been in office for two years while Secretary WONG Kam-sing has already held the position for two terms and been in charge of the Bureau for six years. The implementation of waste charging is something proposed not recently but several years ago. So, why did the authorities fail to draw up any supporting measures several years ago and delayed it until one or two years after the implementation of waste charging? Will the waste reduction initiatives be accomplished simply by toying with the "Big Waster" in the office?

Another thing that the Secretary told us is that he will earmark $300 million to $400 million for some projects relevant to waste reduction. I give it my complete support because it is based on the "dedicated-fund-for-dedicated-use" concept, something DAB always mentions. Yet, this concept of "dedicated fund for dedicated use" is slightly different from the one we propose and, I would say, it seems to savour of an intention to renege on the pledge concerned. When we talk about "dedicated fund for dedicated use", we mean the $300 million to $400 million should be used to help the environmental industry. However, the Secretary said the $300 million to $400 million would be used for running publicity campaigns in the community and constructing a food waste plant. This may sound alright, but Members who have a clear mind and have been following environmental issues closely will be aware that the projects of arranging teams to promote waste recycling or waste reduction in the community, and of building food waste plant are nothing new in respect of this initiative of waste charging. Rather, they are projects which have long been planned. So, I wonder if he is really using the $300 million to $400 million to help reduce waste, or is simply fobbing off the Council's request by incorporating some existing projects in the initiative, with a view to showing that something has been done with the money. What is the truth? I am highly skeptical.

While there is policy but no supporting measure for waste reduction, electric vehicles, which I am always concerned about, can be described as an item for which there is neither policy nor supporting measures. In this Policy
Address, the content about electric vehicles is actually very limited, covering nothing but the Pilot Green Transport Fund, and the promotion of the use of new energy vehicles among people. Specific measures and objectives are nowhere to be found.

Last year, I did a calculation with the Secretary in the Legislative Council by asking him how many electric vehicles there were across the territory. There were some 11,000 electric private cars. Then, what about the number of electric vehicles in the public transport sector? Today, I wish to talk about it with Members. If we see an increase in the number of electric vehicles in the public transport sector, it means the Government has probably done something in this regard. But this is not what happened. Last year when I asked about the number of electric taxis, there was only one in Hong Kong, and this year, there is still one only. What about the number of electric minibuses? There was none last year and so is this year. Then, how many electric buses are there in Hong Kong? Last year, there were 18, and this year, there are only 16. Though the Government has spent a lot of money on the Pilot Green Transport Fund, the trial test has failed to yield any result afterwards and there is even a drop in the number of electric vehicles in the public transport sector. We are really lagging far behind other places.

As I can see, all the buses running in Shenzhen, our neighbour, are electric vehicles, and by the end of this year, all the taxis there will be replaced by electric ones. We are really way behind others. The Government established the Steering Committee on the Promotion of Electric Vehicles in 2009, but what has it done so far? We actually have no idea at all.

Earlier, a group of scholars and university professors suggested that an inter-departmental platform should be set up to facilitate discussions over the development of electric vehicles and electric public transport among the transport sector, the power companies, the manufacturers of electric vehicles and the battery manufacturers. Is this approach worth considering? I hope the Secretary will have a think about it.

President, while it seems that I have a lot of criticisms against the Environment Bureau, I actually have to commend them for a great thing they did this year. I remember that I did an investigation a few months ago. Having bought a takeaway meal, I opened the package and counted the number of plastic products therein. Including the plastic bag and the cutlery, there were altogether
eight pieces of plastic products. Of course, the Environment Bureau was responsive and introduced some corresponding measures afterwards. It has indicated that it will consider how the use of disposable tableware and drinking straws can be reduced by launching a charter signing campaign or on a voluntary basis, and the Government will also take the lead. The Environment Bureau has done a good job in this regard, but still, I hope it can act faster and do more so that the 70,000 tonnes of plastic waste and disposable tableware discarded each year can be eliminated. Other places have already gone way ahead of us and also, the supporting hardware required is relatively not much.

President, the last area I wish to speak about is security. As we can see, one major task of the Security Bureau this year is to amend the Immigration Ordinance. The relevant issues have been discussed in the meetings of the Panel on Security and are currently under deliberation in our relevant subcommittee. As I recall, during a recent meeting, one of our colleagues said that the SAR Government treated the torture claimants very inhumanely, giving them only $1,500 for accommodation and $1,500 for food but forbidding them to work in Hong Kong. While listening to him, I was a little stirred by his words. Yet, is it really the case?

The fact is that over the past three years, we have already spent some $3 billion to $4 billion on these torture claimants. And for this year alone, it has been estimated that $1.4 billion is needed for handling cases involving torture claimants. How many of them are genuine refugees who really need our help? Among the 10,000-odd applicants, genuine refugees account for less than 1%. Certainly, for those who are really subjected to persecution in their original places of residence, we need to provide them with assistance. However, as far as we understand, in actuality, there are some 10,000 people waiting for screening by a team of the Immigration Department ("ImmD"), and some of those who fail to meet the requirements upon screening lodge appeals. There are some 8,000 people whose appeals are pending handling.

So, how do they play the game? For example, when ImmD requires them to submit information and documents, they either submit nothing or keep submitting things; when ImmD makes interview appointments with them, they often request rescheduling unreasonably; when asked to do body examinations, they fail to do it accordingly, or simply disappear after undergoing examinations without submitting the examination reports. They employ the delaying tactics which some Members in this Council always use, and therefore, the handling of
each case now takes 26 weeks though it can be dealt with expeditiously. Some people may defend them, saying that the Government's failure to allocate more money to ImmD is the reason for its slow progress of work. Is this the case? Not at all. As I said just now, the Government has already spent some $3 billion to $4 billion on refugees. Has the Government really failed to allocate resources for it? ImmD has recruited more staff for the screening work. Put it in another way, will genuine refugees who face persecution employ the delaying tactics to prolong the time required for their applications? Absolutely not! They will definitely submit all the information and complete the body examinations as quickly as they can in order to secure the permission to stay in Hong Kong or go to other places sooner. Then, why would they play a waiting game for some 20 weeks? Secretary, I therefore hope that with the amendment of the Immigration Ordinance this year, we can put an end to the problem of "bogus refugees". Besides, I hope that the authorities will come up with more measures to tackle the situation. Apart from the existing measure which has proved to be effective, i.e. intercepting refugees at source, it should also consider some custodial measures, because, in brief, those "bogus refugees" come to Hong Kong for the purpose of working as illegal workers. If they are not allowed to go out, they will not be able to take up employment, and the problem can basically be resolved then.

The problem of "bogus refugees" commands my attention. The reason is not that we want to save money or to ill-treat this group of people, but that they have created some hidden security risks in our society. Government figures tell us that they were involved in over a thousand cases relating to drug trafficking, theft, illegal employment, possession of firearms and even triad-related crimes last year, and they scatter in various communities all over Hong Kong, such as Yau Tsim Mong, Yuen Long and some places in New Territories North. So, if the Government fails to solve the issue of refugees, it will have a great impact on law and order in Hong Kong. Besides, I wish to urge Members not to defend these "bogus refugees" anymore. If Members still insist on allowing them to stay and to work in Hong Kong, I wonder if you are helping wage earners in Hong Kong and the Hong Kong society, or doing disservice to them.

President, as I noted, the Police Force will gradually be equipped with body-worn video cameras ("BWVCs") in the future. However, I hope that the process can be expedited because BWVCs can, indeed, serve to calm down police officers, suspects or persons whom police officers confront. Thus, they offer protection to both the general public and police officers. In my opinion, it is too
late if we have to wait until after 2020 for each frontline police officer to be equipped with a BWVC. Considering that this piece of equipment has proved to be useful in some pilot programmes and that footage captured with BWVCs has become admissible evidence in court, I hope the Secretary can draw up a concrete timetable for providing each police officer with one BWVC.

To end with, I wish to discuss the issue about animal rights which I am personally concerned about. In the previous debate session, Secretary Prof Sophia CHAN mentioned that legislative amendments would be introduced to strengthen the message of caring for animals, in the hope of providing greater protection to animal rights. I absolutely support this move, but I wish to take this opportunity to bring up once again the issue which has long been discussed by us and many animal rights groups, i.e. how to address the issue of cruelty to animals. Of course, we will continue to request the creation of "animal police" and meanwhile, the Government states that "Animal Caring Community Ambassador Programme", a 2.0 version of the Animal Watch Scheme, is now in place. I hope that this programme can achieve remarkable results as it encourages those who care for animals to join in the efforts to prevent cruelty to animals and enables them to offer assistance when cases of cruelty to animals happen. So, for now, regarding this aspect, I will wait expectantly, hoping to hear from the Government that efforts made in this aspect have produced a desirable result and no more cases of cruelty to animals are left neglected. This is the second time that animal welfare is mentioned in the Policy Address after the reunification. I hope that in the next Policy Address, the Chief Executive will introduce more initiatives for the protection of animal rights.

President, I so submit.

MR POON SIU-PING (in Cantonese): President, after the delivery of the Policy Address, the focus of the entire community has been on Lantau Tomorrow, the mega reclamation project which costs $500 billion public money. Without a doubt, this proposal is a relatively easy way to obtain land. With the completion of infrastructure works in Hong Kong one after another, an even larger infrastructure project is going to provide more job opportunities in the construction industry. As a representative of the labour sector, I am duty-bound to support the Government's proposal.
The announcement of the Lantau Tomorrow plan has triggered heated discussion in the community, with many dissenting voices which are not pure political noise. Many people have some understandable worries. From a macro point of view, global warming causes a rise in sea level. How should we estimate the risk associated with reclamation? From a micro point of view, after the commissioning of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link ("XRL") and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, the hinterland of Hong Kong swells with the materialization of the "one-hour living circle" and we now have massive space for development. Some views hold that the Government should broaden its perspective further when considering Hong Kong's development.

Hong Kong is a small but densely populated city. How are we going to cope with population growth? In the speech I made last year on the Policy Address, I pointed out that the One-Way Permit Scheme, which to enables Mainland-HKSAR family reunion, has undergone multiple many changes since its inauguration in 1982, with more than 1.4 million people having settled in Hong Kong through the scheme. There have been sea changes in the circumstances under which the scheme was introduced more than three decades ago, necessitating a review both from the family reunion and the human resources development perspectives. The Government's Lantau Tomorrow provides a chance for the Special Administrative Region ("SAR") Government to raise with the Central Government the need to review this family reunion scheme.

President, $500 billion is an astronomical number to the majority of Hong Kong people. Despite the Government's clarification that the $500 billion will not be spent in one go for the Lantau Tomorrow plan as it will be a long-term expenditure, it is still not easy to dispel people's concern. I hope that the grand Lantau Tomorrow plan will not tear the community apart. Unlike XRL and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, this project falls entirely within the realm of our internal planning. How to plan the development of Lantau while minimizing its social repercussions will be a test of the wisdom of the SAR Government.

President, on transportation, the Policy Address puts forth several policies to alleviate congestion, including such measures as the re-distribution of traffic among the three cross-harbour tunnels and congestion charging. It is also proposed in the policy agenda that stakeholders will be consulted in the first half of 2019 with regard to the Electronic Road Pricing Pilot Scheme. I hope the Government will adhere to the principle of fairness when formulating fees for
various means of public transport and commercial vehicles in relation to the
policies above. The Secretary for Transport and Housing said earlier that a
detailed proposal on the re-distribution of traffic among the three cross-harbour
tunnels will be presented to the Legislative Council Panel on Transport later.
While traffic flow at the Western Harbour Crossing is said to be low relatively,
the volume of traffic is in fact rather heavy at present. Some professional
drivers relayed to me their worry that the traffic re-distribution measure might
result in a slight improvement in the traffic conditions at the Cross Harbour
Tunnel and the Eastern Harbour Crossing but a serious congestion at the Western
Harbour Crossing, which is counterproductive. Given the re-distribution of
traffic among the three cross-harbour tunnels involves legislative amendment, the
simulation model projections of certain figures may deviate a lot from the reality,
I hope the Government will put forward some pilot plans as to prove with facts
the effectiveness of the re-distribution of traffic among the three cross-harbour
tunnels.

President, the Policy Address has also put forth other transport policies,
such as increasing the provision of parking spaces for commercial vehicles. In
this regard, apart from inadequate supply of long-hour night parking spaces, trade
practitioners have expressed concern about issues such as the location of parking
spaces and the inadequate provision of loading/unloading areas. The Policy
Address has also proposed the phasing out of Euro IV diesel commercial
vehicles. While the phase-out of diesel vehicle is inevitable due to
environmental consideration, the Government must carefully consider the
ramifications of engine changes for professional drivers. The various
aforementioned transport policies will have a direct bearing on the sector, I hope
the authorities can carefully listen to practitioners' voices when rolling them out.

President, I so submit.

IR DR LO WAI-KWOK (in Cantonese): President, it is an indisputable fact that
Hong Kong's serious land shortage has significantly affected its economic
development and people's livelihood. Recently, I submitted my proposals on the
2018 Policy Address to the Chief Executive in my capacity as a Member of the
engineering sector in the Legislative Council and urged the SAR Government to
adopt a multi-pronged approach with greater courage and commitment in
formulating and implementing short-, medium- and long-term land reserve
planning covering various policy objectives, such as actively promoting
reclamation at suitable sites outside the Victoria Harbour, speeding up the
development of rock caverns and underground space, raising the plot ratio under specific conditions, revising land uses, expediting land resumption and redevelopment, taking forward various expansion plans concerning new development areas and new towns, flexibly adjusting land supply, expediting the actualization of increasing housing supply, and fostering industries' development.

The Policy Address announces the Lantau Tomorrow Vision and the intention to expeditiously commence studies on undertaking reclamation in phases in the waters near Kau Yi Chau and Hei Ling Chau for the purpose of building several artificial islands totalling around 1 700 hectares, so as to construct 260 000 to 400 000 residential units to accommodate 700 000 to 1 100 000 people, with public housing units accounting for 70% of the units. I, together with Members of the Business and Professionals Alliance for Hong Kong ("BPA"), think that the SAR Government's response to strong social demands and its determination to develop land with greater efforts merit our approval and recognition.

Regrettably, some people in the community have demonized the Lantau Tomorrow Vision. For instance, the speeches of several non-establishment Members in moving their amendments to the Motion of Thanks today were full of alarmist words. Some examples are that the spending of as much as $1,000 billion may result in a depletion of the public coffers, and the plan will damage the ecological environment. Not only have they requested the Chief Executive to shelve or withdraw the Lantau Tomorrow Plan, but they have also asked the Government to undertake that it will not give any further thoughts to the idea of building any artificial island through reclamation before optimizing all land resources in Hong Kong. They have sought to overturn the Lantau Tomorrow Plan no matter what.

President, Hong Kong's natural landscape is made up of mountains and a small area of flat land. Since its inception, land has been created for development through flattening of mountains and reclamation. The bustling districts today, including Central, Wan Chai, Causeway Bay, Tsim Sha Tsui, Yau Ma Tei, Mong Kok, Hung Hom and Kwun Tong, and also such new towns as Sha Tin, Tai Po, Tsuen Wan, Kwai Chung, Tuen Mun, Tseung Kwan O and Tung Chung are all developed on land created through flattening of mountains and reclamation. But the SAR Government has slowed down the progress of land development through reclamation after inauguration, thus resulting in the predicament marked by a serious land shortage today.
Over 4,000 hectares of land have been created through reclamation in Hong Kong since its inception. During the period from late 1989 when the then Governor David WILSON announced the Rose Garden Project to the commissioning of the new airport in Chap Lap Kok on 6 July 1998, over 1,200 hectares of land were created through reclamation, and this process spanning merely nine years even saw the smooth completion of the construction of the airport and related infrastructure facilities, including the Tsing Ma Bridge and the Airport Express. During the 15 years between 1985 and 2000, around 3,000 hectares of land were created through reclamation in Hong Kong. This shows that reclamation is nothing new to Hong Kong, and Hong Kong already has the experience of undertaking reclamation of the scale required of the Lantau Tomorrow Plan.

Previous experience can serve as future reference. Reclamation is the foundation of Hong Kong's prosperity today; and reclamation is the foundation of a brighter future for Hong Kong. The creation of a vast area of land comparable in size to that of the entire Hong Kong International Airport with the future third runway for providing many public and private residential units, community facilities and employment opportunities and also for developing a third core business district will be favourable to Hong Kong's development into an international innovation and technology centre. This will likewise do much help to Hong Kong's development and those who want to resolve their housing problems.

At present, the mere intention of the SAR Government to initiate studies on the Lantau Tomorrow Vision has even met with opposition. Some have voiced objection to "pouring $1,000 billion into the sea" as they call it. I wonder how they come up with this figure. The reclamation expenditure on creating 650 hectares of land for constructing a third airport runway accounts for 40% of the total expenditure of $140 billion, that is around $60 billion. The recently commenced Tung Chung reclamation project for creating some 100 hectares of land has incurred a works cost of around $10 billion. The works costs of reclamation projects vary from one location to another due to various factors such as the conditions, depth and geology of the seabed, and a cost estimate must be made on the basis of preliminary study findings. But it is definitely not the figure asserted by those opposing it.
Some opponents argue that the Lantau Tomorrow Vision will exhaust the Government's reserves. This cannot stand the test of reason either. As a plan spanning the next two or three decades, the Lantau Tomorrow Vision will be taken forward progressively in phases, and we may explore various ways for project financing. BPA has proposed that the Government should issue reclamation bonds as a means of raising funds for meeting the expenses on reclamation and related infrastructure works, and redeem the bonds with its land sale revenue after reclamation, so as to provide people with an additional and more stable investment tool. I believe this can also help to obtain people's support for the Lantau Tomorrow Vision.

President, in my view, a greater problem is that opponents of the Lantau Tomorrow Vision have very often failed to take the whole picture in view and blatantly exaggerated the estimated cost of the reclamation project, in total disregard for the various economic and social benefits that the plan can bring about.

President, Hong Kong has all along taken pride in its low tax rates. At present, the standard rate of the salaries tax merely stands at 15%, and the profits tax rate is capped at 16.5%, the lowest level among advanced regions. This has not only greatly alleviated people's tax burden but also cultivated a satisfactory and competitive business environment in Hong Kong, one which has induced overseas and Mainland enterprises to develop business in Hong Kong and fostered Hong Kong's economic development. All this has in turn enabled Hong Kong to maintain its low tax rates and afford its substantial social expenditures. And, reclaimed land is an important source of increasing the Government's income. Over all these years, Hong Kong has sought to develop land through reclamation. So far, 7,027 hectares of land have been created, and this accounts for 26% of some 26,500 hectares of developed areas. Revenue from reclaimed land constitutes significant fiscal contributions. Statistics show that in 2017-2018, Hong Kong's land sale revenue amounted to as much as $163.6 billion, representing 26.7% of the Government's income. From this, we can see that without the substantial revenue from continued land development and the ensuing land sale, Hong Kong simply cannot sustain its low tax regime, and the various social welfare benefits will lack sufficient resource support. By that time, middle-class people will definitely bear the brunt of a heavier tax burden.
On the precious waterfront sites along the coast of the artificial islands to be created by reclamation under the Lantau Tomorrow Plan, a square foot of land will certainly be worth an inch of gold. At the same time, with the development of a third core business district on those artificial islands in Hong Kong, the nearby Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and also the increasingly sophisticated ancillary transport facilities, some experts have given a preliminary estimate that an income of over $1,000 billion can be generated for the public coffers if computation is done based on the plan's provision of a floor area of as much as 153 million sq ft at a very conservative price in the range of $6,000 and $8,000 per square foot on the Lantau East artificial island. Therefore, the Lantau Tomorrow plan put forth by the Government will not lead to any fiscal crisis, and it may even generate a substantial income. Besides, the tangible and intangible social benefits mentioned above will also be favourable to the general public.

In my opinion, opponents may be over-worried in saying that the reclamation project will jeopardize the ecological environment. Various environmental technologies have been developed to mitigate the environmental impacts caused by reclamation works these days. One example is the third airport runway, which requires the creation of around 650 hectares of land through reclamation. In order to minimize its environmental impact, the Airport Authority Hong Kong has adopted the deep cement mixing method, a method widely applied in various places of the world which can prevent the release of mud from the seabed into the water. With technological advancement, various sophisticated environmental technologies have been developed for reclamation today. Besides, the authorities will certainly factor in the challenges presented by extreme weather to reclamation while also enhancing the defensive measures for coping with weather changes through works design and technologies. Therefore, I will say that it is not technical difficulties that various social sectors must resolve at present. Instead, all depends on our determination and resolution to tackle the land supply predicament that has come to hinder Hong Kong's development over all these years.

President, large-scale land development very often spans over 10 years, and the formulation of comprehensive planning for long-term infrastructural development takes even a longer time. In the SAR Government's projection, even if it commences studies and design very shortly, the first phase of the reclamation project under the Lantau Tomorrow Vision can only be initiated in 2025, and the first batch of residential units can only be offered for people's occupation around 2030. Many people in the community have urged the
authorities to initiate the plan as soon as possible. On 6 November, 38 economics scholars mainly from the eight tertiary institutions in Hong Kong issued a joint statement pointing out with justifications that the reclamation project was not only an affordable proposal, but it was also a desirable social investment. At the same time, they also criticized many assertions about the Lantau Tomorrow plan in the community, saying that they were marked by a "position first" attitude and emotional outbursts while dismissing them as a mere populist political manoeuvre with the aim of inciting public sentiments. It can be said that they have hit the nail on the head. Therefore, BPA hopes that the SAR Government can proceed with the matter decisively, explain the details of the reclamation plan as soon as possible, and present to the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council its funding request concerning a preliminary feasibility study on the reclamation project, so as to speed up the pace of reclamation as a means of resolving the dire land and housing supply problems, and in turn enable more people to live and work in contentment as early as possible.

President, the engineering sector and I are also concerned about another important issue, namely the materialization of new railway projects in Hong Kong and the overall long-term planning for transport infrastructural facilities. The Railway Development Strategy 2014 announced by the Government in 2014 proposed to complete seven new railway projects within the planning period until 2031. But so far, it has not announced any specific proposals on the seven railway projects and the timetable for their actualization. Therefore, people have to continue waiting, and the engineers for railway construction are worried that they will be unable to maintain their subsistence if they get out of work.

At the same time, should the Government commence the Fourth Comprehensive Transport Study as soon as possible, so as to cope with the demands for cross-boundary transport networks and support facilities necessitated by the Development Plan for a City Cluster in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Bay Area? At the first Council meeting in this legislative session, I put an oral question to the authorities about the aforesaid issue. According to the reply given by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL") has presented its proposals on implementing the Tuen Mun South Extension, the Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station), the East Kowloon Line, the Tung Chung West Extension (and Tung Chung East Station) and North Island Line. The authorities are requesting MTRCL to provide supplementary details on the relevant proposals. At the same time, due to tight housing supply and the potential housing supply that may be generated by railway development, the
Government is reviewing the proposals on the Tuen Mun South Extension and Northern Link (and Kwu Tung Station) and will strive to consult the public as soon as possible.

I believe the engineering sector strongly hopes that the relevant parties will pick up the pace and pay heed to the pressing demand for improving mass transport systems in the local community. Nevertheless, I am glad to hear that the authorities will take forward the Strategic Studies on Railways and Major Roads beyond 2030 based on the overall land planning laid down in the study on "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030" now in progress and include the relevant planning studies on the Lantau Tomorrow Vision and the proposed strategic transport corridors in the study.

President, on the development of a safe city, the recent successive lift accidents in Hong Kong involving casualties have aroused widespread public concern about potential lift safety hazards. I have invited industry practitioners and officials to meet with BPA Members many times, and we have strongly urged the authorities to remove this potential "bomb" from the community as soon as possible. BPA has even proposed that the Government should allocate funding for setting up a dedicated fund for conducting a lift safety enhancement campaign and providing needy owners' corporations and also property owners with partial subsidies for lift repair, modernization or replacement. I am glad to hear the Government's announcement of introducing a $2.5 billion Lift Modernisation Subsidy Scheme. I hope the authorities can expeditiously activate the scheme and provide engineering and legal knowledge support to property owners in need, while also allocating additional resources for the purpose of training up skilled workers and encouraging more young people to join this trade.

With these remarks, President, I support the Motion of Thanks proposed by Ms Starry LEE.

MR TONY TSE (in Cantonese): President, the Chief Executive put forward Lantau Tomorrow Vision in her Policy Address, proposing a land reclamation project for the construction of artificial islands with a total area of about 1 700 hectares near Kau Yi Chau and Hei Ling Chau in the Central Waters. It is estimated that the islands will be able to provide as many as 400 000 residential units, accommodating a population of up to 1.1 million. At the same time, they will provide about 40 million sq ft of floor area for office and commercial uses.
Today, Hong Kong is facing acute land and housing shortage problems. Many people are living in subdivided units. The waiting time for public rental housing units gets longer and longer. Property prices have risen to a level even beyond the affordability of middle-class professionals. The chance of successfully applying for a Home Ownership Scheme flat is much lower than that of winning the Mark Six. The aforesaid plan is a response to the aspirations of many people, Legislative Council Members ought to give their support to it.

However, in the absence of any substantive statistics and objective studies, some Members of the opposition camp still put up various specious and fallacious arguments against this proposal for increasing long-term housing and land supply, and oppose the allocation of funds for the relevant planning study.

One of their arguments is that the Chief Executive has pre-empted the Task Force on Land Supply by announcing the project concerned in the Policy Address as the latter has not yet submitted its final report. They consider it irresponsible and a violation of due process. Actually, East Lantau reclamation was the brainchild of the British Hong Kong Government before the reunification with conceptual and feasibility studies conducted and, after the reunification, the SAR Government has continued working on it as well. Now that the Government of the new term plans to conduct a more thorough, in-depth, objective, independent and professional planning study, the opposition camp raises objections and even threatens the use of filibuster tactics to block the funding application concerning the relevant study, in an attempt to force the shelving of the project concerned by forestalling the study while the public are kept in the dark. This is exactly an irresponsible move and a violation of due process.

Another argument is that the reclamation project will drain the coffers and even make the SAR Government bankrupt. As I pointed out earlier, the Hong Kong Government is sitting on fiscal reserves of some $1,100 billion. At present, the annual government expenditure exceeds $500 billion, with around $120 billion being spent on non-recurrent items such as infrastructures. The construction of artificial islands will take many years to complete and its costs will be spread over many years as well, so there will not be any serious implications for the Government's finances.

As I recall, the British Hong Kong colonial Government back then used $160 billion to launch the 10 core projects of the Rose Garden Project. The annual government expenditure only stood at $40 billion to $50 billion approximately. On the basis of this ratio, the relevant expenditure then was
much higher than that of the present one proposed by the SAR Government, and the size of the land reclaimed for the whole Rose Garden Project was 2,200 hectares, much larger than that for Lantau Tomorrow. In the end, the Rose Garden Project did not lead Hong Kong into "a car crash with fatalities". If the Chek Lap Kok Airport, the Western Harbour Crossing, and the Lantau Link were not built because of the worries over huge expenditure, what would the situation in Hong Kong be like today?

For those who oppose Lantau Tomorrow on financial grounds, will they ask the Hong Kong Government not to abolish the offsetting arrangement under the Mandatory Provident Fund ("MPF") System, and not to implement universal retirement protection? Actually, these proposals not only involve a greater amount of public money, but also generate no income at all.

Speaking of income, as I mentioned in my Facebook post before, the construction of artificial islands can create large amounts of land for private residential and commercial development and a conservative estimate is that it will bring to public coffers over $600 billion of proceeds from land sale. Afterwards, some members of the opposition camp questioned whether I had made an overestimation and the validity of some of my assumptions. In fact, before any detailed planning study is conducted by the Government, any relevant data is merely based on assumptions, and all I wish is to remind people that land reclamation can generate revenue. Recently, some economists and members of the sector have made estimations of the amount of proceeds from land sale under Lantau Tomorrow respectively. The amounts range from $800 billion to over $1,000 billion. This shows that my assumptions are conservative and reliable.

Moreover, some members of the opposition camp also links Lantau Tomorrow to the issue of new arrivals from the Mainland in an attempt to create social division. I also stated on the Internet that even if the population in Hong Kong is frozen at the current figure of 7.4 million, to increase the average living space per person by 50 sq ft (including ancillary facilities), we still need an additional 2,000 hectares of land.

In Hong Kong, the average living space per person is just 161 sq ft, which is less than half that of Singapore. Not long ago, Singapore has even set down a requirement that the average size of new private housing flats should be 900-odd sq ft at least. Comparing with Hong Kong, Singapore has a much smaller area, so how can it get so much land? The solution is nothing else but reclamation.
Yet, the most ridiculous point advanced by the opposition camp to oppose the project is the contention that land reclamation is tantamount to supporting the high land price policy, transferring benefits to property developers, and continuing the collusion between the Government and the business sector, and real estate hegemony. It is apparent enough that failure to create land for constructing buildings will in the prices of land and property due to the shortage of supply, benefiting those who possess more properties and land the most. Nonetheless, the opposition camp now refuses to argue with reasons, ignoring the relationship between supply and demand and scientific data. Instead, they blindly oppose forming land for housing construction by reclamation. One just cannot help wondering if they are actually the most loyal supporters of real estate hegemony and the high land price policy.

So, how large should the reclamation area for the artificial islands be? Is reclaiming an area of 1,000 hectares sufficient? Or should it be 2,000 hectares or more? For the reclaimed land, how much should be allotted for residential use and how much for building transport infrastructures, hospitals, schools and community facilities? What percentage should commercial and industrial sites take up? How high should the plot ratio be? Apart from shopping malls and offices, should there also be logistics and exhibition facilities? How much will be required for constructing transport facilities such as cross-harbour bridges and railway in one go? How high should the seawall be built in order to withstand super typhoons? How should the relevant plan for environmental protection and ecology conservation be worked out? While all these are open for discussion, there must be independent, professional, objective and in-depth planning and studies so that relevant data, information and recommendations can be obtained for rational discussion and decision. Wild speculations and quarrels are not going to resolve these issues.

Further, there is also an argument comparing Lantau Tomorrow to distant water that cannot put out a nearby fire, and expressing criticism against the Policy Address that it only has the long-term vision of land reclamation but lacks short- and medium-term land and housing initiatives. If we are unwilling to bring in distant water, naturally we will never have any water to put out the fire and all of us will be burned to death. While the Government wants to kindle the flame of hope for Hong Kong people, the opposition camp wants to burn away their hope. Therefore, I urge the Government to really after discussions, and seek funding approval from the Legislative Council as soon as possible for conducting the relevant planning study instead of bowing to unreasonable criticisms and
accusations, so as to enable us to get more evidence and data for the discussion about whether we should support the reclamation proposal and the scale of Lantau Tomorrow.

Regarding short- and medium-term measures for increasing land and housing supply, the Policy Address proposed expediting the development of brownfield sites; introducing the Land Sharing Pilot Scheme to better utilize private agricultural land; building more varieties of transitional housing; encouraging the redevelopment of buildings under the Civil Servants' Co-operative Building Society Scheme; launching a new round of policy of revitalizing industrial buildings; streamlining the process of development approval for various departments, etc. For all these measures, I have expressed my views before. Now, given the time constraint, I will only focus my response on some of them.

The Policy Address proposed to allow wholesale conversion of industrial buildings for transitional housing. The Buildings Department has recently issued new guidelines, relaxing some of the requirements for transitional housing such as natural lighting and air ventilation. These are what I have always advocated, but it seems that the time limit of five years as set down for the relevant conversion scheme is too short and this may affect the industrial building owners' intention to participate in the scheme.

Perhaps, the Government worries that it will no longer be regarded as transitional housing if the time limit is too long. Actually, what we refer to as transitional housing is a place which, we hope, the dwellers only stay temporarily. After some time, they will be allocated a public housing unit or will even be able to buy a flat. That said, the transitional housing can exist for a longer period. When land and housing problem in Hong Kong is completely solved, there will be no more demand for transitional housing and it will thus vanish as a matter of course.

As for streamlining and expediting the process of development approval, I hope the Government will really take action once a decision is made and have it implemented by every frontline approving officers. Many members of the sector have relayed to me that even if the amendments made to the building plans are simple ones, they are still being handled very slowly by officers of some departments. This is bureaucracy, i.e. delaying whenever possible. When
multiple departments are involved, they will even try to pass the buck to each other and mind only their own business, thus slowing down land and housing supply in Hong Kong.

When it comes to helping the middle class and the professionals to become home owners, the Policy Address appears to have done nothing at all. My previous proposal of relaunching the Sandwich Class Housing Scheme has not been accepted. I hope the Government will review the existing subsidized housing schemes in a timely manner, including the income and asset limits, as well as the selling prices and quality of the buildings. There should also be a clearer classification of different subsidy targets in order to create a housing ladder which has different levels. At the same time, I hope the Government will consider my suggestion of devising a queuing system for subsidized sale flats, a system similar to the Waiting List for public rental housing. Under this system, applicants who have been unsuccessful for multiple times will have a better chance of having their lots drawn, unlike lottery which starts afresh each time. In this way, people concerned will see the hope of achieving home ownership.

President, next, I wish to talk about transport, infrastructure, environmental protection and city management. The Policy Address put forward a proposal of redistributing the traffic among the three tunnels. As I have pointed out in the newspaper and during the Chief Executive's Question and Answer Session, the proposal is of no help at all to solving the present problem of traffic congestion at the harbour crossings. I am not going to repeat myself here.

Nevertheless, I must reiterate one point which has been mentioned from the previous term of the Legislative Council until now: the Fourth Comprehensive Transport Study should be conducted as soon as possible. This time round, not only should the public transport and railway transport be studied, but private cars, coaches, goods vehicles, commercial vehicles, parking spaces, and the need of building road facilities should also be studied. What is more, the study should cover the Hong Kong Section of the Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge which have just been commissioned, so as to fit in with the overall transport and development planning of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

Upon the commissioning of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, various problems have emerged, including inadequate shuttle bus service, insufficient parking spaces for coaches, and overcrowding at existing attractions. Since
some connecting roads and tunnels are still under construction, it is impossible to
divert the flow of tens of thousands of visitors travelling to Hong Kong via the
bridge every day and, in the end, all of them crowded in Tung Chung, seriously
affecting the daily life of local residents. These problems all stem from the
Government's failure to properly conduct a study on the relevant transport
planning. While constructing the bridge, it has paid too much attention to the
technical issues of the project; when building the roads, it has merely considered
traffic safety and speed. It has never carefully considered providing
comprehensive supporting facilities for road users. Visitors travelling to Hong
Kong, however, need to eat, shop, go to the toilet and tour around.

Infrastructural development should base on people's need rather than purely
focusing on the technicalities and time of the construction work. When planning
and designing various infrastructural developments in the future, the Government
must make good use of different professional sectors and their expertise,
including the functional constituency of architectural, surveying, planning and
landscape which I represent for sure. Infrastructural projects should not be
made to serve just one single function. I hope the Government will
expeditiously improve and increase the relevant supporting facilities, so as to act
as a genial host to visitors using the bridge and to minimize the impact on Hong
Kong residents. Otherwise, it may trigger a new round of "liberation" protests.

The Policy Address suggested that the project management of public works
should be enhanced to strictly control the costs of works and avoid costs
overruns. I myself and my sector strongly support the relevant principle. One
of the good examples is the proposed construction of an elevated footbridge in
Yuen Long at a cost of $1.7 billion. However, the Government should not
completely sacrifice aesthetic and unique architectural designs for a lower
construction cost, just like the Artist Square Bridge of the West Kowloon Cultural
District. Also, when inviting tenders, the Government should refrain from
overemphasizing the principle of "lowest bid wins" and must take account of the
need for both quality of works and training of local talents at the same time.

I am very glad to hear the Acting Financial Secretary stating on Wednesday
that the existing procurement regime is currently under review and that more
emphasis will be put on innovations so as to provide small and medium
enterprises with more opportunities. It has also been announced that the revised
procurement regime will be implemented from April next year. Once again, I
wish to state that I welcome such move.
This year, the issue of environmental protection has not been discussed at length in the Policy Address, but the proposal of waste charging announced by the Secretary earlier has attracted extensive discussion. As the chairperson of the Property Management Services Authority, I am particularly concerned about the implementation details of waste charging at private housing estates. I was asked by many of those working in the property management industry: Should the garbage be separated in bags before it can be discarded? In order to prevent people from littering, should the housing estates install CCTV in all common areas? Should they employ more staff members for monitoring the CCTV footage? What can they do if anyone is found to have violated the law? Should they call the Environmental Protection Department to enforce the law whenever this happens? Should they keep the garbage for the time being and allow it to stink in order to retain it as an exhibit? They are very worried and have a lot of questions. I hope the authorities can strengthen communication with them and implement the initiative only after there has been proper consultation and careful consideration with the relevant supporting measures readily available. If not, it may lead to utter chaos.

Even when various measures for waste reduction at source, for example, waste charging, are implemented, Hong Kong still needs to have sufficient capacity to deal with waste disposal so as to avoid "being surrounded by a deluge of garbage". As estimated, the existing landfills will soon be saturated one after another. The construction of the incinerator in Shek Kwu Chau will only be completed a few years later. Only one of the five Organic Resources Recovery Centres has been completed and funding application for the second one has just begun. Secretary, the pace of work is really too slow. The authorities should proceed once a decision is made and should speed things up.

Finally, regarding the use of innovation and technology to enhance urban planning and management, the governments of many other countries have already launched Common Spatial Data Infrastructure for a long period of time and set up dedicated departments with designated officers to promote its application. In contrast, Hong Kong has been relatively slow in this area. By whom is the relevant policy decided? Do the relevant departments and government officials have sufficient power to decide and proceed upon discussions?

With these remarks, President, I oppose the various amendments proposed by Members.
MR WONG KWOK-KIN (in Cantonese): President, I speak in support of the Motion of Thanks for the Policy Address. I think this is a visionary and far-sighted Policy Address, and I particularly appreciate the courage and commitment shown in the Policy Address. As everyone knows, proposing a reclamation policy is an arduous and thankless task. It will not only face the opposition of environmentalists and social activists, the smearing and attacks of opposition parties, but also offend the powerful business conglomerates with vested land interests. Moreover, the reclamation project will span more than 10 or 20 years, and its fruits will not be enjoyed until the next or even the next two governments. Therefore, it requires considerable commitment and audacity to propose the Lantau Tomorrow project.

We agree that there are many outstanding problems in our society. Some major social issues need to be resolved as soon as possible. Most of the social problems are related to the shortage of land in Hong Kong, such as housing problem. According to government statistics, the total number of public housing applications is now approaching 270 000. The average waiting time is 5.3 years. But this is only the Government's official data. Based on the numerous complaints and requests for assistance that I have received, many applicants have been waiting for seven years. The number of households living in subdivided units with poor living conditions has exceeded 90 000, and the number of residents involved is about 210 000.

Besides, many overcrowded households living in PRH are waiting for splitting of tenancies. There are also many tenants who live in dilapidated old housing estates awaiting redevelopment. They also hope that their estates will be redeveloped as soon as possible in order to improve their living condition. Some young families who do not have the financial means yet to buy their "first-time property" are also waiting for the Government to open up land for housing construction to help them relieve their problems. Let's just say in the area of traffic congestion improvement measures, we also need land to provide transport infrastructure and expand the road network to alleviate the existing traffic conditions. Other aspects such as economic development, medical care, elderly services and community facilities, all necessitate a large amount of land.

In order to solve the core problem of land shortage in Hong Kong, the Policy Address has proposed to create land through reclamation. Reclamation can be considered as one of the feasible directions. However, since the announcement of the Lantau Tomorrow Vision, there have been many different
voices in the community. Certainly, there are many goodwill concerns due to lack of understanding. Yet there are also quite a lot of misled opposition voices and emotional feedbacks of "oppose for the sake of opposition", and even sensational stories of populism intended to incite public sentiment. Of course, it cannot be ruled out that stakeholders with vested interests are manipulating everything behind the scene.

In fact, it is not uncommon to carry out reclamation in Hong Kong. Geologically, Hong Kong is mountainous with little flat land. Land suitable for development is limited. The Government has always been supplying land through reclamation for community development. Hong Kong began its first formal reclamation works in 1852. As of 2016, about 70 sq km, i.e. about 7,000 hectares of land, was created through reclamation. It accounts for about one quarter of the developed area in Hong Kong.

Today, nearly 30% of Hong Kong's population live on reclaimed land; and 70% of Hong Kong's commercial activities are conducted on reclaimed land. There are nine new towns in Hong Kong, and land reclamation was carried out in six of them to support development. According to statistics, there are 330 hectares of reclaimed land in Tuen Mun; 380 hectares in Tai Po; 140 hectares in Tsuen Wan; 680 hectares in Tseung Kwan O; 128 hectares in Tung Chung; over 1,000 hectares in Sha Tin. Even the Chek Lap Kok Airport that Hong Kong people take pride in was also built on an artificial island of 1,248 hectares through reclamation. From this, we can tell that it is Hong Kong's normal practice to create land through reclamation to cater for social needs. At present, some people demonize the reclamation policy for their political agenda and personal interests. They smear the Lantau Tomorrow plan and put forward all kinds of absurd grounds of objection in an attempt to fool people. Their claims are utterly untenable.

I will try to list their grounds of objection as follows: First, reclamation is pouring money into the sea. Let us not forget that one quarter of Hong Kong's developed land is obtained through reclamation. Nearly 30% of our population are living on it and 70% of our commercial activities are conducted there. All these achievements are made by our predecessors through pouring money into the sea. Even the Legislative Council Complex where Honourable Members are bragging was also built on land obtained by means of pouring money into the sea.
In fact, real examples of pouring money into the sea do exist. In 2011, there was a grandma who claimed to be a volunteer of the Civic Party. She was represented by lawyer Alan WONG Hok-ming, Executive Member of the Civic Party, to apply for judicial review on the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge ("HZMB") project. As a result, the bridge project was delayed for one year and the project cost has increased by $6.5 billion. The $6.5 billion was really money poured into the sea, a total waste of resources. The Civic Party still owes Hong Kong people a justification. Recently, the Civic Party has announced the results of a poll, quoting the number of people who oppose the Lantau Tomorrow plan. According to the track record of the Civic Party, they take an opposing stance towards every single infrastructure project, such as the Express Rail Link ("XRL") project and the HZMB project. How credible and convincing are the opinion polls they have made?

The second ground of objection is that the Lantau Tomorrow project will drain Hong Kong's fiscal reserves. Fabrication cannot stand the test of verification. Although I am not an expert, I can do simple mathematics. According to experts' estimates, the total cost of the Lantau Tomorrow project is about $500 billion. If the works are spread over more than 20 years, the annual cost will be only tens of billions. With Hong Kong's current fiscal reserves of over $1 trillion, and a total reserve of more than $4 trillion when various reserve funds are included, it is more than enough to meet the costs of reclamation. Not to mention the fact that the land obtained from reclamation can be sold to recover the costs. Reclamation is the solution to the core problem of land shortage in Hong Kong, its social benefits alone are more than the worth of the money spent.

The third ground of objection is that the artificial island cannot withstand a serious natural disaster. This even needs no further elaboration. Just look at the artificial island where the Chek Lap Kok Airport lies and the two small artificial islands of HZMB. They are safe and sound even after the onslaught of the two super typhoons "Hato" and "Mangkhut". This is the best proof.

The fourth ground of objection is that the privately-owned farmlands and brownfields in the New Territories should be resumed for development first rather than rushing with the reclamation plan. This is a red herring that attempts to mislead the public. In proposing the Lantau Tomorrow project, the Government has never indicated that the Lantau Tomorrow reclamation plan will be used to replace farmlands and brownfields in the New Territories for
development. In fact, paragraphs 66 to 70 of the Policy Address has indeed talked about the development of brownfields and the use of rural farmlands in the hands of private developers.

As we all know, in order to meet the demand for land in Hong Kong, there must be short-, medium- and long-term measures. Reclamation is a relatively long-term measure. In the short and medium term, the farmlands and brownfields of the New Territories need to be used. Even the Fanling Golf Course site should be considered for emergency use. While using brownfields as an excuse to oppose the Lantau Tomorrow reclamation project, the opposition is just playing the trick of substituting concepts and misleading the public. Many experts have already pointed out that the cost, time and social costs of resuming and developing farmlands and brownfields in the New Territories will not be lower than reclamation, it could even be higher.

President, let us not forget the North East New Territories New Development Areas Planning which was launched in 2008. It was then jointly opposed by opposition politicians and some social activists. They proposed to retain the operations on the brownfields and supported the "no relocation, no clearance" demand of villagers in the northeast. As a result, the Government has encountered great difficulties in the land resumption work. Ten years have lapsed and land resumption work is still pending, let alone housing construction and development. Since opposition lawmakers oppose the Lantau Tomorrow project now, so they ask the Government to take back these farmlands and brownfields in the hands of private developers for development first. Are they fooling the public by treating them as people with memory loss; or because they now recognize their past mistakes and no longer support the "no relocation, no clearance" stance? Opposition Members, you owe us an explanation.

The fifth ground of objection is that the 1700 hectares of reclamation area proposed by the Lantau Tomorrow project is too ambitious. The Lantau Tomorrow project is only a long-term goal. The specific development and reclamation projects will be implemented in phases. The project may also span over 10 to 20 years. I believe that in each project phase, the Government will adjust the reclamation scale based on the objective circumstances and social conditions at the time, such as economic environments, population changes, and land demand. Besides, the Government has not yet launched a comprehensive
preliminary study of the project. At the present moment, it is of no practical significance to argue whether reclamation of 1 700 hectares of land is too ambitious or not.

There are also other more ridiculous verbal attacks on the Lantau Tomorrow project. For example, Dr KWOK Ka-ki has speculated that the Lantau Tomorrow project is intended to facilitate some Mainland cities to make money by selling sea sand, or enable some Mainland engineering companies to bid for this Hong Kong project. If we can arbitrarily make allegation against something on the basis of speculation, can we presume that some opposition Members have secretly received money from real estate consortia to voice strong opposition to the reclamation project? Of course, I will not make that presumption because what we say is fact-based.

President, the Lantau Tomorrow project is proposed in response to the strong demand for land in Hong Kong. Land shortage has become a major challenge in the Hong Kong community. Some people put the blame on the continuous inflow of new immigrants from the Mainland, saying that they have overloaded local housing supply. Therefore, as long as the one-way permit quota is drastically reduced, the problem can be resolved without reclamation. However, this is actually another fabrication which cannot stand the test of verification. Recently, more than 30 academics have jointly pointed out that the 21 years after reunification is a period of slowest population growth in Hong Kong's record. The average annual growth rate is only 0.6%, which is less than 1%. Hong Kong's population growth is slow, but the decline in land supply is even greater.

From 1995 to 2004, newly developed land area in Hong Kong added up to 7 800 hectares. Yet from 2005 to 2014, only 1 100 hectares of land were made. During the period from 2000 to 2015, land obtained through reclamation in Hong Kong was only about 690 hectares which were mainly used to meet infrastructure-related needs. It can be seen that the main reason for the shortage of land and housing is the acute shortage of supply, not excess increase in population. If someone puts the blame of land problem in Hong Kong on new immigrants, making them the scapegoats, it is an overt political act intended to incite ethnic tensions and tear apart society. That is dirty and despicable behaviour!
Contrary to the stagnant land development policy in Hong Kong in recent years, our neighbouring regions and cities like Singapore, Macao, Shenzhen have been actively developing economy, industries and housing through land reclamation. Both Singapore and Macao are short of land and their problem of insufficient land supply is mainly solved through land reclamation. Singapore has always stuck to reclamation, and its land area has hitherto increased by 24%, from 580 sq km to 718 sq km, about 13 800 hectares. The land area of Macao has increased by 160% through reclamation, which is about 1 900 hectares. In the past decade, Shenzhen has created more than 5 000 hectares of land through reclamation. From this, it can be seen that land reclamation is an important means for cities to create land and promote development.

President, we support the Lantau Tomorrow Vision stated in the Policy Address so that sufficient land can be created through reclamation for the development of Hong Kong in the next 20 to 30 years. We urge the Government to conduct cautious and thorough study on the project, fully disclose and explain relevant information to the public to convince them to support the plan. We also support the Government to launch short-term and medium-term land development initiatives as soon as possible, develop brownfield sites and introduce the Land Sharing Pilot Scheme, so as to take a multi-pronged approach to solve the problem of land shortage in Hong Kong.

President, according to my many years of experience in the political arena, many officials of the SAR Government often back down in the face of difficulties and easily "U-turn" in front of obstacles, lacking in perseverance and resilience. Nonetheless, this reclamation project is of great importance. I hope that the relevant government officials can stand firm on this righteous cause and make determined efforts to solve this core problem that has long plagued Hong Kong.

President, I so submit.

MR FRANKIE YICK (in Cantonese): President, this debate session is about land, transport and environment, and I would like to discuss the land problem first.

In the face of keen demand for housing from the public, the Liberal Party does not object to the Government's proposal of integrating scattered brownfield sites, and even developing these sites. However, I have to reiterate that the operations on brownfield sites must mostly support the development of other
industries. For instance, container depots are for supporting harbour operation, vehicle repairs are for supporting the transport industry, while heavy machinery is for supporting the construction industry. It is obvious that the operations on brownfield sites are indispensable. Therefore, the Government must accommodate the existing operators on brownfield sites. In accommodating them, I do not only refer to compensation, as they hope that the Government can look for alternative sites for them to continue their operations. Although the Government is studying the accommodation of some operators on brownfield sites in multi-storey buildings, some operations, for example, the storage of heavy machinery and pre-fabricated parts for construction usage, container depots and the like, can hardly be moved upstairs. The Government thus has to assist them in finding alternative sites.

We should bear in mind that the emergence of economic activities on brownfield sites is mainly due to their low rental prices. Therefore, if the Government really builds multi-storey buildings to accommodate the operations on brownfield sites, the rental prices must be affordable to the operators. The Government should take the industrial development policies into consideration when deciding on the rental level. If alternative sites are rented to operators operating on brownfield sites in future on short-term leases, the rental period must be longer so as to attract long-term investment by operators. Instead of awarding tenancy to the highest bidder, the Government should consider the operators' experience and contributions to economic development. In case re-tendering is needed, the Government should impose a fee for transfer, so that the investment made by the previous operator in basic infrastructure construction, such as land formation, electricity supply system and heavy operational machinery will not come to naught.

The Policy Address mentions re-launching the revitalization scheme for industrial buildings, and even allowing conversion of the whole industrial building into transitional housing. I wish to point out that the small and medium enterprises ("SMEs") of the freight logistics sector were the victims of the past revitalization scheme for industrial buildings. Because when the industrial buildings were being reconstructed or converted, they would be forced to move out. Besides, a rapid rise in rents of industrial buildings due to the decrease in their number has increased the operating costs of SMEs in the freight logistics sector. Hence, when the Government launches a new round of revitalization scheme for industrial buildings, it must reserve some industrial buildings in certain districts for freight logistics use.
In order to cope with the future demand for land and housing, the Liberal Party agrees that we should prepare for the rainy days by conducting studies on the exploration of potential land sites. Under the East Lantau plan advocated by the Chief Executive, in order to tie in with the development of artificial islands in the central waters, the Government will give priority to the construction of a new strategic road and railway network. This approach of giving priority to transport infrastructure has long been advocated by the Liberal Party. Because in the past when the Government decided whether it was necessary to gradually provide additional transport and livelihood facilities on the basis of population density and the scale of community development, the provision of transport facilities would usually be seriously lagging behind. The residents who moved into the new development district would have the feeling of living in an isolated island, and their untold miseries are beyond description. Tseung Kwan O is a typical example. I hope that this concept of infrastructure before population intake will be applicable to all new development districts in future.

In terms of transport, in the Policy Address, the Chief Executive says that this is a bumper year for transport infrastructure, because in 2018, the Hong Kong Section of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link ("XRL"), the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge ("HZMB"), and the new land boundary control point at Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai would be commissioned. The first two transport infrastructural projects were commissioned in September and October respectively, but there were teething problems, including the ticketing arrangements of XRL and the transport connection arrangements of HZMB. The Liberal Party understands that it usually takes some time for a new facility to run smoothly, but we hope that the Government can, through liaising with the authorities concerned as soon as possible, rationalize the operation of the two transport infrastructure facilities. The Liberal Party also hopes that the Government can learn from the experience with these two new transport infrastructure facilities so that we can see the smooth operation of the new land boundary control point at Liantang/Heung Yuen Wai, which is scheduled to be commissioned at the end of this year.

In order to effectively alleviate the congestion problem of the cross harbour traffic, the Government plans to increase the tolls for the Cross Harbour Tunnel at Hung Hom ("CHT") and the Eastern Harbour Crossing ("EHC"), and at the same time reduce the tolls for the Western Harbour Crossing ("WHC"), while the toll adjustment will focus on private vehicles, taxis and motorcycles which account for a bigger share of the traffic volume. In regard to this proposal from the
Government, the Liberal Party thinks that it has improved from the previous one which involved an increase of tolls for CHT and a decrease of tolls for EHC, as this proposal includes the reduction of tolls for WHC.

As regards the new toll proposal for rationalizing the traffic distribution among the three tunnels, since CHT occupies the most advantageous geographical location and has the best connecting road network, from the perspective of traffic management, its tolls should be the highest in order to achieve a reasonable distribution of traffic. Given that a motorist will choose the suitable tunnel after taking into account the driving distance, level of convenience and toll level, any proposal which will bring the toll levels of the tunnels concerned, particularly those between CHT and WHC, can naturally achieve the goal of rationalizing the traffic distribution among the three tunnels.

Some people say that when the toll levels of the three tunnels are drawn closer, some traffic flow will be diverted to WHC, leading to traffic congestion there, and eventually the loss of one option for motorists who were willing to pay more for using WHC in exchange for less travel time. However, I want to point out that if the toll proposal of the Government can be passed, it will come into effect on 1 January 2020, with the purpose of tying in with the opening of the Central-Wan Chai Bypass and Island Eastern Corridor Link in 2019. By that time, the traffic condition from WHC to the central part of Hong Kong Island will improve a lot, and future increase in traffic flow will not result in congestion. But in the long run, with the rise in the number of vehicles and the development of society, the Government should really conduct a study on a fourth harbour crossing tunnel.

President, in my view, the Council should support the Government's proposal. I would like to raise two points for Members' consideration. Firstly, as highlighted by Mr Tommy CHEUNG, the Government's proposal actually seeks to take back the automatic toll adjustment power of the WHC operator, so that before WHC's return to the Government in 2023, the WHC operator can only charge according to the presently proposed tolls. Secondly, if the Government's traffic distribution proposal cannot be passed, the tunnel toll waiver scheme for franchised buses, which I am going to discuss, will be unable to be fully implemented and the passengers using WHC tunnel bus service will be unable to enjoy this concession. Therefore, the Liberal Party hopes that Members can carefully consider and accept the Government's proposal for rationalizing the traffic distribution among the three tunnels.
Apart from adjusting the tolls of the three tunnels, in order to encourage the public to make use of mass transit carriers to cross the Victoria Harbour, the Government suggests waiving the tunnel tolls for franchised buses so as to alleviate the fare increase pressure of franchised buses in future. Notwithstanding its good intention, this proposal repeats the same mistake as the non-means-tested Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme introduced last year of not treating all the public means of transport in a fair manner. Similarly, this proposal does not include residents' bus services and public light buses ("PLBs") among non-franchised buses. In fact, residents' buses and PLBs, no matter green or red PLBs, also serve the public, filling the gap in services of franchised buses. Besides, the routes, timetable, frequency, number of vehicles and charges of residents' buses and green minibuses are also subject to supervision of the Transport Department. In order to encourage more people to use public transport services, the Government should incorporate such public transport services as residents' buses and PLBs into the tunnel toll waiver scheme.

The Government has stressed many times that it is not easy to maintain a balance among public transport services, but it usually introduces some measures that undermine the hard-earned state of balance. Apart from the non-means-tested Public Transport Fare Subsidy Scheme introduced last year and the tunnel toll waiver scheme suggested this year, the Government Public Transport Fare Concession Scheme for the Elderly and Eligible Persons with Disabilities (or the $2 concession scheme) implemented some years ago has also only covered some of the public transport services, thus making it unfair to the other transport services. The Liberal Party hopes that the Government can conduct a review on the $2 concession scheme as soon as possible and extend the coverage of the scheme to red PLBs and kaitos on which Octopus cards can be used so as to benefit more people in need. In the long run, in view of the changes in commute of the public and the increase in cross boundary passengers, the Liberal Party still hopes that the Government can quickly embark on the Fourth Comprehensive Transport Study, so as to have a better planning for future transportation need.

I will absolutely support the Government's proposal to study the possibility for vehicles supporting economic activities to enjoy concessionary tunnel tolls. At present, heavy and medium goods vehicles as well as coaches are playing an important role in supporting the trading, logistics and tourism sectors of Hong Kong and promoting Hong Kong's economic development, but the tolls for these vehicles are relatively high at present. Considering their contributions to local
economy, it definitely will be a benevolent policy if they are allowed to enjoy concessionary tunnel tolls, as this can help lower the operating costs of the sectors and the cost thus saved can be ploughed back to their users.

For the purpose of resolving the problem of insufficient parking spaces, the Policy Address mentions increasing the number of public parking spaces in government facilities and public open space. Although it is estimated that at least 1,500 public parking spaces will be increased in the coming five years, this is nothing more than a drop in the bucket in the face of a shortfall of tens of thousands of parking spaces. Responding to the housing demand of the public, the Government has already resumed a number of sites which were used as temporary car parks on short-term tenancies for development purpose. Recently two temporary car parks in Kai Tak which could accommodate 500 large vehicles were resumed for development purpose, possibly in preparation for the construction of the Multi-purpose Sports Complex. The Liberal Party hopes that the Government can expedite the study on the need for parking spaces, so as to plan quickly for the provision of sufficient commercial parking facilities to tie in with social development. Besides, the Liberal Party strongly requests the Government to shelve the plan to demolish existing public multi-storey car parks, set up more purpose-built temporary commercial car parks, provide more on-street parking spaces for commercial vehicles during night time and fully implement the measure to allow parking of PLBs at PLB stands during night time.

President, the Policy Address has been silent on how to combat illegal carriage of passengers for reward by private cars or "white licence cars' service" and I feel highly disappointed. The infestation of white licence cars' service in recent years is attributed to the ineffective monitoring and lax enforcement by the Government. It is most ironical that the Chief Executive wants to maintain Hong Kong as the safest city while the roads are full of "bombs", as reflected by a large number of unregulated vehicles and drivers engaged in illegal carriage of passengers for reward activities. Once an accident happens, other road users will also be affected as they may lose the protection due to them.

As a matter of fact, illegal white licence cars' service has brought a significant impact on those public transport operators whose operations are in compliance with the rules. Due to decrease in passenger volume, the drivers' livelihood is affected, leading to a serious wastage of drivers. Nearly 20% of taxis and PLBs are forced to be left idle due to lack of drivers. In order to clamp
down on white licence cars’ service, we hope that the Transport and Housing Bureau can instruct the Police to step up enforcement actions, and amend the related laws without delay so as to increase penalties on white licence cars’ service related crimes and even confiscate the vehicles carrying out illegal activities.

In order to improve roadside air quality, the Policy Address suggests progressively phasing out Euro IV diesel commercial vehicles by the end of 2023. The Liberal Party hopes that the blueprint of this plan will be modelled on the existing scheme of phasing out the old pre-Euro IV diesel commercial vehicles. Besides, since the age range of Euro IV diesel vehicles is wide, from the oldest ones which may be already 13 years of age to the youngest ones of only a few years old, the ex gratia payment introduced by the Government, apart from being delinked from the purchase of new vehicles as in the scheme of phasing out the pre-Euro IV diesel vehicles, should also be determined by the age of a vehicle so that the younger the vehicle, the more ex gratia payment it can obtain, with a view to encouraging vehicle owners to replace their old vehicles as early as possible. In regard to the final proposal, I hope that the Environmental Protection Department can discuss with the sectors concerned without delay. It is important that the scheme should minimize the impact on these commercial vehicles. However, the PLB sector wants me to relay a message to the Secretary that since the types of Euro IV vehicles are absolutely not suitable for PLB operation and will generate a lot of problems, they hope that the scheme can be quickly implemented in respect of PLBs.

President, I so submit.

MR MA FUNG-KWOK (in Cantonese): President, yesterday I already indicated my support in principle for the Lantau Tomorrow project. Today, I would like to talk about the issues of revitalization of industrial buildings and space for cultural and sports venues.

Ever since the Chief Executive officially announced this year to reactivate the policy of revitalizing industrial buildings, merger and acquisition activities related to industrial building units have been surreptitiously going on and are poised to burgeon. They have begun to affect some art groups and sports organizations operating in industrial buildings. The direct impact on art groups is that they have no alternative but to move out because the unit owners refuse to renew their leases, or else significantly increase the rents. The indirect impact is
that they are forced to leave because of the nuisances caused by some people repeatedly reporting to the Lands Department and requesting inspections. Characterized by high ceiling height, very functional space and relatively cheap rent, those industrial building units have long been the choice of many arts and culture groups, artists, and recreational and sports groups as a base for operation. Unfortunately, the policy of revitalizing industrial buildings introduced in 2010 has caused great harm to local arts and culture community, especially small and medium-sized art groups, which are forced to either move out and end their operation or pay high rent to continue operation. The groups remaining in the industrial buildings have been enduring a tough ordeal to this day. The Government has revisited the revitalization of industrial buildings, but while the policy has yet to be officially introduced, some developers are eagerly waiting for action, which the relevant sectors will find it difficult not to worry.

The policy of revitalizing industrial buildings will incorporate a new condition that the applicants should designate 10% of the floor area for specific uses prescribed by the Government, such as arts and culture, creative industries and community facilities. From the perspective of the sectors concerned, it is certainly a good thing to reserve some area for them, and more is even better. I also hope that the area possibly reserved by the Government can be used for the development of recreational organizations. However, the more critical question is whether the reserved area can really be available for use by those organizations displaced due to the policy of revitalizing industrial buildings. I hope that the Administration can seriously consider setting up a mechanism that enables the reserved area to truly benefit the art groups and recreational organizations operating in industrial buildings, instead of repeating the well-intentioned mistakes of the last policy.

In order to encourage owners to redevelop industrial buildings constructed before 1987, the Government proposed to allow relaxation of the maximum permissible plot ratio by up to 20% for relevant redevelopment projects. In this regard, I hold that the Government can adopt a more aggressive approach, similar to that for the conversion of industrial buildings, to require redevelopment applicants to reserve a certain percentage of floor space, say 10%, for specific uses prescribed by the Government. It can also consider further relaxation of the plot ratio or partial reduction of land premium to increase the incentives for redevelopment, with a view to providing more space for the development of arts and culture, creative industries, recreation and sports.
Moreover, the Government proposed to relax the waiver application policy on a time-limited basis to permit the arts and cultural sectors and creative industries to operate at individual units of existing industrial buildings without the need for making separate waiver applications and paying waiver fees, so long as such uses are permitted under the planning regime. This is an initiative that industry players and I have all along been pushing for. In fact, as tenants, the art groups did not have enough bargaining power in the past to ask the owners to spend time and money on applications for changing the use of industrial building units. Some owners have turned a blind eye, allowing them to operate in breach of lease conditions. Some other owners simply refuse to consider leasing to these sectors. The Policy Address has now responded to the appeal. I believe this initiative will raise the owners' willingness to lease their units to arts and cultural sectors, and relieve some art groups and artists from further worries about law enforcement against breaches of lease conditions.

On the other hand, regarding the proposed policy to widen the permissible uses of buffer floors to cover telecommunications exchange centres and computer/data processing centres, so as to facilitate conversion of lower floors of industrial buildings into non-industrial uses, I believe this is an important step forward taken by the Chief Executive to deliver on her manifesto pledge to further relax the limitations on lower floors of some industrial buildings, so that those industrial buildings can be used by companies engaged in creative industries. The conversion of lower floors of industrial buildings into non-industrial uses currently requires the provision of a buffer floor, or the so-called refuge floor, which should be entirely vacant or used as a car park. Admittedly, this is a huge restriction. Now that the permissible uses of buffer floors will be widened, it is believed that the owners are more incentivized to convert the lower floors of industrial buildings into non-industrial uses. However, it is a cause for concern that the existing policy does not impose restrictions on the application for non-industrial uses. It does not matter if they are converted for use by creative businesses or into performance venues, or even more profitable eateries and retail shops, etc. Can these measures really work for cultural and creative purposes as described in the Chief Executive's manifesto? I have serious doubts and hope that there will be more specific requirements to cater for the needs of the cultural and sports sectors when the policy is implemented.
Admittedly, most of the major arts and cultural spaces, particularly performance venues, are controlled in the hands of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department. In light of the principle of fair use, it is difficult to allocate a particular venue to the same art group for a long period of time to enable the long run of some popular shows, or let art groups stay long at a particular venue to better organize their programmes, which are the common practice among foreign countries. The cultural facilities of the West Kowloon Cultural District are gradually being commissioned. For example, the Xiqu Centre will be opened at the end of the year and the Lyric Theatre Complex may be operational in 2022. However, the venues available are still limited and private performance venues remain severely inadequate, thus constraining the development of local performing arts. It is necessary for the Government to contemplate how to make good use of existing spaces, especially those in industrial buildings, to provide more private arts venues. The initiatives put forward in the Policy Address have taken a step forward, but there are still many that warrant further study and implementation by the Government, including further expansion of the scope of non-industrial uses under the assurance of fire safety to allow certain facilities, such as performance venues and arts education workshops, to be located in industrial buildings in response to the demands of the relevant sectors.

President, I would like to talk about the issues related to sports. Both the current term and the last term of Government have made huge investments in sports. As far as venues are concerned, the green light has been given to the construction of the Kai Tak Sports Park and $20 billion has been earmarked to launch 26 projects to develop new or redevelop existing sports and recreation facilities in order to increase supply. As for resources, additional funding will be injected into the Elite Athletes Development Fund, and $130 million will be allocated to launch a five-year programme to promote the development of team ball games.

With the increased investment in hardware and software, we are beginning to see results. At this year's Asian Games, the Hong Kong team achieved historic success by winning a total of 46 medals, comprising 8 gold, 18 silver and 20 bronze medals. Among them was the first-ever Asian Games gold medal in team sports that the Hong Kong rugby sevens men's team had won. In squash events, Leo AU Chun-ming and Max LEE Ho-yin bagged the gold and silver medals in the men's singles. Both of them reached the final after turning the tables on their opponents by winning three games in a row in the semi-finals having fallen behind by two games. From this it is evident that our athletes are
quite good in terms of psychological well-being. I believe this is a result of the success of the elite training programme and the increase in investment by the Government over the years.

President, in anticipation of the completion of the Kai Tak Sports Park between 2022 and 2023, the Government should actively improve the water quality of the waters around Kai Tak and consider establishing an international water sports centre on the water surface around the old runway near the sports park for year-round organization of water sports activities, such as rowing, canoeing, dragon boating and sailing, so as to make up for the lack of water sports in the sports park on the one hand, and, on the other, attract more sports activities to Kai Tak with a view to turning it into a genuine local sports hub. Furthermore, with excellent geographical conditions for a panoramic view of Victoria Harbour, the waters around Kai Tak will be quite attractive if developed into a water sports centre. In fact, some neighbouring cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area ("the Greater Bay Area"), for instance Zhuhai, are also very active in preparing for the development of mega water sports centres. If the Government does not act now, it will only lag behind and give up the opportunity to others. The Government should also consider supporting and exploring other mega sports events, such as motor racing, rowing and aviation.

In addition, I am very supportive of the Government's planning and engineering study on Sunny Bay reclamation, which will provide 60 to 100 hectares of land to be developed for leisure, recreation and sports purposes. In light of the proposed Lantau Tomorrow project and the projection of 1 million population on Lantau, the Government should also study the need to develop a second sports park on the reclaimed land at Sunny Bay in order to meet the demand of the new population for recreation and sports and the need for future sports development. Experience from the Kai Tak Sports Park suggests that it takes more than 10 years to go from initial conception to final implementation. As it is difficult to build high-rise residential buildings on the reclaimed land at Sunny Bay due to height restrictions, development of a sports venue is undoubtedly a feasible option, which can increase the supply of such venues on the one hand, and, on the other, host some facilities, such as a motor racing course, that cannot be accommodated in the current sports park due to limited site area. Therefore, an early planning for the development will not only pave the path for the future development of local sports, but also meet the public's demand for sports venues.
President, up next, I would like to discuss the relationship between the Greater Bay Area development and culture and sports. Along with the completion of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link and the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge, the Greater Bay Area will form a one-hour living circle. In the context of regional collaborative development, we can foresee an urban life in a first-class international bay area ideal for living, working and travelling. The nine municipalities and two special administrative regions in the Greater Bay Area share the same root of Lingnan culture development. As a cosmopolitan city where Chinese and Western cultures meet, an international financial centre and an Asian cultural hub, Hong Kong attracts arts and cultural practitioners and organizations from all over the world to shape its unique characteristics. The development of Hong Kong's creative industries, such as advertising, architecture, design, digital entertainment, film making, music, printing, publishing and television, is widely welcomed by the international community and the Mainland.

Since the country's reform and opening up, Hong Kong's arts and culture and creative industries have made important contributions to the national development. Hong Kong culture, Hong Kong films and Cantonese songs, among others, were once an important part of the Mainland popular culture. In the context of collaborative development of the Greater Bay Area, Hong Kong's arts and culture and creative industries will have great development potential and opportunities. Possible work includes pushing for the establishment of regional arts and culture organizations to serve the Greater Bay Area. For example, a Greater Bay Area Cantonese opera troupe can be one of the feasible options. Meanwhile, it is also necessary to enhance the ability of Hong Kong's art groups to go on performance tours to make the most of the emerging market.

As for recreation and sports, the city clusters in the Greater Bay Area have each their own strengths in sports resources, making it possible to complement each other and explore possibilities of cooperation to jointly promote sports development in the Greater Bay Area. For example, they can jointly organize mega sports events for the Greater Bay Area cities to participate in together for exchanges of skills and sports culture. In addition, they can encourage organization of more sports events and activities to promote the common development of sports and sharing of relevant resources in the Greater Bay Area, including training camps in areas with well-developed sports facilities. Moreover, they can promote the development of sports industries in various places, capitalizing on the opportunities arising from the rapid development of
sports industries in the Mainland. In my view, the commitments made by our Government are far from sufficient in the light of the opportunities available for promoting cooperation and exchanges in culture and sports in the Greater Bay Area. In this regard, we have to ramp up investment to take early advantage of the opportunities.

President, I so submit.

SUSPENSION OF MEETING

PRESIDENT (in Cantonese): I now suspend the meeting until 9:00 am tomorrow.

Suspended accordingly at 9:53 pm.