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**Speech by the Hon Mrs Selina Chow Liang Shuk-ye, GBS,  
JP**  
**Motion Debate on Policy on Heritage Preservation, 13  
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Selina Chow:

Madam President, I certainly very much agree with the views expressed by Mr Howard YOUNG on cultural tourism, and in fact the Tourism Board has also made cultural tours one of the key promotion items. In Hong Kong, for example, we are already an advanced city and we want to preserve our heritage is not only for the promotion of the tourist business but also to make the people of Hong Kong take pride in their history. From these heritage items and historical buildings, we can remind ourselves of our past achievements and the old stories we should all remember well.

Honourable colleagues have spoken quite a lot on this and pointed out that the Government has not taken the initiative or has been proactive about it. Thus it can be seen that not much has been done on the part of the Government. Of course, we hope that the Secretary, Dr Patrick HO, can make positive efforts to change this state of affairs and really answer the people's aspirations. Members must have seen the strong social reaction in the Kom Tong Hall incident. The Government should be more sensitive to public demands and it should do more in this respect.

Members have also said that apart from a passive mentality on this, the Government has done little in introducing relevant legislation and policies. I believe Members will agree that irrespective of the course of action, the most important thing is not to demolish buildings of historical value recklessly. For once they are pulled down, nothing can be done about it. I think many people may be sorry now for some of these buildings have been demolished and they are there no more. Such buildings include the Hong Kong Club and others which were torn down to make way for the development of Hong Kong into an international metropolis. To prevent the demolition of buildings of historical value, we may do something about the Buildings Ordinance, for apart from declared monuments, no other buildings can be spared demolition on grounds of their historical value. I think this is something to which we can give serious thoughts, especially those buildings classified as grade one historical buildings. Grade one buildings in fact carry important historical value and should be preserved as much as practicable. Now more than 100 buildings in Hong Kong are classified as grade one historical buildings. About 9 000 other buildings are presently being assessed and the number of grade one historical buildings may increase. Even if these buildings are not classified as grade three buildings, they

ought to be protected. Indeed, even grade one buildings should also be protected.

On strength of powers vested by the Land Resumption Ordinance, the Government may take public interest more into consideration, such as considering the resumption of private buildings classified as grade one historical buildings. That certainly does not mean that the Government can resume any building whenever it feels like it, but adequate compensation must be offered. Once a private building is classified as grade one, efforts must be made at once to determine if it can be declared a statutory monument. For once declared a statutory monument, the building cannot be demolished. And since the building cannot be demolished, it would then have limited value for redevelopment or its redevelopment value would be lost. Then would the Government have to pay a heavy price on resuming these buildings? Not necessarily, as this can be seen in the funds set aside by many cities for this purpose.

As to the question of transfer of plot ratio, there are successful examples on this and they can be applied. Irrespective of what the measures may be, the aim is to conserve monuments and not to demolish them. Yet, another question remains: What has become of the monuments which are under protection? Insofar as the 77 declared monuments are concerned, more than 40 of them are not easily accessible. Those that are readily accessible account for a minority only. Have we made good use of these statutory monuments, in particular those owned by the Government? It may be a different matter if these monuments are privately owned. Some of these monuments, even if they are in good repairs, are not easily accessible. These include the Hung Shing Temple on Kau Sai Chau which has been awarded an Outstanding Project Award in the UNESCO Asia Pacific 2000 Awards for Culture Heritage Conservation. If we want to visit this temple, we need to spend a lot of money to find a boat and go there and the return trip is another problem. If the transport problem is so serious, then we may as well not promote it. The Tourism Board has been criticized for promoting this monument, for the place is inaccessible and the return trip arrangement is also a problem. Monuments like these are not very useful to promoting tourism at all.

On the other hand, there are some buildings which obviously have historical value, such as the Old Stanley Police Station, and it is now turned into a supermarket. This is an insult to our heritage, and it is a most unfortunate case. I very much hope that the Secretary can formulate a policy as soon as possible and launch extensive consultations. There will be a sequel to this topic as I believe it will be brought up again some time in future. Thank you, Madam President.