



# DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE AN EX-OFFICIO  
MEMBER OF HKECIC ADVISORY BOARD

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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PASSED A RESOLUTION THAT IT APPROVES THAT THE REGISTRAR GENERAL'S EX-OFFICIO MEMBERSHIP OF THE HONG KONG EXPORT CREDIT INSURANCE CORPORATION'S ADVISORY BOARD TO BE TAKEN OVER BY THE COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE WHO HAD STATUTORY RESPONSIBILITY OVER AND EXPERTISE IN THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY.

MOVING A MOTION UNDER THE INTERPRETATION AND GENERAL CLAUSES ORDINANCE, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR PIERS JACOBS, SAID THIS HAD BEEN AGREED IN CONSULTATION WITH THE COMMISSIONER OF THE CORPORATION, THE REGISTRAR GENERAL AND THE COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE.

SIR PIERS EXPLAINED THAT ACCORDING TO SECTION 10(2) OF THE HONG KONG EXPORT CREDIT INSURANCE CORPORATION ORDINANCE, THE CORPORATION'S ADVISORY BOARD SHOULD CONSIST OF THE "REGISTRAR GENERAL OR HIS REPRESENTATIVE" AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HONG KONG TRADE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OR HIS REPRESENTATIVE AS EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS AND NOT MORE THAN 10 OTHER MEMBERS TO BE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR.

THE REGISTRAR GENERAL'S POSITION IN THE ADVISORY BOARD HAD ALL ALONG BEEN FILLED BY THE PREVIOUS INSURANCE AUTHORITY UNDER THE REGISTRAR GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT, HE SAID.

SIR PIERS SAID THE CHANGE WAS MADE FOLLOWING A RECENT REORGANISATION OF THE REGISTRAR GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT WHEN THE WORK OF THE INSURANCE AUTHORITY HAD BEEN TRANSFERRED TO THE NEWLY-ESTABLISHED OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE UNDER THE MONETARY AFFAIRS BRANCH SINCE JUNE THIS YEAR.

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SCHEDULE AMENDMENT ON MAXIMUM CHARGES BY HK TELEPHONE APPROVED

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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PASSED A RESOLUTION THAT UNDER SECTION 26(2) OF THE TELEPHONE ORDINANCE IT APPROVED TO AMEND THE SCHEDULE OF MAXIMUM CHARGES THAT MAY BE LEVIED BY THE HONG KONG TELEPHONE COMPANY.

MOVING A MOTION TO AMEND THE SCHEDULE, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, THE HON ANSON CHAN, SAID THE MAJOR ITEMS IN THE PROPOSED TARIFF REVISION WERE THE INCREASES IN EXCHANGE LINE RENTAL CHARGES.

MRS CHAN SAID THE RESOLUTION WOULD INCREASE THE MONTHLY COST OF AN ORDINARY EXCHANGE LINE FOR BUSINESS USE FROM \$70 TO \$78, AND FOR A RESIDENTIAL EXCHANGE LINE FROM \$48 TO \$56.

/"THE PROPOSED .....

"THE PROPOSED INCREASE IN THE MONTHLY RENTAL CHARGE FOR A STANDARD TELEPHONE IS FROM \$6 TO \$7.

"LEASED CIRCUIT CHARGES WOULD BE INCREASED BY BETWEEN 10 PER CENT AND 16.7 PER CENT DEPENDING ON THE CATEGORY.

"HOWEVER, THE STANDARD CONNECTION CHARGE OF \$600 WOULD REMAIN UNCHANGED, AS WOULD A LARGE NUMBER OF OTHER MISCELLANEOUS CHARGES, SUCH AS THOSE FOR SPECIAL EQUIPMENT," SHE ADDED.

MRS CHAN SAID IN SEPTEMBER 1990, THE COMPANY HAD SUBMITTED AN APPLICATION TO INCREASE ITS CHARGES BY AN OVERALL AVERAGE OF 11 PER CENT WHICH WAS ABOUT THREE PER CENT LESS THAN THE ACCUMULATED INFLATION RATE SINCE THE LAST INCREASE IN JUNE 1989 AND WAS CLOSE TO THE ANNUAL RATE OF INFLATION.

IN MOVING THE RESOLUTION FOR THE LAST INCREASE, THE ACTING FINANCIAL SECRETARY HAD INFORMED MEMBERS, BASED ON PROJECTIONS THEN AVAILABLE, THAT THERE WAS UNLIKELY TO BE ANY REQUIREMENT FOR A FURTHER ROUND OF INCREASES UNTIL 1991, MRS CHAN SAID.

"THE MOTION BEFORE THIS COUNCIL TODAY WOULD IMPLEMENT FURTHER INCREASES IN TELEPHONE CHARGES FROM JANUARY 1, 1991.

"WHILE THIS WOULD ACCORD WITH THE LETTER OF THE FORECAST GIVEN TO THIS COUNCIL IN 1989, THE INCREASES ARE NEVERTHELESS A FEW MONTHS EARLIER THAN EXPECTED," SHE NOTED.

MRS CHAN SAID THIS WAS DUE TO LOWER THAN EXPECTED GROWTH IN REVENUE FROM INTERNATIONAL TELEPHONE SERVICES AND LEASED CIRCUITS, AND HIGHER COSTS THAN WERE FORECAST BY THE COMPANY IN 1989.

"THE APPLICATION HAS BEEN THOROUGHLY EXAMINED AND THE ITEMS IN THE RESOLUTION NOW BEFORE THIS COUNCIL ARE CONSIDERED TO BE JUSTIFIED," SHE ADDED.

IN ADDITION TO RAISING CHARGES FOR EXISTING SERVICES, MRS CHAN SAID THE RESOLUTION WOULD ADD TWO NEW MINOR ITEMS TO THE SCHEDULE.

THESE WERE A CHARGE OF \$275 FOR CONVERSION OF AN ALREADY INSTALLED EXCHANGE LINE TO A CENTREX LINE, INSTEAD OF THE FULL CHARGE OF UP TO \$600 FOR CONNECTION OF A CENTREX LINE; AND A 10 PER CENT SURCHARGE FOR INTERNATIONAL TELEPHONE CALLS MADE FROM PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PAYPHONES.

"THIS SURCHARGE IS JUSTIFIED ON THE BASIS OF THE ADDITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE COST INCURRED FOR INTERNATIONAL CALLS MADE FROM PAYPHONES.

"THE RESOLUTION BEFORE THIS COUNCIL PROPOSES THAT THESE TWO NEW CHARGES AND THE INCREASES IN EXISTING CHARGES SHOULD TAKE EFFECT FROM JANUARY 1, 1991," SHE SAID.

RESOLUTION TO INCLUDE NEW PROHIBITED WEAPONS IN LAW

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THE GOVERNMENT SEES IT NECESSARY TO AMEND THE SCHEDULE TO THE WEAPONS ORDINANCE TO INCLUDE NEW WEAPONS WHICH ARE NOT COVERED BY THE EXISTING ITEMS IN THE SCHEDULE, BUT WHICH HAVE NO USEFUL PURPOSE OTHER THAN AS VICIOUS FIGHTING WEAPONS.

MOVING A MOTION, WHICH SOUGHT TO MAKE A RESOLUTION UNDER SECTION 17 OF THE WEAPONS ORDINANCE (CAP 217), THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID NEW ITEMS SUCH AS KNUCKLE KNIVES AND MICRO KNIVES, AS PROHIBITED WEAPONS, HAD APPEARED IN HONG KONG IN RECENT YEARS.

HE SAID THE MOTION INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN THE SCHEDULE:

- \* KNUCKLEDUSTERS, WHETHER SPIKED OR NOT AND WITH OR WITHOUT BLADE;
- \* ANY KNIVES THE BLADE OF WHICH IS EXPOSED BY A SPRING OR OTHER MECHANICAL OR ELECTRIC DEVICE; AND
- \* ANY BLADED OR POINTED WEAPON DESIGNED TO BE USED IN A FASHION WHEREBY THE HANDLE IS HELD IN A CLENCHED FIST AND THE BLADE OR POINT PROTRUDES BETWEEN THE FINGERS OF THE FIST.

THE RESOLUTION ALSO SOUGHT TO DELETE FROM THE SCHEDULE "KNUCKLEDUSTER" AND "FLICK-KNIFE" WHICH WOULD BE COVERED BY THE NEW ITEMS ADDED TO THE SCHEDULE.

THE MOTION WAS PASSED.

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POLICY ON CABLE TV REMAINS UNCHANGED

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THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY OBJECTIVES ON A CABLE TELEVISION SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY REMAINS UNCHANGED, THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, THE HON PETER TSAO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHAN YING-LUN, MR TSAO SAID: "ON THE ONE HAND, WE WISH TO PROVIDE THE COMMUNITY WITH THE WIDEST POSSIBLE CHOICE OF QUALITY TELEVISION PROGRAMMING, IN BOTH CHINESE AND ENGLISH; ON THE OTHER, WE WISH TO DEVELOP A TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE WHICH WILL STIMULATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A WIDE RANGE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES."

MR TSAO ALSO SAID FOLLOWING THE WITHDRAWAL OF HONG KONG CABLE COMMUNICATIONS LIMITED FROM THE PROJECT IT WOULD SEEM PRUDENT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO PAUSE, TAKE STOCK AND CONSIDER THE WAY FORWARD.

"ONCE WE HAVE IDENTIFIED THE BEST STRATEGY FOR TAKING MATTERS FORWARD I CAN ASSURE MEMBERS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WILL MOVE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE," HE STRESSED.

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POLICE THREE-PRONGED ACTION TO TACKLE CAR THEFT PROBLEM

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THE POLICE HAVE STEPPED UP INVESTIGATIONS TO OBTAIN INTELLIGENCE ON CRIMINAL GROUPS ENGAGED IN CAR THEFT, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MICHAEL CHENG, MR ASPREY SAID BASED ON THIS INTELLIGENCE, THE POLICE HAD MOUNTED A NUMBER OF LARGE-SCALE OPERATIONS, BOTH ON LAND AND AT SEA, WHICH HAD RESULTED IN ARRESTS, THE RECOVERY OF STOLEN VEHICLES, AND THE BREAKING UP OF SOME OF THE CAR THEFT SYNDICATES.

"THEY HAVE ALSO STEPPED UP PUBLICITY ON ANTI-THEFT PRECAUTIONS, APPROACHED THE MANAGEMENT OF CARPARKS TO ADVISE ON SECURITY MEASURES, AND INCREASED CHECKS ON VEHICLES AT ROAD BLOCKS.

"THEY ARE ALSO MAINTAINING HIGH LEVEL LIAISON WITH POLICE AUTHORITIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION TO SECURE COOPERATION IN CLOSING OFF THE MARKETS FOR STOLEN VEHICLES," HE SAID.

MR ASPREY SAID ALTHOUGH THE GREAT MAJORITY OF STOLEN VEHICLES WERE RECOVERED, THIS YEAR HAD SEEN BOTH A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE OVERALL NUMBER OF VEHICLES STOLEN, AND A SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION IN THE PROPORTION SUBSEQUENTLY RECOVERED -- FROM OVER 80 PER CENT IN THE PREVIOUS FIVE YEARS TO 65 SOME PER CENT SO FAR THIS YEAR.

"THIS IS A MATTER OF GREAT CONCERN," HE SAID.

AS TO THE CAUSES OF THIS PROBLEM, MR ASPREY SAID CARS WERE HIGH VALUE ITEMS, WHICH WERE FOR MOST OF THE TIME LEFT UNATTENDED ON THE STREETS OR IN CARPARKS. THEY WERE ALSO RELATIVELY EASY TO STEAL, PARTICULARLY IF THE OWNERS TOOK INADEQUATE SECURITY PRECAUTIONS.

"THERE IS A READY MARKET FOR QUALITY CARS IN OTHER COUNTRIES IN THIS REGION.

"CARS ARE THEREFORE A TEMPTING TARGET FOR THIEVES, AND IN PARTICULAR FOR CRIME SYNDICATES WHO HAVE THE ORGANISATION AND CONTACTS TO ARRANGE MODIFICATION, SHIPPING AND RESALE," MR ASPREY ADDED.

NO PLANS TO INCREASE RATE OF SICKNESS ALLOWANCE

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO PLANS TO PROPOSE AN INCREASE IN THE PRESENT RATE OF SICKNESS ALLOWANCE, THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON K.Y. YEUNG, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG, MR YEUNG POINTED OUT THAT AT PRESENT, UNDER SECTION 35(1) OF THE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE, THE DAILY RATE OF SICKNESS ALLOWANCE PAYABLE TO AN EMPLOYEE WHO HAD BEEN CERTIFIED ILL FOR AT LEAST FOUR CONSECUTIVE DAYS WAS TWO-THIRDS OF THE WAGES HE WOULD HAVE DRAWN HAD HE BEEN WORKING.

"THIS RATE WAS RAISED FROM ONE HALF WHEN IT WAS FIRST ESTABLISHED IN 1961 TO TWO-THIRDS IN 1977.

"THE RATE IS BETTER THAN THE INTERNATIONAL NORM AT 60 PER CENT AND COMPARES FAVOURABLY WITH THAT OBTAINING IN, SAY, JAPAN, WHERE IT IS 60 PER CENT, AND WITH TAIWAN, WHERE IT IS 50 PER CENT," HE SAID.

NEVERTHELESS THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE WILLING TO CONSIDER SOUNDLY ARGUED PROPOSALS FOR AN INCREASE AND WOULD IN THAT EVENT SEEK THE ADVICE OF THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD, MR YEUNG SAID.

MR YEUNG ALSO SAID THAT SICK EMPLOYEES WERE NOT ENTITLED TO SICKNESS ALLOWANCE FOR AT LEAST THREE DAYS BECAUSE IT WAS NECESSARY TO DISCOURAGE MALINGERING AND ABUSE.

"THIS MINIMUM QUALIFYING PERIOD IS CONSISTENT WITH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION AND REGIONAL PRACTICE.

"BUT A SICK EMPLOYEE WHO REMAINS ILL ON THE FOURTH DAY WOULD OBTAIN AN ALLOWANCE OF TWO-THIRDS OF HIS OR HER NORMAL WAGE FOR ALL FOUR DAYS."

AS REGARDS THE CERTIFICATION OF ILLNESS, MR YEUNG SAID EXISTING STATUTORY RULES PROVIDED THAT ANY REGISTERED MEDICAL PRACTITIONER WOULD DO.

"BUT WHERE THE EMPLOYER IS PROVIDING A FREE MEDICAL SERVICE TO HIS EMPLOYEES UNDER A SCHEME OF MEDICAL TREATMENT RECOGNISED BY THE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH, IT IS ONLY REASONABLE THAT ILLNESS BE CERTIFIED BY DOCTORS IN THAT SCHEME," MR YEUNG POINTED OUT.

THEREFORE, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT COULD SEE NO COMPELLING REASON FOR CHANGING THE RULES.

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PROCEDURES FOR VETTING FARE INCREASE APPLICATION  
SAFEGUARD PUBLIC INTEREST

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THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON MICHAEL LEUNG, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) SAID THERE WERE WELL ESTABLISHED PROCEDURES FOR VETTING FARE INCREASE APPLICATIONS FROM FRANCHISED BUS OR FERRY COMPANIES.

THE VETTING PROCESS INCLUDED DETAILED SCRUTINY BY THE ADMINISTRATION AND PRESENTATION TO THE TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR INDEPENDENT ADVICE.

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON RONALD CHOW IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR LEUNG SAID ANY FRANCHISED BUS OR FERRY COMPANY WHICH SOUGHT A FARE RISE HAD TO PROVIDE FULLY SUBSTANTIATED JUSTIFICATIONS INCLUDING ITS EXISTING AND FORECAST FINANCIAL POSITION AND ALL THE RELEVANT ASSUMPTIONS MADE.

MR LEUNG SAID: "EXPENDITURE ON FUEL IS ONLY ONE OF MANY FACTORS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT BY THE GOVERNMENT. OTHER FACTORS, SUCH AS PATRONAGE, WAGE LEVELS AND MAINTENANCE COSTS, ARE ALSO TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT."

IN THE DETAILED SCRUTINY BY THE GOVERNMENT, FULL REGARD WAS ALWAYS GIVEN TO THE OVERALL PUBLIC INTEREST.

MR LEUNG STRESSED THAT A FINAL RECOMMENDATION WOULD NOT BE PUT FORWARD TO THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL FOR CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL UNTIL BOTH THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE WERE FULLY SATISFIED THAT THE ADJUSTMENTS SOUGHT WERE NECESSARY FOR CONTINUING EXISTING SERVICES AND MAKING IMPROVEMENTS TO MEET PASSENGER DEMAND.

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GOVT TO SEEK FUNDS TO INCREASE AUXILIARY POLICE DEPLOYMENT

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THE GOVERNMENT WILL SHORTLY BE SEEKING ADDITIONAL FUNDS FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE TO INCREASE THE DAILY DEPLOYMENT OF THE AUXILIARY POLICE FROM 750 TO 850, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON JIMMY MCGREGOR, MR ASPREY SAID THE ADDITIONAL MANPOWER WOULD BE DEPLOYED ON OPERATIONAL DUTIES ON THE STREET, OR ON OTHER DUTIES SO AS TO RELIEVE REGULAR POLICE OFFICERS FOR OPERATIONAL DUTIES.

HE SAID ABOUT 750 AUXILIARY POLICE OFFICERS WERE DEPLOYED ON OPERATIONAL DUTIES EVERYDAY.

"ABOUT 60 PER CENT OF THESE ARE ASSIGNED TO REGULAR BEAT PATROLS, AND ANOTHER 30 PER CENT TO OTHER DUTIES ON THE STREET, FOR EXAMPLE CROWD CONTROL AT MAJOR SPORTING EVENTS AND OTHER PUBLIC FUNCTIONS.

"THE REMAINING 10 PER CENT ARE EMPLOYED ON ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES IN POLICE STATIONS, THEREBY RELEASING THEIR REGULAR COUNTERPARTS FOR BEAT PATROL AND OTHER OPERATIONAL DUTIES," MR ASPREY SAID.

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MANPOWER IN SPEECH THERAPY SERVICE WILL IMPROVE IN 1992

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THE MANPOWER SITUATION IN THE SPEECH THERAPY SERVICE WILL IMPROVE IN 1992 WHEN THE FIRST BATCH OF STUDENTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH AND HEARING SCIENCES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG GRADUATES.

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON ELIZABETH WONG, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HENRIETTA IP.

MRS WONG SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAS IN THE PAST, EXPERIENCED PROBLEMS IN THE RECRUITMENT OF QUALIFIED SPEECH THERAPISTS.

MRS WONG SAID SHE WAS NOT AWARE OF ANY INCREASE IN THE INCIDENCE OF SPEECH PROBLEMS IN RESPECT OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN DUE TO THE INFLUENCE OF DOMESTIC HELPERS FROM THE PHILIPPINES OR THE EXPOSURE OF THE CHILDREN OF NEW IMMIGRANTS TO A MULTI-DIALECT ENVIRONMENT.

"SPEECH PROBLEMS GENERALLY INCLUDE DELAYED LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT, UNINTELLIGIBLE SPEECH, DEFICIENCY IN FLUENCY, DEFECTS IN ARTICULATION, AND OTHER FORMS OF PHONOLOGICAL DISORDER.

"THEY MAY BE CAUSED BY DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY, HEARING IMPAIRMENT, MENTAL RETARDATION, AUTISM, CEREBRAL PALSY, BEHAVIOURAL OR PSYCHIATRIC DISORDERS, AND POOR SOCIAL AND LINGUISTIC ENVIRONMENT," THE SECRETARY SAID.

MRS WONG POINTED OUT THAT SPEECH THERAPY SERVICE FOR PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN HAVING PROBLEMS OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OR SPEECH IMPAIRMENT WAS PROVIDED BY THE CHILD ASSESSMENT CENTRES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND THE SPECIAL EDUCATION SECTION OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

RECORDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SHOWED THAT THE PERCENTAGES OF SPEECH DELAY PROBLEMS IN THE CASES REFERRED TO CHILD ASSESSMENT CENTRES WERE ABOUT 45 PER CENT IN 1983, DECREASING TO 41 PER CENT IN 1988 AND 38 PER CENT IN 1989.

THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF CASES OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS INVOLVING SPEECH THERAPY SERVICES FOR PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN REFERRED TO CHILD ASSESSMENT CENTRES WAS 435 PER ANNUM, 428 CASES WERE REFERRED TO SUCH CENTRES LAST YEAR AS COMPARED WITH 471 IN 1983, FOR EXAMPLE.

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FURTHER GOVT FUNDS INTO HA INAPPROPRIATE

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THE GOVERNMENT DO NOT THINK IT EITHER APPROPRIATE OR NECESSARY TO INJECT FURTHER FUNDS INTO THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OVER THE \$10,000 MILLION ALREADY AGREED, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR PIERS JACOBS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"THIS DECISION SHOULD HAVE LITTLE EFFECT ON THE OVERALL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LONG TERM HOUSING STRATEGY.

"THE TARGET IS STILL TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS STRATEGY BY THE TURN OF THE CENTURY AS ORIGINALLY PLANNED," SIR PIERS SAID.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LEUNG WAI-TUNG, SIR PIERS SAID GIVEN THE PHILOSOPHY UNDERLYING THE FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN THE HOUSING AUTHORITY AND THE GOVERNMENT, THE AUTHORITY'S MANDATE TO MANAGE ITS FINANCES PROPERLY AND PRUDENTLY AND ITS STRONG FUNDAMENTAL FINANCIAL POSITION, THE ADMINISTRATION HAD ENDORSED THIS APPROACH.

HE POINTED OUT THAT TO FACILITATE THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LONG TERM HOUSING STRATEGY, A SET OF FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS HAD BEEN MADE BETWEEN THE HOUSING AUTHORITY AND THE GOVERNMENT IN 1988.

"UNDER THESE ARRANGEMENTS, THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, WHILE REMAINING A STATUTORY BODY, HAS MUCH GREATER FREEDOM IN DISCHARGING ITS DUTIES. IT ALSO ENJOYS A HIGH DEGREE OF AUTONOMY IN MANAGING ITS FINANCES.

"TO ALLOW IT TO EXERCISE THE HIGH DEGREE OF FINANCIAL AUTONOMY, THE GOVERNMENT, WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE, TRANSFERRED OVER \$2,700 MILLION FROM THE HOME OWNERSHIP FUND AND CAPITALISED ABOUT \$13,500 MILLION WORTH OF OUTSTANDING LOANS AND THE INTEREST THEREON FROM THE DEVELOPMENT LOAN FUND TO THE AUTHORITY.

"IN ADDITION, THE GOVERNMENT AGREED TO PROVIDE THE AUTHORITY WITH CASH UP TO \$10,000 MILLION," SIR PIERS SAID.

THE AMOUNT OF \$10,000 MILLION WAS BASED ON THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S ASSESSMENT IN 1988 THAT A SUM OF \$6,350 MILLION WOULD BE SUFFICIENT.

TO DATE, \$5,355 MILLION HAD BEEN DRAWN BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, AND THE BALANCE WAS LIKELY TO BE DRAWN IN THE NEXT 15 MONTHS, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY ADDED.

"THE AUTHORITY NOW ESTIMATES THAT UPON THE FULL DISBURSEMENT OF THE \$10,000 MILLION, IT MAY ENCOUNTER SOME SHORT-TERM CASH SHORTAGE.

"TO CATER FOR THIS, THE HOUSING AUTHORITY HAS DECIDED, AFTER DISCUSSION WITH THE GOVERNMENT, TO APPROACH THE FINANCIAL MARKET FOR ASSISTANCE," SIR PIERS SAID.

/HE ALSO .....

HE ALSO STRESSED THAT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE HOUSING AUTHORITY AND THE GOVERNMENT WAS AS HEALTHY AS EVER.

"THE GOVERNMENT REGARDS PUBLIC HOUSING AS A MAJOR SOCIAL PROGRAMME. ASIDE FROM THE \$10,000 MILLION CASH PROVISION, THE GOVERNMENT MAKES AVAILABLE LAND TO THE AUTHORITY FREE OF CHARGE FOR RENTAL PUBLIC HOUSING AND AT COST FOR HOME OWNERSHIP FLATS.

"THE GOVERNMENT ALSO FORMS AND SERVICES MUCH OF THIS LAND, AND PROVIDES THE RELATED INFRASTRUCTURAL AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES NEEDED BY THE PUBLIC HOUSING RESIDENTS. ALTOGETHER THEY COST BILLIONS OF DOLLARS EVERY YEAR," HE SAID.

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CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR DRIVING SPEEDBOATS  
AND WATER SCOOTERS ADEQUATE

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THE EXISTING CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR DRIVING SPEEDBOATS AND WATER SCOOTERS ARE GENERALLY ADEQUATE TO ENSURE SAFE BOATING PRACTICES, PROVIDED THAT OPERATORS DO NOT ACT IRRESPONSIBLY WHILE AT THE HELM.

THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, THE HON ANSON CHAN, SAID THIS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON PETER WONG HONG-YUEN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

MRS CHAN SAID PRESENT LEGISLATION REQUIRED THAT PLEASURE VESSELS, INCLUDING SPEEDBOATS AND WATER SCOOTERS, WHICH WERE LONGER THAN THREE METRES OR FITTED WITH AN ENGINE OF MORE THAN THREE KILOWATTS IN TOTAL POWER SHOULD BE OPERATED BY A PERSON OR PERSONS POSSESSING THE REQUIRED CERTIFICATES OF COMPETENCY.

CERTIFICATES WERE GRANTED TO CANDIDATES WHO HAD PASSED THE RELEVANT EXAMINATIONS COVERING A RANGE OF SUBJECTS INCLUDING SAFE BOATING PRACTICES.

MRS CHAN SAID THE GENERAL CONTENT OF THE EXAMINATION FOR OPERATOR CERTIFICATES WAS BEING REVIEWED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE HONG KONG YACHTING ASSOCIATION.

"THE DIRECTOR OF MARINE DOES NOT ANTICIPATE MAJOR CHANGES TO THESE REQUIREMENTS BUT HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE GREATER EMPHASIS PLACED ON TRAINING COURSES GIVING PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE RATHER THAN RELYING SOLELY ON A WRITTEN EXAMINATION."

SHE ADDED THAT THE MARINE POLICE AND THE MARINE DEPARTMENT MAINTAINED REGULAR PATROLS TO ENFORCE REGULATIONS ON SAFE NAVIGATION IN THE WATERS OF HONG KONG.

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RISKY TO ENTRUST MONEY IN UNREGULATED FOREIGN EXCHANGE COMPANIES: FS

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IT IS NEVER SENSIBLE TO ENTRUST ONE'S MONEY IN THE HANDS OF PEOPLE WHO LACK A GOOD TRACK RECORD OF SAFEGUARDING THE INTERESTS OF THEIR CLIENTS, HOWEVER ATTRACTIVE THEIR SALES LITERATURE OR THE PROMISES THEY MAKE, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR PIERS JACOBS, INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MICHAEL CHENG, SIR PIERS SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS AWARE OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THOSE SO-CALLED FOREIGN EXCHANGE COMPANIES AND THE COMPLAINTS FROM INVESTORS WHO CLAIMED TO HAVE FALLEN VICTIM IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH THESE COMPANIES.

"WHILST I BELIEVE THAT INVESTORS HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO BE CAREFUL AND PRUDENT IN TAKING CARE OF THEIR OWN MONEY, I ACCEPT THAT THERE IS DOUBT AS TO WHETHER OR NOT SMALL INVESTORS ARE IN A POSITION TO ASSESS OBJECTIVELY ALL THE RISKS INVOLVED."

HE SAID HE WAS NOT SO MUCH WORRIED ABOUT INVESTORS' INABILITY TO ASSESS THE RISKS OF INVESTING IN LEVERAGED CONTRACTS IN FOREIGN EXCHANGE.

"WHAT IS OF MORE CONCERN TO ME IS THEIR INABILITY TO ASSESS THE RISKS OF GIVING FULL DISCRETION TO THESE UNREGULATED FOREIGN EXCHANGE COMPANIES, PURPORTEDLY TO INVEST ON THEIR BEHALF, THUS SUBJECTING THEMSELVES TO THE POSSIBILITY OF RIGGED TRADING AND CHURNING BY SOME OF THESE COMPANIES."

SIR PIERS SAID AN INTERNAL WORKING GROUP IN THE MONETARY AFFAIRS BRANCH HAD BEEN LOOKING AT THE MATTER AND THREE OPTIONS COULD BE IDENTIFIED.

THE FIRST IS TO ALLOW THESE COMPANIES TO REGULATE THEMSELVES.

"IN VIEW OF THE NATURE AND THE RECORD OF COMPLAINTS, I CONSIDER THIS TO BE AN UNACCEPTABLE OPTION.

"ALTHOUGH SOME OF THESE COMPANIES HAVE TAKEN STEPS TO FORM THEMSELVES INTO ASSOCIATIONS, AND THERE HAS BEEN MUCH PUBLICITY ABOUT SUCH MATTERS AS THE DRAFTING OF CODES OF PRACTICE, WE HAVE YET TO BE CONVINCED THAT THESE DEVELOPMENTS WILL RESULT IN INVESTORS BEING PROVIDED WITH THE PROTECTION THEY NEED," HE SAID.

HE URGED INVESTORS TO NOTE THAT NONE OF THOSE ASSOCIATIONS HAD BEEN RECOGNISED OR IN ANY WAY ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT AS A SELF-REGULATORY ORGANISATION.

THE SECOND OPTION IS TO CREATE A NEW AND COMPREHENSIVE REGULATORY SYSTEM FOR THIS TYPE OF ACTIVITY.

SIR PIERS SAID: "SUCH A SYSTEM COULD INCLUDE A REGISTRATION PROCEDURE OPEN ONLY TO COMPANIES WHICH ARE CONSIDERED FIT AND PROPER BY A REGISTRATION AUTHORITY, AND THE REGISTRATION OF DIRECTORS, ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES AND MANAGERS OF DISCRETIONARY ACCOUNTS."

"THERE COULD BE FULL CAPITAL ADEQUACY REQUIREMENTS, ELABORATE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF ACCOUNTS AND CLEAR DOCUMENTATION, STANDARDISED MARGIN REQUIREMENTS, A CODE OF CONDUCT, AND POSSIBLY A COMPENSATION FUND.

"THE REGULATOR COULD BE GIVEN POWERS OF INSPECTION AND ENQUIRY, AND THERE COULD BE DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS, SANCTIONS AND PENALTIES AGAINST MALPRACTICES, INCLUDING REVOCATION OF REGISTRATION," HE SAID.

SIR PIERS ADDED THAT HE HAD A CONCERN OVER SUCH AN OPTION.

"A NEW AND COMPREHENSIVE REGULATORY SYSTEM WOULD BE VERY EXPENSIVE FOR TAX PAYERS."

HE SAID AUTHORISED INSTITUTIONS UNDER THE BANKING ORDINANCE, WHICH WERE SUPERVISED BY THE COMMISSIONER OF BANKING, AND OTHER WELL-ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL REPUTE PROVIDED OPPORTUNITIES TO INVEST IN FOREIGN CURRENCIES.

"THE EXTENT OF LEVERAGE THAT SUCH INSTITUTIONS ARE PREPARED TO OFFER MAY WELL BE LOWER, BUT THIS IS ON GROUNDS OF PRUDENCE AND IS, I BELIEVE, IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF INVESTORS THEMSELVES."

THE THIRD OPTION WAS TO RESTRICT ACTIVITIES TO INSTITUTIONS THAT WERE SUPERVISED BY THE EXISTING AUTHORITIES, FOR EXAMPLE, AUTHORISED INSTITUTIONS UNDER THE BANKING ORDINANCE, AND CERTAIN SPECIFIED PERSONS UNDER THE SECURITIES AND THE COMMODITIES TRADING ORDINANCES.

SIR PIERS SAID THE OPTION WOULD HAVE THE DISADVANTAGE OF HITTING EVERYBODY WHO WAS OUTSIDE THE EXISTING REGULATORY SYSTEM.

"PROVISION WOULD THEREFORE NEED TO BE MADE UNDER SUCH AN OPTION FOR THOSE WHICH ARE PRUDENTLY RUN TO OFFER THEMSELVES TO BE CONSIDERED FOR INCLUSION WITHIN THIS FRAMEWORK.

"THIS IS THE OPTION WE AT PRESENT FAVOUR," SIR PIERS SAID.

HE ADDED THAT AMENDMENTS TO LEGISLATION WOULD BE REQUIRED, AND FURTHER EXAMINATION OF THE MATTER WAS NECESSARY BEFORE A DECISION COULD BE TAKEN.

IN THE MEANTIME, THE GOVERNMENT HAD FREQUENTLY BEEN ISSUING "HEALTH WARNINGS" ABOUT THE RISKS OF DEALING WITH THESE UNREGULATED FOREIGN EXCHANGE COMPANIES.

SIR PIERS STRESSED THAT INVESTORS THEMSELVES HAD A RESPONSIBILITY.

"IT IS ALWAYS WISER TO RELY UPON THE SERVICES OF A REPUTABLE AND WELL-ESTABLISHED INSTITUTION EVEN IF THE RETURNS OFFERED SEEM LESS EXCITING," HE SAID.

REDEMPTION OF JAPANESE MILITARY CURRENCY -- A MATTER FOR UK GOVT

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THE REDEMPTION OF JAPANESE MILITARY CURRENCY HELD BY LOCAL RESIDENTS IS A MATTER FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, AND NOT THE GOVERNMENT OF HONG KONG, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR PIERS JACOBS, INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ELSIE TU, SIR PIERS SAID: "QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE ALLEGED RESPONSIBILITY OF A FOREIGN GOVERNMENT ARE MATTERS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, AND NOT THE GOVERNMENT OF HONG KONG.

"THIS MATTER HAS BEEN REFERRED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, AND IT IS STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION," HE ADDED.

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THREE MOTIONS PASSED IN LEGCO

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THREE MOTIONS WERE PASSED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THEY WERE MADE UNDER : INTERPRETATION AND GENERAL CLAUSES ORDINANCE WHICH WAS MOVED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY; THE HON SIR PIERS JACOBS; TELEPHONE ORDINANCE MOVED BY THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, THE HON ANSON CHAN; AND WEAPONS ORDINANCE MOVED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY.

THE KOWLOON-CANTON RAILWAY CORPORATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990 WAS ALSO PASSED WITH NO AMENDMENT.

TWO REPORTS WERE TABLED. THEY WERE VOCATIONAL TRAINING COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 1989/90 AND THE ANNUAL ACCOUNTS AND BALANCE SHEETS OF HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 1990.

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INGREDIENTS OF HONG KONG'S SUCCESS OUTLAST THE TRANSITION

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THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS OF HONG KONG'S RECIPE FOR SUCCESS WILL OUTLAST THE TRANSITION, THE DEPUTY TO THE GOVERNOR, SIR DAVID FORD, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

DELIVERING A KEYNOTE ADDRESS TO A SEMINAR ORGANISED BY THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ON "STRAIGHTENING BUSINESS CONFIDENCE IN HONG KONG", SIR DAVID GAVE A BROAD PERSPECTIVE OF HOW THE GOVERNMENT SAW HONG KONG: HONG KONG ITSELF, HONG KONG IN RELATION TO CHINA AND HONG KONG AS A PART OF THE WIDER ASIAN PACIFIC REGION.

SIR DAVID POINTED OUT THAT EVERY TIME HE TRAVELLED ABROAD, HE WAS STRUCK BY HOW DIFFICULT IT WAS TO SHAKE OFF AN OLD IMAGE.

HE SAID THE AMERICAN WHO SAW HONG KONG ON AN R&R VISIT DURING THE VIETNAM WAR HAD DIFFICULTY ACCEPTING THAT HONG KONG PEOPLE NOW ENJOYED A STANDARD OF LIVING WHICH COMPARED WELL WITH MUCH OF THE DEVELOPED WORLD; THAT ITS PER CAPITA GDP WAS HIGHER THAN SEVERAL EUROPEAN COUNTRIES THAT HONG KONG HAD BECOME AN ULTRA-MODERN METROPOLIS WHICH REVELLED IN HIGH-TECH GADGETS; THAT COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORTATION WERE RAPID AND EFFICIENT, AND THAT HONG KONG'S STANDARDS OF HEALTH AND EDUCATION COMPARED WELL WITH THE BEST IN THE WORLD.

"FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT COME HERE TO SEE FOR THEMSELVES HONG KONG IS SYNONYMOUS WITH 1997," SAID SIR DAVID.

HE STRESSED THAT THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT PLANNED BEYOND THAT DATE AND REFERRED TO THE PLANS FOR BOTH PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE.

SIR DAVID OUTLINED HOW HE SAW HONG KONG'S ECONOMIC ROLE AND THE REASONS WHY HE BELIEVED THAT ULTIMATELY IT WAS THAT ROLE WHICH WOULD SURVIVE 1997 AND CARRY HONG KONG INTO THE 21ST CENTURY AS BUSTLING AND DYNAMIC AS EVER.

"UNDERLYING ANY CLEAR-EYED APPRECIATION OF HONG KONG'S POTENTIAL IS LOCATION," SIR DAVID SAID.

HE DETAILED THE ROLE PLAYED BY HONG KONG AS THE NATURAL ENTREPOT BETWEEN CHINA AND THE REST OF THE WORLD; AS AN ENTREPOT FOR NON-CHINA REGIONAL TRADE; AND AS A MAJOR FINANCIAL CENTRE.

"THIS IS NOT A NATURAL ROLE, BUT ONE WHICH WE HAVE CREATED AND BUILT UP FOR OURSELVES. I HAVE NO DOUBT WE WILL RETAIN IT.

"OTHERS STEER BUSINESS IN OUR DIRECTION BY RESTRICTING WHERE WE ARE LIBERAL, AND SWITCHING POLICIES WHILST WE REMAIN STABLE AND PREDICTABLE.

"BUT TO STAY AHEAD, WE MUST KEEP UP OUR RECORD OF CONTINUOUS RE-INVESTMENT IN COMMUNICATIONS," HE ADDED.

ON HONG KONG'S MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY, SIR DAVID SAID HONG KONG NOW PRODUCED MORE SOPHISTICATED PRODUCTS FOR THE MIDDLE AND UPPER END OF THE MARKET.

"DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY CONTINUE TO IMPROVE AS COMPETITION FROM ELSEWHERE IN THE REGION CONCENTRATES THE MINDS OF OUR ENTREPRENEURS ON INCREASING VALUE ADDED.

"THIS IS A TREND WHICH WILL CONTINUE AS WE BECOME MORE EXPERIENCED IN MANAGING PRODUCTION ELSEWHERE," HE SAID.

POINTING OUT THAT HONG KONG HAD ALSO BECOME A SERVICE HUB FOR OFF-SHORE PRODUCTION, SIR DAVID SAID TRADE RESTRICTIONS ORIGINALLY DROVE SOME OF HONG KONG'S TEXTILES AND CLOTHING MANUFACTURERS TO INVEST ABROAD.

"OTHER INDUSTRIES HAVE FOLLOWED THEIR LEAD AND YOU WILL NOW FIND PLANTS OWNED AND OPERATED BY HONG KONG FIRMS NOT ONLY IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA, BUT ALSO THE CARIBBEAN, CENTRAL AND NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE.

"OUR BUSINESSMEN NOW THINK GLOBALLY, MULTI-NATIONALLY.

"IN THIS THEY ARE SEVERAL STEPS AHEAD OF THEIR COMPETITORS IN KOREA AND TAIWAN AND THERE IS A PARALLEL TREND IN INVESTMENT IN THE SERVICE SECTOR INDUSTRIES SUCH AS HOTELS," SIR DAVID SAID.

MORE RECENTLY, HE POINTED OUT THAT CHINA'S REOPENING HAD PRESENTED NEW OPPORTUNITIES AND HONG KONG'S BUSINESSMEN HAD BEEN QUICK TO RESPOND.

"THEY HAVE INVESTED NEARLY \$90 BILLION IN CHINA, MOSTLY IN THE SOUTH. IN THE PROCESS THEY HAVE CREATED EMPLOYMENT FOR SOME TWO MILLION PEOPLE IN GUANGDONG - TWO-AND-A-HALF TIMES HONG KONG'S OWN MANUFACTURING WORKFORCE.

"HONG KONG HAS BECOME THE ENGINE GROWTH FOR THE SOUTH - BETWEEN 1984 AND 1989 GUANDONG HAS GROWN AT AN ANNUAL AVERAGE RATE OF OVER 14 PER CENT, COMPARED WITH 9 PER CENT FOR CHINA AS A WHOLE," HE SAID.

"ABUNDANT LAND, LABOUR AND A WILLINGNESS TO LEARN ON ONE SIDE OF THE BORDER AND HONG KONG'S READY ACCESS TO CAPITAL, TECHNOLOGY, MANAGEMENT, AND MARKETING SKILLS ON THE OTHER FORM A POTENT SYMBIOSIS.

"NOWHERE ELSE IN THE REGION DOES SUCH A HAPPY JUXTAPOSITION OF COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE EXIST. THE POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH IN SOUTHERN CHINA IS ENORMOUS.

"HONG KONG IS FUELLING IT AND IS PERFECTLY PLACED TO BOTH AID AND BENEFIT FROM IT," SIR DAVID SAID.

ON THE ROLE OF HONG KONG AS A CENTRE FROM WHICH INTERNATIONAL FIRMS COULD RUN THEIR ASIAN OPERATIONS, SIR DAVID SAID HONG KONG OFFERED EVERYTHING THE MULTINATIONAL NEEDS: CONVENIENT TRANSPORTATION LINKS TO HEAD OFFICE AND THE REGION, FIRST CLASS COMMUNICATIONS, EFFICIENT, HARDWORKING, INCREASINGLY WELL EDUCATED PERSONNEL AND A REFRESHING ABSENCE OF RED TAPE.

"IT IS A MAGNETIC COMPOUND: WE HAVE EXPERIENCED, SINCE 1984, AN ANNUAL NET GAIN OF 60 COMPANIES ESTABLISHING REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS IN HONG KONG. THEY CONTINUE TO COME," HE SAID.

HE REITERATED THAT THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT HAD WORKED TO SECURE THE CONTINUITY OF POLICY, OF INSTITUTIONS AND OF PERSONNEL.

"AS A GOVERNMENT WE CONTINUE TO PLAN AND BUILD FOR AN ECONOMY WHICH WE BELIEVE WILL CONTINUE TO ADAPT AND TO GROW TO MEET THE OPPORTUNITIES I HAVE DESCRIBED.

"LIVING PROOF THAT WE ARE ON THE RIGHT TRACK IS THE INCREASING NUMBER OF FOREIGN BUSINESSMEN WHO HAVE PICKED HONG KONG AS THE GATEWAY TO THOSE OPPORTUNITIES," SIR DAVID SAID.

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STATEMENT ON TOWN PLANNING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990

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COMMENTING ON THE REMARKS MADE BY AN NCNA OFFICIAL ON THE TOWN PLANNING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990, A SPOKESMAN FOR THE PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS BRANCH TODAY (WEDNESDAY) SAID:

"WE ARE QUITE PUZZLED BY THE STATEMENT MADE BY THE NCNA.

"THERE IS NOTHING IN THE TOWN PLANNING (AMENDMENT) BILL WHICH CONFLICTS WITH THE JOINT DECLARATION.

"SINCE THE BILL WAS FIRST GAZETTED IN JULY THIS YEAR, THE GOVERNMENT HAS UNDERTAKEN EXTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS WITH VARIOUS SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY AND PROFESSIONAL BODIES.

"WE HAVE ALSO RECEIVED WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS FROM A LARGE NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS AND CONCERNED PARTIES. ALL VIEWS RECEIVED HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AD HOC GROUP FOR THEIR REFERENCE WHEN THEY CONSIDER THE AMENDMENT BILL.

"THERE IS NO QUESTION OF THE GOVERNMENT RUSHING THROUGH THE BILL WITHOUT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT PUBLIC VIEWS.

"THE BILL IS AIMED AT PROVIDING A BASIS FOR PROPER PLANNING ON LAND USE AND PREVENTING FURTHER DETERIORATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE NEW TERRITORIES IN THE INTEREST OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE."

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LAND COMMISSION MEETING TODAY  
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THE 21ST MEETING OF THE SINO-BRITISH LAND COMMISSION WAS HELD TODAY (DECEMBER 5).

AFTER REVIEWING THE 1990/91 LAND DISPOSAL PROGRAMME, THE TWO SIDES EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH THE PROGRESS MADE SO FAR, AND AGREED THAT THE SUPPLEMENTARY LAND DISPOSAL PROGRAMME WOULD NOT BE DRAWN ON AT THIS STAGE.

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JLG MEETING NEXT WEEK  
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THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE ANNOUNCED THIS (WEDNESDAY) MORNING THAT THE 17TH MEETING OF THE SINO-BRITISH JOINT LIAISON GROUP ON HONG KONG WILL TAKE PLACE IN HONG KONG FROM DECEMBER 11 TO 14.

THE BRITISH TEAM WILL BE LED BY THE SENIOR REPRESENTATIVE, MR ANTHONY GALSWORTHY. THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE BRITISH TEAM WILL BE MR MICHAEL SUEN (SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS, HONG KONG), MR DOUG MARTIN (COUNSELLOR, OFFICE OF THE BRITISH SENIOR REPRESENTATIVE, SINO-BRITISH JOINT LIAISON GROUP, HONG KONG), MR ALAN PAUL (HEAD, HONG KONG DEPARTMENT, FCO), AND MR WILLIAM EHRMAN (POLITICAL ADVISER, HONG KONG).

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URUGUAY ROUND MINISTERIAL-LEVEL MEETING IN BRUSSELS  
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MEMBERS OF THE HONG KONG DELEGATION ATTENDING THE MINISTERIAL-LEVEL MEETING TO CONCLUDE THE URUGUAY ROUND OF MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS IN BRUSSELS HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE TALKS SINCE THEY STARTED ON MONDAY (DECEMBER 3).

THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR JOHN CHAN, WHO IS LEADING THE DELEGATION, SAID MAJOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE TALKS HAD SINCE THEN BEEN MEETING, BOTH IN PLENARY AND UNDER VARIOUS GROUPS AND SUB-GROUPS COVERING THE 15 NEGOTIATING AREAS OF THE ROUND.

"GIVEN ITS WIDE INTERESTS AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION SINCE THE LAUNCHING OF THE ROUND FOUR YEARS AGO, HONG KONG HAS BEEN INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN ALL OF THESE GROUPS EXCEPT THE ONE ON AGRICULTURE," HE SAID.

MR CHAN SAID THE HONG KONG DELEGATION HAD ALSO HELD BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH VARIOUS TRADING PARTNERS IN PARALLEL WITH THE GROUP MEETINGS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS, INCLUDING TEXTILES AND CLOTHING, TARIFFS, ANTI-DUMPING, SAFEGUARDS, RULES OF ORIGIN, TRADE IN SERVICES AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY.

"ON MOST OF THESE SUBJECTS, THE TALKS HAVE BEEN USEFUL, BUT THERE HAS BEEN NO MOVEMENT FROM ENTRENCHED POSITIONS IN ANY OF THE MAJOR AREAS.

"IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED AMONG DELEGATIONS THAT THE NEGOTIATIONS ON AGRICULTURE WILL MAKE OR BREAK THE ROUND AND INDEED THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MINISTERIAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS COMMITTEE HAS SAID THAT THE PROCESS NOW STANDS BLOCKED.

"THE CHAIRMAN ALSO SAID THAT 'THERE SHOULD BE SUBSTANTIAL BREAKTHROUGHS IN THE NEXT 24 HOURS IN A NUMBER OF KEY AREAS, INCLUDING, IN PARTICULAR, AGRICULTURE, IF THE MEETING IS TO END WITH A PACKAGE OF RESULTS TRULY MEANINGFUL FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS'," MR CHAN SAID.

MR CHAN ADDED THAT THE HONG KONG DELEGATION WOULD BE INVOLVED IN VERY TOUGH NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE NEXT 24 HOURS IN ORDER TO TRY TO RESOLVE THE GENERAL IMPASSE.

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HONG KONG DELEGATION INCLUDE THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF TRADE, MR CHAU TAK-HAY; HONG KONG'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE GATT, MR KEITH BROADBRIDGE; AND OTHER HONG KONG GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

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#### FEWER INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS IN MOST TRADES

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THE UPWARD TREND OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS IN MOST TRADES HAS SHOWN SIGNS OF CURB IN THE FIRST THREE QUARTERS OF THIS YEAR.

ACCORDING TO STATISTICS RELEASED BY THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT TODAY (WEDNESDAY), 31,244 INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS WITH 55 FATALITIES WERE REPORTED BETWEEN JANUARY AND SEPTEMBER THIS YEAR. (NOTE: AN "ACCIDENT" REFERS TO A CASE INVOLVING ONE INJURED PERSON OR ONE DEATH)

"THIS REPRESENTS A DROP OF FOUR PER CENT FROM THE 32,513 ACCIDENTS WITH 61 DEATHS RECORDED IN THE SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR," THE DEPARTMENT'S CHIEF FACTORY INSPECTOR, MR YIP YUK-LUN, SAID.

MR YIP EXPLAINED THAT THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DECREASE WAS IN THE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY, WHICH SAW A DROP OF 11 PER CENT TO 13,031 ACCIDENTS WITH SIX FATALITIES, FOLLOWED BY A TWO PER CENT FALL TO 3,122 ACCIDENTS AND SIX FATALITIES IN THE MINING, QUARRYING, UTILITIES, TRANSPORT AND SERVICING INDUSTRIES.

"IN THE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY, THE GREATEST DECREASE WAS IN THE WEARING APPAREL AND ELECTRONICS INDUSTRIES, DOWN RESPECTIVELY FROM 2,256 TO 1,872 ACCIDENTS AND FROM 693 TO 592 ACCIDENTS, WHILE THE FIGURE FOR THE SHIPBUILDING AND REPAIRING INDUSTRY HAS GONE UP FROM 496 TO 573 ACCIDENTS," HE NOTED.

/HOWEVER, MR .....

HOWEVER, MR YIP SAID ACCIDENTS CONTINUED TO TAKE A HEAVY TOLL IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY DURING THE PERIOD, WHICH ROSE BY THREE PER CENT TO 15,091 CASES.

"THE INDUSTRY ALSO ACCOUNTED FOR 43 OF THE 55 FATAL CASES IN ALL INDUSTRIES," HE ADDED.

THEY INCLUDED 21 WORKERS KILLED IN FALLS FROM HEIGHTS, EIGHT BY MACHINERY, SEVEN BY FALLING OBJECTS, THREE BY ELECTRICITY, TWO BY GASES OR TOXIC SUBSTANCES, ONE BY COLLAPSED SOIL AND ONE AS A RESULT OF STEPPING ON OR STRIKING AGAINST OBJECTS.

FATALITIES IN OTHER INDUSTRIES RELATED TO MACHINERY (FIVE CASES), ELECTRICITY (TWO CASES), TRANSPORT (TWO CASES), FALL OF PERSON (ONE CASE), HOT OR CORROSIVE SUBSTANCES (ONE CASE) AND GAS POISONING OR TOXIC SUBSTANCES (ONE CASE).

MR YIP NOTED THAT THE MAJOR CAUSES OF THE INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS WERE INVARIABLY SIMILAR TO THOSE IN PREVIOUS YEARS.

"THEY WERE CAUSED BY STEPPING ON OR STRIKING AGAINST OBJECTS (10,052 CASES), MANUAL LIFTING OF WEIGHTS (5,503 CASES), MACHINERY (4,838 CASES), FALL OF PERSONS (3,443 CASES), HAND TOOLS (2,040 CASES) AND FALLING OBJECTS (1,850 CASES)," HE SAID.

"OTHERS WERE DUE TO HOT OR CORROSIVE SUBSTANCES, TRANSPORT, EXPLOSION OR FIRE, ELECTRICITY, GAS POISONING OR TOXIC SUBSTANCES, COLLAPSE OF SOIL AND SO ON," HE ADDED.

MR YIP APPEALED TO INDUSTRIAL PROPRIETORS AND WORKERS TO MAKE THE GREATEST EFFORT IN ENSURING THE SAFETY OF THE WORKPLACE.

"ALMOST ALL OF THESE TRAGIC ACCIDENTS COULD IN FACT HAVE BEEN PREVENTED HAD ALL PARTIES CONCERNED TAKEN THE NECESSARY PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES," HE STRESSED.

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#### SWD CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION ON TRAICES CASES

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A SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN TODAY (WEDNESDAY) REITERATED THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO DEAL WITH THE 8,000 TRAFFIC RECORD AND IMMIGRATION CONTROL ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM (TRAICES) CASES, WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN DEALT WITH BECAUSE OF THE INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY THE WELFARE ASSISTANTS GRADE STAFF IN THE DEPARTMENT.

AT A MEETING WITH THE MANAGEMENT YESTERDAY, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE WELFARE ASSISTANTS BRANCH OF THE HONG KONG CHINESE CIVIL SERVANTS' ASSOCIATION WERE TOLD THAT THE DEPARTMENT MUST TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION ON THESE CASES, AS MANY OF THE OLD AGE ALLOWANCE RECIPIENTS ARE STILL AWAY FROM HONG KONG, SOME OF WHOM FOR GOOD.

/THESE PEOPLE .....

THESE PEOPLE WAS ANTICIPATED TO CONSTITUTE SOME 90 PER CENT OF THE 8,000 CASES. OVERPAYMENT TO THEM WOULD CONTINUE IF NO ACTION WAS TAKEN.

THE TRAICES MATCHING IS TO DETECT THROUGH COMPUTER RECORDS ABSENCE OF OLD AGE ALLOWANCE RECIPIENTS FROM HONG KONG AND TO IDENTIFY CASES WHO HAVE BEEN OVERPAID AS A RESULT OF HAVING LEFT THE TERRITORY FOR OVER 90 DAYS IN ONE YEAR.

THE SOME 500 WELFARE ASSISTANTS GRADE STAFF WERE ASKED TO CONTACT (BY PHONE OR BY MAIL), IN A WEEK'S TIME, SOME 8,000 OLD AGE ALLOWANCE RECIPIENTS WHO, ACCORDING TO THE MATCHING OF IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT'S MOVEMENT RECORDS IN SEPTEMBER 90, HAVE EXTENSIVE ABSENCE PERIODS FROM HONG KONG AND HAVE NOT RETURNED TO THE TERRITORY.

IT WAS THEREFORE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST THAT THE DEPARTMENT'S STAFF SHOULD PROCESS THESE CASES, WHICH IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THEIR DUTIES, THE SPOKESMAN ADDED.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID A SERIES OF SIMPLIFICATION PROCEDURES HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS TO ACHIEVE STAFF SAVING IN COPING WITH THE ADDITIONAL WORK.

THESE INCLUDED PAYMENT EXTENSION OF OLD AGE ALLOWANCE WITHOUT CASE REVIEWS AND EXTENSION OF THE REVIEW CYCLES FOR CERTAIN CATEGORIES OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE CASES, SUCH AS STABLE CASES, SINGLETONS AND SIMPLE FAMILY CASES.

ABOUT A HUNDRED STAFF COULD THUS BE RELEASED TO DEAL WITH WORK RELATED TO TRAICES CASES.

THE SPOKESMAN STRESSED THAT SUCH WORK MUST BE ACCORDED PRIORITY.

"STAFF OF THE GRADE WILL BE ADVISED AGAIN THAT TO RESUME PROCESSING ALL THE TRAICES CASES IS PART OF THE NORMAL DUTIES OF THE WELFARE ASSISTANTS GRADE. ANY ATTEMPT BY THE STAFF TO DELAY THE WORK WOULD INCUR A SERIOUS LOSS OF PUBLIC FUNDS AND WOULD NOT BE IN KEEPING WITH THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AS PUBLIC SERVANTS. THE MANAGEMENT WILL TAKE A SERIOUS VIEW OF ANY SUCH ACTIONS," THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

THE STAFF SIDE WAS ALSO ASSURED THAT THE MANAGEMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO HOLD DIALOGUES WITH THEM IN ORDER TO RESOLVE THE MANPOWER ISSUE.

MEANWHILE, THE MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT IS STILL STUDYING THE FINANCE BRANCH'S REVISED MANNING SCALE REPORT. IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT A DECISION WOULD BE MADE IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

ANNUAL SEARCH AND RESCUE EXERCISE STARTS

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THE ANNUAL SEARCH AND RESCUE EXERCISE ORGANISED BY THE CIVIL AVIATION DEPARTMENT (CAD) AND INVOLVING A NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND EMERGENCY UNITS FROM THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION BEGAN TODAY (WEDNESDAY) AND WILL LAST FOR TWO DAYS.

A SPOKESMAN FOR CAD SAID THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE EXERCISE IS TO TRAIN AND FAMILIARISE STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT AND OTHER SUPPORTING UNITS IN SEARCH AND RESCUE TECHNIQUES.

"THE ALERTING AND CO-ORDINATING PROCEDURES AND COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES WILL ALSO BE TESTED," HE SAID.

"IN ADDITION, IT WILL PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REPRESENTATIVES FROM GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND EMERGENCY SERVICES OF NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EXERCISE AND TO CO-ORDINATE THEIR PROCEDURES."

COMPRISING A SHORT-RANGE AND A LONG-RANGE SEARCH OPERATION, THE EXERCISE WILL INVOLVE FIXED-WING AIRCRAFT, HELICOPTERS AND VESSELS.

IN THE SHORT-RANGE EXERCISE THIS AFTERNOON, THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE PARA-RESCUERS DEMONSTRATED THEIR RESCUE TECHNIQUE NEAR THE NINEPIN GROUP OF ISLANDS AND THE ROYAL HONG KONG AUXILIARY AIR FORCE AND ROYAL AIR FORCE HELICOPTERS DEMONSTRATED WINCHING OF SURVIVORS FROM THE SEA.

THE LONG-RANGE EXERCISE WILL BE ACTIVATED THIS EVENING SIMULATING AN AIRCRAFT IN DISTRESS ABOUT 70 MILES SOUTHEAST OF HONG KONG. AIRCRAFT, HELICOPTERS AND SHIPS WILL BE DISPATCHED TO SEARCH AND LOCATE THE TARGETS IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA.

TAKING PART IN THIS YEAR'S SEARCH AND RESCUE EXERCISE ARE THE CIVIL AVIATION DEPARTMENT, ROYAL HONG KONG POLICE FORCE, ROYAL NAVY, ROYAL HONG KONG AUXILIARY AIR FORCE, ROYAL AIR FORCE, CIVIL AID SERVICES, MARINE DEPARTMENT, FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT, AND OTHER EMERGENCY UNITS FROM THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION.

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CHANGE IN FC MEETING SCHEDULE

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THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING ON JANUARY 11 HAS BEEN CANCELLED.

THE COMMITTEE'S MEETING ON JANUARY 25 IS PUT FORWARD TO JANUARY 18. IT WILL BEGIN AT 2.30 PM IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

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MASSIVE GET-TOGETHER FOR FAMILIES IN YAU TSIM

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A FAMILY DAY FOR MORE THAN 300 FAMILIES IN THE YAU TSIM DISTRICT WILL BE HELD AT THE WU KAI SHA YOUTH VILLAGE IN SHA TIN ON SUNDAY (DECEMBER 9) AFTERNOON.

THE GATHERING IS ORGANISED BY THE DISTRICT FESTIVAL'S FAMILY WEEK WORKING GROUP TO PROMOTE "FAMILY HAPPINESS" AND TO PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR MAKING NEW FRIENDSHIPS.

PRECEDING THE GATHERING WILL BE OUTINGS AND PICNICS TO BE ORGANISED BY THE DISTRICT'S FIVE AREA COMMITTEES AND A WOMEN'S GROUP, THE YIN NGAI SOCIETY, IN THE MORNING.

THE FAMILY DAY AT WU KAI SHA YOUTH VILLAGE WILL OFFICIALLY BEGIN AT 2 PM PROVIDING FUN AND GAMES.

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FUNDS FOR LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS IN SOUTHERN

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ORGANISATIONS IN SOUTHERN DISTRICT WISHING TO APPLY FOR DISTRICT BOARD SUBSIDIES FOR HOLDING LUNAR NEW YEAR ACTIVITIES ARE REMINDED TO SUBMIT THEIR APPLICATIONS BEFORE THE DEADLINE ON MONDAY (DECEMBER 10).

APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE MADE TO THE DISTRICT BOARD'S COMMUNITY BUILDING AND AFFAIRS COMMITTEE FOR CONSIDERATION.

A DISTRICT BOARD SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE COMMITTEE HAS SET ASIDE ABOUT \$70,000, WHICH THE URBAN COUNCIL HAS ALLOCATED \$10,000 FOR LUNAR NEW YEAR ACTIVITIES.

MEANWHILE, THE COMMITTEE IS ALSO ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR DISTRICT BOARD FUNDS FOR OTHER COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROJECTS. ACCEPTANCE OF THESE APPLICATIONS WILL ALSO CLOSE ON THE SAME DAY.

A SET OF APPLICATION GUIDELINES IS AVAILABLE FOR REFERENCE FROM THE COMMITTEE SECRETARY, MISS KAREN CHEUNG, SOUTHERN DISTRICT OFFICE, SECOND FLOOR, MEI FUNG COURT, 7-11 NAM NING STREET, ABERDEEN CENTRE.

ENQUIRIES CAN BE MADE ON TEL. 554 0271.

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BUILDING MANAGEMENT SEMINAR IN EASTERN

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FLAT OWNERS OF PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS WILL BE BRIEFED ON WAYS TO DEAL WITH ILLEGAL STRUCTURES AT A BUILDING MANAGEMENT SEMINAR IN CAUSEWAY BAY ON SATURDAY (DECEMBER 8).

A SENIOR BUILDING SURVEYOR OF THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT, MR YIP SO, WILL SPEAK ON THE SUBJECT AND ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR.

THE THREE-HOUR SEMINAR WILL START AT 2.30 PM. IT WILL COVER TOPICS SUCH AS HOME SECURITY MEASURES, PROPER BUILDING MANAGEMENT AND RELATED FINANCIAL MATTERS. ADMISSION IS FREE.

THERE WILL ALSO BE A DISPLAY OF 14 EXHIBITS ON THE COMMON PROBLEMS IN MULTI-STOREY BUILDINGS, THE OPERATION OF AN OWNERS' CORPORATION, THE ROLES OF VARIOUS GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS IN BUILDING MANAGEMENT AND THE WORK OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE BUILDING MANAGEMENT.

THE SEMINAR IS JOINTLY ORGANISED BY THE EASTERN DISTRICT OFFICE AND THE EASTERN DISTRICT FEDERATION OF MULTI-STOREY BUILDING ORGANISATIONS, WITH SPONSORSHIP FROM THE DISTRICT BOARD.

OFFICIATING AT THE SEMINAR WILL BE EASTERN DISTRICT OFFICER, MR STEVE BARCLAY; CHAIRMAN OF THE DISTRICT FEDERATION OF MULTI-STOREY BUILDING ORGANISATIONS, MRS CHOW SUN FONG-CHUNG; AND EASTERN DISTRICT BOARD CHAIRMAN, MR SHUM CHOI-SANG.

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ATTENTION NEWS EDITORS:

MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES ARE INVITED TO COVER THE EASTERN DISTRICT BUILDING MANAGEMENT SEMINAR WHICH WILL BEGIN AT 2.30 PM ON SATURDAY (DECEMBER 8) IN THE HALL OF THE CAUSEWAY BAY COMMUNITY CENTRE, 7 FOOK YUM ROAD.

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