



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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NEW CURRENCY PLAN AIM FULFILLED SO FAR : SIR JOHN
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THE HONG KONG DOLLAR HAS NOT DEPRECIATED SINCE THE CURRENCY STABILISATION SCHEME WAS ANNOUNCED ON OCTOBER 15, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR JOHN BREMRIDGE, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON PETER C WONG, SIR JOHN POINTED OUT THAT THE EFFECTIVE INDEX RATE AGAINST A BASKET OF CURRENCIES HAD ACTUALLY APPRECIATED FROM 63.9 TO 68.6.

AGAINST THE LINKED RATE OF HK\$7.80 TO US\$1, HE SAID, THE MOVEMENT OF THE HONG KONG DOLLAR HAS BEEN LIMITED TO 0.25 PER CENT.

+THIS IS REMARKABLE, GIVEN THE EXTRAORDINARY RECENT STRENGTH OF THE U.S. DOLLAR, WHICH HAS CREATED HAVOC WITH OTHER MAJOR INTERNATIONALLY-TRADED CURRENCIES,+ SIR JOHN SAID.

+IN OTHER WORDS, SO FAR OUR NEW CURRENCY ARRANGEMENTS HAVE FULFILLED THEIR PURPOSE.+

BUT DAMAGE WAS DONE EARLIER, HE SAID, AND THE DEPRECIATION OF THE HONG KONG DOLLAR UP TO THE LOW POINT IN SEPTEMBER 24 RESULTED IN HIGHER IMPORT PRICES.

+THE RATE OF INFLATION, IN TERMS OF THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX, STAYED AT AROUND 9 PER CENT DURING THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF THIS YEAR, BUT PICKED UP TO 12.7 PER CENT IN OCTOBER. THE AVERAGE FOR 1983 AS A WHOLE IS LIKELY TO BE AROUND 10 PER CENT, ROUGHLY THE SAME AS IN 1982.

+BECAUSE IT TAKES TIME FOR HIGHER IMPORT PRICES TO WORK THROUGH THE ECONOMY, RETAIL PRICES TO CONSUMERS ARE AFFECTED ONLY AFTER A TIME LAG OF SEVERAL MONTHS.

+THUS, THE RATE OF INFLATION IN THE FOURTH QUARTER OF THIS YEAR AND IN THE EARLY MONTHS OF NEXT YEAR IS LIKELY TO RISE HIGHER AS A RESULT OF THE RAPID DEPRECIATION IN SEPTEMBER.+

BUT THE EFFECT OF THE DEPRECIATION OF THE EXCHANGE RATE ON PRICES WAS LIKELY TO BE DAMPENED BY A NUMBER OF OTHER MORE FAVOURABLE FACTORS, SIR JOHN POINTED OUT.

+LOCALLY, AGGREGATE DEMAND FOR RESOURCES IN THE ECONOMY IS NOT IMPOSING MUCH PRESSURE ON AGGREGATE SUPPLY AND THE GENERAL PRICE LEVEL- AND THE UNDERLYING GROWTH RATE OF THE MONEY SUPPLY IS MODERATE. EXTERNALLY, THE RATE OF INFLATION IN HONG KONG'S MAJOR TRADING PARTNERS HAS SLOWED DOWN.

+MOREOVER, THE CURRENCY STABILISATION MEASURES WILL CERTAINLY HAVE A DAMPENING EFFECT ON THE RATE OF INFLATION IN DUE COURSE.

+MOREOVER, THE DEPRECIATION OF THE HONG KONG DOLLAR HAS ENHANCED HONG KONG'S EXTERNAL COMPETITIVENESS AND HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE IMPRESSIVE PERFORMANCE OF THE EXPORT SECTOR THIS YEAR.

/+ANOTHER MAJOR

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+ANOTHER MAJOR SECTOR IS THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN THE U.S. AND SEVERAL OTHER EXPORT MARKETS. THE YEAR-ON-YEAR GROWTH RATE IN REAL TERMS OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS ACCELERATED TO 18 PER CENT IN THE THIRD QUARTER, FROM THREE PER CENT IN THE FIRST QUARTER AND 14 PER CENT IN THE SECOND QUARTER.

+WITH DOMESTIC DEMAND STILL RELATIVELY WEAK, THE RECOVERY OF THE EXPORT SECTOR HAS PROVIDED THE MAIN IMPETUS TO ECONOMIC GROWTH AND HAS RESULTED IN MORE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, SO THAT UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT RATES ARE NOW CONSIDERABLY BELOW THEIR PEAKS RECORDED EARLIER THIS YEAR.

+THE OUTLOOK FOR 1984/85 IS THUS ENCOURAGING,+ HE SAID.

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COMPUTER DATA PROTECTION UNDER STUDY

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THE WORKING GROUP ON PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION, SET UP IN JUNE THIS YEAR, HAS BEEN MEETING REGULARLY SINCE THEN, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR PHILIP HADDON-CAVE SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHEUNG YAN-LUNG, SIR PHILIP SAID, HOWEVER, THAT DATA PROTECTION IS A COMPLEX SUBJECT WHICH HAD BEEN STUDIED IN BRITAIN FOR 10 YEARS BEFORE THE DATA PROTECTION BILL REACHED PARLIAMENT.

HE EXPECTS THAT IT WILL BE SOME TIME YET BEFORE THE WORKING GROUP WILL BE IN A POSITION TO PRESENT ITS FINAL REPORT.

SIR PHILIP SAID THE WORKING GROUP IS CONDUCTING THE EXERCISE IN THREE STAGES: STAGE ONE, AN EXAMINATION OF THE PRESENT POSITION IN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS; STAGE TWO, AN EXAMINATION OF THE PRESENT POSITION IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR; AND STAGE THREE, IN THE LIGHT OF THE RESULTS OF THESE RESEARCH EXERCISES, AN EXAMINATION OF THE NEED FOR LEGISLATION COVERING BOTH GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

HE SAID STAGE ONE IS WELL IN HAND AND A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF INFORMATION HAS BEEN COLLECTED BY THE WORKING GROUP ABOUT THOSE COMPUTER SYSTEMS CONTAINING PERSONAL DATA WHICH ARE BEING OPERATED BY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

THE WORKING GROUP HAS COMMISSIONED THE GOVERNMENT DATA PROCESSING AGENCY TO DETERMINE JUST HOW PERSONAL DATA IS HANDLED AT PRESENT BY COMPUTER SYSTEMS IN SELECTED GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

AT THE SAME TIME, SIR PHILIP SAID, THE WORKING GROUP HAS BEEN COLLECTING INFORMATION ABOUT THE ACTION THAT IS BEING TAKEN IN THIS FIELD IN OTHER COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE UNITED KINGDOM, WHERE A DATA PROTECTION BILL IS NOW BEFORE PARLIAMENT.

+AND, IN THE LIGHT OF THIS INFORMATION, THE WORKING GROUP HAS BEEN CONSIDERING WHAT GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF DATA PROTECTION MIGHT BE SUITABLE FOR ADOPTION IN HONG KONG,+ HE SAID.

SIR PHILIP SAID FOR STAGE ONE, THE WORKING GROUP CONSISTS SOLELY OF OFFICIALS. HOWEVER, WHEN THE WORKING GROUP MOVES ON TO STAGE TWO, WHICH WILL BE FAIRLY SOON, IT WILL INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

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+OFFENSIVE+ TAX PROVISIONS REMOVED
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THREE UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY THAT THE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) (NO. 5) BILL REMOVED THE PROVISIONS DEEMED TO BE OFFENSIVE TO WOMEN FROM THE ORDINANCE BUT FAILED TO MEET THE REQUEST FOR SEPARATE TAXATION.

THE THREE - DR THE HON HO KAM-FAI, THE HON MARIA TAM AND THE HON PETER POON - WERE SPEAKING ON THE PROPOSALS INTRODUCED BY THE BILL. THEY, HOWEVER, SUPPORTED THE MOTION.

DR HO SAID, +THEY SEEK TO REMOVE THE PROVISIONS DEEMED TO BE OFFENSIVE TO WOMEN FROM THE ORDINANCE AND PERMIT SPOUSES TO MAKE TAX RETURN JOINTLY WITH EACH SPOUSE BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS OR HER SHARE OF THE TAX LIABILITY.+

+THE EFFECT WILL BE TO REMOVE THE STIGMA AND SEEMINGLY SECOND-CLASS STATUS HITHERTO ATTACHED TO THE WORKING WIFE. SHE WILL IN THE FUTURE FUNCTION AS A FULL-FLEDGED INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF THE FAMILY, BEING FULLY RECOGNISED FOR HER ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS AND FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR HER FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS.+

THESE CHANGES, DR HO ADDED, WOULD MEET THE ASPIRATIONS OF WOMEN IN PARTICULAR AND BRING THE ORDINANCE IN LINE WITH DEVELOPMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY IN GENERAL, BUT WOULD STILL PRESERVE THE TRADITIONAL CONCEPT OF THE FAMILY UNIT AS THE FISCAL UNIT OF CHARGE.

ON THE POTENTIAL FINANCIAL GAIN DERIVED FROM SEPARATE ASSESSMENT, DR HO NOTED THAT THE BILL DID NOT ADDRESS ITSELF TO IT.

HE SAID THAT THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY HAD MADE IT LOUD AND CLEAR IN HIS INTRODUCTORY SPEECH THAT THE PROPOSAL WOULD NOT GIVE RISE TO ANY SAVINGS IN THE TOTAL TAX PAYABLE BY THE FAMILY UNIT.

+HOWEVER, IF THE HUSBAND AND THE WIFE WERE TAXED SEPARATELY, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY HAS ESTIMATED IN MARCH 1983 THAT IN THE YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION, THE COST COULD BE IN THE ORDER OF \$285 MILLION,+ HE SAID.

DR HO - SUPPORTING THE MOTION - ADDED THAT THIS WAS NOT AN INSIGNIFICANT SUM TO FOREGO FOR THE ANNUAL BUDGET, AND WAS ALMOST EQUIVALENT TO THE GOVERNMENT SUBVENTIONS TO SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES FOR 1983-84.

THE SHORTFALL IN REVENUE MIGHT HAVE TO BE RECOUPED EITHER BY INCREASES IN TAX RATES OR BY NEW TAXES, WITH THE EFFECT OF PASSING THE TAXATION BURDEN BACK ONTO THE TAX-PAYING PUBLIC, HE WARNED.

+THEREFORE ANY SUCH PROPOSALS HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE WIDER PERSPECTIVE, WITH DUE REGARD TO THE PREVAILING FISCAL CONDITIONS AND THE LONG-TERM PERFORMANCE OF OUR ECONOMY,+ HE SAID.

/RECALLING HER

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RECALLING HER REMARKS ON THE SUBJECT IN THE BUDGET DEBATE, MISS TAM SAID, +AS I HAVE EXPLAINED IN MARCH THIS YEAR DURING THE BUDGET DEBATE IN THIS COUNCIL, THE REASON WHY A MARRIED WOMAN TAKES EMPLOYMENT IS EITHER BECAUSE THE FAMILY NEEDS THE SECOND WAGE PACKET SHE EARNS, OR THAT SHE HAS THE ABILITY TO WORK SO AS TO FULFIL HER ASPIRATION, OR BOTH.

+IT IS PROBABLY FOR THE SAME REASON THAT HER HUSBAND TAKES EMPLOYMENT, AND HENCE THERE IS NO REASON TO DENY HER THE RECOGNITION OF HER OWN IDENTITY, HER CONTRIBUTION TO THE FAMILY OR SOCIAL ECONOMY.+

SHE SAID THAT THE AMENDMENTS ANSWERED THE CRITICISM BASED ON THE +NARROW VIEW+ THAT OUR LAW FAILED TO MOVE WITH THE CHANGES OF TIME.

+HOWEVER, AS I HAVE EXPRESSED IN THE SAME BUDGET DEBATE, A BROADER VIEW OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SEPARATE TAXATION FOR MARRIED WOMEN IS THAT, IF THE WIFE'S TAX LIABILITY IS ASSESSED ON HER INCOME INDEPENDENTLY OF THAT OF HER HUSBAND, THERE CAN OFTEN BE A SAVING ON THE TAX PAYABLE ON THE TOP SLICE OF THE COUPLES' INCOME,+ SHE ADDED.

SHE BELIEVED THAT THE EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY WOULD WELCOME THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS IN THAT IT RECOGNISED THE WIFE'S SEPARATE IDENTITY. BUT THE CHINESE COMMUNITY HAD BEEN FAR MORE INTERESTED IN THE TAX SAVINGS WHICH THE BROADER INTERPRETATION OF THE CONCEPT OF SEPARATE TAXATION MIGHT OFFER.

+ACCEPTING THE FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS THAT WE ARE AT PRESENT UNDER AND THAT IT IS UNREALISTIC THEREFORE TO ASK FOR THE TAX CONCESSION THE GOVERNMENT HAS TO MAKE IN A TRULY SEPARATE ASSESSMENT OF THE WIFE'S INCOME, AND HOPING THAT THIS PROPOSED BILL INDICATES ONLY THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS FURTHER REFORMS AND TAX CONCESSIONS WHEN POSSIBLE, I SUPPORT THE MOTION,+ SHE CONCLUDED.

MR POON SAID THAT THE BILL +GIVES IDENTITY TO THE MARRIED WOMAN, REMOVES THE PROVISIONS DEEMED TO BE OFFENSIVE TO WOMEN AND GIVES HUSBANDS AND WIVES AN OPTION TO MAKE AN ELECTION FOR A JOINT RETURN WITH SEPARATE PAYMENT OF THEIR RESPECTIVE SHARES OF THE TAX BILL.+

+THUS MANY WILL WELCOME THE PROPOSAL OF SEPARATE ASSESSMENT BUT SOME MAY STILL BE UNHAPPY THAT SUCH APPLICATION CAN ONLY BE MADE JOINTLY BY BOTH SPOUSES AND NOT BY EITHER INDIVIDUAL AS PERMITTED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM,+ HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT SOME LONG-SUFFERING HUSBANDS HAD COMPLAINED THAT THEY HAD BEEN PAYING THEIR WIVES' TAXES WITHOUT EVER ENJOYING THEIR WIVES' SHARES OF INCOMES.

TURNING TO +SEPARATE TAXATION+, HE SAID, +THERE WILL STILL BE A LOT OF OUTCRY FROM WOMEN ABOUT DISCRIMINATION AND THAT FOR TAX PURPOSE, IT IS BETTER TO LIVE IN SIN THAN TO BE MARRIED.+

/+THIS HAS

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+THIS HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO BE SOMEWHAT OVER-DRAMATISED. THE EFFECT UNDER OUR PRESENT SYSTEM OF LOW TAX RATE AND 'FAMILY UNIT' OF ASSESSMENT IS NOT AS GREAT AS IN THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH ADOPT SEPARATE TAXATION,+ HE NOTED.

HE FURTHER POINTED OUT THAT TAX ADVANTAGE WOULD NOT ARISE IN ALL CASES. +IN THE CASE OF HIGH INCOME COUPLES, THE CEILING IS THE STANDARD RATE OF 15 PER CENT, SEPARATE TAXATION OR OTHERWISE.+

+ALSO, UNDER OUR EXISTING LAW, A MARRIED MAN GETS TWICE THE 'ADDITIONAL ALLOWANCE' AS A SINGLE PERSON, I.E. \$15 000 INSTEAD OF \$7 500. THIS HELPS IN SOME WAY TO ALLEVIATE THE INEQUITY,+ HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT THERE WERE COMPLICATIONS IN +SEPARATE TAXATION+ BUT ONE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION NOT OFTEN MENTIONED WAS THE +PRESERVATION OF FINANCIAL SECRECY BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE+.

+THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES WITH JOINT RETURN. NEVERTHELESS, IT DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE APPROPRIATE AT THIS TIME TO CONSIDER SUCH BASIC CHANGE IN THE PRESENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE,+ HE SAID, SUPPORTING THE MOTION.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR JOHN BREMRIDGE, SAID HE WAS GRATEFUL FOR THE CONSTRUCTIVE AND WISE COMMENTS OF DR HO, MISS TAM AND MR POON.

+THIS BILL IS DESIGNED TO REMOVE WHAT SEEMED TO ME QUITE OFFENSIVE PROVISIONS. IT IS NOT INTENDED TO ALTER OUR BASIC SALARIES TAX STRUCTURE.

+THE CONTENTIOUS ISSUES INVOLVED HAVE BEEN EXHAUSTIVELY, INDEED VEHEMENTLY, DEBATED FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND MAY WELL AGAIN FEATURE IN NEXT YEAR'S BUDGET DEBATE,+ HE SAID.

THE GOVERNMENT, SIR JOHN SAID, RAISES REVENUE TO MEET EXPENDITURE SANCTIONED BY THE COUNCIL.

+IT IS ENTIRELY PROPER THAT THE METHODS ADOPTED SHOULD BE CRITICALLY EXAMINED. I BELIEVE MYSELF THAT TAX ON THE FAMILY UNIT IS APPROPRIATE IN HONG KONG. I RESPECT OTHER OPINIONS.

+IF, HOWEVER, WE DO ONE DAY DECIDED TO CHANGE TO SEPARATE TAXATION, HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE BURDEN REMOVED FROM A FEW WOMEN MUST BE TRANSFERRED ELSEWHERE. AND THE COMPLICATIONS AND COST WOULD BE GREAT INDEED,+ HE ADDED.

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FUTURES MARKET PROPOSALS STUDIED

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A COMMITTEE HAS BEEN SET UP BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR SECURITIES AND COMMODITIES TRADING, WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE FINANCIAL COMMUNITY, TO EXAMINE VARIOUS ASPECTS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A STOCK INDEX FUTURES MARKET IN HONG KONG.

THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, IN REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON PETER POON IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY, SAID STOCK INDEX FUTURES HAD BEEN FOUND ELSEWHERE TO BE OF VALUE IN PROVIDING HEDGING FACILITIES FOR UNDERWRITERS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONAL INVESTORS.

HOWEVER, HE SAID, A MARKET OF THIS NATURE MUST BE REGULATED TO PREVENT ABUSE, AND THE POSSIBLE EFFECT OF A STOCK INDEX FUTURES MARKET MUST BE CAREFULLY EXAMINED TO ENSURE THAT IT DOES NOT LEAD TO UNDESIRABLE CONSEQUENCES.

MR JACOBS SAID TWO SETS OF PROPOSALS TO ESTABLISH A STOCK INDEX FUTURES MARKET IN HONG KONG HAD BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE COMMISSIONER FOR SECURITIES AND COMMODITIES TRADING. ONE PROPOSAL WAS PREPARED BY THE CONSORTIUM OF TEN BANKS AND THE OTHER BY THE HONG KONG COMMODITY EXCHANGE LIMITED.

ON DECEMBER 1, 1983, HE SAID, THE SECURITIES COMMISSION AND THE COMMODITIES TRADING COMMISSION SITTING TOGETHER CONSIDERED IN PRINCIPLE WHETHER A MARKET IN STOCK INDEX FUTURES SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED IN HONG KONG.

THE COMMISSIONS WERE ASKED WHETHER THEY WISHED TO MAKE A JOINT RECOMMENDATION TO THE GOVERNMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT SUCH A MARKET WOULD BE GOOD FOR HONG KONG.

+IT WAS FELT BY MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSIONS THAT FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS SHOULD BE MADE, AND TO THIS END THE COMMISSIONER FOR SECURITIES AND COMMODITIES TRADING IS CARRYING OUT STUDIES WITH THE INTERESTED PARTIES,+ MR JACOBS SAID.

ONCE THE COMMISSIONER HAS COMPLETED HIS FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS, THE MATTER WILL BE REFERRED BACK TO THE TWO COMMISSIONS FOR CONSIDERATION.

MR JACOBS STRESSED THAT HONG KONG IS A FREE ECONOMY AND IF THERE IS A DEMAND FOR A PARTICULAR TYPE OF INVESTMENT WHICH IS NOT OPPOSED TO COMMUNITY WELL-BEING, THEN GENERALLY IT IS ADVANTAGEOUS IF THAT DEMAND CAN BE MET BY THE LOCAL MARKET.

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NEW RULES ON HANDCUFFS PROPOSED
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HANDCUFFS HAVE BEEN USED IN 57 CRIMES COMMITTED IN 1982 AND IN THE FIRST HALF OF THIS YEAR, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON MICHAEL THOMAS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

MR THOMAS WAS MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE SUMMARY OFFENCES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1983 WHICH AIMS TO FORBID THE POSSESSION OF HANDCUFFS AND SIMILAR RESTRAINTS.

+THERE HAVE BEEN SEVERAL INSTANCES OF PEOPLE BEING FOUND BY THE POLICE IN SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, CARRYING ARTICLES WHICH COULD BE USED TO RESTRAIN A VICTIM WHILE HE IS ROBBED OR KIDNAPPED OR HIS HOME IS BURGLERED,+ HE SAID.

+IT IS THOUGHT DESIRABLE THAT THE POLICE SHOULD HAVE POWER TO ARREST AND CHARGE A PERSON FOUND IN POSSESSION OF SUCH ARTICLES WITHOUT LAWFUL EXCUSE.+

MR THOMAS SAID THE USE OF HANDCUFFS IN SOME 57 CRIMES LAST YEAR AND THE FIRST HALF OF THIS YEAR SUPPORTED THIS VIEW: IT IS DIFFICULT TO ENVISAGE ANY LAWFUL EXCUSE FOR THEIR POSSESSION. THE NEW RULES WILL ALSO COVER THUMB CUFFS AND OTHER ARTICLES MANUFACTURED FOR RESTRAINT.

IF SECTION 17 OF THE SUMMARY OFFENCES ORDINANCE IS AMENDED AS PROPOSED, IT WILL MEAN THAT ANY PERSON WHO HAS IN HIS POSSESSION ANY SUCH ARTICLES INTENDING TO USE THEM FOR AN UNLAWFUL PURPOSE, OR WHO IS UNABLE TO GIVE A SATISFACTORY EXPLANATION OF HIS POSSESSION, WILL BE GUILTY OF AN OFFENCE AND LIABLE TO A FINE OF \$5 000 OR TO IMPRISONMENT FOR TWO YEARS.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED UNTIL JANUARY 11.

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SHOPLIFTERS MOSTLY YOUTHS
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SHOPLIFTING IS A CRIME PRIMARILY COMMITTED BY YOUNG PEOPLE, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON DAVID JEAFFRESON, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

MR JEAFFRESON WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON ANDREW SO.

HE SAID THAT, FROM JANUARY 1 TO NOVEMBER 30 THIS YEAR, 2 744 PEOPLE HAD BEEN PROSECUTED FOR THE OFFENCE - COMPARED WITH 2 142 IN 1982 AND 2 216 IN 1981.

STATISTICS ON THE AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THOSE ACTUALLY FOUND GUILTY ARE NOT READILY AVAILABLE, HE SAID. THE DISTRICT POLICE SUPERINTENDENT'S DISCRETION SCHEME ALLOWS SUCH OFFICERS TO CAUTION FIRST OFFENDERS AGED BETWEEN SEVEN AND 16, PROVIDED THEY ADMIT THE OFFENCE AND PARENTS, OR GUARDIANS, AND THE PERSON AGAINST WHOM THE OFFENCE WAS COMMITTED, AGREE. IF THESE STATISTICS ARE ADDED TO THOSE FOR THE NUMBER OF PERSONS ACTUALLY PROSECUTED, THEN, BETWEEN JANUARY AND NOVEMBER THIS YEAR, 48 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PERSONS PROSECUTED, OR CAUTIONED FOR SHOPLIFTING, WERE BETWEEN 12 AND 20 YEARS OF AGE.

/MR JEAFFRESON

MR JEAFFRESON SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS INVOLVED IN A WIDE RANGE OF ACTIVITIES AIMED AT EDUCATING THIS AGE GROUP ABOUT THE SERIOUSNESS OF BECOMING INVOLVED IN CRIME IN GENERAL, AND IN SHOP-LIFTING IN PARTICULAR. THE POLICE, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENTS, TOGETHER WITH VOLUNTARY AGENCIES, ARE ALL CONCERNED IN THIS EFFORT.

DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE YOUNG, AND PUBLICITY, ALSO HELPED IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THIS TYPE OF CRIME. AS STATISTICS INDICATE THAT IT IS MORE PREVALENT DURING DECEMBER, AND THE EARLY PART OF EACH YEAR, PARTICULAR EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE TO GET THE MESSAGE ACROSS.

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BILL PROVIDES FOR PAYMENT OF ADVISERS FEES
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THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE THAT NO ONE SHOULD SUFFER A FINANCIAL LOSS AS A RESULT OF RESUMPTION OF PROPERTY.

THIS WAS STATED TODAY IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BY THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, MR NICKY CHAN, WHEN MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE CROWN LANDS RESUMPTION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1983.

MR CHAN SAID, THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE BILL, WAS TO PROVIDE FOR THE FEES OF PROFESSIONAL ADVISERS ENGAGED BY OWNERS WHOSE LAND IS THE SUBJECT OF RESUMPTION UNDER THE CROWN LANDS ORDINANCE TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN COMPENSATION CLAIMS AND PAYMENTS.

HE SAID ONE SECTION OF THE ORDINANCE WAS ALSO AMENDED TO ENABLE ALL OWNERS OR OCCUPIERS OF PROPERTY WHICH WAS THE SUBJECT OF RESUMPTION TO CLAIM RELOCATION EXPENSES REASONABLY INCURRED IN CONNECTION WITH THE RESUMPTION.

+AT PRESENT, CLAIMS CAN ONLY BE SUBMITTED WHEN BUSINESSES ARE AFFECTED,+ HE SAID.

+THIS WILL ENABLE EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS UNDER WHICH EX-GRATIA 'SETTING-UP' ALLOWANCES ARE PAID TO BE DISPENSED WITH.+

HE SAID THE AMENDMENTS BROUGHT THE ORDINANCE INTO LINE WITH OTHER LEGISLATION WHICH PROVIDED FOR THE RESUMPTION OF LAND.

AS A RESULT OF ANOTHER AMENDMENT INTRODUCING A REFERENCE TO +A WILLING SELLER+ IN RELATION TO VALUATIONS, THE ORDINANCE WOULD CORRESPOND WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM'S LAND COMPENSATION ACT 1961. THIS, MR CHAN SAID, WOULD GIVE GREATER CERTAINTY TO THE LAW AND REMOVE ANY DIFFICULTY IN APPLYING DECIDED CASES TO THE ORDINANCE.

MR CHAN SAID AN ADDITION TO THE ORDINANCE WOULD ENABLE PROVISIONAL PAYMENTS OF COMPENSATION TO BE MADE WHILE CLAIMS WERE BEING DETERMINED BY THE LANDS TRIBUNAL, AND THERE WOULD BE AN AMENDMENT GIVING STATUTORY BASIS TO THE LONG-STANDING PRACTICE OF PAYING INTEREST WHERE CLAIMS WERE SETTLED BY AGREEMENT.

DEBATE ON THE MOTION WAS ADJOURNED TO JANUARY 11.

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PLOT RATIO CRITERIA EXPLAINED

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THE CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING PLOT RATIO WAS EXPLAINED BY THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, MR NICKY CHAN, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ANDREW SO, HE SAID THE PLOT RATIO OF A PARTICULAR SITE WAS NORMALLY DETERMINED BY APPLYING THE BUILDING (PLANNING) REGULATIONS. HOWEVER, IN SOME CASES, THE MAXIMUM PLOT RATIO MAY BE DETERMINED BY APPLYING OTHER LIMITS SUCH AS THOSE LAID DOWN UNDER RULES GOVERNING DENSITY ZONING, TOWN PLANNING, BUILDING HEIGHT RESTRICTIONS RELATED TO THE SAFE OPERATION OF THE AIRPORT, AND LEASE CONDITIONS.

UNDER THE BUILDING (PLANNING) REGULATIONS, HE SAID, PLOT RATIO WAS DETERMINED BY DIVIDING THE GROSS FLOOR AREA OF A BUILDING BY THE AREA OF THE SITE ON WHICH IT WAS BUILT.

THE TWO MAIN FACTORS WHICH DETERMINED PLOT RATIO UNDER THE BUILDING (PLANNING) REGULATIONS WERE THE HEIGHT OF THE BUILDING AND THE CLASS INTO WHICH THE SITE FELL.

+WHETHER DEVELOPMENT ON A SITE IS TO BE DOMESTIC OR NON-DOMESTIC ALSO AFFECTS THE EXTENT OF PLOT RATIO PERMISSIBLE,+ MR CHAN SAID.

HE SAID DENSITY ZONING RULES, WHICH WERE BASED ON POLICY DECIDED BY THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL, RESTRICTED THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT PERMITTED ON A SITE HAVING REGARD TO ITS URBAN, SUBURBAN OR RURAL LOCATION AND USE.

MAXIMUM PERMISSIBLE PLOT RATIOS WERE PRESCRIBED IN SOME STATUTORY TOWN PLANS, FOR EXAMPLE THOSE COVERING THE PEAK AREA AND KOWLOON TONG. THE REASONS WERE GENERALLY TO PRESERVE OR ACHIEVE A CERTAIN STANDARD OF AMENITY OR ENVIRONMENT, TO PREVENT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES BECOMING OVERLOADED, OR TO AVOID GEOTECHNICAL PROBLEMS.

IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES, LIMITATIONS ON PLOT RATIO MAY BE PRESCRIBED IN LEASE CONDITIONS TO ACHIEVE DEVELOPMENT OF A CERTAIN TYPE AND LIMITED DENSITY BELOW WHAT WAS PERMISSIBLE UNDER OTHER MEANS OF RESTRICTION ALREADY MENTIONED.

MR CHAN SAID THE CRITERIA GOVERNING PLOT RATIO EMBODIED IN THE BUILDING (PLANNING) REGULATIONS HAD NOT BEEN REVIEWED SINCE THEIR INTRODUCTION IN 1962 AND THE DENSITY ZONING RULES DATED FROM (APRIL) 1966.

AS REGARD STATUTORY PLANS, AIRPORT-RELATED RESTRICTIONS AND LEASE CONDITIONS, IT WAS DIFFICULT TO BE PRECISE ABOUT THE FREQUENCY OF REVIEW IN EVERY CASE, BUT IT COULD BE SAID THAT ALL RESTRICTIONS WERE SUBJECT TO REVIEW FROM TIME TO TIME.

/MR CHAN

MR CHAN ALSO SAID THE BUILDING REGULATIONS AND DENSITY ZONING RULES, WHICH APPLIED GENERALLY, DATED FROM 1962 AND 1966 RESPECTIVELY.

+HOWEVER, THE OVERRIDING RESTRICTION ON BUILDING DEVELOPMENT OF THE SIZE OCCURRING IN TSIM SHA TSUI NOWADAYS AND THEREFORE ON PLOT RATIO WHICH CAN IN EFFECT BE ACHIEVED, IS THAT RELATING TO THE SAFE OPERATION OF THE AIRPORT,+ MR CHAN SAID.

+SO LONG AS KAI TAK AIRPORT CONTINUES IN OPERATION THIS RESTRICTION IS MOST UNLIKELY TO BE CHANGED,+ HE CONCLUDED.

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HIGHER PENALTY NEEDED FOR TRADE CONTROL: HO
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AN INCREASE IN THE MAXIMUM CUSTODIAL SENTENCE FOR IMPORTING AND EXPORTING UNMANIFESTED CARGO WAS NECESSARY FOR THE EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT OF THE IMPORT AND EXPORT CONTROL SYSTEM, THE HON E.P. HO, SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE IMPORT AND EXPORT (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1983, MR HO EXPLAINED THAT IT SEEKS TO INCREASE THE CUSTODIAL PENALTY FROM SIX MONTHS TO TWO YEARS, BRINGING IT IN LINE WITH LICENSING OFFENCES.

HE SAID THAT UNDER EXISTING LEGISLATION, IT IS AN OFFENCE TO MAKE A FALSE STATEMENT OR TO ALTER A LICENCE. TO FACILITATE THE ENFORCEMENT OF LICENSING AND DECLARATION REQUIREMENTS, THE BILL WOULD MAKE IT AN OFFENCE TO CAUSE A FLASE STATEMENT TO BE MADE, TO FORGE A LICENCE OR TO USE A FORGED OR ALTERED LICENCE.

+FINALLY, THE BILL SEEKS TO EXTEND THE LIABILITY FOR LICENSING AND DECLARATION OFFENCES COMMITTED BY A CORPORATION TO THE DIRECTORS AND MANAGER OF THAT CORPORATION, UNLESS THEY CAN PROVE THAT THEY DID NOT KNOW THE OFFENCE WAS BEING COMMITTED, OR DID ALL THEY REASONABLY COULD TO PREVENT IT,+ MR HO SAID.

+THE PROPOSALS ARE SUPPORTED BY THE TRADE ADVISORY BOARD AND THE TEXTILES ADVISORY BOARD, AND I CAN ASSURE COUNCIL THAT THE PROVISIONS OF THIS BILL ARE NECESSARY FOR THE EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT OF OUR IMPORT AND EXPORT CONTROL SYSTEM, AND WILL STRENGTHEN OUR ABILITY TO MAINTAIN HONG KONG'S INTEGRITY AS A RESPONSIBLE TRADING PARTNER WITHOUT DISRUPTION TO THE LEGITIMATE TRADE,+ MR HO CONCLUDED.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED TO JANUARY 11.

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AID FOR WOMEN AT RISK
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A RECEPTION CENTRE WHERE WOMEN AT RISK, INCLUDING BATTERED WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN, CAN OBTAIN SHELTER IS TO BE OPENED NEXT YEAR, SAID THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON GEOFFREY BARNES, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

MR BARNES WAS RESPONDING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON SELINA CHOW WHO WISHED TO KNOW WHETHER THERE WAS AN ESTIMATE AVAILABLE OF THE PERCENTAGE OF CASES OF BATTERED WIVES BEING REPORTED. SHE ALSO ASKED WHAT THE GOVERNMENT IS DOING TO ASSIST VICTIMS AND TO REDUCE THE PROBLEM.

MR BARNES SAID THAT NUMBER OF UNREPORTED CASES IS DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE AND IT IS THEREFORE DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE A PERCENTAGE FIGURE. IN THE 12 MONTHS ENDING OCTOBER 1983, THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT HANDLED 42 CASES AT ITS FAMILY SERVICES CENTRE.

THE ACTUAL INCIDENCE OF ABUSE IS PROBABLY HIGHER, HE SAID, DESCRIBING THE PROBLEM AS : +SAD, DEPLORABLE AND OFTEN DIFFICULT TO RESOLVE, AND, FOR THE ABUSED PERSON, SOMETHING WHICH CAN BE A PAINFUL, FRIGHTENING AND DEGRADING EXPERIENCE.+

+NEXT YEAR THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT IS PLANNING TO OPEN A RECEPTION CENTRE WHERE WOMEN AT RISK, INCLUDING BATTERED WOMEN, AND THEIR CHILDREN, CAN OBTAIN SHELTER UNTIL LONGER TERM ALTERNATIVES CAN BE ARRANGED,+ SAID MR BARNES.

+VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS ARE ALIVE BOTH TO THE PROBLEM OF SPOUSE ABUSE AND THE NEED FOR REFUGE FACILITIES, AND HAVE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN BECOMING MORE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN PROVIDING ASSISTANCE. THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO ANY VOLUNTARY AGENCY WITH THE NECESSARY EXPERTISE WHICH MIGHT COME FORWARD WITH A PROPOSAL TO RUN A SHELTER FOR BATTERED WOMEN.+

FIRE SAFETY INVOLVES EVERYONE
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SATISFACTORY LEVELS OF FIRE SAFETY IN BUILDINGS CAN BE ACHIEVED ONLY WITH EFFECTIVE BUILDING MANAGEMENT AND WITH THE FULL COOPERATION OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC, THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WAS TOLD TODAY.

THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR DAVID JEAFFRESON, WAS ANSWERING A QUESTION FROM THE HON MRS RITA FAN WHO WISHED TO KNOW WHAT ACTION IS TAKEN TO REMOVE ILLEGAL STRUCTURES AND OBSTRUCTIONS WHICH POSE A FIRE HAZARD AND WHAT MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC SHOULD DO IF THEY DETECT SUCH OBSTRUCTIONS.

MR JEAFFRESON SAID THAT FIRE SERVICES OFFICERS DEAL WITH SUCH FIRE HAZARDS UNDER THE ABATEMENT PROCEDURE LAID DOWN IN THE FIRE SERVICE ORDINANCE. THEY FIRST CONDUCT AN INVESTIGATION TO FIND OUT WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE HAZARD AND, IF THEY CANNOT FIND THE PERSON CONCERNED, THEY ASKED THE OWNER OR OCCUPIER OF A BUILDING TO REMOVE IT. IN ABOUT 40 PER CENT OF CASES THIS BRINGS RESULTS.

IN THE OTHER 60 PER CENT A FIRE HAZARD ABATEMENT NOTICE HAS TO BE SERVED. THIS GIVES A TIME LIMIT FOR THE DANGER TO BE REMOVED. AFTER THIS PROSECUTION FOLLOWS. HOWEVER, PROSECUTION IS NECESSARY ONLY IN ABOUT 10 PER CENT OF SUCH CASES.

WHERE THERE IS AN IMMEDIATE THREAT TO LIFE, OR A PERSON REPEATEDLY OFFENDS THE DIRECTOR OF FIRE SERVICES IS EMPOWERED TO REMOVE THE ILLEGAL STRUCTURES AND OBSTRUCTIONS - THOUGH THIS POWER IS RARELY USED.

THE BEST ANSWER IS FOR ILLEGAL STRUCTURES AND OBSTRUCTIONS TO BE DISCOURAGED IN THE FIRST PLACE, HE SAID. PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS PUT THIS MESSAGE ACROSS TOGETHER WITH VISITS BY CREWS AND OFFICERS OF THE FIRE PROTECTION BUREAU.

+DESPITE ALL THESE EFFORTS, SATISFACTORY LEVELS OF FIRE SAFETY IN BUILDINGS CAN BE ACHIEVED ONLY WITH EFFECTIVE BUILDING MANAGEMENT AND WITH THE FULL COOPERATION OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC,+ SAID MR JEAFFRESON.

+THE REGIONAL SECRETARY (HONG KONG AND KOWLOON) HAS SET UP A COMMITTEE TO SEE HOW MANAGEMENT COULD BE IMPROVED.+

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WHO COME ACROSS OBSTRUCTIONS CAUSING FIRE HAZARDS SHOULD REPORT THEM TO THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT THROUGH ANY FIRE STATION OR VIA THE FIRES SERVICES HOTLINE 5-281224 WHICH OPERATES 24 HOURS A DAY.

ROAD WORKS TO TAKE TWO YEARS
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WORK ON STAGE I OF WIDENING TING KOK ROAD, TAI PO, WILL START AROUND APRIL, 1985, AND BE COMPLETED JUST OVER TWO YEARS LATER.

THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, MR NICKY CHAN, SAID THIS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION FROM THE REV HON P.T. MCGOVERN.

FATHER MCGOVERN ASKED IF THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SAY WHAT HAD HAPPENED SINCE TAI PO DISTRICT BOARD WAS GIVEN AN UNDERTAKING IN JANUARY, 1982, THAT THE PRIORITY OF CERTAIN PROJECTS, INCLUDING WIDENING TING KOK ROAD, WOULD BE REVIEWED.

MR CHAN REPLIED THAT THE PROGRAMME FOR WIDENING TING KOK ROAD WAS REVIEWED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE DISTRICT BOARD MEETING IN JANUARY, 1982, BUT, DUE TO THE NEED TO CLEAR SOME 3 000 SQUATTERS IN ORDER TO IMPLEMENT THE SCHEME AND THE LACK OF A SUITABLE RESITE FOR THESE SQUATTERS, EARLY COMMENCEMENT OF THE WORK WAS NOT POSSIBLE.

THIS PROJECT, AND OTHER CAPITAL WORKS PROJECTS IN TAI PO, WERE INCLUDED IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR TAI PO NEW TOWN, WHICH WAS PREPARED AND UPDATED ANNUALLY AFTER CONSULTATION WITH GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND POLICY BRANCHES, AND THE VIEWS OF THE DISTRICT BOARD HAVING BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT, MR CHAN SAID.

FULL CONSIDERATION WAS GIVEN TO THE PRIORITY OF INDIVIDUAL PROJECTS WITHIN NORMAL ENGINEERING, PLANNING AND FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS, AND WITH DUE REGARD TO THE NEED FOR THE OVERALL BALANCED DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW TOWN.

+THE REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IS AN ON-GOING PROCESS, AND WHERE CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRE A REVIEW OF THE PRIORITY OF ANY INDIVIDUAL PROJECT WITH A VIEW, PERHAPS, TO ADVANCING THE START DATE, THIS IS DONE,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID TAI PO DISTRICT BOARD'S VIEWS WERE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT, THEREFORE, WHEN THE 1982 EDITION OF THE TAI PO PROGRAMME WAS PREPARED, AND THE BOARD WAS APPRISED OF THE OUTCOME WHEN IT REVIEWED THIS PROGRAMME IN JANUARY THIS YEAR.

THE 1983 EDITION OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR THE NEW TOWNS WAS EXPECTED TO BE REVIEWED BY DISTRICT BOARDS NEXT MONTH.

MR CHAN SAID, ACCORDING TO THE LATEST EDITION OF THE TAI PO PROGRAMME, WHICH HAD BEEN NOTED BY THE PUBLIC WORKS SUB-COMMITTEE (PWSC) OF FINANCE COMMITTEE, WORK WAS DUE TO START ON DETAILED DESIGN AND THE PREPARATION OF CONTRACT DOCUMENTS FOR THE FIRST STAGE OF THE TING KOK ROAD UPGRADING IN SEPTEMBER THIS YEAR.

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THIS WORK HAD NOT ACTUALLY COMMENCED, BUT THE PWSC HAD ALREADY RECOMMENDED THE UPGRADING TO CATEGORY A OF AN ITEM FOR IT, AND A START WAS ANTICIPATED VERY SHORTLY ON THIS DESIGN WORK WHICH WOULD NOW COVER THE WHOLE PROJECT, INCLUDING THE SECOND STAGE OF THE UPGRADING AS FAR AS TAI MEI TUK.

+IT IS EXPECTED THAT TENDERS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF STAGE I FROM TAI PO INDUSTRIAL ESTATE TO SHUEN WAN WILL BE INVITED BEFORE THE END OF NEXT YEAR AND THAT WORK ON SITE WILL START ABOUT APRIL, 1985, AND BE COMPLETED BY MID-1987, AS PROGRAMMED,+ MR CHAN SAID.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE SECOND STAGE FROM SHUEN WAN TO TAI MEI TUK WAS SCHEDULED TO COMMENCE IN 1988, WITH COMPLETION DUE BY 1991.

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NEW RULES ON COMMITTAL PROCEEDINGS

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SUBSIDIARY LEGISLATION RELATING TO THE NEW STYLE OF COMMITTAL PROCEEDINGS, DESIGNED TO SAVE TIME AND UNNECESSARY EXPENSE, WAS APPROVED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

THE LAW DRAFTSMAN, MR GERALD NAZARETH, EXPLAINED THAT, IN AUGUST, AN ORDINANCE WAS INTRODUCED WHICH PROVIDES FOR THE VIRTUALLY AUTOMATIC COMMITTAL FOR TRIAL BY THE HIGH COURT OF A PERSON WHO HAS BEEN SERVED WITH A COPY OF THE CHARGE AND EVIDENCE.

MR NAZARETH EXPLAINED: +BUT THIS, IN EFFECT, WOULD ONLY BE WITH THE AGREEMENT OF THAT PERSON AS HE IS GIVEN A RIGHT TO ELECT FOR AN OLD STYLE PRELIMINARY ENQUIRY. EVEN IF AN ACCUSED PERSON DOES NOT ELECT FOR AN OLD STYLE PRELIMINARY ENQUIRY, HE WILL NOT LOSE HIS VALUABLE RIGHT OF APPLYING FOR A DISCHARGE ON THE BASIS THAT THERE IS NO CASE TO ANSWER.

+THE LEGISLATION ENACTED IN AUGUST EXPRESSLY PROVIDES A PERSON COMMITTED UNDER THE NEW PROCEDURE WITH A RIGHT TO APPLY TO A HIGH COURT JUDGE FOR A DISCHARGE. IT ALSO PROVIDES FOR SUCH A DISCHARGE TO OPERATE AS AN ACQUITTAL. ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN, THE LEGISLATION PROVIDES THE ATTORNEY GENERAL WITH A RIGHT TO APPEAL TO THE COURT OF APPEAL AGAINST SUCH AN ACQUITTAL.+

MR NAZARETH SAID THAT THE MAIN LEGISLATION ONLY CONTAINS FUNDAMENTAL PROVISION FOR THESE MATTERS, WITH MATTERS OF PROCEDURE AND DETAIL TO BE PROVIDED BY SUBSIDIARY LEGISLATION. THE CHIEF JUSTICE HAS NOW MADE THE NECESSARY SUBSIDIARY LEGISLATION IN THE FORM OF TWO SETS OF RULES - THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (APPLICATION UNDER SECTION 16) RULES 1983 AND THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (APPEAL AGAINST DISCHARGE) RULES 1983. THE FORMER PROVIDES FOR APPLICATIONS FOR DISCHARGE WHILE THE LATTER MAKES PROVISION FOR APPEALS.

+IT IS INTENDED TO BRING THE NEW PROCEDURE INTO OPERATION WITHOUT DELAY, THAT IS, TO APPLY IT TO ALL COMMITTAL PROCEEDINGS THAT COMMENCE ON OR AFTER JANUARY 1, 1984,+ HE SAID.

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NEED FOR CANTEENS RECOGNISED

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GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THE IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING EATING FACILITIES FOR FACTORY WORKERS, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, MR NICKY CHAN, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR CHAN, ANSWERING A QUESTION FROM THE HON WONG LAM, SAID SINCE THE PROBLEMS RELATING TO CANTEENS IN INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS WERE REVIEWED IN DETAIL BY THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL IN 1981, THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISED THE IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING EATING FACILITIES FOR FACTORY WORKERS. IT ALLOWED CANTEENS, SUBJECT TO HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIRMENTS BEING MET AND THERE BEING NO CONFLICT WITH INDUSTRIAL OPERATIONS, INCLUDING VEHICULAR ACCESS AND EGRESS AND RELATED LOADING AND UNLOADING FACILITIES.

+THE LICENSING AUTHORITY WILL NORMALLY ISSUE A LICENCE PROVIDED THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY ARE MET,+ MR CHAN SAID.

HE SAID IN SOME CASES CANTEENS WERE NOT PERMITTED UNDER THE LEASE CONDITIONS, BUT THE DIRECTOR OF LANDS WAS NORMALLY PREPARED TO MODIFY THE CONDITIONS TO ACCOMMODATE CANTEENS PROVIDED THE AREA THEY WOULD OCCUPY:

DID NOT EXCEED 10 PER CENT OF THE PREMISES ON THE LOT,

WAS NOT REQUIRED FOR VEHICULAR ACCESS, PARKING, LOADING OR UNLOADING, AND

WAS NOT AT OR NEAR GROUND FLOOR LEVEL WITH EXCLUSIVE DIRECT ACCESS TO THE STREET OTHER THAN FOR EMERGENCY USE.

+THESE RESTRICTIONS WERE NECESSARY PRINCIPALLY TO AVOID INCREASING TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND PARKING PROBLEMS IN INDUSTRIAL AREAS AND BECAUSE CANTEENS WERE ONLY INTENDED TO SERVE WORKERS IN FACTORIES IN THE PARTICULAR BUILDING AND NOT THE GENERAL PUBLIC,+ MR CHAN TOLD THE COUNCIL.

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BOARD AND COMMITTEE PARTNERSHIP STRESSED

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THE DISTRICT BOARD AND DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE ARE PARTNERS IN DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION AND THERE IS NO QUESTION OF ONE BEING SUPERIOR THAN THE OTHER, THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DAVID AKERS-JONES, STRESSED IN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

+ONE ADVISES WHILE THE OTHER RESPONDS TO THAT ADVICE,+ HE SAID IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY REV. THE HON PATRICK MCGOVERN.

MR AKERS-JONES SAID HE WAS AWARE THAT SOME DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS PERCEIVED THE DMC AS ASSUMING A MORE IMPORTANT POSITION THAN THE DBS IN THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS.

/BUT HE

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BUT HE BELIEVED THAT IT AROSE FROM A MISCONCEPTION OF THE RESPECTIVE ROLES OF THE TWO COMPONENTS OF DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION.

+SOME MATTERS ARE RESOLVED QUICKLY AND RESULT IN EXECUTIVE ACTION BEING TAKEN BY THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE WITHOUT REFERENCE OUTSIDE THE DISTRICT,+ HE SAID.

+OTHER ADVICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BOARDS MAY HAVE WIDER IMPLICATIONS AND REQUIRE REFERENCE TO CENTRAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.+

MR AKERS-JONES EMPHASISED THAT IF, AFTER THIS CONSIDERATION, THE DISTRICT ADVICE COULD NOT BE ACCEPTED BECAUSE OF THE WIDER PUBLIC INTEREST, THE BOARD WOULD BE INFORMED WITH SUPPORTING REASONS.

+HOWEVER, IF PARTICULAR MEMBERS OF A DISTRICT BOARD ARE DISSATISFIED IN ANY WAY WITH THE RESPONSIVENESS OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OR IN THE MANNER IN WHICH MATTERS ARE REFERRED TO THE BOARD BY THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE, THERE CAN BE NO BETTER PLACE TO RAISE IT THAN IN A MEETING OF THE BOARD.

+RATHER THAN HAVE A SPECIAL REVIEW OF THIS WORKING RELATIONSHIP, I WOULD TRY TO IMPROVE AND CORRECT AS IMPERFECTIONS AND OMISSIONS ARISE,+ HE ADDED.

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ACTION TAKEN ON PRIVATE STREET PROBLEM

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A PILOT SCHEME WILL SOON BE LAUNCHED TO RESUME SEVEN PRIVATE STREETS IN HONG KONG AND KOWLOON FOR BETTER MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE, THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DAVID AKERS-JONES, TOLD LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT IS WELL AWARE OF THE SERIOUS SANITARY, ENVIRONMENTAL AND TRAFFIC PROBLEMS RESULTING FROM THE LACK OF MAINTENANCE OF PRIVATE STREETS.

+WE ARE CURRENTLY CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF RESUMING PRIVATE STREETS AND MAINTAINING THEM THEREAFTER AS PUBLIC ROADS.+

IN ORDER TO TEST THE PRACTICABILITY OF THIS PROPOSAL, THE PILOT SCHEME WOULD BE EMBARKED ON SHORTLY UNDER THE ROADS (WORKS, USE AND COMPENSATION) ORDINANCE, HE SAID.

HE WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON HO KAM-FAI ON STEPS TAKEN TO ENSURE THAT SUCH STREETS ARE MAINTAINED IN A CLEAN AND SANITARY CONDITION.

+THE URBAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT PROVIDES A DAILY CLEANSING SERVICE TO PRIVATE STREETS WHICH ARE NOT MAINTAINED IN A CLEAN AND SANITARY CONDITION BY THE OWNERS OR THE DEVELOPER,+ MR AKERS-JONES SAID.

+IT MUST BE APPRECIATED THAT ITS ACTIONS IN THIS RESPECT ARE RESTRICTED BY THE FACT THAT THESE STREETS ARE PRIVATE LAND.+

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FERRY SERVICE NEED CAREFULLY STUDIED
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WITHDRAWAL OF A SCHEDULED FERRY SERVICE IS NOT CONSIDERED UNLESS IT IS LOSING MONEY, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON ALAN SCOTT TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHARLES YEUNG, MR SCOTT SAID THE DESIRABILITY OF PROVIDING TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR WHAT ARE USUALLY SMALL OUTLYING COMMUNITIES HAS TO BE WEIGHED CAREFULLY AGAINST THE NEED TO ENSURE SENSIBLE FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATIONS.

WHEN THE WITHDRAWAL OF SUCH A SERVICE IS SUGGESTED, HE SAID, A SURVEY IS CONDUCTED TO ESTABLISH THE TRAVEL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PASSENGERS USING IT.

THIS SURVEY INCLUDES DETERMINING THE PASSENGERS' POINTS OF ORIGIN AND DESTINATION, THE PURPOSE OF THEIR TRIPS AND THE FREQUENCY OF TRAVEL. ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORT SERVICES ARE ALSO EXAMINED TO ESTABLISH THEIR USE AND ADEQUACY.

+IF, AFTER THIS PROCESS, THERE APPEARS TO BE A REASONABLE CASE FOR THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE SERVICE, THE PROPOSAL IS SUBMITTED TO THE APPROPRIATE DISTRICT BOARD FOR DISCUSSION,+ MR SCOTT SAID.

+AFTER THIS CONSULTATION, THE PROPOSAL IS PUT TO THE TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE. IF TAC IS SATISFIED, THE PROPOSAL IS THEN SUBMITTED TO THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL FOR A DECISION.

+THE SITUATION AFTER THE WITHDRAWAL OF A SERVICE IS MONITORED CLOSELY TO ENSURE THAT THE ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORT SERVICES ARE ADEQUATE, OR IMPROVED, TO REDUCE THE INCONVENIENCE TO THE TRAVELLERS CONCERNED,+ HE SAID.

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COMPLAINTS ON MONEY-CHANGERS RAISE CONCERN

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THERE MIGHT BE A CASE FOR LEGISLATIVE INTERVENTION TO GIVE CUSTOMERS OF MONEY CHANGERS A FAIR CHANCE OF DECIDING IN ADVANCE WHETHER THEY WISH TO DO BUSINESS ON THE TERMS OFFERED, SAID THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, MR MICHAEL THOMAS, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

MR THOMAS WAS ANSWERING A QUESTION FROM THE HON CHEUNG YAN-LUNG WHO ASKED IF THERE ARE ANY PLANS TO REGULATE MONEY CHANGERS IN VIEW OF DISPUTES WITH CUSTOMERS WHICH HAVE ARISEN ABOUT THE LEVEL OF THEIR CHARGES.

MR THOMAS SAID THAT THERE HAVE BEEN MANY COMPLAINTS FROM TOURISTS THAT SOME MONEY CHANGERS DO NOT SUFFICIENTLY ADVERTISE THE +VERY SUBSTANTIAL+ COMMISSIONS THAT THEY CHARGE.

+BY THE TIME CUSTOMERS DISCOVER JUST HOW MUCH THEY ARE, THE CURRENCY HAS BEEN EXCHANGED. SHARP PRACTICES OF THIS KIND, ARE NOT, OF COURSE, CONFINED TO HONG KONG,+ HE SAID.

ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO PLANS AT PRESENT TO INTRODUCE LEGISLATION, IT IS CONCERNED AT THE COMPLAINTS WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE. THE HONG KONG TOURIST ASSOCIATION IS WARNING TOURISTS, SAID MR THOMAS.

+ALTHOUGH MONEY-CHANGERS ARE CARRYING ON A LAWFUL BUSINESS, AND IT IS A FACT THAT SINCE 1978 THEY HAVE NOT BEEN SUBJECT TO ANY CONTROLS, THERE MIGHT BE A CASE FOR LEGISLATIVE INTERVENTION TO GIVE CUSTOMERS A FAIR CHANCE OF DECIDING IN ADVANCE WHETHER THEY WISH TO DO BUSINESS ON THE TERMS OFFERED,+ HE SAID.

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OYSTER FARMERS IGNORE RESEARCH FINDINGS

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THE DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES OFFERS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO OYSTER FARMERS IN DEEP BAY TO IMPROVE FARMING TECHNIQUES AND TO IDENTIFY ALTERNATIVE SITES SUITABLE FOR OYSTER FARMING.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, THE HON PIERS JACOBS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

HE WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHEUNG YAN-LUNG CONCERNING ASSISTANCE OFFERED TO OYSTER FARMERS IN DEEP BAY TO MINIMISE THE IMPACT OF POLLUTION ARISING FROM RAPID URBANISATION OF YUEN LONG.

/MR JACOBS

MR JACOBS SAID RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN BY THE DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES IN THE EARLY 1970'S SHOWED THAT FARMING OYSTERS IN CAGES SUSPENDED WELL CLEAR OF THE SEA BOTTOM WOULD IMPROVE YIELD BY HALVING THE GROWTH CYCLE AND WOULD REDUCE THE RISK OF THE OYSTERS BEING CONTAMINATED BY THE SILT AND OTHER POLLUTANTS SUSPENDED CLOSE TO THE SEA BOTTOM.

AN ALTERNATIVE SITE SUITABLE FOR OYSTER FARMING AND RELATIVELY FREE FROM POLLUTION WAS ALSO IDENTIFIED IN TUNG CHUNG BAY ON LANTAU ISLAND. HOWEVER, NO OYSTER FARMERS HAD MOVED THERE.

MR JACOBS SAID THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH HAD BEEN PASSED TO THE OYSTER FARMERS IN DEEP BAY.

+IT SEEMS, HOWEVER, THAT FEW, IF ANY, OYSTER FARMERS HAVE TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THIS RESEARCH,+ HE ADDED.

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ANOTHER CLINIC FOR TAI PO

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TAI PO IS TO HAVE ANOTHER OUT-PATIENT CLINIC FOR ITS GROWING POPULATION, THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, DR THE HON K.L. THONG, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

WORK ON THE CLINIC IS SCHEDULED TO BE COMPLETED BY THE SECOND HALF OF NEXT YEAR, HE SAID.

HE WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MR CHAN YING-LUN, CONCERNING MEDICAL AND OUT-PATIENT FACILITIES IN THE AREA.

DR THONG SAID THAT THE DISTRICT IS AT PRESENT SERVED BY THE TAI PO JOCKEY CLUB CLINIC, WHICH PROVIDES A WIDE RANGE OF FACILITIES.

OUT-PATIENT, EYE, MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH, FAMILY PLANNING, CHEST AND SPECIAL SKIN SERVICES ARE INCLUDED, HE SAID.

+IT ALSO PROVIDES FACILITIES TO CATER FOR ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY CASES ON A 24-HOUR BASIS, AND ONE ADDITIONAL CONSULTING ROOM, MAKING A TOTAL OF FOUR, HAS BEEN PUT INTO OPERATION IN THIS CLINIC SINCE APRIL THIS YEAR.

+THUS, IT IS CONSIDERED THAT THE EXISTING FACILITIES, TOGETHER WITH THE SCHEDULED IMPROVEMENT IN THE NEAR FUTURE, ARE ADEQUATE TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY AT TAI PO,+ HE SAID.

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PLANS TO FIGHT NT WATER POLLUTION

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS RECOGNISED THE PROBLEM OF POLLUTION TO THE STREAMS AND RIVERS OF THE NEW TERRITORIES BY SETTING UP A CENTRAL STEERING GROUP TO CO-ORDINATE REMEDIAL ACTION.

THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MR GEOFFREY BARNES, SAID THIS TODAY IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON CHAN YING-LUN.

MR CHAN WANTED TO KNOW WHAT WAS BEING DONE TO REDUCE THE LEVEL OF POLLUTION IN STREAMS IN THE TAI PO AREA, PARTICULARLY AS THESE STREAMS ALL RUN INTO TOLO CHANNEL WHICH HAS BEEN DECLARED A WATER CONTROL ZONE UNDER THE WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ORDINANCE.

MR BARNES SAID THAT IN RECOGNITION OF THE POLLUTION PROBLEM WITH STREAMS AND RIVERS OF THE NEW TERRITORIES, INCLUDING THOSE AROUND TAI PO, A CENTRAL STEERING GROUP ON WATERCOURSE MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT HAS BEEN SET UP.

+THE FIRST TASK OF THE GROUP HAS BEEN TO IDENTIFY PRIORITY AREAS,+ HE SAID.

+FIVE RIVERS HAVE BEEN SELECTED INCLUDING THE LAM TSUEN RIVER, WHICH RUNS INTO TOLO HARBOUR THROUGH TAI PO, AND THE SHING MUN RIVER, WHICH ALSO ENTERS THE WATER QUALITY CONTROL ZONE AT SHA TIN.+

PLANS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THESE WATERCOURSES ARE BEING STUDIED, HE SAID. THESE WILL COVER MATTERS SUCH AS THE CONTROL OF POLLUTION DISCHARGES, TOGETHER WITH REMEDIAL MEASURES, SUCH AS DESILTING AND DREDGING, REFUSE CLEARANCE AND IMPROVEMENT OF THE FLOW.

IN ADDITION LEGISLATIVE MEASURES ARE BEING DEVELOPED.

+REGULATIONS UNDER THE WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ORDINANCE TO CONTROL DISCHARGES INTO THE WATER CONTROL ZONE ARE BEING PREPARED AND ARE EXPECTED TO BE PUT BEFORE THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1984,+ SAID MR BARNES.

+THESE WILL BE AIMED INITIALLY AT DISCHARGES FROM INDUSTRIAL PROCESSES. COMPLEMENTARY CONTROLS ON THE DISPOSAL OF AGRICULTURAL WASTES ARE ALSO BEING DEVELOPED.+

THE GOVERNMENT HAS EMBARKED UPON A MAJOR PROGRAMME FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANTS AT SHA TIN AND TAI PO, HE SAID.

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POOR CAN GET HELP IN COLD WEATHER
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THE ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO THE POOR DURING COLD WEATHER WAS DETAILED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY BY THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON GEOFFREY BARNES.

HE WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON SELINA CHOW, WHO WISHED TO KNOW WHAT SERVICE OR ASSISTANCE THE GOVERNMENT WOULD OFFER SHOULD SEVERE COLD SET IN.

MR BARNES SAID THAT HE HAD DESCRIBED AT THE LAST LEGCO MEETING THE HELP AVAILABLE TO STREET SLEEPERS IN COLD WEATHER.

SUCH ASSISTANCE IN THE FORM OF SHELTER, BLANKETS, HOT DRINKS AND SO ON IS ALSO AVAILABLE TO ANYONE ELSE WITH LITTLE OR NO RESOURCES WHO MIGHT BE WITHOUT CLOTHING OR SHELTER IN VERY COLD WEATHER.

+PUBLIC ASSISTANCE WOULD ALSO NORMALLY BE AVAILABLE TO SUCH PERSONS ALL THE YEAR ROUND, AND MORE IMMEDIATE HELP CAN BE PROVIDED BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT FROM CHARITABLE TRUST FUNDS.

+WHERE NECESSARY AN ISSUE OF WARM CLOTHING CAN BE ARRANGED DIRECTLY BY THE DEPARTMENT,+ HE SAID.

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PUBLIC HOUSING ENQUIRY SERVICES ADEQUATE
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THE SECRETARY FOR HOUSING, THE HON DONALD LIAO, SAID TODAY ENQUIRY SERVICES ON PUBLIC HOUSING FOR TENANTS AND PROSPECTIVE TENANTS WERE ADEQUATE.

+DURING THE PAST 12 MONTHS, WE HAVE RECEIVED MORE THAN A MILLION ENQUIRIES ABOUT PUBLIC HOUSING, OF WHICH ABOUT ONE-THIRD WAS THROUGH THE PUBLIC ENQUIRY COUNTERS AND TWO-THIRDS THROUGH THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT'S HEADQUARTERS AND ESTATE OFFICES,+ HE SAID.

REPLYING TO THE HON W.C.L. BROWN, MR LIAO SAID THE MANAGEMENT OFFICES IN THE HOUSING ESTATES MAINTAINED CLOSE CONTACT WITH TENANTS TOTALLING 2.3 MILLION OR 44 PER CENT OF HONG KONG'S POPULATION, AND HANDLED ALL ENQUIRIES CONCERNING INDIVIDUAL TENANCY PROBLEMS.

+A LARGE NUMBER OF SUCH ENQUIRIES ARE RAISED WITH THE MANAGEMENT STAFF DURING THEIR MONTHLY DOOR-TO-DOOR RENT COLLECTION ROUNDS.

+WHEN TENANTS MOVE INTO NEW ESTATES, THEY ARE BRIEFED ON THE FACILITIES AND SERVICES AVAILABLE IN THE AREA.

/+IN ADDITION,

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+IN ADDITION, THE DEPARTMENT HAS, SINCE 1981, SET UP TENANT'S ADVICE CENTRES IN A NUMBER OF NEW ESTATES TO HELP FAMILIES TO SETTLE DOWN IN THEIR NEW ENVIRONMENT.+

AS TO MORE GENERAL ENQUIRIES, MR LIAO SAID MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WERE DEALT WITH BY THE RESPECTIVE OFFICES IN THE DEPARTMENT'S HEADQUARTERS REGARDING INFORMATION ABOUT HOUSING SERVICES WHICH WERE CENTRALLY ADMINISTERED, SUCH AS APPLICATION FOR PUBLIC HOUSING, HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME AND CLEARANCE REHOUSING.

+AND, OF COURSE, PUBLIC ENQUIRY SERVICE IS ALSO AVAILABLE AT ALL DISTRICT OFFICES, WHERE ADVICE AND INFORMATION CAN BE OBTAINED ABOUT VARIOUS ASPECTS OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES INCLUDING PUBLIC HOUSING.+

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PENALTIES TO BE DOUBLED

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A BILL WHICH WILL DOUBLE THE MAXIMUM FINE AND THE MAXIMUM SURCHARGE THAT MAY BE IMPOSED ON AN EXPORTER WHO MAKES A FALSE DECLARATION, OR WHO FAILS TO LODGE SUCH A DECLARATION, WAS READ A SECOND TIME IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

THE BILL IS THE INDUSTRIAL TRAINING (CLOTHING INDUSTRY) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1983, AND IT SEEKS TO RAISE THE MAXIMUM FINE AND THE MAXIMUM SURCHARGE FROM \$5 000 TO \$10 000.

MOVING THE BILL, THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR E.P. HO EXPLAINED THAT SIMILAR PROVISIONS EXIST IN THE IMPORT AND EXPORT ORDINANCE, AND THIS PROPOSAL WILL REMOVE THE INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN SEPARATE PLACES OF LEGISLATION FOR THE SAME OFFENCE.

+THE BILL FURTHER SEEKS TO PROVIDE GREATER RELIEF TO TRADERS INVOLVED IN THE SHIPMENT OF CLOTHING SAMPLES. UNDER EXISTING LEGISLATION, THE EXPORT OF SAMPLES WITH A VALUE BELOW \$500 IS EXEMPTED FROM THE DECLARATION REQUIREMENTS. TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF PRESENT DAY COSTS, THE BILL SEEKS TO INCREASE THIS VALUE LIMIT FROM \$500 TO \$1 000.

+THE OPPORTUNITY IS ALSO TAKEN TO AMEND THE REFERENCE TO THE HONG KONG TRAINING COUNCIL TO THE NAME OF ITS SUCCESSOR BODY, THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING COUNCIL,+ MR HO ADDED.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED TO JANUARY 11.

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MORE MONEY FOR WITNESSES

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WITNESSES IN CRIMINAL CASES ARE TO RECEIVE INCREASED COMPENSATION, UNDER A RESOLUTION APPROVED TODAY IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

MOVING THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (WITNESSES' ALLOWANCES) (AMENDMENT) RULES 1983, THE LAW DRAFTSMAN, MR GERALD NAZARETH, SAID THAT, AT PRESENT, CRIMINAL CASE WITNESSES RECEIVE A MAXIMUM OF \$50 PER DAY, OR \$25 WHERE THE ABSENCE FROM HOME OR WORK DOES NOT EXCEED FOUR HOURS.

+BOTH THESE AMOUNTS WERE FIXED IN 1978,+ HE SAID.

+SINCE THEN INCREASED REMUNERATION RATES AND INFLATION HAVE MADE THEM INCREASINGLY UNREALISTIC.+

THE COUNCIL APPROVED THE NEW RATES OF \$90 AND \$45 RESPECTIVELY.

THE NEW LIMITS DO NOT AFFECT ALLOWANCES FOR PROFESSIONAL AND EXPERT WITNESSES, FOR WHICH SEPARATE PROVISION IS MADE, MR NAZARETH EXPLAINED.

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PHONE WEATHER SERVICE FEE INCREASED

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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) APPROVED A MOTION SEEKING INCREASES IN CHARGES FOR WEATHER WARNING SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE HONG KONG TELEPHONE COMPANY.

IN MOVING THE MOTION, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, THE HON PIERS JACOBS SAID THE COMPANY OFFERED ITS SUBSCRIBERS A THUNDERSTORM AND HEAVY RAIN WARNING SERVICE AT A CHARGE OF \$50 FOR INITIAL REGISTRATION AND AN ANNUAL CHARGE OF \$144.

THE SAME SCALE OF CHARGES APPLIED ALSO TO THE COMPANY'S TROPICAL CYCLONE WARNING SERVICE.

THE INCREASES WOULD RAISE THE REGISTRATION FEE IN EACH CASE BY \$40 TO \$90.

IN ADDITION TO THE REVISION OF REGISTRATION FEES, THE TELEPHONE COMPANY ALSO PROPOSED TO BREAKDOWN ITS THUNDERSTORM AND HEAVY RAIN WARNING SERVICES INTO TWO NEW, SEPARATE SERVICES -- A THUNDERSTORM WARNING SERVICE AND A FLOOD WARNING SERVICE.

MR JACOBS SAID THE CHANGE WOULD REFLECT A SIMILAR DISTINCTION WHICH THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY INTRODUCED IN MAY THIS YEAR IN ITS OWN WEATHER INFORMATION WARNINGS, IN AN ATTEMPT TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN TWO RELATED BUT DISTINCT WEATHER CONDITIONS.

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THE FEE FOR THE NEW THUNDERSTORM WARNING SERVICE WOULD BE \$240 PER ANNUM COMPARED WITH THE ANNUAL CHARGES OF \$144, WHICH REMAINS THE SAME, FOR OTHER SERVICES.

MR JACOBS SAID THE PROPOSED CHARGES WERE BASED DIRECTLY ON THE COST OF HANDLING REGISTRATION PROCEDURES AND RUNNING THE SERVICES. HE ADDED THAT THE POSTMASTER GENERAL CONSIDERED THE NEW CHARGES REASONABLE.

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LANTAU TAXIS
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THE PERIOD LIMITING THE NUMBER OF MOTOR VEHICLES WHICH MAY BE REGISTERED AS LANTAU TAXIS HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO FEBRUARY 23, 1984.

MOVING THE MOTION AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON ALAN SCOTT SAID THE PRESENT LIMIT ON LANTAU TAXIS LICENCES IS TWENTY.

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FIVE BILLS APPROVED
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FIVE BILLS WERE APPROVED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

THEY ARE THE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) (NO. 5) BILL 1983, THE JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1983, THE BUILDINGS (AMENDMENT) (NO. 3) BILL 1983 AND TWO UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS BILLS - THE METHODIST CHURCH, HONG KONG, INCORPORATION BILL 1983 AND THE HONG KONG SEA CADET CORPS BILL 1983.

FOUR BILLS WERE INTRODUCED AND READ A SECOND TIME, AND DEBATE ON THEM WAS ADJOURNED TO JANUARY 11, 1984.

THEY ARE : THE CROWN LANDS RESUMPTION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1983, THE SUMMARY OFFENCES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1983, THE INDUSTRIAL TRAINING (CLOTHING INDUSTRY) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1983, AND THE IMPORT AND EXPORT (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1983.

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CLOSURE OF BUILDINGS SOUGHT

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THE BUILDING AUTHORITY TODAY DECLARED NO. 17 GRAHAM STREET, HONG KONG TO BE IN A DANGEROUS CONDITION AND NOS. 122, 124 AND 126 WELLINGTON STREET, HONG KONG LIABLE TO BECOME DANGEROUS.

IN A STATEMENT ISSUED THIS MORNING, THE PRINCIPAL GOVERNMENT BUILDING SURVEYOR SAID THAT THESE THREE STOREY PRE-WAR BUILDINGS CONSTRUCTED WITH LOAD-BEARING BRICK WALLS AND TIMBER FLOORS AND ROOFS HAD BEEN UNDER OBSERVATION FOR SEVERAL YEARS.

A RECENT INSPECTION OF THESE BUILDINGS INDICATED FRESH MOVEMENT IN THE ALREADY FRACTURED AND WEAK ENCLOSING WALLS OF NO. 17 GRAHAM STREET, ESPECIALLY THE PARTY WALL COMMON WITH NOS. 122, 124 AND 126 WELLINGTON STREET. AS THERE IS NOW A RISK OF A COLLAPSE OF NO. 17 GRAHAM STREET IT IS CONSIDERED NECESSARY TO CLOSE AND DEMOLISH THIS BUILDING.

THE FRACTURES AND OUTWARD MOVEMENT IN THE PARTY WALL COMMON WITH NO. 17 GRAHAM STREET AND NOS. 122, 124 AND 126 WELLINGTON STREET IS SUCH THAT NOS. 122, 124 AND 126 WELLINGTON STREET COULD NOT WITHSTAND THE DEMOLITION OF NO. 17 GRAHAM STREET.

IT IS THEREFORE NECESSARY TO CLOSE AND DEMOLISH THESE BUILDINGS AT THE SAME TIME.

NOTICES OF INTENTION TO APPLY FOR CLOSURE ORDERS IN VICTORIA DISTRICT COURT AT 9.30 AM ON FEBRUARY 8, 1984 WERE POSTED TODAY.

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INDUSTRIAL SAFETY GALA NIGHT

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AN INDUSTRIAL SAFETY GALA NIGHT TO MARK THE CONCLUSION OF THE RTHK RADIO PROGRAMME, +MUSIC WHILE YOU WORK+ WILL BE HELD AT THE KO SHAN THEATRE IN HUNGHOM, AT 8 PM TOMORROW (THURSDAY) NIGHT.

THE HIGHLIGHT WILL BE A VARIETY SHOW FEATURING LOCAL SINGERS KEN CHOI, SAM HO, WONG YEE-KA, CHEUNG SUK-LING, HA MIU-YIN, LAM CHI-MEI AND THE TOPNOTES.

DR J.W. HAYES, ACTING COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR, WILL PRESENT PRIZES TO WINNERS OF AN INDUSTRIAL SAFETY SLOGAN COMPETITION WHICH FORMED PART OF THE SERIES OF THE 26 HALF-HOUR RADIO PROGRAMMES JOINTLY ORGANISED BY RTHK AND THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT.

THE ENTERTAINMENT SEGMENT OF THE GALA NIGHT WILL BE RECORDED BY RTHK AND BROADCAST ON SATURDAY (DECEMBER 24) FROM 3 PM TO 5 PM ON RADIO 2 WHILE ATV WILL TELEVISIONISE THE SHOW AT 7.30 PM ON CHRISTMAS EVE.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE GALA NIGHT WHICH WILL BEGIN AT 8 PM TOMORROW NIGHT AT KO SHAN THEATRE IN HUNGHOM.

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DB LOOKING AFTER DISTRICT WELL-BEING
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THE ENTHUSIASM OF PEOPLE SUCH AS DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS WILL ENSURE THAT THE NEEDS OF ALL SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY ARE WELL TAKEN CARE OF, SAID THE REGIONAL SECRETARY FOR HONG KONG AND KOWLOON, MR BARRIE WIGGHAM, TODAY.

IN A BRIEF ADDRESS TO THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT BOARD MEETING, HE SAID HE WAS VERY IMPRESSED BY THE DYNAMISM OF THE BOARD WHICH, SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN MARCH LAST YEAR, HAS CHARGED FULL STEAM AHEAD WITH ITS TASK OF LOOKING AFTER THE WELL-BEING OF THE DISTRICT.

+WE HAVE JUST HAD THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT FESTIVAL WHICH HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE, AND NO DOUBT IT HAS FURTHER ENHANCED THE SENSE OF DISTRICT IDENTITY AMONG LOCAL RESIDENTS,+ HE TOLD THE BOARD MEMBERS.

DESCRIBING THE BOARD AS +VERY ACTIVE+, MR WIGGHAM SAID IT HAD SET UP VARIOUS WORKING GROUPS TO LOOK INTO THE SHORTFALL OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH CENTRES, TO IMPROVE SERVICES PROVIDED FOR THE ELDERLY, AND TO LOOK INTO THE PROBLEM OF TRAFFIC CONGESTION ALONG THE KENNEDY TOWN PRAYA.

+THE PROGRESS REPORT ON THE CLEARANCE OF HOI PONG VILLAGE ON TODAY'S AGENDA REMINDS ME OF THE TIME AND EFFORT MEMBERS HAVE DEVOTED IN ASSISTING THE VICTIMS OF TYPHOON ELLEN,+ HE ADDED.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS
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THE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS AT TSUEN WAN WILL BE SWITCHED ON BY MRS VICTORIA HSU, WIFE OF THE TSUEN WAN DISTRICT COMMISSIONER, AT 6 PM TOMORROW (THURSDAY) AT THE FIRST FLOOR PODIUM OF TSUEN WAN TOWN HALL.

THE CEREMONY WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A PERFORMANCE BY A CHILDREN'S CHOIR OF THE TSUEN WAN CULTURE AND RECREATION CO-ORDINATING ASSOCIATION.

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE CEREMONY AND THE PERFORMANCE.

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TEMPORARY TRAFFIC PLANS
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FROM 10.30 AM ON FRIDAY (DECEMBER 23), SPECIAL TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN TSZ WAN SHAN AREA FOR ABOUT ONE MONTH TO FACILITATE WATER MAINS WORKS.

THE SOUTHBOUND CARRIAGEWAY OF WAN WAH STREET BETWEEN WAI WAH STREET AND THE ACCESS ROAD TO TSZ ON ESTATE WILL BE TEMPORARILY CLOSED TO ALL TRAFFIC.

WAN WAH STREET SECTION BETWEEN SHEUNG FUNG STREET AND WAI WAH STREET WILL BE RE-ROUTED FROM TWO-WAY TO ONE-WAY NORTHBOUND.

GENERAL TRAFFIC TO AND FROM TSZ WAN SHAN ARE ADVISED TO USE TSZ WAN SHAN ROAD AND PO KONG VILLAGE ROAD.

THE FOLLOWING BUS DIVERSIONS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED:

<u>ROUTE NO.</u>	<u>ON JOURNEY TO TSZ WAN SHAN</u>	<u>ON JOURNEY FROM TSZ WAN SHAN</u>
3A, 3B, 15A	NO CHANGE	VIA TSZ WAN SHAN ROAD, YUK WAH STREET AND WAN WAH STREET TO RESUME NORMAL ROUTING

THE FOLLOWING DIVERSION OF MAXICAB SERVICE WILL BE IMPLEMENTED:-

<u>ROUTE NO.</u>	<u>ON JOURNEY TO TSZ WAN SHAN</u>	<u>ON JOURNEY FROM TSZ WAN SHAN</u>
20	VIA SHEUNG FUNG STREET, WAN WAH STREET AND TSZ ON ESTATE ACCESS ROAD	NO CHANGE

THE TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENT WILL BE EFFECTED UNTIL THE COMPLETION OF THE ROAD WORKS.

AND FROM THE SAME DAY AT 10 AM, THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS OF ROADS WILL BE DESIGNATED RESTRICTED ZONES FROM 7 AM TO MIDNIGHT DAILY:-

- * KAU PUI LUNG ROAD BETWEEN CHI KIANG STREET AND A POINT ABOUT 30 METRES NORTH OF THE JUNCTION OF KAU PUI LUNG ROAD AND LOK SHAN ROAD.
- * LOK SHAN ROAD BETWEEN KAU PUI LUNG ROAD AND MA TAU WAI ROAD.

WITHIN THESE RESTRICTED ZONES, ALL PUBLIC LIGHT BUSES EXCEPT THOSE AUTHOSIRED IN WRITING BY THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT WILL BE PROHIBITED FROM PICKING UP OR SETTING DOWN PASSENGERS.

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MODY ROAD PROHIBITED ZONE

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FROM 10 AM ON FRIDAY (DECEMBER 23), THE OUTER BAY OF THE LOADING AND UNLOADING LAYBY ON MODY ROAD WESTBOUND BETWEEN HOUSE NOS. 68 AND 70, WILL BE DESIGNATED A PROHIBITED ZONE.

ALL MOTOR VEHICLES, EXCEPT THOSE AUTHORISED IN WRITING BY THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT, WILL BE PROHIBITED FROM ENTERING THE ABOVE-MENTIONED BAY.

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