



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 1986

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CS: CLEAR MANDATE FOR TOUGHER ACTION ON TRIADS
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THE PUBLIC HAS GIVEN A CLEAR MANDATE FOR TOUGHER ACTION AGAINST TRIADS, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SIR DAVID SAID THIS WHEN TABLING A STATEMENT ON HOW THE GOVERNMENT WOULD PROCEED WITH MEASURES TO CHANGE THE LAW AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE LAW DEALING WITH TRIADS IN SOCIETY.

THE STATEMENT SHOWED THE GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION TO TACKLE THE CRIME PROBLEM WITH VIGOUR, HE SAID.

SIR DAVID NOTED THAT THE STATEMENT WAS THE CULMINATION OF A PERIOD OF EXTENSIVE CONSULTATION WITH THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, DISTRICT BOARDS, THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE, ORGANISATIONS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AFTER THE PUBLICATION OF A DISCUSSION DOCUMENT. AN INDEPENDENT SURVEY ON PUBLIC VIEWS HAD ALSO BEEN CARRIED OUT.

HE THANKED ALL THOSE WHO HAD MADE COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS ON THE SUBJECT, AND IN PARTICULAR DR THE HON HO KAM-FAI, WHO CHAIRED THE AD-HOC GROUP OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS WHICH EXAMINED THE DOCUMENT.

SUMMARISING OPINIONS GIVEN, SIR DAVID SAID: +IT IS CLEAR THAT MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND OF THIS COUNCIL WANT TO SEE SUSTAINED AND DETERMINED ACTION AGAINST TRIADS, AND THAT PEOPLE WERE EVEN WILLING TO SACRIFICE SOME OF THEIR FREEDOMS THE BETTER TO TACKLE TRIADS, WHILE WARNING OF THE POSSIBLE ABUSE OF POWER BY THE POLICE AND THE NEED TO SAFEGUARD THE RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL.

+MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC HAVE ALSO CALLED FOR GREATER EFFORT TO EDUCATE OUR YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE TRIAD PROBLEM AND MORE EFFORT TO REHABILITATE THOSE WHO WANT TO ESCAPE THE CLUTCHES OF THE TRIADS.+

HE NOTED THAT THERE WAS UNIVERSAL SUPPORT FOR BETTER PROTECTION OF WITNESSES AND ALREADY A NOTICE HAD BEEN SENT TO ALL PROSECUTORS DRAWING THEIR ATTENTION TO THE WAYS IN WHICH A COURT MIGHT PROTECT A WITNESS WHILE HE WAS GIVING EVIDENCE.

+A POLICE GENERAL ORDER IS BEING PREPARED TO THE SAME EFFECT. IT WILL ENSURE THAT PROPER CONSIDERATION IS GIVEN, BY THOSE IN CHARGE OF CASES WHERE WITNESSES FEEL THREATENED, WHETHER OR NOT TO WITHHOLD THEIR ADDRESSES FROM THEIR STATEMENTS,+ HE SAID.

+THE INTRODUCTION OF ONE-WAY VIEWERS FOR IDENTIFICATION PARADES RECEIVED UNANIMOUS SUPPORT. THE POLICE ARE CURRENTLY WORKING OUT THE DETAILS OF PROVIDING FIVE ONE-WAY VIEWERS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.+

/OTHER MEASURES

OTHER MEASURES WHICH MET WITH GENERAL SUPPORT INCLUDED INCREASED FINES FOR TRIAD OFFENCES, THE INTRODUCTION OF A TRIAD RENUNCIATION SCHEME, THE USE OF TASK FORCES TO INVESTIGATE TRIAD BACKED ORGANISED CRIME; AND TOUGHER ACTION AGAINST VICE ESTABLISHMENTS AND AGAINST ILLEGAL GAMBLING.

+MOST OF THESE PROPOSALS REQUIRE AMENDMENT TO THE LAW OR NEW LEGISLATION AND THIS IS BEING, AND WILL BE, FOLLOWED UP,+ HE SAID.

SIR DAVID SAID DIFFERING VIEWS WERE EXPRESSED ABOUT SOME OF THE OPTIONS DESCRIBED IN THE DISCUSSION DOCUMENT, PARTICULARLY POLICE SUPERVISION AND PROHIBITING ENTRY TO CERTAIN PREMISES FOR CONVICTED TRIAD MEMBERS. THESE IDEAS WOULD REQUIRE FURTHER STUDY.

+THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT PURSUE THREE OPTIONS. THESE WERE - A POSSIBLE CHANGE TO SECTION 20 OF THE SOCIETIES ORDINANCE DEALING WITH THE DISPLAY OF TRIAD MEMBERSHIP, TO SECTION 22 OF THE SOCIETIES ORDINANCE ON THE RECRUITING OF TRIADS AND TO THE POSSIBILITY OF INTRODUCING MORE FORMS OF LEGAL GAMBLING,+ SIR DAVID SAID.

SIR DAVID NOTED THAT GOVERNMENT'S ACTION AGAINST CRIME WAS SPEARHEADED BY THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE, WHICH WAS SUPPORTED BY A UNIQUE SYSTEM OF DISTRICT FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEES WHERE THE POLICE AND THE PEOPLE WORKED TOGETHER TO FIGHT CRIME.

+THE FIGHT IS NOT ONE OF INSTANT VICTORY. IT IS A WAR OF ATTRITION AND ADJUSTMENT TO CHANGING NEEDS,+ HE ADDED.

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LABOUR CHIEF GIVES ASSURANCE ON CONSULTATION
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THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR WILL CONSULT THE SAFETY OFFICERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE BEFORE HE EXERCISES HIS POWERS UNDER THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKING ORDINANCE AND IF AN APPEAL IS MADE TO THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION WILL BE MADE BEFORE THE APPEAL IS DECIDED, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO MEMBERS' SPEECHES ON THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (SAFETY OFFICERS AND SAFETY SUPERVISORS) REGULATIONS 1986, MR BRIDGE SAID THAT IF THIS SYSTEM PROVED TO BE UNSATISFACTORY THIS ASPECT OF THE REGULATIONS WOULD BE REVIEWED.

/ON CLARIFYING

ON CLARIFYING THE SEPARATE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SAFETY OFFICERS, SAFETY SUPERVISORS AND EMPLOYERS, HE POINTED OUT THAT SINCE SAFETY OFFICERS AND SAFETY SUPERVISORS WOULD BE EMPLOYEES THEY THEREFORE HAD LIMITED POWERS.

HOWEVER, HE ADDED THAT PART V OF THE REGULATIONS CLEARLY PLACED ON THE EMPLOYER THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROVIDING THE SAFETY OFFICERS AND SAFETY SUPERVISORS WITH ALL THE ASSISTANCE AND FACILITIES THEY NEEDED TO CARRY OUT THEIR DUTIES.

+I BELIEVE THAT EMPLOYERS WILL FULLY SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE SAFETY OFFICERS BUT THERE ARE PENALTIES IN THE REGULATIONS FOR ANY EMPLOYERS WHO FAILS TO DO SO,+ HE SAID.

MR BRIDGE REITERATED THAT THE POINT THAT INITIALLY THE REGULATIONS WOULD IN FACT BE APPLIED ONLY TO THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY WOULD BE EMPHASISED IN PUBLICITY.

+HOWEVER, THE REGULATIONS HAVE BEEN DRAFTED IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY CAN IN DUE COURSE BE APPLIED TO OTHER INDUSTRIES IF THE NEED ARISES; BUT LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS TO THE SCHEDULES WILL BE NECESSARY SO THAT THE APPROVAL OF THIS COUNCIL WILL BE REQUIRED,+ HE SAID.

REFERRING TO THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE REQUIREMENT FOR SAFETY OFFICERS WAS ON A COMPANY OR SITE BASIS, MR BRIDGE SAID THE FOURTH SCHEDULE WAS QUITE CLEAR THAT IT WAS ON A COMPANY BASIS.

THE REQUIREMENT WAS FOR ONE COMPANY TO EMPLOY ONE SAFETY OFFICER REGARDLESS OF THE NUMBER OF CONSTRUCTION SITES THE COMPANY HAD.

ON THE NEED FOR THE FACTORY INSPECTORATE TO MONITOR THE APPLICATION OF THE REGULATIONS, MR BRIDGE ASSURED MEMBERS THAT THE INSPECTORATE WOULD HAVE THIS VERY MUCH IN MIND.

HE ALSO SAID THAT AS THE REGULATIONS WOULD TAKE EFFECT IN TWO STAGES, ON DECEMBER 1, 1986 AND DECEMBER 1, 1987, HE INTENDED TO REVIEW THEM ONE YEAR AFTER THE SECOND STAGE HAD BEEN IMPLEMENTED, TOWARDS THE END OF 1988.

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REGULATIONS INITIALLY APPLY ONLY TO CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY
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THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (SAFETY OFFICERS AND SAFETY SUPERVISORS) REGULATIONS 1986 WOULD INITIALLY APPLY ONLY TO THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY BUT COULD BE EXTENDED TO OTHER INDUSTRIES IF NECESSARY, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING A RESOLUTION THAT THE REGULATIONS BE APPROVED, MR BRIDGE SAID A PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR OR A SPECIALIST CONTRACTOR WOULD BE REQUIRED TO EMPLOY ONE REGISTERED SAFETY OFFICER FULL-TIME IF HE EMPLOYED 200 OR MORE PEOPLE ON A CONSTRUCTION SITE OR SITES, AND TO EMPLOY ONE SAFETY SUPERVISOR ON EACH CONSTRUCTION SITE ON WHICH HE EMPLOYED 20 OR MORE WORKERS.

A SAFETY OFFICER, HELPED BY A SAFETY SUPERVISOR WHERE APPROPRIATE, WOULD ASSIST THE PROPRIETOR IN PROMOTING THE SAFETY AND HEALTH OF THOSE EMPLOYED.

HIS DUTIES WOULD INCLUDE INSPECTING PLANTS AND EQUIPMENT TO IDENTIFY SAFETY RISKS, ADVISING ON PREVENTIVE MEASURES, MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS ON ACCIDENT PREVENTION AND INVESTIGATING ACCIDENTS AND DANGEROUS OCCURRENCES.

AS FOR THE SAFETY SUPERVISOR, HIS DUTIES WOULD BE TO ADVISE ON SAFETY STANDARDS FOR WORKERS, SUPERVISE THE OBSERVANCE OF SUCH STANDARDS AND PROMOTE SAFETY AT WORK.

UNDER THE REGULATIONS, THE PROPRIETOR HAD TO ENSURE THAT HIS SAFETY OFFICER AND SAFETY SUPERVISOR CARRIED OUT THEIR DUTIES PROPERLY, AND TO PROVIDE THEM WITH NECESSARY ASSISTANCE AND FACILITIES, MR BRIDGE SAID.

+A PROPRIETOR WHO FAILS TO EMPLOY A SAFETY OFFICER IS LIABLE TO A FINE OF \$20 000.

+IF HE FAILS TO EMPLOY A SAFETY SUPERVISOR OR CONTRAVENES OTHER PROVISIONS OF THE REGULATIONS, HE IS LIABLE TO A FINE OF \$10 000,+ HE SAID.

MR BRIDGE SAID THE REGULATIONS ALSO REQUIRED THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR TO MAINTAIN A REGISTER OF SAFETY OFFICERS, AND AT THE SAME TIME EMPOWERED HIM TO REGISTER A SAFETY OFFICER AND, IN CERTAIN CASES, TO SUSPEND OR CANCEL SUCH REGISTRATION.

IN EXERCISING THESE DUTIES, THE COMMISSIONER WOULD BE ADVISED BY A SAFETY OFFICERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE, APPOINTED BY HIM, ON THE QUALIFICATIONS AND SUITABILITY OF A PERSON FOR REGISTRATION AS A SAFETY OFFICER AND ON THE SUSPENSION OR CANCELLATION OF REGISTRATION.

/MR BRIDGE

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MR BRIDGE SAID THAT IN PREPARING THE LEGISLATION, THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT HAD CARRIED OUT EXTENSIVE AND REPEATED CONSULTATIONS WITH CONCERNED EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL BODIES.

+ALL THE RELEVANT POINTS MADE TO THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR DURING THE CONSULTATIONS HAVE BEEN FULLY CONSIDERED, AND WHERE APPROPRIATE INCORPORATED IN THE REGULATIONS.+

THE ONE MAJOR POINT WHICH HAD NOT BEEN INCORPORATED, MR BRIDGE POINTED OUT, CONCERNED EMPLOYEES' RESPONSIBILITY IN INDUSTRIAL SAFETY. ALTHOUGH EMPLOYEES DID INDEED SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR INDUSTRIAL SAFETY, THIS POINT WAS ALREADY PROVIDED FOR BY OTHER SETS OF REGULATIONS UNDER THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS ORDINANCE.

REFERRING TO THE AVAILABILITY OF SAFETY OFFICERS TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE REGULATIONS, MR BRIDGE SAID THAT SINCE 1979 A TOTAL OF 482 PEOPLE HAD COMPLETED SAFETY OFFICER COURSES AT THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC AND THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TRAINING AUTHORITY'S TRAINING CENTRE.

+IN ADDITION, SOME 210 PEOPLE ARE EXPECTED TO COMPLETE TRAINING BY THE END OF THE CURRENT ACADEMIC YEAR,+ HE SAID.

HE ALSO NOTED THAT A FURTHER 7 800 PERSONS HAD COMPLETED CONSTRUCTION SAFETY COURSES RUN BY THE INDUSTRIAL SAFETY TRAINING CENTRE OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT AND WERE CAPABLE OF PERFORMING THE DUTIES OF A SAFETY SUPERVISOR.

TO GIVE EMPLOYERS TIME TO RECRUIT SAFETY OFFICERS OR SAFETY SUPERVISORS TO COMPLY WITH THE REGULATIONS, THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR INTENDED TO BRING THE REGULATIONS INTO OPERATION IN TWO STAGES.

+THE PROVISIONS CONCERNING THE REGISTRATION OF SAFETY OFFICERS AND THE REGULATIONS EMPOWERING THE COMMISSIONER TO APPOINT THE SAFETY OFFICERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE WILL BE BROUGHT INTO EFFECT ON DECEMBER 1 THIS YEAR.

+THE REST OF THE REGULATIONS WILL BE BROUGHT INTO OPERATION ONE YEAR LATER,+ MR BRIDGE SAID.

IN ORDER TO BRING THE CONTENTS OF THE REGULATIONS TO THE ATTENTION OF EMPLOYERS, SAFETY OFFICERS, SAFETY SUPERVISORS AND THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT WOULD LAUNCH A PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN.

THE DEPARTMENT WOULD PUBLISH A GUIDE FOR THE USE OF EMPLOYERS AND SAFETY OFFICERS WHICH WOULD EXPLAIN THE REGULATIONS AND HOW THEY SHOULD BE APPLIED.

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REGULATIONS ON CONSTRUCTION SITE SAFETY APPROVED
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THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (SAFETY OFFICERS AND SAFETY SUPERVISORS) REGULATIONS 1986, WHICH SEEK TO IMPROVE INDUSTRIAL SAFETY AT CONSTRUCTION SITES, WERE APPROVED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SIX MEMBERS SPOKE IN SUPPORT OF THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE REGULATIONS -- THE HON CHAN KAM-CHUEN, THE HON HU FA-KUANG, DR THE HON HENRIETTA IP, THE HON CHENG HON-KWAN, THE HON NGAI SHIU-KIT AND THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG.

LEADING DEBATE ON THE MOTION AS CONVENER OF THE LEGCO AD HOC GROUP STUDYING THE REGULATIONS, MR CHAN SAID HE WAS PERSONALLY VERY PLEASED TO SEE THE SAFETY OFFICERS AND SAFETY SUPERVISORS SCHEME COME TO FRUITION AFTER YEARS OF PREPARATION.

HE STRESSED THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO TRAIN A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF QUALIFIED SAFETY OFFICERS AND SAFETY SUPERVISORS BEFORE THE SCHEME WAS IMPLEMENTED.

THERE WERE NOW ABOUT 500 SAFETY OFFICERS AND OVER 7 000 SAFETY SUPERVISORS, WITH SOME OF THE LATTER PERFORMING DUAL DUTIES AT A LARGE NUMBER OF SMALLER INDUSTRIAL ESTABLISHMENTS EMPLOYING ABOUT 20 WORKERS.

THIS WOULD ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO INDUSTRIAL SAFETY.

MR CHAN SAID THE IMPORTANCE OF INDUSTRIAL SAFETY MEASURES COULD NOT BE OVER-EMPHASISED.

+ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT ACHIEVE THE GOAL OF A ZERO ACCIDENT FIGURE, I TRUST THAT WITH THE COMBINED AND SUSTAINED EFFORTS OF THE GOVERNMENT, EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES, WE MAY REDUCE THE TRAGIC FIGURES TO A MORE ACCEPTABLE LEVEL,+ HE SAID.

MR HU CONSIDERED THAT IT WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE FOR AN APPEAL BOARD COMPRISING MAINLY PRIVATE SECTOR MEMBERS TO HANDLE APPEALS CONCERNING THE REGISTRATION OF SAFETY OFFICERS.

ACCORDING TO THE REGULATIONS, THE DECISION TO REFUSE, CANCEL AND SUSPEND REGISTRATION AND THE SUBSEQUENT APPEAL WOULD ALL BE HANDLED BY CIVIL SERVANTS, HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT MEMBERS OF THE SAFETY OFFICERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THE APPEAL BOARD COULD BE APPOINTED BY THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER INSTEAD OF BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR.

/HOWEVER, AS

HOWEVER, AS SUCH AMENDMENTS WOULD CAUSE CONSIDERABLE DELAY IN IMPLEMENTING THE REGULATIONS, MR HU SUGGESTED THAT THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR CONSULT FULLY WITH THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE BEFORE HE EXERCISED HIS POWER, IN ORDER TO ENSURE FAIRNESS.

+SHOULD THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR ACT AGAINST THE ADVICE OF HIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER MUST ENSURE A DETAILED INVESTIGATION UPON RECEIPT OF AN APPEAL,+ HE SAID.

IN ADDITION, MR HU SAID THE RATIO BETWEEN SAFETY OFFICER AND THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES FOR EACH PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR OR SPECIALIST CONTRACTOR WORKING AT MORE THAN ONE CONSTRUCTION SITE SHOULD BE CALCULATED ON A COMPANY BASIS.

COMMENTING ON WHETHER AN EMPLOYER WOULD LISTEN TO THE ADVICE OF HIS SAFETY OFFICER, DR IP SAID THAT IT WAS A QUESTION OF MUTUAL TRUST AND RESPECT AND A CONJOINT EFFORT TOWARDS A COMMON GOAL -- THE SAFETY OF THE WORK ENVIRONMENT.

+IT WILL BE CONSIDERABLY SHORTSIGHTED OF PROPRIETORS NOT TO TAKE REMEDIAL ACTIONS BASED ON THE SAFETY OFFICER'S REPORT, WHEN ONE CONSIDERS THE DAMAGE THIS WOULD BRING TO THE IMAGE, CREDIBILITY, AND MORALE OF THE COMPANY, ON TOP OF ALL THE HUMAN SUFFERINGS, INJURY AND DEATH WILL BRING,+ SHE SAID.

DR IP URGED THAT FACTORY INSPECTORS SHOULD, OTHER THAN INVESTIGATING THOSE PROPRIETORS WHOSE STAFF RECEIVED INJURIES ON SITE MORE FREQUENTLY THAN THE NORM, OR COMPANIES WHERE SAFETY OFFICERS' REPORTS WERE FRANKLY IGNORED, ALSO STUDY THOSE COMPANIES WHOSE REPORTS CONSISTENTLY SHOWED NO PROPOSALS FOR CHANGE OR WHERE THERE WAS A RAPID TURNOVER OF SAFETY OFFICERS.

MR CHENG SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE MANDATORY EMPLOYMENT OF A SAFETY OFFICER AND A SAFETY SUPERVISOR BY THE PROPRIETOR OF AN INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKING COULD IMPROVE CONSTRUCTION SAFETY, WHICH WAS BADLY NEEDED.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE REGULATIONS WERE INTENDED SOLELY FOR CONSTRUCTION SITES AT THE PRESENT TIME AND THAT THIS SHOULD BE CLEARLY SPELT OUT IN THE GUIDES TO BE ISSUED BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR TO AVOID UNDUE WORRY BY PROPRIETORS OF INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS OTHER THAN CONSTRUCTION SITES.

HOWEVER, HE HOPED THAT THE REGULATIONS WOULD BE EXPANDED WHERE APPROPRIATE TO OTHER INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS TO ENHANCE HONG KONG'S INDUSTRIAL SAFETY.

MR CHENG SAID THE SAFETY OFFICER ADVISORY COMMITTEE SHOULD INCLUDE SAFETY OFFICERS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF INTERESTED ORGANISATIONS SO THAT INTERESTS OF ALL PARTIES MIGHT BE WELL PROTECTED.

HE ALSO STRESSED THAT IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGULATIONS, THE PROPRIETOR SHOULD BE HELD ULTIMATELY RESPONSIBLE FOR SAFETY AT A CONSTRUCTION SITE.

HOWEVER, MR NGAI DISAGREED THAT THE REGULATIONS COULD BE TREATED AS A SET OF REGULATIONS FOR GENERAL USE WHICH COULD BE EXTENDED TO ANY OTHER INDUSTRY.

ON THE CONTRARY, HE CONSIDERED THAT THE MORE PRACTICAL MEASURE TO ADOPT WAS TO STIPULATE THAT THE REGULATIONS WERE APPLICABLE ONLY TO THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY.

+SHOULD THE NEED OF EMPLOYING SAFETY OFFICERS IN OTHER INDUSTRIES ARISE IN FUTURE, THEN SEPARATE LEGISLATION CAN BE ENACTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RATE OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS AND THE LEVEL OF RISKS IN THE RELEVANT INDUSTRY,+ HE SAID.

MR TAM ECHOED MR CHENG'S VIEWS, SAYING THAT MEMBERS OF THE SAFETY OFFICER ADVISORY COMMITTEE SHOULD INCLUDE LABOUR REPRESENTATIVES AND THAT THE REGULATIONS SHOULD IN FUTURE BE EXTENDED TO COVER OTHER DANGEROUS INDUSTRIES.

HE FELT THAT EMPLOYERS AND RELATED ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF MUST RENDER SAFETY OFFICERS THEIR FULL SUPPORT OTHERWISE THESE OFFICERS WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO CARRY OUT THEIR DUTIES EFFECTIVELY.

MR TAM URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO SPECIFY A DATE FOR REVIEWING THE REGULATIONS SO THAT A MORE COMPLETE SYSTEM OF SAFEGUARDING INDUSTRIAL SAFETY COULD BE DEVELOPED.

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STUDIES SHOW SMOKELESS TOBACCO, ORAL CANCER LINK
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EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDIES BY VARIOUS OVERSEAS AUTHORITIES SHOW A STRONG CONNECTION BETWEEN THE USE OF SMOKELESS TOBACCO AND THE INCIDENCE OF ORAL CANCER, WHICH COULD DEVELOP WITHIN FIVE YEARS, MUCH MORE QUICKLY THAN LUNG CANCER ASSOCIATED WITH CIGARETTE SMOKING, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) BILL 1986, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE OBJECT OF THE BILL WAS TO ENABLE REGULATIONS TO BE MADE BY THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL TO PROHIBIT THE IMPORTATION, MANUFACTURE, SALE, OFFERING OR POSSESSION FOR SALE OF SMOKELESS TOBACCO PRODUCTS.

HE EXPLAINED THAT SMOKELESS TOBACCO INCLUDED BOTH CHEWING TOBACCO AND SNUFF, AND THE LATTER COULD BE DIVIDED INTO TWO DISTINCT TYPES, DRY SNUFF WHICH WAS SNIFFED THROUGH THE NOSE, AND MOIST SNUFF WHICH WAS PLACED IN THE MOUTH.

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+CLAUSE 2 OF THE BILL AMENDS THE DEFINITION OF FOOD IN THE PRINCIPAL ORDINANCE TO INCLUDE SMOKELESS TOBACCO PRODUCTS, THAT IS TOBACCO PRODUCTS WHICH ARE TAKEN ORALLY, BUT NOT INCLUDING DRY SNUFF TAKEN BY INHALATION.

+CLAUSE 3 WIDENS THE EXISTING POWER TO MAKE REGULATIONS PROHIBITING OR REGULATING THE IMPORTATION OF ANY FOOD OR DRUGS WHICH MAY BE PREJUDICIAL TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH, TO INCLUDE PROHIBITING OR REGULATING THE MANUFACTURE, SALE, POSSESSION FOR SALE, OFFER OR EXPOSURE FOR SALE, OR CONSIGNMENT OR DELIVERY OF SUCH FOOD OR DRUGS,+ HE SAID.

IN ADDITION, A SMALL CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENT TO THE DUTIABLE COMMODITIES ORDINANCE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THAT ORDINANCE SHOULD NOT APPLY TO SMOKELESS TOBACCO PRODUCTS.

GIVING THE REASONS FOR THE PRESENT LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL, MR CHAMBERS SAID THAT RECENTLY A SPECIAL TYPE OF MOIST SNUFF HAD BEEN MARKETED SUCCESSFULLY IN A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE, AND THERE WAS INTENTION OF INTRODUCING A NEW MOIST TOBACCO PRODUCT CONTAINED IN SMALL SACHETS TO HONG KONG.

HE POINTED OUT THAT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE UNITED STATES VOLUNTARY AGREEMENTS AND MARKETING RESTRICTIONS HAD BEEN NEGOTIATED WITH THE MANUFACTURERS OF SMOKELESS TOBACCO PRODUCTS, BUT THERE WAS EVIDENCE THAT THESE ARRANGEMENTS HAD NOT ACHIEVED THE DESIRED EFFECT OF PREVENTING THE ADOPTION BY CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS OF THIS DANGEROUS HABIT.

+IN VIEW OF THE HIGH RISKS INVOLVED, AND THE FACT THAT AT PRESENT ONLY A VERY LIMITED QUANTITY OF MOIST TOBACCO PRODUCTS ARE SOLD IN HONG KONG, THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT IT HAS A DUTY TO STEP IN AND PREVENT THEIR WIDESPREAD USE HERE,+ HE SAID.

AS TO WHY THE GOVERNMENT WAS PROPOSING A BAN ON SMOKELESS TOBACCO WHILE CONTINUING TO ALLOW CIGARETTES AND OTHER TOBACCO PRODUCTS TO BE SOLD, MR CHAMBERS SAID THAT IT WAS IMPRACTICAL TO TRY TO STOP BY LEGISLATIVE ACTION A HABIT WHICH, HOWEVER RISKY, WAS STILL PRACTISED BY ABOUT A QUARTER OF THE ADULT POPULATION.

+A SIMPLE ACTION TAKEN, ON THE BEST AND LATEST HEALTH ADVICE, TO STOP THE SPREAD OF A NEW AND HAZARDOUS HABIT, WHICH IS PARTICULARLY ADDICTIVE AND LIABLE TO BE TAKEN UP BY THE YOUNG, IS A DIFFERENT MATTER ALTOGETHER.+

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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REMOVAL OF FAMILY MAINTENANCE LIMITS PROPOSED
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DRAFT LEGISLATION PROVIDING FOR THE REMOVAL OF FINANCIAL LIMITS ON THE AMOUNTS A COURT CAN ORDER TO BE PAID AS MAINTENANCE TO A WIFE AND HER CHILDREN AND IN RESPECT OF ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN WAS INTRODUCED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON MICHAEL THOMAS, SAID THE MAIN OBJECT OF ALL THREE BILLS CONCERNED WAS TO REMOVE THE EXISTING FINANCIAL LIMITS ON AMOUNTS THAT THE DISTRICT COURT COULD ORDER TO BE PAID UNDER THE PRINCIPAL ORDINANCES FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND EDUCATION OF A CHILD.

THE BILLS ARE THE SEPARATION AND MAINTENANCE ORDERS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986, THE AFFILIATION PROCEEDINGS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986, AND THE GUARDIANSHIP OF MINORS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986.

IN MOVING THE SECOND READINGS OF THE BILLS, MR THOMAS SAID THE VARIOUS FINANCIAL LIMITS IN THREE ORDINANCES CONCERNED WERE THE PRODUCT OF HISTORY RATHER THAN PRINCIPLE. +THEY DATE BACK TO A TIME WHEN THIS JURISDICTION WAS EXERCISED BY LAY MAGISTRATES.+

+THE MAIN DISADVANTAGE OF LIMITS IS THAT THEY WILL PREVENT THE COURT FROM DOING JUSTICE IN THE EXCEPTIONAL CASE,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID THERE WAS NO REASON IN LAW OR IN PRINCIPLE WHY THE ASSESSMENT OF MAINTENANCE IN ALL THREE ORDINANCES COULD NOT BE LEFT TO THE DISCRETION OF THE COURT. THE FACTS OF EACH CASE WOULD PROVIDE THE ONLY CONSTRAINTS THAT WERE RELEVANT. IN ALL CASES, THERE WOULD BE THE USUAL RIGHTS OF APPEAL.

MR THOMAS NOTED THAT THERE HAD ALREADY BEEN WIDE CONSULTATION ON THIS ASPECT OF THE BILLS, AND THE OVERWHELMING RESPONSE WAS IN FAVOUR OF A REMOVAL OF THE LIMITS.

+THE REMOVAL OF THE FINANCIAL LIMITS IN THE THREE PRINCIPAL ORDINANCES IS UNLIKELY TO RESULT IN ANY GENERAL INCREASE IN THE AMOUNT OF AWARDS MADE BY THE COURTS. BUT IT WILL ENSURE THAT THERE IS NOTHING TO PREVENT JUSTICE BEING DONE IN EXCEPTIONAL CASES WHERE THE CIRCUMSTANCES MAY REQUIRE AN EXCEPTIONAL AWARD AGAINST A WEALTHY PARENT, FOR EXAMPLE IN THE CASE OF A HANDICAPPED CHILD WHO NEEDS SPECIAL CARE,+ HE SAID.

THE AFFILIATION PROCEEDINGS ORDINANCE AND THE GUARDIANSHIP OF MINORS ORDINANCE PROVIDED THAT PAYMENTS IN RESPECT OF A CHILD COVERED BOTH MAINTENANCE AND EDUCATION.

SIMILARLY, THIS BILL NOW MADE PROVISION FOR ORDERS MADE UNDER THE SEPARATION AND MAINTENANCE ORDERS ORDINANCE TO COVER BOTH MAINTENANCE AND EDUCATION.

/+THESE ARE

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+THESE ARE ALL USEFUL ADJUNCTS TO THE COURT'S JURISDICTION TO PROVIDE FOR THE NEEDS OF WIVES AND CHILDREN, WHETHER LEGITIMATE OR ILLEGITIMATE. THEY ARE SUPPORTED BY THE BAR AND BY THE LAW SOCIETY,+ MR THOMAS SAID.

ON THE GUARDIANSHIP OF MINORS (AMENDMENT) BILL, MR THOMAS SAID THIS BILL SOUGHT TO PERMIT THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE, AS WELL AS EITHER PARENT, TO APPLY FOR AN ORDER FOR CUSTODY AND MAINTENANCE OF A MINOR UNDER THE GUARDIANSHIP OF MINORS ORDINANCE.

AT PRESENT SUCH AN ORDER COULD ONLY BE MADE ON THE APPLICATION OF A PARENT.

AS A RESULT, ALTHOUGH THE DIRECTOR COULD APPLY FOR THE CARE OF A MINOR IN THE MAGISTRATES COURT UNDER THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND JUVENILES ORDINANCE AND IN THE HIGH COURT IN ITS WARDSHIP JURISDICTION, AN ORDER PLACING THE MINOR IN THE CARE OF THE DIRECTOR COULD ONLY BE MADE UNDER THE GUARDIANSHIP OF MINORS ORDINANCE WHERE ONE OF THE PARENTS HAD INITIATED THE PROCEEDINGS.

THE COURT HAD NO POWER TO MAKE SUCH AN ORDER UNDER ANY OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES.

+THE NEW LEGISLATION WOULD ENABLE THE DIRECTOR AS WELL AS EITHER PARENT TO INITIATE THE PROCEEDINGS. IN EVERY CASE, OF COURSE, IT WILL BE FOR THE COURT THEN TO REACH A VIEW UPON THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE MINOR,+ MR THOMAS SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILLS WAS ADJOURNED.

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BETTER PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

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THE EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION (AMENDMENT) BILL WHICH WILL ENABLE EMPLOYEES INJURED IN AN INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENT TO RECEIVE A MORE REASONABLE LEVEL OF PROTECTION WAS SUPPORTED BY THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE BILL, HE SAID THE AMENDMENTS FURTHER CLARIFIED THE PROVISIONS OF THE MAIN ORDINANCE, BUT HE EXPRESSED DISSATISFACTION OVER DELAY IN THE BILL'S PASSAGE.

MR TAM SAID THAT SUCH A +SIMPLE AND REASONABLE+ AMENDMENT SHOULD HAVE BEEN PASSED IN THE LAST SESSION OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BUT THE DELAY MADE TRADE UNIONS AND LABOUR CIRCLES +FEEL WORRIED AND UNEASY+.

/HE SAID

HE SAID HE HOPED SUCH A DELAY WOULD NOT OCCUR IN FUTURE.

WINDING UP DEBATE ON THE BILL, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE SAID IT DID NOT SEEK IN ANY WAY TO INCREASE THE LIABILITY OF EMPLOYERS.

THANKING MR TAM FOR HIS SUPPORT, MR BRIDGE SAID: +I HOPE THAT THE MINDS OF EMPLOYERS WILL HAVE BEEN PUT AT REST IN THIS RESPECT.

+THIS WAS INDEED THE REASON WHY IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO ENACT THE BILL DURING THE LAST SESSION AS REFERRED TO BY MR TAM, SINCE MEMBERS NEEDED MORE TIME IN WHICH TO SATISFY THEMSELVES ON THIS POINT.+

MR BRIDGE SAID THE BILL SOUGHT TO MAKE CLEAR THE ORIGINAL INTENTION OF THE LAW TO ENABLE BOTH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES TO APPLY TO THE DISTRICT COURT FOR A COMPENSATION AGREEMENT TO BE CANCELLED AND FOR AN ORDER REQUIRING COMPENSATION TO BE REASSESSED IF THE AGREEMENT WAS ENTERED INTO IN IGNORANCE, OR UNDER A MISTAKE, AS TO THE TRUE NATURE OR EXTENT OF AN INJURY.

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HK DEVELOPING INTERNATIONAL FAME FOR DENTISTRY
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THE HIGH CALIBRE OF STUDENTS AND THE POSTGRADUATE WORK OF THE FACULTY OF DENTISTRY AT THE PRINCE PHILIP DENTAL HOSPITAL ARE RAPIDLY DEVELOPING HONG KONG'S INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION FOR EXCELLENCE IN THE FIELD OF DENTISTRY.

THIS WAS STATED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE HON LYDIA DUNN IN HER CAPACITY AS CHAIRMAN OF THE PRINCE PHILIP DENTAL HOSPITAL WHEN TABLING THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE TEACHING HOSPITAL.

SHE SAID THAT THE ACTIVITIES OF THE INSTITUTION WERE NOT ONLY CONFINED TO HONG KONG, BUT SENIOR STAFF WERE ALSO HEAVILY COMMITTED IN THE WORK OF INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS DEVOTED TO DENTAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH.

+I AM ESPECIALLY PLEASED ABOUT THE GROWING CONNECTIONS WITH FACULTIES OF STOMATOLOGY IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, TO THE EXTENT OF SENIOR FACULTY HERE BEING APPOINTED TO HONORARY VISITING PROFESSORSHIPS IN SISTER INSTITUTIONS IN CHINA.

+SUCH LIAISON WILL ENHANCE THE LINKS BETWEEN THE DENTAL PROFESSION HERE AND IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC,+ SHE SAID.

/MISS DUNN

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MISS DUNN SAID THAT IN HONG KONG THE HOSPITAL CONTINUED TO PROVIDE AN EXCELLENT DENTAL SERVICE FOR THOSE MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WHO WERE ACCEPTED FOR THE FACULTY'S TEACHING PROGRAMMES.

SHE SAID THE GROWTH OF POSTGRADUATE TEACHING WOULD BRING WITH IT AN INCREASED AVAILABILITY OF SPECIALIST TREATMENT FOR THE MORE SEVERE ORAL HEALTH PROBLEMS WHICH EXISTED IN THE COMMUNITY.

+SENIOR STUDENTS WITH THEIR TEACHERS ARE ALSO ENGAGED IN OUT-REACH COMMUNITY DENTAL HEALTH PROJECTS WHICH BENEFIT SPECIFIC, AND OFTEN UNDERSERVED, SECTION OF THE COMMUNITY.

+SOME 27 OF THESE PROJECTS HAVE BEEN UNDERTAKEN SINCE 1983, ALL OF WHICH UNDERLINES THE SENSE OF COMMITMENT OF THE FACULTY AND THE HOSPITAL TO THE SERVICE OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG,+ SHE SAID.

EARLIER IN HER SPEECH, MISS DUNN REPORTED THAT THE HIGH ACADEMIC STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY DENTAL STUDENTS TRAINED BY THE FACULTY OF DENTISTRY AT THE INSTITUTION IN THE PAST HAD BEEN MAINTAINED DURING THE YEAR UNDER REVIEW.

+ONCE AGAIN THE EXTERNAL EXAMINERS HAVE BEEN UNSTINTING IN THEIR PRAISE OF THE CALIBRE OF THE CANDIDATES AND HONG KONG CAN WELL FEEL PROUD OF ITS RAPIDLY DEVELOPING INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION FOR EXCELLENCY IN THE FIELD OF DENTISTRY,+ SHE SAID.

SHE ADDED THAT THE POSTGRADUATE WORK OF THE FACULTY WAS GAINING MOMENTUM WITH 12 CANDIDATES FOR MASTERS DEGREES NOW REGISTERED, AND A FURTHER 10 FACULTY MEMBERS READING FOR HIGHER DEGREES.

MISS DUNN SAID SUCH POSTGRADUATE ACTIVITY INEVITABLY INCREASED THE RESEARCH THRUST OF THE FACULTY AND IN TURN THIS WOULD FURTHER ESTABLISH THE FACULTY AS A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN THE REGION.

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INDUSTRIAL ESTATES ACHIEVING GREAT SUCCESS
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THE HONG KONG INDUSTRIAL ESTATES CORPORATION RESPONDED QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY TO INDUSTRIAL DEMAND IN 1985-86 AND ACHIEVED THE BEST RESULTS IN ITS HISTORY, THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

DURING THE YEAR, HE SAID IT ACHIEVED A TOTAL OF 18 AGREEMENTS FOR LEASE FOR MORE THAN 11 HECTARES OF LAND, COMPARED WITH AN AVERAGE OF LESS THAN FOUR HECTARES IN EACH OF THE PREVIOUS YEARS.

IN HIS CAPACITY AS CHAIRMAN OF THE CORPORATION MR CHEONG WAS MAKING A STATEMENT ON ITS ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR, WHICH WAS TABLED IN THE COUNCIL ON OCTOBER 15.

HE ATTRIBUTED THE SUCCESS TO THE VISION AND LEADERSHIP OF THE CORPORATION'S FORMER CHAIRMAN, MR LI FOOK-WO, WHO RELINQUISHED THE CHAIRMANSHIP AT THE END OF LAST YEAR AFTER A PERIOD OF NEARLY NINE YEARS.

HAVING OVERCOME SO MANY OBSTACLES OVER THE YEARS, MR LI'S PATIENCE AND RESOLUTION WERE FINALLY REWARDED, HE SAID.

TURNING TO PROSPECTS FOR 1986-87, MR CHEONG POINTED OUT THAT INTEREST IN THE INDUSTRIAL ESTATES WAS CONTINUING AT A HIGH LEVEL AND THAT UP TO THE PRESENT TIME, FIVE AGREEMENTS FOR LEASE HAD BEEN SIGNED FOR 3.5 HECTARES OF LAND AND DEPOSITS HAD BEEN PAID FOR A FURTHER 3.2 HECTARES.

IN ADDITION, FIVE OF THE SIX SINGLE-STOREY STANDARD FACTORY UNITS CONSTRUCTED BY THE CORPORATION HAD BEEN SOLD OUTRIGHT AND THE SIXTH HAD BEEN RENTED ON A SHORT-TERM BASIS, HE SAID.

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION OUTSTANDING OFFERS AND PENDING APPLICATIONS, MR CHEONG SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE PROJECTED RECEIPTS FOR THE CURRENT YEAR WOULD COMFORTABLY EXCEED THE CORPORATE TARGET OF \$95 MILLION.

HOWEVER, HE SAID THE SUCCESS OF THE CORPORATION SHOULD NOT BE MEASURED IN FINANCIAL TERMS ALONE.

+THE INDUSTRIAL ESTATES PROVIDE SITES FOR FACTORIES WHICH INTRODUCE TO HONG KONG NEW OR IMPROVED PRODUCTS AND PROCESSES, AND ARE THEREBY INSTRUMENTAL IN ATTRACTING NEW AND IMPROVED TECHNOLOGY FROM ABROAD.

+THIS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE HAS BEEN GIVEN FRESH IMPETUS BY VIRTUE OF THE VERY REAL COOPERATION THAT EXISTS BETWEEN STAFF OF THE CORPORATION AND THAT OF THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT,+ HE SAID, ADDING THAT THE COOPERATION WOULD BE MAINTAINED.

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APPROVAL GIVEN FOR CHARGE STRUCTURE CHANGE

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) APPROVED A MOTION SEEKING TO EXPAND THE EXISTING CHARGE STRUCTURE OF THE STARLINE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE HONG KONG TELEPHONE COMPANY LIMITED TO ALLOW CUSTOMERS TO MAKE USE OF SIX OR ALL SEVEN FEATURES OF THE SERVICE.

MOVING THE MOTION, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, SAID THE CHARGES IMPOSED BY THE COMPANY FOR ITS STARLINE SERVICES WERE APPROVED BY A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL UNDER SECTION 26(2) OF THE TELEPHONE ORDINANCE ON JULY 24, 1985.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE CHARGES CURRENTLY ALLOWED FOR THE PROVISION OF A MAXIMUM OF FIVE FEATURES, BUT THE COMPANY NOW WISHED TO PROVIDE TWO NEW FEATURES ADDITIONAL ABBREVIATED DIALLING AND CALL-FORWARDING, BRINGING THE TOTAL NUMBER OF FEATURES AVAILABLE UP TO SEVEN.

MR JACOBS SAID IT WAS PROPOSED THAT THERE WOULD BE AN ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF \$36 PER YEAR FOR EACH OF THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH FEATURES.

HE ALSO NOTED THAT THIS WAS THE SAME ADDITIONAL CHARGE AS FOR THE FIFTH FEATURE, AND THAT OTHER THAN CHARGES FOR THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH FEATURES NO CHANGE TO THE EXISTING CHARGE STRUCTURE WAS PROPOSED.

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LAW TIGHTENED ON TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) APPROVED AN AMENDMENT TO THE IMMIGRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986, MAKING IT AN OFFENCE FOR A TRAVEL DOCUMENT TO BE TRANSFERRED WITHOUT REASONABLE EXCUSE.

THE AMENDMENT CONCERNS CLAUSE 3 OF THE BILL, WHICH WAS SUBSEQUENTLY PASSED BY THE COUNCIL.

MOVING THE AMENDMENT, THE HON MARIA TAM SAID THAT ORIGINALLY CLAUSE 3 MADE IT AN OFFENCE FOR THE HOLDER OF A TRAVEL DOCUMENT TO TRANSFER IT TO ANOTHER PERSON +WITHOUT LAWFUL AUTHORITY+.

/HOWEVER, THE

HOWEVER, THE WORD +TRANSFER+, STRICTLY CONSTRUED, MIGHT COVER, FOR EXAMPLE, THE SITUATION WHERE A PERSON WAS IN HOSPITAL AND ENTRUSTED HIS TRAVEL DOCUMENT TO ANOTHER FOR SAFE KEEPING WITHOUT BEING AUTHORISED BY THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT, SHE SAID.

+IN ORDER TO AVOID IMPOSING STRICT LIABILITY UNNECESSARILY ON THE CITIZEN, IT IS PROPOSED THAT ANY TRANSFER OF A TRAVEL DOCUMENT MUST ALSO BE 'WITHOUT REASONABLE EXCUSE' BEFORE THE SANCTION OF THE CRIMINAL LAW CAN BE INVOKED,+ MISS TAM SAID.

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'RENT POLICY PAPERS FAIR AND REASONABLE'

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RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE TWO REPORTS ON PUBLIC HOUSING RENTAL AND SUBSIDY POLICIES +ARE FAIR AND REASONABLE,+ THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DONALD LIAO, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE WAS WINDING UP THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE REPORTS OF THE DOMESTIC RENT POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE AND OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING SUBSIDY TO TENANTS OF PUBLIC HOUSING.

MR LIAO SAID THE AIMS OF THE TWO REPORTS WERE TO OPTIMISE HOUSING RESOURCES AND TO ENSURE THOSE WHO WERE ALREADY IN RENTAL PUBLIC HOUSING WOULD RECEIVE AN APPROPRIATE AMOUNT OF SUBSIDY ACCORDING TO THEIR RESPECTIVE NEEDS IN ORDER TO REHOUSE THOSE WHO WOULD BE IN NEED OF PUBLIC HOUSING BY THE MID-1990'S AND TO PROVIDE FOR FUTURE DEMAND.

PUBLIC HOUSING RENTS HAD REMAINED LOW AND ACCEPTABLE TO TENANTS AS A RESULT OF THE SIGNIFICANT SUBSIDIES FROM THE GOVERNMENT, HE SAID.

FROM OCTOBER 1983 TO SEPTEMBER 1985, ONLY 738 -- OR LESS THAN ONE PER CENT -- OF A TOTAL OF 77 876 HOUSING OFFERS MADE HAD BEEN REFUSED ON ACCOUNT OF HIGH RENT. IN THE SAME PERIOD, 1 310 FAMILIES HAD ASKED FOR BIGGER FLATS AT HIGHER RENTS.

+THIS ACCEPTANCE RATE IS A CLEAR INDICATION THAT THE CURRENT RENT LEVEL IS AFFORDABLE AND INDEED SOME INTEREST GROUPS ON PUBLIC HOUSING HAVE FROM TIME TO TIME ECHOED THE SAME SENTIMENT,+ HE ADDED.

REFERRING TO THE MAXIMUM MEDIAN RENT-INCOME RATIO OF 15 PER CENT PROPOSED BY THE DOMESTIC RENT POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE, MR LIAO SAID PRELIMINARY STATISTICS FOR 1985-86 SHOWED THE MEDIAN RENT-INCOME RATIO FOR HOUSEHOLDS REHOUSED IN THAT YEAR WAS 12.4 PER CENT.

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+OF THESE HOUSEHOLDS, 72.5 PER CENT OF THEM PAID A RATIO OF LESS THAN 15 PER CENT, 22.3 PER CENT PAID 15 PER CENT UP TO 25 PER CENT AND 5.2 PER CENT OF THEM PAID 25 PER CENT OR MORE,+ HE SAID.

BUT MR LIAO SAID THE TWO GROUPS PAYING A HIGHER PERCENTAGE THAN 15 PER CENT INCLUDED PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS WHOSE RENTS WERE PAID FOR BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND TENANTS WHO OPTED FOR HIGHER SPACE STANDARDS.

THE 15 PER CENT MEDIAN RENT-INCOME RATIO WAS INTENDED TO ENSURE THAT PUBLIC HOUSING RENT WOULD CONTINUE TO BE AFFORDABLE WHEN SETTING RENT LEVELS FOR NEW ESTATES, HE SAID.

+AS FOR EXISTING OLDER HOUSING UNITS WITH LESS SPACE AND A LOWER STANDARD OF AMENITIES AND HOUSING ESTATES FURTHER AWAY FROM THE URBAN AREA, THEY ARE ACCORDED A LOWER ESTATE VALUE AND THEREFORE THEIR RENT LEVELS WOULD NOT BE RAISED UP TO THE 15 PER CENT MEDIAN RENT-INCOME RATIO LEVEL,+ MR LIAO SAID.

HE SAID SOME MEMBERS HAD MISUNDERSTOOD THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS WHEN THEY SAID HALF OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S TENANTS WOULD PAY MORE THAN 15 PER CENT OF THEIR INCOME WHEN A RENT-INCOME RATIO OF 15 PER CENT WAS APPLIED.

IT WAS ESTIMATED THAT LESS THAN TWO PER CENT OF THE FOUR-PERSON FAMILIES MOVING INTO NEW ESTATES AND THOSE ALREADY IN PUBLIC HOUSING WOULD IN FACT PAY MORE THAN 15 PER CENT UNDER THE NEW PROPOSED POLICIES. FOUR-PERSON FAMILIES CONSTITUTED ABOUT A QUARTER OF THE AUTHORITY'S EXISTING TENANTS.

+OVERALL, IN THE PERIOD 1976-77 TO 1984-85, THE RENT-INCOME RATIO FOR ALL HOUSEHOLDS AMONG NEW TENANTS RANGED FROM 10.7 PER CENT TO 13.5 PER CENT AND AMONG SITTING TENANTS THE RATIO RANGED FROM FOUR PER CENT TO 6.5 PER CENT,+ HE SAID.

+EVEN IF THE 15 PER CENT MEDIAN RENT-INCOME RATIO IS IMPLEMENTED FOR THE NEW ESTATES WHICH REPRESENT A SMALL FRACTION OF THE TOTAL PUBLIC HOUSING STOCK, THE OVERALL RATIO WILL NOT BE AFFECTED SIGNIFICANTLY.+

ON THE HON HUI YIN-FAT'S SUGGESTION THAT THE BIENNIAL RENT INCREASES WOULD IN TIME PLACE RENTS BEYOND THE AFFORDABILITY OF PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS, MR LIAO SAID PUBLIC HOUSING RENT HAD BARELY KEPT UP WITH INFLATION AND HAD REMAINED FAIRLY STABLE IN CONSTANT PRICES OVER THE YEARS.

+IN CONTRAST TO THE STEADILY IMPROVING FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS WHO HAVE RESIDED IN PUBLIC HOUSING FOR SOME TIME, RENTS HAVE LAGGED BEHIND THE REAL GROWTH IN THE INCOME OF THE AVERAGE TENANTS,+ HE ADDED.

/REPLYING TO

REPLYING TO THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG'S QUESTION CONCERNING COMPARISON BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HOUSING RENTS, MR LIAO SAID THE TWO WERE NOT REALLY COMPARABLE AS THE FORMER INCLUDED RATES AND MANAGEMENT FEES AS WELL AS OTHER MAJOR REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE CHARGES.

HE SAID THE PRESENT RENT LEVEL IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES REPRESENTED ABOUT A THIRD OF THE MARKET LEVEL.

MR LIAO ADDED THAT THE 1986 BI-CENSUS PUBLISHED YESTERDAY (TUESDAY) SHOWED THAT HALF OF THOSE HOUSEHOLDS OCCUPYING WHOLE FLATS IN PRIVATE HOUSING PAID A RENT OF LESS THAN \$1 794. +THIS COMPARED WITH THE \$350 FOR THOSE IN PUBLIC RENTAL BLOCKS,+ HE ADDED.

ON THE REPORT ON HOUSING SUBSIDY TO TENANTS OF PUBLIC HOUSING, MR LIAO SAID IT HAD TAKEN A REALISTIC APPROACH TO REDUCING SUBSIDIES, AND TO CHARGE WELL-OFF TENANTS A HIGHER RENT IF THEY PREFERRED TO STAY IN PUBLIC HOUSING.

ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THESE TENANTS COULD AFFORD TO PAY DOUBLE RENT, MR LIAO SAID TENANTS AFFECTED BY THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS WERE IN EFFECT AMONG THE TOP 15 PER CENT HOUSEHOLDS IN TERMS OF INCOME IN THE WHOLE TERRITORY.

+THEIR MEDIAN MONTHLY INCOME IS AROUND \$13 200 AND THEY ARE ONLY PAYING A MEDIAN RENT OF \$330 PER MONTH,+ HE SAID.

+IF THEIR NET RENTS WERE TO BE DOUBLED, THEY WOULD HAVE TO PAY A NEW MEDIAN RENT OF AROUND \$600, REPRESENTING FOUR TO SIX PER CENT OF THEIR INCOME.

+THE NEW RENT IS CLEARLY WELL WITHIN THEIR AFFORDABILITY.+

COMMENTING ON THE VIEW THAT IT WAS UNREASONABLE TO INCLUDE ALL THE INCOME OF WORKING CHILDREN IN CALCULATING HOUSEHOLD INCOME, MR LIAO SAID INCLUDING 60 PER CENT OF THE INCOME OF WORKING CHILDREN WAS IN FACT THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL MADE BY THE COMMITTEE.

+THIS WAS SUBSEQUENTLY CHANGED IN RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS AND THE SUBSIDY INCOME LIMIT NOW PROPOSED IS A MORE GENEROUS FIGURE,+ HE SAID.

ON A SUGGESTION THAT A MORE ACCURATE SURVEY BE CONDUCTED TO ESTABLISH THE TRUE FINANCIAL POSITION OF FAMILIES IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES, MR LIAO SAID A CLEARER FINANCIAL PICTURE OF PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS WOULD BECOME AVAILABLE IF THE COMMITTEE'S PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED AND TENANTS WERE REQUIRED TO DECLARE THEIR INCOME.

/MR LIAO

MR LIAO ALSO STRESSED THE GOVERNMENT'S FULL COMMITMENT TO SOLVING HOUSING PROBLEMS. +IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, FOR INSTANCE, THE CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC HOUSING HAS REPRESENTED AS MUCH AS ONE-THIRD OF HONG KONG'S TOTAL ANNUAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE ON PUBLIC WORKS,+ HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT UP TO MARCH 31 THIS YEAR THE VALUE OF LAND PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR RENTAL PUBLIC HOUSING AMOUNTED TO ABOUT \$23 000 MILLION ON A HISTORICAL COST BASIS AND THE AMOUNT OF HOUSING AUTHORITY LOANS OUTSTANDING FROM THE DEVELOPMENT LOAN FUND WAS \$11 160 MILLION.

MR LIAO SAID THE GOVERNOR HAD REFERRED IN THE ANNUAL ADDRESS ON OCTOBER 8 TO A NEED TO REVIEW PRODUCTION PROGRAMMES AND TO FORMULATE LONG-TERM HOUSING STRATEGIES FOR THE 1990'S AND BEYOND TO ENABLE THE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO MEET EXISTING DEMAND AND TO PROVIDE FOR FUTURE DEMAND FOR HOUSING.

HE SAID THE PROPOSALS IN THE TWO REPORTS WERE +FAIR AND REASONABLE AND THEY WILL HELP US IN ACHIEVING OUR VERY AMBITIOUS PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE WHOLE OF HONG KONG.+

MR LIAO ALSO THANKED MEMBERS OF THE TWO COMMITTEES FOR THEIR HARD WORK, PARTICULARLY THE HON CHEUNG YAN-LUNG AND THE HON CHAN YING-LUN FOR CHAIRING THE COMMITTEES.

HE SAID MEMBERS' VIEWS WOULD BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WHEN IT MET TO DISCUSS THE TWO REPORTS NEXT MONTH.

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PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS SHOULD TAKE UP THEIR SHARE

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IN UPGRADING THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC HOUSING, IT IS NOT UNFAIR TO ASK TENANTS TO TAKE UP AN INCREASING SHARE IN THAT COMMITMENT, THE HON SELINA CHOW SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

LEADING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE +REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING SUBSIDY TO TENANTS OF PUBLIC HOUSING+ AND THE +REPORT OF DOMESTIC RENT POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE+ AS THE CONVENOR OF THE OMELCO HOUSING PANEL AND THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AD HOC GROUP STUDYING THE GREEN PAPER ON HOUSING SUBSIDY, MRS CHOW SAID SHE WAS IN PRINCIPLE SUPPORTIVE OF THE GRADUAL MOVE TOWARDS FINANCIAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY.

SHE SAID SHE AGREED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S SUPPLY OF FREE LAND SHOULD CONTINUE BUT STRESSED THAT THE AFFORDABILITY OF TENANTS MUST BE THE MAIN CONSIDERATION AT ALL TIMES.

/+WE MUST

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+WE MUST BUILD INTO THE SYSTEMS WAYS TO HELP THOSE IN REAL NEED,+ SHE SAID.

MRS CHOW RECALLED THAT A LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AD HOC GROUP WAS FORMED TO STUDY THE GREEN PAPER ON HOUSING SUBSIDY IN NOVEMBER LAST YEAR WITH A VIEW TO DEBATING IT.

HOWEVER, WHEN THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING SUBSIDY DECIDED TO DEFER ITS FINAL RECOMMENDATION TO THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, PENDING RESULTS OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION, THE LEGCO GROUP DECIDED TO WAIT UNTIL THE COMMITTEE HAD REACHED ITS CONCLUSION, SHE SAID.

MRS CHOW EXPLAINED THAT THE RELEASE OF THE TWO REPORTS TOGETHER IN SEPTEMBER HAD LED THE GROUP TO CONCLUDE THAT THEY SHOULD BE TACKLED AT THE SAME TIME IN ONE DEBATE.

SHE SAID THAT SINCE JUNE THIS YEAR, THE AD HOC GROUP HAD BEEN WELL INFORMED OF THE THINKING OF THE TWO COMMITTEES, THROUGH MEETINGS WITH BOTH THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN, THE HON F.K. HU AND THE HON CHAN YING-LUN.

MRS CHOW ADDED THAT THEY HAD REPEATED OPPORTUNITIES BEFORE AND AFTER THE RELEASE OF THE REPORTS TO MEET CONCERNED GROUPS REPRESENTING PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS TO HEAR THEIR VIEWS.

ON THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF HOUSING SUBSIDY TO TENANTS OF PUBLIC HOUSING, MRS CHOW SAID MEMBERS HAD DISCUSSED AT LENGTH THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE OF THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW MEASURE.

+WE ARE BY AND LARGE IN TUNE WITH THE PRINCIPLE THAT AT THE END OF TEN YEARS OF SUBSTANTIALLY SUBSIDISED HOUSING, TENANTS' FINANCIAL CONDITION SHOULD BE RE-ASSESSED TO ESTABLISH WHETHER THE SAME LEVEL OF SUBSIDY SHOULD CONTINUE,+ SHE SAID.

HOWEVER, SHE SAID MOST MEMBERS WERE NOT COMFORTABLE THAT THE INCREASE AT THE END OF THE TENTH YEAR WAS AUTOMATIC, WITH THE ONUS OF PROOF PLACED SQUARELY ON THE TENANTS.

+THE ASSUMPTION THAT ALL TEN-YEAR TENANTS HAVE REACHED THE SUBSIDY INCOME LIMIT AND WOULD BE REQUIRED TO PAY DOUBLE RENT UNLESS THEY CAN PROVE OTHERWISE IS WRONG IN PRINCIPLE, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE ESTIMATE THAT THE ACTUAL NUMBER OF TENANTS WHO EXCEED THE LIMIT IS ONLY FIVE PER CENT OF THE ENTIRE CATEGORY,+ SHE SAID.

MRS CHOW SUPPORTED THE PROPOSAL CONTAINED IN THE REPORT PROVIDED THAT:

- (1) ALL TENANTS AT THE END OF THEIR TENTH YEARS DECLARE THEIR HOUSEHOLD INCOME, AND THE RENT INCREASE IS BASED ON ACTUAL FINANCIAL POSITIONS OF THE TENANTS.

/(2) THESE TENANTS'

- (2) THESE TENANTS' AFFORDABILITY BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT, SO THAT SUCH TENANTS OF NEWER ESTATES THE RENT OF WHICH WERE FIXED AT A MEDIAN INCOME-RENT OF 10 PER CENT OR MORE WOULD NOT ENCOUNTER HARDSHIP AS A RESULT OF THIS MEASURE.
- (3) THE CHOICE MUST ALWAYS BE OPEN TO THOSE TENANTS TO MOVE TO UNITS OF LOWER RENT.

TURNING TO THE REPORT OF THE DOMESTIC RENT POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE, MRS CHOW SAID MEMBERS HAD INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY MET WITH INTEREST GROUPS TO HEAR THEIR VIEWS OF OPPOSITION CONCERNING THE REPORT.

SHE SAID SHE AGREED THAT THE ARGUMENTS PUT FORWARD BY THE REPRESENTATIONS WERE NOT ALTOGETHER GROUNDLESS AND DESERVED CAREFUL CONSIDERATION BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY.

HOWEVER, SHE POINTED OUT THAT THE MEDIAN RENT-INCOME RATIO ALREADY STOOD AT 12.4 PER CENT FOR HOUSEHOLD REHOUSED IN 1985-86 AND THE REJECTION RATE HAD BEEN ONE PER CENT.

+THIS ACTUAL EXPERIENCE INDICATES GENERAL ACCEPTABILITY OF PRESENT LEVELS,+ SHE SAID.

MRS CHOW SAID SHE PERSONALLY FOUND A 15 PER CENT RENT-INCOME RATIO ACCEPTABLE BUT RECOGNISED THAT HOUSEHOLDS IMMEDIATELY ABOVE THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE LEVEL EARNING INCOME AT THE LOWER END OF THE SCALE MIGHT ENCOUNTER DIFFICULTY.

SHE THEREFORE SUGGESTED THAT A LIMITED NUMBER OF LOW-RENT FLATS WITH AN ESTATE TO CATER FOR THIS SPECIAL GROUP SHOULD BE SET ASIDE, ESPECIALLY WHEN REDEVELOPMENT REDUCED OLDER LOW-RENT FLATS.

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WELL-OFF TENANTS SHOULD LEAVE PUBLIC HOUSING
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THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT FOR WELL-OFF PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO BE A COMMITMENT THAT CONTINUES INDEFINITELY, THE HON S.L. CHEN STATED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

PUBLIC HOUSING POLICY IN HONG KONG HAD ALWAYS BEEN TO SUBSIDISE ONLY THOSE IN NEED, MR CHEN SAID DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON TWO HOUSING REPORTS.

THERE WERE ABOUT 170 000 PEOPLE ON WAITING LISTS, 38 000 HOUSEHOLDS IN TEMPORARY HOUSING AREAS AND 190 000 IN SQUATTER AREAS, HE SAID.

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IT WAS OBVIOUS ALL COULD NOT BE ACCOMMODATED AT THE SAME TIME. BUT SUITABLE CRITERIA FOR DEFINING ELIGIBILITY HAD TO BE ESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE A RATIONAL BASIS FOR ALLOCATING HOUSING.

MR CHEN SAID HE OPPOSED THE LOGIC IN THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING SUBSIDY TO TENANTS OF PUBLIC HOUSING IN EXCLUDING NON-INCOME-GENERATING ASSETS FROM THE CALCULATION OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME.

HE SAID THAT THE INCOME AND THE WEALTH OF A HOUSEHOLD SHOULD BE CONSIDERED TOGETHER IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH TRUE ELIGIBILITY.

ANOTHER RECOMMENDATION IN THE REPORT, THAT PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS WHO HAD IMPROVED THEIR FINANCIAL SITUATION SHOULD NOT BE EVICTED, ALSO CAME IN FOR CRITICISM.

+WHILE IT WOULD BE UNFAIR TO SINGLE OUT FLAT OWNERSHIP AS A CRITERION FOR EVICTION, I DO NOT CONSIDER IT WRONG OR UNREASONABLE TO EXERCISE EVICTION USING TOTAL WEALTH POSSESSION AS A CRITERION,+ MR CHEN SAID.

ACCEPTING THAT EVICTING A LARGE NUMBER OF PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS WOULD HAVE SERIOUS REPERCUSSION ON THE COMMUNITY, MR CHEN EMPHASISED THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE REMAINED THAT MANY PEOPLE WERE IN NEED OF SUBSIDISED HOUSING.

HE AGREED THAT PROBLEMS EXISTED CONCERNING EVICTION, BUT THESE WERE NOT UNSURMOUNTABLE.

+WHAT WE NEED IS TO MAKE SOME REAL AND GENUINE EFFORT IN RESOLVING THIS ANOMALY. IN THE PROCESS NO DOUBT A FEW WILL BE UPSET BUT MANY WHO ARE IN REAL AND GENUINE NEED WOULD BENEFIT.+

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WORSE-OFF TENANTS SHOULD PAY LESS RENT
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THE PROPOSED 15 PER CENT MEDIAN RENT-INCOME GUIDELINE FOR NEW PUBLIC HOUSING MIGHT CAUSE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WORSE-OFF TENANTS, DR THE HON HO KAM-FAI SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE THEREFORE SUGGESTED THAT A 10 PER CENT LIMIT SHOULD BE IMPOSED ON THOSE HOUSEHOLDS BELOW THE MEDIAN INCOME LEVEL, AND A 15 PER CENT LIMIT BE APPLIED TO THOSE ABOVE IT.

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON TWO HOUSING REPORTS, DR HO SAID ONE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE MEDIAN INCOME WAS THAT IT WAS POSITIONED IN THE MIDDLE OF DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME STATISTICS, MEANING THAT ONE HALF OF THE INCOMES WERE ABOVE AND THE OTHER HALF BELOW THAT VALUE.

+IN CHARGING 15 PER CENT OF THE MEDIAN INCOME, THOSE HOUSEHOLDS WITH AN INCOME BELOW THE MEDIAN ARE IN FACT PAYING A PERCENTAGE ABOVE 15 PER CENT,+ HE SAID.

+THE HOUSEHOLDS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE INCOME DISTRIBUTION MAY PAY AS MUCH AS 30 PER CENT OF THEIR INCOME FOR RENT.+

+ON THE CONTRARY, THOSE HOUSEHOLDS WITH AN INCOME ABOVE THE MEDIAN WILL PAY LESS THAN 15 PER CENT OF THEIR INCOME FOR RENT.+

+THIS PHENOMENON ENTAILS A CROSS-SUBSIDISATION IN DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE WORSE-OFF TENANTS.+

DR HO SAID THAT IN THE INTEREST OF SOCIAL EQUITY AND IN LINE WITH THE SOCIAL OBJECTIVE OF PUBLIC HOUSING, A 10 PER CENT LIMIT SHOULD BE IMPOSED ON THOSE HOUSEHOLDS BELOW THE MEDIAN INCOME, AND A 15 PER CENT LIMIT ON THOSE ABOVE IT.

IN GENERAL DR HO PERSONALLY CONSIDERED THE PROPOSED 15 PER CENT MEDIAN RENT-INCOME GUIDELINE TO BE +FAIR AND PRACTICABLE AND IS WELL WITHIN THE TENANT'S ABILITY TO PAY+.

+BY THIS STANDARD, THE PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS PAY ABOUT ONE THIRD OF WHAT THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR ARE PAYING FOR THEIR ACCOMMODATION,+ HE SAID.

+IN ADDITION, THEIR COUNTERPARTS MAY HAVE TO PAY RATES, MANAGEMENT FEES AND MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR CHARGES.+

AS THE AVERAGE RENT-INCOME LEVELS FOR ALL PUBLIC HOUSING CATEGORIES IN 1983-84 AND 1984-85 WERE 12.3 PER CENT AND 13.5 PER CENT RESPECTIVELY, DR HO BELIEVED THE 15 PER CENT GUIDELINE WOULD BE VERY UNLIKELY TO CAUSE HARDSHIP TO PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS.

FURTHERMORE, THIS METHOD OF PEGGING RENT TO THE TENANT'S MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME SHIELDED THE TENANT FROM THE EFFECTS OF ANOMALOUS FLUCTUATIONS IN THE PROPERTY MARKET AND ECONOMIC DEPRESSIONS, HE ADDED.

TURNING TO THE PRINCIPLES OF HOUSING SUBSIDIES, DR HO SAID SUBSIDISED HOUSING SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED AS A LIFE-LONG ENTITLEMENT.

HE THEREFORE ENDORSED THE PROPOSAL MADE BY THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING SUBSIDY THAT THOSE PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS WHOSE TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME EXCEEDED THE REVISED SUBSIDISED INCOME LIMIT AT THE EXPIRY OF THE INITIAL 10-YEAR RESIDENCE, SHOULD PAY DOUBLE THEIR EXISTING RENTS.

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+SECURITY OF TENURE IS RIGHTLY PROTECTED AS MUCH IN PUBLIC HOUSING AS IN PRIVATE HOUSING, SO LONG AS THE BETTER OFF TENANTS ARE WILLING TO PAY A FAIR SHARE OF RENT,+ HE SAID.

LASTLY, DR HO SAID HE SUPPORTED SETTING UP A SPECIAL COMMITTEE UNDER THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE TO DEAL WITH FAMILIES IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

HOWEVER, IN THE INTEREST OF FAIRNESS, THIS COMMITTEE SHOULD BE MADE INDEPENDENT FROM THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, HE SUGGESTED.

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HOUSING SUBSIDY PROPOSALS REALISTIC
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THE REVISED PROPOSALS PUT FORWARD IN THE FINAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING SUBSIDY TO TENANTS OF PUBLIC HOUSING ARE REALISTIC AND ARE THE FIRST STEP TO ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF REDUCING PUBLIC HOUSING SUBSIDIES.

THE HON HU FA-KUANG, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE, SAID THIS DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON PUBLIC HOUSING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

+IT IS NOW TIMELY FOR US TO MAKE SURE THAT WHILE THOSE IN GENUINE NEED WILL CONTINUE TO BE OFFERED SUBSIDIES, OUR FINANCIAL CAKE IS PROPERLY AND CORRECTLY DIVIDED,+ HE SAID.

MR HU SAID THE COMMITTEE HAD EXAMINED WHETHER SUBSIDIES SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE GIVEN TO THOSE TENANTS WHO HAD IMPROVED THEIR FINANCIAL SITUATION.

THE COMMITTEE HAD FOUND THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS HAD PROSPERED SINCE MOVING INTO PUBLIC ESTATES, HE SAID.

STATISTICS SHOWED THAT FROM 1974 TO 1984, THE INCOME OF PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS RECORDED AN AVERAGE ANNUAL NET INCREASE OF SEVEN PER CENT AFTER ALLOWING FOR INFLATION. DURING THE SAME PERIOD, PUBLIC HOUSING RENTS ONLY INCREASED IN REAL TERMS AT 0.6 PER CENT EACH YEAR.

+FROM THIS IT CAN BE SEEN THAT WITH IMPROVING PER CAPITA EARNINGS, OUR PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS ARE ABLE TO UPGRADE THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE STEADILY,+ HE SAID.

MR HU

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MR HU SAID THE COMMITTEE HAD CONCLUDED THAT WHILE THE GOVERNMENT MUST CONTINUE TO TAKE CARE OF THOSE WHO WERE LEAST ABLE TO CARE FOR THEMSELVES, IT HAD TO LOOK FOR WAYS AND MEANS TO REDUCE EXPENDITURE IN PUBLIC HOUSING, WITHOUT CAUSING UNDUE HARDSHIP OR PUTTING THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAMME IN JEOPARDY.

+THE COMMITTEE SEES NO REASON TO CARRY ON POLICIES WHICH ALLOW FOR ACROSS-THE-BOARD SUBSIDIES, PARTICULARLY TO THOSE WHO COULD HAVE AFFORDED TO SHARE A LARGE PART OF THE COSTS WITHOUT THE DANGER OF LOWERING THEIR LIVING STANDARD,+ HE SAID.

NOTING THAT THE SUGGESTION TO REMOVE BETTER-OFF TENANTS FROM PUBLIC HOUSING HAD BEEN RULED OUT BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, MR HU SAID A SENSIBLE ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE TO ASK SUCH TENANTS TO PAY A MORE REALISTIC RENT IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE HOUSING SUBSIDIES GIVEN TO THEM.

+SUCH A MEASURE NOT ONLY ENSURES THAT THE LIMITED AVAILABLE RESOURCES CAN BE RECYCLED TO AREAS WITH MOST URGENT NEED BUT ALSO HELPS TO ACHIEVE A GREATER DEGREE OF EQUITY,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID HIGHER RENTS WOULD ALSO BE AN INCENTIVE FOR BETTER-OFF TENANTS TO SERIOUSLY CONSIDER BUYING HOME OWNERSHIP FLATS, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RENT AND MONTHLY MORTGAGE REPAYMENT WAS NOT SIGNIFICANT.

THE UNITS LEFT VACANT BY TENANTS BUYING THEIR OWN FLATS COULD THEN BE USED FOR THOSE WHO HAD BEEN WAITING TO MOVE INTO PUBLIC HOUSING, HE SAID.

TURNING TO CRITICISM ABOUT THE CALCULATION OF A HOUSEHOLD'S TOTAL INCOME, MR HU SAID THAT IN ALL FAIRNESS ALL THOSE WHO HAD AN INCOME SHOULD HAVE EQUAL RESPONSIBILITY IN BEARING COMMON EXPENSES, A TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF WHICH WAS RENT.

+IT IS THEREFORE NOT UNREASONABLE TO INCLUDE THE FULL INCOME OF EACH IN THE TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME,+ HE SAID.

+OTHER WAGE EARNERS OF THE HOUSEHOLD WILL STILL KEEP A CONSIDERABLE PROPORTION OF THEIR INCOME FOR THEIR OWN EXPENDITURE,+ HE ADDED.

IN ADDITION, HE SAID, THE SUBSIDY INCOME LEVEL, WHICH SET A BASIS FOR CHARGING DOUBLE RENT, HAD BEEN RAISED TO TWICE THE WAITING LIST INCOME LEVEL, AND THUS A SMALLER NUMBER OF TENANTS WOULD BE AFFECTED.

COMMENTING ON A SUGGESTION ABOUT A COMPULSORY INCOME DECLARATION, HE POINTED OUT THAT SUCH A MOVE COULD BE SEEN AS AN INFRINGEMENT ON THE PRIVACY OF THOSE WHO DID NOT WISH TO DECLARE THEIR INCOME AND WERE PREPARED TO PAY DOUBLE RENT.

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THEREFORE, THE PROPOSAL TO ASK TENANTS TO DECLARE THEIR INCOME SHOULD THEY WISH TO PAY THE EXISTING RENT WAS THE MOST PRACTICABLE AND LEAST DISTURBING OF ALL ALTERNATIVES, HE SAID.

ON THE COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS, MR HU SAID THAT IF ALL TENANTS WITH INCOMES EXCEEDING THE SUBSIDY INCOME LEVEL OPTED TO PAY DOUBLE RENT, THE ADDITIONAL RENTAL REVENUE IN THE FIRST YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION WOULD AMOUNT TO \$14 MILLION, BASED ON 1985 PRICES.

THE CAPITAL COSTS OF IMPLEMENTING THE PROPOSALS WERE ESTIMATED AT \$3.3 MILLION, WITH ANOTHER \$5.3 MILLION IN RECURRENT EXPENSES FOR THE FIRST YEAR, HE SAID.

MR HU THEN STRESSED THAT THE PRINCIPLE OF FAIR DISTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL RESOURCES MUST BE ACHIEVED, PROVIDED THAT THE COSTS INCURRED WERE REASONABLE, THE INCONVENIENCE CAUSED WAS WITHIN PERMISSIBLE LIMITS AND THE SOCIAL GAINS WOULD BENEFIT THE MAJORITY OF THE COMMUNITY.

LASTLY, MR HU SAID SUFFICIENT SAFEGUARDS HAD BEEN MADE FOR TENANTS WHO MIGHT EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTY IN PAYING DOUBLE RENT DUE TO AN UNEXPECTED DROP IN THEIR INCOME. A SPECIAL COMMITTEE WOULD BE SET UP TO DEAL WITH SUCH CASES.

TO CATER FOR CHANGING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, IT HAD ALSO BEEN SUGGESTED THAT THE MEASURES TO ADDRESS HOUSING SUBSIDIES SHOULD BE REVIEWED PERIODICALLY, HE ADDED.

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TOUGHER ACTION MAY BE REQUIRED
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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE A FIRMER LINE ON THE ISSUE OF PUBLIC HOUSING RENT POLICY AND HOUSING SUBSIDY IF THE SOFTER LINE FAILS, THE HON CHAN KAM-CHUEN TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HOWEVER, HE DID HOPE THAT THE SOFTER TACTIC OF INCREASING RENT COULD REPLACE THE TOUGHER TACTIC OF EVICTING WELL-OFF TENANTS, MR CHAN SAID DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON TWO HOUSING REPORTS CONCERNING RENT POLICY AND SUBSIDY.

HE EMPHASISED THAT THE RESOURCES OF ANY SOCIETY WERE NOT UNLIMITED, AND THE BEST USE MUST BE MADE OF THEM.

THE EXISTING POLICY OF PROVIDING LIFE-LONG TENANCY AND TOLERANCE TOWARDS SUCCESSION OF TENANCY BY SONS OR DAUGHTERS WOULD SIMPLY MEAN THAT MORE PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES HAD TO BE BUILT, HE SAID.

+IT WILL BE A HEAVY BURDEN ON PUBLIC FINANCE AND THE NEEDY WILL HAVE TO WAIT MUCH LONGER FOR PUBLIC HOUSING.+

FROM A SOCIAL POINT OF VIEW, ELDERLY SINGLE PEOPLE SHOULD BE GIVEN HIGHER PRIORITY IN PUBLIC HOUSING, HE ADDED.

ON THE SUBJECT OF DECLARATION OF INCOME, MR CHAN SUGGESTED THAT SUCH DECLARATION MADE TO HOUSING DEPARTMENT OFFICERS SHOULD HAVE STATUTORY EFFECT SO THAT OFFICERS WOULD HAVE SOME AUTHORITY WHEN DEALING WITH FALSE DECLARATIONS.

HE ALSO CRITICISED +FALLACIOUS ARGUMENTS+ MADE BY PRESSURE GROUPS ON THE HOUSING ISSUE AND REITERATED A STATEMENT HE MADE IN THE COUNCIL THREE YEARS AGO:

+WE SHOULD GET ALL WELL-OFF TENANTS OR ABSENTEE TENANTS OUT OF PUBLIC HOUSING INTO HOME OWNERSHIP OR PRIVATE HOUSING AND LET THE QUEUE OF UNDER-PRIVILEGED APPLICANTS WHO CANNOT AFFORD PRIVATE HOUSING TO TAKE UP THE VACANCIES THUS CREATED.

+NEW TENANCIES IN PUBLIC HOUSING SHOULD BE OF 10 YEARS DURATION AND TERMINATED OR EXTENDED ACCORDING TO THE THEN PREVAILING FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE TENANT.+

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PROPOSED RENT-INCOME RATIO ONLY A GUIDELINE

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THE SETTING OF A 15 PER CENT MEDIAN RENT-INCOME RATIO IS ONLY A GUIDELINE AND IT IS NOT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S INTENTION TO BRING ALL RENTS FOR PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS UP TO THIS LIMIT.

THIS ASSURANCE CAME FROM THE HON CHEUNG YAN-LUNG TODAY (WEDNESDAY) DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE HOUSING REPORTS CONCERNING DOMESTIC RENT POLICY AND HOUSING SUBSIDY.

MR CHEUNG, ALSO A MEMBER OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, SAID THAT THERE WERE TWO TYPES OF REACTIONS TO THE PROPOSED RATIO.

HE SAID GROUPS REPRESENTING PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS FELT THAT THE 15 PER CENT RATIO WAS TOO HIGH AS MANY TENANTS IN OLDER HOUSING ESTATES WERE AT PRESENT PAYING A SUBSTANTIALLY LOWER PROPORTION OF THEIR INCOME AS RENT AND FEARED THAT THEIR RENTS WOULD BE RAISED TO THE 15 PER CENT LEVEL.

ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE WAS A LESS VOCAL GROUP WHO THOUGHT THE PROPOSED RATIO WAS TOO LOW BECAUSE RENT LEVELS FOR PUBLIC HOUSING IN OTHER COUNTRIES WERE HIGHER, HE SAID.

MR CHEUNG POINTED OUT THAT THE DOMESTIC RENT POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE, IN RECOMMENDING THE LIMIT, HAD SENSIBLY BASED ITS CONSIDERATION ON THE ABILITY OF PROSPECTIVE TENANTS TO PAY.

+THERE IS AMPLE EVIDENCE IN THEIR REPORT TO SUPPORT THE VIEW THAT 15 PER CENT IS WELL WITHIN THE AFFORDABILITY OF THE TENANTS,+ HE SAID.

MR CHEUNG NOTED THAT MANY ELIGIBLE FAMILIES WERE STILL WAITING PATIENTLY IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR FOR THEIR TURN TO MOVE INTO PUBLIC HOUSING.

HE SAID THESE PRIVATE SECTOR TENANTS VERY OFTEN HAD TO PAY A RENT WHICH WAS ABOUT THREE TO FOUR TIMES MORE THAN THAT PAID BY FAMILIES LIVING IN PUBLIC HOUSING FLATS. IT WAS NOT UNCOMMON FOR A NEW TENANT IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO PAY UP TO 40 PER CENT OF HIS INCOME AS RENT.

+I THEREFORE SUPPORT THE PROPOSED GUIDING RATIO OF 15 PER CENT, NOT FORGETTING THAT STATISTICS HAVE CLEARLY INDICATED THAT AFTER MOVING INTO PUBLIC HOUSING, TENANTS CONTINUE TO ENJOY A STEADY RISE IN THEIR LIVING STANDARD,+ HE SAID.

TURNING TO THE REPORT ON HOUSING SUBSIDY, MR CHEUNG STRESSED THAT PUBLIC HOUSING SHOULD BE DIRECTED TOWARDS THOSE IN NEED, AND THAT THE AIM SHOULD BE TO HELP THEM TO BECOME ABLE TO HELP THEMSELVES.

HE THEREFORE FELT THAT HEAVILY SUBSIDISED PUBLIC HOUSING SHOULD NOT BE LOOKED UPON AS A LIFE-LONG ENTITLEMENT.

HE SAID THAT ONCE A FAMILY HAS PASSED THE DIFFICULT PERIOD WHEN THEY MOST NEEDED ASSISTANCE IN HOUSING, THEY SHOULD NO LONGER BE ENTITLED TO A SUBSTANTIAL HOUSING SUBSIDY.

HE OBSERVED THAT SHORT OF FORCED EVICTION, HIGHER RENT FOR THOSE WHO HAD IMPROVED THEIR FINANCIAL POSITION CONSIDERABLY AFTER MOVING INTO PUBLIC HOUSING WAS THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE.

HE THEREFORE SUPPORTED THE PROPOSALS IN THE REPORT.

LASTLY, MR CHEUNG SAID IT SHOULD BE THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S POLICY IN THE LONG RUN TO BE SELF-FINANCING AND TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT HOUSING AT A RENT AFFORDABLE BY TENANTS WITHOUT SIGNIFICANTLY LOWERING THEIR LIVING STANDARD.

HE ALSO PRAISED THE HARD WORK OF MEMBERS OF THE TWO COMMITTEES AND STAFF OF THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT IN PREPARING THE REPORTS.

+THEY HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO A LOT OF PRESSURE AND SOME UNKIND CRITICISMS,+ HE SAID.

+THEY HAVE BEEN SHOWN IMMENSE PATIENCE AND TACT, AND FOR THESE THEY HAVE WON MY RESPECT.+

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CALL FOR CONSISTENT AND REALISTIC RENT POLICY

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A CONSISTENT AND REALISTIC RENT POLICY HAS BEEN THE KEY TO THE SUCCESS OF HONG KONG'S PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME, THE HON CHAN YING-LUN SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE TWO HOUSING REPORTS, MR CHAN SAID IT WAS HIS SINCERE HOPE THAT THIS POLICY WOULD BE CONTINUED FOR THE BENEFIT OF PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS.

HE SAID THAT SINCE PUBLICATION OF THE TWO REPORTS LAST MONTH THERE HAD BEEN CONCERN AMONG SOME TENANTS OVER RENT POLICY.

REVIEWING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMMES, HE SAID IT HAD BEEN REMARKABLE THAT ALL IMPROVEMENTS AT PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES WERE PROVIDED AT COSTS THAT TENANTS, MOST OF WHOM CAME FROM THE LOWER INCOME GROUP, COULD AFFORD.

HE SAID THE PRESENT RENT POLICY HAD PROVED TO BE PRACTICABLE AND ACCEPTABLE AND ITS CONTINUED APPLICATION WAS SUPPORTED BY THE DOMESTIC RENT POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE.

HE NOTED THAT THE MEDIAN RENT-INCOME RATIO OF NOT MORE THAN 15 PER CENT FOR NEW ESTATES PROPOSED BY THE COMMITTEE HAD DRAWN OBJECTIONS FROM SOME PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS.

AS CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE, MR CHAN TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO CLARIFY THE MATTER FOR TENANTS.

+BASED ON DATA AVAILABLE, I AM CONVINCED THAT RENTS SET ACCORDING TO THE 15 PER CENT GUIDELINES ARE WELL WITHIN THE AFFORDABILITY OF TENANTS,+ HE SAID.

FIGURES FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS SHOWED THAT THE MEDIAN RENT-INCOME RATIOS FOR NEW ESTATES WERE VERY CLOSE TO THE 15 PER CENT BENCHMARK.

HE SAID OF THOSE WHO HAD TO PAY MORE THAN 15 PER CENT, A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER WERE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS WHOSE RENTS WERE PAID BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND THERE WERE ALSO TENANTS WHO OPTED FOR LARGER ACCOMMODATION THAN THEY WERE BASICALLY ENTITLED TO.

HE ADDED THAT CHEAPER ACCOMMODATION IN OLDER ESTATES WAS AVAILABLE FOR THOSE WHO COULD NOT AFFORD THE RENTS CHARGED IN NEW ESTATES.

REFERRING TO PUBLIC COMMENT THAT THE 15 PER CENT GUIDELINE WAS TOO CLOSE TO THE LEVEL IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR, WHERE RENTS TOOK UP ABOUT 15 TO 18 PER CENT OF TENANTS' INCOME, MR CHAN STRESSED THAT THE GUIDELINE ONLY REFERRED TO THE RENTS OF NEW ESTATES AT THE TIME THE TENANTS MOVED IN.

/HE SAID

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HE SAID THE CORRESPONDING FIGURE FOR NEW TENANTS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR WAS MUCH HIGHER, REACHING 40 PER CENT IN SOME CASES.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE 15 TO 18 PER CENT FIGURE QUOTED IN THE REPORT ONLY REFERRED TO SITTING TENANTS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND ADDED THAT SITTING TENANTS IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES WERE CURRENTLY PAYING SEVEN PER CENT OF THEIR INCOME IN RENT.

MR CHAN REASSURED TENANTS IN OLDER ESTATES WHO WERE CONCERNED THAT THEIR RENTS WOULD BE RAISED TO THE 15 PER CENT LEVEL THAT THEY WOULD STILL BE PAYING RENTS SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER THAN THIS.

REGARDING THE HOUSING SUBSIDY REPORT, MR CHAN SAID HE SUPPORTED THE PRINCIPLE THAT THOSE WHO HAD LIVED IN PUBLIC HOUSING FOR OVER 10 YEARS AND COULD AFFORD TO PAY DOUBLE SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO DO SO.

+IT IS ONLY LOGICAL THAT SITTING TENANTS WHO ARE NOW EARNING MORE THAN TWICE THE WAITING LIST INCOME LIMIT SHOULD PAY DOUBLE RENT,+ HE SAID.

+AT ANY RATE, THE DOUBLE RENT WILL NOT BE MORE THAN 15 PER CENT OF THEIR INCOME AND SHOULD THEREFORE BE AFFORDABLE,+ HE ADDED.

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CALL TO PROVIDE MORE HOS FLATS

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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER INCREASING THE PROPORTION OF HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME FLATS TO ACCOMMODATE THOSE PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS WITH IMPROVED FINANCIAL STANDINGS.

THIS WAS SUGGESTED BY THE HON CHENG HON-KWAN DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON PUBLIC HOUSING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR CHENG SAID THE MOVE WOULD VACATE MORE RENTAL FLATS FOR PEOPLE IN THE LOWER INCOME GROUP WITH DEFINITE AND ACUTE HOUSING NEEDS.

+THIS IS, IN MY VIEW, A LOGICAL APPROACH TO SOLVING THE HOUSING PROBLEM WITH THE PROVISION OF A BETTER LIVELIHOOD COUPLED WITH A SENSE OF BELONGING FOR THIS GROUP OF CITIZENS TO LIVE IN THEIR OWN PROPERTY,+ HE SAID.

MR CHENG ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE SUBSTANTIAL ANNUAL DEFICIT INCURRED BY GROUP B ESTATES IN VIEW OF THE HIGH COST OF MAINTENANCE, IMPROVEMENTS AND REPAIR WHICH REFLECTED FAR-REACHING IMPLICATIONS OF THE SUB-STANDARD QUALITY OF DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF OLDER ESTATES.

/HE POINTED

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HE POINTED OUT THAT THE DEFICIT MIGHT STEADILY DIMINISH AS A RESULT OF THE REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND BY BEING FINANCED BY A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF THE SURPLUS IN THE NON-DOMESTIC ESTATE WORKING ACCOUNT.

HOWEVER, HE SAID IT WAS CERTAINLY NOT ADVISABLE THAT SUCH SUBSIDY SHOULD INDEFINITELY CONTINUE AND MEASURES SHOULD BE TAKEN URGENTLY TO MAKE USE OF THE SURPLUS FROM THE COMMERCIAL PREMISES AND GROUP A ESTATES TO CONSTRUCT MORE HOUSING UNITS RATHER THAN FURTHER SUBSIDISE EXISTING TENANTS.

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GRANT ALLOWANCE TO TENANTS ON THE 'VERGE'
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AN ALLOWANCE EQUIVALENT TO THREE PER CENT OF THE MEDIAN INCOME SHOULD BE GRANTED TO TENANTS WHOSE FAMILY INCOME WAS ON THE 'VERGE' OF THE SUBSIDY INCOME LIMIT, THE HON CHUNG PUI-LAM SUGGESTED TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE ALSO RECOMMENDED THAT SPECIAL CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO HARDSHIP CASES AND PROVISIONS FOR EXCEPTIONAL CASES BE MADE UNDER THE +DOUBLE RENT+ REQUIREMENT.

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE TWO REPORTS ON HOUSING SUBSIDY AND DOMESTIC RENT POLICY IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR CHUNG SAID THE HOUSING POLICY SHOULD AIM POSITIVELY AT STRIKING A BALANCE BETWEEN THE SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS AND HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME (HOS) FLATS AT THE PRESENT BASIS.

+THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER TAKING THE MOST APPROPRIATE ECONOMIC APPROACH TO ACHIEVE THE SOCIAL OBJECTIVE OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT POLICIES.

+IN PRINCIPLE, PRIORITY SHOULD BE GIVEN TO ASSISTING PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS IN PURCHASING HOS FLATS,+ HE SAID.

CONCRETE MEASURES THAT HE SUGGESTED WERE THE EXEMPTION OF THE DOWN-PAYMENT OR A GUARANTEE BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY ON THE FIVE PER CENT DOWN-PAYMENT TO BE WITHDRAWN AUTOMATICALLY ON FULL PAYMENT OF THE AMOUNT.

MR CHUNG POINTED OUT THAT THE MAXIMUM MONTHLY INSTALMENT PAYMENT SHOULD BE 15 PER CENT OF THE FAMILY INCOME OF A HOS FLAT BUYER, SO THAT THE BURDEN OF PURCHASING SUCH A FLAT WAS ABOUT THE SAME AS THAT FOR RENTING A PUBLIC HOUSING UNIT.

/+THIS PROPOSAL

+THIS PROPOSAL WILL NOT ONLY REDUCE THE IMPACT OF THE NEW PUBLIC HOUSING POLICY TO A MINIMUM, BUT ALSO DEVELOP THE HOS TO A MAXIMUM.

+MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, MORE OPPORTUNITIES WILL BE CREATED FOR WAITING LIST APPLICANTS FOR PUBLIC HOUSING,+ HE SAID.

MR CHUNG SUGGESTED A NUMBER OF ATTRACTIONS TO BOOST THE SALE OF HOS FLATS.

FIRSTLY, PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS WHO ARE PROSPECTIVE HOS FLAT BUYERS SHOULD BE GIVEN THE ASSURANCE THAT THEY MAY SURRENDER THEIR HOS FLATS AND RE-ALLOCATED PUBLIC HOUSING WHEN NECESSARY SO AS TO RELIEVE THEIR CONCERN ABOUT A COMMITMENT TO LONG-TERM REPAYMENT.

SECONDLY, PRIORITY TO PURCHASE HOS FLATS SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THOSE ALLOCATED PUBLIC HOUSING WITHOUT INCOME RESTRICTION.

THIRDLY, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BUILD AND SELL HOS FLATS OF VARIOUS SIZES TO CATER TO THE NEEDS OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF BUYERS.

LASTLY, MR CHUNG SAID HE FELT THAT UNLESS TENANTS COULD GENERALLY AFFORD TO PAY DOUBLE RENT AND BECOME HOS FLAT OWNERS WITH IMPROVED FINANCIAL CONDITIONS, HONG KONG'S HOUSING POLICY COULD NOT CLAIM ANY SUCCESS.

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CONDUCT FULL-SCALE REVIEW ON HOUSEHOLD INCOME
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THE OMELCO HOUSING PANEL'S PROPOSAL TO CONDUCT A FULL-SCALE REVIEW ON THE INCOME OF ALL HOUSEHOLDS WHO HAVE RESIDED FOR TEN YEARS IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES RECEIVED SUPPORT.

SPEAKING IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE HON HUI YIN-FAT SAID SUCH A REVIEW COULD PUT AN END TO SPECULATIONS ON THE NUMBER OF WELL-OFF TENANTS AND CLEAR UP DOUBTS ABOUT DISCREPANCIES SHOWN IN OFFICIAL STATISTICS.

MR HUI SAID THE SOCIAL WORK FIELD SUPPORTED THE PRINCIPLE THAT THOSE WHO COULD AFFORD HIGHER RENTS SHOULD GET LESS SUBSIDY.

HOWEVER, THEY DID NOT AGREE TO THE GENERAL DEFINITION OF +WELL-OFF+ FAMILIES WHICH WAS BASED ON THE TOTAL INCOME OF ALL WORKING MEMBERS, HE SAID.

/MR HUI

MR HUI SAID HE FELT THAT THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING SUBSIDY HAD NOT ONLY NEGLECTED THE GREATER EXPENDITURE REQUIRED BY WORKING MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY, BUT ALSO IGNORED THE FACT THAT WORKING CHILDREN DID NOT TAKE HOME THE FULL SHARE OF THEIR MONTHLY EARNINGS.

THE HOUSING SUBSIDY PROPOSAL WOULD THEREFORE DISCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE FROM LIVING WITH THEIR FAMILIES, AND WOULD LEAD TO THE FORMATION OF NUCLEAR FAMILIES AS WELL AS AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF WAITING LIST APPLICANTS FOR PUBLIC HOUSING.

IT WOULD ALSO DO INJUSTICE TO THE BULK OF LOW-INCOME TENANTS WHO WERE THE FIRST TO BE HIT DURING ECONOMIC RECESSIONS, HE ADDED.

HE RECOMMENDED THAT 60 PER CENT OF THE INCOME OF OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS BE INCLUDED IN THE CALCULATION OF HOUSING SUBSIDY, AS THIS WOULD SPARE THE MAJORITY OF TENANTS THE TROUBLE OF DECLARING THEIR INCOME ONCE EVERY TWO YEARS.

MR HUI ALSO STRESSED THAT HONG KONG'S SPECTACULAR ACHIEVEMENT IN PROVIDING LOW-COST HOUSING TO ALMOST HALF THE POPULATION DURING THE PAST 33 YEARS SHOULD BE MAINTAINED, IF ONLY AT THE EXPENSE OF A SLIGHTLY REDUCED REVENUE FOR THE HOUSING AUTHORITY.

+THE HOUSING AUTHORITY SHOULD EXPLORE INCOME GENERATING AVENUES SUCH AS CUTTING COST THROUGH IMPROVED MANAGEMENT, PRODUCING MORE HOME OWNERSHIP UNITS, EVICTING ABSENTEE TENANTS AND SELLING FLATS TO EXISTING OCCUPANTS,+ HE URGED.

MR HUI NOTED THAT PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS WERE CONCERNED ABOUT THE FACTORS CONSTITUTING HOUSING ESTATE VALUE, THE METHODOLOGY OF CALCULATING THE 15 PER CENT RENT-INCOME RATIO AND THE CRITERIA FOR EFFECTING A RENT INCREASE.

HE CALLED ON THE DOMESTIC RENT POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE TO REVIEW AND RESHUFFLE ITS STATISTICS BY PITCHING THE RENT-INCOME RATIO AT THE MAXIMUM POINT OF 15 PER CENT OF THE MEDIAN INCOME, ALLOWING TENANTS WHOSE RENT-INCOME RATIO EXCEEDING 15 PER CENT TO APPLY FOR RENT REDUCTION.

+THE SUGGESTION MEASURES WOULD PROVE MORE PRACTICABLE THAN TO EXERCISE RIGID FORMULAE IN DOMESTIC RENT AND HOUSING SUBSIDY REVIEWS,+ HE SAID.

+THE TWO REPORTS IN QUESTION ALSO SERVE AS A WARNING SIGNAL THAT A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW ON GOVERNMENT'S OVERALL HOUSING POLICY IS LONG OVERDUE,+ HE ADDED.

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CALL FOR REVIEW OF HOUSING POLICY

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THE HOUSING AUTHORITY SHOULD CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE AND OBJECTIVE REVIEW ON THE EXISTING HOUSING POLICY BEFORE REVIEWING THE DOMESTIC RENT POLICY, THE HON RICHARD LAI SAID TODAY.

HE SAID HE STRONGLY OPPOSED THE +WELL-OFF TENANTS POLICY+ AND URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO SHELVE IT WITH A VIEW TO FORMULATING EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO EVICT SUCH TENANTS AND PROPERTY OWNERS IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

HE ALSO URGED THE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO CONDUCT ONE-OFF EXERCISE TO EXTENSIVELY CONSULT PUBLIC OPINION ON THE DEFINITION OF WELL-OFF TENANTS AND TO FIND OUT THEIR EXACT NUMBER.

MR LAI WAS SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE TWO REPORTS ON HOUSING SUBSIDY AND DOMESTIC RENT POLICY.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PUBLIC HELD COMPLETELY DIFFERENT VIEWS ON THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND IMPLEMENTING THE +WELL-OFF TENANTS+ POLICY BECAUSE OF THEIR DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDING OF THE SOCIAL OBJECTIVE OF PUBLIC HOUSING.

NOTING THAT DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF FAMILIES WERE ADMITTED INTO PUBLIC HOUSING THROUGH DIFFERENT ADMISSION CRITERIA OVER THE YEARS, HE ARGUED THAT THE POLICY COULD NOT SUIT THE SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF EACH AND EVERY CATEGORY OF PUBLIC HOUSING AND THEREFORE HAD GIVEN RISE TO WIDESPREAD DISCONTENT AND CRITICISMS.

MR LAI CONSIDERED THAT THE ACTUAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY MIGHT CONTRADICT THE SPIRIT OF THE POLICY.

HE SAID THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF THE POLICY WAS TO EVICT THOSE PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS WHO COULD AFFORD MOVING TO HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME FLATS OR ACCOMMODATION IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR SO THAT MORE PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO NEEDY APPLICANTS.

HOWEVER, HE FELT THAT THE AFFECTED FAMILIES MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO PAY THE HIGH RENT CHARGED BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR, AS A RESULT OF WHICH THEY WOULD EITHER PAY DOUBLE RENT AND STAY IN PUBLIC HOUSING OR REMOVE THE FAMILY MEMBER WITH THE HIGHEST INCOME FROM THE TENANCY.

THUS, THE OUTCOME MAY BE VERY MUCH DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IS ORIGINALLY EXPECTED, HE SAID.

REFERRING TO THE DOMESTIC RENT POLICY, MR LAI STRESSED THAT BEFORE REVIEWING THE POLICY, THE HOUSING AUTHORITY SHOULD FIRST IDENTIFY THE SOCIAL OBJECTIVE OF PUBLIC HOUSING.

/HE CONSIDERED

HE CONSIDERED THAT ONLY BY IDENTIFYING THE SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF PUBLIC HOUSING AND ESTABLISHING A COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL OBJECTIVE COULD MORE EQUITABLE RECOMMENDATIONS BE MADE.

MR LAI SAID HE FELT THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT REDUCE ITS COMMITMENT ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC HOUSING BECAUSE OF A GREATER SURPLUS FROM ESTATES.

HE SUGGESTED THAT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY SHOULD CONSIDER CAREFULLY ITS COMMITMENT ON PUBLIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND SHOULD NOT CONTINUOUSLY INCREASE TENANTS' RESPONSIBILITY BY RENT INCREASE.

HE ALSO QUESTIONED THE REASONS FOR SUPPORTING THE PROPOSAL FOR A 15 PER CENT RENT-INCOME RATIO.

HE SAID STATISTICS QUOTED IN THE REPORT COULD NOT EFFECTIVELY PROVE THAT TENANTS COULD AFFORD THE 15 PER CENT RENT-INCOME RATIO.

HE WAS ALSO NOT SATISFIED THAT THE REPORT HAD QUOTED EXAMPLES OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES TO PROVE THAT THE RECOMMENDED RATIO WAS FAIR AND REASONABLE, SAYING IT WAS UNFAIR THAT COMPARISON WAS DRAWN ON RENTALS ALONE WITHOUT TAKING INTO ACCOUNT OTHER FACILITIES.

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HOUSING LOAN FUND FOR SANDWICH CLASS ECHOED
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THE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A FUND FOR PROVIDING DOWN-PAYMENT LOANS TO THE SANDWICH CLASS TO ENABLE THEM TO PURCHASE THEIR OWN RESIDENTIAL FLATS WAS REPEATED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE HON LEE YU-TAI.

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON HOUSING, MR LEE SAID THE PROPOSAL, IF IMPLEMENTED, WOULD HELP REDUCE DISSATISFACTION AMONG NON-PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS TOWARDS THE BENEFITS ENJOYED BY PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS, AND WOULD THUS ALLEVIATE THE DISINTEGRATION AND ANTAGONISM EXISTING AMONG THE POPULATION.

MR LEE SAID SINCE PUBLIC HOUSING SERVED AN IMPORTANT SOCIAL FUNCTION, HE AGREED THAT A TRULY FAIR POLICY SHOULD BE FORMULATED.

+BUT SINCE ABOUT 40 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION LIVE IN PUBLIC HOUSING AND SLIGHTLY MORE THAN HALF THE POPULATION LIVE IN PRIVATE PREMISES, NO MATTER HOW GOVERNMENT'S RENT POLICY OR HOUSING SUBSIDY POLICY IS FORMULATED, IT WILL GIVE RISE TO CRITICISM OR DISCONTENT FROM ABOUT HALF THE POPULATION,+ HE SAID.

MR LEE SAID HONG KONG PEOPLE WERE OFTEN TOO HARSH WITH THE GOVERNMENT AND WOULD ASK FOR LEGISLATION TO BE MADE TO RECTIFY SOME RARE CASES OF APPARENT INJUSTICE.

/+IN FACT,

+IN FACT, MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ALSO HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO DEFEND SOCIAL INJUSTICE.

+IT IS A CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY TO INITIATE CRITICISM AGAINST INJUSTICE, RATHER THAN TO ASK THE GOVERNMENT TO IMPOSE LEGISLATIVE CONTROLS ON EVERY CASE,+ HE SAID.

MR LEE OBSERVED THAT THE PROPOSAL ON THE MEDIAN RENT-INCOME RATIO OF 15 PER CENT WOULD BE VIEWED AS A KIND OF RENT INCREASE POLICY AND WOULD INEVITABLY ATTRACT OBJECTIONS FROM PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS.

AS TO THE +DOUBLE RENT+ PROPOSAL, MR LEE SAID PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS WOULD NOT WELCOME IT AND WOULD FIND IT IRRITATING.

HE SAID HE HOPED THAT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, AFTER CONSIDERING THE REPORTS ON HOUSING RENT POLICY AND SUBSIDIES, WOULD FIRST PUBLISH A GREEN PAPER TO CONSULT THE PUBLIC ON THE VARIOUS PROPOSALS WHICH IT INTENDED TO IMPLEMENT.

+AFTER CONSULTATION AND PUBLICATION OF THE GREEN PAPER, MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WILL FIND IT EASIER TO ADAPT TO THE PROPOSALS BECAUSE WHETHER THEY ARE FOR OR AGAINST THE PROPOSALS THEY HAVE BEEN GIVEN A CHANCE TO AIR THEIR VIEWS,+ HE SAID.

AS A RESULT, THE DEGREE OF OPPOSITION WOULD BE MARKEDLY REDUCED, HE ADDED.

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WELL-OFF TENANTS SHOULD BE EVICTED
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IT IS REGRETTABLE THAT THE PRINCIPLE OF EVICTING GENUINELY WELL-OFF PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS HAS NOT BEEN ADOPTED, THE HON POON CHI-FAI SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON TWO PUBLIC HOUSING REPORTS, MR POON SAID IT WAS ALSO UNREASONABLE TO INCLUDE THE INCOME OF ALL FAMILY MEMBERS IN THE CALCULATION OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME.

+THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PUBLIC HOUSING REPORT ONLY AIM TO GENERATE AN ADDITIONAL REVENUE FROM ABOUT FIVE PER CENT OF THE TENANTS WHO HAVE TO PAY DOUBLE RENT, BUT 95 PER CENT OF TENANTS WHO DO NOT HAVE TO PAY DOUBLE RENT WOULD HAVE TO BE INCONVENIENCED,+ HE SAID.

/MR POON

MR POON SAID HE HOPED THAT THE AUTHORITIES WOULD CAREFULLY CONSIDER WHETHER IT WOULD BE BOTH A WASTE OF PUBLIC MONEY AND AN UNWISE MOVE TO INCUR ADDITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES ON SCREENING THE INCOME DECLARATIONS OF 95 PER CENT OF TENANTS WHO DID NOT HAVE TO PAY DOUBLE RENT.

+FOR SOME marginally well-off household whose family income only exceeds the subsidy income limit by several hundred dollars, they may be compelled to drive away their income-earning children, so as to reduce the burden of paying double rent,+ he said.

MR POON SAID THAT THIS WOULD RESULT IN THE ESTATES BEING POPULATED BY OLD PEOPLE AND RUN COUNTER TO THE SPIRIT AND PRINCIPLE OF CHINESE TRADITION.

HE SUGGESTED THE FOLLOWING MEASURES:

- * TENANTS WHO WERE CLEARLY BETTER-OFF AND THOSE NO LONGER IN NEED OF HOUSING SUBSIDY SHOULD BE EVICTED;
- * SPEEDING UP CONSTRUCTION OF LOW-COST HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME FLATS; AND
- * A FURTHER REVIEW OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOUSING SUBSIDY TO PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS.

ON DOMESTIC RENT POLICY, MR POON SAID THE PROPOSED MEDIAN RENT-INCOME RATIO OF 15 PER CENT NEEDED FURTHER REVIEW AND DISCUSSION.

+CONSIDERATION AND SEPARATE TREATMENT MUST BE GIVEN TO THE 280 000 HOUSEHOLDS LIVING IN OLD PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES AND THOSE FAMILIES WITH A RENT-INCOME RATIO BELOW THE 15 PER CENT LEVEL,+ HE SAID.

+AN APPROPRIATE AND REASONABLE POLICY WILL BRING FORTH BENEFITS; IF NOT, IT WILL LEAD TO A CHAIN OF ADVERSE EFFECTS WHICH MIGHT EVEN JEOPARDISE OUR PROSPERITY AND STABILITY.+

SPECIAL COMMITTEE SHOULD CONSIDER HARDSHIP CASES

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FEARS THAT THE PROPOSED AMOUNT OF INCREMENT IN PUBLIC HOUSING RENT MIGHT CAUSE HARDSHIP TO TENANTS WERE EXPRESSED BY THE HON TAI CHIN-WAH IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON TWO PAPERS ON PUBLIC HOUSING POLICY, MR TAI SAID THAT SPECIAL ATTENTION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE IMPACT OF THE RENTAL INCREMENT ON THE LOWER-INCOME GROUP TO ENSURE THAT ANY CHANGE WOULD NOT CAUSE UNDUE HARDSHIP.

TO ACHIEVE THE SOCIAL OBJECTIVES AS STATED IN THE REPORT PREPARED BY THE DOMESTIC RENT REVIEW COMMITTEE, HE SUGGESTED THAT A SPECIAL COMMITTEE BE FORMED TO CONSIDER CASES OF HARDSHIP, SUCH AS WHETHER A PARTICULAR TENANT WOULD BE DESERVING OF THE INCREMENT BEING WAIVED.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE PROPOSED AMOUNT OF INCREMENT FIXED AT A CEILING OF 15 PER CENT OF MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME SHOULD ALSO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE FACILITIES, AMENITIES, LOCALITY AND AGE OF THE PARTICULAR ESTATE.

ON THE EXTRA REVENUE GENERATED, HE SAID THE MONEY SHOULD BE USED NOT ONLY FOR IMPROVEMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND FACILITIES OF ALL HOUSING ESTATES BUT ALSO FOR FUTURE EXPANSION PROGRAMMES.

TURNING TO THE PROPOSAL TO CHARGE DOUBLE THE EXISTING RENT OF THOSE TENANTS WITH 10 YEARS' OCCUPANCY AND WHOSE INCOME WAS TWICE THE INCOME LIMIT OF PEOPLE ON THE WAITING LIST, MR TAI ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT ITS EFFECT ON THE STANDARD OF LIVING.

IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE HARDSHIP OF THOSE TENANTS AFFECTED BY SUCH A PROPOSAL, HE SUGGESTED THAT IF THEIR AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME WAS PROVED TO HAVE FALLEN BELOW THE SO-CALLED SUBSIDY INCOME LIMIT FOR A CONTINUOUS PERIOD OF SIX MONTHS, THAT PARTICULAR HOUSEHOLD SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO PAY THE EXISTING RENT.

AS TO THE SUGGESTION BY THE COMMITTEE THAT MORE CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO SPECIAL CASES WHERE A TENANT'S HOUSEHOLD INCOME EXCEEDED THE SO-CALLED SUBSIDY INCOME LIMIT, MR TAI SAID MORE EMPHASIS SHOULD BE MADE IN DEFINING PRECISELY THE SITUATION OR THE TYPE OF EXPENDITURE THAT WOULD FALL WITHIN EXCEPTIONAL OR UNAVOIDABLE EXPENSES.

MR TAI ALSO SAID THE MIDDLE INCOME GROUP STILL FOUND IT HARD TO MAKE ENDS MEET BECAUSE THEY WERE NEITHER ENTITLED TO PUBLIC HOUSING NOR QUALIFIED FOR PUBLIC HOME OWNERSHIP FLATS.

/HE SUGGESTED

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HE SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF GRANTING TAX CONCESSION TO TAXPAYERS SO THAT THEY COULD OFF-SET THEIR MORTGAGE INTEREST PAYMENTS AGAINST PERSONAL INCOME TAX.

THE PROPOSAL WOULD LESSEN THE DEMAND ON PUBLIC HOUSING AND ON THE HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME, HE BELIEVED.

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LONG-TERM HOUSING POLICY ADVOCATED
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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD FORMULATE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THE LONG-TERM HOUSING POLICY MENTIONED IN THE GOVERNOR'S ANNUAL ADDRESS, THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG SAID DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON PUBLIC HOUSING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

+ONLY BY ASCERTAINING THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TOWARDS THE PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME, THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS THEMSELVES AND THE FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, CAN A BASIC SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS OF PUBLIC HOUSING BE WORKED OUT,+ HE SAID.

STATING THAT THE REPORTS ON PUBLIC HOUSING SUBSIDY AND DOMESTIC RENT POLICY WERE BY NO MEANS COMPREHENSIVE, MR TAM SAID HE DID NOT AGREE THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ADOPT THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING WELL-OFF TENANTS AND THE DOMESTIC RENT POLICY TODAY IN THE ABSENCE OF A LONG-TERM AND COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING POLICY.

HE SAID THAT AT PRESENT, ACCORDING TO THE FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, THE MAJOR COMMITMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT IN CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC HOUSING WERE PROVISION OF LAND AT NO COST AND LOW-INTEREST LOANS.

HOWEVER, HE SAID THERE WAS AN INDICATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS TRYING TO RELINQUISH ITS PUBLIC HOUSING COMMITMENTS.

+SUCH WITHDRAWAL WILL DIRECTLY INCREASE THE BURDEN OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY AND INDIRECTLY INCREASE THAT OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG,+ HE ADDED.

MR TAM SAID IT APPEARED THAT THE AMOUNT OF GOVERNMENT LOANS WOULD BE PROGRESSIVELY REDUCED; AND THAT BY 1992-93, THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WOULD NOT REQUIRE ANY LOANS FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

/+OBVIOUSLY, IF

+OBVIOUSLY, IF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY STILL WANTS TO REDEVELOP OLD HOUSING ESTATES AND CONSTRUCT NEW ONES WHILE PART OF ITS FINANCIAL RESOURCES - GOVERNMENT LOANS -- ARE SHRINKING TO THE EXTENT OF HAVING NONE AT ALL, IT WOULD HAVE TO INCREASE ITS RELIANCE ON THE OTHER FINANCIAL RESOURCE - RENTAL INCOME FROM TENANTS,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID THAT UNDER THIS CIRCUMSTANCE THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WOULD HAVE TO COLLECT HIGHER RENTALS FROM TENANTS OR SLOW DOWN ITS CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC HOUSING.

+TO THOSE PEOPLE WITH ACCOMMODATION NEEDS, THIS IS SOMETHING REGRETTABLE,+ HE SAID.

MR TAM EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THE BACKGROUND REASON FOR PUBLISHING THE TWO REPORTS BEING DEBATED WAS TO ALLOW THE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO +EXPLORE NEW RESOURCES AT A QUICKER PACE+ AND TO FACILITATE THE GOVERNMENT IN SHEDDING ITS COMMITMENTS.

+MY COMMENTS ON THE TWO REPORTS ARE THAT IT IS DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT THEM IN PRINCIPLE AND THAT THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS ARE IMPRACTICAL,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID THE REPORT ON HOUSING SUBSIDY WAS ONLY DIRECTED AGAINST THE FIVE PER CENT OR SO TENANTS WHO HAD BEEN LIVING IN PUBLIC HOUSING FLATS FOR MORE THAN 10 YEARS.

+THERE ARE LOTS OF PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH APART FROM WASTING A LARGE AMOUNT OF ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES, ALSO CAUSE HARASSMENT TO THE TENANTS,+ HE ADDED.

MR TAM FELT THAT THE PROPOSED POLICY AGAINST +WELL-OFF TENANTS+ WAS, IN FACT, A WASTE OF RESOURCES AND ONE WHICH WOULD CAUSE MORE LOSSES THAN GAINS.

+INSTEAD OF USING OPPRESSIVE AND NEGATIVE MEANS TO IMPEL THE SO-CALLED WELL-OFF TENANTS' TO MOVE OUT OF THEIR PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS, I THINK IT WOULD BE BETTER TO USE POSITIVE AND PERSUASIVE METHODS TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO PURCHASE HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME FLATS AND VACATE THEIR UNITS VOLUNTARILY,+ HE SAID.

MR TAM SAID THE PROPOSED DOMESTIC RENT POLICY ALSO GAVE RISE TO A NUMBER OF PROBLEMS.

THE PROPOSED 15 PER CENT MEDIAN RENT-INCOME RATIO CARRIED AN IMPLICATION THAT THE LOWER THE HOUSEHOLD INCOME, THE HIGHER WOULD BE ITS RENT TO INCOME RATIO.

AS A RESULT, THOSE WHO WERE ACTUALLY MOST IN NEED HAD NOW BECOME THE VICTIMS OF THE POLICY, HE SAID.

HE ALSO FELT THAT THE STIPULATED 15 PER CENT WAS TOO CLOSE TO THE RENTAL LEVEL OF PRIVATE HOUSING AND THAT THE ARGUMENTS REGARDING TENANTS' AFFORDABILITY PUT FORWARD IN THE REPORT WERE NOT SOUND.

HE ALSO CONSIDERED THAT THE COMPARISON WITH RENTAL LEVELS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES COULD HARDLY BE USED AS A SUPPORTING ARGUMENT BECAUSE DIFFERENT SOCIETIES HAD DIFFERENT SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEMS.

MR TAM SAID THE CRUX OF THE WHOLE PROBLEM LAY IN THE FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE HOUSING AUTHORITY AND IN WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD RELINQUISH ITS LIMITED COMMITMENTS.

MR TAM SAID THE FORMULATION OF A LONG-TERM HOUSING POLICY MUST INVOLVE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

+SUCH A POLICY NOT ONLY AFFECTS EXISTING PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS, BUT ALSO THOSE WHO ARE OR WHO WILL BE ON THE WAITING LIST,+ HE SAID.

+IN THE COURSE OF DISCUSSION, THE IMAGE OF THE SO-CALLED HEAVILY SUBSIDISED PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS SHOULD NOT BE OVER-EXAGGERATED BECAUSE THIS IS OF NO HELP TO THE WHOLE SOCIETY IN WORKING OUT A REASONABLE HOUSING POLICY,+ HE ADDED.

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ALL-OUT EFFORT TO PREVENT ANOTHER FUR FACTORY FIRE
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DEPARTMENTS CONCERNED WILL DO ALL THEY CAN TO PREVENT THE RECURRENCE OF AN ACCIDENT SIMILAR TO THE ONE WHICH TOOK PLACE IN THE KWAI CHUNG FUR FACTORY ON OCTOBER 8 THIS YEAR, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG, MR BRIDGE SAID A TEAM OF 20 FIRE SERVICES PERSONNEL LED BY SENIOR OFFICERS HAD BEEN WORKING CONTINUOUSLY 18 HOURS A DAY SINCE THE FIRE TO ESTABLISH ITS CAUSE AND THEIR WORK WAS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED IN THREE WEEKS' TIME.

AN INQUEST WOULD BE HELD ON NOVEMBER 25 AND THE RESULTS OF THE FIRE SERVICES INVESTIGATIONS WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE CORONER.

MR BRIDGE SAID THAT SINCE THE ACCIDENT WAS THE SUBJECT OF A CORONER'S INQUEST, HE WAS NOT READY TO COMMENT FURTHER AS THIS WOULD PREJUDICE THE HEARINGS.

ON PREVENTING FIRE IN FACTORIES, MR BRIDGE SAID IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN A HIGH PRIORITY OF BOTH THE FACTORY INSPECTORATE AND THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (FIRE PRECAUTIONS IN NOTIFIABLE WORKPLACES) REGULATIONS ALREADY REQUIRED PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES TO BE TAKEN WHERE FLAMMABLE SUBSTANCES WERE IN USE.

DURING THE LAST FIVE YEARS MORE THAN 2 500 SUMMONSES HAD BEEN TAKEN OUT FOR FIRE-RELATED OFFENCES AND FINES TOTALLING MORE THAN \$3 MILLION HAD BEEN IMPOSED, HE SAID.

+WE ALSO INTEND TO ADOPT APPROPRIATE MEASURES FOR OTHER DANGEROUS CHEMICALS,+ HE SAID.

+I SHALL, FOR EXAMPLE, BE INTRODUCING A MOTION NEXT MONTH SEEKING APPROVAL OF NEW REGULATIONS BANNING OR CONTROLLING THE USE OF VARIOUS CARCINOGENS AND WE ARE NOW DRAFTING A SET OF REGULATIONS TO ENSURE THAT HARMFUL SUBSTANCES ARE PROPERLY LABELLED AND THAT LABELS INCLUDE ESSENTIAL SAFETY INFORMATION,+ HE ADDED.

IN THE MEANTIME, A CODE OF PRACTICE WOULD BE ISSUED TO FACTORY PROPRIETORS SHORTLY.

MR BRIDGE ALSO SAID ACTION WAS IN HAND TO INCREASE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FACTORY INSPECTORATE FROM ITS PRESENT FIGURE OF 198.

EIGHT POSTS WERE ABOUT TO BE CREATED AND PROVISION WAS BEING SOUGHT FOR FURTHER POSTS IN THE 1987-88 ESTIMATES.

HOWEVER, HE STRESSED THAT INSPECTION ALONE COULD NOT ELIMINATE ACCIDENTS.

HE NOTED THAT THE KWAI CHUNG FACTORY HAD BEEN INSPECTED BY THE FACTORY INSPECTORATE ON THREE OCCASIONS OVER THE PAST 18 MONTHS, THE LAST BEING ABOUT TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE ACCIDENT. ON EACH OF THESE THREE OCCASIONS THE CONDITIONS FOUND BY THE INSPECTORS WERE DIFFERENT.

+UNFORTUNATELY, IT WILL NEVER BE PRACTICABLE TO MAINTAIN A PERMANENT PRESENCE IN EVERY FACTORY AND THE ONUS MUST ULTIMATELY BE ON THE FACTORY MANAGEMENT AND THE WORKERS THEMSELVES TO ENSURE THAT A SAFE SYSTEM OF WORK IS MAINTAINED,+ HE SAID.

+THE FACTORY INSPECTORATE HAVE HOWEVER VISITED EVERY FUR PROCESSING AND COMPARABLE FACTORY IN HONG KONG - ABOUT 350 IN ALL - SEVERAL TIMES SINCE THE FIRE TO DO WHAT THEY CAN TO PREVENT A SIMILAR FIRE RECURRING.

+THEY IN FACT FOUND ONLY THREE FACTORIES USING FLAMMABLE CLEANSING AGENTS IN THEIR FINAL STAGE OF FUR PROCESSING AND AT THE LAST INSPECTION ALL THREE HAD CEASED TO DO SO.+

MR BRIDGE SAID THIS UNDERLINED THE NEED FOR BOTH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES TO BE AWARE OF POTENTIAL HAZARDS AND TO OBSERVE GOOD SAFETY PRACTICES AT ALL TIMES.

TO ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE, THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT WAS PURSUING A STRATEGY BASED ON EDUCATION, PUBLICITY AND ENFORCEMENT, HE SAID.

WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE SAFE HANDLING OF CHEMICALS, THE DEPARTMENT HAD PRODUCED FOUR ANNOUNCEMENTS OF PUBLIC INTEREST FOR TELEVISION, FIVE SAFETY POSTERS AND A NUMBER OF BOOKLETS ON CHEMICALS, INCLUDING FLAMMABLE SOLVENTS, COMMONLY USED IN HONG KONG.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IN THE FORM OF A PICTORIAL LEAFLET FOR WORKERS ENGAGED IN FUR PROCESSING AND A GUIDANCE NOTE FOR MANAGEMENT WAS BEING PREPARED FOR URGENT DISTRIBUTION TO ALL RELEVANT FACTORIES.

IT WAS ALSO INTENDED TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF COURSES ON CHEMICAL SAFETY RUN BY THE DEPARTMENT AND TO GIVE ADDITIONAL EMPHASIS TO THIS SUBJECT IN THE CONTINUING INDUSTRIAL SAFETY CAMPAIGN.

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LOCALISATION POLICY BEARING FRUIT
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THE GOVERNMENT POLICY OF GIVING PREFERENCE TO LOCAL CANDIDATES ON APPOINTMENT HAS BORNE FRUIT AS MANY OF THESE OFFICERS HAVE ACQUIRED EXPERIENCE AND GAINED PROMOTION TO DIRECTORATE LEVEL, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HOWEVER, OVERSEAS OFFICERS WOULD CONTINUE TO BE APPOINTED ON AGREEMENT TERMS TO FILL POSTS FOR WHICH LOCAL TALENT WAS NOT AVAILABLE.

+INDEED WE SHALL BE APPOINTING MORE OVERSEAS OFFICERS THIS YEAR THAN THOSE WHO WILL BE LEAVING ON COMPLETION OF THEIR CONTRACTS,+ HE ADDED.

/REPLYING TO

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TAI CHIN-WAH, SIR DAVID SAID THAT UNDER THE CURRENT POLICY ON LOCALISATION, WHICH HAD BEEN IN FORCE SINCE THE EARLY 1960'S, PREFERENCE WAS GIVEN TO THE APPOINTMENT OF LOCAL CANDIDATES AT RECRUITMENT AND OVERSEAS CANDIDATES WERE APPOINTED ONLY WHEN THERE WAS NO SUITABLE LOCAL CANDIDATE.

NEVERTHELESS, PROMOTION WAS BASED ON MERIT AND ALL ELIGIBLE OFFICERS, WHETHER LOCAL OR OVERSEAS, ON PENSIONABLE OR AGREEMENT TERMS, WERE CONSIDERED ON AN EQUAL BASIS.

+OVERSEAS OFFICERS ON AGREEMENT TERMS ARE GIVEN A FURTHER CONTRACT IF A LOCAL OFFICER IS NOT AVAILABLE TO FILL THE VACANCY.+

SIR DAVID POINTED OUT THAT REGARDING APPLICATIONS FOR TRANSFER TO THE PERMANENT AND PENSIONABLE ESTABLISHMENT, THE GUIDELINE WAS TO LOOK FIVE YEARS AHEAD.

+IF, WITHIN THIS PERIOD, A LOCAL OFFICER WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE TO FILL THE VACANCY, THEN THE APPLICATION TO TRANSFER TO PENSIONABLE ESTABLISHMENT WOULD BE FAVOURABLY CONSIDERED.+

ON WHETHER THE LOCALISATION POLICY WAS LIKELY TO AFFECT THE MORALE OF THE EXPATRIATE CIVIL SERVICE IN HONG KONG, SIR DAVID SAID MORALE WAS HIGH BUT +THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT ALL OFFICERS ARE EQUALLY HAPPY AND CONTENTED+.

SIR DAVID NOTED THAT THERE APPEARED TO BE SOME MISUNDERSTANDING AMONG SOME OVERSEAS OFFICERS THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD TIGHTENED THE RULES ON RENEWAL OF CONTRACTS.

+I MUST STRESS THAT THE RULES HAVE NOT BEEN CHANGED,+ HE SAID.

+IN THE LAST THREE YEARS, OVER 90 PER CENT OF THOSE WHO HAVE APPLIED FOR CONTRACT RENEWAL HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL AND I EXPECT THE TREND TO CONTINUE THIS YEAR,+ HE ADDED.

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CONTINUING STEPS TAKEN TO CONSERVE ENERGY

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THE PROGRAMMES THAT HONG KONG HAS BEEN FOLLOWING FOR ENERGY CONSERVATION ARE MEANINGFUL IN RELATION TO ITS NEEDS AND HONG KONG SHALL CONTINUE WITH THEM, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MARTIN LEE, MR JACOBS RECALLED THAT IN 1979 THE OIL (CONSERVATION AND CONTROL) ORDINANCE WAS ENACTED TO EMPOWER THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE SWIFT ACTION IN ORDER TO REGULATE THE SUPPLY AND CONSUMPTION OF ENERGY.

/HE NOTED

HE NOTED THAT MEASURES SUCH AS RESTRICTION ON THE USE OF ELECTRIC LIGHT FOR ADVERTISING DISPLAYS AND FLOODLIGHTING PURPOSES, ADOPTATION OF DAYLIGHT SAVING HOURS AND EVEN SUSPENSION OF SOME NIGHT RACE MEETINGS WERE TAKEN FROM TIME TO TIME.

HOWEVER, MR JACOBS ALSO POINTED OUT THAT IN NORMAL TIMES WHEN SUPPLIES WERE ADEQUATE, IT SHOULD NOT BE SO RESTRICTIVE THAT INDUSTRY WAS ADVERSELY AFFECTED IN ANY WAY, PARTICULARLY BY MAKING IT LESS COMPETITIVE WITH INDUSTRY CARRIED ON IN OTHER PLACES IN THE REGION.

+NOR DO WE WISH TO IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS THAT DAMAGE THE IMPROVING LIFESTYLE OF OUR COMMUNITY,+ HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT IN THIS REGARD THE DENSITY OF POPULATION AND THE CLIMATE HAD TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

MR JACOBS ALSO NOTED THAT THE PUBLIC SECTOR HAD MAINTAINED MANY OF THE ENERGY ECONOMY MEASURES WHICH ORIGINATED FROM THE OIL CRISES IN 1973 AND 1979.

+FURTHERMORE, WE HAVE CARRIED OUT DETAILED STUDIES IN RELATION TO SEVERAL MAJOR BUILDINGS AND INSTALLATIONS WITH A VIEW TO ATTAINING SIGNIFICANT ENERGY SAVINGS.

+WE HAVE ALSO PUBLISHED INFORMATION ON ENERGY CONSERVATION IN BUILDINGS, AND THIS INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE TO THOSE INVOLVED WITH PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT AND BUILDING MANAGEMENT.

+IN A SUSTAINED EFFORT TO NURTURE A MORE ENERGY-CONSCIOUS COMMUNITY, ENERGY CONSERVATION IS INCORPORATED IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM,+ HE SAID.

MR JACOBS SAID THAT IN ESTABLISHING POLICIES FOR CONSERVING ENERGY FOR HONG KONG, SOME FACTORS THAT WERE OF PARTICULAR RELEVANCE TO ITS OWN CIRCUMSTANCES HAD TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

FIRST, HONG KONG WAS A VERY SMALL USER OF ENERGY BY INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS. SECOND, IT HAD NO ENERGY RESOURCES OF ITS OWN.

+WE ARE THUS TOTALLY DEPENDENT UPON THE RULES OF THE MARKETPLACE INSOFAR AS THE IMPORT OF THE RAW MATERIALS OF ENERGY IS CONCERNED,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID THAT THE SITUATION WAS MONITORED IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT HONG KONG'S ENERGY NEEDS WERE SATISFIED, AND IF THERE WAS A PROSPECT OF A SHORTAGE, NECESSARY STEPS WOULD BE TAKEN TO SAFEGUARD THE POSITION.

HE ADDED THAT IN THE PAST THE AUTHORITY HAD INTERVENED TO ENSURE THAT SUPPLIES THAT WERE AVAILABLE WERE PRUDENTLY USED WITH A VIEW TO MINIMISING AS FAR AS POSSIBLE ANY DISRUPTION TO THE ECONOMY OR TO PEOPLE'S LIFESTYLE.

NO ACTION TO PREJUDGE SSPA OUTCOME
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NO ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN BY THE ADMINISTRATION WITH REGARD TO THE +ENHANCEMENTS TO THE SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES ALLOCATION SYSTEM+ (SSPA) WHICH WOULD IN ANY WAY PREJUDGE THE OUTCOME, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO THE HON HUI YIN-FAT WHO ASKED WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONSIDER SHELIVING THE NEW MEASURES IN THE LIGHT OF OBJECTIONS RAISED, MR BRIDGE SAID BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE BOARD OF EDUCATION WERE VERY MUCH AWARE THAT THESE WERE CONTROVERSIAL PROPOSALS AND THAT STRONG VIEWS WERE HELD ON BOTH SIDES.

+THE BOARD WILL BE LOOKING AGAIN AT THE ISSUE AT ITS NEXT MEETING IN NOVEMBER,+ MR BRIDGE STATED.

IN ANSWER TO OTHER POINTS RAISED BY MR HUI, HE SAID HE DID NOT SEE THE SSPA SYSTEM AS A QUESTION OF A SIMPLE CHOICE BETWEEN AN +ELITIST+ SYSTEM AND AN +EGALITARIAN+ ONE.

+THERE IS RATHER A RANGE OF POSSIBLE SYSTEMS, WITH SELECTION ON THE BASIS OF ABILITY ALONE AT ONE EXTREME AND SELECTION TAKING NO ACCOUNT OF ABILITY AT THE OTHER,+ MR BRIDGE SAID.

+THE FORMER, IN THEORY AT LEAST, PERMITS TEACHING TO BE TAILORED MORE SPECIFICALLY TO THE ABILITY LEVEL OF STUDENTS BUT AT THE SAME TIME HAS A DEMORALISING EFFECT ON THE LESS ABLE STUDENTS AND THE SCHOOLS CATERING FOR THEM.

+THE OPPOSITE SYSTEM RESULTS IN SO WIDE A MIX OF ABILITY THAT TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS IS SERIOUSLY UNDERMINED.+

MR BRIDGE NOTED THAT IN PRACTICE, SOME COMPROMISE BETWEEN THESE CONFLICTING PRINCIPLES WAS NEEDED.

ADDING THAT THE REVISED BANDING PROPOSALS WOULD SEEK TO NARROW THE RANGE OF ABILITY IN INDIVIDUAL SCHOOLS IN THE INTERESTS OF IMPROVING TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS, MR BRIDGE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS AWAITING FURTHER ADVICE OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION FOR ACHIEVING A REASONABLE BALANCE.

AS TO THE EXTENT OF CONSULTATION CONDUCTED ON THE NEW MEASURES, MR BRIDGE SAID THE REPORT OF A WORKING PARTY ON REVIEW OF THE SSPA WAS WIDELY CIRCULATED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT IN 1981.

PROPOSALS WERE DRAWN UP IN THE LIGHT OF COMMENTS RECEIVED, HE ADDED, BUT FURTHER ACTION WAS DEFERRED PENDING THE REPORT OF THE PANEL OF VISITORS AND THE EDUCATION COMMISSION'S FIRST REPORT.

+IN 1985, THE SSPA PROPOSALS WERE PUT TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND, IN THE LIGHT OF THE BOARD'S ADVICE, FURTHER COMMENTS WERE SOUGHT FROM THE VARIOUS SCHOOLS COUNCILS AND ASSOCIATIONS AND THE SSPA CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND DISTRICT COMMITTEES IN WHICH ALL PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS ARE REPRESENTED,+ MR BRIDGE SAID.

+IN THE LIGHT OF THESE FURTHER COMMENTS, THE BOARD ADVISED EARLIER THIS YEAR THAT THE PROPOSALS SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED AND A CIRCULAR WAS ISSUED. IT IS THE RESPONSE TO THIS CIRCULAR WHICH HAS LED TO THE BOARD'S FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE MATTER.+

MR BRIDGE SAID THAT THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HAD IN THE MEANTIME, ORGANISED THREE REGIONAL SEMINARS FOR THE HEADS OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND THE VIEWS EXPRESSED AT THESE SEMINARS WOULD BE REPORTED TO THE BOARD.

AS TO THE PERIOD OF NOTICE GIVEN TO SCHOOLS IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROPOSED REACTIVATION OF THE FEEDER AND NOMINATED SCHOOL SCHEMES, MR BRIDGE SAID SCHOOLS INTERESTED IN FORMING NEW LINKS UNDER THESE SCHEMES WITH EFFECT FROM SEPTEMBER 1989 WERE ORIGINALLY ASKED IN JULY TO ADVISE THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF THEIR INTENTION BY THE END OF OCTOBER THIS YEAR.

+HOWEVER, AS THE PROPOSAL IS BEING RECONSIDERED BY THE BOARD IN NOVEMBER, THE SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT THIS DEADLINE NO LONGER APPLIES,+ HE ADDED.

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SUICIDE RATE AMONG IMMIGRANTS 'SLIGHTLY LOWER'
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WHILE THE NUMBER OF SUICIDES COMMITTED BY IMMIGRANTS FROM CHINA WAS WORRYING, THEIR SUICIDE RATE SEEMED IF ANYTHING TO BE SLIGHTLY LOWER THAN THAT FOR THE POPULATION AS A WHOLE, WITH 21 CASES OR FIVE PER CENT OF ALL CASES IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF THIS YEAR.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON DAVID JEAFFRESON IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LIU LIT-FOR.

MR JEAFFRESON SAID THAT IN 1984 THERE WERE 36 SUICIDES BY THESE IMMIGRANTS, REPRESENTING SEVEN PER CENT OF ALL SUICIDE CASES.

+IN 1985, IT WAS 37, FIVE PER CENT OF ALL CASES,+ HE SAID.

/ON WHAT

ON WHAT COUNSELLING FACILITIES THE GOVERNMENT HAD PROVIDED TO ASSIST THE IMMIGRANTS IN SEEKING EMPLOYMENT, FURTHERING THEIR STUDIES AND ADAPTING TO THE NEW ENVIRONMENT, MR JEAFFRESON SAID IN GENERAL TERMS, THE IMMIGRANTS COULD MAKE USE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE NETWORK OF SERVICES, INCLUDING COUNSELLING, THAT VOLUNTARY AGENCIES AND THE GOVERNMENT PROVIDED FOR EVERYONE IN HONG KONG.

BESIDES, THERE WERE SERVICES SPECIFICALLY DIRECTED AT MIGRANTS.

+ONE-WAY PERMIT HOLDERS ARRIVING AT LO WU ARE GIVEN THE ADDRESSES OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT'S OFFICES WHERE THEY CAN GO TO SEEK EMPLOYMENT,+ HE SAID.

IN ADDITION, ONE OF THE SUBVENTED VOLUNTARY AGENCIES, INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE, HAD A DESK AT HUNG HOM RAILWAY STATION FOR ITS STAFF ENGAGED IN COUNSELLING IMMIGRANTS AS THEY ARRIVED THERE.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE ALSO HAD AN OFFICE IN NEW RODNEY BLOCK, QUEENSWAY, IN WHICH STAFF BRIEFED THE MIGRANTS ON SOCIAL SERVICES AVAILABLE IN HONG KONG AND SHOWED FILMS DESIGNED TO INTRODUCE THE IMMIGRANTS TO HONG KONG.

THE ORGANISATION PROVIDED OTHER FACILITIES FOR CANTONESE CLASSES AND SESSIONS DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY TO HELP THE IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR CHILDREN ADAPT THEMSELVES TO HONG KONG.

IT ALSO RAN A 24-HOUR TELEPHONE +HOTLINE+ THROUGH WHICH IMMIGRANTS COULD CONTACT STAFF FOR ADVICE AT ANY TIME.

MR JEAFFRESON ALSO GAVE THE NUMBER OF LEGAL IMMIGRANTS WHO HAD ARRIVED IN HONG KONG DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS - 25 714 IN 1983; 27 612 IN 1984 27 153 IN 1985; AND 13 178 IN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 1986.

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SMALL NUMBER OF TUNNEL TOLL EVASION CASES
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THE GOVERNMENT IS AWARE OF CASES WHERE VEHICLES HAVE MADE USE OF THE CROSS-HARBOUR TUNNEL WITHOUT PAYING THE TOLL FEE, BUT THE NUMBER OF TOLL EVASION CASES IS VERY SMALL, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON HARNAM GREWAL, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON RICHARD LAI, MR GREWAL SAID IN 1985 THERE WERE ONLY 191 EVASION CASES, AND THE CROSS-HARBOUR TUNNEL COMPANY FAILED TO RECOVER TOLL AND TAX IN ONLY TWO CASES. THE FINANCIAL LOSS WAS \$14.

/MR GREWAL

MR GREWAL SAID THAT UP TO THE END OF SEPTEMBER THIS YEAR, THERE WERE 114 EVASION CASES. THE COMPANY HAD BEEN ABLE TO RECOVER TOLL AND TAX IN MOST CASES AND THE NUMBER OF OUTSTANDING CASES WAS AGAIN VERY SMALL.

+IT WILL BE APPARENT FROM THE FIGURES THAT ANY LOSS OF PUBLIC REVENUE ARISING FROM TOLL EVASION IS NEGLIGIBLE,+ HE SAID.

THE CROSS-HARBOUR TUNNEL COMPANY HAD ESTABLISHED PROCEDURES TO RECOVER TOLL AND TAX IN EVASION CASES AND HE WAS SATISFIED WITH THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THESE PROCEDURES, HE ADDED.

MR GREWAL POINTED OUT THAT UNDER THE CROSS-HARBOUR TUNNEL ORDINANCE AND BY-LAWS (CAP. 203) ALL VEHICLES WHICH USED THE CROSS-HARBOUR TUNNEL HAD TO PAY THE APPROPRIATE TOLL. THE ONLY EXCEPTION TO THIS WAS IN RESPECT OF VEHICLES CARRYING GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL ON DUTY IN THE TUNNEL AREA (FOR EXAMPLE, CIVIL ENGINEERING SERVICES DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL CHECKING TUNNEL STRUCTURES).

+UNDER THE CROSS-HARBOUR TUNNEL (PASSAGE TAX) ORDINANCE (CAP. 274), HOWEVER, BUSES AND CERTAIN OTHER SPECIFIED USERS, FOR EXAMPLE DISABLED DRIVERS WHO MUST MAKE USE OF THE TUNNEL AND MEMBERS OF THE CONSULAR CORPS, ARE EXEMPTED FROM THE APPLICATION OF THE PASSAGE TAX,+ HE ADDED.

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RANGE OF WELFARE SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR GIRLS
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THE FAMILY SERVICES CENTRES OF SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT PROVIDE A RANGE OF WELFARE SERVICES FOR GIRLS WHO HAVE BEEN MISSING PERSONS, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON DAVID JEAFFRESON, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO THE HON ROSANNA TAM, MR JEAFFRESON SAID THE SERVICES INCLUDED COUNSELLING, FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, HELP IN ARRANGING COMPASSIONATE REHOUSING, SEEKING SCHOOL PLACEMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER SERVICES NEEDED BY THE GIRLS OR THEIR FAMILIES.

+THE AIM IS TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO THE GIRLS AND TO ASSIST THE FAMILIES TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS WHICH MIGHT HAVE INFLUENCED THE GIRLS' BEHAVIOUR,+ HE SAID.

+COUNSELLING FROM THE DEPARTMENT'S CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS IS AVAILABLE FOR GIRLS WITH PSYCHO-SOCIAL PROBLEMS OR WHO ARE OTHERWISE MENTALLY DEFECTIVE.+

/MR JEAFFRESON

MR JEAFFRESON SAID GIRLS WHO WERE IN NEED OF CARE AND PROTECTION, FOR EXAMPLE THOSE WHO WERE BEYOND THE CONTROL OF THEIR PARENTS, MIGHT BE BROUGHT BEFORE A JUVENILE COURT TO BE MADE SUBJECTS OF CARE AND PROTECTION ORDERS UNDER THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND JUVENILES ORDINANCE.

+THESE GIRLS WILL BE PLACED UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE FOR SPECIFIED PERIODS DURING WHICH THEY WILL BE VISITED REGULARLY BY SOCIAL WORKERS,+ HE SAID.

+THEY MAY ALSO BE COMMITTED TO THE CARE AND CONTROL OF A WELFARE INSTITUTION EITHER RUN BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT OR BY A VOLUNTARY AGENCY.+

MR JEAFFRESON NOTED THAT BETWEEN JANUARY 1981 AND SEPTEMBER 1986, THE POLICE HAD RECEIVED 7 912 REPORTS OF MISSING GIRLS UNDER THE AGE OF 16.

A TOTAL OF 1 357 MISSING GIRLS WERE LOCATED IN 1984. THE FIGURES FOR 1985 AND THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF 1986 WERE 1 431 AND 1 092 RESPECTIVELY.

MR JEAFFRESON SAID STATISTICS ON THE LOCATIONS WHERE MISSING GIRLS WERE FOUND ARE NOT AVAILABLE EXCEPT WHERE MISSING GIRLS WERE DISCOVERED EITHER DURING POLICE RAIDS OR WHEN ARRESTED BY THE POLICE FOR CRIMINAL OFFENCES.

+THE NUMBER OF MISSING GIRLS FOUND UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES IS RELATIVELY SMALL, REPRESENTING 6.5 PER CENT AND 2.9 PER CENT OF ALL MISSING GIRLS FOUND IN 1984 AND 1985 RESPECTIVELY,+ HE SAID.

MR JEAFFRESON SAID THAT UPON RECEIVING A REPORT THAT A GIRL WAS MISSING, THE POLICE WOULD ASK FOR A FULL DESCRIPTION OF HER, AFTER WHICH APPROPRIATE IMMEDIATE ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN INCLUDING A SEARCH AND CHECKING TO SEE IF THE GIRL HAD BEEN ARRESTED OR ADMITTED TO HOSPITAL.

IF AFTER THESE EFFORTS THE GIRL HAD STILL NOT BEEN LOCATED, THE POLICE WOULD CIRCULATE A MISSING PERSON MESSAGE TO ALL POLICE FORMATIONS AND THE CASE WOULD ALSO BE INVESTIGATED BY THE APPROPRIATE POLICE UNIT.

MR JEAFFRESON SAID THAT WITH THE CONSENT OF THE PERSON WHO REPORTED THE GIRL MISSING, THE PRESS MIGHT BE ASKED TO HELP PUBLICISE THE GIRL'S DESCRIPTION AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HER DISAPPEARANCE.

SERVICES FOR CHRONICALLY ILL ELDERLY OUTLINED
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THE RANGE OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH FACILITIES PROVIDED FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE WHO ARE CHRONICALLY ILL INCLUDES INFIRMARIES, GERIATRIC DAY HOSPITALS AND COMMUNITY NURSING SERVICE, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON HUI YIN-FAT, HE DESCRIBED IN DETAIL THE MEDICAL AND SUPPORT SERVICES THAT WERE BEING PLANNED AND PROVIDED FOR CHRONICALLY ILL OLD PEOPLE.

THE SERVICES INCLUDED:

- * INFIRMARIES WHICH WERE INTENDED TO CATER FOR THE LONGER TERM PATIENTS WHOSE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL CONDITION REQUIRED CONSTANT NURSING CARE AND SOME MEDICAL SUPERVISION.

AT PRESENT, 1 015 INFIRMARY BEDS WERE PROVIDED IN THREE SUBVENTED HOSPITALS. A FURTHER 2 401 INFIRMARY BEDS WOULD BE PROVIDED BY 1995.

- * GERIATRIC DAY HOSPITALS WERE PROVIDED TO SUPPLEMENT IN-PATIENT TREATMENT, OFFERING CURATIVE AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES TO ELDERLY PATIENTS ON A NON-RESIDENTIAL BASIS.

THESE DAY PLACES HAD THE ADDED ADVANTAGE OF RESTORING ELDERLY PATIENTS TO THEIR OWN FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND THUS HELPING THE REHABILITATION PROCESS.

THERE WERE 120 GERIATRIC DAYPLACES PROVIDED IN FOUR GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS AND THERE WERE PLANS TO EXPAND THE FACILITIES BY PROVIDING ANOTHER 415 PLACES IN NINE OTHER PUBLIC HOSPITALS OR CLINICS.

- * COMMUNITY NURSING SERVICE (CNS) PROVIDED BOTH BASIC NURSING CARE FOR THESE PATIENTS AND ALSO ASSISTANCE ON ALL ASPECTS OF REHABILITATION AND HEALTH EDUCATION FOR PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES. FORTY PER CENT OF THE CLIENTS OF THE CNS WERE AGED 65 AND OVER.

THERE WERE AT PRESENT A TOTAL OF 45 CNS CENTRES AND HOSPITAL REFERRAL STATIONS LOCATED THROUGHOUT THE TERRITORY. PLANS TO ESTABLISH AN ADDITIONAL 15 CENTRES WERE BEING CONSIDERED.

MR CHAMBERS SAID OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES AVAILABLE TO SUCH PEOPLE INCLUDED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE THROUGH THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM, ACCOMMODATION OR REHOUSING ASSISTANCE, HOME HELP AND DAY CARE SERVICES, AND INSTITUTIONAL CARE IN CARE-AND-ATTENTION HOMES.

+THESE SERVICES ARE PROVIDED THROUGH 10 MULTI-SERVICE CENTRES FOR THE ELDERLY, FOUR DAY CENTRES AND 13 CARE-AND-ATTENTION HOMES AND HOMES FOR THE AGED BLIND. A MULTI-SERVICE CENTRE AND A DAY CENTRE FOR THE ELDERLY WILL EVENTUALLY BE ESTABLISHED IN EVERY ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT.+

HE ADDED THAT ON PRESENT PLANS, THE PROJECTED DEMAND FOR ABOUT 4 400 CARE-AND-ATTENTION HOME PLACES WOULD BE MET BY 1991.

TURNING TO THE QUESTION OF OTHER MEASURES BEING TAKEN TO PREVENT THE INCIDENCE OF SUICIDE AMONG THE ELDERLY, MR CHAMBERS POINTED OUT THAT STATISTICS FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS SHOWED THAT THE NUMBER OF ELDERLY PEOPLE (THOSE OVER 60) WHO HAD COMMITTED SUICIDE HAD FLUCTUATED.

+THE FIGURE DROPPED FROM 177 CASES IN 1983 TO 149 CASES IN 1984, BUT INCREASED TO 220 CASES IN 1985,+ HE SAID.

ON AVERAGE, ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF ALL SUICIDE CASES INVOLVED ELDERLY PEOPLE.

MR CHAMBERS SAID: +TO HELP ELDERLY PEOPLE TO OVERCOME THEIR INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY PROBLEMS, COUNSELLING SERVICES ARE PROVIDED BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN FAMILY SERVICE CENTRES.+

TO HELP THEM TO CONTINUE CONTACTS WITH THE COMMUNITY, VOLUNTEERS WERE MOBILISED TO VISIT THOSE WHO WERE LIVING BY THEMSELVES, WHO WERE ENCOURAGED TO BECOME MEMBERS OF GROUPS IN SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY CENTRES AS WELL AS TO PARTICIPATE IN ORGANISED GROUP SESSIONS.

FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES WERE ALSO ORGANISED TO HELP OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS TO UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEMS FACED BY THE ELDERLY, AND TO PROMOTE RESPECT FOR THE ELDERLY IN THE FAMILY.

ALL THESE MEASURES SHOULD HELP TO REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF SUICIDE AMONG THE ELDERLY, HE SAID.

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MORE BEDS PLANNED FOR MENTALLY ILL
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A FURTHER 2 286 BEDS FOR THE MENTALLY ILL ARE PLANNED TO BE PROVIDED BY 1995 IN ADDITION TO THE 3 699 SUCH BEDS ALREADY AVAILABLE.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON POON CHI-FAI IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

/MR POON

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MR POON HAD ASKED ABOUT RECRUITMENT OF PSYCHIATRISTS AND SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF HOSPITAL BEDS FOR MENTAL PATIENTS IN GOVERNMENT AND SUBVENTED HOSPITALS IN HONG KONG GENERALLY AND IN THE EAST KOWLOON REGION IN PARTICULAR.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THE PSYCHIATRIC SERVICE WAS NOT REGIONALISED AND THE REQUIREMENT AND PROVISION OF BEDS FOR THE MENTALLY-ILL WERE PLANNED ON A TERRITORY-WIDE BASIS.

+BASED ON A PLANNING RATIO OF 1 BED FOR EVERY 1 000 OF THE POPULATION, THE DEMAND FOR HOSPITAL BEDS FOR THE MENTALLY ILL IS NOW ESTIMATED TO BE 5 538 BEDS,+ HE SAID.

REFERRING TO THE EAST KOWLOON REGION, MR CHAMBERS SAID THERE WERE NOW 151 BEDS FOR MENTAL PATIENTS IN THE KOWLOON HOSPITALS AND 30 BEDS IN THE GOVERNMENT SUBVENTED UNITED CHRISTIAN HOSPITAL.

THE FUTURE PROVISION IN THIS REGION IS AS FOLLOWS:

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>NO. OF BEDS</u>
1991	UNITED CHRISTIAN HOSPITAL EXTENSION	122
1993	KOWLOON HOSPITAL EXTENSION	420
	KOWLOON HOSPITAL REPROVISIONING	420
1995	EAST KOWLOON HOSPITAL	340

ON THE NUMBER OF PSYCHIATRISTS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, MR CHAMBERS SAID THERE WERE 94 POSTS AT PRESENT, OF WHICH 87 WERE BEING FILLED.

+PYSCHIATRISTS ARE NOT RECRUITED SEPARATELY, BUT THROUGH RECRUITMENT EXERCISES FOR DOCTORS IN ALL SPECIALTIES WHICH ARE CONDUCTED AT REGULAR INTERVALS,+ HE ADDED.

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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 1986

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ANAESTHETISTS ADEQUATE FOR EMERGENCY CASES
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THE SUPPLY OF ANAESTHETISTS IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS IS ADEQUATE TO MEET EMERGENCY SURGICAL CASES, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HO KAM-FAI, MR CHAMBERS SAID ANAESTHETIST SERVICES WERE PROVIDED IN ALL MAJOR PUBLIC HOSPITALS ON A 24-HOUR BASIS AND URGENT CASES WERE GIVEN PRIORITY.

+THERE ARE AT PRESENT 92 ANAESTHETISTS IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS AND ANOTHER 50 IN SUBVENTED HOSPITALS,+ HE SAID.

+THE ESTABLISHMENTS ARE 101 AND 57 RESPECTIVELY= THIS MEANS THAT VACANCIES REPRESENT NINE PER CENT OF ESTABLISHMENT IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS AND 12 PER CENT IN SUBVENTED HOSPITALS.+

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BEST POSSIBLE USE MADE OF LAND UNDER FLYOVERS

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THE BEST POSSIBLE USE IS MADE OF THE LAND UNDER FLYOVERS, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON LEE YU-TAI, MR BARNES SAID ALTHOUGH MUCH OF THE LAND UNDER FLYOVERS IN MORE DISTANT PLACES HAD NO PARTICULAR VALUE GOVERNMENT ALWAYS CONSIDERED HOW BEST THEY MIGHT BE USED.

+SITES UNDER FLYOVERS IN THE DENSER URBAN AREAS MAY BE PARTICULARLY SUITABLE FOR COMMUNITY USES AND I CAN VIRTUALLY GUARANTEE THAT THE USER OF EACH AND EVERY ONE HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF BOTH GOVERNMENT CONSIDERATION AND A DISTRICT BOARD DISCUSSION,+ MR BARNES SAID.

BUT THE STRUCTURES OF FLYOVERS WERE VULNERABLE TO FIRE AND SO USES WHICH MIGHT GIVE RISE TO FIRES OR OTHER ACCIDENTAL DAMAGE WERE NOT NORMALLY ALLOWED.

+AGAIN, MANY FLYOVERS ARE SURROUNDED BY CONGESTED ROADS, AND USES WHICH WOULD ATTRACT PEDESTRIANS TO CROSS DANGEROUSLY OR WHICH WOULD GIVE RISE TO TRAFFIC PROBLEMS ARE ALSO DISCOURAGED,+ HE SAID.

/WITHIN THESE

WITHIN THESE MAIN LIMITATIONS A GUIDANCE NOTE OF PERMITTED AND PROHIBITED USES HAD BEEN AGREED AND WAS APPLIED VERY POSITIVELY.

+I AM OF COURSE OPEN TO CORRECTION ABOUT INDIVIDUAL CASES, BUT GENERALLY I BELIEVE THAT THE BEST USE POSSIBLE IS MADE OF THE LAND UNDER FLYOVERS,+ MR BARNES SAID.

+NEVERTHELESS, I THINK SUCH POLICIES ARE ALWAYS WORTH REVIEWING AND I WILL SO ARRANGE SHORTLY,+ HE ADDED.

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CENTRAL ESCALATOR PROJECT MOVES STEP FORWARD
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THE INCLUSION OF AN ITEM IN CATEGORY C OF THE PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME WILL SHORTLY BE SOUGHT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PEDESTRIAN ESCALATOR BETWEEN MID-LEVELS AND CENTRAL ALONG COCHRANE STREET AND SHELLEY STREET, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON HARNAM GREWAL, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON PETER POON, MR GREWAL SAID THIS WOULD BE A PILOT PROJECT. PLANS WERE FOR IT TO BE LINKED TO THE ELEVATED WALKWAY SYSTEM IN CENTRAL DISTRICT VIA THE PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT OF THE CENTRAL MARKET AND FORMER CENTRAL FIRE STATION SITES.

+THE INTENTION IS THAT CONSTRUCTION OF THE ESCALATOR SYSTEM SHOULD TIE IN WITH THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE TWO SITES,+ HE SAID.

+IT IS, HOWEVER, DIFFICULT TO INDICATE A COMMENCEMENT DATE FOR THE ESCALATOR PROJECT AT THIS STAGE AS THIS IS DEPENDENT ON THE PRIORITY ACCORDED TO IT IN RELATION TO OTHER ITEMS IN THE PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME.+

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TWO BILLS PASSED
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TWO BILLS -- THE EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986 AND THE IMMIGRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986 -- WERE PASSED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

FOUR OTHER BILLS -- THE SEPARATION AND MAINTENANCE ORDERS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986, THE AFFILIATION PROCEEDINGS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986, THE GUARDIANSHIP OF MINORS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986 AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES (AMENDMENT) (NO 2) BILL 1986 -- WERE READ A SECOND TIME AND DEBATE ON THEM WAS ADJOURNED.

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED TO NOVEMBER 5.

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'BEST MAN FOR THE JOB' KEY CRITERION
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THE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT IT WAS TOO EARLY NOW TO SAY AT WHAT TIME HONG KONG WOULD HAVE A CHINESE CHIEF SECRETARY.

+BUT SOONER OR LATER THERE WILL BE ONE,+ SIR DAVID SAID. HE WAS SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AFTER OPENING THE AU TAU PUMPING STATION IN YUEN LONG.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE SELECTION OF THE CHIEF SECRETARY WAS NOT DECIDED ON GROUNDS OF RACE. +IT IS DECIDED ON GROUNDS OF WHO IS THE BEST MAN TO DO THE JOB AT THE TIME,+ HE SAID.

+I'VE KNOWN MR DAVID FORD IN FACT SINCE HE JOINED THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE, WAY BACK IN THE 1970'S. I'M QUITE SURE THAT THE PROCESS OF SELECTION IS TO FIND THE BEST MAN FOR THE JOB AT THE TIME. THAT'S THE IMPORTANT CRITERIA.+

ON WHETHER MR FORD MIGHT BE THE LAST NON-CHINESE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID SAID: +I THINK IT IS TOO SOON TO SPECULATE ABOUT THAT. AS WE MOVE AHEAD WE WILL HAVE TO CHOOSE THE BEST MAN FOR THE JOB AT THE TIME THAT WE NEED TO CHOOSE HIM.+

ASKED WHETHER MR FORD'S MAIN JOB WOULD BE TO TRAIN A CHINESE TO TAKE OVER FROM HIM ONE DAY, SIR DAVID SAID: +IT IS A BIT TOO SIMPLISTIC THAT HE WOULD BE ACTUALLY TRAINING THE PERSON CONCERNED. GRADUALLY A CHIEF SECRETARY, WHO WILL BE A CHINESE CHIEF SECRETARY, WILL EMERGE FROM ALL THE OFFICERS IN THE CIVIL SERVICE.+

IN REPLY TO ANOTHER QUESTION ON DIRECT ELECTIONS, HE SAID SIR GEOFFREY HOWE HAD ANSWERED THOSE QUESTIONS AT LENGTH DURING HIS RECENT PRESS CONFERENCE IN HONG KONG.

+THESE WILL ALL BE SWEEPED UP IN THE 1987 REVIEW AND THE SITUATION WILL BE DESCRIBED IN THE REVIEW. HONG KONG PEOPLE'S VOICE WILL BE LISTENED TO.+

HE ADDED THAT, AS SIR GEOFFREY HAD SAID, THE REVIEW WOULD BE THOROUGH.

ASKED ABOUT HIS PLANS AFTER RETIREMENT FROM THE CIVIL SERVICE, SIR DAVID SAID HE HAD NO PLANS FOR HIS NEXT JOB. +HONG KONG IS SUCH A FAST MOVING ECONOMY AND SUCH AN EXPANDING PLACE THAT I DO HOPE THERE WILL BE SOMETHING FOR AKERS-JONES TO DO. I FEEL QUITE FIT STILL.+

WHEN ASKED TO COMMENT ON A REPORT THAT HE WOULD JOIN THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, SIR DAVID SAID LAND ADMINISTRATION WAS ONE AREA THAT HE HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN FOR A VERY LONG TIME.

/+AND AT

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+AND AT THE PRESENT MOMENT, I'M INVOLVED IN THE HOUSING SOCIETY, ON DEVELOPMENT SIDE. SO I DO HAVE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF EXPERIENCE IN THAT AREA.+

BUT HE STRESSED THAT THE REPORT WAS +PURE SPECULATION+. THE CORPORATION ITSELF WAS DOING THE PROCESS OF SELECTION, HE ADDED.

SIR DAVID DISAGREED THAT HE HAD ANY BITTERNESS ABOUT NOT CONTINUING WITH HIS JOB. HE SAID: +WHEN I FIRST LEARNT THAT I'LL BE RETIRING AT 60, I DIDN'T FEEL ANY BITTERNESS AT ALL. SIXTY, AS I SAID YESTERDAY IN MY SPEECH TO HEUNG YEE KUK, IN YOUR CHINESE TRADITION IS QUITE AN IMPORTANT YEAR. AND IT IS A GOOD YEAR TO CHANGE.

+LEAVE IT A BIT LATER AND IT MAY BE TOO LATE TO CHANGE,+ HE SAID.

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FILM STANDARD ADVISORY BOARD PLANNED
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THE GOVERNMENT IS CONSIDERING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ADVISORY BOARD TO ADVISE ON FILM STANDARDS AND TO MONITOR THE CENSORIAL PROCESS, DEPUTY SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND INFORMATION, MR ADOLF HSU, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

ADDRESSING THE ZONTA INTERNATIONAL LUNCHEON MEETING ON +PUBLIC VIEWS AND FILM STANDARDS+, MR HSU SAID THAT THE BOARD, WHICH COULD BE NON-STATUTORY AND DISTINCT FROM THE CENSORIAL PROCESS PRESCRIBED IN EXISTING LEGISLATION, WOULD HELP MAINTAIN AN OVERVIEW OF THE CENSORSHIP PROCESS.

IT WOULD ALSO MINIMISE THE SUBJECTIVE JUDGMENTS ON THE PART OF THE GOVERNMENT AND ACT AS A SAFEGUARD AND SOURCE OF GUIDANCE TO CENSORS.

+IT IS CERTAINLY THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION THAT THIS BOARD SHOULD BE RECEPTIVE TO IDEAS PUT FORWARD BY LAY PERSONS AND THE TRADE AND SHOULD BE APPRECIATIVE OF THE POWERFUL INFLUENCE OF THE FILM MEDIUM,+ HE SAID.

MR HSU SAID THAT IT WAS PROPOSED THAT THE ADVISORY BOARD WOULD HAVE A LAY PERSON AS ITS CHAIRMAN, WITH A PREPONDERANCE OF MEMBERS BROADLY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMMUNITY, AND INCLUDING PERSONS ACTIVE IN THE FILM INDUSTRY.

/+SOME OF

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+SOME OF THESE MEMBERS WILL COME FROM THE BOARD OF REVIEW (FILM CENSORSHIP), OTHERS FROM THOSE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THE PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF FILMS, THE OPERATION OF CINEMAS OR IN THE FIELD OF FILM COMMENTARIES.

+OFFICIAL PARTICIPATION WILL COME FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND INFORMATION BRANCH, TELEVISION AND ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING AUTHORITY, CITY AND NEW TERRITORIES ADMINISTRATION, EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT,+ HE SAID.

MR HSU WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THAT THE REASON FOR PROPOSING TO APPOINT A LAY PERSON AS CHAIRMAN WAS IN RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY VIEWS IN THIS ADVISORY PROCESS.

+THE INCLUSION OF LAY PERSONS FROM THE BOARD OF REVIEW WILL PROVIDE A LINK BETWEEN THE REVIEW BODY WHICH HAS THE ULTIMATE EXECUTIVE CONTROL OF THE CENSORSHIP PROCESS AND THE PROPOSED ADVISORY BODY WHICH WILL MONITOR AND ADVISE UPON STANDARDS,+ HE SAID.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE OTHER LAY MEMBERS WOULD BE CHOSEN FROM PERSONS WITH NO VESTED INTEREST IN THE FILM INDUSTRY BUT WHO HAD DEMONSTRATED INTEREST IN THE NEED TO PROTECT THE WELL-BEING OF THE YOUNG.

+AS REGARDS MEMBERS REPRESENTING THE TRADE, OUR PRESENT THINKING IS THAT THE APPOINTMENTS WILL BE MADE ON AN AD PERSONAM BASIS.

+THE MEMBERSHIP REPRESENTING THE GOVERNMENT TO A LARGE EXTENT REFLECTS SIMILAR REPRESENTATION ON THE BOARD OF REVIEW AND PROVIDES PROFESSIONAL INPUT IN LINE WITH THE ADMINISTRATION'S OTHER SOCIAL AND EDUCATION POLICY OBJECTIVES,+ HE ADDED.

MR HSU SAID THE MOVE WAS IN KEEPING WITH GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TO OPEN UP ITS CONSULTATION MACHINERY AND WAS PART OF THE PACKAGE OF PROPOSALS BEING CONSIDERED TO ENCOURAGE INCREASED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESSES OF GOVERNMENT WITH REGARD TO THE PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT FIELD.

HE POINTED OUT THAT WHILE THE FILM CENSORSHIP PROVISIONS AND PROCEDURES DEMONSTRATED THE EXISTENCE OF SOME DEGREE OF COMMUNITY INPUT IN THE CENSORIAL PROCESS, THIS INPUT WAS CONSTRAINED AND CONFINED TO THE CONSIDERATION OF INDIVIDUAL FILMS AS THEY WERE SUBMITTED FOR EXAMINATION.

+THERE IS AS YET NO FORMAL CONSULTATION ON THE MORE GENERAL ISSUES OF CENSORSHIP STANDARDS AND THE INTERPRETATION OF THE COMMUNITY'S PERCEPTION OF ACCEPTABLE MORAL STANDARDS IN FILMS,+ HE SAID.

/GIVEN THE

GIVEN THE INTENTION TO WIDEN PUBLIC CONSULTATION COUPLED WITH THE LIMITATIONS OF THE EXISTING SYSTEM, THE ADVISORY BOARD IS EXPECTED TO BE TASKED WITH THE TERMS OF REFERENCE INCLUDING ADVISING THE FILM CENSORSHIP AUTHORITY ON FILM CENSORSHIP STANDARDS; TO MONITOR THE EXISTING CENSORSHIP PROCESS, TO PROPOSE CHANGES TO THE GUIDELINES FOR FILM CENSORSHIP AND TO OBSERVE THE EXTENT TO WHICH THESE ARE OBSERVED.

THE BOARD IS ALSO ENVISAGED TO BE TASKED WITH CONSIDERING MEANS OF ASSESSING PUBLIC EXPECTATION OF FILM CENSORSHIP STANDARDS AND INTERPRETING THE RESULTS OF ANY SUCH ASSESSMENT INCLUDING THE RESULTS OF ESTABLISHED SURVEYS AND RECOMMENDING FOLLOW-UP ACTION.

ANOTHER TASK WHICH THE BOARD IS EXPECTED TO TAKE ON IS TO CONSIDER MATTERS RELATING TO THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE PLACES OF PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT ORDINANCE AND ITS SUBSIDIARY REGULATIONS IN RESPECT OF FILM CENSORSHIP AND TO ADVISE ACCORDINGLY.

+IN THIS CONNECTION, IT IS RELEVANT TO NOTE THAT A SIMILAR, BUT STATUTORY BOARD IS ESTABLISHED UNDER THE TELEVISION ORDINANCE TO ADVISE, INTER ALIA, THE TELEVISION AUTHORITY IN THE EXERCISE OF HIS FUNCTIONS,+ MR HSU NOTED.

AS A FURTHER STEP, HE SAID, THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALSO CONSIDERING CHANGES TO THE COMPOSITION OF THE FILM CENSORSHIP REVIEW BOARD.

+ONE OF THE PROPOSALS UNDER CONSIDERATION IS TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF LAY PERSONS FROM THREE AT PRESENT TO SAY SIX, WHICH WE HOPE WOULD ENABLE A GREATER MEASURE OF COMMUNITY VIEWS TO BE REFLECTED IN REVIEWING THE CENSOR'S DECISIONS,+ HE SAID.

MR HSU NOTED THAT THE SETTING OF FILM STANDARDS WAS A DIFFICULT AND ONEROUS TASK AND IT WOULD ONLY BE FAIR AND LOGICAL THAT THE GOVERNMENT TOOK POSITIVE STEPS TO IMPROVE ON THE MEANS OF GAUGING PUBLIC VIEWS ON SUCH STANDARDS.

+BUT WHATEVER WE DO, THE FUNDAMENTAL DILEMMA IS THE SAME, THAT IS, HOW TO ESTABLISH CONTROLS WHICH ALLOW MAXIMUM FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND YET MINIMISE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ABUSE AND THEREFORE HARM.+

THE TASKS BEFORE US ARE BOTH SENSITIVE AND IMPORTANT, AND I HOPE, THROUGH GREATER PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND THE INTRODUCTION OF A THREE-TIER FILM CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM, WE ARE HOPEFULLY MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, HE SAID.

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CHINA WATER PROJECT'S FIRST STAGE COMPLETED
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A PRESS OF A BUTTON BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) STARTED WATER FROM CHINA FLOWING THROUGH A NEWLY-COMPLETED PUMPING STATION AT AU TAU IN THE NEW TERRITORIES -- AND ALSO SIGNIFIED COMPLETION OF THE FIRST STAGE OF THE \$1 750 MILLION, 12-YEAR SCHEME TO BRING MORE WATER FROM CHINA.

THE WATER, WHICH COMES FROM THE EAST RIVER 100 KILOMETRES AWAY, IS FIRST RECEIVED AT MUK WU PUMPING STATION AT THE BORDER FOR ITS 20-KILOMETRE JOURNEY THROUGH A SERIES OF PIPELINES AND TUNNELS TO TAI LAM CHUNG RESERVOIR, RECEIVING A BOOST AT AU TAU TO HELP IT ON ITS WAY.

AFTER STARTING THE WATER FLOWING AND UNVEILING A PLAQUE TO INAUGURATE THE MUK WU-AU TAU-TAI LAM CHUNG AQUEDUCT, SIR DAVID TRAVELLED TO THE END OF THE AQUEDUCT TO WATCH IT ENTERING THE RESERVOIR.

SIR DAVID SAID THE DEMAND FOR WATER IN HONG KONG COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MET WITHOUT THE IMPORTANT ROLE THAT SUPPLY FROM CHINA HAD PLAYED IN OUR OVERALL SUPPLY SYSTEM.

+THE SUPPLY FROM CHINA IS NOW AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF HONG KONG'S WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM AND IS THE RESULT OF DISCUSSION, CO-OPERATION AND AGREEMENT STRETCHING BACK THROUGH NEARLY 30 YEARS.

+A LINK OF FRIENDSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING HAS BEEN FORGED, BETWEEN THE WATER AUTHORITIES THEMSELVES AND THEIR RESPECTIVE STAFFS, AND IS YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE AMONG MANY OF THE INTERACTION AND INTERRELATIONSHIP OF OUR ECONOMY WITH THAT OF THE REST OF CHINA,+ SIR DAVID SAID.

ALTHOUGH THE SUPPLY OF WATER FROM CHINA DATES BACK TO 1960, WHEN THE SHENZHEN SCHEME FOR RECEIVING A PIPED SUPPLY WAS FORMULATED, IT WAS NOT UNTIL 1981 THAT A 12-YEAR, THREE-STAGE PROJECT WAS LAUNCHED TO CONSTRUCT RECEPTION AND DISTRIBUTION FACILITIES.

WHEN THIS IS COMPLETED THE AMOUNT OF WATER PROVIDED BY CHINA WILL AMOUNT TO 620 MILLION CUBIC METRES PER ANNUM, OR MORE THAN 60 PER CENT OF HONG KONG'S TOTAL DEMAND.

THE SECOND STAGE OF THE PROJECT IS WELL ADVANCED. IT WILL COST \$626 MILLION AND CATER FOR DEMAND IN THE PERIOD FROM 1987-91. THE FINAL STAGE, COSTING \$300 MILLION, WILL DEAL WITH DEMAND FROM 1991 ONWARDS.

THE AQUEDUCT, WHICH WILL DELIVER THE MAIN PORTION OF WATER FROM CHINA AT A RATE OF 910 000 CUBIC METRES PER DAY, COST \$220 MILLION AND WAS THE LARGEST SINGLE CONTRACT LET BY THE WATER SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROJECT.

/WORK CONSISTED

WORK CONSISTED OF DRIVING 14 KILOMETRES OF TUNNELS, LAYING 5.5 KILOMETRES OF PIPELINES AND CONSTRUCTING FOUR KILOMETRES OF ACCESS ROADS.

AU TAU PUMPING STATION, WHICH COST \$28 MILLION TO BUILD, RECEIVES RAW WATER DELIVERED FROM MUK WU PUMPING STATION AND HAS A CAPACITY OF 518 000 CUBIC METRES PER DAY IN THE FIRST STAGE. THIS WILL INCREASE TO 778 000 CUBIC METRES PER DAY IN THE SECOND STAGE.

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FIVE LAND LOTS SOLD FOR \$149 MILLION
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FIVE LOTS OF GOVERNMENT LAND - THREE ON HONG KONG ISLAND AND TWO IN THE NEW TERRITORIES - WERE SOLD FOR \$149 MILLION AT AN AUCTION TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE HIGHEST PRICE PAID WAS \$65 MILLION FOR A NON-INDUSTRIAL SITE AT 530-540 LOCKHART ROAD. BIDDING OPENED AT \$35 MILLION.

THE SITE HAS AN AREA OF 506.4 SQUARE METRES AND THE DEVELOPER HAS TO COMPLETE A GROSS FLOOR AREA OF NOT LESS THAN 2 820 SQUARE METRES BY DECEMBER 31, 1990.

THE BUYER WAS EAST VIEW PROPERTIES LIMITED.

A HOTEL OR GODOWN CANNOT BE BUILT ON THE SITE UNDER THE TERMS OF SALE.

ANOTHER SITE OF 736 SQUARE METRES BETWEEN VICTORIA ROAD AND SAI NING STREET WAS PURCHASED BY RYFORT CONSTRUCTION LIMITED FOR \$39 MILLION.

BIDDING STARTED AT \$25 MILLION.

THE BUYER HAS TO COMPLETE AT LEAST 3 600 SQUARE METRES OF GROSS FLOOR AREA BY THE END OF 1990.

A HENNESSY ROAD SITE, ALSO FOR NON-INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, WAS SOLD TO PREGEE COMPANY LIMITED FOR \$34 MILLION.

BIDDING OPENED AT \$14 MILLION.

THE DEVELOPER HAS TO COMPLETE AT LEAST 880 SQUARE METRES OF GROSS FLOOR AREA ON THE 197.1 SQUARE METRE SITE BY DECEMBER 31, 1990.

BIDDING FOR AN INDUSTRIAL SITE NEAR ON LOK TSUEN, FANLING, STARTED AT \$1.5 MILLION. IT WAS BOUGHT BY DORMIND LIMITED FOR \$6 MILLION.

UNDER THE SALE CONDITIONS, A MINIMUM OF 6 087 SQUARE METRES OF GROSS FLOOR AREA MUST BE COMPLETED BY SEPTEMBER 30, 1990, ON THE 2 029-SQUARE-METRE SITE.

THE LAST SITE, ALSO SITUATED NEAR ON LOK TSUEN AND FOR INDUSTRIAL OR GODOWN DEVELOPMENT WAS SOLD TO JETIC LIMITED FOR \$5 MILLION, THE PRICE AT WHICH BIDDING OPENED.

UNDER LEASE CONDITIONS, NOT LESS THAN 5 070 SQUARE METRES OF GROSS FLOOR AREA MUST BE BUILT ON THE 1 690 SQUARE METRE SITE BEFORE SEPTEMBER 30, 1990.

COMMENTING ON THE SALE RESULTS, THE AUCTIONEER, GOVERNMENT LAND AGENT MR TIM MILLS, OF THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT, SAID IT WAS A VERY GOOD AUCTION AND THE PRICES WERE ABOUT WHAT HE EXPECTED TO ACHIEVE.

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RATING SYSTEM FOR FACTORY INSPECTION SATISFACTORY
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THE RATING SYSTEM USED AT PRESENT TO ESTABLISH THE PRIORITIES FOR ROUTINE INSPECTION OF FACTORIES IS WORKING SATISFACTORILY, CHIEF FACTORY INSPECTOR OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT, MR YIP YUK-LUN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

INDIVIDUAL FACTORIES WERE RATED ACCORDING TO THEIR HAZARD POTENTIAL AS DETERMINED BY A SERIES OF FACTORS, HE SAID.

THESE INCLUDED THE NATURE OF THE PREMISES AND THE INDUSTRIAL PROCESSES INVOLVED, THE COMPLEXITY OF THE PLANT, THE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES AND THE PAST RECORD OF ACCIDENTS AND PROSECUTIONS.

+THE GREATER THE POTENTIAL HAZARD ASSESSED ON THIS BASIS, THE HIGHER THE NUMBER OF POINTS AWARDED AND THE HIGHER THE FREQUENCY OF INSPECTION,+ HE SAID.

ADDRESSING A LUNCHEON MEETING OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF HONG KONG ISLAND EAST, MR YIP NOTED THAT OF THE 194 FACTORY INSPECTORS ON THE DEPARTMENT'S ESTABLISHMENT, 120 WERE ASSIGNED TO INSPECTION OF FACTORIES.

/A FURTHER

A FURTHER 30 ARE ENGAGED IN INSPECTION OF CONSTRUCTION SITES WHILE THE REMAINDER IN VARIOUS SUPPORTING FUNCTIONS SUCH AS TRAINING AND PROSECUTION.

+THE FREQUENCY OF ROUTINE INSPECTIONS VARIES FROM ONCE IN SIX MONTHS IN THE CASE OF A LARGE FACTORY WITH HIGH POTENTIAL HAZARD TO ONCE IN A MAXIMUM OF 54 MONTHS IN THE CASE OF A SMALL LOW-RISK FACTORY WITH A GOOD SAFETY RECORD,+ SAID MR YIP.

+IN ADDITION TO ROUTINE INSPECTIONS, SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS ARE UNDERTAKEN IN THE CASE OF SERIOUS OR FATAL ACCIDENTS OR COMPLAINTS.

+AND FOLLOW-UP INSPECTIONS FOR ENFORCEMENT PURPOSES ARE NORMALLY MADE WITHIN ONE TO THREE MONTHS WHERE A NEED FOR SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED.+

MR YIP STRESSED THAT EVERY EFFORT HAD BEEN MADE BY THE DEPARTMENT TO MAXIMISE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INSPECTION WITHIN THE PRESENT CONSTRAINTS OF MANPOWER.

AS AND WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES PERMIT, HE ADDED, THE DEPARTMENT WOULD EXPAND ITS FACTORY INSPECTORATE TO AROUND 250, THUS ENABLING IT TO INCREASE THE FREQUENCY OF INSPECTIONS.

HOWEVER, MR YIP POINTED OUT THAT INSPECTIONS OR PROSECUTIONS COULD ONLY RESULT IN A TEMPORARY IMPACT AND WOULD NOT ALWAYS BE TAKEN AS A LESSON.

TO MAKE A SAFETY AND HEALTH POLICY TRULY EFFECTIVE, A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMME OF WIDER ACTIVITIES IS NECESSARY TO COMPLEMENT THE ENFORCEMENT ACTION.

IN THIS RESPECT, A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF MANPOWER AND RESOURCES OF THE DEPARTMENT'S FACTORY INSPECTORATE IS COMMITTED ANNUALLY TO THE PROMOTION OF THESE WIDER ACTIVITIES WHICH INCLUDE ADVISORY AND INFORMATION SERVICES, EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AND INTENSIVE PUBLICITY PROGRAMMES.

ON THE ADVISORY ROLE, THE FACTORY INSPECTORATE ALWAYS TAKES THE INITIATIVE TO DISCUSS SAFETY PROBLEMS AND EXPLAIN THE PRESENCE OF HAZARDS WITH THE MANAGEMENT AND WORKERS DURING THEIR DAILY VISITS. SAFETY PAMPHLETS ARE DISTRIBUTED FREELY TO COMPLEMENT VERBAL ADVICE.

AS FOR TRAINING, THE INDUSTRIAL SAFETY TRAINING CENTRE RUN BY THE FACTORY INSPECTORATE CONDUCTS A WIDE RANGE OF BASIC AND ADVANCE SAFETY COURSES ANNUALLY NOT ONLY FOR ITS OWN STAFF BUT ALSO FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICERS.

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TURNING TO PUBLICITY, MR YIP SAID THE DEPARTMENT ORGANISES AN ANNUAL INDUSTRIAL SAFETY CAMPAIGN WITH A VIEW TO AROUSE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF, AND TO INCULCATE MANAGERIALS AND WORKERS WITH, THE IMPORTANCE OF SAFETY AT WORK. THIS YEAR A BUDGET OF \$750 000 HAS BEEN APPROVED FOR THE CAMPAIGN.

ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN TAKING A LEAD IN PLANNING AND FINANCING SUCH INDUSTRIAL SAFETY PROMOTION ACTIVITIES, MR YIP SAID HE WAS GLAD TO SEE THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN THIS AREA HAS BEEN ON THE INCREASE.

+WE STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT THE TRIPARTITE APPROACH WE HAVE BEEN ADVOCATING IN HONG KONG -- THAT IS, PARTICIPATION BY THE GOVERNMENT, EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES -- IS AN EFFECTIVE MEANS OF IMPROVING SAFETY AT WORK,+ HE SAID.

+IN OUR EXPERIENCE, LEGISLATION ALONE CANNOT FULLY ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE OF A HIGH STANDARD OF INDUSTRIAL HEALTH AND SAFETY.

+SELF-REGULATION BY BOTH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES IS ESSENTIAL IF THE OBJECTIVE IS TO BE FULLY REALISED,+ MR YIP ADDED.

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LABOUR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS PROMOTION STEPPED UP
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THE LABOUR RELATIONS DIVISION OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT HANDLED 166 TRADE DISPUTES IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF THIS YEAR COMPARED WITH 118 IN THE CORRESPONDING PERIOD LAST YEAR.

THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF ITS CONCILIATION OFFICERS, \$48.3 MILLION INCLUDING WAGE ARREARS, WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE, SEVERANCE PAY AND OTHER PAYMENTS, WERE PAID TO 5 834 WORKERS INVOLVED IN THE DISPUTES.

IN ADDITION, THE DIVISION HELPED SETTLE 9 952 CLAIMS WITH \$20.8 MILLION PAID TO 10 211 WORKERS.

DURING THE SAME PERIOD, THE DIVISION ALSO GAVE ADVICE ON MATTERS RELATING TO CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT AND PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT IN 318 790 CONSULTATIONS SOUGHT BY WORKERS OR EMPLOYERS, CONDUCTED 98 VISITS TO INDIVIDUAL ESTABLISHMENTS TO PROMOTE GOOD MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND ORGANISED 57 SEMINARS, CERTIFICATE COURSES AND LECTURES ON INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS.

A DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN POINTED OUT THAT LABOUR RELATIONS IN HONG KONG COMPARED FAVOURABLY WITH MOST OTHER INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD.

/+LAST YEAR,

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+LAST YEAR, THERE WERE ONLY THREE WORK STOPPAGES RESULTING IN THE LOSS OF 1 160 WORKING DAYS -- THE LOWEST ON RECORD,+ HE SAID.

THE DIVISION, HE ADDED, HAD FOR YEARS BEEN PAYING ATTENTION TO THE RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS IN AN EFFORT TO BUILD UP A MORE HARMONIOUS LABOUR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONSHIP.

+THROUGH VISITS, CONSULTATIONS WITH TRADE UNIONS AND EDUCATIONAL APPROACH, IT HAS SUCCEEDED IN DRIVING HOME THE MESSAGE TO WORKERS OF THE BENEFITS THEY ARE ENTITLED TO UNDER THE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE.

+THESE INCLUDE SICKNESS ALLOWANCE, REST DAYS, STATUTORY HOLIDAYS, PAID ANNUAL LEAVE, MATERNITY PROTECTION, SEVERANCE PAY AND OTHER STATUTORY BENEFITS.

+AS REGARDS TRADITIONAL PRACTICES IN CERTAIN TRADES WHICH ARE FOUND TO BE CONTRARY TO THE LEGAL REQUIREMENTS, THE DIVISION HAS INTENSIFIED ITS PROMOTIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS IN THESE TRADES WITH A VIEW TO ENSURING FULL COMPLIANCE OF THE LAW,+ HE SAID.

THE SPOKESMAN ADDED THAT ALL COMPLIANTS ARISING FROM TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT UNDER THE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE ARE THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATED.

THESE INVESTIGATIONS ARE CARRIED OUT IN STRICT CONFIDENCE AND WORKERS WITH GRIEVANCES MAY CONTACT THE DEPARTMENT EITHER IN PERSON, ON THE TELEPHONE OR THROUGH THEIR TRADE UNIONS.

HE SAID THAT THE DEPARTMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE CONCILIATION SERVICE AND TO STEP UP ITS PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES TO ENABLE WORKERS AND EMPLOYERS TO UNDERSTAND BETTER THEIR RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE.

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FIRST WOMAN JUDGE APPOINTED
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THE GOVERNOR HAS APPROVED THE APPOINTMENT OF MISS HELEN ANDRENE LO AS DISTRICT JUDGE WITH EFFECT FROM NOVEMBER 3, 1986.

MISS LO'S APPOINTMENT WILL MAKE HER THE FIRST WOMAN JUDGE TO SERVE IN HONG KONG'S COURTS.

BORN IN HONG KONG IN 1933, MISS LO WAS EDUCATED LOCALLY AND SERVED HER ARTICLES IN HONG KONG BEFORE TAKING HER SOLICITORS FINALS IN ENGLAND IN 1959.

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AFTER SHE QUALIFIED IN ENGLAND, SHE RETURNED TO HONG KONG AND WAS EMPLOYED AS AN ASSISTANT SOLICITOR UNTIL 1961.

SINCE THEN, SHE HAS BEEN IN PRIVATE PRACTICE AND HAS AN EXCELLENT REPUTATION FOR HER WORK AS A SOLICITOR, ESPECIALLY IN THE AREA OF MATRIMONIAL LAW. SHE IS AT PRESENT SENIOR PARTNER OF HER FIRM.

MISS LO HAS SAT AS DEPUTY DISTRICT JUDGE IN THE FAMILY COURT IN 1985 AND 1986.

ALTHOUGH MISS LO HAS BEEN PRACTISING UNDER HER MAIDEN NAME, SHE IS MARRIED AND HAS ONE CHILD. SHE IS ALSO WELL-KNOWN FOR HER HORSEMANSHIP.

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MAP-BASED LAND INFORMATION SYSTEM PLANNED
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THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT IS PLANNING TO START WORK EARLY NEXT YEAR ON SETTING UP A MAP-BASED LAND INFORMATION SYSTEM.

THE DEPARTMENT'S DIRECTOR, MR CHAU CHAM-SON, SAID THIS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN OPENING A ONE-DAY WORKSHOP AND SEMINAR ON SUCH SYSTEMS AT THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC.

MR CHAU SAID HIS DEPARTMENT HAD EVERYTHING THAT WAS REQUIRED FOR ESTABLISHING A MAP-BASED LAND INFORMATION SYSTEM AND HE POINTED OUT THAT AN INTER-DEPARTMENTAL STEERING COMMITTEE HAD BEEN SET UP IN 1982.

HE SAID HIS DEPARTMENT PROPOSED TO IMPLEMENT THE SYSTEM IN THREE STAGES:

- (I) INSTALLATION OF THE CENTRAL (HEADQUARTERS) SYSTEM.
- (II) DIGITISATION FOR THE INSTALLATION OF THE HONG KONG AND KOWLOON SUB-SYSTEMS.
- (III) DIGITISATION FOR AND INSTALLATION OF THE NEW TERRITORIES SUB-SYSTEMS.

+INITIALLY THE SYSTEM WILL MEET THE NEEDS OF THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT ALONE, BUT IT WILL BE DEVELOPED WITH THE SCENARIO IN MIND THAT IT WILL TAKE UP THE ROLE OF A CORE SYSTEM IN A NETWORK OF SYSTEMS AMONG A NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, AND IDEALLY FOR THE UTILITY COMPANIES WHICH RELY ON LAND-RELATED INFORMATION,+ MR CHAU SAID.

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+INDEED, IT APPEARS LOGICAL TO ME THAT THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT MUST TAKE THE LEAD IN THIS RESPECT, AS WE CONTROL ALL LAND RELATED RECORDS AND PRODUCE ALL OFFICIAL MAPPING IN HONG KONG.+

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT'S PROJECT DEFINITION STUDY OF THE SYSTEM WAS NEARING COMPLETION, AND HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE SYSTEM WOULD BE FOUND TO BE TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE AND FINANCIALLY JUSTIFIABLE.

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SHIPPING, PORT AND CARGO STATISTICS RELEASED
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IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1986, 3 411 SHIPS WITH A TOTAL CAPACITY OF 20.1 MILLION NRT (NET REGISTERED TONS) ARRIVED IN HONG KONG, REPRESENTING AN INCREASE OF 79 (OR 2 PER CENT) IN NUMBER AND OF 5 PER CENT IN CAPACITY OVER THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1985.

THESE FIGURES ARE CONTAINED IN THE +HONG KONG SHIPPING STATISTICS REPORT+ PUBLISHED TODAY BY THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT.

DURING THE SAME PERIOD, THE TOTAL TONNAGE OF CARGO DISCHARGED IN HONG KONG FROM INCOMING SHIPS (ESTIMATED FROM SAMPLED MANIFEST CONSIGNMENTS) INCREASED BY 17 PER CENT. WHEN ANALYSED BY SHIP TYPE, A NOTABLE INCREASE WAS RECORDED IN THE NUMBER OF CONTAINER VESSELS (+212), WHILE DECREASES WERE RECORDED IN THE NUMBER OF ROLL-ON/ROLL-OFF VESSELS (-74), SEMI-CONTAINER VESSELS (-63) AND CONVENTIONAL CARGO VESSELS (-46).

A NOTABLE INCREASE IN NUMBER WAS RECORDED FOR SHIPS REGISTERED IN CHINA (+174); BUT DECREASES WERE RECORDED FOR THOSE REGISTERED IN LIBERIA (-37), JAPAN (-33) AND THE PHILIPPINES (-19). THE NUMBER OF SHIPS WITH A CAPACITY OF LESS THAN 10 000 DWT (DEADWEIGHT TONS) INCREASED (+17).

IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1986, THERE WERE 3 387 OUTGOING SHIPS WITH A TOTAL CAPACITY OF 20.0 MILLION NRT, REPRESENTING AN INCREASE OF 83 (OR 3 PER CENT) IN NUMBER AND OF 6 PER CENT IN CAPACITY OVER THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1985.

THE TOTAL TONNAGE OF CARGO LOADED IN HONG KONG ONTO OUTGOING SHIPS (ESTIMATED FROM SAMPLED MANIFEST CONSIGNMENTS) ROSE BY 26 PER CENT. ABOUT 65 PER CENT OF THE DEPARTING SHIPS STAYED IN HONG KONG FOR LESS THAN TWO DAYS.

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OF THE CARGO DISCHARGED FROM INCOMING SHIPS, 86 PER CENT IN TERMS OF TONNAGE WAS IMPORTS AND 14 PER CENT WAS TRANSHIPMENT CARGO. OF THE CARGO LOADED ONTO OUTGOING SHIPS, 58 PER CENT WAS EXPORTS (INCLUDING RE-EXPORTS) AND 42 PER CENT WAS TRANSHIPMENT CARGO.

THE MAJOR COUNTRIES OF LOADING FOR SEABORNE IMPORTS IN TONNAGE TERMS WERE SINGAPORE (17 PER CENT), JAPAN (14 PER CENT), THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA (13 PER CENT), CHINA (11 PER CENT) AND TAIWAN (8 PER CENT); WHILE THE MAJOR COUNTRIES OF DISCHARGE FOR SEABORNE EXPORTS WERE THE U.S. (20 PER CENT), CHINA (18 PER CENT), TAIWAN (13 PER CENT) AND INDONESIA (7 PER CENT). TRANSHIPMENT CARGO WAS MAINLY LOADED IN CHINA (32 PER CENT) AND THE U.S. (14 PER CENT); AND WAS ALSO MAINLY DISCHARGED IN CHINA (16 PER CENT) AND THE U.S. (12 PER CENT).

COMPARING THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1986 WITH THE SAME QUARTER IN 1985, INCREASES IN TONNAGE WERE NOTED FOR IMPORTS FROM CHINA (+41 PER CENT), THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA (+33 PER CENT), SINGAPORE (+32 PER CENT) AND THE U.S. (+9 PER CENT) = BUT DECREASES WERE NOTED FOR IMPORTS FROM TAIWAN (-14 PER CENT) AND JAPAN (-11 PER CENT). AS A WHOLE, THE TOTAL TONNAGE OF IMPORTS ROSE BY 14 PER CENT.

AMONG THE PRINCIPAL COMMODITIES, INCREASES IN CARGO TONNAGE WERE RECORDED IN THE IMPORTS OF MISCELLANEOUS EDIBLE PRODUCTS AND PREPARATIONS (+105 PER CENT), CEREALS AND CEREAL PREPARATIONS (+55 PER CENT) AND CHEMICAL MATERIALS AND PRODUCTS, N.E.S. (+51 PER CENT).

DURING THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1986, THE TOTAL TONNAGE OF SEABORNE EXPORTS (DOMESTIC EXPORTS PLUS RE-EXPORTS) INCREASED BY 21 PER CENT. INCREASES IN TONNAGE WERE RECORDED FOR SEABORNE EXPORTS TO INDONESIA (+89 PER CENT), SOUTH KOREA (+61 PER CENT) AND SINGAPORE (+50 PER CENT) = BUT A DECREASE WAS NOTED FOR THOSE TO CHINA (-16 PER CENT).

AMONG THE PRINCIPAL COMMODITIES, INCREASES WERE NOTED FOR SEABORNE EXPORTS OF PETROLEUM AND PETROLEUM PRODUCTS (+372 PER CENT), VEGETABLES AND FRUIT (+298 PER CENT) AND MISCELLANEOUS MANUFACTURED ARTICLES, N.E.S. (+99 PER CENT), BUT SEABORNE EXPORTS OF INORGANIC CHEMICALS DROPPED (-54 PER CENT).

SHIPPING STATISTICS ARE COMPILED PRIMARILY FROM GENERAL DECLARATIONS SUBMITTED TO THE MARINE DEPARTMENT BY SHIPOWNERS OR AUTHORISED SHIPPING AGENTS AND COVER ALL OCEAN-GOING VESSELS ENTERING AND LEAVING HONG KONG, EXCLUDING YACHTS AND PLEASURE CRAFT.

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PORT AND CARGO STATISTICS ARE COMPILED FROM OCEAN CARGO MANIFESTS SUPPLIED BY SHIPPING COMPANIES OR AGENTS TO THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT. BECAUSE OF RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS, A SAMPLE OF ALL CONSIGNMENTS LISTED IN THE MANIFESTS IS USED FOR COMPILING THE STATISTICS. THE SAMPLING METHOD IS DESCRIBED IN THE EXPLANATORY NOTES OF THE REPORT.

MORE DETAILS ON SHIPPING, PORT AND CARGO STATISTICS FOR THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1986 ARE CONTAINED IN THE +HONG KONG SHIPPING STATISTICS REPORT+ FOR APRIL TO JUNE 1986, WHICH IS ON SALE AT THE GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS CENTRE, GENERAL POST OFFICE BUILDING, CONNAUGHT PLACE AT \$14 PER COPY.

ENQUIRIES ON STATISTICS PROVIDED ON THE REPORT MAY BE DIRECTED TO THE SHIPPING STATISTICS SECTION OF THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT ON 5-455422.

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ILLEGAL STRUCTURES TO BE DEMOLISHED
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DEMOLITION OF ILLEGAL STRUCTURES ON THE MAIN ROOF OF A KOWLOON BUILDING WILL BE CARRIED OUT SOON AFTER A CLOSURE ORDER IS OBTAINED FROM KOWLOON DISTRICT COURT.

AN APPLICATION FOR THE CLOSURE ORDER WILL BE MADE ON JANUARY 6 IN RESPECT OF THE STRUCTURES AT 11-17, MA TAU KOK ROAD.

THE OCCUPANTS WERE INFORMED OF THE BUILDING AUTHORITY'S INTENTION TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THROUGH NOTICES PLACED ON PROMINENT PARTS OF THE STRUCTURES.

ORDERS TO DEMOLISH THE STRUCTURES WERE ISSUED BY THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OFFICE IN APRIL, BUT THEY WERE IGNORED.

CLOSURE OF THE STRUCTURES IS REQUIRED SO THAT THEY CAN BE DEMOLISHED WITHOUT ENDANGERING THE PUBLIC OR OCCUPANTS.

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HK ASSESSING PACT ON SEMI-CONDUCTORS

HONG KONG IS ASSESSING AN AGREEMENT RECENTLY REACHED BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN ON THE LATTER'S EXPORTS OF SEMI-CONDUCTORS.

THE DIRECTOR OF TRADE, MR HAMISH MACLEOD, SAID ONE OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE AGREEMENT CALLS FOR JAPAN TO KEEP A CHECK ON THE EXPORT PRICE OF CHIPS SENT TO A NUMBER OF THIRD MARKETS, INCLUDING HONG KONG.

HE SAID THAT THERE COULD WELL BE IMPLICATIONS RELATING TO THE GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE (GATT) AND HONG KONG WAS NOW EXAMINING THE MATTER TO ASCERTAIN WHAT HONG KONG TRADE INTERESTS MIGHT BE AFFECTED.

IN ORDER TO DO THIS, THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT WOULD BE CONTACTING INDUSTRY AND MAJOR INDUSTRIAL AND TRADE ORGANISATIONS TO GATHER INFORMATION.

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THREE NT SITES TO LET BY TENDER

TENDERS ARE BEING INVITED FOR THE SHORT-TERM TENANCIES OF TWO GOVERNMENT SITES IN TSUEN WAN AND ONE IN YUEN LONG.

THE TSUEN WAN SITES, MEASURING 1 475 AND 1 890 SQUARE METRES, ARE AT TSUEN WAN MARKET STREET AND YUEN TUN CIRCUIT.

BOTH ARE FOR USE AS FEE-PAYING PUBLIC PARKING AREAS FOR MOTOR VEHICLES AND BUSES, EXCLUDING CONTAINER TRACTORS AND TRAILERS.

THE INITIAL TENANCY OF THE SMALLER LOT IS TWO YEARS, WHILE THAT OF THE LARGER LOT IS ONE YEAR, BOTH RENEWABLE QUARTERLY AT THE END OF THE PERIOD.

THE THIRD LOT IS AT MA TIN ROAD, YUEN LONG.

MEASURING ABOUT 5 320 SQUARE METRES, IT IS ALSO FOR USE AS A FEE-PAYING PUBLIC CAR PARK OR STORAGE OF GOODS, EQUIPMENT OR CONTAINERS.

THE INITIAL TENANCY OF THE SITE IS SIX MONTHS, RENEWABLE MONTHLY AFTERWARDS.

THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING TENDERS FOR THE THREE LOTS IS NOON ON NOVEMBER 14.

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TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS IN CENTRAL, WESTERN
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NO VEHICLE WILL BE ALLOWED TO TURN LEFT FROM WESTBOUND CONNAUGHT ROAD CENTRAL INTO HILLIER STREET FROM 10 AM ON FRIDAY (OCTOBER 31) BECAUSE OF UTILITY WORKS.

THE SECTION OF HILLIER STREET BETWEEN CONNAUGHT ROAD CENTRAL AND DES VOEUX ROAD CENTRAL WILL BE RE-ROUTED FROM ONE-WAY SOUTHBOUND TO TWO-WAY TRAFFIC TO FACILITATE LOCAL ACCESS.

VEHICLES ON WESTBOUND CONNAUGHT ROAD CENTRAL HEADING FOR HILLIER STREET WILL BE DIVERTED VIA CLEVERLY STREET AND DES VOEUX ROAD CENTRAL.

ALSO FROM 10 AM ON FRIDAY, THE SECTION OF WESTERN STREET BETWEEN DES VOEUX ROAD WEST AND CONNAUGHT ROAD WEST WILL BE TEMPORARILY CLOSED TO TRAFFIC FOR ABOUT TWO WEEKS BECAUSE OF ROAD WORK.

THE EXISTING LEFT-TURN BAN ON VEHICLES TURNING FROM DES VOEUX ROAD WEST INTO CENTRE STREET WILL BE LIFTED TEMPORARILY SO THAT VEHICLES AFFECTED BY THE ROAD CLOSURE CAN TRAVEL VIA CENTRE STREET INSTEAD.

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TRAFFIC CHANGES IN ABERDEEN
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THE WESTERN KERBSIDE SECTION OF WAH LAM PATH BETWEEN WAH FU ROAD AND WAH LOK PATH IN ABERDEEN WILL BE DESIGNATED A PEAK-HOUR (7 AM TO 10 AM AND 4 PM TO 7 PM) URBAN CLEARWAY FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY (NOVEMBER 1).

WITHIN THE RESTRICTED ZONE, NO VEHICLE EXCEPT FRANCHISED BUSES WILL BE ALLOWED TO STOP FOR PASSENGERS OR GOODS.

MEANWHILE, U-TURNS ON NORTHBOUND WAH LAM PATH NEAR ITS JUNCTION WITH WAH LOK PATH WILL BE BANNED.

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