



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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UK GOVT RECOGNISES FEELING ON BN(O) ISSUE

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THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THE STRENGTH OF FEELING ON THE NATIONALITY ISSUE IN HONG KONG AND IT IS GIVING THE MATTER PRIORITY, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A STATEMENT BY THE HON LYDIA DUNN, SIR DAVID SAID THAT THESE QUESTIONS WERE HOWEVER COMPLEX, AND IT WAS RIGHT THAT THEY SHOULD RECEIVE FULL AND CAREFUL CONSIDERATION.

SIR DAVID SAID THAT BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S POLICY HAD BEEN TO GIVE A FULL OPPORTUNITY FOR HONG KONG PEOPLE TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS.

ONCE LAID, THE DRAFT HONG KONG (BRITISH NATIONALITY) ORDER WOULD HAVE TO BE DEBATED BY BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT AND THERE WOULD BE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THOSE CONCERNED TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS ON THE MATTER, HE SAID.

+I KNOW THAT THE GOVERNMENT HOPE TO REACH DECISIONS SHORTLY, BUT I CANNOT SAY AT THIS STAGE WHETHER THIS WILL BE BEFORE EASTER,+ SIR DAVID SAID.

HOWEVER, SIR DAVID SAID THAT HE WOULD CERTAINLY CONVEY THE COUNCIL'S VIEW TO THE UK GOVERNMENT.

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PROGRESS REPORT ON NATIONALITY ISSUE SOUGHT

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SENIOR UNOFFICIAL MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, THE HON LYDIA DUNN, TODAY CALLED FOR A RESPONSE TO HONG KONG'S REQUESTS ON THE NATIONALITY ISSUE BEFORE THE DRAFT HONG KONG (BRITISH NATIONALITY) ORDER IS LAID BEFORE PARLIAMENT.

+WE EXPECT TO HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONSIDER THAT RESPONSE AND COMMENT UPON IT BEFORE PARLIAMENT IS INVITED TO ASSENT TO THE ORDER,+ SHE STRESSED.

IN A STATEMENT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MISS DUNN NOTED THAT HONG KONG WAS STILL WAITING TO HEAR WHAT THE TERMS OF THE ENDORSEMENT IN THE PASSPORT WOULD BE, AND THE ETHNIC MINORITIES AND EX-SERVICEMEN WAITED TO SEE THEIR REQUESTS HAD FALLEN ON DEAF EARS.

MISS DUNN URGED THE GOVERNOR TO CONVEY TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT THE COUNCIL'S INCREASING APPREHENSION ABOUT THE PASSAGE OF TIME.

/SHE NOTED

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SHE NOTED THAT IT WAS NOW TEN WEEKS SINCE THE COUNCIL UNITED BEHIND A MOTION DRAWING THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S ATTENTION TO THE DEEP CONCERN ABOUT THE EROSION OF THE RIGHTS OF HONG KONG BRITISH DEPENDENT TERRITORIES CITIZENS.

ALTHOUGH THE CHIEF SECRETARY PROMISED ON JANUARY 15 TO INFORM THE COUNCIL AS SOON AS THE BRITISH RESPONSE WAS RECEIVED, NOTHING MORE HAD BEEN SAID.

+NO ONE SHOULD THINK THAT THE STRENGTH OF HONG KONG'S FEELINGS ON THIS MATTER ARE ANY LESS TODAY THAN THEY WERE TEN WEEKS AGO,+ SHE SAID.

+THE CONCERNS OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG MUST NOT BE IGNORED.

+THE WISHES OF THIS COUNCIL MUST BE ADDRESSED.+

MISS DUNN SAID THE COUNCIL WAS GRATEFUL TO THE GOVERNOR FOR HAVING CONVEYED THE STRENGTH OF HONG KONG'S FEELINGS TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND FOR SENDING A TEAM OF OFFICIALS TO LONDON LAST MONTH TO PROVIDE THE FACTS AND FIGURES NEEDED BY THOSE WHO ADVISE THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

SHE AND HER COLLEAGUES HAD ALSO BEEN GRATIFIED BY THE EXTENT OF THE SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM FRIENDS OF HONG KONG IN WESTMINSTER, INCLUDING THOSE WHO SPOKE IN THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES ON HONG KONG'S BEHALF.

+WE ARE ENCOURAGED BY THE EVIDENCE OF THEIR CONTINUING GOOD WILL,+ SHE SAID.

ONLY LAST WEEK, SHE ADDED, SHE HAD RECEIVED A MESSAGE OF SUPPORT FROM THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY. HE HAD ALSO ASKED THE BISHOP OF BIRMINGHAM TO WRITE TO THE HOME SECRETARY TO EXPRESS +HIS CONCERN ABOUT THIS SERIOUS MATTER+.

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DECISIONS IN SIX MONTHS ON BRB PROPOSALS
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DECISIONS ARE EXPECTED TO BE REACHED ON THE PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD DURING THE COURSE OF THE NEXT SIX MONTHS, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

WINDING UP THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE, SIR DAVID SAID A PAPER WOULD BE PUBLISHED, FOLLOWING CONSULTATION WITH THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, SETTING OUT THE BACKGROUND AND THE RATIONALE FOR THE CONCLUSIONS REACHED AND THE DECISIONS TAKEN.

/+WHATEVER DECISIONS

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+WHATEVER DECISIONS ARE MADE ABOUT THE FUTURE OF BROADCASTING, THEY MUST BE BASED ON COMMON SENSE AND SOUND JUDGEMENT, AND ABOVE ALL THEY MUST BE MADE IN THE WIDER PUBLIC INTEREST,+ HE SAID.

SIR DAVID POINTED OUT THAT FEW REPORTS OF A SIMILAR NATURE HAD AROUSED SUCH DEBATE AND DIVERSITY OF OPINION AND PUBLIC INTEREST AS THE REPORT OF THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD.

HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD RECEIVED OVER 800 SUBMISSIONS AND THAT THE REPORT HAD BEEN DISCUSSED BY ALMOST ALL DISTRICT BOARDS AND HAD BEEN THE SUBJECT OF INTENSE ATTENTION IN THE PRESS.

+A REPORT IS NOW BEING WRITTEN SUMMARISING AND ANALYSING ALL THE VIEWS RECEIVED DURING THE PERIOD OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION, AND THIS REPORT WILL BE MADE PUBLIC SHORTLY,+ HE SAID.

SIR DAVID SAID THAT THE EIGHT PRINCIPLES WHICH HAD BEEN SPELT OUT BY DR THE HON HO KAM-FAI CONSTITUTED AN IMPORTANT SUMMARY OF THE MAIN THEMES WHICH HAD EMERGED FROM THIS PERIOD OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION.

HE ADDED THAT MEMBERS HAD RIGHTLY POINTED OUT THAT LICENCE TO BROADCAST WAS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER KINDS OF COMMERCIAL LICENCE AND ENTERPRISE; IT WAS SUBJECT NOT ONLY TO NORMAL COMMERCIAL IMPERATIVES BUT PLACED ON THE LICENSEES, THE OPERATORS, A HEAVY PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY.

THEY WERE FRANCHISED TO USE A PUBLIC ASSET WHICH, HE SAID, ALTHOUGH INVISIBLE, REACHED INTO EVERY HOUSE- THEY HAD A SOLEMN DUTY TO EXERCISE THIS RESPONSIBILITY IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST.

+AND, BECAUSE IT IS A PUBLIC TRUST, BECAUSE OF ITS ALL PERVADING NATURE, THE GOVERNMENT OF ANY PLACE HAS WITH JUSTIFICATION TO APPLY TO THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY SENSIBLE RESTRAINTS AND A GREATER DEGREE OF REGULATION AND SUPERVISION THAN WOULD BE APPLICABLE TO OTHER COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISES OPERATING IN AN ENTIRELY FREE MARKET,+ SIR DAVID SAID.

THIS WAS THE BACKGROUND AGAINST WHICH THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD'S PROPOSALS HAD TO BE JUDGED, HE ADDED.

THE PROPOSALS INCLUDED THE CREATION OF A PUBLIC BROADCASTER ~~WITH GUARANTEED ACCESS TO TELEVISION PRIME TIME~~; MEASURES AIMED AT RESTORING A MORE COMPETITIVE SITUATION; ESTABLISHMENT OF A BROADCASTING AUTHORITY; AND THAT THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER, OR RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG, SHOULD COME UNDER THE GENERAL SUPERVISION OF A BOARD OF GOVERNORS.

THE REPORT ALSO DEALT WITH THE ISSUES OF CABLE TELEVISION AND SATELLITE BROADCASTS, SIR DAVID POINTED OUT.

+IT IS PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE THAT AN APPLICATION HAS BEEN MADE TO THE GOVERNMENT TO OPERATE A CABLE TELEVISION SERVICE TO ONE OF OUR LARGE RESIDENTIAL ESTATES,+ HE SAID.

/IT WAS

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IT WAS ASSERTED THAT A CABLE TELEVISION SERVICE COULD OFFER THE PURCHASER A GREATER CHOICE OF PROGRAMMES THAN PROVIDED OVER THE AIR, HE SAID.

+THIS WILL REQUIRE CAREFUL EVALUATION BECAUSE, IF IT PROVED POPULAR, IT WOULD CLEARLY HAVE A FAR-REACHING EFFECT UPON THE EXISTING TELEVISION BROADCAST STATIONS,+ HE ADDED.

SIR DAVID NOTED THAT DR CHAM HAD DRAWN ATTENTION TO SATELLITE BROADCAST RECEPTION SYSTEMS AND TO RECENT IMPROVEMENTS IN TECHNOLOGY.

IT MIGHT BE, HE ADDED, WITH THE HIGH-DENSITY, HIGH-RISE RESIDENTIAL AREAS, AND THE PREVALENT USE OF COMMUNAL AERIALS IN THESE HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS, THAT ECONOMIES OF SCALE WOULD MAKE THESE SYSTEMS MORE VIABLE IN HONG KONG.

+IT WILL, THEREFORE, BE ESSENTIAL TO REAPPRAISE THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE REPORT ON CABLEVISION AND SATELLITE BROADCASTING IN THE LIGHT OF THESE FRESH DEVELOPMENTS,+ HE SAID.

NOTING THAT SOME OF THE BOARD'S PROPOSALS HAD BEEN THE SUBJECT OF A VIGOROUS PUBLIC DEBATE, SIR DAVID SAID, +THE OBJECTIVE NOW IS TO SEE BEYOND THE CONTROVERSIES, TO AVOID BEING SWAYED BY EMOTION AND TENDENTIOUS ARGUMENTS, AND TO TAKE A COOL LOOK AT THE REAL ISSUES IN ORDER TO ARRIVE AT SOLUTIONS WHICH WILL BE WELCOMED BY THE PUBLIC AND, VIEWED DISPASSIONATELY, ACCEPTED BY THE PRIVATE INTERESTS INVOLVED.+

HE SAID THE RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE BOARD, THE VIEWS OF MEMBERS EXPRESSED TODAY, OTHER REPRESENTATIONS THAT HAD BEEN MADE AND THE NEED TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE IMPLICATIONS OF CABLEVISION AND SATELLITE BROADCASTING HAD ALL TO BE BROUGHT TOGETHER BY THE GOVERNMENT.

SIR DAVID SAID, +CONCLUSIONS MUST BE REACHED IN THE LIGHT OF THE ADVICE RECEIVED AND THESE CONCLUSIONS MUST BE PUBLICLY EXPLAINED.

+WHATEVER DECISIONS ARE TAKEN, THEY MUST BE TAKEN IN WITH THE AIM OF IMPROVING THE INDUSTRY, OF FOSTERING ITS GROWTH AND ITS COMPETITIVENESS, ITS SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY, ITS CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE, TO ENJOYMENT, TO INFORMATION AND ITS SERVICES TO THE PEOPLE.+

SIR DAVID THANKED MEMBERS WHO FORMED AN AD-HOC GROUP TO STUDY THE REPORT, ADDING THAT THEIR OBSERVATIONS AND THE RECOMMENDATIONS WERE AN INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTION.

HE ALSO THANKED THE HON MR JUSTICE POWER AND THE MEMBERS OF THE REVIEW BOARD FOR THEIR AWARENESS OF THE HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY PLACED UPON THEM AND FOR PROVIDING SUCH A COMPREHENSIVE AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING DOCUMENT.

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UNOFFICIALS REACH CONSENSUS ON EIGHT PRINCIPLES

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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S AD HOC GROUP FORMED TO STUDY THE REPORT OF THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD HAS REACHED UNANIMOUS CONSENSUS ON EIGHT PRINCIPLES WHICH HAVE BEEN ENDORSED BY ALL UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS, DR THE HON HO KAM-FAI TOLD THE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

DR HO, CONVENER OF THE GROUP, WAS LEADING OFF THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BOARD'S REPORT.

ELABORATING ON THE EIGHT PRINCIPLES, DR HO SAID THAT FIRST THE GOVERNMENT HAD A DUTY TO PRESCRIBE BROAD GUIDELINES ON THE STANDARDS AND TYPES OF PROGRAMMES APPROPRIATE FOR THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY AND THAT THE INDUSTRY SHOULD BE SUBJECT TO SOME FORM OF REGULATION AND MONITORING IN THE INTEREST OF THE COMMUNITY.

+SECOND, THE AIRWAVES ARE THE LIMITED PROPERTY OF THE COMMUNITY, AND THEREFORE, NOT ONLY DOES THE RIGHT TO BROADCAST MUST BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE COMMUNITY, PAYMENT SHOULD BE MADE TO THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE USE OF THE AIRWAVES,+ HE SAID.

THIRD, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST WATCH DEVELOPMENTS, SUCH AS CABLE TELEVISION AND DIRECT SATELLITE TRANSMISSIONS, ESPECIALLY AS THEY APPLY TO HONG KONG.

FOURTH, FAIR AND HEALTHY COMPETITION WOULD ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF TELEVISION AND RADIO PROGRAMMES AND WOULD BENEFIT BOTH THE PUBLIC AND THE INDUSTRY.

FIFTH, THE RIGHT TO BROADCAST SHOULD BE LIMITED, FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS REVIEW, TO COMMERCIAL LICENSEES AND A PUBLIC BROADCASTER.

SIXTH, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REGULATE AND MONITOR THE PERFORMANCE OF THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY AND THIS SHOULD BE ENTRUSTED TO A BROADCASTING AUTHORITY.

+THE AUTHORITY SHOULD, HAVING REGARD TO THE PREVAILING STANDARD OF PUBLIC DECENCY, ENSURE THAT AN ADEQUATE, COMPREHENSIVE AND BALANCED SERVICE WHICH IS RESPONSIVE TO THE DIVERSE NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE COMMUNITY, IS PROVIDED,+ DR HO SAID.

HE ADDED THAT PUBLIC HEARINGS SHOULD BE HELD BEFORE PERMISSION WAS GIVEN TO BROADCAST AT WHICH THE PERFORMANCE OF EXISTING LICENSEES, THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER, AND POTENTIAL APPLICANTS, WAS EXAMINED.

SEVENTH, THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY SHOULD ENSURE ITS PROGRAMMING WAS BALANCED IN CONTENT, ENTERTAINING, INFORMATIVE AND EDUCATIONAL AND AT THE SAME TIME SHOULD CONFORM TO ALL TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PRODUCTION AND TRANSMISSION OF PROGRAMMES.

/EIGHTH, THERE

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EIGHTH, THERE SHOULD BE A PUBLIC BROADCASTER WHICH SHOULD REPORT TO A BOARD OF GOVERNORS APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR WITH CAREFULLY SELECTED MEMBERS.

IT SHOULD HAVE EDITORIAL AUTONOMY AND THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SUPPORT THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER WITH PUBLIC FUNDS, DR HO NOTED.

HE ADDED THAT THE UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS WERE ALSO UNANIMOUS IN THEIR SUPPORT FOR UPHOLDING THE GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-SMOKING POLICY THOUGH THEY HAD DIFFERENT VIEWS ON HOW AND AT WHAT PACE THIS POLICY SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED.

DR HO THEN EXPRESSED HIS PERSONAL VIEWS ON THE ROLE OF RTHK AND THE LICENCE PERIOD FOR THE TELEVISION INDUSTRY.

HE POINTED OUT THAT A SIGNIFICANT ROLE OF RTHK IN FUTURE WAS TO ENSURE A BALANCED TELEVISION PROGRAMMING OF ENTERTAINMENT, INFORMATION AND EDUCATION.

+TO THIS END, I PROPOSE THAT RTHK SHOULD PRODUCE MORE PUBLIC AFFAIRS, EDUCATIONAL AND ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMES AND SECURE AN EXTENDED ACCESS TO THE AIRTIME OF THE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION LICENSEES FOR THEIR SCREENING THROUGH PROVISIONS IN THE FUTURE BROADCASTING ORDINANCE, SPECIFICATIONS IN THE NEW LICENSING CONDITIONS AND MUTUAL CONSULTATIONS,+ HE SAID.

A MORE FLEXIBLE USE OF AIR-TIME ON WEEKDAYS AND WEEKENDS IN PREFERENCE TO THE SERVICE SHARING OPTION AND WEEKEND OPTION PERMITTED THE SCREENING OF A GREATER VARIETY OF RTHK PROGRAMMES, HE SUGGESTED.

THESE ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION LICENSEES AS EVIDENCED BY THE FACT THAT RTHK ALREADY HAD 14 HOURS PER WEEK ON THE FOUR CHANNELS WITH ABOUT A QUARTER WITHIN PRIME TIME ON WEEKDAYS AND WEEKENDS, HE SAID.

DR HO SAID HE WAS SATISFIED THAT RTHK DID ENJOY EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE AS REFLECTED BY FINDINGS OF THE TELEVISION AND ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING AUTHORITY AUDIENCE SURVEY BUT HE CAUTIONED THAT RELIANCE ON ADVERTISING REVENUE WOULD INEVITABLY SUBJECT EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE TO COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS.

HE THEREFORE AGREED THAT A BOARD OF GOVERNORS BE SET UP, COMPOSED OF A CROSS-SECTION OF COMMUNITY LEADERS IN DIVERSIFIED FIELDS, MEDIA EXPERTS AND TWO LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLORS, AND CHAIRED BY AN UNOFFICIAL MEMBER TO ENSURE THAT RTHK WOULD REMAIN AN AUTONOMOUS ORGANISATION, INSULATED AGAINST EXTERNAL PRESSURES AND RESTRAINTS.

/+IN ADDITION,

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+IN ADDITION, RTHK SHOULD BE FINANCED BY PUBLIC FUNDS THROUGH LEGISLATIVE PROCEDURES, AND BY A COMBINATION OF INCOMES, SUCH AS CHARGES FROM THE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION LICENSEES FOR RELEASE OF ITS PRODUCTIONS AND COMMERCIAL SPONSORSHIP AND ADVERTISING,+ HE SAID.

HE SOUNDED A NOTE OF WARNING AGAINST THE ARGUMENT THAT RTHK BE DISESTABLISHED FROM THE GOVERNMENT MACHINERY AS THE MOST DESIRABLE MEANS OF ACQUIRING INDEPENDENCE.

+HIVING-OFF IS LIKELY TO BE PERCEIVED BY THE PUBLIC AS A DELIBERATE GOVERNMENT MOVE TO RELINQUISH MORE AND MORE OF ITS RESPONSIBILITIES AND OBLIGATIONS IN THE SENSITIVE TRANSITION PERIOD, THUS CAUSING UNNECESSARY EROSION OF CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT,+ HE WARNED.

DR HO ALSO WARNED THAT DISESTABLISHMENT, IF NOT HANDLED JUDICIOUSLY, WOULD CREATE DISSATISFACTION AMONG SOME SEGMENTS OF THE STAFF AND HENCE WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THEIR MORALE AND LOYALTY.

TURNING TO THE LICENCE PERIOD FOR THE TELEVISION INDUSTRY, DR HO WAS OF THE VIEW THAT IT SHOULD BE FOR 15 YEARS RATHER THAN EIGHT YEARS AS PROPOSED BY THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD.

HE NOTED THAT THE TELEVISION INDUSTRY REQUIRED HEAVY CAPITAL INVESTMENT IN FACILITIES, TECHNOLOGICAL INSTALLATIONS, HUMAN RESOURCES AND PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT.

HE BELIEVED A LONG-TERM LICENCE WOULD INDUCE THE LICENSEES TO ACQUIRE TOP-RATED PROGRAMME RIGHTS AND MAKE LONG-TERM PLANS TO TRAIN PRODUCERS, ARTISTS AND SCRIPT WRITERS WHO WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN PRODUCING QUALITY PROGRAMMES.

BUSINESS CONFIDENCE IN THE TERRITORY WOULD ALSO BE BOOSTED, HE SAID.

HE SAID THAT AN EIGHT-YEAR LICENCE MIGHT DETER A LICENSEE FROM INJECTING SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENTS TO IMPROVE THE TELEVISION STATION'S CAPABILITY, THUS PERPETUATING THE CURRENT STATE OF LOPSIDED DOMINANCE PREVAILING IN THE INDUSTRY.

+THIS WILL WORK AGAINST THE IDEAL OF FAIR COMPETITION WHICH THE BRB REPORT WOULD LIKE TO REALISE,+ HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT THE PUBLIC HEARINGS AT REGULAR INTERVALS, REINFORCED BY THE POWER TO IMPOSE NEW LICENSING CONDITIONS, WERE EFFECTIVE SAFEGUARDS AGAINST ABUSE OF A LONG LICENCE PERIOD AND THAT THERE WERE ALREADY OTHER EXAMPLES OF THE GOVERNMENT GRANTING LICENCES TO OPERATORS OF SOME IMPORTANT PROJECTS BEYOND 1997.

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BAN ON ADVERTISING BY FISCAL MEASURES PROPOSED
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TOBACCO AND CIGARETTE ADVERTISING SHOULD BE BANNED BY FISCAL MEASURES INSTEAD OF FORCED PROHIBITION, THE HON S.L. CHEN SUGGESTED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT, MR CHEN SAID HE DID NOT AGREE WITH THE REPORT'S RECOMMENDATION THAT TOBACCO AND CIGARETTE ADVERTISING IN THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA SHOULD BE TOTALLY BANNED.

+IF A HEALTH HAZARD IS THE SOLE REASON FOR BANNING ADVERTISING IN THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA, I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT BANNING SHOULD BE TOTAL. IN OTHER WORD, THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA SHOULD NOT BE SINGLED OUT FOR THIS PURPOSE; OTHER FORMS OF MEDIA SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AT THE SAME TIME,+ HE SAID.

IN SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-SMOKING POLICY, MR CHEN PROPOSED A MIDDLE COURSE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM - THAT ALL TOBACCO AND CIGARETTE ADVERTISING SHOULD BE BANNED BY FISCAL MEASURES, SUCH AS THE IMPOSITION OF A TAX ON ADVERTISING.

HE SAID THE TAX SHOULD BE INCREASED PROGRESSIVELY FROM YEAR TO YEAR, SO THAT THE COST OF ADVERTISING WOULD EVENTUALLY BECOME SO PROHIBITIVE AS TO DISCOURAGE ADVERTISING ALTOGETHER.

MR CHEN BELIEVED THERE WAS A NEED TO REVIEW THE EXISTING CONTROL AND MONITORING FUNCTIONS OF ADVERTISING IN THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA.

HE SAID UNDER THE PRESENT REGULATION ONLY A CERTAIN PORTION OF BROADCASTING TIME WAS PERMITTED TO BE USED FOR ADVERTISING PURPOSES.

+AS A RESULT, THE BROADCASTER MAY LENGTHEN THE BROADCASTING TIME QUITE UNNECESSARILY SIMPLY AS A MEANS TO GAIN THE MAXIMUM PERMISSIBLE ADVERTISING TIME,+ HE EXPLAINED.

HE WAS CONCERNED THAT THIS WOULD RESULT IN MOST OF THE ADVERTISING TIME BEING CRAMPED INTO THE SO-CALLED PRIME TIME WITH THE RESULT THAT ADVERTISEMENTS OCCUPIED A LARGE PROPORTION OF THIS TIME.

+I THEREFORE SUPPORT THE PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE EXISTING REGULATIONS TO STIPULATE CLEARLY THE PERMISSIBLE ADVERTISING TIME,+ HE SAID.

ON THE QUESTION OF AN INDEPENDENT PUBLIC BROADCASTER, MR CHEN SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT A TOTALLY INDEPENDENT ORGANISATION WOULD BE A FINANCIALLY VIABLE PROPOSITION IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

/+GOVERNMENT SHOULD

+GOVERNMENT SHOULD THEREFORE CONTINUE TO GIVE FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG BUT APPROPRIATE STEPS MUST BE TAKEN TO IMPROVE ITS EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID HE COULD NOT SHARE THE VIEW THAT RTHK SHOULD BE DISESTABLISHED IN ORDER TO ENSURE MAXIMUM EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE.

+TO DISESTABLISH RTHK WOULD BE A VERY COSTLY EXERCISE AND UNLESS THERE IS A RADICAL CHANGE IN THE STAFF, MERELY TO DISESTABLISH WOULD NOT FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE OF COMPLETE EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE,+ MR CHEN CONCLUDED.

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SOME BASIC ISSUES NEED EXAMINING
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THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE ADDRESSED IN SUFFICIENT DETAIL THE NEED FOR A CONTINUED VIABLE TELEVISION INDUSTRY IN HONG KONG, THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG SAID DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE REPORT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR CHEONG SAID THE REPORT DID NOT INCLUDE EXAMINATION OF THE DEGREE OF CONTRIBUTION, OR OTHERWISE, THE TELEVISION INDUSTRY CURRENTLY MIGHT HAVE ON OUR SOCIETY OR SOME BASIC QUESTIONS, THE ANSWERS OF WHICH WERE FUNDAMENTAL AND CRUCIAL TO THE FORMULATION OF NEW POLICIES.

+THE BOARD SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN FOR GRANTED THAT THERE WILL IN FUTURE BE A VIABLE TELEVISION INDUSTRY AND THEREFORE DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE EXAMINED IN SUFFICIENT DEPTH THE ADVERSE IMPACT, OR OTHERWISE, THEIR VARIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS MIGHT HAVE ON THE CONTINUED ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF THE INDUSTRY,+ HE SAID.

MR CHEONG POINTED OUT THAT WATCHING TELEVISION HAD BECOME AN IMPORTANT PART OF PEOPLE'S LIFE OVER THE PAST 20 YEARS AND ACTED AS A BALANCE TO THE DAILY PRESSURES OF SOCIETY.

HE SAID THIS HAD IN TURN CONTRIBUTED TOWARDS THE GENERAL STABILITY OF SOCIETY, AND HE URGED THAT ANY POLICIES, THE IMPLEMENTATION OF WHICH WOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF DAMAGING THE VIABILITY OF THE FUTURE TELEVISION INDUSTRY, MUST BE APPROACHED WITH EXTREME CAUTION.

+I PLEAD THEREFORE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL SHOULD SERIOUSLY TAKE THIS ASPECT INTO CONSIDERATION IN THEIR FUTURE DELIBERATIONS,+ HE SAID.

TURNING TO THE QUESTION OF THE NEED FOR A PUBLIC BROADCASTING SERVICE, MR CHEONG NOTED THERE HAD BEEN CONCERN OVER THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF TELEVISION PROGRAMMES SCREENED BY THE TWO COMMERCIAL STATIONS AND HE AGREED THAT THERE WAS A NEED TO ENSURE A PROPER BALANCE OF PROGRAMMES.

HE ALSO SUPPORTED IN PRINCIPLE THE VIEW THAT THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER BE GIVEN AUTONOMOUS EDITORIAL CONTROL.

+YET I AM OF THE OPINION THAT THE PROBLEMS AND THE DETAILS OF HOW THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING SERVICE WOULD BE MANAGED, CONTROLLED AND FINANCED SHOULD BE ADDRESSED BY PROFESSIONALS IN THE TRADE RATHER THAN IMPOSED UPON BY NON-PRACTITIONERS,+ HE SAID.

MR CHEONG SAID THAT AFTER SEEKING ADVICE FROM SOME PROFESSIONALS INVOLVED IN THE INDUSTRY, HIS INITIAL CONCLUSION WAS THAT THE PARTICULAR ARRANGEMENT RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD MIGHT NOT BE PRACTICAL TO ALL THE PARTIES CONCERNED, INCLUDING THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER ITSELF.

HE FELT THAT THE ARRANGEMENT MIGHT HAVE THEORETICAL MERITS YET FALL SHORT IN PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS. HE CALLED ON THE ADMINISTRATION TO WORK OUT OTHER FORMULAE TO ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVE.

+IN WORKING OUT POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE FORMULAE, IT IS MY EARNEST HOPE THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD APPROACH THE PROBLEMS PRINCIPALLY FROM A PRAGMATIC ANGLE, TAKING INTO FULL ACCOUNT ALL THE OPERATIONAL DIFFICULTIES AS WELL AS THE QUESTION OF THE CONTINUED VIABILITY OF THE FUTURE TELEVISION INDUSTRY,+ HE STRESSED.

MR CHEONG THEN DISCUSSED THE PROPOSED BANNING OF TOBACCO ADVERTISING ON TELEVISION.

+IT IS MY CONSIDERED VIEW THAT SUCH A STEP IS FAR TOO DRASTIC AND THE JUSTIFICATIONS FOR THE DRASTIC STEP HAVE NOT BEEN CLEARLY ESTABLISHED,+ HE SAID.

HE POINTED OUT THAT SURVEYS TAKEN IN WESTERN COUNTRIES HAD INDICATED CLEARLY THAT BANNING OF TOBACCO ADVERTISING ON TELEVISION HAD NOT REALLY ACHIEVED THE INTENDED RESULT.

+IN MY VIEW, WE SHOULD NOT TAKE ANY ACTION FOR EMOTIONAL REASONS KNOWING FULL WELL THAT THE PROPOSALS, EVEN IF IMPLEMENTED, WOULD NOT CONCLUSIVELY AND DECISIVELY ACHIEVE THE DECLARED OBJECTIVE,+ HE SAID.

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PHASED TOBACCO AD BAN URGED
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TOBACCO ADVERTISING SHOULD BE PROHIBITED IN PHASES AS A MEANS OF REDUCING THE TIME DURING WHICH YOUNG PEOPLE ARE EXPOSED TO SUCH ADVERTISEMENTS, THE HON CHEUNG YAN-LUNG SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD'S REPORT, MR CHEUNG SUGGESTED THAT THAT PRESENT BAN ON TOBACCO ADVERTISING BETWEEN 4.30 AM-6.30 PM BE EXTENDED TO 8.30 PM, AND THEN TO 11.30 PM.

MR CHEUNG SAID THAT AT THE SAME TIME THE STYLE OF THE ADVERTISEMENTS SHOULD BE CONTROLLED IN ORDER TO AVOID THE IMPLANTING OF ANY SENSUOUS OR ILLUSIONARY IMAGES ABOUT SMOKING.

+THIS METHOD WOULD REDUCE THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF ADVERTISEMENTS AND IT WOULD ALSO ALLOW BREATHING SPACE FOR THE TELEVISION STATIONS AND ADVERTISING AGENTS TO FINANCIALLY ADJUST BEFORE TOBACCO ADVERTISEMENTS ARE COMPLETELY BANNED,+ HE SAID.

+CONCURRENTLY THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD FURTHER STRENGTHEN PUBLICITY ON THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF SMOKING AS A MEANS TO IMPLEMENT THE ANTI-SMOKING POLICY,+ HE ADDED.

ON OTHER ASPECTS OF THE REPORT, MR CHEUNG SAID HE DID NOT SUPPORT THE RECOMMENDATION THAT THE PROPOSED PUBLIC BROADCASTER BE ALLOCATED THE 7 PM- 8 PM TIME SLOT OF THE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION STATIONS.

HE SAID THE RE-ALLOCATION OF THE TIME SLOT DID NOT GUARANTEE A SELF-SUFFICIENT PUBLIC BROADCASTER, YET IT WOULD HAVE A TREMENDOUS FINANCIAL EFFECT ON THE COMMERCIAL STATIONS.

HE FURTHER POINTED OUT THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSAL MIGHT RESULT IN A LOWERING OF PROGRAMME STANDARDS OF THE COMMERCIAL STATIONS BECAUSE OF A REDUCTION IN INCOME.

THEREFORE MR CHEUNG SUPPORTED THE WEEKEND OPTION, WHICH WAS ALSO RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD, AS A REASONABLE SOLUTION, BECAUSE RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG WAS ALREADY TAKING A SIZEABLE PORTION OF THE WEEKEND AIR-TIME.

THE WEEKEND OPTION WOULD ACCOMMODATE THE DESIRE TO HAVE A BETTER PROGRAMME CHOICE WITHOUT AFFECTING THE COMMERCIAL STATIONS TOO SERIOUSLY, HE ADDED.

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GOVERNMENT URGED TO RIGHT OLD WRONGS IN TELEVISION

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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD RIGHT ITS HISTORICAL WRONGS IN FAILING TO REGULATE THE TELEVISION INDUSTRY FOR TRANSMISSION OF EQUAL QUALITY AND COVERAGE BY BOTH LICENSEES, THE HON SELINA CHOW SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT, MRS CHOW HAD FIRST DECLARED AN INTEREST AS PROGRAMME CONSULTANT TO THE HONG KONG TELEPHONE COMPANY WHICH WAS SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION TO THE GOVERNMENT TO OPERATE A CABLE TELEVISION SERVICE IN HONG KONG.

SHE SAID SHE FULLY SUPPORTED THE RECOMMENDATION THAT THE NEW TELEVISION LICENSEES SHOULD MAKE PROVISIONS FOR THE SHARING OF A COMMON ANTENNA ON A SINGLE TOWER BY ALL TELEVISION COMPANIES.

HOWEVER, THIS ARRANGEMENT MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A REALLOCATION OF FREQUENCY, SHE OBSERVED.

+GOVERNMENT MUST SEEK TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS THAT AFFECT TRANSMISSION SO AS TO STIMULATE AND FACILITATE FAIR COMPETITION, FROM WHICH BOTH THE PUBLIC AND THE INDUSTRY CAN ONLY BENEFIT,+ SHE SAID.

REFERRING TO PRE-BROADCAST CENSORSHIP, A PRESENT PRACTICE WHICH SHE CONSIDERED AS ANOTHER OLD WRONG, MRS CHOW ADVOCATED THAT IT SHOULD BE SUBSTITUTED BY THE ADMINISTRATION OR THE FUTURE REGULATING AUTHORITY BY SELF DISCIPLINE WITHIN THE INDUSTRY.

+THE INDUSTRY, NEEDLESS TO SAY, MUST TAKE IT ON TO ITSELF TO ABIDE BY STANDARDS LAID DOWN IN THE BROADCASTING ORDINANCE, WHICH WILL BE SAFEGUARDED AND ENFORCED BY THE REGULATING INDUSTRY,+ SHE ADDED. SHE STRESSED THAT SHE WAS NOT IN ANY WAY PROPOSING A RELAXATION OF EXISTING STANDARDS.

ON THE RECOMMENDED RETENTION OF TWO ENGLISH CHANNELS, SHE SAID IT WAS REGRETTABLE THAT THE BOARD HAD NOT RECOMMENDED A MORE ECONOMICAL AND EFFECTIVE USE OF AVAILABLE CHANNELS BY RESTRUCTURING EXISTING ENGLISH CHANNELS.

+THE BOLD MOVE OF THE REDUCTION OF ONE ENGLISH CHANNEL CAN MEAN CONSIDERABLE SAVINGS IN THE PROCUREMENT OF IMPORTED PROGRAMMES AS WELL AS THE ELIMINATION OF WASTAGE WHICH RESULTS FROM OFTEN IDENTICAL PROGRAMME SCHEDULE OF THE TWO COMPETING CHANNELS.

+MEANWHILE THAT CHANNEL VACATED CAN BE USED FOR MINORITY PROGRAMMING IN CHINESE,+ SHE SUGGESTED.

MRS CHOW SAID SHE ENTIRELY AGREED WITH THE RECOMMENDATION THAT RTHK SHOULD BECOME AN AUTONOMOUS ORGANISATION WITH ITS OWN BOARD OF GOVERNORS AND STAFF, SEPARATE FROM AND INDEPENDENT OF GOVERNMENT AND THE CIVIL SERVICE.

/IT SHOULD

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IT SHOULD BE SUBVENTED BY GOVERNMENT WITH THE SAME RULES FOR SPONSORSHIP THAT PRESENTLY APPLIED, WHICH MEANT THERE SHOULD BE NO SALE OF COMMERCIAL SPOTS BUT ONLY INSTITUTIONAL SPONSORSHIP, SHE SAID.

ON THE AIR-TIME FOR THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER, MRS CHOW SAID SHE DID NOT SUPPORT THE SEVEN TO EIGHT WEEKDAY STRIP NOR THE WEEKEND OPTION.

+THE FORMER AUDIENCE MIX PLACES LIMITATION ON THE PROGRAMME TYPE OF PUBLIC SERVICE PRODUCTION WHILE THE LATTER REQUIRES RTHK TO ESTABLISH ITSELF AS A WEEKEND STATION, WHICH IS NOT A ROLE IT HAS HITHERTO ASSUMED,+ SHE SAID.

SHE QUERIED WHETHER THERE WAS A NEED OR CALL FOR A PUBLIC SERVICE STATION AT ALL.

+IN MY VIEW PUBLIC SERVICE PROGRAMMES INSPIRED AND INITIATED BY FACTORS OTHER THAN COMMERCIAL PROFITS SERVE A MUCH MORE VALUABLE PURPOSE AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE PROGRAMMING SCHEDULE OF EXISTING COMMERCIAL SERVICES, PROVIDED THEY ARE GIVEN THE PROFESSIONAL RESPECT THEY DESERVE AND THE TIME SLOTS THEY BELONG TO IN THESE SCHEDULES,+ SHE SAID.

+THIS WOULD MEAN OF COURSE THAT THE AUTHORITY WHICH IS LUMBERED WITH THE TASK OF ENFORCING THE NEW LICENSING CONDITIONS, MUST BE GIVEN THE POWERS, BY LEGISLATION, AND MUST HAVE THE GUMPTION TO USE THOSE POWERS, EVEN IF IT MEANS STANDING UP TO PERSUASIVE LOBBYING OR FIERCE OPPOSITION BY THE COMMERCIAL COMPANIES, WHEN IT IS SATISFIED THAT PUBLIC INTEREST IS BEING SERVED,+ SHE STRESSED.

ON THE PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A BROADCASTING AUTHORITY, MRS CHOW SAID IT WAS +A DEFINITE IMPROVEMENT ON PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS+.

HOWEVER, SHE SAID IT WAS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL THAT PROFESSIONALS WERE INCLUDED IN THE AUTHORITY SO THAT THE INDUSTRY WOULD NOT BE REGULATED ENTIRELY BY PEOPLE WHO COULD ONLY ASSESS POINTS PUT FORWARD BY THE INDUSTRY AS OUTSIDERS AND ON A THEORETICAL LEVEL, WITH NEITHER THE INSIGHT NOR THE PRACTICAL UNDERSTANDING SO VERY NECESSARY AS THE BASIS OF JUDGEMENT.

LASTLY, MRS CHOW SAID SHE DID NOT SEE THE NEED FOR A COMPLAINTS TRIBUNAL.

WHILE ACCEPTING THAT THERE MIGHT BE A NEED FOR COMMUNITY INPUT IN THE ASSESSMENT OF WHETHER STANDARDS HAD BEEN BREACHED BY THE INDUSTRY, MRS CHOW BELIEVED THIS COULD BE EASILY ENSURED BY THE APPOINTMENT OF ASSESSORS TO ASSIST JUDGES WHEN BROADCASTERS WERE TAKEN TO COURT, WITHOUT THE SETTING UP OF YET FURTHER MACHINERY OUTSIDE THE EXISTING JUDICIAL SYSTEM.

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PHASED-OUT TOTAL BAN ON TOBACCO ADS URGED
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THE TOTAL BAN ON TOBACCO ADVERTISING ON TELEVISION AND RADIO AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD (BRB) REPORT, SHOULD BE APPLIED EQUALLY TO ALL MEDIA OF ADVERTISING, DR THE HON HENRIETTA IP SAID TODAY.

EXPRESSING HER DETERMINED ATTITUDE TOWARDS BANNING CIGARETTE ADVERTISING AT THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BRB REPORT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, DR IP CALLED FOR THE TOTAL BAN TO BE PHASED OUT OVER A PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS.

+IN VIEW OF THE INFILTRATION OF ADVERTISING, THE BAN OUGHT TO BE TOTAL. IT SHOULD BE APPLIED EQUALLY TO ALL MEDIA OF ADVERTISING AND NOT BROADCASTING ALONE AND SHOULD BE INTRODUCED IN A GRADUAL AND CO-ORDINATED FASHION,+ SHE SAID.

DR IP SAID SHE WAS NOT SUGGESTING THAT THE TOTAL BAN SHOULD TAKE IMMEDIATE EFFECT WHEN THE NEW LICENCES COMMENCE IN 1989.

POINTING OUT THAT MANY OF THE ADVERTISING AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS WOULD BE AFFECTED BY SUCH INTERDICTION, DR IP PROPOSED: +TO ALLOW THESE ORGANISATIONS TO ADJUST TO A DIFFERENT MODE OF BUSINESS, THE BAN SHOULD BE PHASED OUT WITH A VIEW TO ACHIEVING A TOTAL BAN, SAY, IN FIVE YEARS' TIME, AS THIS PERIOD SHOULD BE ADEQUATE TO CANVASS NEW BUSINESS.+

SHE SAID IT WAS WRONG TO THINK THAT ADVERTISING WAS THE SOLE CAUSE OF SMOKING BUT A MORE IMPORTANT CAUSE WAS A PSYCHOSOCIAL ONE.

THEREFORE, SHE SAID, IT WAS MORE POSITIVE AND SENSIBLE TO FIND WAYS TO MAKE LIVING IN HONG KONG LESS STRESSFUL.

+TOO RADICAL AND ABRUPT CHANGES IN OUR WAYS OF LIFE IS IN ITSELF A STRESS,+ SHE SAID.

DR IP SAID SHE ALSO BELIEVED THAT A TOTAL BAN ON TOBACCO ADVERTISING COULD FOSTER THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ANTI-SMOKING CAMPAIGN.

SHE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD HEEDED AND RESPONSIVELY ORGANISED THE ANTI-SMOKING CAMPAIGN, WHICH WAS COMPREHENSIVE AND OF AN APPROPRIATE SCALE.

HOWEVER, IT WAS AN ONEROUS TASK TO COMPETE WITH THE EFFECTIVE AND ENTERTAINING TOBACCO ADVERTISING WHICH WAS BEING CONDUCTED ON AN ENORMOUS SCALE.

/+IT IS

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+IT IS FRUSTRATING THAT THE DETERRENT MESSAGE ARE UNDULY UNDERMINED BY THE LURING EFFECT OF SUCH ADVERTISING.

+IN FACT, IT IS AN OUTRIGHT WASTE OF PUBLIC MONEY TO TAX PROFITS ARISING FROM TOBACCO ADVERTISING AND TO SPEND IT ON THE ANTI-SMOKING CAMPAIGN SUBSEQUENTLY,+ SHE SAID.

DR IP REITERATED THAT IT WAS NOT FAIR TO SAY THAT A TOTAL BAN ON TOBACCO ADVERTISING WAS A CONFLICT WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF FREE ENTERPRISE AND FREEDOM OF CHOICE.

+IN FACT, THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROPOSAL IS TO ALLOW THE PUBLIC TO BE FREE FROM LURING AND TO BE ABLE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN GOOD HEALTH AND CIGARETTES CONSCIOUSLY YET FREELY,+ SHE SAID.

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+PUBLIC STATION - THE MOST CONVENIENT AND EFFECTIVE MEDIUM+
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AN INDEPENDENT BROADCASTING STATION AS PROPOSED BY THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD IS THE ANSWER TO A CONSISTENTLY NEUTRAL, ACCURATE MEDIUM, THE HON CHAN YING-LUN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BRB REPORT, MR CHAN SAID THE STATION WOULD ALSO MAKE UP FOR THE LIMITATIONS OF COMMERCIAL STATIONS AS IT WOULD HAVE THE SOLE OBJECTIVE OF SERVING THE PUBLIC INTEREST AND NOTHING ELSE.

HE HAD GREAT EXPECTATIONS THAT THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING STATION WOULD DELIVER THE GOODS.

IT WOULD, UNDER THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS CONSISTING OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC, PRODUCE PROGRAMMES THAT PRESENT TO VIEWERS ALL FACTS AND ARGUMENTS WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR, MR CHAN SAID.

+PARTICULARLY ON PUBLIC ISSUES WHEN THE PUBLIC NEED THE FULL FACTS BEFORE THEY CAN ARRIVE AT THEIR OWN INFORMED CONCLUSIONS,+ HE ADDED.

ITS PERFORMANCE WOULD ALSO STIMULATE THE COMMERCIAL STATIONS TO ACHIEVE EVEN GREATER STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE, HE SAID.

IN ORDER TO ENABLE THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING STATION TO FULFIL ITS ROLE, ITS PROGRAMMES MUST COINCIDE WITH THE OFF-WORK LEISURE HOURS OF MOST PEOPLE SO AS TO GIVE IT A WIDE AND SUBSTANTIAL AUDIENCE, MR CHAN CONCLUDED.

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UPGC A GUIDE FOR FINANCING

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THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES OF A PUBLIC BROADCASTER SHOULD COME MAINLY FROM TAXPAYERS AND PERHAPS PARTLY FROM SPONSORS, THE HON RITA FAN SAID DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MRS FAN PROPOSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER THE METHOD OF FINANCING HIGHER EDUCATION AS A REFERENCE, AND SUBSIDISE THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER THROUGH AN ORGANISATION SIMILAR TO THE UNIVERSITY AND POLYTECHNIC GRANTS COMMITTEE.

+IT IS FORESEEABLE THAT THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF APPROPRIATION WILL, IN THE NEAR FUTURE, EXCEED THE CURRENT EXPENDITURE OF RTHK. BUT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD EXPLORE MEANS TO BOOST PUBLIC REVENUE, E.G. BY LEVYING A REASONABLE AMOUNT OF ROYALTY, SO AS TO COPE WITH THE INCREASE IN EXPENDITURE.+

MRS FAN SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THE REORGANISATION OF RTHK INTO A PUBLIC BROADCASTER HAD ALREADY RECEIVED MAJORITY SUPPORT FROM THE PUBLIC, THE QUESTION OF HOW TO INCREASE THE TELEVISION AIR-TIME OF THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER HAD AROUSED MUCH DISPUTE.

IN PRINCIPLE, SHE THOUGHT THE AIR-TIME OF THE CHINESE CHANNELS OVER THE WEEKEND COULD BE ALLOCATED TO THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER. COMMERCIAL LICENSEES COULD NEGOTIATE WITH THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER FOR AN EXCHANGE OF AIR-TIME AND SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WOULD OFFER A FAIRLY HIGH DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY AND, IF SUITABLY APPLIED, WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO BOTH SIDES.

REGARDING THE NEW LICENCE PERIOD, MRS FAN PROPOSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER EXTENDING THE VALIDITY OF THE LICENCE PERIOD TO 12 YEARS SO AS TO ATTRACT TENDERERS OF GOOD QUALITY.

+SOME PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE DOUBTS ON THE FEASIBILITY OF EXTENDING THE LICENCE PERIOD BEYOND 1997 AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE FUTURE SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION GOVERNMENT.

+BUT I THINK THAT BY DOING SO, THE PUBLIC WOULD GAIN GREATER CONFIDENCE IN THE SMOOTH TRANSITION OF GOVERNMENT IN 1997, BECAUSE THIS IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF MAINTAINING THE 'STATUS QUO',+ SHE SAID.

ON THE PROPOSAL TO BAN TOBACCO ADVERTISEMENTS, MRS FAN SAID THE CRUX OF THE PROBLEM LAY IN THE PUBLIC'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS SMOKING. SHE FELT THAT ALTHOUGH MOST PEOPLE THOUGHT THAT SMOKING SHOULD NOT BE ENCOURAGED, OPINION HAD NOT REACHED THE STAGE THAT SMOKING SHOULD BE BANNED.

/+FROM THE

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+FROM THE COMMERCIAL POINT OF VIEW, ONCE COMMERCIAL RADIO AND TELEVISION STATIONS ARE DEPRIVED OF THEIR REVENUE FROM TOBACCO ADVERTISING, THEIR PRODUCTIONS WILL INEVITABLY BE AFFECTED,+ SHE SAID.

IN SUM, MRS FAN PROPOSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER BANNING TOBACCO ADVERTISEMENTS ON TELEVISION BETWEEN 4.30 PM AND 11 PM= LEVYING HEAVIER TAXES ON TOBACCO PRODUCTS AND USING THE REVENUE TO PUBLICISE THE HARMFULNESS OF SMOKING AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE= AND MAKING TOBACCO ADVERTISEMENTS SUBJECT TO CENSORSHIP.

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CALL TO FACILITATE RECEPTION OF SATELLITE BROADCASTS
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LEGISLATORS HAVE THE TASK OF FACILITATING THE RECEPTION, FOR THE ORDINARY HOUSEHOLD IN HONG KONG, OF SATELLITE TELEVISION BROADCASTS ACROSS A TRANSNATIONAL OR PERHAPS GLOBAL SPECTRUM, DR THE HON KIM CHAM SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT, DR CHAM SAID SUCH AN ACHIEVEMENT WOULD HELP SERVE TO KEEP HONG KONG ABREAST OF THE RAPID DEVELOPMENTS IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND VINDICATE ITS IMAGE AS AN OPEN, MODERN AND AFFLUENT URBAN CENTRE IN THE ASIAN PACIFIC REGION.

+MOREOVER, IT WILL ENABLE OUR CITIZENS TO BROADEN THEIR CONTACTS WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD, IN GAINING ACCESS TO FIRST-HAND AND UPDATED INFORMATION ABOUT FASHIONS, CONSUMER TASTES AS WELL AS POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, FINANCIAL AND OTHER NEWS ON CURRENT AFFAIRS,+ HE SAID.

DR CHAM NOTED THAT SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS IN RECEPTION TECHNOLOGY SINCE THE MID-70S HAD PERMITTED THE DIRECT RECEPTION IN HONG KONG OF BROADCAST TELEVISION PROGRAMMES FROM SATELLITES.

HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD, SUCH AS IN THE UNITED STATES AND SOME EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, RESTRICTIONS ON USING AERIALS HAD BEEN LIFTED, RESULTING IN THE LIBERALISATION OF PRIVATE RECEPTION.

DR CHAM FELT THAT THE TIME WAS THEREFORE OPPORTUNE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO REVIEW EXISTING RESTRICTIONS WHICH MIGHT LIMIT THE APPLICATION OF THIS TECHNOLOGY FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF ALL IN HONG KONG.

HE OBSERVED THAT DOMESTIC RECEPTION OF THESE BROADCAST SIGNALS BY INDIVIDUAL HOUSEHOLDS WAS NOT ILLEGAL AT PRESENT.

/+HOWEVER, THE

+HOWEVER, THE RELAYING AND DISTRIBUTING OF THESE PROGRAMMES VIA COMMUNAL ANTENNAE WHICH ARE COMMON TO MOST RECIPIENT HOUSEHOLDS LOCATED IN APARTMENT BLOCKS IN HONG KONG MAY ENCOUNTER LEGALISTIC OBSTACLES OF FRANCHISED TELECOMMUNICATIONS,+ HE SAID.

DR CHAM ARGUED THAT AS OVER 90 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION LIVED IN MULTI-STOREY BUILDINGS, IT WAS UNREALISTIC TO PERMIT INDIVIDUAL HOUSEHOLDS TO RECEIVE SATELLITE TELEVISION BROADCASTS WHILE DEPRIVING THEM OF THE USE OF COMMUNAL ANTENNAE.

+SETTING ASIDE LEGALISTIC ARGUMENTS, WE MUST MAKE CLEAR OUR COMMITMENT TO THE PRINCIPLE OF MAINTAINING HONG KONG AS AN OPEN-INFORMATION CITY, WITH OUR CITIZENS FREE TO RECEIVE SATELLITE TELECASTS JUST LIKE SHORT-WAVE RADIO BROADCASTS,+ HE SAID.

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PUBLIC BROADCASTER SUITS PRESENT NEEDS
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THE RECOMMENDATION THAT RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG BE DISESTABLISHED FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND BECOME A PUBLIC BROADCASTER FALLS WHOLLY IN LINE WITH THE PRESENT NEEDS OF HONG KONG, THE HON JACKIE CHAN SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT, MR CHAN SAID HONG KONG IS UNDERGOING A STAGE OF RAPID DEVELOPMENT IN ITS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE.

+IT IS NECESSARY FOR A PUBLIC BROADCASTER WITH FREE EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE TO BE SET UP TO SERVE THE INTEREST OF THE PUBLIC WITHOUT COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATION AND GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION,+ HE STRESSED.

HOWEVER, MR CHAN DISAGREED WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER TO USE THE PRIME TIME OF COMMERCIAL BROADCASTERS, AND TO BE FINANCED BY THE SHARING OF ADVERTISING REVENUE.

+THIS IS TOTALLY UNFAIR AND SOMEWHAT BARBARIAN,+ HE SAID.

WITH A DRASTIC REDUCTION IN REVENUE, COMMERCIAL BROADCASTERS WOULD BE FORCED TO LOWER THEIR PRODUCTION QUALITY OR EVEN WIND UP THEIR BUSINESS, HE SAID.

EVENTUALLY, MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WOULD SUFFER A LOSS AND IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF BROADCASTING WOULD BE LEFT UP IN THE AIR, MR CHAN NOTED.

/THEREFORE, HE

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THEREFORE, HE URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO GIVE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO THE ISSUES WHEN MAKING DECISIONS SO THAT ITS POLICIES WOULD NOT LEAVE A BAD IMPRESSION IN THE PUBLIC MIND.

+SINCE THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER IS SUPPORTED BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC, IT SHOULD BE FINANCED BY GOVERNMENT WHICH ACTS ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLIC,+ MR CHAN SAID.

AS REGARDS AIR-TIME FOR THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER, HE SAID INITIALLY THE BROADCASTER WOULD HAVE TO RELY ON THE COMMERCIAL STATIONS TO BROADCAST ITS PROGRAMMES, BUT IT SHOULD HAVE ITS OWN FREQUENCIES IN THE LONG TERM.

IN VIEW OF THE TIME CONSTRAINT, HE SAID IT WAS NOT LIKELY FOR THE NEW FREQUENCIES TO BE ESTABLISHED IN 1988.

HOWEVER, MR CHAN HOPED THAT WITHIN THE FIVE YEARS AFTER 1988, THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER WOULD BE ABLE TO SERVE ALL PEOPLE IN HONG KONG WITH ITS OWN FREQUENCIES.

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GREATER RANGE FROM NEW ELECTRONIC MEDIA
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A LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBER TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WELCOMED ANY FORM OF NEW ELECTRONIC MEDIA INCLUDING CABLE, MICROWAVE AS WELL AS DIRECT SATELLITE BROADCASTING WHICH WOULD PROVIDE A GREATER RANGE OF INFORMATIVE AND ENTERTAINING PROGRAMMES.

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT, THE HON CHENG HON-KWAN SAID IT WAS ENCOURAGING TO NOTE THAT TENDERS WOULD BE INVITED FOR CABLE TELEVISION 18 MONTHS PRIOR TO THE EXPIRY OF THE PRESENT TELEVISION LICENCES ON DECEMBER 1, 1988.

+NOT ONLY THAT CABLE TELEVISION IS ANTICIPATED TO CONVEY A NUMBER OF TELEVISION PROGRAMMES WITH BETTER TECHNICAL QUALITY, THE POTENTIAL OF ITS SYSTEMS MAY ALSO BRING ABOUT FUTURE TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT INTO A WIDE RANGE OF NON-PROGRAMMING INTERACTIVE SERVICES,+ HE SAID.

NEVERTHELESS, MR CHENG AGREED THAT THE PROGRAMMING SHOULD BE OF HIGH QUALITY AND SUBJECT TO THE SAME CENSORSHIP CONTROL AS OFF-AIR BROADCASTING.

+I ENDORSE THE VIEW THAT NO ADVERTISING SHOULD BE ALLOWED BUT HAVE MY RESERVATION ON THE RECOMMENDATION THAT A CABLE TELEVISION OPERATOR SHOULD NOT BE REQUIRED TO PAY A ROYALTY,+ HE SAID.

/AS TECHNOLOGY

AS TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPED FURTHER, MR CHENG SAID, IT WOULD ALMOST BE CERTAIN THAT HONG KONG AS A RENOWNED CITY OF FREE ENTERPRISE WOULD SEE THE FEASIBILITY OF CONTINUING TECHNOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS IN BROADCASTING INCLUDING RECEPTION OF DIRECT SATELLITE TRANSMISSIONS AND MICROWAVE TELEVISION BROADCASTING.

+IT IS THEREFORE IMPRORTANT FOR GOVERNMENT TO GIVE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO ITS FUTURE POLICIES WITH REGARD TO THEIR SERVICES AND CONTROL,+ HE SAID.

MR CHENG ALSO ENDORSED THE POSTMASTER GENERAL'S PROPOSAL TO EXTEND THE EXISTING VHF/FM TRANSMISSION SERVICES AND THEIR COVERAGE.

+SIMILARLY, I SUPPORT THE VIEWS THAT THE TELEVISION BROADCASTERS SHOULD USE A COMMON BUILDING, A COMMON POWER SUPPLY AND A COMMON ANTENNA TOWER AT EACH OF THE PRIME HILL-TOPS SO THAT COVERAGE CAN BE SATISFACTORILY ACHIEVED AND VIRTUALLY IDENTICAL,+ HE SAID.

THIS PROVISION WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY SERVE THE PURPOSE OF ERADICATING THE EXISTING UNFAIR SITUATION WHICH WORKED AGAINST THE INTERESTS OF BROADCASTERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC, MR CHENG ADDED.

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PUBLIC FUNDS SHOULD SUPPORT BROADCASTER
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THE SETTING UP OF A PUBLIC BROADCASTER AS PROPOSED BY THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT WAS STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE REPORT, MR CHEONG-LEEN SAID THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER SHOULD BE FORMED AS AN INDEPENDENT CORPORATION WITH AN INDEPENDENT BOARD APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

HE NOTED THAT THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER SHOULD ABSORB RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG AND SAID HE WAS IN FAVOUR OF THE EVENTUAL DISESTABLISHMENT OF RTHK, BUT FELT IT SHOULD BE DONE IN TWO STAGES, WITH THE SECOND STAGE TAKING PLACE PERHAPS WITHIN THREE YEARS AFTER THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER WAS SET UP.

+I AM NOT AT ALL CONVINCED THAT THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER COULD BE COMMERCIALY VIABLE,+ MR CHEONG-LEEN SAID.

HE THEREFORE SUGGESTED THAT IT SHOULD BE SUPPORTED BY PUBLIC FUNDS THROUGH AN ANNUAL GRANT PROVIDED FOR BY LEGISLATION, AND BY ALLOWING THE BROADCASTER TO SEEK ADVERTISING REVENUE, AS WELL AS CORPORATE OR OTHER TYPES OF SPONSORSHIP.

/MR CHEONG-LEEN

MR CHEONG-LEEN ALSO CALLED FOR A MORE SUBSTANTIAL PRESENCE IN TELEVISION TIME BY THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER BY EXTENDING THE EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS BY SEVERAL MORE HOURS PER WEEK ON ALL EXISTING CHANNELS, WITH A REASONABLE AND SPECIFIED PERCENTAGE OF PRIME TIME.

HE STRESSED THAT THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER SHOULD CONTINUE TO PLAY A POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE AS A TWO-WAY CONNECTION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE, WITH A GOOD MIXTURE OF ENTERTAINING, ENLIGHTENING, CULTURE AND CIVIC ORIENTED PROGRAMMES.

HE ALSO SUPPORTED THE RECOMMENDATION ON ESTABLISHING A CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FOUNDATION WHICH HE SAID WOULD PROMOTE A WIDER VARIETY AND BETTER QUALITY OF CHILDREN'S TELEVISION PROGRAMMES.

MR CHEONG-LEEN ALSO BACKED THE PROPOSAL TO SET UP A BROADCASTING AUTHORITY WITH ALL MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR.

HE ACCEPTED IN PRINCIPLE THE SUGGESTION THAT A RADIO TELEVISION TRIBUNAL BE ESTABLISHED, BUT SAID THAT ITS PROCEDURES SHOULD BE CAREFULLY WORKED OUT TO AVOID HEARINGS IN PUBLIC BECOMING DESTRUCTIVE OR UNPRODUCTIVE IN NATURE.

ON TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL ADVERTISING, MR CHEONG-LEEN SAID HE DID NOT ACCEPT THE BOARD'S RECOMMENDATION THAT THERE SHOULD BE A TOTAL BAN ON ALL FORMS OF CIGARETTE ADVERTISING ON TELEVISION AND RADIO BY 1989.

+GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ON DISCOURAGING THE PUBLIC FROM SMOKING SHOULD PROCEED ON A BROAD FRONT, COVERING ALL ASPECTS OF THE MEDIA,+ HE SAID.

HE SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONTINUE TO ALLOW CIGARETTE ADVERTISING ON THE CONDITION THAT TELEVISION TIME ON THE GOVERNMENT'S WARNING ON SMOKING SHOULD BE IN THE RATIO OF 1:2, THAT IS, ONE SECOND OF WARNING FOR EACH TWO SECONDS OF ADVERTISING, AND THE TOTAL COST OF THE ADVERTISING TIME SHOULD BE PAID FOR BY THE ADVERTISER.

HE FURTHER SUGGESTED THAT THE HOURS DURING WHICH CIGARETTE ADVERTISEMENTS COULD BE SCREENED SHOULD BE REVIEWED AND TIGHTENED, AND CALLED ON THE GOVERNMENT TO SET UP A WORKING PARTY TO WORK OUT A PHASED BAN AIMED AT EVENTUAL ABOLITION OF CIGARETTE ADVERTISING IN ALL PARTS OF THE MEDIA.

LASTLY, MR CHEONG-LEEN SAID THERE WAS A NEED TO EXTEND THE EXISTING PARTIAL BAN ON ALCOHOL ADVERTISING FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

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TOBACCO AD BAN JUST A TRADE RESTRICTION
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THE RECOMMENDED BAN ON TOBACCO ADVERTISEMENT SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS AN INFRINGEMENT OF LIBERTY BUT AS A TRADE RESTRICTION ON A DANGEROUS AND ADDICTIVE CONSUMER PRODUCT, DR THE HON CHIU HIN-KWONG SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE WAS SPEAKING AT THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

IN HIS CAPACITY AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE MEDICAL FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY, DR CHIU SAID HE SPOKE FOR A NUMBER OF MEDICAL BODIES AND INDIVIDUALS AND THEY WERE IN A UNIQUE POSITION TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF TOBACCO.

HE SAID THEY HAD FOUND IT NECESSARY TO INTRODUCE A TOTAL BAN ON THE ADVERTISEMENTS OF ALL TOBACCO PRODUCTS NOT ONLY ON THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA BUT ALSO ON ALL MEDIA FOR THE HEALTH OF THE HONG KONG PEOPLE.

DR CHIU SAID IT WAS MOST UNFORTUNATE THE BAN HAD BEEN LINKED WITH FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS.

HE SAID HE CONSIDERED THE BAN WAS JUST ANOTHER MEASURE TO COORDINATE WITH GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-SMOKING POLICY AND HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH AN INTERFERENCE OF LIBERTY.

HE POINTED OUT THAT COUNTRIES WITH THE GREATEST FREEDOM TO EXPRESS ONE'S FEELINGS, SUCH AS THE UNITED KINGDOM, THE UNITED STATES, CANADA AND WEST GERMANY, HAD BANNED TOBACCO ADVERTISEMENTS FOR 20 YEARS.

AS FOR THE ARGUMENT THAT TOBACCO WAS A LEGAL PRODUCT AND THAT ANY ACTION TO ELIMINATE ITS ADVERTISEMENT WAS NOT RECOMMENDABLE, DR CHIU SAID THAT CERTAIN LEGAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES, SUCH AS PHARMACEUTICAL PREPARATIONS, MATCH-MAKING AGENCIES, FORTUNE-TELLERS, UNDERTAKERS AND EVEN DOCTORS WERE NOT ALLOWED TO ADVERTISE ON TELEVISION.

STRESSING THAT TOTAL BAN OF TOBACCO ADVERTISEMENT WAS ALREADY A UNIVERSAL TREND, HE SAID THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE BRB WAS HEADING FOR THE RIGHT DIRECTION FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO FULFIL ITS RESPONSIBILITIES OF SAFEGUARDING THE HEALTH OF ITS PEOPLE.

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+RTHK SHOULD BE TOTALLY INDEPENDENT+
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NOT ONLY SHOULD RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG (RTHK) BE INDEPENDENT BUT IT SHOULD BE SEEN BY THE PUBLIC THAT IT COULD REALLY KEEP THE INITIATIVE IN ITS OWN HANDS, THE HON CHUNG PUI-LAM SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD (BRB) REPORT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR CHUNG SAID UPON RTHK'S INDEPENDENCE, THE HIGHEST AUTHORITY FOR DECISION-MAKING IN IT SHOULD REST WITH A STATUTORY CORPORATION.

HE SUGGESTED THAT THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS SHOULD BE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNMENT, WITH THE GREAT MAJORITY OF ITS MEMBERS BEING UNOFFICIALS.

THE BOARD SHOULD ALSO BE EMPOWERED TO WORK OUT THE PAY AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE OF ITS STAFF WHO WOULD THEN NO LONGER BE CIVIL SERVANTS.

CONCERNING THE AIRTIME FOR THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER, MR CHUNG THOUGHT THE WEEKEND OPTION WAS THE MOST DESIRABLE.

HE SAID: +IN COMPARISON WITH THE OPTION OF SHARING THE PRESENT SERVICES WITH THE LICENSEES AT THE PRIME TIME PERIODS OF 7 TO 8 PM THROUGHOUT THE WEEK (SERVICE SHARING OPTION), THE WEEKEND OPTION WILL BE ABLE TO PROVIDE THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER WITH A MORE SEPARATE ENTITY OF ITS OWN.

+PEOPLE CAN EASILY IDENTIFY THOSE PROGRAMMES WHICH ARE PRODUCED BY THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER, THUS AVOIDING THE PRESENT SITUATION WHERE SOME RTHK PROGRAMMES ARE CONFUSED WITH PROGRAMMES PRODUCED BY THE COMMERCIAL LICENSEES.

+IT WILL ALSO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE THE PROGRAMMES WITH SOME CONTINUITY, THUS ACHIEVING THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING THE AUDIENCES WITH A BALANCED OUTPUT OF PROGRAMMES - ENTERTAINMENT AS WELL AS INFORMATION AND EDUCATION.+

MR CHUNG HOPED THAT THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER WOULD BE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE IN THE FIELD OF OPEN EDUCATION OR, MORE SPECIFICALLY, IN THE PROVISION OF OPEN EDUCATION COURSES.

AS REGARDS THE FINANCIAL SOURCES OF THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER, HE SAID THAT IT SHOULD BE BORNE BY THE GOVERNMENT BUT SPONSORING OF PROGRAMMES BY ADVERTISING COULD BE ALLOWED SO AS TO OFFSET SOME OF THE EXPENSES.

/TURNING TO

TURNING TO TOBACCO ADVERTISING, MR CHUNG BELIEVED IT SERVED NO USEFUL PURPOSE JUST TO EXTEND THE HOURS OF PARTIAL BAN A LITTLE LONGER.

+THE ISSUE ON PROHIBITION OF TOBACCO ADVERTISING CANNOT BE LINKED UP WITH THE POLICY OF FREE ENTERPRISE OR LAISSEZ-FAIRE. AS SMOKING IS HAZARDOUS TO ONE'S HEALTH, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR TAKING REASONABLE AND APPROPRIATE MEASURES TO FORE-STALL THE PROMOTION OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS AND CURB THE TENDENCY OF THE PUBLIC TO SMOKE SO AS TO PROTECT PEOPLE'S HEALTH.

+THEREFORE, I GIVE MY SUPPORT TO A TOTAL BAN OF TOBACCO ADVERTISEMENTS ON RADIO AND TELEVISION.+ HE SAID.

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COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS SHOULD NOT BE CONFINED
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THE RECOMMENDATION THAT BROADCAST LICENSEES SHOULD BE CONFINED AS TO CORPORATE STRUCTURE AND THAT THEY MUST OPERATE SOLELY AS BROADCASTERS MET WITH OBJECTION FROM THE HON THOMAS CLYDESDALE.

SPEAKING IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD (BRB) REPORT TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, HE SAID HE COULD NOT SEE WHY LICENSEES COULD NOT OPERATE WITHIN A BUSINESS SPECTRUM WHICH PERMITTED DIVERSE COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH BROADCASTING.

HE BELIEVED THAT THE EXISTING TELEVISION ORDINANCE CLEARLY PERMITTED A LICENSEE TO CARRY ON SUCH FORMS OF BUSINESS AS MAY BE DIRECTLY CONNECTED OR ASSOCIATED WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF A TELEVISION BROADCASTING SERVICE.

+THERE ARE MANY ASSOCIATED ACTIVITIES WHICH CAN ADD TO THE COMMERCIAL AND COMPETITIVE STRENGTH OF ANY LICENSEE, FOR EXAMPLE, DISTRIBUTION OF A PROGRAMME MAGAZINE, TECHNICAL SERVICES OF USE TO THE STATION AND TO OTHERS, AND SO ON.

+IN SHORT, THE SAME COMMERCIAL REASONS THAT APPLY TO THE LOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF A BASIC SOURCE OF BUSINESS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO APPLY TO BROADCASTING LICENSEES,+ HE SAID.

MR CLYDESDALE WARNED THAT CONFINING LICENSEES UNDULY COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THE ECONOMICS OF THEIR BUSINESS THUS REDUCING COMPETITIVE CAPABILITY AND SCOPE FOR NEW INVESTMENT AND TECHNOLOGICAL UPGRADING.

+THE MAIN CRITERION MUST SURELY BE THAT THE LICENSEE AT ALL TIMES MAINTAINS THE STANDARD OF SERVICE WHICH HIS LICENCE REQUIRES,+ HE SAID.

/ON ROYALTY

ON ROYALTY PAYMENTS, HE BELIEVED THEY SHOULD BE ASSESSED PRIMARILY ON A LICENSEE'S ABILITY TO PAY - THAT WAS TO SAY ON THE NET PROFITS ARISING FROM THE OPERATION OF THE BROADCASTING SERVICE AND DIRECTLY CONNECTED OR ASSOCIATED BUSINESS.

HE SAID IT SHOULD NOT BE DIFFICULT TO PRODUCE ACCURATE ACCOUNTS REFLECTING THE PROFITS THUS DERIVED.

HE ADDED THAT CORPORATE STRUCTURE WAS NOT RELEVANT TO THIS SITUATION AS IT WAS NOT BEYOND THE COMPETENCE OF ACCOUNTANTS TO PRODUCE THE NECESSARY ACCOUNTS BE THEY IN RESPECT OF A SOLE CORPORATE ENTITY OR A CONSOLIDATED GROUP OF COMPANIES.

+THE PRESENT PRINCIPLE OF ASSESSING ROYALTIES SHOULD CONTINUE WITH MORE CONTROL OVER THE DETERMINATION OF PROFITS ARISING FROM THE OPERATION OF THE LICENCE.

+THE FEE SHOULD PERHAPS BE DIVIDED INTO TWO PARTS: FIRSTLY A FLAT FEE FOR THE USE OF THE AIRWAVES WHICH BELONG TO THE PUBLIC, AND SECONDLY, ROYALTIES ON PROFITS,+ HE SAID.

TURNING TO THE PROPOSAL FOR A PUBLIC BROADCASTER, MR CLYDESDALE BELIEVED THAT RTHK SHOULD BECOME THE LEGALLY ESTABLISHED PUBLIC BROADCASTER AS PROPOSED BY THE BRB AND BE GIVEN THE DEGREE OF INDEPENDENCE SUGGESTED.

HE SAID ITS FUNDING SHOULD COME FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND THIS SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO ALLOW IT TO EXPAND BOTH THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF ITS PRODUCTIONS.

HE SUGGESTED THAT ACCESS TO BROADCASTING TIME FOR THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER SHOULD BE SECURED THROUGH LICENCE CONDITIONS AND THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO JUSTIFY EXPENDITURE AND THE CONTINUANCE OF PUBLIC FUNDING THROUGH REGULAR REVIEWS OF PERFORMANCE.

SUCH REVIEWS SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT PERIODICALLY BY THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY, HE ADDED.

ON THE PROPOSED TOTAL BAN ON TOBACCO ADVERTISING, HE SAID HE AGREED THAT MOUNTING CONCERN OVER THE DANGERS OF SMOKING WAS REAL AND SERIOUS, BUT HE COULD NOT ACCEPT THE PROPOSAL THAT ADVERTISING ON TOBACCO PRODUCTS SHOULD BE BANNED FROM RADIO AND TELEVISION.

+WHILE THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO DERIVE SUBSTANTIAL REVENUE FROM THE IMPORT AND MANUFACTURE OF TOBACCO AND TOBACCO PRODUCTS, I CANNOT IN ALL CONSCIENCE AGREE TO REMOVE THE RIGHT OF THE INDUSTRY TO PROMOTE THE SALE OF ITS PRODUCTS,+ HE SAID.

MR CLYDESDALE SAID HE DID NOT SMOKE PERSONALLY AND IN FACT DETESTED THE HABIT AND THAT HIS OBJECTION TO THIS PROPOSAL WAS BASED ON COMMON SENSE AND PRINCIPLE.

/LASTLY, HE

LASTLY, HE SAID HE AGREED WHOLEHEARTEDLY WITH THE RECOMMENDATION THAT THERE SHOULD BE CABLE TELEVISION AND THE SOONER THE BETTER.

+THIS SHOULD NOT PERMIT ADVERTISING, SHOULD BE FUNDED BY SUBSCRIPTION BUT MIGHT INCLUDE TIME FOR RTHK PUBLIC SERVICE PROGRAMMES, IF THAT IS TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE,+ HE SUGGESTED.

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DIRECT SUBVENTION NEEDED FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTER
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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROVIDE DIRECT AND SUBSTANTIAL SUBVENTION TO A PUBLIC BROADCASTER, THE HON HO SAI-CHU SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT.

MR HO SAID HE SUPPORTED THE BOARD'S RECOMMENDATION THAT RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG BE DEVELOPED INTO AN INDEPENDENT BROADCASTER SO THAT IT MIGHT BE SEEN TO BE FREE FROM GOVERNMENTAL CONTROL IN ORDER TO ENSURE MAXIMUM NEUTRALITY AND OBJECTIVITY IN ITS REPORTING.

HOWEVER, HE WAS NOT IN FAVOUR OF IT BEING ALLOWED TO SELL ADVERTISING DURING ANY OF THE TIME SLOTS WHICH MIGHT BE ALLOCATED TO IT AND THE PROCEEDS BEING USED TO FINANCE ITS OPERATIONS.

HE SAID THIS MIGHT SUBJECT THE RTHK PROGRAMMES TO PREVAILING DEMANDS IN THE ADVERTISING MARKET AND LEAVE THE PUBLIC WITH LITTLE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE PROGRAMMING OF THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER AND THAT OF THE COMMERCIAL STATIONS.

HE BELIEVED THAT THERE WAS NO ALTERNATIVE, AS FAR AS FINANCING WAS CONCERNED, BUT TO CONTINUE WITH DIRECT AND SUBSTANTIAL GOVERNMENT SUBVENTION OF THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER.

MR HO ADDED THAT HE WAS IN FAVOUR OF RESERVING CERTAIN TIME SLOTS ON A DAILY BASIS FOR THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER RATHER THAN THE USE OF A SINGLE BUT SPECIFIED +PRIME TIME+ SLOT.

HE SAID HIS SUGGESTION WOULD PROVIDE THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER WITH GREATER FLEXIBILITY AND WOULD NOT IMPOSE AN ARTIFICIAL RESTRICTION ON THE RANGE OF PROGRAMMES TO BE BROADCAST.

FURTHERMORE, HE NOTED THAT THE SOLE USE OF THE PRESENT PRIME TIME, NAMELY BETWEEN 7 PM AND 8 PM, MIGHT BE SUBJECT TO CHANGES IN THE VIEWING HABITS OF THE AUDIENCE.

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PROGRAMMING PROPOSALS SHOULD GET PRIORITY

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THE PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD SHOULD BE ADOPTED AS A PRIORITY, IRRESPECTIVE OF FINANCIAL COMMITMENT, IN THE LIGHT OF THE POPULATION'S LONG-TERM NEEDS FOR HIGH QUALITY TELEVISION AND RADIO PROGRAMMES, THE HON HUI YIN-FAT SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BOARD'S REPORT, MR HUI SAID HE BELIEVED THAT BROADCASTING STATIONS, BE THEY PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, WERE ENTRUSTED WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY TO INFORM AND TO EDUCATE AND NOT JUST TO ENTERTAIN.

HOWEVER, PROGRAMMES GEARED TO THE CHANGING NEEDS OF SOCIETY, AND AROUSING PUBLIC INTEREST IN VARIOUS FIELDS WERE STILL SADLY LACKING IN HONG KONG.

MR HUI SAID HONG KONG VIEWERS NEEDED A BALANCED MIX OF CULTURAL, ARTISTIC AND PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAMMES INCLUDING ANALYTICAL NEWS REPORTING, EVENTS OF LOCAL INTEREST AND EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION.

+FROM THE SOCIAL WORK POINT OF VIEW, TELEVISION PROGRAMMES SHOULD PROVIDE CIVIC EDUCATION FOR YOUTH, PROMOTE PROPER FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS, ENHANCE FAMILY TIES, AND SHOULD AVOID OVER-DRAMATISATION OF REAL LIFE SITUATIONS.

+THEY SHOULD ALSO CATER FOR THE HEALTH, LEISURE, SOCIAL AND EDUCATION NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY, CREATING A HEALTHY SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT FOR OUR SENIOR CITIZENS,+ HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT TELEVISION PROGRAMMES SHOULD ALSO GUIDE THE PUBLIC TOWARDS POSITIVE ACCEPTANCE OF DISABLED PEOPLE AND, IN THIS RESPECT, THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION REITERATED ITS BELIEF IN THE VALUE OF USING CAPTIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AND SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AS WELL AS IN THE INCLUSION OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN PROGRAMME PRODUCTION.

+WE FURTHER ADVOCATE THE EXTENSION OF FAMILY VIEWING TIME TO 9.30 PM AND THE PRODUCTION OF MORE LOCAL CHILDREN'S PROGRAMME WHICH ARE INNOVATIVE, EDUCATIONAL AND CONDUCIVE TO THE HEALTHY SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL GROWTH OF THE YOUNGER GENERATION,+ MR HUI SAID.

APART FROM SUPPORTING THE BOARD'S RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE SETTING UP OF A BROADCASTING AUTHORITY AND A TRIBUNAL FOR POLICY FORMULATION AND MONITORING PURPOSES, HE SAID THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION ALSO PROPOSED A DEMERIT SYSTEM THAT WOULD LEAD TO THE SUSPENSION OF OPERATION.

/+FURTHERMORE,

+FURTHERMORE, WE SUGGEST THAT STRICT STANDARDS BE ENFORCED, INCLUDING THE CENSORSHIP OF PROGRAMME CONTENT THAT DISCRIMINATES AGAINST THE DISABLED- THAT PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE BE REPRESENTED ON ADVISORY GROUPS FOR TELEVISION PROGRAMMING- AND THAT OPINION SURVEYS AND DATA ANALYSES BY EXPERTS BE CONDUCTED REGULARLY FOR CONTROL PURPOSE,+ MR HUI ADDED.

TURNING TO THE FINANCING OF AN INDEPENDENT PUBLIC BROADCASTER, MR HUI SAID THE STATION SHOULD BE FINANCED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND CORPORATE SPONSORSHIP IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE, IN THE SAME WAY THAT OTHER PUBLIC BODIES ACQUIRED ADMINISTRATIVE INDEPENDENCE.

+IN ASSESSING THE FINANCIAL AND MANPOWER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO LOCAL BROADCASTING INDUSTRY, IT IS BELIEVED THAT A PARTIALLY GOVERNMENT-FINANCED PUBLIC BROADCASTER CAN BRING ABOUT IMPETUS FOR FREEDOM, COMPETITION AND PROGRESS IN THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY,+ HE SAID.

ON ADVERTISING OF TOBACCO AND ALCOHOLIC PRODUCTS, MR HUI SAID THE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION SAW NO REASON WHY CIGARETTE SMOKING, ALREADY PROVEN TO BE THE CAUSE OF FATAL DISEASES, SHOULD BE GIVEN ACCESS TO PUBLICITY ON THE ALL-POWERFUL ELECTRONIC MEDIA.

SPEAKING OF THE REPORT GENERALLY, MR HUI SAID HE SAW A RAY OF HOPE FOR REFORM AND PROGRESS IN BROADCASTING THAT WAS LONG OVERDUE.

+LET US HOPE THAT WHEN CUDGELS ARE BURIED, ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN ON THE MORE CONSTRUCTIVE COMMENTS AND PROPOSALS.

+THAT, AT THE END OF THE DAY, GOVERNMENT COMES UP WITH COMPROMISES WHICH MORE OR LESS MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO FOR COST CONSIDERATIONS WOULD BE THE LAST THING WE WANT TO SEE,+ HE CONCLUDED.

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+TAKING PRIME TIME NOT PRACTICABLE+
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THE HON RICHARD LAI TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY THAT HE WAS IN FAVOUR OF RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG BECOMING INDEPENDENT AND HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER FUNDING THE RECURRENT EXPENSES OF THE STATION DIRECTLY FROM ROYALTY PAYMENTS MADE BY RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING COMPANIES.

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT, MR LAI SAID IT WAS NOT PRACTICABLE FOR RTHK TO TAKE THE 7PM-8PM PRIME TIME PERIOD FROM THE PRIVATE BROADCASTERS FOR SHOWING COMMERCIALS TO OFFSET ITS EXPENDITURE.

/MR LAI

MR LAI WENT ON: +THE SOCIAL EVIL OF 'PROGRAMME COMMERCIALISATION' PRODUCED BY COMMERCIAL TELEVISION BROADCASTERS COULD WELL BE RECTIFIED BY THEIR PROVISION OF SOME NON-COMMERCIAL PROGRAMMES.

+IT IS THEREFORE FAIR AND REASONABLE FOR THEM TO FUND FROM THEIR ROYALTY PAYMENTS THE PRODUCTION OF NON-COMMERCIAL PROGRAMMES BY RTHK.+

MR LAI SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER SETTING UP AN INDEPENDENT FUNDING AUTHORITY TO SUBSIDISE RTHK ANNUALLY ACCORDING TO ITS NEEDS.

SHOULD ITS INCOME FROM ADVERTISING AND GRANTS FROM ROYALTY PAYMENTS BE INSUFFICIENT TO DEFRAY EXPENSES, THE FUNDING AUTHORITY COULD SUPPLY THE DIFFERENCE AND ENSURE STABLE AND SUFFICIENT INCOME, HE SAID.

REGARDING THE LEVYING OF ROYALTIES, DR LAI SAID HE SUPPORTED THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REPORT.

HE SAID THAT BASING ROYALTIES ON TURNOVER WOULD ON THE ONE HAND INCREASE EFFICIENCY AND REDUCE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CUTTING DOWN PROFITS IN ORDER TO AVOID TAX WITH THE HELP OF ACCOUNTING METHODS BY THE LICENSEES, AND WOULD ON THE OTHER HAND AVOID THE SITUATION WHERE A BADLY-OPERATED OR UNPROFITABLE LICENSEE COULD BE EXEMPTED FROM ROYALTY PAYMENTS.

HE SUGGESTED THAT ROYALTIES SHOULD BE PAID ACCORDING TO A SLIDING SCALE, WHICH WOULD BE FAIRER.

TURNING TO THE AIR-TIME ALLOCATED TO RTHK PROGRAMMES, HE URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING TWO METHODS:

- (1) RTHK SHOULD MAKE USE OF, OR MAKE MORE USE OF, IN A MORE FLEXIBLE MANNER THE BROADCASTING TIME OF THE OTHER TWO BROADCASTERS;
- (2) IT SHOULD BE MADE A CONDITION OF THE RENEWAL OF LICENCES THAT MORE AIR-TIME SHOULD BE DESIGNATED OR A SPECIFIC PERIOD OF AIR-TIME SHOULD BE SET ASIDE FOR EDUCATIONAL OR INFORMATION PROGRAMMES.

ON THE QUESTION OF BANNING TOBACCO COMMERCIALS, MR LAI SAID HE HAD RESERVATIONS AS THE REPORT'S RECOMMENDATION SEEMED TO BE TOO STRICT AND ALSO UNFAIR TO THE COMPANIES THAT WOULD BE AFFECTED.

+THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT ON THE ONE HAND ALLOW TOBACCO TO BE SOLD IN THE SHOPS AND ON THE OTHER HAND DEPRIVE THE DISTRIBUTORS OF THE RIGHT OF PROMOTION.

/+THOUGH VARIOUS

+THOUGH VARIOUS MEDICAL RESEARCHES HAVE SHOWN THAT SMOKING IS HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH, UNLESS THE GOVERNMENT CHOOSES TO LEGISLATE TO BAN THE SALE OF TOBACCO, SUCH A LOPSIDED APPROACH WILL COME TO NOTHING,+ HE SAID.

MR LAI BELIEVED THAT THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST SMOKING SHOULD CONTINUE, BUT SHOULD BE TAKEN STEP BY STEP, AND THESE SHOULD NOT BE IMPLEMENTED WITH UNDUE HASTE.

+HIGH-HANDED MEASURES MAY NOT BE ACCEPTABLE. THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ATTEMPT TO RESTRICT FURTHER THE HOURS OF RELAYING TOBACCO COMMERCIALS SO THAT THEY ARE NOT BROADCAST DURING CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES OR DURING PRIME TIME.

+BANNING IS ONLY A TEMPORARY SOLUTION. AS TO RADICAL MEASURES, WE HAVE TO START OFF WITH HEALTH EDUCATION AND REINFORCE THE MEASURE BY PUBLICISING MEDICAL EVIDENCE WHICH PROVES THAT SMOKING IS HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH, SO THAT THE INTENTION OF BANNING TOBACCO COMMERCIALS IS THOROUGHLY FULFILLED,+ HE SAID.

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SUPPORT FOR TOTAL ADVERTISING BAN
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SUPPORT FOR A TOTAL BAN ON TOBACCO ADVERTISING ON RADIO AND TELEVISION WAS VOICED BY DR THE HON CONRAD LAM DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

DR LAM SAID THAT ADVERTISEMENTS GLORIFYING SMOKING WOULD ONLY INSTIL MISCONCEIVED AND DISTORTED MESSAGES IN THE AUDIENCE, ESPECIALLY AMONG THE YOUNGER GENERATION.

HE SAID SUCH ADVERTISEMENTS ALSO GAVE RISE TO AN IMPRESSION THAT SMOKING WAS SOCIALLY ACCEPTABLE.

+THIS RUNS COUNTER TO THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORT IN PROMOTING THE ANTI-SMOKING CAMPAIGN,+ HE SAID.

+ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT IMPOSE RESTRICTIONS ON TOBACCO ADVERTISING, IT WILL MAKE THE PUBLIC QUESTION THE SINCERITY OF THE GOVERNMENT IN PROMOTING THE ANTI-SMOKING CAMPAIGN.+

ON OTHER ISSUES, DR LAM FELT THAT IT WOULD BE AGAINST THE PUBLIC INTEREST FOR A MONOPOLY SITUATION TO EXIST IN THE TELEVISION INDUSTRY.

/HE SUPPORTED

HE SUPPORTED THE RECOMMENDATION THAT RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG BE DISESTABLISHED FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND THAT IT BE GIVEN ADEQUATE FUNDING SO THAT IT COULD PROVIDE MORE BALANCED PROGRAMMES.

DR LAM ALSO BACKED THE RECOMMENDATIONS ON SETTING UP A BROADCASTING AUTHORITY AND A RADIO AND TELEVISION COMPLAINTS TRIBUNAL IN ORDER TO PROVIDE A PROPER COMPLAINT CHANNEL FOR THOSE WHOSE TELEVISION INTERVIEWS HAD BEEN MISQUOTED OR ERRONEOUSLY INTERPRETED OUT OF CONTEXT BY THE STATIONS.

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CALL FOR OVERALL ANTI-SMOKING POLICY
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A CALL WAS MADE BY THE HON MARTIN LEE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO PRODUCE AN OVERALL ANTI-SMOKING POLICY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

SPEAKING IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT, MR LEE SAID SUCH A POLICY SHOULD INCLUDE RAISING THE TAX ON TOBACCO, PROHIBITION OF THE SALE OF CIGARETTES TO PERSONS UNDER 18, AND A TOTAL BAN ON ANY FORM OF TOBACCO ADVERTISING.

HE SAID THE PROPOSED BAN ON TOBACCO ADVERTISING ON TELEVISION WAS BUT A SIDE ISSUE RAISED IN THE REPORT BUT IT HAD NOW BECOME ONE OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL.

HE SAID THERE COULD BE NO DOUBT WHATSOEVER THAT SMOKING WAS HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH AND THIS WAS WHAT THE GOVERNMENT FIRMLY BELIEVED IN.

HE ALSO SAID HE HAD NO HESITATION IN ACCEPTING THE SUBMISSIONS OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION AND REJECTING THOSE OF THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY.

ON THE ARGUMENTS RAISED BY THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY, MR LEE SAID NONE OF THEM WAS NEW, ALTHOUGH MANY IN HONG KONG HAD HEARD THEM FOR THE FIRST TIME.

+THEY HAVE BEEN PRACTISED ON OVER 60 GOVERNMENTS IN COUNTRIES ALL OVER THE WORLD.

+WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ONE, PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT IN CANADA, EVERY GOVERNMENT WHICH HAD STUDIED THIS PARTICULAR ISSUE DECIDED TO BAN TOBACCO ADVERTISING ON TELEVISION, AND NONE OF THESE GOVERNMENTS HAS EVER REVERSED ITS DECISION,+ HE SAID.

+AND THE QUALITY OF THEIR TELEVISION PROGRAMME HAS NOT SUFFERED EITHER,+ HE ADDED.

+AS TO FREEDOM, THE PEOPLE OF USA, FRANCE, AUSTRALIA, UK AND THE OTHER COUNTRIES ALL BELIEVE IN FREEDOM AS MUCH AS WE DO= AND THE BAN ON TOBACCO ADVERTISING DOES NOT WORRY THEM.

+WHY SHOULD THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT, WHICH HAS A VERY GOOD REPUTATION IN PROTECTING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE IN HEALTH AND OTHER MATTERS, GO AGAINST THIS WORLD TREND?+ MR LEE ASKED.

HE SAID PEOPLE SHOULD NOT FEAR THAT ANY COMMERCIAL TELEVISION STATION WOULD BE CLOSED DOWN BECAUSE OF SUCH A BAN SINCE THERE HAD NOT BEEN SUCH PRECEDENT IN THE WORLD.

HE QUOTED THE CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH OF THE EDITORIAL OF THE TIMES ON NOVEMBER 28, 1985, WHICH SAID: +IN THE FACE OF THE OVERWHELMING MEDICAL EVIDENCE ON THE DANGER OF SMOKING, IT IS NO LONGER ENOUGH JUST TO SAY THAT SMOKING IS DECLINING AND CAN BE LEFT TO DIE OUT AT ITS OWN RATE. IT IS THE INDUSTRY THAT SHOULD BE DYING MORE QUICKLY, NOT ITS CUSTOMERS.+

ON THE INDEPENDENCE OF RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG, MR LEE SAID HE SUPPORTED THE WEEKEND OPTION AND THE DISESTABLISHMENT OF ITS STAFF.

AS FOR THE CORPORATE STRUCTURE OF THE COMMERCIAL LICENSEES, HE SAID HE AGREED WITH THE BOARD'S INTERPRETATION OF AND PROPOSAL ON SECTION 10 OF THE TELEVISION ORDINANCE BUT HE SAW A DIFFICULTY.

+I UNDERSTAND THAT BEFORE HK-TV B LTD WENT PUBLIC, THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN CONSULTED BEFOREHAND AND HAD GIVEN ITS IMPLICIT APPROVAL TO THE PROPOSED CORPORATE STRUCTURE WHICH WAS IN FACT ADOPTED.

+IT DOES SEEM TO ME RATHER HARSH NOW TO REQUIRE THIS LICENSEE TO UNDERGO A METAMORPHOSIS BEFORE BEING ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR A NEW LICENCE,+ HE SAID.

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NEW TV LICENCE SHOULD COVER 15 YEARS
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THE NEW TELEVISION LICENCE PERIODS SHOULD CONTINUE TO COVER A 15-YEAR PERIOD TO LAST BEYOND 1997 UPON RENEWAL SO THAT PUBLIC CONFIDENCE ON THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH COULD BE FOSTERED, THE HON LEE YU-TAI SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT, MR LEE SAID THE VALUE OF HONG KONG DEPENDED VERY MUCH ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS ECONOMY WHICH WAS SUSTAINED BY PUBLIC CONFIDENCE THE KEY TO THE WHOLE QUESTION.

/HE SAID

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HE SAID THE BOARD'S RECOMMENDATION TO REDUCE THE LICENCE PERIOD TO LAST FOR EIGHT YEARS MIGHT DETER NEW COMPANIES FROM BIDDING FOR THE LICENCE.

+AS THE REPORT RECOMMENDS THAT A PUBLIC HEARING BE HELD EVERY FOUR YEARS, WE SHOULD NOT NEED TO WORRY THAT A LONGER LICENCE PERIOD WOULD NECESSARILY ALLOW THE TELEVISION STATIONS TO GO ON IN THE SAME SLOPPY RUT WITHOUT MAKING EFFORTS FOR IMPROVEMENT,+ HE SAID.

HE FELT THAT THE RECOMMENDATION FOR THE SETTING UP OF A RADIO AND TELEVISION COMPLAINTS TRIBUNAL SHOULD NOT BE IMPLEMENTED.

+THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG HAS ITS FOUNDATION ON A SOUND AND COMPREHENSIVE JUDICIAL SYSTEM AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ADDITIONAL TRIBUNAL MIGHT, I AM AFRAID, WEAKEN THE INDEPENDENT STATUS OF THE JUDICIARY, WASTE FINANCIAL AND MANPOWER RESOURCES AND EVEN DO HARM TO PUBLIC CONFIDENCE,+ HE SAID.

MR LEE ALSO FELT THAT SOME RECOMMENDATIONS DIRECTED AGAINST A CERTAIN TELEVISION COMPANY WHICH HAD BEEN EXCEPTIONALLY SUCCESSFUL WERE SLIGHTLY SUBJECTIVE AND SOMETIMES ARBITRARY.

AS THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD OPINED THAT THE PROGRAMMES CURRENTLY PROVIDED BY THE TWO COMMERCIAL TELEVISION STATIONS WERE FAR FROM COMPREHENSIVE, THE ADMINISTRATION SHOULD REQUIRE THEM TO BROADCAST A CERTAIN NUMBER OF INFORMATIVE, CURRENT AFFAIR, EDUCATIONAL OR CULTURAL PROGRAMMES IN SPECIFIED HOURS, HE SAID.

MR LEE POINTED OUT THAT MOST PEOPLE WELCOMED THE PROPOSAL FOR THE SETTING UP OF A PUBLIC BROADCASTER, BUT DIVERSE VIEWS HAD BEEN EXPRESSED ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF ALLOCATING TO IT THE HOUR FROM 7 PM TO 8 PM ON EACH OF THE TWO CHINESE CHANNELS.

STILL OTHERS THOUGHT THAT IN THE LONG RUN, WE SHOULD NOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF SETTING UP A FIFTH TELEVISION BROADCASTING CHANNEL, HE SAID.

+ADDITIONAL BROADCASTING SERVICES WILL HELP MUCH IN THE PROMOTION OF MASS MEDIA EDUCATION AND OPEN EDUCATION SHOULD THE ADMINISTRATION DECIDE TO GO AHEAD ALONG THESE LINES,+ MR LEE NOTED.

HE SAID RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG WOULD BE ABLE TO ACQUIRE A HIGHER DEGREE OF EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE UPON ITS CONVERSION INTO AN INDEPENDENT PUBLIC BROADCASTER, BUT IT SHOULD BE RESTRUCTURED AS A NON-PROFIT-MAKING BODY AND CONSIDERATION MUST BE GIVEN TO SUBSIDISE PART OF ITS RECURRENT COST WITH PUBLIC FUND.

AFTER ITS DISESTABLISHMENT FROM THE GOVERNMENT, RTHK SHOULD RETAIN THE SERVICE OF ITS EXPATRIATE STAFF WITH APPROPRIATE TERMS OF SERVICE SO AS TO MAINTAIN THE QUALITY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAMMES, HE ADDED.

/MR LEE

MR LEE HOPED THAT CONSIDERATION WOULD BE GIVEN TO TAKING A GRADUAL APPROACH TOWARDS THE BAN ON TOBACCO ADVERTISING SO THAT THE COMMERCIAL TELEVISION LICENSEES WOULD HAVE SUFFICIENT TIME TO LOOK FOR OTHER SOURCES OF ADVERTISING REVENUES TO OFFSET SUCH LOSSES.

HE ALSO BELIEVED THAT IT WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE FOR THE MEDICAL SOCIETY TO GIVE THE HEALTH WARNING ADVICE AGAINST CIGARETTE SMOKING.

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HARM SEEN IN TOTAL BAN
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OBJECTION TO A TOTAL BAN ON CIGARETTE ADVERTISING AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT WAS EXPRESSED BY THE HON LIU LIT-FOR IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY). BUT HE ACCEPTED THE VIEW THAT ADVERTISING TIME SHOULD BE RESTRICTED.

SPEAKING IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE REPORT, MR LIU SAID HE DID NOT AGREE TO A TOTAL BAN BECAUSE HE CONSIDERED THAT BROADCASTING OF CIGARETTE ADVERTISEMENTS WAS EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY RELATED TO A NUMBER OF INDUSTRIES AND INVOLVED LAWFUL BUSINESS COMPETITION AND AFFECTED THE SPIRIT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF A FREE ECONOMY.

HE SAID THAT IN PROPOSING A BAN ON CIGARETTE ADVERTISEMENTS AND AN EXTENSION OF THE TIME LIMIT DURING WHICH ALCOHOL ADVERTISEMENTS WERE BANNED, THE BOARD DID NOT SEEM TO HAVE EXTENSIVELY DISCUSSED THE RELEVANT CRITERIA, SUCH AS WHETHER ALL THOSE WHICH WENT AGAINST PREVAILING MORAL CONCEPTS OR MISLED THE AUDIENCE SHOULD BE BANNED.

+EVERYONE KNOWS THAT THE OVERWHELMING SUCCESS WHICH HONG KONG HAS ACHIEVED IN ITS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE PAST DECADES IS MAINLY A RESULT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FREE TRADE POLICY AND THE RESPECT GIVEN TO INDIVIDUAL ENTERPRISING SPIRIT AND THE FREEDOM OF ENTERPRISE.

+YET THE BOARD'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE COMMERCIAL BROADCASTING STATIONS TO ALLOCATE PRIME TIME AND REVENUE TO THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER, TO BE FORBIDDEN DIVERSIFICATION AND FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO BAN TOTALLY TOBACCO ADVERTISEMENTS ARE BOUND TO INTERVENE IN THE OPERATION OF ENTERPRISES AND HINDER THE NATURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ECONOMY,+ HE SAID.

MR LIU FELT THAT IT WAS MOST IMPORTANT FOR THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY TO BE ABLE TO TRANSMIT INFORMATION FREELY AND TO PROTECT THE FREE CHOICE OF VIEWERS AND LISTENERS AND CONSUMERS.

/HE SAID

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HE SAID IT WAS ONLY NATURAL THAT ADVERTISING OF UNLAWFUL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES SHOULD NOT BE BROADCAST, BUT THOSE WHICH WERE LAWFUL SHOULD BE GIVEN THE CHANCE OF BEING AIRED.

+NONETHELESS, APART FROM STRENGTHENING THE WARNING THAT SMOKING IS HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH, THE BROADCASTING TIME OF CIGARETTE ADVERTISEMENTS SHOULD BE SO RESTRICTED THAT IT WILL NOT FALL INTO THE PERIOD DURING WHICH MOST YOUNGSTERS ARE VIEWING/LISTENING TO THE PROGRAMMES,+ HE SAID.

MR LIU STRESSED THAT SINCE HONG KONG WAS AN IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION CENTRE, TO MAINTAIN FREE TRANSMISSION OF INFORMATION WOULD BE HIGHLY BENEFICIAL TO THE COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL SECTORS AS WELL AS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF VARIOUS ASPECTS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS.

+I DO NOT WISH TO SEE THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD'S RECOMMENDATIONS AFFECT INFORMATION AND ADVERTISING FREEDOM IN HONG KONG,+ HE ADDED.

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PROPOSALS HINDER FINANCIAL VIABILITY

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A LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBER TODAY (WEDNESDAY) QUERIED WHY THE GOVERNMENT HAD NOT CONSIDERED THE POSSIBILITY OF INTRODUCING SOME CONTROL, ALONG THE LINES OF THE SCHEMES OF CONTROL WHICH EXISTED FOR SOME OF THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMPANIES, OVER THE COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES OF TELEVISION LICENSEES.

INSTEAD, A SLEDGEHAMMER APPROACH WAS BEING ADOPTED, THE HON HELMUT SOHMEN SAID DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

HE POINTED OUT THAT OTHER FRANCHISED ENTERPRISES IN HONG KONG SUBJECT TO GOVERNMENT CONTROL OR SUPERVISION WERE GENERALLY PERMITTED TO ENGAGE IN OTHER CORPORATE ACTIVITIES.

HE SAID THE BOARD'S PROPOSALS ON CORPORATE STRUCTURE SEEMED TO BE INFLUENCED TOO MUCH BY THE RELATIVE MARKET SHARES OF THE TWO TELEVISION LICENSEES AND DISREGARDED THE REAL COMMERCIAL AND MANAGERIAL REASONS FOR THIS STATE OF AFFAIRS.

+THE REPORT PROPOSES SOLUTIONS WHICH WOULD MEAN RESTRAINTS ON LEGITIMATE CORPORATE ACTIVITIES WHICH HAVE UP TO NOW BEEN ACCEPTED, IF NOT ENCOURAGED, AND WHICH ARE NOT UNCOMMON IN OTHER COUNTRIES,+ HE SAID.

/BY FORCING

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BY FORCING DISINVESTMENT AND PROHIBITING DIVERSIFICATION, THE PROPOSALS WOULD PREVENT LICENSEES FROM STRENGTHENING THEIR FINANCIAL VIABILITY UNDER THE PRETEXT OF A NEED TO SAFEGUARD COMPETITION IN A PUBLICLY-SENSITIVE INDUSTRY, HE ADDED.

MR SOHMEN BELIEVED THERE WAS A GOOD CASE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO IMPOSE A FIXED ANNUAL ROYALTY PAYMENT PAYABLE ON EVERY LICENCE ANNIVERSARY DATE BY THE COMMERCIAL LICENSEES FOR THEIR USE OF THE AIRWAVES IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR FINANCIAL RESULTS.

+THIS SHOULD BE SUPPLEMENTED BY AN ADDITIONAL LEVY ON PROFITS FROM BROADCASTING ACTIVITIES PROPER, BASED ON AUDITED ACCOUNTS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE LICENSING AUTHORITY.

+IT SHOULD TAKE THE FORM OF A PERCENTAGE FIGURE APPLIED ON A DECREASING SCALE ON NET PROFITS ABOVE A CERTAIN MINIMUM RETURN ON SHAREHOLDERS' FUNDS, SAY EIGHT PER CENT, SO AS TO ENCOURAGE THE LICENSEES TO PRODUCE PROFITS WITHOUT PENALISING THEM FOR COMMERCIAL SUCCESS.

+IT CERTAINLY DOES NOT REFLECT GOOD BUSINESS SENSE FOR THE BOARD TO RECOMMEND ROYALTY PAYMENTS BASED ON TURNOVER (I.E. ANNUAL GROSS RECEIPTS) OF BOTH THE TELEVISION AND RADIO LICENSEES SINCE TURNOVER IS NEVER A SATISFACTORY MEASURE OF THE ACTUAL PERFORMANCE OF ANY ENTERPRISE, AND WOULD ALSO TEND TO INHIBIT LICENSEES FROM MAKING THE NEW INVESTMENTS WHICH MAY BE NECESSARY OR DESIRABLE TO IMPROVE THEIR PROGRAMMING AND TECHNICAL STANDARDS,+ MR SOHMEN SAID.

BECAUSE OF ITS SIGNIFICANT SOCIAL IMPACT, MR SOHMEN SAID TELEVISION BROADCASTING DID REQUIRE SPECIAL CONTROL.

+BUT THESE CONTROLS SHOULD BE DESIGNED PRIMARILY TO ENSURE PROGRAMMING QUALITY WHICH CAN CONSISTENTLY SATISFY THE VARIED NEEDS OF A MULTINATIONAL AND MULTILINGUAL COMMUNITY, BUT SHOULD FALL SHORT OF INTERVENTION IN LEGITIMATE COMMERCIAL AND CORPORATE ARRANGEMENTS MADE BY THE BROADCASTERS,+ HE SAID.

HE NOTED THAT THE LICENSING PROCESS WAS ITSELF A CONTROL MECHANISM.

A REDUCTION IN THE LICENCE PERIODS FROM 15 TO, SAY, 10 YEARS, COUPLED WITH MID-TERM REVIEWS, WOULD PROVIDE RELATIVELY FREQUENT REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES OF THEIR OVERALL POSITION AND BEHAVIOUR, MR SOHMEN SAID.

HE WAS NOT CONVINCED THAT PUBLIC HEARINGS EITHER AT THE MID-TERM OF LICENCE EXPIRY DATES WOULD BE PARTICULARLY USEFUL, AS TOO LARGE A NUMBER OF ESSENTIALLY SUBJECTIVE VIEWS COULD CLOUD ISSUES AND MAKE DECISIONS MORE DIFFICULT.

/+IF A

+IF A PHILOSOPHY WAS ACCEPTED THAT LICENCES COULD GENERALLY BE RENEWED ON EXPIRY UNLESS LICENSEES HAD CONSISTENTLY OR FUNDAMENTALLY VIOLATED THE LICENCE CONDITIONS, OR A NUMBER OF APPLICANTS WERE VYING FOR A LIMITED NUMBER OF LICENCES, ONLY THEN SHOULD PUBLIC HEARINGS BE HELD TO DECIDE ON LICENCE REVOCATION OR THE AWARD OF LICENCES TO NEWCOMERS,+ HE SUGGESTED.

HE WAS IN FAVOUR OF THE BOARD'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENACT A NEW AND COMPREHENSIVE BROADCASTING ORDINANCE AND TO ESTABLISH A BROADCASTING TRIBUNAL.

HOWEVER, HE WAS HESITANT TO ENDORSE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMPLAINTS TRIBUNAL WITH JUDICIAL FUNCTIONS, SAYING THAT THESE SHOULD BETTER BE LEFT TO THE COURTS.

+I WOULD STRONGLY ARGUE THAT LICENCE CONDITIONS SHOULD BE TIGHTLY DRAFTED AND ROBUSTLY ENFORCED, AND PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS BE INCREASED AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BOARD.

+CLARITY SHOULD ALSO BE SOUGHT WITH REGARD TO PROVISIONS RELATING TO THE CORPORATE STRUCTURE OF THE LICENSEES, ON WHICH I WOULD ADVOCATE A LIBERAL RATHER THAN AN INTERVENTIONIST APPROACH, AND AS REGARDS THE FORMULATION OF PROGRAMME STANDARDS,+ HE SAID.

TURNING TO THE CREATION OF A PUBLIC BROADCASTER OUT OF RTHK BY THE SETTING UP OF AN INDEPENDENT STATUTORY CORPORATION, MR SOHMEN NOTED THAT THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE AND JUSTIFIABLE SUPPORT FOR SUCH A PROPOSAL.

HE SAID A PUBLIC BROADCASTER COULD INDEED HELP TO IMPROVE WHAT WAS CALLED +TELEVISION LITERACY+ AND BETTER ASSIST IN CIVIC EDUCATION, AND WOULD ALSO INTRODUCE AN ADDITIONAL COMPETITIVE ELEMENT.

GIVEN ITS RATHER MORE CIRCUMSCRIBED SCOPE FOR PROGRAMMING, MR SOHMEN BELIEVED THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER WOULD CLEARLY NEED SPECIAL FINANCIAL TREATMENT.

+THIS SHOULD CONSIST OF AN EXEMPTION FROM ANY ROYALTY PAYMENTS, THE LIBERTY AS ENDORSED BY THE BRB, TO RAISE INCOME FROM ADVERTISING, AS WELL AS THE PROVISION OF GOVERNMENT GUARANTEES TO FINANCE ANY SHORTFALLS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENDITURE,+ HE SAID.

ON THE ALLOCATION OF REGULAR PRIME VIEWING TIME TO GUARANTEE THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER BETTER AUDIENCES AND ADVERTISING SUCCESS, MR SOHMEN SAID IT WOULD INTERFERE WITH THE OVERALL INTENTION TO CREATE MORE PROGRAMME VARIETY, AND CAST IMMEDIATE DOUBT ON THE ABILITY OF THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER TO HOLD ITS OWN AGAINST THE COMMERCIAL LICENSEES.

/HE AGREED

HE AGREED THAT THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO AIR-TIME BUT THIS SHOULD BE SPREAD EVENLY DURING BROADCASTING HOURS TO PROVIDE A REAL CHOICE TO THE VIEWING PUBLIC AND FAIR TREATMENT TO ALL LICENSEES.

+THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER SHOULD IN ALL REGULATORY MATTERS BE TREATED IN THE SAME MANNER AS THE OTHER LICENSEES.

+I AM CONVINCED THAT EDITORIAL INDEPENDENCE FROM GOVERNMENT INFLUENCE CAN BE SAFEGUARDED BY APPROPRIATE ORGANISATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS,+ HE SAID.

ON THE QUESTION OF BANNING TOBACCO ADVERTISING, MR SOHMEN SAID THIS WAS A DIFFICULT MATTER SO LONG AS TOBACCO PRODUCTS WERE LEGALLY SOLD AND PERMITTED TO BE ADVERTISED IN OTHER MEDIA AND IN OTHER FORMS.

+ONE CANNOT MAKE A VERY CONVINCING CASE THAT TOBACCO ADVERTISING SHOULD BE BANNED FROM TELEVISION, HOWEVER MUCH ONE IS CONVINCED OF OR WISHES TO SUPPORT GOVERNMENT'S VALID POLICY TO DISCOURAGE SMOKING ON HEALTH GROUNDS,+ HE SAID.

HE SUGGESTED THE GOVERNMENT AND THE ANTI-SMOKING LOBBY SHOULD GET THEIR VIEWS ACROSS BY USING THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY AS AN ADVERTISING MEDIUM FOR THEIR OWN MESSAGE TO THE PUBLIC ON A COMMERCIAL BASIS.

+ANOTHER SOLUTION IS PERHAPS TO STATUTORILY REQUIRE A LARGER SCREEN AREA, SAY 40 PER CENT, TO BE BLOCKED OFF IN EACH COMMERCIAL FOR THE HEALTH WARNING.

+IN THE LATTER CASE TOBACCO ADVERTISING WOULD BE FORCED TO PAY PARTIALLY FOR THE ANTI-SMOKING EFFORT WITHOUT BEING COMPLETELY DENIED ACCESS TO THE MARKET AND WITHOUT DEPRIVING LICENSEES OF SUBSTANTIAL REVENUE,+ HE SAID.

EARLIER, MR SOHMEN PRAISED THE COUNCIL'S AD HOC GROUP ON THE REPORT FOR ACHIEVING A HIGH DEGREE OF CONSENSUS AT LEAST ON THE PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING IN HONG KONG. HE ALSO COMMENTED THAT THE REPORT SUFFERED FROM TRYING TO ACHIEVE TOO MANY AND OFTEN CONTRADICTORY OBJECTIVES.

NEED SEEN TO CLOSE LOOPHOLES
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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REAFFIRM THE SPIRIT OF SECTION 10 OF THE TELEVISION ORDINANCE FOR THE SAKE OF THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDUSTRY AND IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE COMMUNITY, THE HON MRS ROSANNA TAM SAID DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

+SECTION 10 OF THE CURRENT TV ORDINANCE STIPULATES THAT TELEVISION LICENSEES SHALL BE PERMITTED ONLY TO PROVIDE BROADCASTING SERVICES AND OTHER BUSINESSES THAT ARE CONNECTED OR ASSOCIATED WITH IT.

+THE SPIRIT BEHIND THIS LEGISLATION IS TO ENSURE THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE TELEVISION BROADCASTING INDUSTRY, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE SUBJECTED TO POLITICAL INFLUENCE OR THE MANIPULATION OF FINANCIAL CONGLOMERATES, AND AT THE SAME TIME ALLOWING ALL LICENSEES TO COMPLETE ON EQUAL FOOTING,+ SHE SAID.

UNFORTUNATELY, FOR VARIOUS REASONS, THERE WAS TODAY IN THE INDUSTRY A VIOLATION OF THE SPIRIT OF SECTION 10, SHE SAID.

+THE EMERGENCE OF JOINT VENTURE CONGLOMERATES NOT ONLY DOES INJUSTICE TO OTHER TELEVISION LICENSEES, BUT ALSO BRINGS ABOUT UNFAIR COMPETITION TO OTHER COMPANIES IN THE JOINT VENTURE BUSINESS,+ MRS TAM SAID.

SHE SAID THAT APPROPRIATE AMENDMENTS SHOULD BE MADE TO THE LEGISLATION TO CLOSE LOOPHOLES AND ALSO TO ENSURE THAT WHEN NEW LICENCES WERE ISSUED NO PRETENTIOUS OR FICTITIOUS JOINT VENTURE COMPANIES OR OTHER FORMS OF BUSINESS NOT CONNECTED WITH BROADCASTING WOULD BE ALLOWED TO DEVELOP AND TO MONOPOLISE THE INDUSTRY.

IN ANTICIPATION OF FUTURE BROADCASTING NEEDS, MRS TAM AGREED THAT THERE WOULD BE AN UNPRECEDENTED DEMAND FOR INFORMATIVE PROGRAMMES.

SHE ALSO SUPPORTED THE RECOMMENDATION TO DISESTABLISH RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG, WHICH HAD AMPLE EXPERIENCE IN MAKING PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAMMES, FROM THE GOVERNMENT TO BECOME THE INDEPENDENT PUBLIC BROADCASTER.

MRS TAM HOPED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER ALLOCATING WEEKENDS AND SUNDAYS TO THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER.

+THIS WILL NOT ONLY ENSURE THAT IT WILL HAVE AN IDEAL AND SUITABLE TIME TO PUT ITS PROGRAMMES ON THE AIR, BUT WILL ALSO HELP TO ESTABLISH IN THE MINDS OF THE PUBLIC A SHARP AND DISTINCT IMAGE.

+LAST BUT NOT THE LEAST, GOVERNMENT SHOULD MAKE EFFECTIVE FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS TO ENSURE THAT THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING STATION CAN SURVIVE AND THRIVE,+ SHE SAID.

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CONCERN FOR PROSPECTS OF RTHK STAFF

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A LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLOR, THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE CAREER PROSPECTS OF RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG STAFF, WHO WOULD BE DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY THE RE-ORGANISATION OF THE STATION AS PROPOSED IN THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT.

SPEAKING AT THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE OF THE REPORT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR TAM ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO FIRST CONSULT RTHK'S STAFF UNION BEFORE DECIDING ON THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATION.

IN HANDLING THE RE-ORGANISATION OF RTHK, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ENSURE THAT IT COULD SURVIVE FINANCIALLY AFTER ITS INDEPENDENCE.

HE ADDED THAT THE EXISTING LEVEL OF PAY, BENEFITS AND JOB SECURITY ENJOYED BY RTHK STAFF SHOULD NOT BE LOWERED, AND THAT THOSE STAFF ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE STATION SHOULD BE GIVEN A REASONABLE COMPENSATION AND EARLY RETIREMENT GRATUITY.

MR TAM DISAGREED WITH THE PROPOSAL THAT THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER SHOULD BE SELF-FINANCING THROUGH ADVERTISING REVENUE AND SPONSORSHIP, SAYING THAT SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WOULD AFFECT FINANCIAL STABILITY AND BROADCASTING INDEPENDENCE.

+IN MY OPINION, PUBLIC BROADCASTING IS A KIND OF COMMUNITY SERVICE. THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SHOULDER PART OF OR EVEN THE ENTIRE FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY,+ HE SAID.

HE ALSO SAID IT WAS WORTH CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF FINANCING THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER BY APPROPRIATIONS FROM THE ROYALTY OBTAINED FROM COMMERCIAL BROADCASTING LICENCEES.

REFERRING TO OTHER ASPECTS OF THE REPORT, MR TAM SUPPORTED THE VIEW THAT THE AIRWAVES WERE THE PROPERTY OF THE COMMUNITY, AND, WHEN RENEWING LICENCES, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE THE POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY TO REALLOCATE THE USE OF THESE AIRWAVES IN THE WIDER INTERESTS AND NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.

HE AGREED THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST REGULATE AND MONITOR THE USE OF AIRWAVES, AND THAT THE REPORT'S RECOMMENDATION FOR RE-ORGANISING RTHK INTO AN INDEPENDENT PUBLIC BROADCASTER HAVING A BETTER, MORE STABLE AND LONGER AIR-TIME WAS IN LINE WITH PUBLIC NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS.

/MR TAM

MR TAM SUPPORTED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A BROADCASTING AUTHORITY AND A RADIO AND TELEVISION COMPLAINTS TRIBUNAL TO FACILITATE MORE EFFECTIVE MONITORING OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY. HE LIKewise SUPPORTED THE PROPOSALS TO STRENGTHEN THE SUPERVISORY POWER OF THE EXISTING TELEVISION ADVISORY BOARD AND TO CONDUCT PUBLIC HEARINGS BEFORE THE GRANTING, OR MID-TERM REVIEW, OF LICENCES.

+IN ORDER TO ENABLE THE PUBLIC TO FULLY UTILISE THEIR MONITORING POWER, THE GOVERNMENT MUST STEP UP PUBLICITY ON THE CURRENT AND FUTURE MONITORING SYSTEM AND EDUCATE THE CITIZENS TO UNDERSTAND THEIR RIGHT TO MONITOR,+ HE ADDED.

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QUALITY OF PROGRAMMES SHOULD SATISFY PUBLIC NEEDS
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THE GOVERNMENT HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ENSURING THAT THE CONTENTS AND QUALITY OF BROADCAST PROGRAMMES SATISFY PUBLIC NEEDS WHEN IT ALLOCATE THE RIGHT TO USE A SPECIFIED FREQUENCY TO PRIVATE BODIES, DR THE HON DANIEL TSE SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT, DR TSE SAID THE MOST APPROPRIATE AND EFFECTIVE WAY FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO DISCHARGE THIS RESPONSIBILITY WAS BY IMPLEMENTING SIMPLE GUIDING LEGISLATION AS WELL AS A POWERFUL MONITORING SYSTEM TO ENSURE FAIR, REASONABLE AND ADEQUATE COMPETITION WITHIN THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY AND ALL BROADCASTING-ASSOCIATED BUSINESSES.

AS TO THE MODE OF OPERATION, ENTERPRISE STRUCTURE AND SCOPE OF BUSINESS, DR TSE SAID THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE CONSISTENT IN ITS LAISSEZ-FAIRE POLICY AND AVOID IMPOSING PASSIVE RESTRICTIONS ON THE LICENSEES.

TO ENSURE THAT THE PUBLIC RECEIVED AN ADEQUATE AND OBJECTIVE SERVICE THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD MAKE USE OF THE TAX ON PROFITS OF COMMERCIAL BROADCASTERS AND THEIR ASSOCIATED BUSINESS TO SET UP AND SUPPORT A PUBLIC BROADCASTER WHICH WAS NOT A GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT, HE SUGGESTED.

+BUT IN ORDER TO UPHOLD THE PRINCIPLE OF REASONABLE AND FAIR COMPETITION, THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER SHOULD NOT ENJOY THE PRIVILEGE OF MONOPOLISING A SPECIFIED PRIME TIME AND THERE SHOULD NOT BE A GREAT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE WORKING CAPITAL OF THE PUBLIC BROADCASTER AND THE COMMERCIAL LICENSEES,+ DR TSE SAID.

/HE ALSO

HE ALSO NOTED THE POPULARITY OF INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING BY SATELLITE IN ADVANCED COUNTRIES AND THE OBVIOUS TREND OF A REVIVAL IN CABLE BROADCASTING ON A LOCALISED LEVEL.

+ALTHOUGH THESE TWO TYPES OF BROADCASTING HAVE NOT YET DEVELOPED IN HONG KONG, THE POSSIBILITY OF THEIR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND THE SOCIAL IMPACT WHICH THEY MAY BRING ABOUT SHOULD NOT BE OVERLOOKED.

+HENCE, IT IS NOT TOO EARLY FOR US TO MENTION THIS TODAY AS AN AIDE-MEMOIRE,+ DR TSE SAID.

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MOVE TO PROMOTE BANKING STABILITY, PROTECT DEPOSITORS
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A BILL AIMED AT PROVIDING A MEASURE OF PROTECTION TO DEPOSITORS AND PROMOTING THE GENERAL STABILITY AND EFFECTIVE WORKING OF THE BANKING SYSTEM WAS INTRODUCED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BANKING BILL 1986, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR JOHN BREMIDGE, SAID THE BILL, WHEN ENACTED, WOULD REPLACE THE EXISTING BANKING AND DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES ORDINANCE.

HE SAID THE MAIN NEW PROPOSALS IN THE BILL RELATED TO SIX AREAS, NAMELY THE COMMISSIONER OF BANKING'S ROLE, AUDIT, OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, RESTRICTION ON LOANS, CAPITAL TO RISK ASSETS RATIO, AND LIQUIDITY RATIO.

NOTING THAT THE COMMISSIONER OF BANKING WAS RESPONSIBLE, AMONG OTHER DUTIES, FOR ENSURING THAT AUTHORISED INSTITUTIONS WERE OPERATED IN A RESPONSIBLE, HONEST AND BUSINESS-LIKE MANNER, SIR JOHN SAID HE WAS ALSO RESPONSIBLE TO PROMOTE AND ENCOURAGE PROPER STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AND SOUND BUSINESS PRACTICE AMONG THESE INSTITUTIONS.

+IT IS NECESSARY TO SPELL OUT IN THE BILL THESE FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMISSIONER IN ORDER TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT HIS ROLE IS GREATER THAN MERELY ONE OF CHECKING THAT THE INSTITUTIONS COMPLY WITH THE VARIOUS TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS,+ HE SAID.

+THIS REFLECTS A DIFFERENT AND UP-TO-DATE EMPHASIS IN THE APPROACH TO PRUDENTIAL SUPERVISION - ONE THAT IS MORE FLEXIBLE AND RELIES MORE ON THE COMMISSIONER'S DISCRETION AND QUALITATIVE JUDGMENT THAN PREVIOUSLY.+

/NOTHING THAT

NOTING THAT SOME FACILE PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE BILL SINCE IT WAS GAZETTED HAD FOCUSED ON THE COMMISSIONER'S POWERS, SIR JOHN SAID THE EXISTING LEGISLATION ALREADY GAVE VERY WIDE POWERS OF DISCRETION TO THE COMMISSIONER.

+IT COULD NOT BE OTHERWISE IF HE IS TO CARRY OUT EFFECTIVELY HIS SUPERVISORY DUTIES.

+THESE POWERS ARE IN LINE WITH, INDEED ARE MODEST COMPARED WITH, THOSE WHICH APPLY IN OTHER MAJOR BANKING CENTRES,+ HE SAID.

SIR JOHN ADDED THAT SAFEGUARDS AGAINST ABUSES IN THE COMMISSIONER'S EXERCISE OF HIS DISCRETION WERE PROVIDED THROUGHOUT THE BILL - BY WAY OF APPEALS TO THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY OR TO THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL.

IT WAS ALSO PROPOSED THAT THE COMMISSIONER SHOULD PROVIDE AN ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL, WHO MIGHT PUBLISH THE REPORT, IN PART OR IN WHOLE, HE SAID.

ON THE QUESTION OF AUDIT, SIR JOHN SAID THERE WAS A COMMON APPRECIATION OF THE RESPECTIVE ROLES OF THE AUDITOR AND SUPERVISOR, AND HOW THESE SEPARATE ROLES CAME TOGETHER TO ENABLE PROBLEMS TO BE DETECTED BEFORE IT WAS TOO LATE.

+TO THIS END, THE BILL PROVIDES FOR ANY OF THE THREE PARTIES - MANAGEMENT, COMMISSIONER, AUDITOR - TO CALL A TRIPARTITE MEETING TO DISCUSS MATTERS RELATING TO THE INSTITUTION, AND FOR THE MEETING TO BE HELD NOTWITHSTANDING NON-ATTENDANCE BY ANY ONE OF THE THREE PARTIES,+ HE SAID.

TO DEAL WITH WEAKNESSES IN AUDIT, SIR JOHN SAID, THE COMMISSIONER MIGHT IN FUTURE REFER TO THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIETY OF ACCOUNTANTS ANY CASES OF NEGLIGENCE OR SERIOUS MISCONDUCT BY THE AUDITOR - SOMETHING HE COULD NOT DO AT PRESENT.

ACCORDING TO THE BILL, THE AUDIT REQUIREMENTS PRESENTLY APPLICABLE ONLY TO BANKS WOULD BE EXTENDED TO DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES. THE COMMISSIONER WOULD ALSO HAVE THE POWER TO APPOINT A SECOND AUDITOR FOR DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES.

TWO PROPOSALS WERE MADE RELATING TO THE CONTROL ON OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF BANKS AND DTCS INCORPORATED IN HONG KONG.

FIRSTLY, AFTER THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE BILL, ANY PERSON WHO, INDIVIDUALLY OR IN CONCERT WITH OTHERS, ACQUIRED SHARES WHICH BROUGHT HIS HOLDING TO 10 PER CENT OR MORE OF THE VOTING SHARES OF THE INSTITUTION, WOULD NEED THE COMMISSIONER'S APPROVAL BEFORE HE WAS ABLE TO EXERCISE HIS VOTING RIGHTS IN THOSE ACQUIRED SHARES.

/SECONDLY, AFTER

SECONDLY, AFTER COMMENCEMENT, ALL APPOINTMENTS TO DIRECTOR AND COMPANY SECRETARY POSTS OF A LOCAL INSTITUTION WOULD BE SUBJECT TO THE COMMISSIONER'S PRIOR APPROVAL.

SIR JOHN SAID THE COMMISSIONER'S CONTROL ALSO EXTENDED TO THE +CONTROLLER+ - DEFINED AS ONE WHO CONTROLLED MORE THAN 50 PER CENT OF THE VOTING SHARES OF THAT INSTITUTION OR OF ITS HOLDING COMPANY.

RELATING TO THE RESTRICTION ON LOANS, HE SAID THE BILL PROVIDED THAT THE COMMISSIONER MIGHT ISSUE DIRECTIONS TO AUTHORISED INSTITUTIONS NOT TO ENGAGE IN SPECIFIED BUSINESS PRACTICES WHICH, IN HIS OPINION, MIGHT CAUSE THE SOUNDNESS OF THE FINANCIAL POSITION OF AN AUTHORISED INSTITUTION TO BE DEPENDENT UPON THE SOUNDNESS OF THE FINANCIAL POSITION OF A SINGLE PARTY.

THE BILL ALSO REQUIRED THAT AN INSTITUTION SHOULD NOT, EXCEPT WITH THE COMMISSIONER'S APPROVAL, GIVE CREDIT AGAINST THE SECURITY OF THE SHARES OF ITS RELATED COMPANIES - THAT IS, ANY SUBSIDIARY OF THAT INSTITUTION, THE HOLDING COMPANY OF THAT INSTITUTION, OR ANY SUBSIDIARY OF SUCH HOLDING COMPANY.

SUCH MEASURES WOULD COVER BOTH BANKS AND DTCS INCORPORATED IN HONG KONG AND OTHER FOREIGN COMPANIES, SIR JOHN SAID.

ON THE QUESTION OF CAPITAL TO RISK ASSETS RATIO, SIR JOHN SAID ONE OBVIOUS COMMON FEATURE OF THE BANKS THAT HAD HAD TO BE TAKEN OVER BY GOVERNMENT WAS INSOLVENCY.

+IN OTHER WORDS, THEIR CAPITAL AND RESERVES WERE GROSSLY INADEQUATE TO MEET THE LOSSES ARISING FROM BAD DEBTS.+

IN VIEW OF THIS, SIR JOHN SAID, THE BILL INTRODUCED A NEW RATIO THE CAPITAL TO RISK ASSETS RATIO, TO APPLY TO ALL BANKS AND DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES INCORPORATED IN HONG KONG.

HE SAID THE CONCEPT OF A CAPITAL TO RISK ASSETS RATIO WAS WIDELY ACCEPTED INTERNATIONALLY, BUT THERE WAS NO UNIFORM STANDARD.

+THE BILL SETS A MINIMUM RATIO OF FIVE PER CENT, BUT THE COMMISSIONER HAS THE POWER TO INCREASE THE RATIO FOR PARTICULAR INSTITUTIONS TO NOT MORE THAN EIGHT PER CENT IN THE CASE OF BANKS, AND 10 PER CENT IN THE CASE OF DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES.

+THIS DISCRETIONARY REQUIREMENT IS TO PROVIDE FLEXIBILITY DUE TO SUCH DIFFERENCES AS THE QUALITY AND NATURE OF INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION'S ASSET PORTFOLIOS,+ SIR JOHN SAID.

SINCE THE CAPITAL TO RISK ASSETS RATIO WAS NEW, AND WOULD PLACE SUBSTANTIAL REQUIREMENT ON SOME OF THE INSTITUTIONS CONCERNED, HE ENVISAGED THAT A REASONABLY LONG PERIOD OF ABOUT TWO YEARS WOULD BE ALLOWED BEFORE BRINGING IT INTO EFFECT.

ON THE AREA RELATING TO LIQUIDITY, SIR JOHN SAID THE BILL INTRODUCED NEW LIQUIDITY REQUIREMENTS TO REPLACE THE PRESENT ONES.

+THESE WILL PUT AUTHORISED INSTITUTIONS IN A BETTER POSITION TO MEET LIABILITIES SUCH AS CUSTOMERS AND INTERBANK DEPOSITS AS THEY FALL DUE,+ HE SAID.

AS ALMOST ALL BODIES CONCERNED HAD EMPHASISED THE IMPORTANCE OF ALLOWING TIME FOR CAREFUL SCRUTINY OF THE DRAFTING OF THE BILL WHEN PUBLISHED, SIR JOHN PROPOSED TO ALLOW A PERIOD OF TWO MONTHS FOR DETAILED EXAMINATION AND REPRESENTATION BY INTERESTED BODIES, BEFORE RESUMPTION OF THE DEBATE ON THE BILL.

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REDEVELOPMENT OF TEMPLE PROPERTIES PROPOSED
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A BILL TO ENABLE THE TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS TO REDEVELOP THE MAN MO TEMPLE PROPERTIES, AND TO IMPROVE THE RANGE OF CHARITABLE SERVICES WAS INTRODUCED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE MAN MO TEMPLE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986, THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DONALD LIAO, SAID THE MAN MO TEMPLE ORDINANCE PROVIDED FOR THE ADMINISTRATION AND DISCIPLINE OF THE TEMPLE AND THE MAN MO TEMPLE FUND BY THE TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS.

+THE OBJECTS OF THE FUND, AS SPELT OUT BY THE ORDINANCE, INCLUDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANY PROPERTY BELONGING TO THE FUND AND THE USE OF THE FUND FOR EDUCATIONAL, MEDICAL AND CHARITABLE PURPOSES.

+UNDER THE TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS ORDINANCE, THE GROUP IS EMPOWERED TO MANAGE THE FUND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE MAN MO TEMPLE ORDINANCE.

+THIS IN EFFECT TURNS THE GROUP INTO A TRUSTEE OF THE FUND,+ MR LIAO SAID.

THE NEW BILL INTRODUCES THE NECESSARY AMENDMENTS TO ENABLE THE GROUP TO REDEVELOP AND MORTGAGE ANY PROPERTY BELONGING TO THE FUND, HE SAID.

MR LIAO POINTED OUT THAT SOME OF THE EXISTING PROPERTIES OF THE FUND WERE IN DISREPAIR AND WERE EXTREMELY UNDER-UTILISED.

+TO IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE AREAS WHERE THE PROPERTIES ARE SITUATED AND TO MAXIMISE THEIR DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL, THE GROUP PROPOSES TO REDEVELOP CERTAIN PROPERTIES IN SHEUNG WAN,+ HE SAID.

/+THE FUND

+THE FUND IS, HOWEVER, INSUFFICIENT TO COVER THE COST OF THE PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT SCHEME. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE GROUP PROPOSES TO RAISE THE NECESSARY FUNDS BY COMMERCIAL BORROWING WITH THE CREATION OF MORTGAGES AS SECURITY,+ HE ADDED.

ON REPAYMENT OF THE LOAN REQUIRED FOR THE PROJECT, IT WAS EXPECTED THAT THE FUND WOULD BE BOOSTED BY AN ADDITIONAL NET INCOME OF ABOUT \$7 MILLION PER ANNUM, MR LIAO SAID.

+THIS WILL ENABLE THE GROUP TO IMPROVE THE RANGE OF CHARITABLE SERVICES FINANCED BY THE FUND,+ HE SAID.

UNDER THE BILL, A NEW SECTION HAD BEEN ADDED TO THE PRINCIPAL ORDINANCE TO PERMIT THE GROUP, SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE GOVERNOR, TO ACQUIRE, DISPOSE OF AND MORTGAGE ANY PROPERTY BELONGING TO THE FUND, MR LIAO SAID.

+INCIDENTAL POWERS SUCH AS THE ENGAGEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL OR EXPERT PERSONS ARE ALSO INCLUDED,+ HE ADDED.

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VARIOUS FACTORS IN FIXING FARE LEVELS * * * * *

A REDUCTION IN OVERALL REVENUE AS A RESULT OF DECLINING PATRONAGE WOULD BE ONLY ONE OF THE FACTORS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN DETERMINING APPROPRIATE PUBLIC TRANSPORT FARE LEVELS, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON IAN MACPHERSON, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LEE YU-TAI, MR MACPHERSON SAID FACTORS OTHER THAN PATRONAGE AND REVENUE INCLUDED CAPITAL EXPENDITURE, OPERATING COSTS INCLUDING WAGES, GENERAL INFLATION, EXCHANGE AND INTEREST RATES AND LEVELS OF SERVICE.

+FARES CHARGED BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATORS ARE SET AT A LEVEL WHICH WILL GENERATE SUFFICIENT INCOME OVERALL TO COVER OPERATING COSTS AND AS FAR AS POSSIBLE A REASONABLE RETURN ON INVESTMENT,+ MR MACPHERSON SAID.

HE SAID THE OPENING OF THE MTR ISLAND LINE ON MAY 30 LAST YEAR HAD RESULTED IN A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN MTR PATRONAGE, LARGELY AT THE EXPENSE OF FRANCHISED BUSES, FERRIES AND MINIBUSES.

+BY DECEMBER 1985, MTR PASSENGER VOLUME HAD INCREASED BY 26 PER CENT OVER PRE-ISLAND LINE LEVELS FROM 1.1 MILLION TO 1.4 MILLION PASSENGERS PER DAY, AND BUS AND FERRY PATRONAGE HAD CONSEQUENTIALLY DECREASED BY 11 PER CENT AND FIVE PER CENT RESPECTIVELY,+ HE SAID.

THE HARDEST HIT WAS THE CHINA MOTOR BUS COMPANY WHICH SUFFERED A LOSS OF SOME 107 000 PASSENGERS PER DAY OR ALMOST 11 PER CENT OF ITS TOTAL DAILY PATRONAGE, HE SAID.

+THIS HAS BEEN REFLECTED IN REDUCTIONS IN SERVICE LEVELS ON THOSE ROUTES WHICH PARALLEL THE MTR ISLAND LINE,+ HE ADDED.

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MORE SOCIAL CENTRES FOR ELDERLY
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SOCIAL CENTRES FOR THE ELDERLY HAVE INCREASED FROM 45 TO 100 IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS, AND MULTI-SERVICE CENTRES FROM FIVE TO 10, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

+SEVEN ADDITIONAL SOCIAL CENTRES AND TWO MULTI-SERVICE CENTRES ARE PLANNED TO BE OPENED DURING THE COMING FINANCIAL YEAR,+ HE SAID.

ANSWERING A QUESTION BY THE HON HUI YIN-FAT ON SHORTFALLS IN THE NUMBERS OF SOCIAL AND MULTI-SERVICE CENTRES FOR THE ELDERLY, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS AWARE OF THE SITUATION AND STEPS WOULD CONTINUE TO BE TAKEN TO REMEDY IT.

HOWEVER, HE SAID, +THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE PRESENT LEVEL OF SUBVENTION HAS HINDERED THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROVISION OF THESE SERVICES.+

UNDER THE PRESENT SUBVENTION ARRANGEMENTS, AGENCIES OPERATING THESE CENTRES WERE EXPECTED TO MAKE A PERCENTAGE CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS RUNNING COSTS.

+DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT HAS NOT RECEIVED ANY APPEAL RELATING TO FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES FROM ANY OF THE 40 AGENCIES WHICH OPERATE THESE CENTRES, AND ALL THE PROJECTS BEING PLANNED HAVE ALREADY BEEN TAKEN UP BY INTERESTED WELFARE AGENCIES,+ HE SAID.

+GIVEN THE NEED TO MAKE THE BEST USE OF THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR WELFARE SERVICES AS A WHOLE, I SEE NO CASE FOR CHANGING THE PRESENT SUBVENTION ARRANGEMENTS.+

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'231 KIDNEY MACHINES BY 1991'

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WITH THE COMPLETION OF VARIOUS HOSPITAL AND CLINIC PROJECTS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, THE NUMBER OF KIDNEY MACHINES WOULD BE INCREASED TO 231 BY 1991, COMPARED WITH 95 KIDNEY MACHINES AT PRESENT IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID TODAY.

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON CONRAD LAM, MR CHAMBERS SAID IT WAS INTENDED TO INTRODUCE A FULL GOVERNMENT-OPERATED CONTINUOUS AMBULATORY PERITONEAL DIALYSIS (CAPD) SCHEME FOR 150 PATIENTS IN 1986-87.

THE SCHEME, ESTIMATED TO COST \$10 MILLION, WOULD BE EVALUATED AND THE ADVICE OF THE MEDICAL DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE WOULD BE SOUGHT ON WHETHER IT SHOULD BE EXTENDED, HE SAID.

CAPD TREATMENT WAS NOW PROVIDED IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS AS A NON-STANDARD SERVICE AND PATIENTS MET THE COST OF CERTAIN ITEMS USED IN THEIR TREATMENT, HE SAID.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THE SELECTION CRITERIA ON WHETHER PATIENTS SHOULD BE ADMITTED TO THE RENAL DIALYSIS PROGRAMME IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR HAD BEEN DEvised TO ENSURE THAT TREATMENT WAS GIVEN TO THOSE MOST LIKELY TO BENEFIT - FROM A MEDICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POINT OF VIEW.

THE CRITERIA HAD RECENTLY BEEN REVISED BY THE CENTRAL RENAL COMMITTEE WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1985 FOLLOWING ADVICE BY THE MEDICAL DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE, IN ORDER TO CO-ORDINATE THE PROGRAMME FOR RENAL FAILURE TREATMENT IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, HE SAID.

+TO BE ADMITTED TO THE RENAL DIALYSIS PROGRAMME A PATIENT SHOULD PREFERABLY BE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 12 AND 55 AND SHOULD NOT BE SUFFERING FROM UNRELATED DISEASES WITH A POOR PROGNOSIS OR SEVERE PSYCHIATRIC ILLNESSES.

+HE SHOULD HAVE GOOD FAMILY SUPPORT, BE ABLE TO CO-OPERATE WITH RENAL CARE STAFF AND HAVE GOOD MOTIVATION.

+THE QUALITY OF THE PATIENT'S LIFE BEFORE THE ONSET OF END-STAGE RENAL FAILURE SHOULD HAVE BEEN GOOD AND HE SHOULD BE SUFFICIENTLY INTELLIGENT TO BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF HIS ILLNESS AND THE INSTRUCTIONS RELATING TO HIS TREATMENT, + HE SAID.

PRIORITY WAS GIVEN TO THOSE PATIENTS WHO HAD UNSUCCESSFULLY UNDERGONE A KIDNEY TRANSPLANT OPERATION OR WHO WERE NO LONGER ABLE TO REMAIN ON CAPD TREATMENT, HE ADDED.

/HE SAID

HE SAID THE FINAL DECISION, HOWEVER, RESTED WITH THE ATTENDING DOCTOR WHO WEIGHED UP THE VARIOUS FACTORS AND DETERMINED THE MOST APPROPRIATE COURSE OF TREATMENT FOR HIS PATIENT.

MR CHAMBERS SAID ABOUT 180-200 NEW PATIENTS COULD HAVE DERIVED BENEFIT FROM DIALYSIS TREATMENT IN EACH OF THE PAST THREE YEARS.

IN 1983, 1984 AND 1985, HE SAID, 254, 358 AND 450 PATIENTS RESPECTIVELY WERE ON DIALYSIS TREATMENT. DURING THE SAME THREE-YEAR PERIOD, A TOTAL OF 79 KIDNEY TRANSPLANTS WERE PERFORMED. THE COST OF RENAL DIALYSIS TO THE GOVERNMENT IN THE LAST THREE YEARS WAS ABOUT \$58 MILLION, HE SAID.

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STEPS TAKEN TO REMOVE DISQUALIFICATION RULE
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THE PROPOSAL TO REMOVE THE PROVISION FOR THE MANDATORY DRIVING DISQUALIFICATION WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL NEXT MONTH, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON IAN MACPHERSON, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON RICHARD LAI ABOUT GOVERNMENT'S PROGRESS TO REMOVE THE MANDATORY DRIVING DISQUALIFICATION PROVISION, MR MACPHERSON SAID THE PROPOSAL, WITH THE SUPPORT FROM THE TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE, WOULD BE SUBMITTED WITH THE NECESSARY AMENDMENT IN APRIL, AND THEN TO INTRODUCE IT INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

MR MACPHERSON ALSO SAID THE PROSECUTIONS UNDER SECTION 41(1) OF THE ROAD TRAFFIC ORDINANCE WERE STILL BEING INSTITUTED.

+IN CASES OF EXCEEDING THE SPEED LIMIT BY MORE THAN 30 KPH, IT IS POLICE POLICY TO PROSECUTE UNDER THE ROAD TRAFFIC ORDINANCE RATHER THAN ISSUING A FIXED PENALTY TICKET,+ HE EXPLAINED.

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STAFFING OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPT EXPLAINED
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VACANT SENIOR POSTS IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT WILL BE FILLED BY THE TRANSFER OF STAFF FROM OTHER DEPARTMENTS AND THE PROMOTION OF JUNIOR OFFICERS, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY PROF THE HON POON CHUNG-KWONG WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT PLANNED TO FILL VACANCIES AT SENIOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OFFICER LEVEL BY RECRUITING LOCAL PEOPLE IN ORDER TO IMPLEMENT MORE VIGOROUSLY THE LOCALISATION POLICY.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THE POSTS IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT (TO BE ESTABLISHED ON APRIL 1) WOULD BE PARTLY FILLED BY OFFICERS IN THE EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY, AND PARTLY BY THE TRANSFER OF STAFF FROM THE OTHER DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED IN THE RATIONALISATION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ORGANISATION FOR POLLUTION CONTROL.

HE SAID MOST OF THOSE TO BE TRANSFERRED WERE LIKELY TO BE LOCAL OFFICERS.

+IN ACCORDANCE WITH EXISTING POLICY,+ HE CONTINUED, +THE REMAINING VACANCIES IN THE SENIOR RANKS WOULD BE FILLED BY THE PROMOTION ON THE BASIS OF MERIT OF SUITABLE AND QUALIFIED OFFICERS IN THE LOWER RANK, VIRTUALLY ALL OF WHOM ARE LOCAL OFFICERS.+

HE SAID DIRECT APPOINTMENT TO THESE VACANCIES WOULD BE MADE ONLY WHEN NO SERVING OFFICERS WERE SUITABLE FOR PROMOTION.

+WHERE IT WAS NECESSARY TO RESORT TO DIRECT APPOINTMENT BY WAY OF OPEN RECRUITMENT, PREFERENCE WOULD BE GIVEN TO LOCAL CANDIDATES IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOVERNMENT'S LOCALISATION POLICY, WHICH PROVIDES THAT APPOINTMENT OF OVERSEAS CANDIDATES CAN ONLY BE CONSIDERED WHEN SUITABLE AND QUALIFIED LOCAL CANDIDATES ARE NOT AVAILABLE,+ HE SAID.

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FINDINGS BY CONSULTANTS NOT BINDING
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RECOMMENDATIONS BY CONSULTANTS MAY BE TURNED DOWN BY THE GOVERNMENT IF THEY RESULT IN UNFAVOURABLE PUBLIC REACTION, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON NICKY CHAN, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON POON CHI-FAI, MR CHAN SAID CONSULTANTS RARELY MADE IMPRACTICABLE SUGGESTIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WERE NOT FEASIBLE.

/+CONSULTANTS ARE

+CONSULTANTS ARE COMPETENT AND EXPERT PERSONNEL WHO ARE CHOSEN AFTER GOING THROUGH A CAREFUL SELECTION PROCEDURE AND ARE UNLIKELY TO PROPOSE IMPRACTICAL SOLUTIONS,+ HE SAID.

+THEY ARE USUALLY APPOINTED UNDER WELL DEFINED TERMS OF REFERENCE WITH A DETAILED BRIEF TO HELP THEM UNDERSTAND THE BACKGROUND OF THE CASE THEY ARE EMPLOYED TO DEAL WITH.

+IN ADDITION, THEIR WORK IS REVIEWED BY THE GOVERNMENT AT REGULAR STAGES THROUGHOUT THE CONSULTANCY,+ HE ADDED.

HOWEVER, MR CHAN SAID, THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT BOUND TO ACCEPT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OR FINDINGS OF ANY CONSULTANT.

+THERE ARE OCCASIONS WHEN THE GOVERNMENT DECIDES NOT TO ACCEPT SOME OR ALL OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS PUT TO IT.

+THE REASONS ARE VARIOUS AND INCLUDE SITUATIONS SUCH AS THE EMERGENCE OF NEW FACTORS AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THE CONSULTANTS'S REPORT, UNFAVOURABLE RESPONSES FROM THE PUBLIC DURING THE CONSULTATION STAGE, OR THE LEVEL OF COSTS CANNOT BE ACCOMMODATED WITHIN THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO GOVERNMENT THROUGH REVENUE.+

MR CHAN REVEALED THAT OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS THE GOVERNMENT HAD PAID \$1 495 MILLION IN FEES TO CONSULTANTS OF WHICH \$1 408 MILLION WAS PAID TO THOSE COMMISSIONED BY THE LANDS AND WORKS GROUP.

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COMPARABLE STANDARD USED TO ASSESS OVERSEAS DEGREES
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THE MAIN CONSIDERATION IN THE RECOGNITION OF OVERSEAS DEGREES FOR THE PURPOSE OF APPOINTING CIVIL SERVANTS IS WHETHER THEY ARE OF COMPARABLE STANDARD AND STANDING TO HONG KONG DEGREES, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

+NO DISTINCTION IS MADE BETWEEN COMMONWEALTH AND NON-COMMONWEALTH DEGREES,+ HE NOTED.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LIU LIT-FOR, SIR DAVID SAID A PANEL OF ADVISORS COMPRISING REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE TWO LOCAL UNIVERSITIES, THE EXAMINATIONS AUTHORITY, EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND EDUCATION AND MANPOWER BRANCH HAD BEEN SET UP TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE ON THE DETAILED CRITERIA TO BE USED IN ASSESSING OVERSEAS QUALIFICATIONS AND TO CONSIDER APPEALS AGAINST DECISIONS WHEN NECESSARY.

+THE ADVICE FROM OVERSEAS PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS, AS WELL AS ESTABLISHED EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITIES, IS ALSO SOUGHT,+ HE ADDED.

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NO LIMIT SET FOR TAXI LICENCE OWNERSHIP
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THERE IS NO UPPER LIMIT ON THE NUMBER OF TAXI LICENCES WHICH MAY BE ACQUIRED BY AN INDIVIDUAL OR A COMPANY, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON IAN MACPHERSON, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON S.L. CHEN, MR MACPHERSON SAID TAXI LICENCES DID CHANGE HANDS AND SPECULATION COULD NOT BE RULED OUT SO LONG AS THERE WAS A LIMIT ON THE TOTAL NUMBER OF TAXIS.

+BUT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT THIS EXISTS ON A SCALE THAT WOULD WARRANT INTERFERENCE WITH MARKET FORCES OR WHICH WOULD JUSTIFY THE EXTENSIVE ENFORCEMENT EFFORT THAT WOULD BE REQUIRED TO BACK UP AN EFFECTIVE LIMITATION ON THE NUMBERS OF LICENCES ALLOCATED BY TENDER,+ HE SAID.

MR MACPHERSON RECALLED THAT WHEN THE TENDERING SYSTEM WAS INTRODUCED IN 1964, THERE HAD BEEN A POLICY TO RESTRICT THE NUMBER OF LICENCES ALLOCATED TO ANY SINGLE INDIVIDUAL OR COMPANY TO ONE HUNDRED AT A TIME. THE IDEA WAS TO PREVENT THE DEVELOPMENT OF MONOPOLY.

+HOWEVER,+ HE SAID, +THIS POLICY WAS ABANDONED IN 1966 WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT NO SINGLE COMPANY OR INDIVIDUAL WAS IN ANY WAY DOMINATING OR SEEKING TO DOMINATE THE TRADE.+

+THE POSITION HAS NOT CHANGED AS AT PRESENT SOME 95 PER CENT OF THE WHOLE TAXI FLEET IS OWNED BY INDIVIDUAL OWNER/DRIVERS, THE REMAINING FIVE PER CENT OR 740 LICENCES BEING DISTRIBUTED AMONG 46 COMPANIES,+ HE SAID.

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PUBLIC UTILITY MONITORING COSTS
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THE COSTS INCURRED BY THE GOVERNMENT IN MONITORING PUBLIC UTILITY COMPANIES TAKE THE FORM OF STAFF COSTS AND CONSULTANCY STUDIES COMMISSIONED SPECIFICALLY FOR THIS PURPOSE, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR JOHN BREMRIDGE, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HELMUT SOHMEN, SIR JOHN SAID EXPENDITURE INCURRED BY THE TWO CONSULTANCIES COMMISSIONED DURING THE FIVE-YEAR PERIOD 1981-82 TO 1985-86 FOR THE MONITORING OF THE TWO POWER COMPANIES WAS \$6.29 MILLION.

/HE SAID

HE SAID THE FINANCIAL MONITORING UNIT (FMU) OF THE ECONOMIC SERVICES BRANCH, STAFFED BY A NUMBER OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS AND SUPPORTING STAFF, HAD THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MONITORING THE FINANCIAL AFFAIRS OF PUBLIC UTILITY COMPANIES.

TOTAL STAFF COSTS DURING THE FIVE-YEAR PERIOD 1981-82 TO 1985-86 AMOUNTED TO \$8.32 MILLION.

IN ADDITION TO THE FMU, HE SAID, STAFF OF THE ECONOMIC SERVICES BRANCH, THE TRANSPORT BRANCH, THE POST OFFICE (FOR THE TELEPHONE COMPANY), ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT (FOR THE ELECTRICITY COMPANIES) AND TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT (FOR THE TRANSPORT COMPANIES) WERE ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING THE OPERATIONS OF UTILITY COMPANIES.

+HOWEVER, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY THE MONITORING COSTS ALONE AS THESE STAFF ARE ALSO ENGAGED IN OTHER ACTIVITIES,+ HE SAID.

SIR JOHN SAID NOT ALL PUBLIC UTILITY COMPANIES WERE SUBJECT TO FORMAL SCHEMES OF CONTROL BUT THE DEGREE OF EXAMINATION OR ANALYSIS NECESSARY, FOR EXAMPLE TO ASSESS AN APPLICATION FOR A REVIEW OF CHARGES, WAS VERY MUCH THE SAME.

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MINIMUM GOVT ROLE IN UTILITY FIRM MANAGEMENT
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THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT ITS INVOLVEMENT IN THE DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS AND MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITY COMPANIES SHOULD BE KEPT TO A MINIMUM, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR JOHN BREMIDGE, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG, SIR JOHN SAID IT WAS THE JOB OF THE COMPANIES' MANAGEMENT TO MANAGE.

HOWEVER, HE POINTED OUT THAT STEPS WERE CONTINUALLY TAKEN TO ENHANCE AND STRENGTHEN THE MONITORING ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT WHEN NECESSARY.

+FOR EXAMPLE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE CONSULTANTS ERNST AND WHINNEY WE ARE REVIEWING THE MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS IN RESPECT OF THE ELECTRICITY COMPANIES,+ HE SAID.

SIR JOHN ALSO POINTED OUT THE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THE TRANSPORT COMPANIES.

IN RESPECT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN MONITORING THE PUBLIC UTILITIES, SIR JOHN SAID THE PRESENT FORMAL ARRANGEMENTS UNDER WHICH THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ACTED ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLIC WERE ADEQUATE AND APPROPRIATE.

THE TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE WAS ALSO HEAVILY INVOLVED, HE SAID.

+HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT IS ACUTELY CONSCIOUS THAT MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL HAVE SHOWN, ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLIC, AN INCREASING DESIRE TO BE MORE CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THIS MONITORING PROCESS,+ SIR JOHN SAID.

+IT WAS IN THIS SPIRIT, THEREFORE, THAT UMEICO ESTABLISHED THE PANELS ON PUBLIC UTILITIES AND TRANSPORT.+

SIR JOHN POINTED OUT THAT THE BASIS OF CALCULATING PERMITTED RETURN AND THE PERCENTAGE OF SUCH RETURN WERE NEGOTIATED WITH THE COMPANIES WHEN THE SCHEMES OF CONTROL WERE AGREED.

HE SAID ALL ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF CALCULATION WOULD BE CONSIDERED WHEN THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL NEXT REVIEWED THE SCHEMES OF CONTROL, BUT ADDED THAT +AT PRESENT THE SCHEMES SEEM WELL DESIGNED+.

SIR JOHN SAID THAT IN EXAMINING THE FINANCIAL FORECASTS OF THE COMPANIES AND IN PARTICULAR THE FINANCING PLANS SUBMITTED BY THE ELECTRICITY COMPANIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SCHEMES OF CONTROL THE RATIO BETWEEN SHAREHOLDERS' FUNDS AND EXTERNAL BORROWINGS WOULD BE ONE OF THE MANY COMPONENTS TO BE EXAMINED.

HE ASSURED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS INTENT ON SECURING SOUND PERFORMANCE BY THOSE UTILITIES WHICH HAD A QUASI-MONOPOLY POSITION AND WHICH WAS THEREFORE NOT OPEN TO THE FULL WINDS OF COMPETITION.

+IT IS EASY TO CRITICISE, BUT WE HAVE CHEAP AND EFFICIENT BUS COMPANIES. OUR ELECTRICITY ON A NON-SUBSIDISED BASIS IS THE CHEAPEST IN ASIA. DESPITE INFLATION PRICES HAVE BEEN UNCHANGED FOR FOUR YEARS. THIS MEANS A DECREASE IN REAL TERMS OF ABOUT 30 PER CENT,+ HE SAID.

+NO SCHEME OF CONTROL WILL SERVE THE PUBLIC INTEREST THAT DOES NOT ENCOURAGE THE NECESSARY CONTINUED HEAVY CAPITAL INVESTMENT. PROFITS ARE THUS ESSENTIAL. THEY MAY LOOK LARGE TO THE INEXPERIENCED EYE BECAUSE IN MANY CASES THEY REFLECT A REASONABLE RETURN ON THE VAST INVESTMENTS MADE BY THE SHAREHOLDERS,+ HE ADDED.

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ANTI-SMOKING MEASURES SUCCESSFUL

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OPINION POLLS LEND WEIGHT TO THE VIEW THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-SMOKING MEASURES HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LEE YU-TAI, MR CHAMBERS SAID THESE OPINION POLLS INDICATED THAT BETWEEN 1981 AND 1983 THE COMMUNITY HAD BECOME MORE AWARE OF THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF SMOKING.

MR CHAMBERS SAID IT WAS DIFFICULT TO QUANTIFY THE EFFECT ANTI-SMOKING PUBLICITY HAD HAD ON SMOKING HABITS IN THE LAST THREE YEARS, NOT LEAST BECAUSE DURING THIS PERIOD THE TAX ON TOBACCO PRODUCTS HAD BEEN SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED.

HOWEVER, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD PURSUED A MORE VIGOROUS ANTI-SMOKING PUBLICITY STRATEGY AND HAD ALSO, THROUGH THE GENERAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEYS, MONITORED TRENDS IN CIGARÉTTÉ SMOKING SINCE 1982, WHEN THE SMOKING (PUBLIC HEALTH) ORDINANCE WAS ENACTED.

+THE FINDINGS OF THESE SURVEYS INDICATE THAT BETWEEN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1982 AND MARCH 1983 THERE WAS A FALL OF 11 PER CENT IN THE NUMBER OF SMOKERS AND THAT A FURTHER FALL OF FIVE PER CENT TOOK PLACE BETWEEN MARCH 1983 AND JULY 1984,+ MR CHAMBERS SAID.

ANOTHER SURVEY ON SMOKING PATTERNS WOULD BE CONDUCTED LATER THIS YEAR, HE ADDED.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THE GOVERNMENT ALSO MONITORED TOBACCO SMOKING TRENDS BY REFERENCE TO ANNUAL STATISTICS ON THE QUANTITY OF IMPORTED TOBACCO PRODUCTS ON WHICH DUTY WAS PAID.

+THESE STATISTICS SHOW THAT THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT FALL IN THE IMPORT OF SUCH TOBACCO PRODUCTS SINCE 1982,+ HE SAID.

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 1986

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COMPULSORY EDUCATION POLICY CLOSELY MONITORED
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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NINE-YEAR FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION POLICY IS CLOSELY MONITORED BY THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND EVERY EFFORT IS MADE TO ENSURE THAT ALL CHILDREN IN THIS AGE GROUP WILL ATTEND SCHOOL, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON NEIL HENDERSON, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HO^Y RITA FAN, MR HENDERSON SAID A MORE COMPREHENSIVE, COMPUTERISED PUPIL RECORD SYSTEM WAS BEING CONSIDERED TO HELP IDENTIFY PUPILS NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL, WHILE THE STUDENT GUIDANCE SECTION WAS BEING STRENGTHENED TO FURTHER IMPROVE AND SPEED THE HANDLING OF NON-ATTENDANCE CASES.

AT PRESENT, MR HENDERSON SAID, SCHOOLS WERE REQUIRED TO REPORT ALL NEW PUPILS ADMITTED AND ALL PUPILS WHO CEASED TO ATTEND WITHOUT REASONABLE EXCUSE FOR MORE THAN 14 DAYS.

THE NUMBER OF REPORTED CASES OF NON-ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL BY CHILDREN BETWEEN 12 AND 14 YEARS OF AGE DURING THE SCHOOL YEARS 1983-85 WAS 8 430, COMPRISING 3 165 IN 1983-84, 3 485 IN 1984-85 AND 1 780 IN 1985-JANUARY 86, HE POINTED OUT.

+IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE FIGURE RELATE TO THE NUMBER OF INCIDENTS OF NON-ATTENDANCE RATHER THAN THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN INVOLVED, SO THAT A DEGREE OF DOUBLE-COUNTING IS POSSIBLE,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID REPORTED CASES COULD BE CLASSIFIED INTO THREE GROUPS: THOSE REQUIRING NO FURTHER ACTION BECAUSE THE CHILDREN INVOLVED HAD EMIGRATED OR WERE ADMITTED TO OTHER SCHOOLS; THOSE WHO RETURNED TO SCHOOL AFTER ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE; AND THOSE WHO MIGHT BE CLASSIFIED AS DROPOUTS.

THOSE DROPPING OUT OF THE COMPULSORY EDUCATION SYSTEM WERE A RELATIVELY SMALL ELEMENT IN THE TOTAL, ACCOUNTING FOR SOME SEVEN TO EIGHT PER CENT OF CASES OVER THE PAST TWO ACADEMIC YEARS, MR HENDERSON EXPLAINED.

AND LACK OF MOTIVATION, HE SAID, WAS THOUGHT TO BE THE MOST SIGNIFICANT FACTOR FOR SCHOOL DROPOUTS.

TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM, GUIDANCE OFFICERS CONTACTED THE FAMILIES OF THESE PUPILS TO ASCERTAIN THE REASON FOR NON-ATTENDANCE AND TO EXPLAIN THEIR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY, MR HENDERSON SAID.

CASES ARISING FROM FAMILY OR FINANCIAL PROBLEMS WERE REFERRED TO THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT, WHILE CASES WHICH RESULTED FROM LEARNING DIFFICULTY WERE REFERRED TO THE SPECIAL EDUCATION SECTION OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT FOR REMEDIAL ASSISTANCE, HE ADDED.

/+WHERE NON-ATTENDANCE

+WHERE NON-ATTENDANCE IS THE RESULT OF PARENTAL HOSTILITY OR INDIFFERENCE, VERBAL OR WRITTEN WARNINGS MAY BE REQUIRED AND - IF NECESSARY - AN ATTENDANCE ORDER WILL BE SERVED,+ HE SAID.

ON AVERAGE, ONE OR TWO SUCH ORDERS WERE SERVED EACH YEAR, HE ADDED.

+IN GENERAL, HOWEVER, PARENTS CO-OPERATE FULLY WITH THE DEPARTMENT AND IN SUCH CASES GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING EFFORTS CONTINUE UNTIL THE CHILD EITHER SUBSEQUENTLY RESUMES ATTENDANCE OR REACHES SCHOOL-LEAVING AGE,+ MR HENDERSON SAID.

HE SAID CONTINUING EFFORTS WERE BEING MADE TO ENSURE THAT LEARNING WAS AN INTERESTING AND REWARDING EXPERIENCE. THESE INCLUDED:

- * PROVISION OF A BROADER AND MORE RELEVANT CURRICULUM WITH INCLUSION OF MORE TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS;
- * IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHING METHODS;
- * PROVISION OF BETTER AUDIO-VISUAL AIDS AND BETTER EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION PROGRAMME;
- * STRENGTHENING OF REMEDIAL TEACHING, GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING, AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES THROUGH THE PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL TEACHERS; AND
- * ENHANCEMENT OF THE PROFESSIONAL AND RESOURCE SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS THROUGH TRAINING COURSES AND TEACHING AND TEACHERS' CENTRES.

IN ADDITION, WHILE THE NORMAL PROCESS OF CURRICULUM REVIEW AND REFORM WOULD CONTINUE, THE POSSIBILITIES WERE BEING EXPLORED OF DEVELOPING A SPECIAL AND MORE PRACTICALLY-ORIENTED CURRICULUM FOR CHILDREN WITH INSUFFICIENT MOTIVATION TO BENEFIT FROM THE MORE STANDARD SCHOOL CURRICULUM, MR HENDERSON SAID.

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REASONS FOR HIGH AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY IN HK * * * * *

A COMPREHENSIVE RANGE OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE COMMUNITY AND AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION ARE AMONG FACTORS WHICH HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE HIGH AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY IN HONG KONG, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS SAID TODAY.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE LATEST GOVERNMENT STATISTICS SHOWED THAT THE AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY IN HONG KONG WAS 73.2 YEARS FOR MEN AND 79.0 YEARS FOR WOMEN.

/THESE FIGURES

CALL TO STOP MONOPOLISATION OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA
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THE VITALITY OF OUR SOCIETY LIES IN FREE COMPETITION, WHICH MUST BE SAFEGUARDED, YET MONOPOLISATION ALREADY APPEARED IN THE FIELD OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA AND THIS IS IN THE PROCESS OF BEING EXTENDED TO OTHER AREAS BY MEANS OF ITS POWERFUL INFLUENCE, THE HON SZETO WAH SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT, MR SZETO SAID THIS SITUATION MUST BE CHANGED, IN PART TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE ENTIRE ELECTRONIC MEDIA SO AS TO ENABLE IT TO BETTER DISCHARGE ITS RESPONSIBILITY TO THE PUBLIC.

HE SAID THE AIRWAVES MUST BE WELL UTILISED TO SERVE THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE COMMUNITY.

MR SZETO SAID THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA CONSTITUTED A MOST POWERFUL MEANS OF PUBLICITY AND EDUCATION, AND IT MUST THEREFORE ACCEPT THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROMOTE SOCIAL PROGRESS.

+IN ORDER THAT THE BABY CONFRONTING THE GIANT COULD STAND FIRM AND EVENTUALLY BECOME A COUNTERACTING AND BALANCING FORCE, AN INDEPENDENT PUBLIC BROADCASTER HAS TO BE ESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE PART OF THE PRIME TIME FOR THIS BROADCASTER SO AS TO ENSURE THAT IT HAS A FIRM FINANCIAL BASE,+ HE SAID.

HE STRESSED THAT SECTION 10(A) OF THE TELEVISION ORDINANCE (CAP 52) MUST BE STRICTLY ENFORCED AND SPECIAL ATTENTION MUST BE PAID TO A RECENT JUDGEMENT MADE BY THE SUPREME COURT.

+ONLY THEN COULD THE UNDESIRABLE EXPANSION OF MONOPOLISATION BE RESTRAINED,+ HE SAID.

MR SZETO NOTED THAT AIRWAVES AND PRIME TIME PERIODS WERE ALL PUBLIC RESOURCES.

+TAKING BACK PART OF THESE AT THE END OF THE LICENCE PERIOD AND GIVING THEM TO AN INDEPENDENT PUBLIC BROADCASTER, WHICH IS MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE BEST COMMUNITY INTERESTS, IS SIMPLY RETURNING PUBLIC RESOURCES TO THE PEOPLE,+ HE SAID.

+IT WILL HELP TO PROMOTE FREE COMPETITION AND ENABLE THE MASS MEDIA TO PROVIDE BETTER SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC,+ HE ADDED.

HE ALSO SAID THAT +WHAT CONTRAVENES THE MODUS OPERANDI OF A CAPITALIST ECONOMY IS MONOPOLISATION.+

+ANTI-TRUST LAWS HAVE LONG EXISTED IN WELL-DEVELOPED CAPITALIST SOCIETIES TO RESTRICT MONOPOLISATION AND TO SAFEGUARD FREE COMPETITION.+

HE ADDED: +RECENTLY, THE UNBALANCED REPORTS BY THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA ON THE REPORT HAVE CREATED WORRIES THAT SUCH MONOPOLISATION IS ALREADY THREATENING NEWS FREEDOM.+

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THESE FIGURES WERE HIGH COMPARED WITH MANY COUNTRIES, ALTHOUGH NOT QUITE THE HIGHEST IN THE WORLD.

ELABORATING ON THE FACTORS WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO THE HIGH AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY, HE SAID THE COMMUNITY WAS PROVIDED WITH A COMPREHENSIVE RANGE OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES WHICH WERE AVAILABLE AT NOMINAL COST.

+IN PARTICULAR, THE EXTENSIVE PACKAGE OF PREVENTIVE CARE SERVICES PROVIDED THROUGH SUCH CHANNELS AS CLINICS, THE PORT HEALTH SERVICE AND THE SCHOOL MEDICAL SERVICE HAVE ENSURED THAT PUBLIC HEALTH HAS BEEN MAINTAINED AT A HIGH LEVEL, HE SAID.

+INCREASED PROSPERITY IN RECENT YEARS LEADING TO AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF OUR COMMUNITY HAS ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO THE HIGH AVERAGE LIFE EXPECTANCY IN HONG KONG,+ HE ADDED.

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RETENTION OF DESALTING PLANT UP FOR REVIEW

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THE GOVERNMENT WILL REVIEW THE QUESTION OF RETAINING ITS SEAWATER DESALTING PLANT AT LOK ON PAI, CASTLE PEAK, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON NICKY CHAN, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE REVIEW WOULD TAKE PLACE TOWARDS THE END OF THE YEAR.

MR CHAN WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM DR THE HON CHIU HIN-KWONG, WHO HAD ASKED WHETHER IT WAS NECESSARY TO KEEP THE DESALTING PLANT AT AN ANNUAL MAINTENANCE COST OF \$4.3 MILLION WHEN \$1.75 BILLION WOULD BE SPENT IN THE 12-YEAR PERIOD UP TO 1995 TO BRING IN WATER FROM CHINA.

+FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE IT IS STILL CONSIDERED NECESSARY TO RETAIN THE DESALTING PLANT AS A STANDBY RESERVE BECAUSE THE TRANSFER SYSTEMS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER ARE STILL UNDER CONSTRUCTION AND THERE ARE TECHNICAL LIMITATIONS IN OBTAINING ANY EXTRA SUPPLIES IN EXCESS OF THE AGREED QUANTITIES SHOULD THE NEED ARISE,+ MR CHAN SAID.

HOWEVER, HE SAID THAT WHEN WORKS ON THE CHINESE SIDE WERE COMPLETED AND RECEPTION AND DELIVERY FACILITIES IN HONG KONG WERE SUFFICIENT, THERE WOULD BE SPARE CAPACITY TO DRAW EXTRA WATER FROM CHINA OVER THE AGREED QUANTITIES IF REQUIRED.

IT WAS THEREFORE INTENDED TO EXAMINE TOWARDS THE END OF THIS YEAR THE QUESTION OF RETENTION OF THE DESALTER IN RELATION TO THE FACILITY TO OBTAIN EMERGENCY SUPPLIES FROM CHINA.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 1986

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HONG KONG BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

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THE RATIFICATION OF THE JOINT DECLARATION ON THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG WAS IN MANY WAYS A NEW BEGINNING AND THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT HONG KONG IS BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND INFORMATION, MR PETER TSAO, WHO IS NOW ON A VISIT TO VANCOUVER TO ATTEND MEETINGS OF COMMISSIONERS GENERAL OF COUNTRIES PARTICIPATING IN EXPO' 86.

+THE OLD UNCERTAINTIES HAVE BEEN REMOVED AND INTEREST HAS TURNED TO THE PRACTICAL QUESTIONS OF HOW THE AGREED TRANSITION CAN BE SUCCESSFULLY MANAGED,+ MR TSAO TOLD A LUNCHEON MEETING OF THE VANCOUVER BOARD OF TRADE AND THE HONG KONG/CANADA BUSINESS ASSOCIATION.

HE POINTED OUT THAT MUCH OF THE DISCUSSION CURRENTLY FOCUSED ON HOW HONG KONG WOULD DEVELOP FROM ITS TRADITIONAL COLONIAL STYLE OF GOVERNMENT INTO THE GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD ADMINISTER THE HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION IN 11 YEARS' TIME.

+THIS IS A UNIQUE PROBLEM. THERE ARE NO PRECEDENTS TO GUIDE US. AND ALL OF US ARE AWARE OF THE DANGER INHERENT IN ATTEMPTING TO IMPORT OR GRAFT ON TO THE EXISTING STRUCTURE SOME SOLUTION TRIED OR TESTED ELSEWHERE BUT NOT NECESSARILY SUITED TO THE UNIQUE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HONG KONG,+ MR TSAO SAID.

HE NOTED THAT HONG KONG HAD ALREADY MADE A START TO BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE, CITING AS EXAMPLES THE NEW-LOOK LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, THE CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES, AND THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE JOINT LIAISON GROUP AND THE LAND COMMISSION.

ON THE ECONOMY, MR TSAO SAID HONG KONG HAD BEEN FORTUNATE BECAUSE IT WAS ABLE TO FACE THE LAST THREE DIFFICULT YEARS WITH EXTRAORDINARY RESILIENCE.

+OUR BUDGET IS ONCE AGAIN IN BALANCE - SOMETHING WE HAVE ALWAYS HELD TO BE SACRED. WE ARE CONCERNED OF COURSE ABOUT PROTECTIONIST TENDENCIES IN OUR MAJOR MARKETS, BUT WE ARE CONFIDENT BOTH THAT GOOD SENSE WILL PREVAIL AND THAT OUR OWN ENTREPRENEURS WILL LIVE UP TO THEIR REPUTATION FOR MAKING THE MOST OF EVERY SMALL OPPORTUNITY.

+THE RE-EMERGENCE OF OUR TRADITIONAL ROLE AS AN ENTREPOT HAS BEEN AN ENORMOUS BENEFIT.

+THERE ARE MANY PLUS POINTS. THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO INVEST HEAVILY IN THE INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT SO VITAL TO OUR FUTURE. EVEN MORE IMPORTANT AS AN INDICATION OF RENEWED CONFIDENCE IS THE DETERMINATION OF PUBLIC UTILITIES, WHICH IN HONG KONG, AS YOU KNOW, ARE LARGELY PRIVATE SECTOR CONCERNS,+ MR TSAO SAID.

/MR TSAO

MR TSAO POINTED OUT ONE OF HONG KONG'S POWER COMPANIES HAD JOINED ITS COUNTERPART IN GUANGDONG PROVINCE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NUCLEAR PLANT TO PROVIDE POWER FOR CONSUMERS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER, WORK ON A HK\$2 BILLION EXPANSION TO A CONTAINER PORT BEGAN IN 1985 AND INVESTORS FROM JAPAN, CHINA AND GREAT BRITAIN WOULD BEGIN WORK THIS YEAR TO BUILD A SECOND HARBOUR CROSSING.

+ROAD AND RAIL LINKS WITH CHINA ARE ALSO BEING IMPROVED, FURTHER CEMENTING THE SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP WHICH WE ENJOY WITH NEIGHBOURING GUANGDONG,+ MR TSAO SAID.

OUTLINING VARIOUS FACETS WHICH HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO HONG KONG'S MIRACULOUS SUCCESS, MR TSAO SAID ONE OF THE REASONS HONG KONG WAS GOING TO EXPO' 86 WAS TO GIVE ALL THOSE WHO ATTENDED A TASTE OF ITS EXTRAORDINARY DYNAMISM AND DIVERSITY.

HE PAID TRIBUTE TO THE HONG KONG/CANADA BUSINESS ASSOCIATION AND ITS COUNTERPART IN HONG KONG, THE CANADIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION IN BOOSTING THE LINKS BETWEEN HONG KONG AND CANADA AND THE HELP GIVEN TO HONG KONG IN RAISING FUNDS FOR EXPO' 86.

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CLOSE WATCH ON LONG SERVICE PAYMENT SCHEME

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THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT WILL KEEP A CLOSE WATCH ON THE EFFECTS OF THE LONG SERVICE PAYMENT SCHEME ON WORKERS' EMPLOYMENT AND ITS FINANCIAL IMPACT ON EMPLOYERS, THE ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR, MR ALFRED CHAN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT A LUNCHEON MEETING OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF SHATIN, HE SAID REACTIONS FROM VARIOUS QUARTERS WOULD BE MONITORED FOR AN OVERALL REVIEW OF THE SCHEME AT THE END OF THE YEAR.

MR CHAN SAID THE LEGISLATION HAD COME INTO OPERATION FOR MORE THAN TWO MONTHS AND THE SITUATION SO FAR HAD BEEN SATISFACTORY.

+THE SCHEME HAS ALREADY BENEFITED SOME WORKERS WHO WERE NOT UNDER ANY PROTECTION BEFORE= THEY INCLUDE THOSE WHO ARE NEARING THEIR RETIREMENT AGE AND THOSE WHO HAVE WORKED FOR THE SAME EMPLOYERS FOR A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF YEARS.+

HOWEVER, MR CHAN SAID, THAT SINCE THE LONG SERVICE PAYMENT PROVISIONS DID NOT APPLY TO RESIGNATIONS AND DISCIPLINARY DISMISSALS, AGED WORKERS WHO RESIGNED FOR HEALTH REASONS WERE NOT PROTECTED.

+THIS IS NOT A SATISFACTORY SITUATION WE WOULD LIKE IT TO BE AND WE ARE NOW STUDYING WHETHER WE SHOULD EXTEND THE PROTECTION TO COVER RESIGNATION FOR HEALTH REASONS, AND HOW THIS COULD BE DONE.+

/MR CHAN

MR CHAN SAID THAT IN THE FIRST TWO MONTHS SINCE THE SCHEME WENT INTO OPERATION, THE LABOUR RELATIONS SERVICE (LRS) HAD RECEIVED MORE THAN 70 COMPLAINTS FROM WORKERS CONCERNING LONG SERVICE PAYMENT.

+HOWEVER, THIS FIGURE REPRESENTS ONLY TWO PER CENT OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF COMPLAINT CASES RECEIVED BY THE LRS DURING THE TWO MONTHS.+

HE POINTED OUT THAT FEW EMPLOYERS WOULD DISMISS A HARD-WORKING AND LOYAL EMPLOYEE JUST TO GET AROUND THEIR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

+FROM OUR EXPERIENCE IN HANDLING LABOUR DISPUTES, EMPLOYERS TENDED TO DISMISS WORKERS FOR DIFFERENT REASONS, BUT MAINLY BASED ON THE WORKERS' CAPABILITIES AND VERY FEW DID IT JUST FOR THE ONE REASON THAT THE WORKERS ARE GETTING OLD.+

HOWEVER, MR CHAN STRESSED THAT WORKERS WHO WERE NOT SATISFIED WITH THE REASONS FOR THEIR DISMISSAL COULD ALWAYS SEEK HELP FROM THE LRS AND EMPLOYERS WOULD STILL HAVE TO PAY LONG SERVICE PAYMENT IF THE REASONS FOR DISMISSAL WERE NOT JUSTIFIED.

HE SAID UNDER THE LONG SERVICE PAYMENT LEGISLATION, EMPLOYERS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR A +FUTURE LIABILITY+ TO THEIR EMPLOYEES.

MR CHAN EXPLAINED THAT UNDER THE LAW, THE AMOUNT OF LONG SERVICE PAYMENT COULD BE REDUCED BY THE PART OF PROVIDENT FUND CONTRIBUTED BY THE EMPLOYER, WHICH IS ALSO EXEMPT FROM TAXATION IN ANY RETIREMENT OR PROVIDENT FUND SCHEMES APPROVED BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR INLAND REVENUE.

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VITAL ROLE PLAYED IN FIGHTING RIVER POLLUTION

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THE REGIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT PLAYS AN ACTIVE ROLE IN HELPING TO MINIMISE THE POLLUTION OF RIVERS IN THE NORTH DISTRICT, THE DISTRICT HYGIENE SUPERINTENDENT (NORTH), MR UN WAI-KWOK, SAID AT A MEETING OF THE DISTRICT COMMITTEE OF THE PROVISIONAL REGIONAL COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE TOLD THE MEETING THAT DUE TO THE DECLINE OF AGRICULTURAL PURSUITS IN THE LATE 1950'S, MANY FARMERS IN THE DISTRICT HAD SWITCHED TO ANIMAL REARING.

ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT CHANGE WHICH HAD TAKEN PLACE IS THE GROWTH OF LIGHT INDUSTRIAL FACTORIES.

+IN THE ABSENCE OF A PURPOSE-DESIGNED DRAINAGE SYSTEM, A LOT OF ANIMAL AND INDUSTRIAL WASTE FINDS ITS WAYS INTO THE STREAMS AND RIVERS,+ HE SAID.

/+IN ADDITION,

+IN ADDITION, THE INCREASES IN POPULATION AND GENERAL PROSPERITY IN THESE AREAS GENERATE A CORRESPONDING RISE IN THE YIELD OF BOTH SOLID AND LIQUID DOMESTIC AND HUMAN WASTE, PART OF WHICH IS DIRECTLY DISCHARGED INTO THE NATURAL WATER COURSES WITHOUT PROPER TREATMENT.

+THESE HAVE RESULTED IN HEAVY POLLUTION OF THE STREAMS AND RIVERS.+

TO MINIMISE THE SOURCES OF RIVER POLLUTION, MR UN SAID THE DEPARTMENT PROVIDED A REGULAR MANUAL VILLAGE CLEANSING SERVICE IN 23 VILLAGES ALONG THE BANKS OF THE BEAS AND INDUS RIVERS TO PREVENT INDISCRIMINATE DUMPING OF REFUSE.

TO ENSURE PROPER DISPOSAL OF HUMAN WASTE FROM THOSE LIVING IN VILLAGE HOUSES NOT PROVIDED WITH WATER-BORNE SANITATION, 35 AQUA-PRIVY TYPE PUBLIC TOILETS WERE PROVIDED AND MAINTAINED BY THE DEPARTMENT AT SUITABLE LOCATIONS IN THE RIVER BASINS.

ON LEISURE SERVICES, THE COMMITTEE WAS ALSO TOLD THAT A TOTAL OF 131 RECREATION AND SPORTS PROGRAMMES WOULD BE ORGANISED BY THE RSD IN NORTH DISTRICT FROM APRIL TO JUNE.

AMONG THESE, 17 WERE FOR WATER SPORTS TO BE HELD AT THE FANLING PUBLIC SWIMMING POOL AND THE TAI MEI TUK WATER SPORTS CENTRE AND 69 DANCE AND FITNESS PROJECTS AT THE CHEUNG WAH SPORTS CENTRE.

THERE WERE ALSO COMPETITIONS IN BASKETBALL, VOLLEYBALL AND FOOTBALL, WITH THE WINNING TEAMS TO TAKE PART IN THE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION SPORTS PROGRAMME TO BE HELD ON JUNE 14.

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REGISTRATION SUSPENDED
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THE COMMISSIONER OF DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES ANNOUNCED THAT HE HAS TODAY SUSPENDED THE REGISTRATION OF BONSUM FINANCE LIMITED AS A DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANY, ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE BUSINESS OF THE COMPANY IS BEING CARRIED ON IN A MANNER DETRIMENTAL TO THE INTERESTS OF ITS DEPOSITORS AND THAT THE COMPANY HAS FAILED TO COMPLY WITH SECTION 24A OF THE DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES ORDINANCE.

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 1986

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31 TO RECEIVE GRADUATION CERTIFICATES
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THIRTY-ONE PEOPLE WHO TOOK PART IN A DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION TRAINING SCHEME IN KWAI CHUNG WILL RECEIVE THEIR GRADUATION CERTIFICATES THIS SATURDAY (MARCH 22).

THE CEREMONY WILL TAKE PLACE AT 6.30 PM IN THE LADY MACLEHOSE CENTRE IN WO YI HOP ROAD.

THE TRAINING SCHEME, ORGANISED BY THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE ON DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION TRAINING SCHEME AND SPONSORED BY THE DISTRICT BOARD, WAS HELD BETWEEN OCTOBER AND FEBRUARY.

PARTICIPANTS ATTENDED TRAINING SESSIONS INCLUDING LECTURES, BRIEFINGS, MOCK DISTRICT BOARD MEETINGS, ACTUAL BOARD MEETINGS, AND VISITED THE UMELCO OFFICE. THEY ALSO HELD DISCUSSIONS, GROUP WORKS AND CARRIED OUT RESEARCH PROJECTS.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE KWAI CHUNG AND TSING YI DISTRICT OFFICE SAID THROUGH VARIOUS ACTIVITIES, PARTICIPANTS GAINED A BETTER KNOWLEDGE OF THE OPERATION AND WORK OF THE DISTRICT BOARD, AND THE IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION ON THE DISTRICT.

+THEY NOW HAVE A GREATER AWARENESS OF CIVIC RESPONSIBILITIES AND HAVE SHOWN A DEEP CONCERN FOR DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT AND AFFAIRS,+ THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER (KWAI CHUNG), MR PATRICK LAU= DISTRICT BOARD CHAIRMAN, MR HO TUNG-CHING= BOARD MEMBERS MR YAU HON-KEE AND MR LEE WING-TAT WILL ATTEND THE CEREMONY AND PRESENT CERTIFICATES TO GRADUATES.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION TRAINING SCHEME GRADUATION CEREMONY ON SATURDAY AT 6.30 PM AT THE LADY MACLEHOSE CENTRE IN WO YI HOP ROAD.

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 1986

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REFUGEES SAY GOODBYE TO CAPE COLLINSON
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VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AT THE CAPE COLLINSON CLOSED CENTRE TODAY (WEDNESDAY) STAGED A VARIETY SHOW TO BID FAREWELL TO THE CAMP WHICH WILL BE CLOSED DOWN IN MID-APRIL.

THE OCCASION WAS ALSO TAKEN BY THE REFUGEES TO EXPRESS THEIR GRATITUDE TO THOSE WHO HAVE CARED FOR THEM AND HELPED THEM OVER THE YEARS AT THE CLOSED CAMP, WHICH WAS DESCRIBED BY THE REFUGEES AS THEIR +CAPE OF GOOD HOPE+.

THE GUESTS AT THE SHOW INCLUDED THE COMMISSIONER OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES, MR CHAN WA-SHEK, OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, AND REPRESENTATIVES OF WORLD RELIEF AND OTHER VOLUNTARY AGENCIES.

THE SHOW FEATURED VIETNAMESE CULTURAL DANCES, FOLK SONGS AND COMEDIES. THE FINALE WAS A SONG SUNG BY ALL THE 325 REFUGEES AND THE GUESTS.

CAPE COLLINSON CLOSED CENTRE IS THE SMALLEST CLOSED CENTRE MANAGED BY THE CORRECTIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT. IT OPENED IN JULY 1983, WITH ACCOMMODATION FOR 600 REFUGEES.

THE REFUGEES AT CAPE COLLINSON WILL BE TRANSFERRED TO THE BOWRING CLOSED CENTRE IN PHASES OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. THE BOWRING CAMP, WHICH HAS A CAPACITY OF 1 400, NOW HOUSES ABOUT 850 REFUGEES.

+IT SHOULD BE EMPHASISED THAT THE EXISTING CLOSED CENTRE POLICY REMAINS IN FORCE, AND ANY VIETNAMESE REFUGEES COMING TO HONG KONG IN FUTURE WILL STILL BE DETAINED AT CLOSED CENTRES,+ A SPOKESMAN FOR THE CORRECTIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT SAID.

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CAMPAIGN TO KEEP MUI WO RIVER CLEAN
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THE ISLANDS DISTRICT OFFICE HAS LAUNCHED A CLEAN RIVER CAMPAIGN IN MUI WO TO URGE ISLANDERS AND VISITORS TO MAINTAIN ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANLINESS IN THE AREA.

THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE CAMPAIGN WILL BE A QUIZ COMPETITION TO BE HELD TOMORROW (THURSDAY). MESSAGES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANLINESS WILL ALSO BE BROADCAST THROUGHOUT THE DAY.

A HUNDRED STUDENTS FROM THE MUI WO SCHOOL WILL BE MOBILISED TO DISTRIBUTE QUIZ QUESTIONNAIRES TO VILLAGES IN THE AREA.

/SOUVENIRS

SOUVENIRS SUCH AS T-SHIRTS, KEY-RINGS AND PENS WILL BE GIVEN TO PARTICIPANTS WITH THE CORRECT ANSWERS. CLEAN RIVER SLOGANS HAVE BEEN PRINTED ON THE SOUVENIRS TO PROMOTE ANTI-POLLUTION MESSAGES.

THE QUESTIONNAIRES AND SOUVENIRS WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE AT THE TWO COMMUNITY AFFAIRS BRANCH OFFICES AT MUI WO AND CHEUNG CHAU.

OTHER ACTIVITIES IN THE CAMPAIGN INCLUDE A DRAWING COMPETITION FOR LOCAL STUDENTS AND THE SETTING UP OF BANNERS AT PROMINENT LOCATIONS.

A PRIZE-PRESENTATION CEREMONY WILL BE HELD TOMORROW BEFORE THE STUDENTS SET OFF ON THEIR PUBLICITY TOUR.

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PARTY FOR NEW REGIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERS
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MEMBERS OF THE NEW REGIONAL COUNCIL WERE HONOURED AT A RECEPTION GIVEN BY THE CHAIRMAN AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE PROVISIONAL REGIONAL COUNCIL TODAY.

SPEAKING AT THE RECEPTION, THE CHAIRMAN, MR CHEUNG YAN-LUNG, SAID: +THIS OCCASION PROVIDES A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO MAINTAIN A CLOSE CONTACT WITH STAFF OF THE REGIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT WHICH WILL BECOME THE EXECUTIVE ARM OF THE COUNCIL AFTER APRIL 1.+

HE ALSO CALLED ON HIS COLLEAGUES TO WORK TOGETHER SO THAT THE NEW COUNCIL CAN DISCHARGE ITS FUNCTIONS EFFICIENTLY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE RAPIDLY DEVELOPING NEW TOWNS.

AMONG THOSE PRESENT WERE THE DIRECTOR OF REGIONAL SERVICES, MR TONY HAMMOND; THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF REGIONAL SERVICES, MR MICHAEL SUEN, AND OTHER SENIOR STAFF OF THE RSD.

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BILLIARD SALOON CONTROLS TO BE DISCUSSED
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MEMBERS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT BOARD WILL DISCUSS THE CONSULTATION PAPER ON THE CONTROL OF PUBLIC SALOONS AND PRIVATE BILLIARD CLUBS AT A MEETING TOMORROW (THURSDAY) AFTERNOON.

THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF URBAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT, MR PATRICK HASE, WILL ATTEND THE MEETING TO EXPLAIN VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE PAPER.

/MEMBERS WILL

MEMBERS WILL ALSO DISCUSS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS FOR 1986-87 PROPOSED BY THE AREA COMMITTEES AND THE PROPOSED LOCATIONS OF ADDITIONAL ON-STREET DISTRICT NOTICE BOARDS.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE MEETING AT 2.30 PM TOMORROW IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT OFFICE ON THE 14TH FLOOR OF HARBOUR BUILDING, 38 PIER ROAD, CENTRAL.

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CHILDREN'S CHOIR TO STAGE FREE CONCERT
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RESIDENTS OF CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT WILL BE TREATED TO A FREE CONCERT BY THE HONG KONG CHILDREN'S CHOIR AT THE COMMUNITY HALL OF THE CARITAS CENTRE IN CAINE ROAD ON SATURDAY (MARCH 22).

ENTITLED '+THE SOUND OF PEACE IN HONG KONG+', THE TWO-HOUR EVENING CONCERT IS BEING PRESENTED TO COINCIDE WITH THE THEME OF THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF PEACE.

NUMBERS BY THE 120-MEMBER CHOIR INCLUDE WELL-KNOWN CHINESE FOLK SONGS, CHINESE AND WESTERN CLASSIC SONGS, DANCING, INSTRUMENTAL PERFORMANCES AND AN OPERA SHOW.

THE CONCERT IS JOINTLY ORGANISED BY THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT OFFICE AND THE MID LEVELS (WESTERN) AREA COMMITTEE, AND IS SPONSORED BY THE MOUNT CAMERON LIONS CLUB.

FREE TICKETS ON A FIRST-COME-FIRST-SERVED BASIS ARE AVAILABLE AT THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT OFFICE, ITS SUB-OFFICES, THE WESTERN DISTRICT COMMUNITY CENTRE AND THE OI MAN ESTATE HALL IN HO MAN TIN.

OFFICIATING AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE CONCERT WILL BE ASSISTANT DISTRICT OFFICER, MISS WINDY KWOK THE CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE MID LEVELS (WESTERN) AREA COMMITTEE, MR YUEN BUN-KEUNG AND MR LEUNG CHUNG-BOR A COMMITTEE MEMBER, MRS YIP WAI CHEE-SHUI AND THE ACTING PRESIDENT OF THE MOUNT CAMERON LIONS CLUB, MR TSE KAI-HO.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE HONG KONG CHILDREN'S CHOIR CONCERT AT 8 PM ON SATURDAY AT THE CARITAS COMMUNITY HALL, CAINE ROAD.

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 1986

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ONE MAIL DELIVERY ONLY
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THERE WILL BE NO MAIL DELIVERIES ON GOOD FRIDAY (MARCH 28), BUT THERE WILL BE ONE MAIL DELIVERY ON SATURDAY (MARCH 29) AND MONDAY (MARCH 31), THE POST OFFICE ANNOUNCED TODAY.

AND ON SATURDAY AND MONDAY, 40 POST OFFICES, INCLUDING THE GENERAL POST OFFICE ON HONG KONG ISLAND, KOWLOON CENTRAL AND TSIM SHA TSUI POST OFFICES IN KOWLOON, AND TSUEN WING STREET, SHA TIN CENTRAL AND TAI PO POST OFFICES IN THE NEW TERRITORIES, WILL BE OPEN FROM 9 AM TO NOON.

DETAILS OF POST OFFICES WHICH WILL OPEN DURING THE EASTER HOLIDAY PERIOD CAN BE OBTAINED FROM A LOCAL POST OFFICE OR FROM THE POST OFFICE ENQUIRY BUREAU AT 5-231071.

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MEET THE MEDIA
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THE COMMISSIONER FOR TELEVISION AND ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING, MR HAROLD KWOK, WILL MEET THE MEDIA TOMORROW (THURSDAY) AT 4 PM IN THE GIS PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM, FIFTH FLOOR, BEACONSFIELD HOUSE, CENTRAL.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND.

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PROVISIONAL REGIONAL COUNCIL TO MEET
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PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ELECTION OF THE FIRST CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL WILL BE AMONG SUBJECTS TO BE DISCUSSED AT A MEETING OF THE PROVISIONAL REGIONAL COUNCIL TOMORROW MORNING (THURSDAY).

OTHER ITEMS TO BE DISCUSSED WILL INCLUDE THE REGIONAL COUNCIL 1986-87 DRAFT ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE AND THE DELEGATION OF EXECUTIVE AUTHORITIES BY THE REGIONAL COUNCIL.

/THE MEETING

THE MEETING WILL START AT 9.30 AM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, TSUEN WAN STATION MULTI-STOREY CARPARK AND GOVERNMENT OFFICE BUILDING, SECOND FLOOR, 174-208 CASTLE PEAK ROAD, TSUEN WAN.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE MEETING.

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DETAILS OF TREE-PLANTING PROGRAMME

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THE AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES DEPARTMENT WILL LAUNCH A MAJOR PROGRAMME LATER THIS MONTH FOR THE PUBLIC TO PLANT TREES IN COUNTRY PARKS, ESPECIALLY PLANTATION AREAS RECENTLY DEVASTATED BY FIRE.

DETAILS OF THE TREE-PLANTING PROGRAMME WILL BE ANNOUNCED AT A PRESS CONFERENCE TO BE HELD TOMORROW (THURSDAY) IN THE TAI PO - SHEK O BALLROOM OF SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, MODY ROAD, TSIM SHA TSUI, AT 3 PM.

PRESIDING AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE WILL BE THE DEPARTMENT'S ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (CONSERVATION AND COUNTRY PARKS), MR K.C. IU.

ALSO PRESENT WILL BE MR PAUL WONG, CONTROLLER (PUBLIC RELATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS) OF TELEVISION BROADCASTS LIMITED, THE CO-ORGANISER OF THE TREE PLANTING PROJECT.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND.

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DRY TAPS FOR TUEN MUN, TSUEN WAN

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FRESH WATER SUPPLY TO CERTAIN PREMISES IN TUEN MUN WILL BE TURNED OFF FROM 1 PM ON SATURDAY (MARCH 22) TO 8 AM THE FOLLOWING DAY FOR MAINS WORK.

THE AFFECTED PREMISES ARE BOUNDED BY TSING WUN ROAD FROM PUI TO ROAD TO LUNG KWU TAN AND LUNG MUN ROAD, INCLUDING LUNG KWU TAN, TAP SHEK KOK, SIU LANG SHUI, MONG HAU SHEK, SHEK KOK TSUI, PAK KOK, SHAN SHEK WAN AND TSING SHAN TSUEN.

/SIU SHAN

SIU SHAN COURT, BUTTERFLY ESTATE, PAK KOK TEMPORARY HOUSING AREA, WU KING ESTATE, MELODY GARDEN, SIU HEI COURT AND CASTLE PEAK BOYS' HOME WILL ALSO BE AFFECTED.

ON THE SAME DAY, FRESH WATER SUPPLY TO SOME PREMISES IN TSUEN WAN WILL BE SUSPENDED FROM 10 PM TO 6 AM THE NEXT DAY FOR MAINS WORK.

THE AFFECTED PREMISES ARE BOUNDED BY TEXACO ROAD, YEUNG UK ROAD, TAI HO ROAD AND CASTLE PEAK ROAD, INCLUDING SHEK WAI KOK ESTATE.

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URBAN CLEARWAY RESTRICTIONS

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FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY (MARCH 22), A NUMBER OF ROAD SECTIONS IN ADMIRALTY WILL BE MADE 24-HOUR DAILY URBAN CLEARWAYS:

THESE ARE:

- * THE WESTERN KERBSIDE LANE OF RODNEY STREET BETWEEN ITS JUNCTION WITH HARCOURT ROAD AND A POINT ABOUT 15 METRES SOUTH OF THE SAME JUNCTION;
- * THE SOUTHERN KERBSIDE LANE OF HARCOURT ROAD BETWEEN ITS JUNCTION WITH TAMAR STREET AND A POINT ABOUT 90 METRES EAST OF THE SAME JUNCTION; AND
- * THE EASTERN KERBSIDE LANE OF TAMAR STREET BETWEEN ITS JUNCTION WITH HARCOURT ROAD AND A POINT ABOUT 15 METRES SOUTH OF THE SAME JUNCTION.

WITHIN THE RESTRICTED ZONES, NO VEHICLE OTHER THAN FRANCHISED BUSES WOULD BE ALLOWED TO STOP FOR PASSENGERS OR GOODS.

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MONG KOK RESTRICTED ZONE

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YIM PO FONG STREET NORTHBOUND IN MONG KOK BETWEEN WATERLOO ROAD AND PAK PO STREET WILL BE DESIGNATED A 24-HOUR DAILY RESTRICTED ZONE FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY (MARCH 22).

NO VEHICLES WILL BE ALLOWED TO STOP FOR PASSENGERS OR GOODS WITHIN THE RESTRICTED ZONE.

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