



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES
BEACONSFIELD HOUSE, HONG KONG. TEL.: 842 8777

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 1994

<u>CONTENTS</u>	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
GOVERNMENT OBLIGED TO A PROPERTY REVALUATION	1
BETTER PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR DISABLED	2
GOVERNOR VISITS WONG TAI SIN	3
GOVERNOR SPEAKS TO REPORTERS AFTER HIS VISIT TO WONG TAI SIN DISTRICT	3
GOVERNOR SPEAKS TO REPORTERS AFTER SUMMIT MEETING ON TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED	7
BUDGET A FINE BALANCING ACT	9
HK'S WELFARE SYSTEM COMPARABLE TO ANY IN ASIA	11
PARTNERSHIP IN BUILDING SAFETY	12
PROVISIONAL ANTI-DUMPING DUTIES ON MAGNETIC DISCS	13
SHABBY BUILDING DECLARED DANGEROUS	14
CENTRAL AND WESTERN ENQUIRY CENTRE TO BE REFITTED	15
HONG KONG MONETARY AUTHORITY MONEY MARKET OPERATIONS	15

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 1994

- 1 -

GOVERNMENT OBLIGED TO A PROPERTY REVALUATION

* * * * *

THE GOVERNOR, THE RT HON CHRISTOPHER PATTEN, THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON SAID THE GOVERNMENT WERE OBLIGED TO A REVALUATION OF PROPERTY AND THE COMMUNITY EXPECTED IT TO BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY AND PRUDENTLY OVER PUBLIC FINANCES.

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AFTER VISITING WONG TAI SIN DISTRICT, MR PATTEN SAID THE REVALUATION TOOK ACCOUNT OF WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO THE VALUE OF PROPERTY OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS.

"NOT TO HAVE A REVALUATION WOULD FRANKLY BE UNFAIR," HE SAID.

"AT THE MOMENT, RATES REPRESENT ABOUT TWO PER CENT OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME. IF YOU ADD THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE REVALUATION, THAT FIGURE WILL GO UP FROM TWO PER CENT TO ALL OF 2.1 PER CENT."

THE GOVERNOR NOTED THAT IN THE BUDGET WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS "EXTREMELY SENSIBLE", THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY CUT TAXES, INCREASED SPENDING ON ISSUES LIKE SOCIAL WELFARE, ANNOUNCED A CONSIDERABLE INCREASE IN HONG KONG'S RESERVES AND PUT MORE MONEY ASIDE FOR THE FUTURE.

"I THINK THAT IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT DOESN'T MAKE VERY MUCH SENSE FOR US TO THROW AWAY \$1.8 BILLION WHICH IS WHAT IT WOULD COST IN ORDER TO MEET SOMETHING WHICH FRANKLY I DON'T BELIEVE IS A CONSIDERABLE SOCIAL PROBLEM.

"SO I HOPE THAT EVERYBODY WILL BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY.

"SPEAKING FOR THE GOVERNMENT, I WANT TO MAKE IT ABSOLUTELY CLEAR THAT WHATEVER HAPPENS, WE ARE NOT GOING TO BE IMPRUDENT WITH HONG KONG'S FINANCES."

MR PATTEN SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD AGREED AND ACCEPTED THAT THERE SHOULD BE A LOW CAP ON THE INCREASE IN RATES.

"WE'VE SET THAT CAP AT 20 PER CENT WHICH IS SUBSTANTIALLY BELOW THE FIGURE FOR INFLATION OF ABOUT 33 PER CENT OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS," THE GOVERNOR SAID.

"SO, NOBODY CAN SAY THE GOVERNMENT ISN'T TRYING TO PROTECT PEOPLE FROM THE VERY MARGINAL CONSEQUENCES OF RATING REVALUATION."

MR PATTEN SAID HE FOUND IT VERY SUPRISING THAT SOME PEOPLE ON THE ONE HAND ACCUSED THE GOVERNMENT OF NARROWING THE TAX BASE WHILE AT THE SAME TIME WERE SUGGESTING THAT THE GOVERNMENT REALLY SHOULD NARROW THE TAX BASE BY NOT LETTING THE REVALUATION GO AHEAD.

"SO I HOPE THAT WISDOM WILL PREVAIL IN THIS CIRCUMSTANCE AND THAT WE CAN MAKE SURE THAT WHEN WE SPEND MONEY, WE SPEND IT IN SENSIBLE AND APPROPRIATE WAYS," HE ADDED.

- - - - 0 - - - -

BETTER PUBLIC TRANSPORT FOR DISABLED

* * * * *

THE GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT COMPANIES HAVE DONE A GOOD JOB IN THE PAST YEAR IN MAKING THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEMS MUCH MORE ACCESSIBLE AND USER-FRIENDLY TO THE DISABLED PERSONS, THE GOVERNOR, THE RT HON CHRISTOPHER PATTEN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT A MEETING ON THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT FACILITIES FOR THE DISABLED, THE GOVERNOR SAID HE WAS GLAD TO KNOW THAT TARGETS HE SUGGESTED AT THE LAST MEETING HAD BEEN MET WITH CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS.

HE CONGRATULATED THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT FOR PRODUCING A PUBLIC TRANSPORT GUIDE (IN ENGLISH, CHINESE AND BRAILLE) FOR THE DISABLED, WHICH SETS OUT THE TRANSPORT FACILITIES AVAILABLE TO THE DISABLED, AND THE WAYS TO MAKE BEST USE OF THESE FACILITIES.

HE ALSO COMMENDED THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT COMPANIES FOR INTRODUCING MEASURES TO MAKE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM MORE ACCESSIBLE TO THE DISABLED.

"BUT WE CANNOT AFFORD TO BE COMPLACENT. THE DIFFICULTIES WHICH DISABLED PEOPLE FACE IN MOVING AROUND IN HONG KONG, AS IN OTHER BUSY CITIES, REMAIN FORMIDABLE," THE GOVERNOR SAID.

"I AM THEREFORE HEARTENED BY THE CONTINUING COMMITMENT OF THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATORS TO CONTINUE WITH THEIR EFFORTS TO IMPROVE FURTHER THEIR SERVICES TO THE DISABLED.

"OUR COLLECTIVE AIM MUST BE TO ENSURE THAT OUR PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM PROVIDES AS CONVENIENT AS POSSIBLE A SERVICE FOR ITS DISABLED PASSENGERS, AND FOR ITS PART THE ADMINISTRATION STANDS READY TO DO WHATEVER IT CAN TO HELP FACILITATE THIS," HE SAID.

ALSO SPEAKING AT THE MEETING, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR HAIDER BARMA SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALSO TAKEN A NUMBER OF NEW INITIATIVES TO HELP DISABLED PEOPLE MOVE AROUND MORE EASILY AND CHEAPLY.

THESE INCLUDE A TRIAL SCHEME TO ALLOW TAXI DRIVERS TO PICK UP AND SET DOWN DISABLED PASSENGERS IN RESTRICTED AREAS, TOLL EXEMPTION FOR DISABLED DRIVERS USING GOVERNMENT TUNNELS AND THE EXTENSION OF THE CONCESSIONS TO DISABLED DRIVERS USING THREE-WHEEL VEHICLES AND SCOOTERS, SUCH AS EXEMPTION FROM FIRST REGISTRATION TAX, VEHICLE AND DRIVING LICENCE FEES, DUTY ON FUEL AND CROSS HARBOUR TUNNEL PASSAGE TAX.

MR BARMA SAID A SPECIAL WORKING GROUP SET UP BY THE GOVERNMENT EARLY LAST YEAR TO PURSUE MEASURES TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT BY DISABLED PERSONS WAS NOW PROVIDING A USEFUL FORUM FOR EXCHANGE OF VIEWS BETWEEN THE TRANSPORT COMPANIES AND THE DISABLED REPRESENTATIVES.

ALSO ATTENDING THE MEETING, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG SAID RECURRENT SPENDING ON REHABUS WOULD BE INCREASED FROM \$9.4 MILLION IN 1993/94 TO \$13.1 MILLION IN 1994/95, REPRESENTING A SIZABLE GROWTH OF ABOUT 40 PER CENT.

/SHE SAID

SHE SAID THIS WOULD ENABLE THE REHABUS SCHEDULED ROUTE SERVICE, WHICH HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED BY FOUR ADDITIONAL ROUTES THIS FINANCIAL YEAR, TO CONTINUE ITS EXPANSION OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

MRS WONG SAID THE VERY POPULAR DAIL-A-RIDE REHABUS SERVICE WOULD ALSO BE EXPANDED BY THREE ADDITIONAL REHABUSES IN 1994/95.

SHE ALSO NOTED THAT MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF THE REHABUS SERVICE WOULD INCLUDE ADDITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT, RENOVATION OF PARKING DEPOTS AND INSTALLATION OF CHARGING METERS.

THE MEETING, WHICH WAS ORGANISED BY THE TRANSPORT BRANCH AND DEPARTMENT, WAS ALSO ATTENDED BY THE TOP MANAGEMENT OF MAJOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT COMPANIES AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE DISABLED GROUPS.

FOLLOWING THE MEETING THE GOVERNOR TOURED AN EXHIBITION OF FACILITIES PROVIDED BY THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATORS FOR THE DISABLED COMMUNITY.

- - - - 0 - - - -

GOVERNOR VISITS WONG TAI SIN

* * * * *

THE GOVERNOR, THE RT HON CHRISTOPHER PATTEN, AND MRS PATTEN TOURED WONG TAI SIN DISTRICT THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON.

THEY FIRST VISITED THE CHI LIN NUNNERY IN DIAMOND HILL AND WAS BRIEFED ON SOME OF ITS FACILITIES WHICH INCLUDE A HOME FOR THE ELDERLY AND A DAY CARE CENTRE.

THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY A TOUR OF NGA TSIN WAI VILLAGE FAMED FOR THE FORTIFIED WALLS WHICH WERE BUILT IN THE EARLY MING DYNASTY.

MR AND MRS PATTEN THEN TOURED THE LOK FU SHOPPING COMPLEX BEFORE MEETING DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS AND LOCAL PERSONALITIES AT A TEA RECEPTION.

THEY WERE ACCOMPANIED BY THE ACTING REGIONAL SECRETARY FOR HONG KONG AND KOWLOON, MR PHILIP CHOK; THE WONG TAI SIN DISTRICT OFFICER, MR ALDAN KWOK; AND THE WONG TAI SIN DISTRICT BOARD CHAIRMAN, MR CHAN KAM-MAN.

- - - - 0 - - - -

GOVERNOR SPEAKS TO REPORTERS AFTER HIS VISIT
TO WONG TAI SIN DISTRICT

* * * * *

GOVERNOR: I'VE ENJOYED MY SECOND VISIT TO THIS DISTRICT BOARD, NOT THE FIRST, NOT ONLY THE SECOND TIME I'VE BEEN TO THE DISTRICT BECAUSE I HAD SEVERAL HOUSING VISITS HERE AS WELL AS MANY OF YOU WILL KNOW BUT IT IS VERY GOOD TO BE BACK IN THE DISTRICT AND SEEING SOME OF THE EFFORTS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE TO DEAL WITH THE DIFFICULTY SOCIAL PROBLEMS, PARTICULARLY THE HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS THAT PEOPLE CONFRONT HERE. NO QUESTIONS?

QUESTION: CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHY IS THAT WHEN MR MICHAEL SZE THIS MORNING SAID THAT THE CIVIL SERVANTS EXCHANGE PROBLEM BETWEEN CHINA AND HONG KONG WAS STOPPED? CAN YOU TELL WHY? IS IT DUE TO THE POLITICAL ROW?

/GOVERNOR

GOVERNOR: NO. IT HASN'T STOPPED. THERE'VE BEEN TWO VERY SUCCESSFUL COURSES AT QING HUA UNIVERSITY AND THERE WILL BE ANOTHER COURSE SHORTLY. BUT THERE HAS BEEN NO IMPACT ON THE PROGRAMME SO FAR AS I AM AWARE AS A RESULT OF THE UNFORTUNATE BREAKDOWN IN TALKS ON POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT.

QUESTION: A REPORT IN THE EASTERN EXPRESS THIS MORNING QUOTED A CHINESE OFFICIAL AS SAYING THAT THE CATHAY PACIFIC... WOULD AMALGAMATE WITH CAAC AFTER 1997....?

GOVERNOR: I HAVE SEEN THE STATEMENT THAT CATHAY PACIFIC PUT OUT EARLIER TODAY WHICH IS A WHOLLY ACCURATE REFLECTION OF WHAT IT SAYS IN THE JOINT DECLARATION. I WAS VERY STRUCK THE OTHER DAY BY AN INTERESTING SPEECH THAT DIRECTOR LU PING MADE IN WHICH HE DESCRIBED HONG KONG AS A GOLDEN BRIDGE FOR CHINA AND IN WHICH HE UNDERLINED THE IMPORTANCE OF EVERYONE INCLUDING OFFICIALS IN PEKING STANDING BY THE JOINT DECLARATION AND THE BASIC LAW AND I THINK THAT THIS IS A CASE WHERE THAT POINT NEEDS TO BE UNDERLINED. THE JOINT DECLARATION IS ABSOLUTELY CLEAR ABOUT RESPONSIBILITIES FOR AIR SERVICE AGREEMENT AND RELATED MATTERS AFTER 1997. AND I DON'T THINK THAT ANY SENIOR CHINESE OFFICIAL WOULD EVEN THINK ABOUT CHANGING THAT.

QUESTION: CAN THE CIVIL SERVANTS' RECORDS BE ACCESSIBLE TO THE CHINESE BEFORE 1997?

GOVERNOR: WE'VE SAID BEFORE ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS, GOING BACK, I THINK, TO THE LATE 1980'S THAT WE WOULD WANT TO DISCUSS AT THE APPROPRIATE MOMENT WITH CHINESE OFFICIALS THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF SENIOR LOCAL CIVIL SERVANTS IN HONG KONG. AND, OF COURSE, THAT MEANS MAKING SURE THAT THEIR CURRICULUM, THEIR CURRICULUM VITAE ARE KNOWN, THE BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS ABOUT THEIR PUBLIC SERVICE CAREERS. THAT IS NOTHING PARTICULARLY SECRETIVE OR CONFIDENTIAL ABOUT THOSE. PEOPLE WOULD KNOW THOSE, I GUESS, FROM LOOKING AT THE STRAIGHT-FORWARD CIVIL SERVICE RECORDS.

QUESTION: CAN YOU GIVE US YOUR RESPONSE TO THE DEMONSTRATIONS TODAY?

GOVERNOR: I WAS INTERESTED IN THE LARGEST OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS WHICH WAS IN FAVOUR OF A GOOD PENSION SCHEME FOR THE ELDERLY. WE'VE PROPOSED, AS YOU KNOW, SOME SENSIBLE PROPOSALS FOR THE RETIREMENT INCOME OF OLD PEOPLE. WE'VE GOT AT PRESENT CONSULTANTS WHO ARE LOOKING AT THE FULL FEASIBILITY STUDY. THEY WILL BE REPORTING IN THE SUMMER AND I HOPE THAT THE DEBATE CAN COME TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION AFTER THAT FEASIBILITY STUDY IS PUBLISHED.

QUESTION: THE CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER TODAY SAID THAT THE CHINESE SIDE WOULD CO-OPERATE WITH THE BRITISH SIDE IN SOME ASPECTS. HOW CAN YOU SEE THE CO-OPERATION..? WHEN WILL THE AIRPORT COMMITTEE HOLD ITS MEETING?

/GOVERNOR

GOVERNOR: I VERY MUCH WELCOME THE CONSTRUCTIVE STATEMENT MADE BY THE CHINESE VICE PREMIER AND FOREIGN MINISTER, MR QIAN QICHEN. I THOUGHT IT WAS A HELPFUL, CREATIVE RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES THAT FACES US ALL OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS. IT'S A MATTER, I THINK, OF GENUINE REGRET TO THE BRITISH SIDE, TO THE CHINESE SIDE, AND TO THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG THAT WE WEREN'T BE ABLE TO REACH AGREEMENT ON THE ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR 1994/95. I REPEAT A MATTER OF GENUINE REGRET ALL ROUND. BUT BECAUSE WE WEREN'T BE ABLE TO AGREE ON THAT PARTICULAR ISSUE DOESN'T MEAN THAT WE SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO AGREE ON MOST OTHER ISSUES. WE DO NEED TO CO-OPERATE. WE DO NEED TO WORK TOGETHER IN THE INTEREST OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG. I NOTICE THAT MR QIAN QICHEN STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKING TOGETHER, OF CO-OPERATING TO PROTECT PEOPLE'S LIVELIHOOD AND TO PROTECT THE STABILITY OF HONG KONG. THAT'S SOMETHING THAT WE NEED TO DO. TODAY ON A VISIT LIKE THIS, ONE SEES ALL THE WELFARE AND LIVELIHOOD ISSUES THAT GENUINELY CONCERN PEOPLE. WE WANT TO CO-OPERATE IN THE INTEREST OF ALL THE FAMILIES WHO LIVE IN HONG KONG. SO, ON ISSUES LIKE THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR INFRASTRUCTURE, ON THE SORT OF ISSUES THAT ARE BEING DISCUSSED IN THE JOINT LIAISON GROUP, TECHNICAL ONES, ONES THAT VERY OFTEN HAVE NO REAL CONTROVERSIAL, POLITICAL CONTENT, PEOPLE IN HONG KONG WANT TO SEE US GET ON TOGETHER AND WORK POSITIVELY TOGETHER AND CO-OPERATE TOGETHER. I AM SURE THAT MR QIAN QICHEN WOULD AGREE WITH ME THAT PEOPLE EXPECT US NOT JUST TO USE WORDS LIKE CO-OPERATE BUT TO CO-OPERATE IN PRACTICE. AND I VERY MUCH HOPE THAT IS WHAT WE'LL BE ABLE TO DO. THE JOB THAT LIES IN FRONT OF US IS A DIFFICULT ONE. NOBODY DOUBTS THAT. WHAT BRITAIN AND CHINA AND HONG KONG ARE TRYING TO DO HAS NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE IN QUITE THIS WAY. SO, THE REQUIREMENT ON US TO WORK CLOSELY TOGETHER AND SINCERELY TOGETHER AND CONSTRUCTIVELY TOGETHER IS A VERY CONSIDERABLE ONE. AND I REPEAT THAT I WELCOME THE STATEMENT MADE BY MR QIAN QICHEN EARLIER TODAY.

QUESTION: DO YOU KNOW WHEN THE AIRPORT COMMITTEE WILL MEET AGAIN?

GOVERNOR: NO, BUT THERE ARE DISCUSSIONS TAKING PLACE BETWEEN OUR EXPERTS TO CLEAR UP SOME ISSUES WHICH I THINK THE CHINESE SIDE HAS RAISED AND I'M SURE THAT THESE DISCUSSIONS WILL LAY THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A MEETING OF THE AIRPORT COMMITTEE IN DUE COURSE. BUT NO DATE HAS YET BEEN FIXED.

QUESTION: (RELATED TO THE PETITION ON RENTALS)

GOVERNOR: I HAVEN'T READ THE PETITION YET ABOUT THE RENTALS. BUT WHEN I HAVE READ IT, I'LL RESPOND TO IT POSITIVELY AND WILL RESPOND TO IT PUBLICLY AS WELL. SO, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO HAVE AN ANSWER TO IT.

QUESTION: WHAT'S YOUR VIEWS ON THE PROPOSAL OF INCREASING THE RATES.

/GOVERNOR

GOVERNOR: I THINK THAT THE COMMUNITY EXPECTS THE GOVERNMENT TO BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY AND PRUDENTLY OVER PUBLIC FINANCES. WE ARE AS WE WERE OBLIGED TO IN THE PROCESS OF A REVALUATION OF PROPERTY. THAT TAKES ACCOUNT OF WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE VALUE OF PROPERTY OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS. NOT TO HAVE A REVALUATION WOULD FRANKLY BE UNFAIR. AT THE MOMENT, RATES REPRESENT ABOUT TWO PER CENT OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME. IF YOU ADD THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE REVALUATION, THAT FIGURE WILL GO UP FROM TWO PER CENT TO ALL OF 2.1 PER CENT. NOW THAT DOESN'T SEEM TO ME TO BE AN ISSUE WHICH JUSTIFIES SOME OF THE THINGS WHICH HAVE BEEN SAID IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS. THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY PUT FORWARD AN EXTREMELY SENSIBLE BUDGET IN WHICH HE CUT TAXES, IN WHICH HE INCREASED SPENDING ON ISSUES LIKE SOCIAL WELFARE, IN WHICH HE WAS ABLE TO ANNOUNCE A CONSIDERABLE INCREASE IN OUR RESERVES, IN WHICH HE WAS ABLE TO PUT MORE MONEY ASIDE FOR THE FUTURE. I THINK THAT IN THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT DOESN'T MAKE VERY MUCH SENSE FOR US TO THROW AWAY \$1.8 BILLION WHICH IS WHAT IT WOULD COST IN ORDER TO MEET SOMETHING WHICH FRANKLY I DON'T BELIEVE IS A CONSIDERABLE SOCIAL PROBLEM. SO I HOPE THAT EVERYBODY WILL BEHAVE RESPONSIBLY. AND SPEAKING FOR THE GOVERNMENT, I WANT TO MAKE IT ABSOLUTELY CLEAR THAT WHATEVER HAPPENS, WE ARE NOT GOING TO BE IMPRUDENT WITH HONG KONG'S FINANCES. JUST ONE OTHER POINT, WE'VE AGREED, WE'VE ACCEPTED THAT THERE SHOULD BE A LOW CAP ON THE INCREASE IN RATES. WE'VE SET THAT CAP AT 20 PER CENT WHICH IS SUBSTANTIALLY BELOW THE FIGURE FOR INFLATION OF ABOUT 33 PER CENT OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS. SO, NOBODY CAN SAY THE GOVERNMENT ISN'T TRYING TO PROTECT PEOPLE FROM THE VERY MARGINAL CONSEQUENCES OF RATING REVALUATION. I FIND IT VERY SURPRISING THAT SOME PEOPLE ON THE ONE HAND ACCUSE THE GOVERNMENT OF NARROWING THE TAX BASE WHILE AT THE SAME TIME THEY ARE SUGGESTING THAT WE REALLY SHOULD NARROW THE TAX BASE BY NOT LETTING THIS REVALUATION GO AHEAD. SO I HOPE THAT WISDOM WILL PREVAIL IN THIS CIRCUMSTANCE AND THAT WE CAN MAKE SURE THAT WHEN WE SPEND MONEY, WE SPEND IT IN SENSIBLE AND APPROPRIATE WAYS ON DEALING FOR EXAMPLE WITH SOME OF THE SOCIAL PROBLEMS THAT PEOPLE HAVE BEEN TALKING TO ME ABOUT TODAY. ONE MORE QUESTION.

QUESTION: CONCERNING THE COURT OF FINAL APPEAL, IS IT SO STRANGE THAT THE GOVERNMENT ALLOWS DISCONTINUITY POLITICALLY FOR THE POLITICAL SYSTEM, BUT FOR THE COURT OF FINAL APPEAL, MR RICHARD HOARE YESTERDAY STRESSED THAT THERE SHOULD BE CONTINUITY OTHERWISE THERE WILL BE A LEGAL VACUUM AT THE TOP OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM?

GOVERNOR: WELL, THERE IS APPRECIATED DIFFERENCE IN THE CASE OF THE COURT OF FINAL APPEAL. AN AGREEMENT WAS REACHED BETWEEN BRITAIN AND CHINA. AN AGREEMENT WAS REACHED ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE COURT OF FINAL APPEAL AND I DON'T THINK WE CAN GO BACK TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE AFTER THAT AGREEMENT WAS REACHED AND SAY WE NOW WANT A DIFFERENT AGREEMENT. I DON'T THINK CHINESE OFFICIALS WOULD REGARD THAT AS ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR. SO I THINK THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THAT AND THE QUESTION OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT WHERE THERE HAVEN'T BEEN AN AGREEMENT ON THE ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS. WE TRY TO GET ONE IN THE 17 ROUNDS OF TALKS BUT ALAS DIDN'T DO SO. THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, PROBABLY NEXT MONTH, WILL CONSIDER A DRAFT BILL ON THE COURT OF FINAL APPEAL. WE'LL THEN WANT TO DISCUSS THAT WITH THE LEGAL PROFESSION IN HONG KONG AND WITH THE CHINESE SIDE. WE'LL THEN PUT IT TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND I HOPE THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WILL AGREE THAT THE COURT SHOULD BE SET UP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE SO THAT IT'S GOT SOME EXPERIENCE OF OPERATING BEFORE 1997. THANKS VERY MUCH INDEED.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 1994

- 7 -

GOVERNOR SPEAKS TO REPORTERS AFTER SUMMIT MEETING
ON TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

* * * * *

GOVERNOR: WE'VE HAD THREE SUMMITS NOW, INVOLVING DISABLED GROUPS. WE HAD THE FIRST JUST OVER A YEAR AGO TO BRING TOGETHER REPRESENTATIVES OF THE DISABLED AND SOME OF OUR TRANSPORT OPERATORS TO CONSIDER HOW WE COULD MAKE PROGRESS IN DEVELOPING FACILITIES FOR THE DISABLED. THAT MEETING WAS SUFFICIENTLY SUCCESSFUL FOR US TO HAVE HELD ANOTHER MEETING INVOLVING THE DISABLED AND EMPLOYERS' REPRESENTATIVES AT WHICH WE LOOKED AT EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THOSE WITH DISABILITY. OBVIOUSLY, THERE'S A VERY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRANSPORT AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DISABLED.

THE MEETING WE HAD TODAY WAS TO SEE HOW MUCH PROGRESS WE'VE MADE SINCE THE FIRST MEETING IN DEVELOPING FACILITIES FOR THE DISABLED SO THAT THEY CAN MOVE AROUND WITH THE MAXIMUM INDEPENDENCE IN HONG KONG. I DON'T THINK ANY OF US ARE COMPLACENT ABOUT WHAT'S BEEN ACHIEVED, BUT I THINK THERE'S A RECOGNITION THAT IN THE LAST YEAR A VERY GREAT DEAL HAS BEEN DONE TO IMPROVE TRANSPORT FACILITIES FOR THOSE WITH VARIOUS FORMS OF DISABILITY. ONE OF THE DISABLED CONTRIBUTORS TO OUR SUMMIT UPSTAIRS SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THAT MORE PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN THE LAST YEAR THAN IN THE PREVIOUS 15. SOMEONE ELSE SAID THAT THERE HAD BEEN A CHANGE IN THE WIND THAT NOW WE TOOK THESE ISSUES, TRANSPORT OPERATORS TOOK THESE ISSUES MUCH MORE SERIOUSLY AND GAVE THEM MORE PROMINENCE ON THEIR AGENDA.

THERE ARE FOUR THINGS THAT I'D LIKE TO SINGLE OUT FOR PARTICULAR NOTE. FIRST OF ALL WE UNDERTOOK LAST YEAR TO PRODUCE A BOOKLET, GIVING THE DISABLED A GUIDE TO THE TRANSPORT FACILITIES WHICH ARE AVAILABLE TO THEM. THAT BOOKLET, THAT GUIDE HAS BEEN PRODUCED BY THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT IN CHINESE, OF COURSE IN ENGLISH AND IN BRAILLE. I THINK IT HAS BEEN FOUND VERY USEFUL BY THE DISABLED GROUPS WHO HAVE OF COURSE CONTRIBUTED SIGNIFICANTLY TO IT THEMSELVES. SECONDLY, INDIVIDUAL TRANSPORT OPERATORS HAVE THEMSELVES MADE A NUMBER OF CHANGES AND WE HAD PRESENTATIONS ON THOSE. THE TRANSPORT OPERATORS HAVE PRODUCED VIDEOS ON WHAT'S BEEN ACHIEVED AND WHAT THEY ARE HOPING TO ACHIEVE AND I HOPE THAT THOSE VIDEOS WILL BE SHOWN NOT ONLY TO GROUPS OF THE DISABLED BUT ALSO ON TELEVISION, SO THAT THE WHOLE COMMUNITY CAN GET A KEENER APPRECIATION OF WHAT'S HAPPENING. ON GOVERNMENT'S PART, WE UNDERTOOK LAST YEAR TO DEVELOP OUR REHABUS SERVICE. WE ARE BRINGING ON STREAM SEVEN NEW VEHICLES IN THE COMING YEAR AND WE ARE INCREASING BY 40 PERCENT THE GOVERNMENT RESOURCES THAT GO INTO REHABUS WHICH DOES, I THINK, MAKE A CONSIDERABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE TRANSPORT NEED OF THE DISABLED BECAUSE IT IS ABLE TO OPERATE SO FLEXIBLY, PROVIDING SERVICES EACH MONTH FOR ABOUT 5000 DIFFERENT JOURNEYS, DIFFERENT TRAVELLERS. FINALLY, WE'VE GOT TO MAKE SURE THAT IN PLANNING FUTURE TRANSPORT UNDERTAKINGS, WE TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE REQUIREMENTS AND NEEDS OF THE DISABLED. WE ARE DOING THAT, FOR EXAMPLE THE MTRC ARE DOING THAT IN THE PLANNING THAT THEY ARE TAKING FORWARD FOR THE AIRPORT RAILWAY.

SO I THINK WE'VE ACHIEVED A GOOD DEAL OVER THE LAST YEAR AND I'D LIKE TO THANK THE GROUPS REPRESENTING THE DISABLED FOR THE VERY POSITIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH THAT THEY'VE TAKEN, JUST AS I'D LIKE TO THANK THE TRANSPORT OPERATORS FOR REACTING AS POSITIVELY AS THEY HAVE. BUT I REPEAT WHAT I SAID EARLIER. WE CAN'T BE COMPLACENT. THERE IS STILL MORE PROGRESS THAT WE NEED TO MAKE. WE'LL BE UNDERTAKING A REPORT NEXT YEAR TO SEE HOW MUCH HAS BEEN ACHIEVED OVER THE NEXT MONTHS AND WILL HAVE A FURTHER DISCUSSION ON THE BASIS OF THAT REPORT. WE OWE IT TO THOSE WITH DISABILITY TO CONTINUE TO GIVE THIS ISSUE IMPORTANCE. IT'S A MATTER OF HUMAN DIGNITY. IT'S A MATTER OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND IT'S IMPORTANT FOR OUR COMMUNITY THAT WE GIVE THE DISABLED EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE FULL, TO THE LIFE OF THE WHOLE COMMUNITY.

QUESTION : ONE OF THE SPEAKERS TODAY, PETER CHAN, HAS BEEN QUITE CRITICAL OF THE BUS COMPANIES, SAYING THAT AT BEST THEY'RE ONLY MAKING COSMETIC IMPROVEMENTS AND SAYING THAT IF BUS COMPANIES ARE RELUCTANT TO CHANGE AND DISCRIMINATE AGAINST DISABLED PASSENGERS, THEY SHOULD LOSE THEIR PUBLIC FRANCHISE. DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENT TO MAKE ON THIS ?

GOVERNOR : THERE WAS QUITE A LIVELY DISCUSSION ABOUT THE PARTICULAR PROBLEMS FACED BY THE BUS COMPANIES. I THINK THERE'S A RECOGNITION ON THE PART OF THE GROUPS REPRESENTING THE DISABLED THAT THERE'S A RATHER DIFFERENT SET OF PROBLEMS WHICH AFFECT THE BUS COMPANIES WHICH ARE TRYING AS THEY REPLACE THE FLEET TO ENSURE THAT THEIR NEW VEHICLES INCORPORATE THE BEST SORT OF DESIGN TO HELP THE DISABLED WHICH IS AVAILABLE IN THE MANUFACTURING COUNTRIES. SO I THINK THERE'S A RECOGNITION ON THE PART OF THE DISABLED BUT IT'S A BIT MORE OF A PROBLEM FOR THE BUS COMPANIES. BUT NEVERTHELESS THEY WANT THE BUS COMPANIES TO DO MORE, THEY WANT THE BUS COMPANIES TO MOVE FASTER, THEY WANT THE BUS COMPANIES TO GIVE THE SUBJECT THE SAME PRIORITY AND ATTENTION WHICH UNDOUBTEDLY KCRC AND MTRC HAVE GIVEN IT. BUT I THINK YOU PROBABLY BEST ASK ONE OR TWO OF THE BUS OPERATORS THEMSELVES HOW THEY THINK THEY CAN BEST REACT. I REPEAT THAT I THINK THERE'S A RECOGNITION THEY HAVE PROBLEMS WHICH THE RAILWAY COMPANIES DON'T HAVE. BUT NEVERTHELESS EVERYONE WANTS TO SEE THEM ADDRESSING THOSE PROBLEMS AS POSITIVELY AS POSSIBLE.

QUESTION : (ON ALLOWANCE)

GOVERNOR : THAT WAS A SUBJECT THAT WAS RAISED AS WELL. WHEN THE GREEN PAPER ON DISABILITY AND REHABILITATION WAS BEING CONSIDERED, THE QUESTION OF MOBILITY ALLOWANCE CAME UP AND AT THAT STAGE THE IDEA WAS TURNED DOWN IN FAVOUR OF CONTINUING TO DEVELOP DISABILITY ALLOWANCE AND PROVIDE SPECIFIC FACILITIES FOR THE DISABLED. BUT I DON'T MYSELF BELIEVE THAT THAT'S THE END OF THE ARGUMENT AND I'M SURE IT WILL CONTINUE TO FEATURE AND IT'S SOMETHING WE'LL HAVE TO LOOK AT IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR OVERALL PRIORITIES. WE ARE VERY KEEN FIRST AND FOREMOST TO MAKE SURE THAT THE GREEN PAPER IS IMPLEMENTED TO THE FULL, IF POSSIBLE, AHEAD OF TIME. ONE MORE QUESTION.

QUESTION : WHAT DOES THE GOVERNMENT DO TO TACKLE THE DISCRIMINATION AMONG THE PRIVATE SECTOR.....

GOVERNOR : THAT WAS A SUBJECT WHICH CAME UP PRINCIPALLY IN THE SEMINAR THAT WE HAD ON THE DISABLED AND EMPLOYMENT. WE ARE TRYING TO ENSURE THAT WE EMPLOY IN GOVERNMENT MORE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY AND WE HOPE THAT PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYERS WILL TAKE THE SAME VIEW AND WE DISCUSSED AT THAT LAST SEMINAR A NUMBER OF INITIATIVES WHICH WE THINK CAN USEFULLY BE TAKEN. AS FOR OTHER FORMS OF PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION, WE HAVE TO COMBAT THEM AS LIBBY WONG HAS BEEN DOING AS VIGOROUSLY AND EFFECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE. DISCRIMINATION AND PREJUDICE ABOUT DISABILITY SIMPLY SHOULDN'T HAVE ANY PART IN A CIVILISED SOCIETY LIKE THIS ONE. I'M VERY STRUCK AS I GO AROUND THE COMMUNITY BY THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO GIVE VOLUNTARILY THEIR TIME AND THEIR ENERGY AND THEIR COMMITMENT TO HELP THOSE WITH DISABILITY AND I THINK THEY REPRESENT FAR MORE THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY VIEW OF PEOPLE IN HONG KONG THAN SOME OF THOSE WHO SHOW UNFORTUNATE PREJUDICE FROM TIME TO TIME. THANKS VERY MUCH INDEED.

- - - - 0 - - - -

BUDGET A FINE BALANCING ACT

* * * * *

IN FORMULATING THE ANNUAL BUDGET, A CAREFUL BALANCE NEEDS TO BE STRUCK BETWEEN ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL REALITIES ON THE ONE HAND AND THE COMMUNITY'S ASPIRATIONS ON THE OTHER, THE SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY, MR DONALD TSANG, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR TSANG SAID THE 1994/95 BUDGET REPRESENTED A WELL-STRUCTURED PACKAGE OF PROPOSALS TO DEAL WITH HONG KONG'S REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE REQUIREMENTS, NOT ONLY FOR THE COMING YEAR BUT ALSO WITH AN EYE OPEN FOR THE YEARS AHEAD.

SPEAKING AT THE LUNCHEON MEETING OF THE HONG KONG FINANCIAL EXECUTIVES INSTITUTE, HE SAID THE BUDGET WAS A COHERENT PACKAGE WHICH NEEDED TO BE EXAMINED AND ADDRESSED AS A WHOLE, WITH DUE REGARD TO BE GIVEN TO ITS OVERALL STRATEGY AND CONTEXT.

HE SAID IN FRAMING THE ANNUAL BUDGET, THE GOVERNMENT FOLLOWED THREE MAIN FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES.

THE FIRST ONE IS THAT PUBLIC SPENDING MUST NOT BE ALLOWED TO GROW FASTER THAN THE ECONOMY.

THE SECOND ONE IS THAT SUFFICIENT REVENUE MUST BE RAISED TO COVER THE SPENDING COMMITMENTS.

THE THIRD ONE IS THAT ADEQUATE RESERVES MUST BE MAINTAINED TO MEET KNOWN COMMITMENTS AND TO PROVIDE A CUSHION AGAINST FUTURE UNCERTAINTIES.

MR TSANG NOTED THAT THE PROCESS ALSO INVOLVED PREPARING A MEDIUM RANGE FORECAST, CONSULTATIONS WITH LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS, POLITICAL PARTIES, THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND OTHER INTEREST GROUPS.

/TURNING TO

TURNING TO THE CURRENT CONTROVERSY ABOUT THE RATES PROPOSAL IN THE BUDGET, HE EMPHASISED THAT THE PROPOSAL HAD BEEN DRAWN UP ON SENSIBLE FINANCIAL GROUNDS WITH THE NECESSARY RELIEF MEASURES IN PLACE.

"RATES ARE A STABLE, BROAD-BASED TAX, PROVIDING A PROGRESSIVE AND RELIABLE SOURCE OF REVENUE," HE SAID.

HE POINTED OUT THAT UNDER THE PROPOSAL, THE OVERALL PERCENTAGE CHARGE WOULD BE MAINTAINED AT THE CURRENT LEVEL OF 5.5 PER CENT.

FURTHERMORE, IT WAS PROPOSED TO CUSHION THE IMMEDIATE IMPACT OF THE REVALUATION ON RATEPAYERS IN THE FORM OF A 20 PER CENT CAP ON INCREASES IN RATES FOR 1994/95 AND 1995/96.

AS A RESULT, HE SAID, THE INCREASES IN RATES PAYABLE BY RATEPAYERS WOULD BE FAR LOWER THAN THE CUMULATIVE INFLATION OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS FROM 1990 TO 1993, WHICH WAS 33 PER CENT.

THE RATES AS A PROPORTION OF AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME WOULD STILL BE ONLY 2.1 PER CENT, HE ADDED.

HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THE RATES INCREASE WOULD ADD ONLY 0.3 PER CENT TO INFLATION AND AS OTHER MEASURES IN THE BUDGET WERE ONLY IN LINE WITH INFLATION OR BELOW, THE OVERALL EFFECT WAS NOT SIGNIFICANT.

FOR A FLAT UNDER 1,000 SQUARE FEET, HE SAID, THE INCREASE IN RATES PAYMENT WOULD BE JUST \$53 A MONTH WHICH WAS CLEARLY MORE THAN AFFORDABLE GIVEN THE GENEROUS TAX CONCESSIONS.

"TO FURTHER DISPEL ANY MISCONCEPTION ABOUT THE HARDSHIP CAUSED BY THE RATES PROPOSAL ON THE MIDDLE AND LOWER INCOME GROUPS, LET ME EMPHASISE THAT 42 PER CENT OF OUR POPULATION NOW LIVING IN RENTAL PUBLIC HOUSING WILL BE LITTLE AFFECTED," HE SAID.

"ANY RATES INCREASES ARE BORNE BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY IN THE FIRST INSTANCE DUE TO THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S POLICY OF CHARGING INCLUSIVE RENTS.

"WHEN THESE RENTS ARE REVISED, ON A TWO-YEAR ROLLING CYCLE, ANY RATES INCREASE, TOGETHER WITH OTHER FACTORS, WILL BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

"BUT AFFORDABILITY, AS MEASURED BY COMPARING THE RENTS WITH THE HOUSEHOLD INCOMES OF TENANTS, WILL REMAIN THE OVERRIDING CONSIDERATION IN DETERMINING NEW RENTS," HE EXPLAINED.

HE ADDED THAT THERE COULD BE NO QUESTION OF ANY HARDSHIP FOR SOCIAL SECURITY RECIPIENTS AS RATES WERE A REIMBURSABLE ITEM UNDER THE COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE SCHEME.

MR TSANG ALSO TOLD HIS AUDIENCE THAT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAD SPENT THE PAST WEEK ANSWERING SOME 1,570 WRITTEN QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BUDGET AND WOULD BE SPENDING TODAY AND THE NEXT TWO DAYS FACING CLOSE QUESTIONING IN SPECIAL MEETINGS OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 1994

- 11 -

HK'S WELFARE SYSTEM COMPARABLE TO ANY IN ASIA

* * * * *

HONG KONG HAS A HIGHLY DEVELOPED SYSTEM OF WELFARE SERVICES AND SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS WHICH IS COMPARABLE TO ANY IN ASIA, THE DEPUTY SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MISS JACQUELINE WILLIS, SAID IN SINGAPORE TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE "WORKSHOP ON POPULATION AGING", MISS WILLIS SAID THE SYSTEM HAD DEVELOPED FROM THE PROVISION OF BASIC RELIEF IN THE EARLY 1970S TO THE PROVISION OF A BROAD RANGE OF SERVICES AND BENEFITS TO THOSE IN NEED OF CARE, PROTECTION AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

SHE TOLD THE PARTICIPANTS THAT IN THE COMING FINANCIAL YEAR, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE PUTTING A STAGGERING \$9.8 BILLION INTO SOCIAL WELFARE, WHICH REPRESENTS 6.8 PER CENT OF PUBLIC EXPENDITURE AND 1.23 PER CENT OF GDP.

MISS WILLIS SAID HONG KONG HAD SET IN PLACE A COMPREHENSIVE SAFETY NET FOR THE NEEDY AND THE DISADVANTAGED.

IN ADDITION, A RANGE OF PREVENTIVE, DEVELOPMENTAL AND SUPPORT SERVICES, AS WELL AS REMEDIAL SERVICES ARE PROVIDED FOR THOSE WHO ARE VULNERABLE AND REQUIRE SUCH ASSISTANCE.

"WE FOCUS PARTICULARLY ON THE NEEDS OF ELDERLY PEOPLE, WOMEN AND THE FAMILY."

MISS WILLIS OUTLINED THE MAIN AREAS OF HONG KONG'S SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES AS LAID DOWN IN THE 1991 WHITE PAPER "SOCIAL WELFARE INTO THE 1990 AND BEYOND": FAMILY AND CHILD CARE SERVICES; SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH; ELDERLY SERVICES, AND SOCIAL SECURITY.

"IN THIS YEAR, THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE FAMILY, WE WILL BE SPENDING \$909 MILLION IN 1994/95 ON FAMILY AND CHILD WELFARE," SHE SAID.

"TO STRENGTHEN SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILY, ADDITIONAL FAMILY CASE WORKERS AND CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS WILL BE PROVIDED TO IMPROVE OUR COUNSELLING WORK," SHE ADDED.

THE NUMBER OF HOME HELP TEAMS WILL BE INCREASED TO HELP FAMILIES IN NEED TO MANAGE THEIR HOMES BETTER AND TO COPE WITH THEIR DIFFICULTIES.

A NEW NETWORK OF FAMILY ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCE CENTRES WILL BE SET UP ACROSS THE TERRITORY, SHE ADDED.

ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH SERVICES, MISS WILLIS SAID A NEW INTEGRATED MODEL FOR THE DELIVERY OF THE SERVICES WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED FROM APRIL 1.

UNDER THIS MODEL, A TEAM OF SOCIAL WORKERS UNDER ONE MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE WILL WORK TOGETHER IN A CATCHMENT AREA TO PROVIDE BETTER AND MORE RELEVANT SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

ON ELDERLY SERVICES, MISS WILLIS SAID THEY COVERED BOTH COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES AND RESIDENTIAL SERVICES.

/"OUR AIM

"OUR AIM IS TO ENABLE ELDERLY PEOPLE TO LIVE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE," SHE SAID.

"IN 1994/95, WE WILL SPEND \$855 MILLION ON THIS IMPORTANT AREA OF SERVICE," SHE ADDED.

THIS REPRESENTS A REAL INCREASE OF 27 PER CENT AND THE LARGEST REAL INCREASE IN SOCIAL WELFARE EXPENDITURE.

MISS WILLIS POINTED OUT THAT THE TOTAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE ON THE ELDERLY WAS MUCH HIGHER.

"THIS COMING YEAR WE WILL SPEND CLOSE TO \$6.5 BILLION ON SERVICES TARGETED AT THE ELDERLY," SHE NOTED.

ON SOCIAL SECURITY, MISS WILLIS SAID IT COMPRISED THE COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE SCHEME AND THE SOCIAL SECURITY ALLOWANCE SCHEME TO PROVIDE FOR THE BASIC AND SPECIAL NEEDS OF THOSE INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES WHO WERE IN NEED OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

- - - - 0 - - - -

PARTNERSHIP IN BUILDING SAFETY
* * * * *

THE CO-OPERATION OF THE PUBLIC AND BUILDING PROFESSIONALS IS ESSENTIAL IF HONG KONG IS TO ENHANCE THE ECONOMIC VALUE, AND EXTEND THE LIFE EXPECTANCY, OF ITS PROPERTIES.

RESIDENTS MUST CO-OPERATE WITH THE BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT IF THEY ARE TO ENJOY A SAFE, PLEASANT AND HEALTHY LIVING AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT, THE DIRECTOR OF BUILDINGS, MRS HELEN YU, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN AN ADDRESS TO THE HONG KONG INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS (HKIA).

MRS YU SAID THE DEPARTMENT WAS DEDICATED TO CONTINUING TO SERVE THE PUBLIC EFFICIENTLY AND COST-EFFECTIVELY THROUGH A CO-OPERATIVE PARTNERSHIP APPROACH.

IT LOOKS FOR CO-OPERATION FROM:

- * PROFESSIONAL INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS HKIA FOR ADVICE ON POLICY AND LEGISLATION, ON CODES OF PRACTICE AND PRACTICE NOTES, THROUGH ADVISORY BOARDS AND COMMITTEES;
- * BUILDING PROFESSIONALS AS AUTHORISED PERSONS SUCH AS ARCHITECTS OR REGISTERED STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS FOR OBSERVANCE OF PROPER STANDARDS IN NEW BUILDING AND MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR PROPOSALS;
- * DEVELOPERS FOR RESPONSIBLE DEVELOPMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS;
- * REGISTERED CONTRACTORS AS "SITE SUPERVISORS" FOR DUE SAFETY DURING CONSTRUCTION;

- * BUILDING OWNERS AND OCCUPANTS FOR PROPER, PREFERABLY PREVENTIVE, MAINTENANCE; AND
- * THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE FOR VIGILANCE IN REPORTING DANGERS AND PROBLEMS.

"TODAY, WE IN THE BUILDINGS DEPARTMENT WORK TOGETHER WITH PROFESSIONALS AND CONTRACTORS IN THE BUILDING INDUSTRY TO MAINTAIN BUILDING SAFETY, TO MAKE FOR MORE FUNCTIONALLY EFFICIENT BUILDINGS AND TO ESTABLISH FOR OUR COMMUNITY A MORE PLEASANT LIVING AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT.

"WE ARE ALSO STEADILY ENHANCING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE NEED FOR BUILDING SAFETY AND SANITATION, AS WELL AS THE ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFIT AND ECONOMIC VALUE OF BETTER MAINTAINED PROPERTIES," MRS YU SAID.

SHE SAID THIS HOPE HAD BEEN, AND WOULD REMAIN, HER DEPARTMENT'S OBJECTIVE FOR BUILDING DEVELOPMENT.

- - - - 0 - - - -

PROVISIONAL ANTI-DUMPING DUTIES ON MAGNETIC DISCS

* * * * *

THE COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ANNOUNCED ON MARCH 11 THE IMPOSITION OF PROVISIONAL ANTI-DUMPING DUTIES ON IMPORTS OF 3.5-INCH MAGNETIC DISCS ORIGINATING IN HONG KONG.

INDIVIDUAL DUTY RATES RANGING FROM 6.7 PER CENT TO 22.2 PER CENT ARE ASSIGNED TO FOUR COMPANIES THAT HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE ANTI-DUMPING INVESTIGATIONS.

THE ALL OTHERS RATE OR "RESIDUAL RATE" WHICH APPLIES TO ALL OTHER COMPANIES AND NEW ENTRANTS IS SET AT 35.7 PER CENT.

"WE ARE VERY DISAPPOINTED BY THE COMMISSION'S DECISION TO IMPOSE PROVISIONAL ANTI-DUMPING DUTIES ON 3.5-INCH MAGNETIC DISCS ORIGINATING IN HONG KONG," ASSISTANT DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF TRADE, MS MARIA KWAN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"MORE SO GIVEN THAT WE FEEL THAT THE CASE HAS BEEN INITIATED ON FLIMS Y EVIDENCE.

"WE WILL BE LOOKING CAREFULLY AT THE METHODOLOGY USED TO SEE WHETHER THERE HAVE BEEN ABUSES," SHE SAID.

"THE RESIDUAL RATE LOOKS PROHIBITIVELY HIGH GIVEN HONG KONG'S COMPLETELY OPEN MARKET AND COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT. IT IS SAID TO BE BASED ON THE HIGHEST DUMPING MARGIN ALLEGED BY THE COMPLAINANTS.

"WE ARE SURPRISED TO FIND THAT THE COMMISSION CHOSE TO DISREGARD HONG KONG DATA WHICH WAS VERIFIED IN THE COURSE OF INVESTIGATION BUT INSTEAD ACCEPT ARBITRARILY ADJUSTED AND UNVERIFIED THIRD COUNTRY DATA FROM THE COMPLAINANTS IN SETTING THE RESIDUAL RATE," MS KWAN ADDED.

THE TRADE DEPARTMENT HAS KEPT IN TOUCH WITH COMPANIES CONCERNED THROUGHOUT THE INVESTIGATION.

A MEETING WAS HELD WITH THEM THIS AFTERNOON TO ASCERTAIN THEIR VIEWS ON THE PROVISIONAL FINDINGS AND TO ADVISE THEM ON PROCEDURES AND OPTIONS.

"WE WILL CONSIDER THE WAY AHEAD IN THE LIGHT OF FEEDBACK RECEIVED AND AFTER FURTHER EXAMINATION OF THE REGULATION ON THE IMPOSITION OF PROVISIONAL ANTI-DUMPING DUTIES.

"COMPANIES CAN REST ASSURED THAT THE DEPARTMENT WILL CONTINUE TO DEFEND HONG KONG'S INTERESTS ROBUSTLY AND WILL PURSUE CONCERNS BILATERALLY AND MULTILATERALLY WHERE WARRANTED," MS KWAN SAID.

THE CURRENT CASE CONCERNING THE DISCS WAS INITIATED IN SEPTEMBER 1992. FOUR HONG KONG COMPANIES HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE INVESTIGATION.

THE PROVISIONAL ANTI-DUMPING DUTIES WILL TAKE EFFECT FROM MARCH 12 AND WILL NORMALLY LAST FOUR MONTHS. THEY MAY HOWEVER BE FURTHER EXTENDED FOR TWO MORE MONTHS.

DURING THIS PERIOD, THE COMMISSION WILL FINALISE ITS FINDINGS AND DECIDE IF IT SHOULD RECOMMEND TO THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION THE IMPOSITION OF DEFINITIVE DUTIES.

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN MAKE REPRESENTATIONS TO THE COMMISSION ON THE ANTI-DUMPING ACTION TAKEN DURING THIS FOUR TO SIX MONTHS PERIOD ALTHOUGH THEY NEED TO REGISTER THEIR INTEREST TO DO SO WITHIN THE FIRST MONTH.

- - - - 0 - - - -

SHABBY BUILDING DECLARED DANGEROUS

* * * * *

A BUILDING AND A ROOF STRUCTURE ON CHEUNG CHAU WERE DECLARED DANGEROUS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE BUILDING AUTHORITY.

NOTICES OF INTENTION TO APPLY FOR CLOSURE ORDERS FROM THE HONG KONG DISTRICT COURT ON MAY 11 IN RESPECT OF THE BUILDING AND STRUCTURE LOCATED RESPECTIVELY AT 9 AND 10 SCHOOL ROAD WERE POSTED ON THE PREMISES TODAY.

THE TWO-STOREY BUILDING AT 10 SCHOOL ROAD HAS A CANTILEVERED BALCONY ON THE FIRST FLOOR.

ITS STRUCTURAL TIMBERS AND STAIRCASE ARE IN A DILAPIDATED AND DEFECTIVE CONDITION.

PORTIONS OF THE FLOOR AND THE STAIRCASE HAVE ALREADY FAILED. THE BUILDING IS CONSIDERED TO BE BEYOND ECONOMIC REPAIR.

ATTACHED TO THE BUILDING IS A TEMPORARY STRUCTURE WITH SOME OF THE SUPPORTS BUILT INTO THE MAIN BUILDING.

DEMOLITION OF THE BUILDING WILL RENDER THIS STRUCTURE WITHOUT ADEQUATE SUPPORT.

THEREFORE, THIS STRUCTURE SHOULD ALSO BE CLOSED AND DEMOLISHED AS BEING LIABLE TO BECOME DANGEROUS.

ACCESS TO A STRUCTURE ON THE ROOF OF 9 SCHOOL ROAD IS THROUGH THE ROOF OF 10 SCHOOL ROAD.

THE DEMOLITION OF THE BUILDING AT 10 SCHOOL ROAD WILL RENDER THIS STRUCTURE WITHOUT MEANS OF ESCAPE. THE ROOF STRUCTURE WILL ALSO NEED TO BE DEMOLISHED.

- - - - 0 - - - -

CENTRAL AND WESTERN ENQUIRY CENTRE TO BE REFITTED

* * * * *

THE PUBLIC ENQUIRY SERVICE CENTRE OF THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT OFFICE WILL UNDERGO RENOVATION FROM FRIDAY (MARCH 18) TO MID-MAY, IN ORDER TO SERVE THE PUBLIC IN A BETTER ENVIRONMENT.

DURING THE PERIOD, THE CENTRE WILL MOVE TEMPORARILY TO ROOM 1401, 14TH FLOOR, HARBOUR BUILDING, 38 PIER ROAD, CENTRAL.

IT WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE A FULL RANGE OF SERVICES. THE PUBLIC ENQUIRY TELEPHONE NUMBER WILL REMAIN UNCHANGED ON 852 3002.

- - - - 0 - - - -

HONG KONG MONETARY AUTHORITY
MONEY MARKET OPERATIONS

* * * * *

	\$ MILLION	TIME (HOUR)	CUMULATIVE CHANGE (\$ MILLION)
	-----	-----	-----
OPENING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT	2,950	0930	-406
CLOSING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT	2,345	1000	-206
CHANGE ATTRIBUTABLE TO :		1100	-55
MONEY MARKET ACTIVITY	+50	1200	+50
LAF TODAY	-655	1500	+50
		1600	+50
LAF RATE 2.00 BID/4.00 OFFER	TWI 125.7 *+0.0*	16.3.94	

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 1994

- 16 -

HONG KONG MONETARY AUTHORITY

EF BILLS		EF/NOTES/HONG KONG GOVERNMENT BONDS				
TERMS	YIELD	TERM	ISSUE	COUPON	PRICE	YIELD
1 WEEK	3.72	18 MONTHS	2508	4.625	99.81	4.82
1 MONTH	3.66	21 MONTHS	2511	4.15	98.67	5.04
3 MONTHS	3.78	24 MONTHS	2602	4.40	98.61	5.23
6 MONTHS	4.01	32 MONTHS	3610	4.20	96.84	5.59
12 MONTHS	4.40	35 MONTHS	3701	4.60	97.31	5.71

TOTAL TURNOVER OF BILLS AND BONDS - 13,120 MN

CLOSED 16 MARCH 1994

----- 0 -----