



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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COMPLEMENTARY ROLE FOR CENTRAL POLICY UNIT

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THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE WORK OF THE CENTRAL POLICY UNIT (CPU) WAS DESIGNED TO COMPLEMENT AND SUPPLEMENT THE WORK DONE BY POLICY SECRETARIES, NOT TO REPLACE IT.

SPEAKING IN THE DEBATE ON THE MOTION OF THANKS FOR THE GOVERNOR'S ANNUAL ADDRESS, SIR DAVID SAID THE UNIT WOULD NOT USURP THE ROLE OF THE POLICY SECRETARIES, AND IT WOULD NOT ACT AS A FILTER THROUGH WHICH ALL POLICY PROPOSALS DRAWN UP BY POLICY SECRETARIES WOULD BE PASSED.

"I WOULD INSTEAD EXPECT A CLOSELY COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIP TO DEVELOP BETWEEN THE CPU AND POLICY SECRETARIES," SIR DAVID SAID.

SIR DAVID SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WAS NOW WORKING ON THE DETAILED ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CPU AND MANY POINTS REMAINED TO BE FINALISED.

OUTLINING THE GOVERNMENT'S THINKING ON THE UNIT, SIR DAVID SAID THE CPU WOULD FORM PART OF THE GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT AND WOULD FUNCTION AS SUCH AND IT WOULD BE HOUSED IN THE SECRETARIAT BUILDING.

"IT WILL, HOWEVER, NOT BE A POLICY BRANCH WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR A DEFINED PROGRAMME AREA OF ITS OWN, ITS ROLE WILL BE TO UNDERTAKE IN-DEPTH EXAMINATIONS OF COMPLEX POLICY ISSUES, TO ANALYSE OPTIONS AND TO RECOMMEND SOLUTIONS," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID EXPLAINED THAT THESE ISSUES WOULD BE SPECIFIED ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS.

"THEY ARE LIKELY TO BE ISSUES OF A LONG-TERM, STRATEGIC NATURE, OR ISSUES WHICH CUT ACROSS, OR FALL BETWEEN, THE BOUNDARIES OF SEVERAL DIFFERENT POLICY BRANCHES OR GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

"I WOULD NOT EXPECT THE CPU TO BE INVOLVED IN THE VAST MAJORITY OF POLICY ISSUES WHICH CLEARLY FALL TO BE DEALT WITH BY ONE OR OTHER OF THE POLICY SECRETARIES," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID POINTED OUT THAT FOR THE CPU TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY, IT WOULD NEED TO PULL TOGETHER ALL THE INFORMATION THAT WAS RELEVANT TO THE ISSUE BEING EXAMINED.

"SOME OF THIS INFORMATION WILL HAVE TO BE OBTAINED THROUGH THE UNIT'S OWN RESEARCH, BUT MUCH OF IT WILL NECESSARILY BE DRAWN FROM MATERIAL ALREADY IN THE POSSESSION OF THE RELEVANT POLICY BRANCHES AND DEPARTMENTS.

"I WOULD ALSO EXPECT THAT THE CPU WILL WISH TO SEEK THE VIEWS OF THOSE BRANCHES AND DEPARTMENTS ON SUBJECTS WHICH IMPINGE ON THEIR AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY.

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"AS THE CPU WILL NOT ITSELF BE A POLICY BRANCH OR AN EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT, CLEARLY IT WILL NOT HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTING POLICY," SIR DAVID EXPLAINED.

COMMENTING ON SPECULATION THAT THE CPU MIGHT SOMEHOW USURP THE ROLE OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OR EVEN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, SIR DAVID STRESSED THAT THERE COULD BE NO QUESTION WHATSOEVER OF THAT HAPPENING.

"ALTHOUGH IN THEORY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL IS PURELY ADVISORY, IT IS IN PRACTICE A CORPORATE DECISION-MAKING BODY GIVEN THAT THE GOVERNOR INVARIABLY ACTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COUNCIL'S ADVICE.

"THE CPU IS NOT A DECISION-MAKING BODY. POLICY PROPOSALS EMERGING FROM THE UNIT WILL INITIALLY BE CONSIDERED WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION AND WILL THEN, WHERE APPROPRIATE, BE SUBMITTED TO THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL FOR CONSIDERATION AND DECISION."

SIR DAVID POINTED OUT THAT IF A DECISION WAS TAKEN FOLLOWING THE ADVICE OF THE CPU WHICH REQUIRED THE ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION OR THE ALLOCATION OF PUBLIC FUNDS, THE APPROVAL OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WOULD HAVE TO BE SOUGHT IN THE NORMAL WAY.

AS REGARDS THE ORGANISATION AND STAFFING OF THE CPU, SIR DAVID ENVISAGED THAT THE UNIT WOULD BE ORGANISED IN A FLEXIBLE WAY.

"THERE WILL BE A SMALL CORE OF ABOUT FOUR FULL-TIME MEMBERS WITH A NUMBER OF SUPPORTING STAFF, AND THEY WILL FORM PART OF THE CIVIL SERVICE ALTHOUGH SOME OF THEM WILL PROBABLY BE BROUGHT IN FROM OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT.

"THERE WILL ALSO BE A NUMBER OF PART-TIME MEMBERS, WHO MAY BE DRAWN FROM WITHIN AS WELL AS OUTSIDE THE CIVIL SERVICE. SOME OF THEM WOULD PARTICIPATE REGULARLY IN THE WORK OF THE UNIT WHILE OTHERS WOULD BE BROUGHT IN ON AN AD HOC BASIS.

"THE MEMBERS, BOTH FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME, WILL BE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR," SIR DAVID SAID.

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NEW BRANCH WILL NOT AFFECT MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

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THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, ASSURED MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE MUNICIPAL COUNCILS, AND THE DEGREE OF AUTONOMY THAT THEY ENJOYED WOULD IN NO WAY BE AFFECTED BY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NEW RECREATION AND CULTURE BRANCH.

SPEAKING IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE, SIR DAVID SAID IT WAS GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION THAT THE CREATION OF THE NEW BRANCH WOULD RESULT IN SOME STRENGTHENING OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORT IN CO-ORDINATING THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE VARIOUS BODIES INVOLVED IN THE FIELD OF SPORTS, RECREATION AND CULTURE; AND THESE INCLUDE THE TWO MUNICIPAL COUNCILS.

"BUT THE BASIC REMITS OF THE TWO COUNCILS AND THOSE OF THEIR EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS WILL REMAIN UNCHANGED, AND IN MATTERS CONCERNING SPORTS, RECREATION AND CULTURE THE NEW SECRETARY WILL BE WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE TWO COUNCILS IN MUCH THE SAME WAY AS THE SECRETARY FOR MUNICIPAL SERVICES DOES NOW," SIR DAVID SAID.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE DEPUTY CHIEF SECRETARY, WHOSE POST WOULD BE RETITLED SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS, WOULD TAKE OVER THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAINTAINING DAY-TO-DAY LIAISON WITH THE MUNICIPAL COUNCILS, AND HE HIMSELF WOULD CONTINUE HIS REGULAR CONTACTS WITH THE TWO CHAIRMEN.

AS REGARDS THE OTHER DUTIES CURRENTLY UNDERTAKEN BY THE SECRETARY FOR MUNICIPAL SERVICES, WHOSE POST WOULD BE ABOLISHED UPON THE CREATION OF THE NEW SECRETARY FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE, SIR DAVID SAID THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION WAS TO REALLOCATE THESE TO OTHER EXISTING PARTS OF THE ADMINISTRATION.

"WE SHALL NEED TO DO FURTHER WORK TO SORT OUT THE DETAILS, AND WILL DO SO IN CONSULTATION WITH THE MUNICIPAL COUNCILS," SIR DAVID SAID.

IN REPLY TO POINTS RAISED BY MEMBERS REGARDING THE CREATION OF A NEW POLICY BRANCH TO TAKE SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITY FOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT, SIR DAVID SAID THERE WERE COMPLEX ORGANISATIONAL QUESTIONS INVOLVED AND THESE WERE BEING ADDRESSED IN THE INTERNAL STUDY MENTIONED IN THE GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS.

SIR DAVID NOTED THAT THERE WERE ARGUMENTS FOR INTEGRATING PLANNING AND WORKS UNDER ONE POLICY SECRETARY, THEREBY ENSURING CONSISTENCY OF APPROACH AND REDUCING THE NEED FOR DEPARTMENTS TO BE RESPONSIBLE TO MORE THAN ONE BRANCH.

"BUT THE RESULTANT RANGE OF DUTIES WOULD BE BROAD AND THE BURDEN MIGHT PROVE TOO GREAT FOR A SINGLE SECRETARY TO SHOULDER.

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"THE ALTERNATIVE MIGHT BE TO PLACE PLANNING AND WORKS UNDER TWO SEPARATE SECRETARIES, WHICH WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO ENSURE THAT BOTH ASPECTS RECEIVE THE ATTENTION THEY NEED AT THE SECRETARY LEVEL.

"THIS WOULD, OF COURSE, REQUIRE VERY CLOSE CO-ORDINATION AND CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO SECRETARIES IF IT IS TO WORK," SIR DAVID SAID.

SIR DAVID ADDED THAT HE WAS CONFIDENT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE ABLE TO FINALISE PLANS FOR THE NEW STRUCTURE BY THE END OF THIS YEAR AND IMPLEMENT THEM IN THE EARLY PART OF 1989.

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COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PROMOTION IN CIVIL SERVICE

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THE CIVIL SERVICE HAS NOW A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF REPORTING AND SELECTION DESIGNED TO ENSURE THAT THOSE WITH TALENT RISE TO THE TOP, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE, SIR DAVID SAID ACCELERATED PROMOTION WAS COMMON PLACE AND MANY WERE REACHING THE TOP EARLIER IN THEIR CAREERS.

THE AVERAGE AGE OF POLICY SECRETARIES FOR EXAMPLE HAS DECLINED FROM 56 FIVE YEARS AGO TO 52 AT PRESENT, AND FIVE OUT OF 15 OF THEM ARE NOW UNDER 50.

SIR DAVID DESCRIBED AS "NONSENSE" THE SEEMINGLY WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT PROMOTION IN THE CIVIL SERVICE WAS BASED ON AGE AND LENGTH OF SERVICE RATHER THAN MERIT.

SIR DAVID STRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS AT PAINS TO ENSURE THAT THE SYSTEM WAS AS FAIR AS POSSIBLE.

"THE SELECTION OF OFFICERS CAPABLE OF TAKING ON RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE DIRECTORATE AND REACHING THE MOST SENIOR LEVELS HAS FOR SOME YEARS BEEN BASED ON REGULAR REVIEW EXERCISES CONDUCTED BY THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS IN CONSULTATION WITH THE SECRETARY OF THE CIVIL SERVICE AND THEIR RELATED POLICY SECRETARIES.

"APART FROM IMMEDIATE DIRECTORATE SUCCESSION PLANNING, THE PROCESS INVOLVES "TALENT SPOTTING" FOR THE LONGER TERM AND IDENTIFYING TRAINING REQUIREMENTS TO BRING ON SUITABLE INDIVIDUALS," HE ADDED.

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ON THE SUBJECT OF TRAINING, SIR DAVID POINTED OUT THAT A WIDE RANGE OF COURSES WAS OFFERED INTERNALLY TO MEET VOCATIONAL, PROFESSIONAL, MANAGEMENT AND LANGUAGE NEEDS.

"THE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL SENIOR STAFF COURSE IS NOW TO BECOME A PERMANENT PART OF THE TRAINING SCENE," HE ADDED.

SIR DAVID NOTED THAT NO LESS THAN 18,000 CIVIL SERVANTS ATTENDED EXTERNAL COURSES EACH YEAR, MAINLY IN HONG KONG BUT ALSO IN 100 OR SO CASES, OVERSEAS.

"THE FACT THAT IT COSTS ABOUT \$400 MILLION TO TRAIN CIVIL SERVANTS EACH YEAR INDICATES THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO THIS PROGRAMME," HE SAID.

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FEW RESIGNATIONS OR RETIREMENTS AT TOP LEVEL

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THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THAT IN RECENT YEARS THERE HAD BEEN RELATIVELY FEW RESIGNATIONS OR EARLY RETIREMENTS AT THE TOP LEVEL OF THE CIVIL SERVICE.

SPEAKING IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE, SIR DAVID SAID WHILE RESIGNATIONS AND RETIREMENTS OBVIOUSLY CONTINUED, THE CIVIL SERVICE DID NOT SHARE THE WORST OF THE PROBLEMS OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

"AT THE DIRECTORATE LEVEL, THE PRESENT STRENGTH IS 1,059. THE NUMBER OF RESIGNATIONS AND EARLY RETIREMENTS OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS IS 29 IN 1985/86, 15 IN 1986/87, 23 IN 1987/88 AND 14 SO FAR IN 1988/89.

"AT SENIOR MANAGEMENT/SENIOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL, THE PRESENT STRENGTH IS 1,734 AND THE RESIGNATION AND EARLY RETIREMENT FIGURES ARE 55 IN 1985/86, 50 IN 1986/87, 55 IN 1987/88 AND 30 SO FAR THIS YEAR," SIR DAVID TOLD THE MEETING.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THESE PRODUCED AVERAGE PERCENTAGES OF LESS THAN TWO PER CENT FOR THE DIRECTORATE AND THREE PER CENT FOR THE SENIOR RANKS.

"I AM TOLD THAT THE COMPARABLE FIGURE FOR SENIOR PEOPLE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR IS AT LEAST TEN PER CENT," SIR DAVID REMARKED.

HE SAID THIS WAS NOT TO SAY THE CIVIL SERVICE WAS ESCAPING THE DUAL PRESSURES OF THE VERY COMPETITIVE LABOUR MARKET AND EMIGRATION COMPLETELY.

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HE POINTED OUT THAT DESPITE THE FACT THAT OVERALL WASTAGE IN RECENT YEARS WAS RUNNING AT ONLY ABOUT FOUR PER CENT OF STRENGTH AND RESIGNATIONS ACCOUNT FOR A LITTLE OVER HALF OF THAT, THE GOVERNMENT DID HAVE SOME PROBLEM AREAS.

USING A TEN PER CENT WASTAGE FIGURE AS A RULE OF THUMB, SIR DAVID NOTED THAT THE CIVIL SERVICE'S IDENTIFIABLE PROBLEMS WERE IN SOCIAL WELFARE, MEDICAL AND HEALTH, LEGAL, DATA PROCESSING AND ONE OR TWO OTHER SMALLER GRADES.

"THESE PROBLEMS CLEARLY NEED TO BE TACKLED. WE ALREADY HAVE PROPOSALS TO DEAL WITH SOME OF THEM AND ARE WORKING HARD ON THE OTHERS," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID SAID ANOTHER POSSIBLE WAY TO GAUGE THE MORALE OF THE CIVIL SERVICE MIGHT BE TO EXAMINE THE PERCEPTIONS OF THOSE OUTSIDE IT AND IN PARTICULAR THOSE STARTING A CAREER OR LOOKING FOR A JOB.

"THE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE IS ONE OF THE KEY AREAS TO WATCH IN THIS RESPECT BECAUSE RECRUITS JOINING IT DO SO NOW IN THE CLEAR KNOWLEDGE THAT THEY WILL FORM THE CORE OF THE GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT UP TO 1997 AND BEYOND," SIR DAVID SAID.

IN 1986 THERE WERE 2,696 APPLICATIONS FOR 26 VACANCIES IN THE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE, IN 1987, 3,443 APPLICANTS FOR 33 VACANCIES, IN 1988, 3,155 FOR 27 VACANCIES AND THIS YEAR NO LESS THAN 3,237 HAD APPLIED FOR THE 30 VACANCIES.

"I FIND THESE FIGURES VERY ENCOURAGING INDEED," HE REMARKED.

HOWEVER, SIR DAVID RECOGNISED THAT THERE WERE RECRUITING DIFFICULTIES IN PARTICULAR GRADES.

"STUDENT NURSES, AND COMPUTER PROGRAMMERS FOR EXAMPLE ARE HARD TO COME BY BUT THESE PROBLEMS STEM FROM SUCH FACTORS AS PRESSURES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE AND IT IS CLEAR THEY DO NOT REFLECT BADLY ON THE MORALE OF THE SERVICE AS A WHOLE.

"IN GENERAL, OUR CIVIL SERVICE SEEMS TO BE ONE WHICH CONSIDERABLE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE ARE WILLING, INDEED EAGER, TO JOIN.

"THIS WOULD SEEM TO SUGGEST THAT, FAR FROM BEING AN ORGANISATION WITH NO SPARK AND NO FUTURE, IT IS SEEN AS A GOING CONCERN WITH PLENTY TO OFFER," SIR DAVID SAID.

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STRONG CORPS OF RESILIENT CIVIL SERVANTS

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THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT HE HAD NO DOUBT WHATSOEVER THAT THE CIVIL SERVICE DID HAVE A STRONG CORPS OF BRIGHT ENTHUSIASTIC AND RESILIENT PEOPLE COMING TO THE TOP.

SIR DAVID WAS REPLYING IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE TO QUESTIONS RAISED BY MEMBERS WHETHER HONG KONG HAD ENOUGH YOUNG LEADERS OF QUALITY AND DEDICATION IN THE COMMUNITY TO TAKE IT FORWARD INTO THE NEXT CENTURY.

SIR DAVID, ANSWERING FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE, SAID THE VAST MAJORITY OF THOSE CIVIL SERVANTS WERE COMMITTED TO HONG KONG AND DEDICATED TO SEEING IT THROUGH 1997 AND BEYOND.

"IN PARTICULAR, THE HIGH FLYERS AMONGST THEM ARE ONLY TOO CONSCIOUS OF THE EFFECT THEIR DEPARTURE WOULD HAVE ON THE SERVICE AND INDEED THE COMMUNITY," SIR DAVID SAID.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THESE CIVIL SERVANTS LIKE ALL IN THE SERVICE, EXPECTED CRITICISM ON THEIR PERFORMANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS.

"BUT ATTACKS ON THEIR MOTIVATION AND LOYALTY ARE QUITE ANOTHER MATTER. THEY NEED TO BE ENCOURAGED NOT DOUBTED.

"IN THIS CONTEXT, IT IS WORTH REMEMBERING THAT, HOWEVER THE POLITICAL SYSTEM DEVELOPS HERE, THE WHOLE COMMUNITY, AND THAT INCLUDES THE POLITICIANS, WILL STILL DEPEND UPON THE CIVIL SERVICE AS THE BACKBONE OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF HONG KONG," HE SAID.

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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY A BROAD FIELD

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THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IT IS NOT PRACTICAL TO CENTRALISE THE GOVERNMENT'S OWN ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN ONE SINGLE DEPARTMENT BECAUSE THE SUBJECT IS AN EXTREMELY BROAD FIELD ENCOMPASSING A LARGE NUMBER OF STREAMS AND DISCIPLINES.

"IT IS ALSO A FIELD IN WHICH RAPID ADVANCES ARE MADE, WITH NEW CONCEPTS AND NEW APPLICATIONS EMERGING DAY BY DAY.

"IT IS NO EASY TASK TO CUT THROUGH THE MASS OF INFORMATION AND POSSIBILITIES TO GET AT THE THINGS HONG KONG NEEDS MOST," SIR DAVID TOLD THE COUNCIL IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE.

/SIR DAVID

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SIR DAVID SAID THE REASON FOR SETTING UP THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WAS TO ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO DRAW UPON ALL THE EXPERTISE BOTH FROM WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AND FROM OUTSIDE AND TO IDENTIFY SUFFICIENTLY SPECIFIC AREAS FOR PRIORITY TREATMENT.

"WE LOOK TO THE COMMITTEE TO PRODUCE IDEAS IN THE AREA OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WHICH ARE OF DIRECT AND PRACTICAL RELEVANCE TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HONG KONG, OR WHICH ARE OF POTENTIAL LONG-TERM BENEFIT TO THE ECONOMY, AND TO RECOMMEND SPECIFIC ACTION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION OF THESE IDEAS.

"I AM ENCOURAGED THAT THE COMMITTEE IS PURSUING ITS TASKS VIGOROUSLY," SIR DAVID SAID.

HE SAID THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WAS NOW DEVELOPING, TOGETHER WITH THE ADMINISTRATION, A SPECIFIC WORK PROGRAMME COVERING A FEW KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES WHICH WERE CONSIDERED TO BE OF THE HIGHEST PRIORITY AND IMPORTANCE.

"WE EXPECT THIS PROGRAMME TO BE ROLLED FORWARD ANNUALLY IN THE FUTURE," HE ADDED.

SIR DAVID POINTED OUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISED THAT THERE WAS NEED TO PROVIDE THE COMMITTEE WITH ADEQUATE SUPPORT, IN TERMS BOTH OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND TECHNICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE BACK-UP, TO ENABLE THE COMMITTEE TO UNDERTAKE BASIC RESEARCH, COMMISSION FEASIBILITY STUDIES AND ORGANISE ACTIVITIES.

"WE ARE WORKING HARD ON THIS AND WILL HAVE SOME POSITIVE PROPOSALS TO PUT TO THE COMMITTEE SHORTLY," HE SAID.

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CS THANKS MEMBERS FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, THANKED MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) FOR THEIR THOUGHTFUL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S ANNUAL ADDRESS.

"SPEECHES HAVE VARIED GREATLY IN STYLE, CONTENT AND TONE. BUT WE HAVE COME TO APPRECIATE AND RESPECT THE VARIETY AND DIVERSITY OF VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS CHAMBER AS A REFLECTION OF THOSE HELD IN THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE," SIR DAVID SAID IN HIS CLOSING REMARKS.

"THIS IS WHAT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MORE REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT IS ALL ABOUT."

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SUPPORTING THE MOTION MOVED BY THE SENIOR MEMBER, THE HON ALLEN LEE, "THAT THIS COUNCIL THANKS THE GOVERNOR FOR HIS ADDRESS," SIR DAVID SAID THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH, THOUGH IT WOULD NOT BE DUBBED IN POPULAR JARGON A POLITICAL SPEECH, DID CERTAINLY CARRY A POLITICAL MESSAGE.

"THE MESSAGE THAT THIS GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO GO FULL STEAM AHEAD WITH ITS PLANS FOR THE FUTURE, COMMITTED TO DOING ITS BEST FOR THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG," SIR DAVID SAID.

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PUBLIC EXPENDITURE MUST BE CONSTRAINED

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THE GROWING PRESSURES FOR INCREASED PUBLIC EXPENDITURE ON ALL SIDES, BOTH RECURRENT AND CAPITAL, MUST BE CONSTRAINED WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT'S GUIDELINES, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

LEADING OFF THE OFFICIALS' REPLIES TO POINTS RAISED IN THE DEBATE ON THE MOTION OF THANKS FOR THE GOVERNOR'S ANNUAL ADDRESS, MR JACOBS SAID IT WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY THAT THE GROWTH RATE OF PUBLIC EXPENDITURE SHOULD NOT OUTSTRIP THAT OF THE ECONOMY.

"PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IS NOT DIRECTLY RELATED TO OUR ABILITY TO RAISE REVENUE, BUT RATHER TO THE UNDERLYING PERFORMANCE OF OUR ECONOMY," HE SAID.

MR JACOBS NOTED THAT CIVIL SERVICE PAY COVERED NEARLY 40 PER CENT OF THE RECURRENT EXPENDITURE AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S GUIDELINE FOR THE GROWTH IN THE SIZE OF THE CIVIL SERVICE WAS 2.5 PER CENT PER ANNUM WHICH WAS RELATED TO THE GOVERNMENT'S FAIR SHARE OF THE LABOUR MARKET.

"YET IN THE CURRENT YEAR THE CIVIL SERVICE COULD GROW BY SOME SIX PER CENT, EQUIVALENT TO ABOUT 9,000 POSTS.

"THIS EXCESSIVE GROWTH CANNOT BE PERMITTED TO CONTINUE AND, AS I SAID IN MY BUDGET SPEECH EARLIER THIS YEAR, IT IS MY INTENTION TO SLOW THIS RATE NEXT YEAR AND GET BACK TO OUR GUIDELINE THE FOLLOWING YEAR," MR JACOBS SAID.

NOTING THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN ENCOURAGED TO PROVIDE BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY IN RELATION TO THE SERVICES OFFERED, MR JACOBS SAID: "ON TOP OF ALL THE EXCELLENT EFFORTS MADE SO FAR BY MY COLLEAGUES, I AGREE THAT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE.

/"NOT ONLY

"NOT ONLY BY HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS BUT INCREASINGLY BY SECRETARIES, WHO HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENSURING THAT THE FUNDS THEY ARE ALLOCATED ARE SPENT EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY."

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALREADY SUCCESSFULLY INSTITUTD A NUMBER OF ONGOING FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REFORMS DESIGNED TO ENHANCE EFFICIENCY AND PRODUCTIVITY.

"THE FOCUS WILL CONTINUE TO BE ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF OUR PERFORMANCE IN THE DELIVERY OF SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY THROUGH THE ADOPTION OF MODERN FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES," MR JACOBS SAID.

"THIS BRINGS ME TO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ON THE ONE HAND THE GOVERNMENT, AND ON THE OTHER THE VARIOUS AGENCIES, INCLUDING STATUTORY AUTHORITIES, WHICH DELIVER SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT.

"I REFER NOT ONLY TO SUBVENTED ORGANISATIONS, SUCH AS THOSE IN THE MEDICAL AND EDUCATIONAL FIELDS, BUT ALSO TO SUCH BODIES AS THE TRADE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, THE HONG KONG TOURIST ASSOCIATION, AND TO COMMERCIAL ORGANISATIONS SUCH AS THE KOWLOON - CANTON RAILWAY AND THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY," HE SAID.

MR JACOBS SAID ONCE THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY WAS ESTABLISHED, MORE THAN 40 PER CENT OF THE SERVICES DELIVERED TO THE PUBLIC WOULD BE PROVIDED BY AGENCIES AND NOT BY THE CIVIL SERVICE.

"IT IS INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT THEREFORE THAT GOVERNMENT SHOULD FORMALISE ITS POSITION REGARDING THESE AGENCIES," HE SAID.

THIS WOULD INVOLVE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PROPER FINANCIAL RELATIONSHIP COVERING MATTERS SUCH AS THE GOVERNMENT'S FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION, APPROVALS FOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PROGRAMMES, DIVIDEND POLICIES AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES, MR JACOBS NOTED.

MR JACOBS POINTED OUT THAT THIS DID NOT MEAN GREATER GOVERNMENT CONTROL OVER THE MANAGEMENT AND DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS OF THESE BODIES.

"WHERE WE HAVE TAKEN THE VIEW THAT CERTAIN PUBLIC SERVICES CAN, FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER, BE BETTER PROVIDED OUTSIDE THE CIVIL SERVICE, IT IS OUR INTENTION THAT THE AGENCIES CONCERNED SHOULD GET ON WITH THE JOB WHICH HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED TO THEM. WE WILL NOT INTERFERE," HE SAID.

IN RESPONSE TO CONCERNS EXPRESSED ABOUT THE LOOSENING OF CONTROL, MR JACOBS SAID: "I ACCEPT THAT IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT THE AGENCIES SHOULD CONTINUE TO OPERATE WITHIN A BROAD FRAMEWORK ESTABLISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

"A FRAMEWORK WHICH SETS OUT CLEARLY THE OBJECTIVES AND THE NATURE OF THE FINANCIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE AGENCIES CONCERNED AND THE GOVERNMENT."

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ADEQUATE CHECKS AND BALANCES

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IN VESTING POWERS IN THE NEW SECURITIES AND FUTURES COMMISSION, THE GOVERNMENT WILL ENSURE THAT THERE ARE ADEQUATE CHECKS AND BALANCES, BUT WITHOUT UNDERMINING THE COMMISSION'S REGULATORY AUTHORITY, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIER'S JACOBS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR JACOBS SAID THAT IN REFORMING A REGULATORY SYSTEM FOR THE SECURITIES MARKETS, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SEEK TO STRIKE THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN THE NEED FOR ADEQUATE POWERS TO COMBAT FRAUD AND MARKET ABUSES AND THE NEED TO PRESERVE CIVIL LIBERTIES; AND BETWEEN THE DESIRE TO ENCOURAGE THE GROWTH OF MARKETS AND THE NEED TO ENSURE THAT THEY DID NOT GET OUT OF CONTROL.

"AS MEMBERS HAVE RIGHTLY POINTED OUT, WE MUST AVOID OVER-REGULATION," HE SAID IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE.

OTHERWISE WE WOULD STIFLE THE VIGOUR AND INNOVATION OF OUR MARKETS.

"THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMISSION IS ESSENTIAL IF WE ARE TO MAINTAIN THE MOMENTUM OF IMPLEMENTING THE REFORM PROPOSALS PUT FORWARD BY THE SECURITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE," HE SAID, ADDING THAT TOP PRIORITY HAD BEEN ACCORDED TO THE DRAFTING OF LEGISLATION TO BRING THE NEW AUTHORITY INTO EARLY EXISTENCE.

"IN VIEW OF THE VERY TIGHT TIMETABLE, WE BEGAN CONSULTING MARKET ORGANISATIONS, PROFESSIONAL BODIES AND ADVISORY COMMITTEES ON THE MAJOR DRAFT PROVISIONS OF THE BILL AT AN EARLY STAGE, NOTWITHSTANDING THE FACT THAT CONSULTATION ON THESE PROVISIONS WITHIN GOVERNMENT WAS STILL CONTINUING."

REFERRING TO A MISTAKEN BELIEF THAT THERE HAD BEEN A POLARISATION OF VIEWS, MR JACOBS EMPHASISED THAT THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS SO FAR HAD BEEN MOST HELPFUL IN ENABLING THE GOVERNMENT TO GAUGE MARKET RESPONSES TOWARDS MAJOR LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS WHILST THEY WERE STILL IN A FORMATIVE STAGE.

"THE PROCESS OF CONSULTATION IS ESSENTIAL AND IT IS CONTINUING.

"IT REMAINS OUR AIM TO ATTRACT A BROAD CONSENSUS OF SUPPORT FOR THE PROPOSALS. I SHALL IN DUE COURSE BE PUTTING BEFORE THIS COUNCIL," HE SAID.

TURNING TO APPEAL PROCEDURES UNDER THE BANKING ORDINANCE, MR JACOBS SAID HE HAD ASKED THE BANKING ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THE DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE SUBJECT.

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HE NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVED THAT THE IDEA OF AN INDEPENDENT TRIBUNAL TO HEAR APPEALS UNDER THE BANKING ORDINANCE WOULD PRESENT A NUMBER OF DIFFICULTIES.

"AN INDEPENDENT TRIBUNAL WOULD NORMALLY BE EMPOWERED TO HEAR AN APPEAL DE NOVO," HE SAID.

"IT COULD REVERSE A DECISION BASED ON SOUND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS. THIS COULD RESULT IN THE WHOLE POLICY BEING CHANGED.

"SUCH A TRIBUNAL WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO POSSESS FULL BACKGROUND INFORMATION IN RELATION TO THE FORMATION OF THE POLICY CONCERNED, AND MIGHT NOT BE IN A POSITION TO PERCEIVE THE WIDER IMPLICATIONS OF ITS OWN DECISION."

HOWEVER, MR JACOBS SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALWAYS PREPARED TO CONSIDER THE VIEWS OF THE BANKING INDUSTRY ON MATTERS OF THIS KIND, AND THE REVIEW WAS MADE IN RESPONSE TO A RECENT STUDY BY THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION OF BANKS.

"THIS REVIEW WILL ALSO COVER THE PROCEDURES CONCERNING APPEALS FROM DECISIONS ON CAPITAL ADEQUACY RATIOS," HE CONTINUED.

"IN RELATION TO CAPITAL ADEQUACY RATIOS, THE BANKING ORDINANCE PROVISIONS REQUIRING MINIMUM PRUDENT LEVELS OF CAPITAL CAME INTO FORCE ON SEPTEMBER 1 THIS YEAR.

"NO AUTHORISED INSTITUTION HAS INDICATED ANY WISH TO APPEAL AGAINST THE MINIMUM CAPITAL ADEQUACY RATIOS ASSIGNED."

AS TO CONCERNS THAT THE CAPITAL ADEQUACY RATIOS IN HONG KONG MIGHT BE SET ABOVE INTERNATIONAL LEVELS, THEREBY PUTTING HONG KONG BANKS AT A DISADVANTAGE, MR JACOBS SAID: "THERE IS AS YET NO INTERNATIONAL STANDARD, IN FORCE, BUT EVEN IF THERE WERE AND OUR LEVELS WERE SOMEWHAT HIGHER, I DO NOT THINK THAT WE SHOULD BE UNDULY WORRIED."

AS AN INTERNATIONAL BANKING CENTRE, HONG KONG HAD MUCH TO GAIN FROM SHOWING THE WORLD THAT ITS BANKS HAD THE ABILITY TO MEASURE UP TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS, MR JACOBS ADDED.

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FIGHT AGAINST PROTECTIONISM CONTINUES

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CONTINUED EFFORTS WOULD BE MADE TO FIGHT TRADE PROTECTIONISM AND TO PROMOTE HONG KONG'S EXPORTS, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE POLICY DEBATE, MR JACOBS SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE DANGERS OF ANY RENEWED ATTEMPT BY THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO PASS PROTECTIONIST TEXTILES LEGISLATION.

HE SAID THE CURRENT TREND IN HONG KONG'S TRADE WITH THE UNITED STATES WAS HELPFUL IN THAT THE PROPORTION OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS TO THIS MARKET HAD CONTINUED TO DECLINE, FROM 44 PER CENT IN 1985 TO 38 PER CENT IN THE FIRST HALF OF 1987, AND TO 33 PER CENT IN THE FIRST HALF OF THIS YEAR.

"PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE UNITED STATES TRADE DEFICIT WITH HONG KONG DECLINED BY A DRAMATIC 26 PER CENT IN THE FIRST EIGHT MONTHS OF THIS YEAR AS AGAINST THE SAME PERIOD IN 1987," MR JACOBS SAID.

"IN RELATION TO OUR TRADING POSITION GENERALLY, WE ARE ALSO MONITORING CAREFULLY THE PROGRESS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SINGLE MARKET IN 1992," HE CONTINUED.

MR JACOBS SAID THE FACT THAT MORE THAN 400 PARTICIPANTS ATTENDED A MAJOR CONFERENCE ON THIS ISSUE IN HONG KONG LAST MONTH WAS CLEAR EVIDENCE OF THE INTEREST THAT DEVELOPMENTS IN EUROPE WERE AROUSING IN THE TERRITORY.

"WHILE THERE ARE POTENTIAL PROBLEMS INVOLVED, WE ARE INCLINED AT THIS STAGE TO REGARD THE SINGLE MARKET AS A POSITIVE STEP WHICH WILL PROVIDE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR EXPORTERS," HE NOTED.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID THE TRADE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN THE EXPANSION OF HONG KONG EXPORTS, AND THAT THE TDC HAD CONTINUED TO HAVE CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS IN DEVELOPING NEW MARKETS.

"COMPLEMENTING THESE TRADE PROMOTION EFFORTS IS THE WORK OF THE TRADE DEPARTMENT, WHICH SEEKS TO REMOVE BARRIERS IN OVERSEAS MARKETS IN ORDER TO PROMOTE A FREE INTERNATIONAL TRADING SYSTEM.

"PARTICULAR EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE TO ACHIEVE POSITIVE RESULTS IN THE GATT'S URUGUAY ROUND," MR JACOBS SAID.

COMMENTING ON THE CONTINUING GROWTH OF HONG KONG'S ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA, MR JACOBS SAID THIS WAS CLEARLY A CRUCIAL AND WELCOME FACTOR IN THE PROGRESSIVE RESTRUCTURING OF THE TERRITORY'S ECONOMY.

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"CHINA IS NOW OUR LARGEST TRADING PARTNER, WITH PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE IN OUR RE-EXPORT TRADE," THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID.

MR JACOBS SAID HE WHOLEHEARTEDLY AGREED WITH REMARKS THAT THERE WAS A NEED TO INCREASE THE COMPETITIVENESS AND TECHNOLOGICAL LEVEL OF HONG KONG'S MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY.

"MUCH IS BEING ACHIEVED THROUGH THE WORKING OF MARKET FORCES, BUT THE ADMINISTRATION IS ALSO LENDING SIGNIFICANT ASSISTANCE IN THIS REGARD," THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID.

"AUTOMATION AND THE USE OF HIGHER TECHNOLOGY IS CONTRIBUTING TO THE UPGRADING OF OUR INDUSTRIAL SECTOR. AND WE ARE ENJOYING THE BENEFITS OF A CONTINUING STREAM OF NEW HIGHER TECHNOLOGY INVESTMENTS FROM OVERSEAS, PARTICULARLY FROM THE U.S.A. AND JAPAN," HE ADDED.

MR JACOBS NOTED THAT WHILE INITIATIVES ALREADY UNDER CONSIDERATION, SUCH AS THE PROPOSALS FOR A TECHNOLOGY CENTRE AND A THIRD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE, HAD BEEN WELCOMED, THERE WERE INEVITABLY CALLS FOR MORE TO BE DONE.

"OF COURSE, WE ARE IN A DYNAMIC SITUATION AND I ACCEPT THAT WE CAN NEVER AFFORD TO REST ON OUR LAURELS IF WE ARE TO REMAIN COMPETITIVE," HE SAID.

HE AGREED THAT MAXIMUM USE SHOULD BE MADE OF PRIVATE REPRESENTATIVES ON BODIES SUCH AS THE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD AND THE PRODUCTIVITY COUNCIL, BOTH OF WHOM PLAYED KEY ROLES IN HONG KONG'S INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE AN EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE.

"IT IS OF IMPORTANCE THAT WE SECURE THE RIGHT INPUT, AND TO THIS END WE HAVE DECIDED TO RESTORE FORMAL REPRESENTATION OF THE PRINCIPAL TRADE AND INDUSTRIAL ORGANISATIONS ONTO THE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD," SAID MR JACOBS.

"IT IS WORTH UNDERLINING THE EXTENT OF OUR COMMITMENT OF RESOURCES TO THE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME," HE ADDED.

"IN RESPECT OF THE PRODUCTIVITY COUNCIL ALONE, THE GOVERNMENT SUBVENTION HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED, FROM \$37 MILLION IN 1985-86 TO \$91 MILLION IN THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR," HE SAID.

"BUT WE NEED TO LOOK IMAGINATIVELY AT PROBLEM AREAS IN ORDER TO SEE HOW THEY CAN BE REMOVED OR REDUCED," MR JACOBS SAID.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT WAS BEING DONE WAS IN THE FIELD OF MANPOWER TRAINING AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES.

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HE POINTED OUT THAT A WORKING GROUP, CHAIRED BY THE DIRECTOR OF INDUSTRY, WOULD SOON COMPLETE ITS CONSIDERATION OF HOW BEST TO ENSURE THAT TECHNOLOGISTS COULD BE KEPT UP TO DATE WITH NEW DEVELOPMENTS.

IN ADDITION, MR JACOBS SAID, THE PROPOSED QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME WAS YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE WAY IN WHICH NEW INITIATIVES WERE BEING FORMULATED TO UPGRADE INDUSTRY.

"WE ARE FIRMLY COMMITTED TO CONTINUING THIS PROCESS, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR," HE SAID.

MR JACOBS SAID WITH THE ECONOMY OPERATING CLOSE TO CAPACITY, INFLATION HAD BECOME ONE OF THE MAJOR CONCERNS.

"THERE ARE AS YET FEW SIGNS THAT THE PRESSURE IS EASING," HE SAID.

"PAINFUL THOUGH INFLATION IS, THERE ARE UNFORTUNATELY RELATIVELY FEW POLICY OPTIONS OPEN TO A SMALL EXTERNALLY ORIENTED ECONOMY, WHICH HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY INTERDEPENDENT WITH OTHER ECONOMIES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD," HE ADDED.

"ALTHOUGH IN THE SHORT TERM I HAVE LITTLE TO OFFER BY WAY OF COMFORT, THE NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS WILL TAKE PLACE, PROBABLY REFLECTED INITIALLY BY A SLOWER GROWTH RATE IN OUR ECONOMY THAN WE HAVE EXPERIENCED IN THE RECENT PAST.

"THEREAFTER, I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT HONG KONG WILL AGAIN ENJOY STRONG GROWTH AND THAT THIS WILL HAPPEN WITHOUT OUR MAKING FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN OUR ECONOMIC POLICIES," MR JACOBS SAID.

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AIRPORT FACILITIES CONTINUOUSLY BEING UPGRADED

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FACILITIES AT KAI TAK AIRPORT ARE CONTINUOUSLY BEING UPGRADED AND IMPROVED TO KEEP PACE WITH DEMAND, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S ANNUAL ADDRESS, MR JACOBS SAID CONSULTANTS AND JUST SUBMITTED THEIR REPORT ON KAI TAK'S ULTIMATE CAPACITY AND DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL.

TAKEN TOGETHER, THE CONSULTANTS' RECOMMENDATIONS SHOULD ENABLE KAI TAK TO MEET DEMAND WELL INTO THE 1990'S, HE SAID.

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"THEY HAVE CONCLUDED THAT DESPITE SITE CONSTRAINTS, IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO IMPROVE THE AIRPORT FACILITIES TO ACCOMMODATE FURTHER GROWTH.

"THE CONSULTANTS' REPORT INCLUDES RECOMMENDATIONS IN RELATION TO THE ENHANCEMENT TO THE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL SYSTEM, THE EXPANSION OF AIRCRAFT PARKING FACILITIES AND MEASURES TO OPTIMISE USAGE OF THE SINGLE RUNWAY SYSTEM."

MR JACOBS NOTED THAT AIRPORT DEVELOPMENTS CONSTITUTED A SUBJECT OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO HONG KONG, AND SEVERAL MEMBERS HAD COMMENTED ON THE NEED TO IMPROVE FACILITIES AT KAI TAK AND TO CONSTRUCT A REPLACEMENT AIRPORT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

"WE MUST, OF COURSE, ENSURE THAT HONG KONG HAS THE NECESSARY AVIATION INFRASTRUCTURE TO UNDERPIN OUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT," HE SAID.

BUT HE STRESSED OUT THAT A REPLACEMENT AIRPORT WOULD BE THE BIGGEST SINGLE PROJECT EVER UNDERTAKEN IN HONG KONG, AND IT WOULD AFFECT HONG KONG'S DEVELOPMENT WELL INTO THE 21ST CENTURY.

"WE HAVE THEREFORE EMBARKED UPON A WELL CO-ORDINATED SERIES OF DETAILED STUDIES TO ENABLE US TO SITE AND FUND THE AIRPORT TO HONG KONG'S GREATEST ADVANTAGE," MR JACOBS SAID.

STUDIES TO EVALUATE THE RELATIVE ADVANTAGES OF SITING A REPLACEMENT AIRPORT AT CHEK LAP KOK OR IN THE WESTERN HARBOUR AREA WERE PROCEEDING WELL AND ON SCHEDULE.

"THE VARIOUS STUDIES WILL BE DRAWN TOGETHER FOR EVALUATION BY THE THIRD QUARTER OF 1989.

"WE SHOULD THEN HAVE ALL THE NECESSARY FACTS AND FIGURES TO ENABLE US TO TAKE A DECISION BEFORE THE END OF 1989," HE SAID.

THE GOVERNMENT NEEDED TO BE SATISFIED THAT THE PROJECT WAS FINANCIALLY AND ECONOMICALLY VIABLE.

THERE SHOULD BE AMPLE SCOPE FOR PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION, BUT MUCH WOULD DEPEND ON THE FINANCING STRATEGIES AND THE INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS ADOPTED.

"WE ARE MAKING GOOD PROGRESS, BUT GIVEN THE MAGNITUDE OF THE TASK AND ITS FAR REACHING IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ECONOMY, IT IS ONLY RIGHT THAT WE EXERCISE CARE. NO ONE WOULD EXPECT OTHERWISE," MR JACOBS ADDED.

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WHITE PAPER ON POLLUTION OUT IN JULY

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THE GOVERNMENT WILL PRODUCE BY JULY 1989 A WHITE PAPER ON POLLUTION, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE, MR BARNES SAID THIS WILL BE A STATEMENT OF INTENT WHICH WILL SPELL OUT GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGIES, OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS, WITH A TIME-TABLE FOR ACHIEVING THEM.

IT WILL COVER THE WHOLE SPECTRUM OF POLLUTION: AIR NOISE, WATER AND WASTES, HE SAID.

"I AM CONFIDENT THAT WE CAN PRODUCE THE RIGHT KIND OF PLANS AND TARGETS, BUT CO-OPERATION AND COMMITMENT WILL DECIDE WHETHER WE SUCCEED OR FAIL IN THEM," HE SAID.

HE SAID CO-OPERATION MEANT CO-OPERATION NOT ONLY FROM MAJOR POLLUTORS IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHOSE EFFLUENTS, WASTES, AIR EMISSIONS AND NOISE LEVELS WERE UNACCEPTABLE; BUT ALSO CO-OPERATION AND CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT BRANCHES AND DEPARTMENTS, AND FROM EVERY MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY.

ALTHOUGH PUBLIC AWARENESS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND SUPPORT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMES WERE GROWING, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO UPGRADE POLLUTION EDUCATION AND AWARENESS PROGRAMMES, MR BARNES SAID, NOTING THAT FINANCIAL PROVISION FOR THIS PURPOSE HAD BEEN INCREASED CONSIDERABLY.

"WE MUST ALSO DO ALL WE CAN TO HELP POLLUTING INDUSTRIES WHENEVER POSSIBLE TO ADJUST THEIR TECHNOLOGY AND METHODS, SO THAT THEY CAN CONTINUE TO PLAY THEIR PART IN THE ECONOMY WITHOUT POLLUTING THE ENVIRONMENT," HE SAID.

"COMMITMENT MEANS THE FIRM RESOLVE TO FINANCE AND IMPLEMENT OUR PLANS, OVERCOMING THE FRUSTRATIONS AND SET-BACKS WHICH WERE BOUND TO OCCUR, AND DRIVING TOWARDS OUR OVERALL OBJECTIVES," MR BARNES SAID.

"BUT MOST OF ALL, WE WILL NEED COMMITMENT TO THE ENVIRONMENT FROM THIS COUNCIL IN CREATING EFFECTIVE AND POSITIVE LEGISLATION," HE ADDED.

WHILE THE WHITE PAPER IS BEING PREPARED, THE ADMINISTRATION IS COMMITTED TO THE PROGRAMMES OF EXPENDITURE AND LEGISLATION WHICH THE GOVERNOR OUTLINED IN HIS POLICY SPEECH, MR BARNES SAID.

"IN THIS MASSIVE CRASH PROGRAMME OF INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT ON WHICH WE WILL BE SET, THERE WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT CHOICES REGARDING FUNDS AND LAND RESOURCES BETWEEN ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS," HE ADDED.

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"IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, IF ALL OUR PROFESSIONS OF INTENT ARE TO MEAN ANYTHING, WE CANNOT, AS PERHAPS WE AND MOST OTHER COUNTRIES HAVE DONE IN THE PAST, ALLOW EXPENDITURE AND LAND ALLOCATION IN SUPPORT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ONLY A RESIDUAL PLACE AFTER WE HAVE PROVIDED FOR OUR ECONOMIC AND OTHER SOCIAL NEEDS," HE SAID.

"WE HAVE WATCHED YEAR AFTER YEAR THE INCREASE OF AFFLUENCE OF OUR SOCIETY MARCHING IN PARALLEL WITH A DECLINE OF OUR AIR AND WATER AND GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS, ASSUMING THAT WE COULD SOMEHOW CATCH UP ON THESE STANDARDS WHEN WE HAD FINISHED OUR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRAMMES.

"OF COURSE IN REALITY WE WILL NEVER FINISH THESE PROGRAMMES, AND WE HAVE TO ACCEPT IN OUR PLANNING AND DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES THAT THE PRESERVATION OF THE HONG KONG ENVIRONMENT HAS TO BE GIVEN AN EQUAL PLACE WITH THEM," MR BARNES SAID.

"IN SOME CASES, AS IN CRITICAL LAND ALLOCATIONS, IT WILL NEED TO BE GIVEN PRIORITY," HE ADDED.

"FOR IT IS NO USE PUTTING ALL OUR TIME, EFFORT AND MONEY INTO PLANNING OUR FUTURE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE, IF AT THE END OF THE DAY, WE FINISH UP WITH AN ENVIRONMENT THAT NOBODY WANTS TO LIVE OR WORK IN OR WHICH MAKES THEM ILL," MR BARNES SAID.

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DEVELOPMENTAL, ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS INTERDEPENDENT

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THE MASSIVE INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION AND THE REVIEW OF THE TOWN PLANNING ORDINANCE COVER VIRTUALLY EVERY CORNER OF THE TERRITORY AND ARE TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON EACH OTHER TO PRODUCE BEST RESULTS.

THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THIS TODAY (WEDNESDAY), IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE.

"FOR INSTANCE, THE PORT AREA AND THE METROPLAN AREA OVERLAP, AND ARE IN SOME CASES COMPETITORS FOR LAND," MR BARNES SAID.

"THE REMOVAL OF THE AIRPORT WOULD PROVIDE THE LARGEST SINGLE OPPORTUNITY FOR LAND FORMATION FOR IMPROVEMENT OF THE KOWLOON ENVIRONMENT, AND FOR COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL, HOUSING AND OTHER USES, AS WELL AS PROVIDING ONE MAJOR OPTION FOR PORT DEVELOPMENT."

MR BARNES SAID THE PORT AND AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (PADS) STUDIES WERE PROGRESSING VERY WELL AND WERE ON SCHEDULE.

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"IN THE GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF THREE BASIC SCENARIOS, THAT IS, WITH KAI TAK AIRPORT RETAINED, A NEW AIRPORT AT CHEK LAP KOK AND A NEW AIRPORT IN THE GENERAL AREA EAST OF LANTAU ISLAND, THE PADS CONSULTANTS HAVE PRODUCED A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT OPTIONS ON PORT DEVELOPMENT.

"THESE OPTIONS WILL BE PROGRESSIVELY REFINED DURING THE NEXT NINE MONTHS AND BY THE END OF NEXT YEAR DECISIONS ON THE AIRPORT AND PORT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY WILL HAVE BEEN TAKEN," HE SAID.

REFERRING TO THE SUB-REGIONAL PLANNING STUDIES COVERING HONG KONG, KOWLOON AND TSUEN WAN UNDER THE METROPLAN, MR BARNES SAID IT HAD BECOME INCREASINGLY CLEAR THAT SUCH A STRATEGY WAS VITALLY NECESSARY.

THIS WAS SO IN VIEW OF THE OVERALL PATTERN OF CHANGE WHICH WILL BE PRODUCED BY THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PADS, THE MAJOR URBAN RECLAMATIONS, REDEVELOPMENT BY THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION AND OTHERS OF OBSOLETE AREAS OF PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT AND OF THE OLDER PUBLIC HOUSING ESATES BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY.

"ALSO, METROPLAN IS ABOUT THE ONLY MEANS BY WHICH WE CAN GIVE ANY HOPE OF REALISATION TO OUR PLANNING OF THE TRANSPORT SYSTEM AFTER THE PERIOD COVERED BY THE COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORT STUDY 2 AND OF THE UPGRADING OF THE GENERAL URBAN ENVIRONMENT.

"SO THE METROPLAN STUDY, WHICH WE INITIATED PRIMARILY FOR URBAN RENEWAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT REASONS, HAS NECESSARILY BECOME STRATEGIC AS WELL," MR BARNES SAID.

HE ADDED THAT THE METROPLAN WAS EXCEPTIONALLY COMPLEX AS ITS IMPLEMENTATION WOULD INVOLVE ENVIRONMENTAL AND TOWN PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS, EXTENSIVE CONSULTATION, LAND ADMINISTRATION AND CO-ORDINATION OF THE REDEVELOPMENT PLANS OF THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION AND THE HOUSING AUTHORITY IN A HEAVILY POPULATED AREA.

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NEW LEGISLATION ON TOWN PLANNING

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PROPOSALS FOR NEW DRAFT LEGISLATION ON TOWN PLANNING IS EXPECTED TO BE FINALISED IN APRIL NEXT YEAR, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR BARNES SAID ONE OF THE REASONS WHY THE PRESENT TOWN PLANNING ORDINANCE NEEDED REVISION WAS THAT IT MADE NO PROVISION FOR THE PREPARATION OF PLANS FOR OR OTHER CONTROLS ON RURAL LAND USES.

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"BUT IT IS NOT THE ONLY REASON," HE SAID IN THE POLICY DEBATE.

"THE TOWN PLANNING ORDINANCE IS ESSENTIALLY A VEHICLE FOR PRODUCING OUTLINE ZONING PLANS FOR URBANISED AREAS, AND, ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN INGENUOUSLY AMENDED TO BRING INTO EFFECT A RUDIMENTARY PLANNING PERMISSION SYSTEM, IT IS STILL FAR FROM WHAT IS NOW NEEDED TO PROVIDE FOR EFFECTIVE PLANNING IN THE TOWN AND COUNTRY."

MR BARNES NOTED THAT AMONG THE MORE SIGNIFICANT FEATURES OF THE PROPOSALS FOR NEW DRAFT LEGISLATION WOULD BE THE EXTENSION OF TOWN PLANNING TO COVER THE WHOLE TERRITORY.

THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT ONLY HAVE A FULLER CONTROL OF THE DEVELOPED AREAS, BUT WOULD HAVE POWERS TO ASSESS AND CONTROL ENVIRONMENTALLY SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS IN ALL AREAS.

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RURAL PLANNING AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY TO BE DISCUSSED

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THE DIFFICULTIES AND MANY OTHER ASPECTS OF THE RURAL PLANNING AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY WOULD HAVE TO BE DISCUSSED BY A WORKING PARTY PRIOR TO A MORE GENERAL CONSULTATION.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DURING THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR BARNES SAID RURAL PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS WERE INSEPARABLE ENTITIES OF THE STRATEGY.

"WITHOUT EFFECTIVE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL POLICIES TO PROVIDE A RATIONAL BASE FOR EFFECTIVE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN THE RURAL AREAS, THE ACCELERATION OF INFRASTRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMMES WILL MERELY OPEN UP LARGER TRACTS OF RURAL LAND FOR INDISCRIMINATE USES AND AGGRAVATE THE PROBLEM OF URBAN SPRAWL AND POLLUTION IN THE COUNTRYSIDE."

HE SAID THE GREATEST BENEFITS TO BE GAINED FROM THE STRATEGY WERE TO PROVIDE A POSITIVE AND REALISTIC FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT, TO HELP TO CONTROL POLLUTION AND TO PREVENT THE ENCROACHMENT OF INCOMPATIBLE ACTIVITIES ON PEOPLE'S NORMAL LIVES, TO REDUCE FLOODING AND TO FACILITATE THE PROVISION OF TRANSPORT TO THE VILLAGES.

HOWEVER, MR BARNES POINTED OUT THAT THERE WERE SOME MAIN DIFFICULTIES IN THE STRATEGY.

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THESE INCLUDED THE ACCEPTANCE BY RURAL LAND-OWNERS THAT PLANNING DID NOT NECESSARILY DIVIDE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES EQUALLY.

"THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF RESUMPTION COMPENSATION WHICH WAS RELATED TO URBAN DEVELOPMENT EXPECTATIONS IN THE NEW TOWNS COULD WELL SWALLOW UP MOST OF THE FUNDS WHICH GOVERNMENT WOULD WISH TO DEVOTE TO IMPROVEMENTS.

"THE FLATNESS OF MUCH OF THE AREA WOULD IN MANY CASES MAKE SEWERAGE RELYING ON GRAVITY IMPOSSIBLE AND REQUIRE PUMPED SYSTEMS AND MAKING ADEQUATE STAFF RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR THE WORK.

"SO THESE AND MANY OTHER ASPECTS OF THE STRATEGY WILL HAVE TO BE DISCUSSED IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL WITH THOSE AFFECTED BEFORE THE MIDDLE OF NEXT YEAR, AND I HAVE IN MIND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT WORKING PARTY INVOLVING BOTH MEMBERS OF THE TOWN PLANNING BOARD AND THE HEUNG YEE KUK TO DISCUSS THEM PRIOR TO A MORE GENERAL CONSULATION," MR BARNES SAID.

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CAREFUL WATCH ON LABOUR SITUATION

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THERE IS NO NEED FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE DRASTIC ACTION TO EASE A LABOUR SHORTAGE IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, BUT THE GOVERNMENT WILL WATCH THE SITUATION CAREFULLY AND LOOK VERY SERIOUSLY AT THE RESOURCES WHICH WILL BE NEEDED FOR FUTURE INFRASTRUCTURAL PROGRAMMES.

THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THIS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE.

A RECENTLY PUBLISHED CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT SURVEY SHOWED A 20 PER CENT LABOUR VACANCY RATE ON HOUSING AUTHORITY CONTRACT SITES, WHILE THE LABOUR VACANCY RATE FOR GOVERNMENT PROJECTS WAS 10 PER CENT AND THE VACANCY RATES FOR THE PROJECTS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR WAS ONLY 3 PER CENT, HE SAID.

THE PRIVATE SECTOR WAS FINANCING ABOUT TWO THIRDS OF \$30 BILLION BEING SPENT ON BUILDINGS AND CIVIL ENGINEERING CONTRACTS THIS YEAR.

MR BARNES SAID A MORE RECENT SURVEY HAD BEEN CARRIED OUT BY THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT, AND ALTHOUGH THE RESULTS WERE STILL COMING IN, THE INDICATIONS WERE THAT THE SITUATION WAS ABOUT THE SAME.

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RATES FOR INCREASE IN BOTH THE TENDER PRICES AND LABOUR AND MATERIAL COSTS AND FOR THE GOVERNMENT AND THE HOUSING AUTHORITY HAD SLOWED DOWN. THERE WAS NO NEED FOR DRASTIC ACTION NOW, HE SAID.

MR BARNES ALSO SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD THROUGHOUT THE YEAR HAD A NUMBER OF MEETINGS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TO DEVISE THE BEST WAY TO IMPORT LABOUR FOR CONSTRUCTION.

"FOLLOWING THESE MEETINGS, A DETAILED BUT LIMITED SCHEME FOR THE IMPORTATION OF LABOUR FOR THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY WAS DRAWN UP. IT WAS NOT INTRODUCED BECAUSE IT WOULD HAVE HAD SERIOUS POLICY IMPLICATIONS IN OTHER AREAS," MR BARNES SAID.

HE SAID HE WAS CONSCIOUS OF PUBLIC FEELING ABOUT HOLES IN THE ROADS AND PAVEMENTS, AND HE HAD SPECIFICALLY ASKED FOR AN EXAMINATION OF PRICING SYSTEM FOR ROAD EXCAVATIONS, WITH A VIEW TO MAKING A PRESENTATION EARLY NEXT YEAR TO THE OMELCO LANDS AND WORKS PANEL ON THE WHOLE ROAD OPENING ISSUE.

MR BARNES ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE LIMITED SUPPLIES OF HIGH GRADE OFFICE ACCOMMODATION EXPECTED TO ENTER THE MARKET IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS AND THE EFFECTS ON COMMERCIAL RENTS. THIS WOULD BE DISCUSSED WITH THE INDUSTRY, HE SAID.

HE ASSURED MEMBERS THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD GIVEN HIGH PRIORITY TO THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION'S SCHEMES.

ON HOUSING, MR BARNES STATED THAT THE REDEVELOPMENT SCHEMES WOULD BE CARRIED OUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

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MAJOR PLANS FOR FUTURE TRANSPORT NEEDS

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THE GOVERNMENT IS ACTIVELY PLANNING TO EXPAND HONG KONG'S ROAD AND RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE COSTING BILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO MEET TRAVEL DEMANDS INTO THE NEXT CENTURY, THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WAS TOLD TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

AT LEAST SIX MAJOR ROADS, TUNNELS AND RAIL PROJECTS ARE CONSIDERED NECESSARY TO CATER FOR A PROJECTED 12 MILLION PASSENGERS DAILY BY THE TURN OF THIS CENTURY COMPARED WITH OVER NINE MILLION TODAY.

STUDIES ALSO FORECAST THAT THE NUMBER OF PRIVATE CARS WILL INCREASE BY 129 PER CENT TO 390,000 BY THE NEXT CENTURY COMPARED WITH THE PRESENT 170,000, AND THE NUMBER OF GOODS VEHICLES BY 85 PER CENT, FROM 100,000 TO 185,000.

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THESE WERE THE INVESTMENT PLANS AND PROJECTIONS OUTLINED BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON MICHAEL LEUNG, IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE.

DESPITE ALL THESE PROJECTS, MR LEUNG FORESAW TRAFFIC CONGESTION CONTINUING TO BE A PROBLEM IN THE FUTURE WITH GROWING ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES AND RISING STANDARD OF LIVING.

HE WARNED, HOWEVER, THAT REGULATORY MEASURES WOULD CONTINUE TO BE REQUIRED TO CONTAIN THE INCREASED DEMAND TO A MANAGEABLE LEVEL.

"THE NEED AND OPTIONS FOR REGULATORY MEASURES, TOGETHER WITH A PROPOSED ROAD AND RAIL INVESTMENT PROJECTS WILL BE DISCUSSED IN THE SECOND COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORT STUDY," MR LEUNG SAID.

THE FINAL REPORT WAS EXPECTED TO BE PUBLISHED EARLY NEXT YEAR AFTER WHICH A GREEN PAPER WOULD BE ISSUED FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION BEFORE JUNE.

BUT TO CATER FOR CURRENT TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE DEMAND AND THAT OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, MR LEUNG ASSURED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS PRESSING AHEAD TO RELIEVE CONGESTION THROUGH THE CONSTRUCTION OF EASTERN HARBOUR CROSSING, SHING MUN AND TATE'S CAIRN TUNNELS.

AT THE SAME TIME, HE SAID, PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES WERE BEING GREATLY INCREASED TO MEET GROWING NEEDS OF THE 9.4 MILLION PASSENGERS DAILY.

SOME OF THE MAJOR PROJECTS BEING CONSIDERED WERE:

- * ROUTE 3 EXTENDING FROM THE BORDER AND THE NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES THROUGH TSING YI TO WEST KOWLOON;
- * WESTERN HARBOUR CROSSING;
- * EAST KOWLOON CORRIDOR PASSING THE NEW HUNG HOM RECLAMATION AND THE SECOND AIRPORT TUNNEL;
- * JUNK BAY MTR EXTENSION;
- * RAIL LINK CONNECTING TSUEN WAN TO TUEN MUN OR TO YUEN LONG; AND POSSIBLY,
- * LIGHT RAIL CONNECTING MA ON SHAN TO TAI WAI AND FURTHER TO DIAMOND HILL.

SINCE AUGUST THIS YEAR, THE KOWLOON-CANTON RAILWAY HAD ADDED 75 TRAIN CARS WHICH, TOGETHER WITH MODIFIED EXISTING CARS, HAD INCREASED TOTAL CAPACITY BY 75 PER CENT OVER 1986.

FIFTY-FOUR NEW TRAIN CARS HAD BEEN ORDERED FOR DELIVERY IN 1990 AND 1991 TO FURTHER BOOST CAPACITY BY 25 PER CENT.

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ON THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY, EIGHT CAR TRAINS WERE BEING RUN AT TWO-MINUTE HEADWAY DURING MORNING PEAKS AT BOTH THE TSUEN WAN AND KWUN TONG LINES, AND AT THREE MINUTES ON THE ISLAND LINE.

BY MAY 1989, IMPROVEMENT WORKS TO THE TSUEN WAN DEPOT SHOULD EXTEND THE TWO-MINUTE HEADWAY AT THE TSUEN WAN LINE FOR A LONGER PERIOD IN THE MORNING PEAK.

ON PHASE I OF THE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT SYSTEM, WHICH CAME INTO OPERATION IN SEPTEMBER, MR LEUNG SAID IT WAS CARRYING A DAILY AVERAGE OF 180,000 COMMUTERS, TOGETHER WITH 20,000 ON THE FEEDER BUSES.

HE SAID LIKE MANY OTHER NEW RAIL SYSTEMS ELSEWHERE, THE LRT FACED TEETHING PROBLEMS DURING ITS INITIAL OPERATION.

HOWEVER, IMPROVEMENTS WERE CONSTANTLY BEING INTRODUCED REFINEMENTS TO SIGNALISED CROSSINGS, PLATFORM WIDTH AND INTERFACE BETWEEN THE LIGHT RAIL VEHICLES AND OTHER ROAD USERS WERE BEING MADE IN THE LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE, HE ADDED.

MR LEUNG BELIEVED THAT LOCAL COMMUTERS, WITH CARE AND PATIENCE, WOULD GRADUALLY ACCUSTOM THEMSELVES TO THE NEW SYSTEM, AND TO USE IT SAFELY.

COMMENTING ON THE ROLE OF KCRC AND MTRC, MR LEUNG SAID THAT THE PRIMARY AIM OF ESTABLISHING THE TWO RAIL CORPORATIONS WAS TO ENSURE THE PROVISION OF AN EFFICIENT PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM THAT WOULD MEET THE GROWING NEEDS OF THE TRAVELLING PUBLIC.

THIS AIM WAS ENSHRINED IN THE RESPECTIVE ORDINANCES, HE STRESSED.

ALTHOUGH THE CORPORATIONS ENJOYED SOME FLEXIBILITY IN THEIR DAY-TO-DAY OPERATION, OVERALL CONTROL REMAINED WITH THE BOARDS OF DIRECTORS APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR TO ENSURE THAT THE CORPORATIONS ACT IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH THE OVERALL PUBLIC INTEREST.

"TIME AND EXPERIENCE HAVE SHOWN THAT BOTH CORPORATIONS HAVE ACTED RESPONSIBLY," MR LEUNG SAID.

ON THE THREE FRANCHISED BUS COMPANIES, HE SAID THEY CARRIED NEARLY FOUR MILLION PASSENGERS A DAY CATERING FOR WELL OVER 40 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL DAILY PUBLIC TRANSPORT PATRONAGE.

THEIR FIVE-YEAR FORWARD PLANNING PROGRAMMES PLUS ANNUAL ROUTE DEVELOPMENT PLANS SHOULD BE ABLE TO COPE WITH THE MEDIUM-TERM NEED.

FERRIES REMAINED AN IMPORTANT OFF-ROAD MODE OF TRANSPORT. TWO ROUTES, WAN CHAI TO KOWLOON POINT, AND FROM KOWLOON TO LANTAU AND CHEUNG CHAU WERE INTRODUCED THIS YEAR.

MR LEUNG INDICATED MORE COULD BE DONE TO EXPAND FERRIES SERVICES. HOWEVER, INADEQUATE PIER AND BERTHING FACILITIES IN THE HARBOUR WERE RESTRICTING THEIR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT.

THE TRANSPORT BRANCH WAS NOW AWAITING THE COMPLETION OF RECLAMATION STUDIES ON THE CENTRAL/WAN CHAI AND WEST KOWLOON AREAS BEFORE FIRING UP PIER REPROVISIONING PROGRAMMES.

IN THE MEANTIME, ALTERNATIVE BERTHING POINTS WERE BEING SOUGHT TO COPE WITH INADEQUATE PASSENGER FACILITIES AT THE CENTRAL PIERS.

ON TAXIS AND PUBLIC LIGHT BUSES, MR. LEUNG SAID THAT THEY PLAYED A SUPPLEMENTARY ROLE IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT. THE TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE HAD, EARLIER THIS YEAR, EXAMINED THEIR SERVICES IN SOME DETAIL.

THE ROLE OF TAXIS INCLUDING THEIR FARE POLICY AND THE ISSUE OF NEW TAXI LICENCES WERE FULLY CONSIDERED, AND RECOMMENDATIONS WERE SUBSEQUENTLY ACCEPTED BY GOVERNMENT FOR IMPLEMENTATION.

THE POLICY OF GRADUALLY CONVERTING RED MINIBUSES TO GREEN MINIBUSES WAS ALSO REAFFIRMED. IT WAS ALSO ACCEPTED THAT FULL CONVERSION WOULD NOT BE PRACTICABLE DUE TO THE LACK OF SUITABLE ROUTES.

APART FROM A QUANTITATIVE EXPANSION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT, THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED FOR QUALITATIVE IMPROVEMENTS IF THEY WERE TO BECOME AN ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO PRIVATE CARS USERS.

THE TWO RAILWAYS OFFERED CONSIDERABLE COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE EXCEPT DURING THE PEAK HOURS. THE BUS COMPANIES WERE ALSO STRIVING TO PROVIDE BETTER COMFORT. MODERN AND LARGE BUSES HAD BEEN PROGRESSIVELY INTRODUCED.

MR LEUNG SAID THAT ALONGSIDE THE CONTINUED EXPANSION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES, THE GOVERNMENT WAS ACTIVELY IMPLEMENTING MEASURES TO BRING SUBSTANTIAL RELIEF TO CONGESTION.

MR LEUNG SAID THAT BUILDING MORE ROADS AND RAILWAYS IS NOT THE ONLY WAY TO REDUCING CONGESTION. TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND ENGINEERING MEASURES WERE USED TO MAXIMISE THE USE OF EXISTING ROAD SPACE.

THESE INCLUDED BUS ONLY LANES, TIDAL FLOW AND SIGNAL CONTROLLED MERGING IN THE LION ROCK TUNNEL AND THE SEGREGATION OF TUNNEL AND NON-TUNNEL TRAFFIC AT THE CROSS HARBOUR TUNNEL.

SYSTEMATIC DISTRICT TRAFFIC STUDIES WERE UNDERTAKEN TO IDENTIFY THE BEST SOLUTIONS FOR LOCAL TRAFFIC PROBLEMS.

THERE WAS A CONTINUAL SEARCH FOR SITES SUITABLE FOR USE AS UNDERGROUND CARPARKS, PLANS FOR LAUNCHING A PILOT SCHEME OF PROVIDING HILLSIDE ESCALATORS CONNECTING CENTRAL WITH THE MID-LEVELS WERE BEING FINALISED.

MR LEUNG SAID MODERN TECHNOLOGY WAS BEING APPLIED IN THE MONITORING AND CONTROL OF TRAFFIC.

THE FIRST AREA TRAFFIC CONTROL SYSTEM INTRODUCED 10 YEARS AGO IN WEST KOWLOON HAD BEEN SUBSEQUENTLY EXTENDED TO COVER EAST KOWLOON. ON HONG KONG ISLAND A NEW SYSTEM WOULD SHORTLY BE INTRODUCED, HE SAID.

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GUEST HOUSES IN MULTI-STOREY BUILDINGS THE FIRST TARGET

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AS THERE ARE MANY TYPES OF GUEST HOUSES, THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION IS INITIALLY TO LICENSE THOSE FOUND IN MULTI-STOREY BUILDINGS AS A MATTER OF PRIORITY BECAUSE OF THE GREATER RISK TO LIFE INVOLVED, THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DONALD LIAO, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE, MR LIAO SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE SUGGESTION THAT GUEST HOUSES SHOULD BE ALLOWED ONLY IN COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS OR IN THE COMMERCIAL PORTION OF MIXED COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS.

HOWEVER, THIS SUGGESTION, IF ADOPTED, WOULD HAVE CONSIDERABLE IMPLICATIONS ON THE LARGE NUMBER OF GUEST HOUSES WHICH WERE ALREADY OPERATING IN RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS OR IN THE RESIDENTIAL PORTION OF COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS, HE SAID.

PENDING THE INTRODUCTION OF A LICENSING SYSTEM BY THE CITY AND NEW TERRITORIES ADMINISTRATION, THE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS CONCERNED WOULD CLOSELY MONITOR THE OPERATION OF EXISTING GUEST HOUSES, AND TAKE ENFORCEMENT ACTION WHERE NECESSARY.

AS REGARDS CONSULTATION ON THE LICENSING PROPOSALS, DISTRICT BOARDS WOULD BE CONSULTED, AND THE EXPERT ADVICE OF THE NEWLY-ESTABLISHED ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON PRIVATE BUILDING MANAGEMENT WOULD BE SOUGHT, MR LIAO ADDED.

IN THE COMING MONTHS, MR LIAO CONTINUED, THE COMMITTEE WAS EXPECTED TO DISCUSS A MULTITUDE OF PRIVATE BUILDING MANAGEMENT ISSUES.

IT WOULD ALSO CONSIDER RECOMMENDATIONS BEING FINALISED BY AN INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING DEEDS OF MUTUAL COVENANTS.

IN HIS REPLIES, MR LIAO ALSO SPOKE ON THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION SCHEME, YOUTH, SPORTS AND ARTS.

ON THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION SCHEME, HE POINTED OUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING DISTRICT BOARDS WITH RESOURCES AND SUPPORT TO ENSURE THAT THEY CONTINUED TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY AS ADVISORY BODIES ON LOCAL MATTERS.

MR LIAO SAID THAT A CENTRAL DIRECTIVE HAD BEEN ISSUED TO ALL DEPARTMENTS AND POLICY BRANCHES REQUIRING THEM TO RESPOND QUICKLY AND POSITIVELY TO THE VIEWS, SUGGESTIONS AND REQUESTS PUT FORWARD BY DISTRICT BOARDS.

A RECENT REVIEW INDICATED THAT THERE WERE INCREASING SIGNS OF CLOSE COOPERATION BETWEEN DISTRICT BOARDS AND GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS IN RESOLVING DISTRICT PROBLEMS.

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ACTIONS WERE ALSO BEING TAKEN TO SEEK A LARGER ALLOCATION OF FUNDS FOR THE DISTRICTS TO UNDERTAKE MORE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT WORKS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROJECTS WITH A VIEW TO FURTHER IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF RESIDENTS IN THE DISTRICTS, HE ADDED.

SPEAKING OF YOUTH, MR LIAO STRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALWAYS GIVEN, AND WOULD CONTINUE TO GIVE, PRIORITY TO THE PROPER DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH IN THE FORMULATION OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMMES.

THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO PROVIDE A FULL RANGE OF SERVICES AIMED AT THE PROPER DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH.

THESE INCLUDED EDUCATION, RECREATION, SPORTS AND ARTS, COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PROGRAMMES, EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE, LEADERSHIP TRAINING, PREVENTIVE SOCIAL WORK, REHABILITATION AND FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION.

"IN FACT, HONG KONG HAS A FINE TRADITION WHERE OUR YOUTH ARE WELL PROTECTED AND LOOKED AFTER," HE NOTED.

MR LIAO ADDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE FINAL REPORT TO BE SUBMITTED BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE ON YOUTH.

TURNING TO ARTS AND SPORTS, MR LIAO SAID THE REPORT ON THE SPORTS CONSULTANCY COMMISSIONED BY THE GOVERNMENT HAD ATTRACTED WIDESPREAD ATTENTION IN SPORTING CIRCLES, ADDING THAT HE WAS HOPEFUL OF NEW INITIATIVES ARISING OUT OF THE EXERCISE.

REFERRING TO MEMBERS' CONCERN ON THE WAY FUNDS FOR THE ARTS WERE SPENT, MR LIAO DISCLOSED THAT THE COUNCIL FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS HAD RECENTLY SET UP AN ARTS AUDIT TEAM TO MONITOR THE WORK OF GRANT RECIPIENTS, AND TO ENSURE THAT THEY MADE THE MOST COST-EFFECTIVE USE OF THE PUBLIC FUNDS ALLOCATED TO THEM.

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PEOPLE WILLING TO PAY FOR BETTER, LARGER ACCOMMODATION

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DESPITE THE SUCCESS OF PUBLIC HOUSING IN HONG KONG, IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE AIM OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO IMPROVE THE SPACE STANDARDS AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES IN THE ESTATES, THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DONALD LIAO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE, MR LIAO SAID AS SOCIETY BECAME MORE AFFLUENT, PEOPLE WOULD ASPIRE TO BETTER AND LARGER LIVING ACCOMMODATION AND WERE WILLING TO PAY FOR IT.

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NOTING THAT IT HAD BEEN THE LONGSTANDING PRACTICE OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO REVIEW FROM TIME TO TIME THE INCOME LIMITS IN RESPECT OF THE GENERAL WAITING LIST AND HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME APPLICANTS, MR LIAO SAID A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW HAD JUST COMMENCED.

"THE OPPORTUNITY IS ALSO TAKEN TO REVIEW THE OPERATION OF THE NEWLY INTRODUCED HOME PURCHASE LOAN SCHEME," HE ADDED.

"THE REVIEW WILL TAKE THE AFFORDABILITY OF THE TENANTS AND HOME-BUYERS AS ITS PRIMARY CONSIDERATION IN SETTING FUTURE DOMESTIC RENTS AND SALE PRICES OF HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME FLATS."

MR LIAO EXPLAINED THAT IN REVIEWING THE NEW HOME PURCHASE LOAN SCHEME, THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S OBJECTIVE WAS TO ENCOURAGE TENANTS WHO COULD AFFORD IT TO PURCHASE FLATS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND VOACATE THEIR PUBLIC HOUSING RENTAL FLATS.

ALTHOUGH THE PRICES OF FLATS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR WERE LARGELY DECIDED BY MARKET FORCES, THE AUTHORITY WOULD ENSURE THAT THE HOME PURCHASE LOAN SCHEME WOULD BE FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO ADJUST TO PREVAILING MARKET CONDITIONS AND PRICES, THEREBY DISCOURAGING SPECULATION, HE SAID.

ON THE LONG TERM HOUSING STRATEGY, MR LIAO NOTED THAT ONE OF THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF THE STRATEGY WAS THAT PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS WHO WERE NO LONGER IN NEED OF THIS FORM OF HEAVILY SUBSIDISED HOUSING SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO MOVE OUT OF THEIR FLATS AND TAKE UP OTHER FORMS OF LESS SUBSIDIZED, OR BETTER STILL NON-SUBSIDISED, ACCOMMODATION.

THE RENTAL FLATS RECOVERED COULD THUS BE REALLOCATED TO OTHER FAMILIES MORE IN NEED, HE SAID.

MR LIAO POINTED OUT THAT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WAS WELL AWARE OF THE SUGGESTION THAT WEALTHY TENANTS WHO OWNED PRIVATE PROPERTIES SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO OCCUPY PUBLIC RENTAL FLATS, TO BUY HOME OWNERSHIP FLATS, OR TO BENEFIT FROM THE HOME PURCHASE LOAN SCHEME.

"HOWEVER, THE AUTHORITY ALSO RECOGNISES THAT IT WOULD BE SOCIALLY UNDESIRABLE, AND IMPRACTICABLE TO ENFORCE A POLICY TO EVICT SUCH TENANTS FROM PUBLIC HOUSING RENTAL ESTATES," HE SAID.

"IT HAS THEREFORE ADOPTED A POLICY WHEREBY PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO DECLARE THEIR INCOME AND FACE POSSIBLE PROSECUTION OR EVICTION IF THEY MADE FALSE DECLARATIONS".

THOSE WHO COULD NO LONGER SATISFY THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA WOULD BE REQUIRED TO PAY MORE RENT OR GIVEN INCENTIVES TO MOVE OUT OF THE FLATS VOLUNTARILY.

THE ARRANGEMENTS WERE MONITORED CONTINUOUSLY AND IF NECESSARY FURTHER DETERRENTS MIGHT BE INTRODUCED, MR LIAO SAID.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1988

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ROLE OF ADVISORY BOARDS, COMMITTEES EXPLAINED

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THE ROLE OF THE VAST PROPORTION OF ADVISORY BOARDS AND COMMITTEES IS DESIGNED TO ALLOW THE GOVERNMENT TO OBTAIN THE BEST POSSIBLE ADVICE ON WHICH TO BASE DECISIONS, THE SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND INFORMATION, THE HON PETER TSAO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"BUT DECISIONS THEMSELVES ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT," MR TSAO SAID IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE.

"INCLUDING COMMITTEES AT DISTRICT AND AREA LEVEL, THERE ARE WELL OVER 400 BOARDS AND COMMITTEES, COMPRISING ALMOST 5,000 MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WHICH GIVE ADVICE EITHER DIRECTLY TO CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OR TO INDIVIDUAL HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS," MR TSAO SAID.

"MEMBERS OF THESE COMMITTEES ARE SELECTED BECAUSE OF THEIR PARTICULAR EXPERTISE IN, OR SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE OF, A SUBJECT, OR THROUGH THEIR RECORD OF INTEREST IN CONTRIBUTING TO THE LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY.

"THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THESE BOARDS FORMED AN IMPORTANT PART IN THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS, IN THE FORMULATION OF POLICIES, AND IN THE METHODS IN WHICH SUCH POLICIES ARE EVENTUALLY IMPLEMENTED."

MR TSAO POINTED OUT THAT THE BOARDS DID NOT ABSOLVE GOVERNMENT OF ITS ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY, THOUGH HE ASSURED MEMBERS THAT THE VIEWS OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES WERE CLOSELY CONSIDERED IN ALL SECTORS AND SECTIONS OF THE WORK OF THE GOVERNMENT.

MR TSAO SAID THE COMPOSITION AND OPERATION OF THE DIFFERENT BODIES NEEDED TO BE REGULARLY REVIEWED IN ORDER TO ENSURE THE BEST POSSIBLE ADVICE.

SUCH REVIEWS WERE CARRIED OUT EVERY TWO YEARS, THE LATEST IN 1987.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES WERE ALSO REGULARLY REVIEWED TO ENSURE THAT THEY WERE UP TO DATE AND REFLECTED PRESENT DAY REQUIREMENTS.

"WHERE APPROPRIATE CHANGES ARE MADE TO THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES SO THAT AN INCREASING NUMBER OF THEM ARE CHAIRED BY NON-OFFICIALS," HE SAID.

REFERRING TO THE DURATION OF MEMBERSHIP, MR TSAO SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS ADOPTING WHAT WAS KNOWN AS THE "SIX-YEAR RULE" TO ENSURE THAT THERE WAS A REGULAR INJECTION OF NEW BLOOD INTO THE SYSTEM.

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"HOWEVER, THIS IS ONLY A GUIDELINE AND WHERE SPECIFIC EXPERTISE AND CONTINUITY ARE IMPORTANT, DISCRETION IS EXERCISED SO THAT A BALANCE IS STRUCK BETWEEN NEW IDEAS AND FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON THE ONE HAND, AND CONTINUITY AND DEPTH OF EXPERIENCE ON THE OTHER," HE ADDED.

MR TSAO ALSO REFERRED TO A SUGGESTION THAT GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS SHOULD MOVE OUT OF THE PRIME AREAS WITH THE TWIN OBJECTS OF ACHIEVING RENTAL SAVINGS AND EASING TRANSPORT DIFFICULTIES.

HE EXPLAINED THAT THE PRINCIPLES IN DETERMINING THE LOCATION OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES WOULD LIE FIRST IN WHETHER THEY WERE CONVENIENTLY LOCATED FOR THE PUBLIC AND SECONDLY, FOR THE OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS WITH WHICH THEY WORKED.

"A LARGE PROPORTION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE IS THEREFORE INEVITABLY LOCATED IN THE URBAN AREA. BUT TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE WITHIN THESE CONSTRAINTS, WE DO TRY TO DISPERSE OUR OFFICES," HE SAID.

MR TSAO SAID AN EXTENSIVE BUILDING PROGRAMME WAS IN HAND TO FURTHER REDUCE THE GOVERNMENT'S RELIANCE ON RENTED OFFICE ACCOMMODATION.

"BUT ALL THESE EFFORTS WILL, I REGRET TO SAY, HAVE LITTLE EFFECT ON TRANSPORT UTILISATION. THAT IS AN AREA WHERE IMPROVEMENTS WILL HAVE TO COME THROUGH OTHER MEANS," HE SAID.

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CONSIDERABLE SCOPE FOR MONITORING ACTIVITIES

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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HAS CONSIDERABLE SCOPE FOR MONITORING THE ACTIVITIES OF STATUTORY BOARDS, THE SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND INFORMATION, THE HON PETER TSAO, TOLD THE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

WHEN THE ENABLING LEGISLATION WAS PLACED BEFORE THE COUNCIL, MEMBERS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT AND INDEED TO CHANGE IT.

WHENEVER AMENDING LEGISLATION WAS INTRODUCED, THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES WERE AFFORDED, MR TSAO SAID IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE.

BODIES RECEIVING PUBLIC FUNDS WERE SUBJECT TO SCRUTINY OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE.

"QUESTIONS CAN ALSO BE RAISED IN THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE AND IN THIS COUNCIL DURING QUESTION TIME," HE SAID.

/MR TSAO

MR TSAO SAID THE ULTIMATE POLICY AND FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE STATUTORY AUTHORITIES RESTED WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

THERE WOULD ALWAYS BE APPROPRIATE OFFICIALS AVAILABLE TO ANSWER QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE OPERATIONS OF THESE BODIES EITHER PUBLICLY IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OR LESS FORMALLY IN THE CONTEXT OF MEETINGS WITH OMELCO'S STANDING PANELS.

MR TSAO EXPLAINED THAT THE TERM "STATUTORY BODIES" REFERRED TO PUBLIC CORPORATIONS, STATUTORY AUTHORITIES AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS ESTABLISHED BY ORDINANCE TO PERFORM FUNCTIONS WHICH WERE PREVIOUSLY UNDERTAKEN BY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

ON REASONS FOR DEVELOPING STATUTORY BODIES, MR TSAO SAID: "THEY PROMOTE GREATER COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT, ALLOW OUTSIDE EXPERTISE TO BE TAPPED, AND THEY ALLOW CERTAIN TASKS TO BE CARRIED OUT AWAY FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE CONSTRAINTS OF GOVERNMENT, FOR EXAMPLE, HIRING AND FIRING, PURCHASING OF SUPPLIES AND BUDGETARY PRACTICES."

ON THE WIDE RANGE OF STATUTORY BODIES, MR TSAO CITED EXAMPLES SUCH AS THE HOUSING AUTHORITY AND THOSE RUNNING THE RAILWAYS AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR HOUSING; REGULATING THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY AND PROMOTING HONG KONG'S OVERSEAS TRADE.

NOTING A WIDE DIFFERENCE IN THE FUNCTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THESE INDIVIDUAL BODIES, MR TSAO SAID THEIR SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES AND FINANCIAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT, WERE SET OUT IN THEIR TERMS OF REFERENCE AND THE ORDINANCES UNDER WHICH THEY WERE CREATED.

"NONETHELESS WHATEVER THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT IS, ULTIMATELY IT IS THE GOVERNMENT WHICH IS ANSWERABLE FOR THE ACTIVITIES OF THESE BODIES.

"IT IS THEREFORE ESSENTIAL THAT ANY MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN POLICY SHOULD BE SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL. THIS IS THE CURRENT POSITION AND IT WILL NOT CHANGE," MR TSAO SAID.

"ONCE THE GOVERNMENT HAS SET DOWN THE BROAD POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES, HOWEVER, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THESE BODIES ARE ALLOWED TO GO ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS INDEPENDENTLY WITHOUT INTERFERENCES.

MR TSAO CITED ALSO THE ARRANGEMENTS MADE FOR THE REORGANISED HOUSING AUTHORITY AS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF SUCH, SAYING THAT "IT IS GIVEN A FREE HAND TO PURSUE ITS OBJECTIVES AND TO USE ITS RESOURCES FLEXIBLY TO ACHIEVE THEM.

"THAT IS NOT TO SAY THAT IT IS TOTALLY INDEPENDENT OF THE GOVERNMENT.

"WHILE THE HOUSING AUTHORITY IS FREE TO DEVISE, IMPLEMENT AND REVIEW ITS POLICIES WITHIN THE SET OBJECTIVES, APPROVAL OF THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL STILL HAS TO BE OBTAINED FOR ANY SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO POLICIES.

REFERRING TO THE FINANCIAL RELATIONSHIP OF THE STATUTORY BODIES WITH THE GOVERNMENT, MR TSAO EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT THERE WERE TOO MANY DIFFERENT SYSTEMS OPERATING AT THE SAME TIME.

"A REVIEW IS CLEARLY CALLED FOR.

"WE THEREFORE PLAN TO ESTABLISH A GENERAL FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH EACH BODY CAN BE CATERED FOR.

"THIS BROAD FRAMEWORK WILL ALLOW ISSUES RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS TO BE ADDRESSED IN A CONSISTENT MANNER."

MR TSAO SAID THE FRAMEWORK BEING PLANNED BY THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD SET OUT PROCEDURES FOR THE CONTRIBUTION OF GOVERNMENT FINANCE TO BODIES; FOR MONITORING AND APPROVING CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROGRAMMES; AND FOR SETTING FINANCIAL OBJECTIVES.

IT WOULD ALSO PROVIDE FOR CONSISTENT REPORTING MECHANISMS, AND ENSURE GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATION ON THE MANAGEMENT BODIES OF SUCH ORGANISATIONS, WITH THE AIM OF SAFEGUARDING GOVERNMENT'S FINANCIAL INTERESTS.

HE POINTED OUT THAT A SERIES OF REVIEWS SHOULD BE UNDERTAKEN TO RATIONALISE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND STATUTORY BODIES IN TERMS OF ULTIMATE POLICY AND FINANCIAL CONTROL, AND THAT CERTAIN BROAD GUIDELINES WERE MET.

"WE SHALL SEEK TO ENSURE FIRST THAT THE TERMS OF REFERENCE OF EACH STATUTORY BODY PROVIDE FOR ADEQUATE POLICY CONTROL AND SECONDLY TO DEFINE THE FINANCIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT.

"WHERE APPROPRIATE, THE GOVERNMENT MUST BE REPRESENTED ON THE BOARD OR COMMITTEE OF THE ORGANISATION; AND IT MUST BE MADE CLEAR WITH WHICH POLICY SECRETARY THE RESPONSIBILITY LIES.

"AS AND WHEN FURTHER STATUTORY BODIES ARE ESTABLISHED THESE GUIDELINES WILL BE FOLLOWED," MR TSAO SAID.

ASSURING MEMBERS THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NO INTENTION TO SEEK TO ABSOLVE ITSELF OF ITS RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE WELFARE AND WELL-BEING OF THE PEOPLE, MR TSAO REITERATED THAT THE MOVE TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF STATUTORY AUTHORITIES WAS AIMED AT SETTING UP MORE EFFICIENT SYSTEMS OF PROVIDING SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC WITHOUT ANY LOSS IN PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY.

EMIGRATION A LESSER FACTOR IN STAFF TURNOVER

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IN SOME SECTORS THE PROBLEM OF HIGH STAFF TURNOVER AND KEEN DEMAND FOR SKILLS ARE CAUSED IN GREATER PART BY THE RAPID EXPANSION OF THOSE INDUSTRIES, AND EMIGRATION IS A LESSER, AGGRAVATING FACTOR, THE SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND INFORMATION, THE HON PETER TSAO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MANPOWER SHORTAGE WAS SOMETIMES A SIGN OF CONTINUING SUCCESS RATHER THAN A SYMPTOM OF FAILURE, MR TSAO SAID IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE.

"WHILE NUMBERS ARE HIGHER THAN THE HISTORICAL NORM - 30,000 PEOPLE LAST YEAR, 45,000 THIS YEAR - THEY DO NOT PRESENT A PICTURE OF ALARMING PROPORTIONS," HE SAID IN REFERRING TO EMIGRATION.

"MOREOVER, ON CLOSER INSPECTION, WE HAVE FOUND IN SOME SECTORS THE PROBLEMS OF HIGH STAFF TURNOVER AND KEEN DEMAND FOR SKILLS ARE CAUSED IN GREATER PART BY THE RAPID EXPANSION OF THOSE INDUSTRIES.

"BE THAT AS IT MAY, WE ARE NOT COMPLACENT. OUR FIRST PRIORITY MUST BE TO MAINTAIN THOSE ASPECTS OF HONG KONG LIFE WHICH ARE MOST ATTRACTIVE."

THE BUOYANT ECONOMY, THE LIFESTYLE, THE FREEDOM OF HONG KONG PEOPLE TO GO ABOUT THEIR DAILY AFFAIRS, THE LOW TAX RATES AND GOVERNMENT'S WELL PUBLICISED PHILOSOPHY OF POSITIVE NON-INTERVENTIONISM WERE THE THINGS WHICH HAD TO BE PRESERVED, MR TSAO SAID.

"WE MUST IMPROVE THOSE AREAS OF LIFE WHERE WE AT PRESENT DO LESS WELL. TWO MATTERS FREQUENTLY QUOTED ARE THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT, AND THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATION SYSTEM BOTH IN QUALITATIVE TERMS AND IN TERMS OF INCREASING OPPORTUNITY," HE SAID.

NOTING THAT THE GOVERNMENT DID HAVE POSITIVE PLANS IN THESE AREAS, MR TSAO REMINDED MEMBERS THAT ALL THE THINGS MENTIONED, ACTION TAKEN OR TO BE TAKEN, APPLIED EQUALLY TO BOTH EXISTING RESIDENTS AND PROSPECTIVE RETURNEES.

"A THIRD AREA ON WHICH MEMBERS LAID STRESS CONCERNS THE NEED TO BOOST TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES TO BRING FORWARD LOCAL TALENTS AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE," MR TSAO CONTINUED.

THE ROLE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND INFORMATION BRANCH IN THIS AREA WAS TO IMPROVE THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROFILE OF THOSE LEAVING SO THAT THE SKILLS BEING LOST COULD BE MORE READILY IDENTIFIED AND REPLACED, MR TSAO SAID.

"SUCH INFORMATION WILL THEN BE PASSED TO MY OFFICIAL COLLEAGUES RESPONSIBLE FOR VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THIS RATHER WIDE-RANGING SUBJECT."

ON THE SUBJECT OF FACILITATING THE RETURN TO HONG KONG OF PEOPLE WHO HAD FELT THE NEED TO OBTAIN SOME FORM OF INSURANCE POLICY OVERSEAS, MR TSAO REFERRED TO THE POINT MADE BY SEVERAL MEMBERS THAT IN THE EFFORTS TO ATTRACT SUCH PEOPLE BACK, HONG KONG HAD TO BEWARE OF CREATING A PRIVILEGED CLASS.

"WELCOME AS THEY ARE, THERE CAN BE NO BONUS FOR COMING HOME WITH A FOREIGN PASSPORT," MR TSAO SAID, "AND IT WOULD BE DISPIRITING FOR THE VAST MAJORITY WHO HAVE STAYED BEHIND.

"BUT HAVING SAID THAT, IT WOULD BE REMISS OF US NOT TO CONSIDER HOW TO PROVIDE BETTER INFORMATION TO THOSE WHO HAVE LEFT ABOUT LIFE HERE AND TO REMOVE FACTORS MITIGATING AGAINST THEIR RETURN.

"IF THERE SHOULD NOT BE INCENTIVES, NOR SHOULD THERE BE DISINCENTIVES. WE SHALL THEREFORE BE CONSIDERING WHAT CAN BE DONE, WITHOUT BREACHING THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY OF TREATMENT, TO REMOVE UNNECESSARY BARRIERS," HE SAID.

MR TSAO ALSO SAID THAT HONG KONG STUDENTS, THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF FUTURE PROSPERITY, WHO WERE STUDYING OVERSEAS SHOULD CONTINUE TO THINK IN TERMS OF RETURNING TO HONG KONG TO LIVE AND WORK AFTER THEIR STUDIES.

HE ADDED THAT IT WAS BELIEVED THAT IN TIME, AS THE INCREASING NUMBERS OF LOCAL GRADUATES MOVED UP THROUGH THE SYSTEM AND GAINED EXPERIENCE, A BETTER EQUILIBRIUM BETWEEN SUPPLY AND DEMAND WOULD THEN BE ACHIEVED.

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ABSOLUTE COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS AN ABSOLUTE COMMITMENT BOTH TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND TO IMPROVE HONG KONG'S TEACHING, CURRICULA AND FACILITIES IN THE YEARS AHEAD, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"THE GOALS OF QUANTITY AND QUALITY IN EDUCATION MUST NOT BE MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE," HE STRESSED IN THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S ANNUAL ADDRESS.

ON THE ISSUE OF QUALITY, MR BRIDGE SAID PROGRESS WAS BEING MADE IN EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURE, CURRICULA AND TEACHING.

WHILE AGREEING THAT IMPROVEMENTS IN QUALITY WERE NEEDED TO THE SYSTEM OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION, HE SAID WE SHOULD NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE ADVANCES MADE OVER THE YEARS.

/MR BRIDGE

MR BRIDGE NOTED THAT IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT THE AVERAGE STANDARD WOULD DROP IF ONE MOVED FROM A HIGHLY SELECTIVE SYSTEM TO A SYSTEM OF EDUCATION FOR ALL.

"BUT EXAMINATION RESULTS DO NOT INDICATE THAT BRIGHTER CHILDREN ARE ACHIEVING LESS NOW THAN THEY DID SOME YEARS AGO; ON THE CONTRARY, THEY INDICATE THAT MANY MORE CHILDREN ARE NOW COMPLETING THEIR SECONDARY EDUCATION TO A SATISFACTORY STANDARD," HE SAID.

MR BRIDGE ALSO NOTED THAT EXAMINATION PRESSURE HAD BEEN CONSIDERABLY REDUCED OVER THE PAST YEARS AS MORE PLACES HAD BECOME AVAILABLE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

"THE FIRST PUBLIC EXAMINATION ANY OF OUR CHILDREN NOW TAKE IS THE CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION AFTER SECONDARY 5," HE SAID.

NOTING THAT THE CHANGE TO A MASS EDUCATION SYSTEM HAD GIVEN RISE TO THE NEED FOR GREATER VARIETY IN CURRICULUM AND TEACHING METHODS, MR BRIDGE SAID THE ACTIVITY APPROACH, WHICH WAS A CHILD-CENTRE APPROACH, WOULD BE EXTENDED TO AS MANY PRIMARY SCHOOLS AS POSSIBLE.

ON THE PROPOSAL TO PHASE OUT HALF-DAY PRIMARY SCHOOLS, HE SAID A PROGRAMME WAS BEING WORKED OUT AND WOULD SOON BE SUBMITTED TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

MEASURES HAD ALSO BEEN TAKEN THIS YEAR TO DEVELOP CURRICULA MORE SUITED TO THE BROADER RANGE OF PUPILS IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS, MR BRIDGE SAID.

"WE HAVE RESTRUCTURED THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE INTO A COUNCIL UNDER A NON-GOVERNMENT CHAIRMAN.

"WE HAVE PROVIDED INCENTIVES FOR TEACHERS TO WORK ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS," HE SAID.

MR BRIDGE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE COUNCIL WOULD BE BETTER PLACED TO RESPOND TO THE VARIOUS CURRICULUM NEEDS OF SCHOOLS WITH MUCH GREATER PARTICIPATION BY TEACHERS AT ALL LEVELS.

HE ALSO NOTED THAT THE EDUCATION COMMISSION WAS NOW WORKING ON A MAJOR STUDY OF CURRICULA AND BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS DURING THE PERIOD OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND JUNIOR SECONDARY CLASSES AND WOULD PUBLISH ITS CONCLUSIONS NEXT YEAR IN ITS FOURTH REPORT.

REFERRING TO THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS, MR BRIDGE SAID THE OBJECTIVE MUST BE TO CREATE A SYSTEM WHICH COULD ENSURE THE PRIVATE SECTOR A STRONG ROLE IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM UP TO 1997 AND BEYOND.

/"BY DOING

"BY DOING SO WE WILL ADD TO THE QUALITY OF OUR EDUCATION BY MAKING AVAILABLE THE GREATER CHOICE AND VARIETY WHICH THE PRIVATE SECTOR CAN PROVIDE."

MR BRIDGE SAID THE DIRECT SUBSIDY SCHEME WOULD BECOME A PRIORITY TASK FOR THE PROPOSED PRIVATE SCHOOLS REVIEW COMMITTEE.

AS TO SOME MEMBERS' CALL FOR CHANGES TO THE CODES OF AID, MR BRIDGE SAID THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT WAS ALREADY CONSIDERING SOME SIMPLIFICATION TO ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE.

ON THE POINT THAT TEACHER TRAINING SHOULD BE HIVED OFF TO THE TERTIARY SECTOR, MR BRIDGE SAID THE EDUCATION COMMISSION INTENDED TO MAKE A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN ONE OF ITS FUTURE REPORTS.

"I THINK WE MUST AWAIT THE COMMISSION'S ADVICE BEFORE CONTEMPLATING ANY RADICAL CHANGES TO OUR EXISTING SYSTEM," HE SAID.

TURNING TO CIVIC EDUCATION, MR BRIDGE SAID MUCH WAS BEING DONE FOLLOWING THE ISSUE OF THE GUIDELINES ON CIVIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS IN 1985.

THESE INCLUDED CIVIC EDUCATION PROGRAMMES INTRODUCED BY NEARLY ALL SCHOOLS, TRAINING COURSES FOR TEACHERS, TEACHING PACKAGES, INTRODUCTION OF A NEW SUBJECT--GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS--IN THE SENIOR SECONDARY AND SIXTH FORM CURRICULUM AND SETTING UP PUPILS ASSOCIATIONS.

OUTSIDE SCHOOLS, CIVIC EDUCATION WAS PROMOTED BY VARIOUS VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS AND GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, HE SAID.

MR BRIDGE NOTED THAT TOTAL PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IN SUPPORT OF CIVIC EDUCATION DURING 1988-89 WOULD AMOUNT TO ABOUT \$25 MILLION.

TURNING TO HIGHER EDUCATION, MR BRIDGE SAID THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUED TO DEVOTE RESOURCES TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE STANDARDS.

HE STRESSED THAT DECISIONS HAD NOT YET BEEN TAKEN ON RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE EDUCATION COMMISSION'S REPORT NO. 3 TO RATIONALISE THE STRUCTURE OF TERTIARY EDUCATION.

"WE HAVE CARRIED OUT A LONG, PAINSTAKING PROGRAMME OF GATHERING AND ANALYSING PUBLIC COMMENT.

"WHATEVER DECISIONS ARE FINALLY MADE, ALL VIEWS EXPRESSED WILL HAVE BEEN MOST CAREFULLY CONSIDERED," MR BRIDGE SAID.

SHARING SOME MEMBERS' VIEW THAT RESEARCH WAS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN MAINTAINING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, MR BRIDGE SAID THE UNIVERSITY AND POLYTECHNIC GRANTS COMMITTEE (UPGC) WAS PROVIDING FUNDS SPECIFICALLY EARMARKED FOR SUCH A PURPOSE STARTING FROM THIS ACADEMIC YEAR.

/HE SAID

HE SAID \$30 MILLION WAS BEING PROVIDED THIS YEAR AND THAT HE EXPECTED FURTHER INCREASES TO FOLLOW IN FUTURE YEARS.

THE UPGC HAS ALSO ESTABLISHED A SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEE TO MAKE SURE THAT THESE FUNDS WERE USED IN THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY, MR BRIDGE ADDED.

WHILE NOTING THAT RESEARCH SHOULD NOT DEPEND SOLELY ON THE PUBLIC SECTOR, MR BRIDGE SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT WOULD INCREASE GREATLY IN THE FUTURE.

ON THE QUALITY OF LANGUAGE TEACHING, MR BRIDGE SHARED THE VIEW THAT LEARNING WAS MORE EFFECTIVE IN THE MOTHER TONGUE FOR CHILDREN WHOSE ENGLISH WAS BELOW A CERTAIN THRESHOLD.

"WE ARE MAKING IT EASIER FOR SCHOOLS TO OPT FOR A GREATER USE OF CHINESE IN THE CLASSROOM, BY ENCOURAGING THE PRODUCTION OF BETTER QUALITY TEXTBOOKS IN CHINESE.

"OUR AIM SHOULD BE TO ACHIEVE A TRULY BILINGUAL SOCIETY, WHERE CHINESE IS THE TEACHING LANGUAGE, AT LEAST IN THE LOWER FORMS, FOR THOSE WHO WOULD BENEFIT MOST FROM IT, BUT THE POSITION OF ENGLISH IS MAINTAINED," HE SAID.

"WE SHALL BE REVIEWING THE PRESENT POSITION IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LOOKING FOR NEW IDEAS TO IMPROVE STANDARDS IN BOTH LANGUAGES," HE ADDED.

MR BRIDGE ALSO NOTED THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE OPEN LEARNING INSTITUTE (OLI) NEXT YEAR WOULD GREATLY INCREASE BOTH THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF EDUCATION.

"AS FAR AS QUANTITY IS CONCERNED, THE OPEN LEARNING INSTITUTE WILL PROVIDE US WITH HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR AN ALMOST UNLIMITED NUMBER OF STUDENTS.

"AS FOR QUALITY, THE RIGOROUS SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENT BY ATTAINMENT AND THE AGREEMENTS NEGOTIATED BY THE OLI ON ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION WILL ENSURE THAT OLI'S QUALIFICATIONS WILL BE REGARDED AT LEAST AS HIGHLY AS THOSE OF OUR EXISTING TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS," HE SAID.

TURNING TO THE ISSUE OF QUANTITY, MR BRIDGE SAID A GREAT ACHIEVEMENT HAS BEEN MADE OVER THE PAST DECADE IN RESPECT OF EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SECTORS.

REFERRING TO MEMBERS' SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT'S PLAN TO INCREASE PLACES IN THE INSTITUTIONS FUNDED BY THE UNIVERSITY AND POLYTECHNIC GRANTS COMMITTEE, MR BRIDGE SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT AN ANNUAL GROWTH RATE OF FIVE PER CENT WOULD BE ACHIEVED.

THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE, HE ADDED.

"FOUR OUT OF OUR SIX TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS WILL HAVE REACHED THEIR PLANNED CAPACITY BY 1997 AND THE REMAINING TWO BY THE YEAR 2000.

"WE WILL BE CONSIDERING OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS WHETHER CONTINUING DEMAND WILL REQUIRE US TO ESTABLISH ANOTHER MAJOR INSTITUTION EARLY IN THE NEXT CENTURY," MR BRIDGE SAID.

TURNING TO EDUCATION POLICY MAKING, MR BRIDGE SAID THE MECHANISM THROUGH WHICH EDUCATIONAL POLICIES WERE DEVELOPED MUST BE SOUND IF WE WERE TO ENSURE THAT OUR COMMITMENT BOTH TO MORE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES AND TO A HIGHER QUALITY OF EDUCATION WAS MAINTAINED.

"I BELIEVE THAT IT IS."

IN ADDITION TO THE NORMAL MECHANISM OF A POLICY MAKING BRANCH AND POLICY IMPLEMENTING DEPARTMENTS, MR BRIDGE SAID THERE WAS A PARTICULARLY STRONG NETWORK OF ADVISORY BODIES IN THE EDUCATION FIELD, INCLUDING THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE EDUCATION COMMISSION.

HE SAID HE BELIEVED THAT THE EDUCATION COMMISSION HAD IMPARTIALLY AND PRAGMATICALLY SURVEYED THE ENTIRE FIELD OF HONG KONG EDUCATION IN ITS FIRST THREE REPORTS.

"I DO NOT AGREE WITH THOSE WHO SUGGEST THAT WE REQUIRE A FURTHER REVIEW.

"I BELIEVE THAT, OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, WE HAVE SPENT ENOUGH TIME REVIEWING AND DEBATING.

"IF WE ARE REALLY COMMITTED TO QUALITY IN EDUCATION, NOW IS THE TIME TO TAKE DECISIONS AND TO ACT ON THEM," MR BRIDGE SAID.

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ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST IMPORTING LABOUR

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GOVERNMENT POLICY HAS ALWAYS ALLOWED FOR THE ENTRY OF SKILLED WORKERS WHEN IT CAN BE SHOWN THAT THERE IS A SHORTAGE OF SPECIAL SKILLS, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

DISCUSSING THE ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST THE IMPORTATION OF WORKERS, MR BRIDGE SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN SKILLED AND UNSKILLED LABOUR.

/HE SAID

HE SAID THE MAIN ARGUMENTS FOR IMPORTING LABOUR WERE THAT IT WOULD RELIEVE THE TIGHT LABOUR SUPPLY, SLOW DOWN THE RATE OF WAGE INCREASES, SLOW DOWN COST INCREASES AND SO RELIEVE INFLATIONARY PRESSURES ON THE ECONOMY.

IT WOULD ALSO REDUCE DELAYS IN THE PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF WORK CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION, HE SAID.

TURNING TO REASONS AGAINST A LARGE SCALE IMPORTATION OF PEOPLE WITHOUT SPECIAL SKILLS, MR BRIDGE SAID THAT, FIRSTLY, IT WOULD UPSET THE FORCES OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND IN THE LABOUR MARKET AND DEPRIVE THE LOCAL WORKFORCE OF THEIR FAIR SHARE OF THE FRUITS OF A BOOMING ECONOMY.

"THIS WOULD BE EXTREMELY DAMAGING TO OUR LABOUR RELATIONS," HE SAID.

A SECOND REASON WAS THAT IMPORTATION OF UNSKILLED LABOUR WOULD REDUCE THE INCENTIVE FOR EMPLOYERS TO UPGRADE TECHNOLOGY, MANAGEMENT SKILLS, PRODUCTIVITY AND PRODUCT QUALITY, WHICH MADE UP THE KEY TO THE ECONOMIC SUCCESS OF HONG KONG.

"IT MIGHT INCREASE OUR TOTAL PRODUCT, BUT WOULD BE UNLIKELY TO INCREASE OUR PRODUCT PER HEAD, WHICH IS WHAT MATTERS FOR OUR STANDARD OF LIVING," HE SAID.

"THIRDLY, IT WOULD BRING ADDITIONAL PRESSURE TO BEAR UPON OUR INFRASTRUCTURE AND SOCIAL SERVICES.

"THE SUPPLY OF HOUSING, MEDICAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES AND OUR TRANSPORT FACILITIES WOULD BE STRETCHED EVEN TIGHTER."

MR BRIDGE SAID A FOURTH REASON WAS THAT IT MIGHT EXPOSE HONG KONG TO INTERNATIONAL ACCUSATIONS OF EXPLOITING CHEAP LABOUR, WHICH WOULD INCREASE PROTECTIONIST PRESSURES AGAINST OUR EXPORTS.

HE NOTED THAT THERE WERE TWO LINES OF ARGUMENTS FROM THOSE IN FAVOUR OF IMPORTING LABOUR.

ONE SIDE SAID THAT THE SHORTAGE PROBLEM WAS SO SERIOUS THAT DRASTIC ACTION MUST BE TAKEN, WHILE THE OTHER SAID THAT WHAT WAS PROPOSED WAS ONLY A LIMITED SHORT-TERM IMPORTATION OF LABOUR ON TOO SMALL A SCALE TO HAVE THE DAMAGING RESULTS ALREADY MENTIONED.

MR BRIDGE SAID THAT HONG KONG HAD LONG BEEN SUBJECT TO CYCLICAL VARIATIONS AND THE CURRENT LABOUR SHORTAGES HAD OCCURRED BEFORE.

"AT SUCH TIMES WE DO LOSE SOMETHING OF OUR COMPETITIVE EDGE, BUT THIS LOSS OF COMPETITIVENESS IS NOT OF A LONG-TERM NATURE."

/"HISTORICALLY, IT

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"HISTORICALLY, IT HAS ALWAYS CORRECTED ITSELF AT THE NEXT STAGE IN THE ECONOMIC CYCLE," HE SAID.

MR BRIDGE ADMITTED THAT SOME SECTORS, FOR EXAMPLE, THE GARMENT INDUSTRY WITH ITS COUNTRY OF ORIGIN REQUIREMENTS, WERE HARDER HIT THAN OTHERS BECAUSE THEY WERE LESS ABLE TO ADJUST.

"EVEN SO, I BELIEVE THERE IS STILL SCOPE FOR FURTHER AUTOMATION OF SOME ASPECTS OF THAT INDUSTRY," HE SAID.

ON THE SUGGESTION THAT A WORKING GROUP BE ESTABLISHED WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF EMPLOYERS, EMPLOYEES AND RELEVANT GOVERNMENT BODIES TO CONSIDER THE REQUIREMENTS FOR LABOUR IN THE LONG TERM AND THE POSSIBILITY OF IMPORTING LABOUR FOR PARTICULAR INDUSTRIES IN THE SHORT TERM, MR BRIDGE FOUND IT DOUBTFUL WHETHER SUCH A GROUP COULD REACH A CONSENSUS ON SUCH A CONTENTIOUS ISSUE.

"THERE ARE, HOWEVER, MAJOR LONG-TERM ECONOMIC STUDIES BEING UNDERTAKEN WHICH ARE DUE TO BE COMPLETED EARLY NEXT YEAR.

"IN THE LIGHT OF THE FINDINGS OF MORE STUDIES WE WILL CERTAINLY CONSIDER MOST CAREFULLY THE PROPOSAL PUT FORWARD BY MEMBERS," HE SAID.

TURNING TO LABOUR LEGISLATION, MR BRIDGE SAID THAT OVER THE YEARS A SET OF LABOUR LAWS GOVERNING INDUSTRIAL SAFETY AND HEALTH, EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION, LABOUR RELATIONS, EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS AND TRADE UNIONS AFFAIRS HAD BEEN BUILT UP.

"THE LEVEL OF STATUTORY PROTECTION IN HONG KONG NOW COMPARES REASONABLY WELL WITH OUR NEIGHBOURS.

"IN FACT THIS BODY OF LAWS ENABLES US TO COMPLY WITH MORE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION CONVENTIONS THAN ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE REGION," HE SAID.

MR BRIDGE EMPHASISED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALWAYS CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO KEEP LAWS UNDER REVIEW AND TO INTRODUCE IMPROVEMENTS.

"A CONSTANT STREAM OF LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS GOES TO THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD FOR CONSIDERATION.

"A NUMBER OF NEW PROPOSALS ARE NEARING THEIR FINAL STAGE OF DRAFTING AND WE HOPE TO BE ABLE TO PRESENT THEM TO THIS COUNCIL IN THE CURRENT SESSION," HE SAID.

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JUSTIFIABLE PRIDE IN MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

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THE GOVERNMENT'S JUSTIFIABLE PRIDE IN NUMEROUS ACHIEVEMENTS IN MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES HAS NOT LED TO COMPLACENCY, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON T.H. CHAU, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"FAR FROM DENYING THAT PROBLEMS EXIST, THE GOVERNMENT HAS FACED THEM SQUARELY AND HAS CONCLUDED THAT FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES TO THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF MANAGING MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES ARE REQUIRED," HE SAID.

SPEAKING IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE, MR CHAU NOTED THAT REFERENCES HAD BEEN MADE TO PROBLEMS OF STAFF WASTAGE, SHORTAGE OF HOSPITAL BEDS, AND OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS IN MANY PUBLIC HOSPITALS.

"WHILE IT MAY WELL BE THAT THE PROBLEMS WHICH NOW CONFRONT US ARE, AT LEAST IN PART, ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE VERY RAPID EXPANSION OF SERVICES WHICH HAS TAKEN PLACE OVER THE PAST 10 TO 15 YEARS, I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT TO HAVE HELD BACK ON SUCH EXPANSION WOULD HAVE BEEN INDEFENSIBLE," HE SAID.

"ACCESS TO MEDICAL TREATMENT CANNOT BE THE PREROGATIVE OF THE PRIVILEGED FEW," HE ADDED.

"IN STRIVING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ACTED IN THE FIRM CONVICTION THAT THE FULL RANGE OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TO ALL, HOWEVER MEAGRE THEIR FINANCIAL RESOURCES ARE," MR CHAU SAID.

THE GOVERNMENT'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN THIS, MR CHAU SAID, HAD BEEN IMPRESSIVE -- A FACT ACKNOWLEDGED BY CONSULTANTS WHO UNDERTOOK THE REVIEW OF MEDICAL SERVICES IN HOSPITALS THAT LED TO THE DECISION TO ESTABLISH A HOSPITAL AUTHORITY.

MR CHAU SAID THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PROVISIONAL HOSPITAL AUTHORITY (PHA) MARKED THE FIRST STEP ON THE ROAD TO A MORE EFFICIENT, WELL-MANAGED AND COST-EFFECTIVE HOSPITAL SYSTEM.

"ITS KEY PRIORITIES WILL BE TO DEVELOP IMPROVED TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE FOR HOSPITAL STAFF AND TO LAY THE FOUNDATIONS OF A BETTER ENVIRONMENT FOR PATIENT CARE," HE SAID.

WHILE NOTING THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PHA WAS ONLY A FIRST STEP, MR CHAU SAID: "THE SETTING UP OF THE FUTURE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY WILL MARK THE BEGINNING OF A PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT AND REFORM WHICH WILL TAKE A NUMBER OF YEARS TO COMPLETE AND WHICH WILL EMBRACE ALL ASPECTS OF THE MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING OF HOSPITAL SERVICES."

TURNING TO CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY NURSING STAFF, MR CHAU SAID: "I WILL DO MY BEST, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, TO SEE WHAT CAN BE DONE, IN THE SHORT TERM, TO IMPROVE THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF NURSING STAFF AND TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF STAFF WASTAGE.

"THE GOVERNMENT WELCOMES A DIALOGUE WITH NURSING STAFF IN ORDER TO IDENTIFY THE PROBLEMS AND TO FIND SOLUTIONS.

"BUT WHILE I SYMPATHISE WITH THE WORRIES AND FRUSTRATIONS FELT BY OUR HOSPITAL STAFF, PARTICULARLY THOSE WORKING IN OVERCROWDED REGIONAL HOSPITALS, IT IS CLEAR THAT THERE ARE NO INSTANT SOLUTIONS.

"I THEREFORE APPEAL TO STAFF TO GIVE NEW INITIATIVES A CHANCE TO WORK AND TO REFRAIN FROM ANY COURSE OF ACTION WHICH MAY AFFECT PATIENT CARE."

MR CHAU SAID THE IMMEDIATE TASK OF THE PROVISIONAL HOSPITAL AUTHORITY WAS TO RECOMMEND THE FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH THE INTEGRATION OF THE SERVICES OF GOVERNMENT AND SUBVENTED HOSPITALS COULD TAKE PLACE.

"THIS WILL INVOLVE CONSIDERATION OF A NEW MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE WHICH WILL, AMONGST OTHER THINGS, PROVIDE FOR GREATER DEVOLUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY TO THE REGIONAL LEVEL OF MANAGEMENT," HE SAID.

THESE WOULD INVOLVE DEVELOPING COMMON TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE FOR STAFF IN BOTH GOVERNMENT AND SUBVENTED HOSPITALS; NEW FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES TO ENSURE CONSISTENT STANDARDS OF SERVICE IN ALL PUBLIC HOSPITALS; AND ALLOWING SUBVENTED HOSPITALS TO RETAIN THE TRADITIONS AND DEGREE OF MANAGEMENT INDEPENDENCE, HE ADDED.

MR CHAU POINTED OUT THAT MEMBERS OF THE PHA, WHO HAD BEEN SELECTED WITH GREAT CARE, WOULD WORK IN FULL CONSULTATION WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL GRADES OF STAFF CURRENTLY EMPLOYED IN GOVERNMENT AND SUBVENTED HOSPITALS.

"WHERE APPROPRIATE, STAFF MEMBERS WILL BE CO-OPTED ONTO THE WORKING COMMITTEES OF THE PROVISIONAL HOSPITAL AUTHORITY," HE SAID.

TURNING TO FEES AND CHARGES IN SUBVENTED HOSPITALS, MR CHAU SAID GOVERNMENT POLICY WAS THAT CHARGES IN THESE HOSPITALS SHOULD BE GENERALLY CONSISTENT WITH SIMILAR CHARGES IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS.

HE SAID WHILE GOVERNMENT FEE LEVELS WERE REGARDED A GUIDELINE FOR SUBVENTED HOSPITALS, THE LATTER WERE INDEPENDENT ORGANISATIONS AND TRADITIONALLY ENJOYED A CERTAIN DEGREE OF AUTONOMY, WITH THE FLEXIBILITY IN SETTING FEES AND CHARGES FOR CERTAIN SERVICES.

"THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT SUCH PRACTICES HAVE LED TO PATIENTS BEING UNABLE TO AFFORD SERVICES AT SUBVENTED HOSPITALS. IN CASES WHERE PATIENTS CANNOT AFFORD TO PAY, FEES MAY BE WAIVED OR REDUCED AS IS THE CASE IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS," MR CHAU SAID.

/THE SECRETARY

THE SECRETARY SAID THAT OVER THE YEARS, THE OUT-PATIENT CLINIC SYSTEM HAD FULFILLED AN IMPORTANT FUNCTION IN THE EARLY DETECTION OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASES AND THE PREVENTION OF EPIDEMICS.

"MORE RECENTLY WE HAVE DEVELOPED A COMPREHENSIVE RANGE OF MATERNAL AND CHILD SERVICES AIMED, IN PARTICULAR, AT THE PROMPT IDENTIFICATION OF DISABILITY OR DEVELOPMENT DELAY IN INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN," HE SAID.

"HOWEVER, AS WITH HOSPITAL SERVICES, PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY OUT-PATIENT CLINICS ARE RISING AND THE DEMANDS ON THEM CHANGING," HE ADDED.

MR CHAU SAID HIGH PRIORITY WOULD BE GIVEN IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS TO REVIEWING THE ROLE OF OUT-PATIENT CLINICS, IN PARTICULAR TO CONSIDERING THE INTERFACE BETWEEN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SERVICES AND THE SERVICES OF THE FUTURE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY.

ON THE QUESTION OF SUPPLY OF DOCTORS, MR CHAU SAID PRESENT EVIDENCE SUGGESTED THAT THE CURRENT RATES OF INTAKE AT THE TWO MEDICAL SCHOOLS WERE ABOUT RIGHT.

"BUT I INTEND TO KEEP THE SITUATION CLOSELY UNDER REVIEW IN THE LIGHT OF THE CURRENT SHORTAGES OF DOCTORS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND THE RECENT REPORT BY THE WORKING PARTY ON POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, WHICH HAS RECOMMENDED THAT AN ACADEMY OF MEDICINE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED IN HONG KONG," HE SAID.

HE SAID APPROPRIATE BODIES WOULD SOON BE CONSULTED ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKING PARTY AND PROPOSALS WOULD BE READY TO BE PUT TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL IN MARCH OR APRIL NEXT YEAR.

TURNING TO DENTAL CARE, MR CHAU SAID HE COULD NOT ACCEPT THE CONTENTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD FAILED TO MAKE THE PUBLIC AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF DENTAL HEALTH, ALTHOUGH THERE WAS ALWAYS MORE THAT COULD BE DONE.

HE SAID THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SCHOOL DENTAL SERVICE, WHICH WAS NOW EXTENDED TO ALL PRIMARY SCHOOLS WITH SOME 370,000 CHILDREN PARTICIPATING, HAD MADE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE TASK OF EDUCATING FUTURE GENERATIONS IN THE IMPORTANCE OF REGULAR PREVENTIVE DENTAL HEALTH CARE.

"THE DESIRABILITY OF EXPANDING THE COVERAGE OF THE SCHOOL DENTAL SERVICE TO INCLUDE, FOR EXAMPLE, SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS WILL BE KEPT UNDER REVIEW," MR CHAU SAID.

EFFORTS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION WERE RECENTLY BOOSTED WHEN THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT'S ORAL HEALTH EDUCATION UNIT BECAME FULLY OPERATIONAL, HE NOTED.

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ON THE POSSIBLE OVER-SUPPLY OF DENTISTS, MR CHAU SAID A SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE MEDICAL DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE RECENTLY SUBMITTED ITS REPORT TO ADVISE THE GOVERNMENT ON STEPS REQUIRED TO ENSURE THAT THE SUPPLY OF QUALIFIED DENTISTS DID NOT CONTINUE TO OUTSTRIP LOCAL DEMAND FOR THEIR SERVICES.

TURNING TO THE QUESTION OF CHINESE MEDICINE, THE SECRETARY SAID THAT FOR OVER 100 YEARS, IT HAD BEEN GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TO RESPECT THE CULTURAL AND TRADITIONAL PRACTICE OF PEOPLE OF THE CHINESE RACE, INCLUDING THE PRACTICE OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL MEDICINE.

"FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, CHINESE TRADITIONAL MEDICINE HAS BEEN EXTENSIVELY AND WIDELY PRACTISED. THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT IT HAS POSED A SERIOUS PUBLIC HEALTH HAZARD," MR CHAU SAID.

"WHERE ADVERSE EFFECTS TO PATIENTS HAVE BEEN REPORTED, THESE HAVE NORMALLY BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH THE MIXING OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL REMEDIES WITH WESTERN DRUGS OR ILLEGAL MEDICAL PRACTICES. SUCH ILLEGAL PRACTICES ARE ALREADY SUBJECT TO LEGISLATIVE CONTROL," HE ADDED.

MR CHAU SAID THE IMPLICATIONS OF DIRECT GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION TO CONTROL THE PRACTICE OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL MEDICINE WOULD BE WIDE-RANGING AND CONSIDERABLE.

"SO WE MUST BE SURE OF OUR GROUND BEFORE WE TAKE SUCH A STEP," HE NOTED.

MR CHAU POINT OUT THAT WHILE THE EXERCISE OF LEGISLATIVE CONTROL OF WESTERN MEDICINE WAS FEASIBLE BECAUSE REGISTRATION REQUIRED ESTABLISHED STANDARDS OF PRACTICE AND SPECIFIC QUALIFICATIONS, THE TRAINING IN CHINESE TRADITIONAL MEDICINE WAS VERY DIVERSIFIED AND THERE WAS NO UNIFORM OR COMMONLY ACCEPTED STANDARD.

"FOR ITS PART, THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT HAS NO EXPERTISE IN DEALING WITH CHINESE TRADITIONAL MEDICINE.

"IT WOULD THUS BE NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH A NEW BODY, STAFFED BY PEOPLE WITH APPROPRIATE TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL MEDICINE," MR CHAU SAID.

"ONCE AGAIN, WE WOULD BE HANDICAPPED IN SUCH AN ENDEAVOUR BY THE PRESENT LACK OF RECOGNISED PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS AGAINST WHICH TO ASSESS NOT ONLY THE QUALITY OF TREATMENT BEING PROVIDED, BUT EVEN THE EXPERTISE OF THE PEOPLE WHOM WE WOULD NEED TO RECRUIT," HE ADDED.

"ANY ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE CONTROL OVER THE PRACTICE OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL MEDICINE WOULD THUS BE AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT AND COMPLICATED AS WELL AS MASSIVE UNDERTAKING," MR CHAU SAID.

MEASURES TO EASE SHORTAGE OF SOCIAL WORKERS

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A PACKAGE OF MEASURES TO EASE THE PROBLEM OF A SHORTAGE OF TRAINED SOCIAL WORKERS HAD BEEN WORKED OUT AND NEW PROJECTS WERE BEING PLANNED TO MEET CURRENT AND ANTICIPATED DEMAND IN WELFARE SERVICES, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON T.H. CHAU, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

NOTING THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT AND PRESSING PROBLEM FACING THE SOCIAL WELFARE SECTOR WAS THE SHORTAGE OF TRAINED SOCIAL WORKERS, MR CHAU SAID THAT THE SOCIAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE HAD EARLIER THIS YEAR ENDORSED A PACKAGE OF MEASURES TO REDRESS THIS PROBLEM IN BOTH THE LONG AND THE SHORT TERM.

THE PRINCIPAL MEASURES PROPOSED WERE THE CONTINUED EMPLOYMENT OF NON-SOCIAL WORK TRAINED GRADUATES AND AN EXPANSION IN THE NUMBER OF SOCIAL WORK PLACES IN THE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS, HE SAID IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE.

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER AND THE UNIVERSITY AND POLYTECHNIC GRANTS COMMITTEE, THE HEALTH AND WELFARE BRANCH WAS PLANNING A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF SOCIAL WORK DEGREE AND DIPLOMA PLACES IN THE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS OVER A PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS, COMMENCING IN SEPTEMBER 1989.

"IT WILL TAKE TIME TO REDUCE THE SHORTFALL, BUT I BELIEVE THAT WE ARE HEADING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION," HE SAID.

ON THE SUGGESTION THAT A CENTRAL BODY SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED TO PLAN THE SUPPLY AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WORK MANPOWER, MR CHAU SAID THIS RESPONSIBILITY WAS ALREADY BEING PERFORMED BY THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL WORK TRAINING.

HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT MANPOWER PLANNING WAS DIFFICULT AT THE BEST OF TIMES AS THE DEMAND FOR SOCIAL WORKERS WAS DEPENDENT ON FACTORS SUCH AS EXPANSION OF SERVICES AND WASTAGE RATES, WHICH COULD NOT ALWAYS BE ACCURATELY FORECAST SEVERAL YEARS IN ADVANCE.

MR CHAU NOTED THAT ONE UNFORTUNATE EFFECT OF THE SHORTAGE WAS THAT IT MADE IT VERY DIFFICULT TO IMPLEMENT ALL OF THE AGREED MANNING RATIOS.

HE QUOTED THE EXAMPLE OF THE CURRENT FAMILY CASEWORK RATIO IN THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT, WHICH AT ONE CASEWORKER TO 90 CASES WAS UNACCEPTABLY HIGH.

THE HIGH CASELOADS MEANT THAT THE CASEWORKERS CONCERNED WERE PLACED UNDER CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE AND THAT SOME CASES MIGHT NOT RECEIVE AS MUCH ATTENTION AS THEY DESERVED.

"THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT THEREFORE PROPOSES TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF FAMILY CASEWORKERS DURING THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR, WHICH WILL ASSIST IN REDUCING THE RATIO," HE SAID.

THE GOVERNMENT WOULD TRY TO ACHIEVE ALL AGREED MANNING RATIOS AS SOON AS FINANCIAL AND, PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, MANPOWER RESOURCES PERMIT, MR CHAU SAID.

AS REGARDS WELFARE SERVICES, MR CHAU SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT REVIEWED THE DEMAND, PROVISION AND SHORTFALL OF SERVICES EVERY TWO YEARS WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FIVE YEAR PLAN FOR SOCIAL WELFARE DEVELOPMENT.

"IN DOING SO, WE TAKE INTO ACCOUNT NOT ONLY THE NUMBER OF FACILITIES AVAILABLE, BUT ALSO THE QUALITY OF SERVICE TO BE PROVIDED."

MR CHAU MENTIONED IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT THERE SHOULD BE AN OVERALL REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES IN THE 1990'S.

"AT PRESENT, WE REVIEW OUR POLICIES AND SERVICES ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PRINCIPLES LAID DOWN IN THE 1979 WHITE PAPER, AND IN THE LIGHT OF ADVICE FROM THE SOCIAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE," HE SAID.

"OUR POLICIES AND PLANS ARE THUS UPDATED REGULARLY TO MEET THE CHANGING NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY AND ARE INCORPORATED INTO THE FIVE YEAR PLAN FOR SOCIAL WELFARE DEVELOPMENT, WHICH IS REVIEWED ON A BIENNIAL BASIS.

"THE PRINCIPLES LAID DOWN IN THE WHITE PAPER ARE STILL VALID AND THAT THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS ARE WORKING SATISFACTORILY.

"NEVERTHELESS, I WILL CERTAINLY BEAR THIS CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTION IN MIND AND WILL GIVE IT FURTHER THOUGHT OVER THE COMING MONTHS."

TURNING TO SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY IN PARTICULAR, MR CHAU SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOW SEEKING A SUITABLE SITE IN THE NEW TERRITORIES FOR THE PROPOSED HOLIDAY HOME FOR THE ELDERLY.

"WE ALSO INTEND TO IMPROVE THE EXISTING HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ELDERLY BY PROVIDING ABOUT 1,900 ADDITIONAL CARE AND ATTENTION PLACES AND 1,800 PLACES IN HOMES FOR THE ELDERLY BY MARCH 1991, AND A FURTHER 820 INFIRMARY PLACES BY THE END OF 1991.

"THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT WILL BE EXAMINING WAYS OF PROVIDING FACILITIES WITHIN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES TO CATER FOR THE NATURAL PROGRESSION OF THE ELDERLY THROUGH THE DIFFERENT PHASES OF OLD AGE," HE SAID.

CONCERNING SOCIAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ELDERLY, HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD TRIED TO IMPROVE THE LEVEL AND RANGE OF BENEFITS AS FAR AS POSSIBLE WITHIN THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE.

"ONE MEASURE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT IN THIS REGARD IS THE FACT THAT EXPENDITURE ON SOCIAL SECURITY HAS INCREASED FROM \$1.4 BILLION IN 1984/85 TO OVER \$2.2 BILLION IN THIS FINANCIAL YEAR," MR CHAU SAID.

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COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION TO VIETNAMESE PROBLEM SOUGHT

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HONG KONG IS SEEKING A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AND BOAT PEOPLE WHICH COVERS AN INCREASE IN RESETTLEMENT QUOTAS, AN EXPANDED ORDERLY DEPARTURE PROGRAMME, REPATRIATION AND THE RESETTLEMENT OF LONG STAYERS.

THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON GEOFFREY BARNES, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE.

MR BARNES SAID THAT ALL THESE ISSUES WERE NOW BEING ADDRESSED IN THE MULTILATERAL DISCUSSIONS LEADING TOWARDS THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INDO-CHINESE REFUGEES TO BE HELD NEXT YEAR.

"WE ARE PARTICIPATING FULLY IN THESE MEETINGS, THE NEXT OF WHICH WILL BE IN KUALA LUMPUR IN DECEMBER," HE SAID.

MR BARNES SAID THAT THE SOLUTIONS TO THE VIETNAMESE PROBLEM LAY OUTSIDE HONG KONG, AND FOR WHICH INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION WAS AN IMPORTANT INGREDIENT.

HE SAID THAT NEARLY 18,000 VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AND BOAT PEOPLE HAD ARRIVED IN HONG KONG THIS YEAR, NONE OF WHOM WAS TURNED AWAY AND ALL WERE PROVIDED WITH TYPHOON-PROOF ACCOMODATION.

"WE CAN ONLY DO SO MUCH OURSELVES, AND THAT MUST BE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE SCREENING POLICY INTRODUCED ON JUNE 16 AND THE ASSOCIATED PROCESSES OF REPATRIATION, RESETTLEMENT, AND THE LIBERALISATION OF THE FORMER CLOSED CAMPS."

ON THE QUESTION OF RESETTLEMENT, MR BARNES SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHARED MEMBERS' CONCERN ABOUT THE CURRENT RATE OF OVERSEAS RESETTLEMENT.

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IN THE CURRENT YEAR NO MORE THAN 2,600 REFUGEES WERE EXPECTED TO BE RESETTLED, WHICH, THOUGH SLIGHTLY BETTER THAN THE 2,200 RESETTLED LAST YEAR, WAS A FAR FROM SATISFACTORY RATE, HE SAID.

"I CAN ASSURE MEMBERS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WASTES NO OPPORTUNITY IN MAKING THIS POINT TO RESETTLEMENT COUNTRIES," HE SAID.

"I BELIEVE OUR BEST PROSPECT FOR A MAJOR INCREASE IN RESETTLEMENT QUOTAS LIES IN THE EFFORTS NOW BEING MADE TO ORGANISE AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE NEXT YEAR ON INDO-CHINESE REFUGEES.

"I HOPE THAT A PACKAGE OF SOLUTIONS WILL EMERGE FROM THIS PROCESS WHICH WILL INCLUDE AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF REFUGEES RESETTLED FROM HONG KONG."

MR BARNES NOTED THAT THE NEED FOR A GENERAL INCREASE IN RESETTLEMENT HAD BEEN CONVEYED TO LONDON, AND THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD CONTINUE TO EMPHASISE THE VERY IMPORTANT POINT THAT OTHER COUNTRIES COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO HELP HONG KONG WITHOUT A FURTHER AND MORE GENEROUS COMMITMENT ON THE PART OF THE UK.

HOWEVER, HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT ONE MILLION POUNDS STERLING HAD RECENTLY BEEN DONATED BY THE UK GOVERNMENT TO THE UNHCR FOR USE SPECIFICALLY IN HONG KONG.

TURNING TO REPATRIATION, MR BARNES RECALLED THAT DURING THE SECOND ROUND OF TALKS IN LONDON WITH OFFICIAL FROM THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM, BOTH SIDES ACCEPTED THE NEED FOR COMPREHENSIVE ARRANGEMENTS COVERING ALL VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE ARRIVING IN HONG KONG AFTER JUNE 15 AND WHO DID NOT QUALIFY AS GENUINE REFUGEES.

"WE ALSO AGREED THAT AN IMMEDIATE START SHOULD BE MADE BY COMPLETING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE RETURN OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO HAVE ASKED TO GO BACK TO VIETNAM," HE SAID.

"WE, THE UNHCR AND THE VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES ARE NOW WORKING ON THESE ARRANGEMENTS WITH A VIEW TO GETTING THE FIRST GROUP HOME BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR," HE SAID.

"AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF SUCH RETURNS THE UNHCR IS WORKING ON A MODEL REPATRIATION AND REINTEGRATION PACKAGE FOR RETURNEES.

"THE BRITISH SIDE IS READY IN PRINCIPLE TO MAKE A FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE UNHCR IN SUPPORT OF THIS PACKAGE," HE ADDED.

MR BARNES ALSO ASSURED MEMBERS THAT THE LIBERALISATION PROGRAMME FOR THE CLOSED CENTRES WAS BEING PLANNED SYSTEMATICALLY AND IMPLEMENTED CAUTIOUSLY.

"THE WORKING GROUPS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED AND ARE PROVING USEFUL.

"I THINK MANY OF THE FEARS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS WERE BASED ON A MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE PLANS AND I HOPE THAT, THROUGH THE PARTICIPATION OF DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS, MANY OF THESE CONCERNS CAN BE ALLAYED," HE SAID.

PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN FOR TRIAD RENUNCIATION SCHEME

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A CAMPAIGN TO PUBLICISE THE TRIAD RENUNCIATION SCHEME WILL BE LAUNCHED EARLY NEXT MONTH, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON GEOFFREY BARNES, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING ON LAW AND ORDER IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE, MR BARNES SAID THE SCHEME WOULD PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THOSE WHO WISHED TO RID THEMSELVES OF THE STIGMA OF TRIADS TO START AFRESH.

HE EMPHASISED THAT THE TRIAD RENUNCIATION TRIBUNAL, WHICH WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ASSESSING IMPLICATIONS AND ADMINISTERING OATHS, WOULD BE BOTH INDEPENDENT OF ANY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT AND SUBJECT TO STRICT CONFIDENTIALITY RULES.

MR BARNES SAID THE ADMINISTRATION SHARED THE CONCERN EXPRESSED ABOUT PREVENTING PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY YOUNG PEOPLE, FROM STARTING ON DRUGS.

"IN ADDITION TO THE ENFORCEMENT OF EXISTING LEGISLATION WHICH HAS RESULTED IN THE SEIZURE OF LARGE QUANTITIES OF ILLICIT DRUGS IN RECENT MONTHS, AND THE DRAFTING OF NEW LEGISLATION TO CONFISCATE THE PROCEEDS OF DRUG TRAFFICKING, THE ACTION COMMITTEE AGAINST NARCOTICS CONTINUES TO ORGANISE EXTENSIVE PREVENTIVE EDUCATION AND PUBLICITY PROGRAMMES," HE SAID.

APART FROM TACKLING SPECIFIC CRIME AREAS THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE'S STANDING COMMITTEE ON YOUNG OFFENDERS HAD RECOMMENDED THE STRENGTHENING OF OUTREACHING SOCIAL WORK SERVICES TO HELP YOUNG DELINQUENTS.

WITH THE AIM OF FORESTALLING JUVENILE DELINQUENCY, THE POLICE SUPERVISED YOUNG OFFENDERS DISCHARGED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENTS' DISCRETION SCHEME, CONTINUED TO DEVELOP THE JUNIOR POLICE CALL AND HAD FORMED SPECIAL WORKING GROUPS AT DISTRICT LEVEL TO TAKE A MORE STRUCTURED APPROACH TO DELINQUENCY.

"WHERE PREVENTION HAS FAILED, IMPROVED CURATIVE MEASURES ARE NECESSARY TO HELP YOUNG OFFENDERS TURN OVER A NEW LEAF," MR BARNES SAID.

"THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON YOUNG OFFENDERS WILL REVIEW SHORTLY THE WORK OF THE YOUNG OFFENDER ASSESSMENT PANEL, AND CONSIDER WHETHER ITS SERVICES IN ADVISING ON APPROPRIATE SENTENCES FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS SHOULD BE EXPANDED.

"THE COMMITTEE WILL ALSO MONITOR THE REHABILITATIVE EFFECTS OF SPECIAL OUTWARD BOUND COURSES FOR 'YOUTH AT RISK' AND REFINE THE COURSES AS APPROPRIATE."

CONCERNING NUISANCES ARISING FROM THE PRESENCE OF VICE ESTABLISHMENTS IN RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS, MR BARNES SAID THE PUBLIC HAD BEEN CONSULTED BY MEANS OF A WHITE BILL ABOUT POSSIBLE LEGISLATION TO CURB SUCH NUISANCES, WHICH WERE ASSOCIATED WITH PROSTITUTION.

"THE RESPONSE SHOWED GENERAL SUPPORT FOR THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION, AND I HOPE TO BRING A REVISED CRIMES (AMENDMENT) BILL BEFORE THIS COUNCIL WITHIN THE PRESENT SESSION," HE SAID.

ON IMPROVING SECURITY IN HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS, HE SAID A GOOD START HAS BEEN MADE BY MEANS OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCHEME WHICH THE POLICE HAVE BEEN RUNNING SINCE 1984. THE FIFTH PHASE OF THE SCHEME WAS COMPLETED IN JUNE THIS YEAR AND THE SIXTH PHASE STARTED IN JULY.

REFERRING TO INTERPOL WORK, MR BARNES SAID THE POLICE AND CUSTOMS AND EXCISE SERVICES WERE WELL AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS TO HELP THEM FIGHT THE SPREAD OF CRIME SYNDICATES, DRUG TRAFFICKING, FRAUD AND OTHER CRIMES.

"CONTACTS WITH INTERPOL, THE CUSTOMS CO-OPERATION COUNCIL, AND WITH INDIVIDUAL ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES HAVE BEEN STEADILY STRENGTHENED AND WILL BE MAINTAINED," HE SAID.

"IN PARTICULAR, LIAISON WITH CUSTOMS AND POLICE AUTHORITIES IN CHINA IS BEING STRENGTHENED TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS ARISING FROM THE INCREASING MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND GOODS BETWEEN HONG KONG AND CHINA.

"OUR COMMITMENT TO EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN FIGHTING CRIME IS FURTHER SHOWN BY THE AGREEMENT WHICH HAS BEEN REACHED IN THE JOINT LIAISON GROUP THAT HONG KONG WILL MAINTAIN SEPARATE MEMBERSHIP OF REGIONAL INTERPOL AND CUSTOMS ORGANISATIONS BEYOND 1997."

MR BARNES ADDED THAT DESPITE THE NEW BURDENS PLACED ON THE ADMINISTRATION, SUCH AS BY THE VIETNAMESE ARRIVALS AND BY THE INCREASED MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE AND GOODS THROUGH HONG KONG, THE DISCIPLINED SERVICES HAD BEEN ABLE TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE, AND TO IMPROVE UPON, THE PREVIOUS SERVICES BEING OFFERED.

"POWERS, CONDUCT AND PROCEDURES ARE KEPT UNDER PROPER REVIEW, AND RECRUITMENT HAS BEEN MAINTAINED AT LEVELS SUFFICIENT TO ENABLE US TO CONTINUE TO PLAN AHEAD, AND TO TRAIN THE STAFF REQUIRED TO MEET FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS," HE SAID.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1988

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UK GOVT TO BE INFORMED

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POINTS RAISED BY MEMBERS ON THE SUBJECT OF GRANTING OF RIGHT OF ABODE IN THE UK TO THE WIVES AND WIDOWS OF HONG KONG EX-SERVICEMEN WILL BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON GEOFFREY BARNES, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), DURING THE POLICY DEBATE.

HE SAID HE COULD UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEMS FACED BY WIDOWS IN THE ACQUISITION OF BRITISH CITIZENSHIP, AND FOR SOME WIVES IN FULFILLING THE RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT.

"I MUST HOWEVER CAUTION THAT, IF WHAT IS BEING SOUGHT INVOLVES, AS IT WOULD APPEAR TO DO, AMENDMENTS TO THE BRITISH NATIONALITY ACT 1981, IT WOULD BE NO SMALL UNDERTAKING, EVEN FOR A LIMITED GROUP OF PEOPLE, BECAUSE OF THE PROVISIONS OF THAT LEGISLATION ARE CLOSELY INTERLINKED, AND TO SEEK TO CHANGE ONE PART COULD HAVE RAMIFICATIONS FOR OTHER AREAS," HE SAID.

"BUT WE SHALL CERTAINLY LOOK INTO THIS AND SEE WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ASSIST THIS PARTICULAR GROUP OF PERSONS."

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PROPOSAL ON FOREIGN LAW FIRMS IN STEP WITH TRENDS

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THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON JEREMY MATHEWS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL ON FOREIGN LAW FIRMS WAS IN STEP WITH THE TRENDS IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS.

SPEAKING IN THE RESUMED POLICY DEBATE, MR MATHEWS SAID: "THERE IS GROWING INTERNATIONAL INTEREST IN THE INTEGRATION OF DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN LAWYERS IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS IN ORDER TO PROVIDE MULTINATIONAL ADVICE WITHIN A SINGLE FIRM.

"TO VARYING DEGREES SUCH INTEGRATION IS ALREADY PERMITTED IN BELGIUM, WEST GERMANY, ITALY, AND THE NETHERLANDS, AS WELL AS CALIFORNIA, NEW YORK, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND NEW SOUTH WALES."

THEREFORE THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSAL ON FOREIGN LAW FIRMS DEMONSTRATES THAT HONG KONG IS IN STEP WITH DEVELOPING INTERNATIONAL TRENDS, MR MATHEWS SAID.

/ "THE AIM

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"THE AIM OF THE PROPOSAL IS TO INTRODUCE FORMAL CRITERIA, WHERE NONE NOW EXIST, TO PERMIT THE REGISTRATION, THROUGH THE COURTS, OF FOREIGN LAWYERS AND FOREIGN LAW FIRMS, IF THEY SO WISH, TO EMPLOY OR TAKEN INTO PARTNERSHIP, HONG KONG QUALIFIED SOLICITORS TO PRACTISE HONG KONG LAW AND TO IMPOSE A FORMAL REGIME OF DISCIPLINE OVER THOSE FIRMS THROUGH THE LAW SOCIETY," HE SAID.

"THE QUESTION OF DEVISING A SCHEME TO REGULATE FOREIGN LAW FIRMS WISHING TO AVAIL THEMSELVES OF THIS OPPORTUNITY IS NOW BEING ADDRESSED," HE ADDED.

MR MATHEWS SAID THERE ARE MANY OTHER MATTERS OF IMPORTANT DETAIL TO BE CONSIDERED IN WHICH THE LAW SOCIETY WILL OBVIOUSLY PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART.

"WE BELIEVE THAT THE DETAILS WHEN FULLY LAID OUT WILL DEMONSTRATE THAT THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED ARE GROUNDLESS," HE SAID.

EXPLAINING THE REASONS BEHIND THE PROPOSAL, MR MATHEWS SAID IT HAD BEEN FORMULATED TO ENHANCE HONG KONG'S REPUTATION AS A MAJOR INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL CENTRE.

"THAT WILL CLEARLY BE A BENEFIT TO HONG KONG AS A WHOLE.

"IT WILL EXTEND THE RANGE OF LEGAL SERVICES AVAILABLE IN HONG KONG BY ENABLING FOREIGN LAW FIRMS TO PROVIDE FROM WITHIN THE FIRM AN INTEGRATED LEGAL SERVICE TO THEIR CLIENTS - CLIENTS WHO COME PREDOMINANTLY FROM THE FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL COMMUNITY.

"THE PROPOSAL WILL THUS EXTEND TO FOREIGN LAW FIRMS, WHICH SATISFY THE ENTRY CRITERIA SIMILAR RIGHTS, TO PRACTISE MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL LAW THAT ARE CURRENTLY ENJOYED BY SOME OF THE LARGER FIRMS OF HONG KONG SOLICITORS," HE SAID.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL REJECTED THE SUGGESTION THAT THE PROPOSAL PROCEEDS FROM THE PREMISE THAT HONG KONG LAWYERS ARE UNABLE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FOR LEGAL SERVICES.

"FAR FROM IT. THE AIM IS TO MAKE WHAT IS GOOD EVEN BETTER," HE SAID.

MR MATHEWS POINTED OUT THAT THE FEAR OF COMPETITION DOES NOT ALONE PROVIDE ANY JUSTIFICATION FOR THE EXCLUSION OF FOREIGN LAW FIRMS.

"HONG KONG HAS A LONG TRADITION OF ENCOURAGING COMPETITION IN A FREE MARKET AND WE BELIEVE THAT FREE COMPETITION BETWEEN LAWYERS PERMITTED TO PRACTISE IN HONGKONG IS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF HONG KONG'S FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT," HE SAID.

/THE ATTORNEY

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL ALSO REJECTED SUGGESTIONS THAT THE PROPOSAL WILL OPEN THE FLOODGATES TO FOREIGN LAWYERS.

HE SAID: "IT WILL NOT. FOREIGN LAWYERS ARE HERE ALREADY."

SINCE THE 1970S MORE THAN 20 FOREIGN LAW FIRMS INCLUDING FIRMS FROM AMERICA, AUSTRALIA, GERMANY, CANADA AND SWEDEN HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED IN HONG KONG.

"THE CRITERIA THEY PRESENTLY HAVE TO SATISFY WILL NOT BE LESSENER BY THE PROPOSAL, IN FACT THEY WILL BE FORMALISED AND TIGHTENED," MR MATHEWS SAID.

HE SAID THE PROPOSAL ENVISAGES THAT A STATUTORY SCHEME UNDER THE CHIEF JUSTICE WILL BE DEvised TO REGULATE FOREIGN LAWYERS PRACTISING HERE.

MR MATHEWS SAID CLEAR CRITERIA WILL BE FORMULATED TO ENSURE THAT ONLY FOREIGN LAW FIRMS OF "SUBSTANTIAL REPUTATION AND INTEGRITY" ARE PERMITTED TO PRACTISE HERE, THAT AN EFFECTIVE CHECK IS PROVIDED ON BOTH THE QUALITY AND THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN LAW FIRMS ALLOWED INTO HONG KONG.

"AND THAT THE LAW SOCIETY IS INVOLVED IN THIS PROCESS WITH ADEQUATE POWERS TO EXERCISE EFFECTIVE CONTROL OVER THE FOREIGN LAW FIRMS," HE SAID.

IT HAS ALSO BEEN SUGGESTED THAT THE PROPOSAL INTERFERES WITH THE LAW SOCIETY'S ROLE IN REGULATING THE CONDUCT OF ITS MEMBERS, HE SAID.

"IT DOES NOT. IT WILL IN FACT STRENGTHEN THIS AS, FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE LAW SOCIETY WILL HAVE CLEARLY LAID DOWN POWERS OF DISCIPLINE OVER FOREIGN LAWYERS," THE ATTORNEY GENERAL SAID.

TURNING TO THE TOPIC OF CIVIC EDUCATION, MR MATHEWS SAID HE SHARES THE CONCERN THAT YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE TAUGHT NOT JUST THE "3RS" BUT ALSO SOMETHING OF THE LEGAL STRUCTURES AND PRINCIPLES WHICH UNDERPIN THE SOCIETY IN WHICH WE LIVE.

MR MATHEWS SAID IT IS IMPORTANT TO INSTIL IN THE PUBLIC AN AWARENESS OF THE RULE OF LAW.

"THE BAR, THE LAW SOCIETY AND THE GOVERNMENT ARE ACTIVELY CONSIDERING HOW LEGAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS CAN BE ENHANCED.

"WE ARE ALSO LOOKING AT WAYS IN WHICH GREATER GENERAL CIVIC AWARENESS OF THE LAW CAN BE ACHIEVED," HE SAID.

THOUGHTS IN THIS AREA WILL NEED TO BE DEVELOPED WITH THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION AND MANPOWER AND WITH THE COMMITTEE ON THE PROMOTION OF CIVIC AWARENESS, MR MATHEWS SAID.

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RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE DIRECTION, LEADERSHIP

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MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROVIDE THE HONG KONG COMMUNITY WITH DIRECTION AND LEADERSHIP IN PREPARATION FOR 1997.

THE SENIOR MEMBER, THE HON ALLEN LEE, SAID THIS IN THE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN WINDING UP THE DEBATE ON HIS MOTION THAT THE GOVERNOR BE THANKED FOR HIS ANNUAL ADDRESS.

WHILE RECOGNISING 1997 AS A "REALITY" THAT THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG HAD TO LIVE WITH AND ACCEPT, MR LEE STRESSED THAT THERE WAS A POSITIVE AND A NEGATIVE APPROACH IN ACCEPTING THIS REALITY AND ALL ITS RAMIFICATIONS.

"WE CAN EITHER RESIGN OURSELVES TO GLOOM AND DOOM, OR WE CAN TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE WITH THE VITALITY AND ADAPTABILITY FOR WHICH HONG KONG IS INTERNATIONALLY KNOWN, AND TO WHICH WE OWE OUR ECONOMIC SUCCESS," HE SAID.

"THE CHOICE IS OURS, AND I BELIEVE THAT WE IN THIS COUNCIL OWE IT TO THE COMMUNITY TO TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE, JOINTLY MAP OUT A CLEAR DIRECTION, AND LEAD THE COMMUNITY IN FORGING AHEAD."

MR LEE ADMITTED THAT THIS WAS NO EASY JOB.

"WE ARE AT CROSSROADS WHERE IMPORTANT DECISIONS ABOUT OUR LONG-TERM FUTURE MUST BE MADE. ACTIONS TO CARRY US FORWARD MUST BE TAKEN," HE SAID.

MR LEE CAUTIONED MEMBERS AGAINST CERTAIN PITFALLS ALONG THE WAY.

"DIVERSITY OF OPINION IS HEALTHY, BUT IRRESPONSIBLE ACCUSATIONS ARE DESTRUCTIVE. SECTORAL INTERESTS ARE INEVITABLE, BUT BLIND PROPONENTS OF THOSE INTERESTS DO NOT MAKE GOOD LEADERS," HE SAID.

HE POINTED OUT THAT A LEADER MUST BE ABLE TO MAKE DECISIONS THAT WERE FREE FROM BIAS AND FREE FROM SELF OR SECTORAL INTEREST.

THE PATH LEADING TO TRUE DEMOCRACY OFTEN INVOLVED THE PROCESS OF GIVE AND TAKE, MR LEE STRESSED.

"WE MUST BE PREPARED, WHEN THE OVERALL INTEREST OF HONG KONG IS AT STAKE, TO GIVE, AND GIVE WITHOUT RESERVATION," HE SAID.

"SELFISH MOTIVATIONS HAVE NO PLACE IN THIS COUNCIL."

MR LEE FIRMLY BELIEVED THAT IF MEMBERS HAD CLARITY OF VISION, UNITY OF PURPOSE, AND "ROW TOGETHER IN HARMONY", THEY COULD "RIDE ANY OF THE WAVES" THAT MIGHT HIT THEM.

/HE PRAISED

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HE PRAISED THE GOVERNOR FOR HIS COMPREHENSIVE PLANS FOR THE FUTURE WHICH SHOULD PROVIDE A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR CONCERTED EFFORTS.

MEANWHILE, THE CONSTRUCTIVE POINTS OR ARGUMENTS PUT FORWARD BY MEMBERS SHOULD PROVIDE A "FERTILE POOL" OF IDEAS OR CONCRETE PROPOSALS ON WHICH THE FUTURE "THINK TANK" COULD DRAW, HE ADDED.

MR LEE'S MOTION WAS PASSED BY THE COUNCIL.

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CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENT APPROVED

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THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON JEREMY MATHEWS, MOVED A MOTION IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE COMPANIES (WINDING-UP) (AMENDMENT) RULES 1988 BE APPROVED.

MR MATHEWS SAID THE COMPANIES (WINDING-UP) (AMENDMENT) RULES 1988 MADE A CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENT TO THE PRINCIPAL RULES FOLLOWING UPON THE ENACTMENT OF THE COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) ORDINANCE 1988 ON JULY 6.

"THIS AMENDMENT READ TOGETHER WITH THE AMENDING ORDINANCE, ALLOWS THE REGISTRAR OF THE SUPREME COURT TO HEAR IN OPEN COURT UNOPPOSED PETITIONS FOR THE WINDING-UP OF A COMPANY, SO THAT THE COMPANIES JUDGE CAN GIVE MORE TIME TO THE HEARING OF CONTESTED PETITIONS," HE EXPLAINED.

THE MOTION WAS PASSED.

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GOVERNOR THANKED FOR ANNUAL ADDRESS

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AFTER THREE DAYS OF DEBATE, THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PASSED A MOTION TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE GOVERNOR BE THANKED FOR HIS ANNUAL ADDRESS TO THE COUNCIL LAST MONTH.

MEMBERS SPOKE ON THE MOTION OVER TWO DAYS LAST WEEK, AND OFFICIALS REPLIED TODAY TO THE POINTS THAT THEY HAD RAISED.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY LED THE REPLIES, AND THE CLOSING SPEECH FOR THE OFFICIALS WAS MADE BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY.

A SHORT SPEECH WINDING UP THE DEBATE WAS MADE BY THE SENIOR MEMBER, THE HON ALLEN LEE, WHO HAD MOVED THE MOTION.

IN OTHER BUSINESS, THE COUNCIL PASSED A MOTION MOVED BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL UNDER THE COMPANIES ORDINANCE.

ONE BILL WAS ALSO PASSED. THIS WAS THE MOTOR VEHICLES (FIRST REGISTRATION TAX) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988.

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MASSIVE INVESTMENT IN PORT SERVICES: GOVERNOR

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THE ENORMOUS GROWTH IN VESSEL MOVEMENTS AND THROUGHPUT OF THE PORT OF HONG KONG CREATES AN URGENT NEED FOR ADDITIONAL SERVICES, AND THERE HAS BEEN MASSIVE INVESTMENT IN THE PORT AND ITS FUTURE FROM BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS, THE GOVERNOR, SIR DAVID WILSON, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"IN 1987 WE BROKE THREE SEPARATE RECORDS: WE HAD ALMOST 205,000 VESSEL MOVEMENTS IN AND OUT, OVER 15,000 OF THESE WERE OCEAN GOING CARGO SHIPS, AND WE BECAME THE WORLD'S BUSIEST CONTAINER PORT WITH AN ANNUAL THROUGHPUT OF NEARLY THREE-AND-A-HALF MILLION TWENTY-FOOT EQUIVALENT UNITS," HE SAID.

ADDRESSING THE 1988 SEATRADE CONFERENCE, A BIENNIAL EVENT BEING HELD IN HONG KONG FOR THE SEVENTH TIME, SIR DAVID SAID THAT THE NEW TERMINAL 6 AT KWAI CHUNG WAS UNDER CONSTRUCTION, WITH ITS FIRST BERTH ALREADY OPERATIONAL AND FULL COMPLETION SCHEDULED FOR MID-1989.

HE NOTED THAT THE TENDER FOR THE ADJACENT TERMINAL 7 WAS AWARDED IN APRIL THIS YEAR, AND COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT WAS EXPECTED IN 1993.

"WHEN FULLY OPERATIONAL, THESE TWO FACILITIES WILL ROUGHLY DOUBLE HONG KONG'S PRESENT CONTAINER HANDLING CAPACITY," HE SAID.

BUT IT WOULD ALSO MEAN THAT KWAI CHUNG WOULD THEN BE FULLY DEVELOPED. FUTURE CONTAINER TERMINALS WOULD NEED TO BE BUILT ELSEWHERE.

SIR DAVID SAID THE SITING OF FUTURE TERMINALS AND PORT FACILITIES WAS ONE OF SEVERAL MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS BEING CONSIDERED BY THE GOVERNMENT IN ITS CURRENT PORT AND AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT STUDY.

"THE DECISIONS WHICH WILL BE TAKEN AS A RESULT OF THIS STUDY WILL BE AIMED AT PROVIDING HONG KONG WITH AN ADEQUATE AND COST EFFECTIVE INFRASTRUCTURE WHICH WILL MEET OUR NEEDS TO THE YEAR 2011 AND BEYOND THAT," THE GOVERNOR SAID.

SIR DAVID ALSO MENTIONED THAT SAFETY WAS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT IN A PORT AS BUSY AS HONG KONG'S.

A NEW AND ADVANCED VESSEL TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM WAS NOW BEING INSTALLED IN THE MACAU FERRY TERMINAL BUILDING, HE SAID.

"THIS WILL INCLUDE COMPUTER AND RADAR-BASED DISPLAYS OF PORT TRAFFIC SO THAT CONTROLLING STAFF CAN MONITOR AND DIRECT THE MOVEMENT OF ALL VESSELS, BOTH IN THE PORT APPROACHES AND WITHIN THE PORT ITSELF.

/"THIS SHOULD

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"THIS SHOULD CONTRIBUTE GREATLY TO THE SAFETY IN THE PORT," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID SAID THAT HONG KONG OFFERED A GREAT DEAL OF INTEREST TO THOSE INVOLVED IN THE SHIPPING BUSINESS.

"WE HAVE ONE OF THE WORLD'S FINEST NATURAL HARBOURS; A BOOMING DOMESTIC ECONOMY; AND A STRATEGIC POSITION AS THE GATEWAY TO CHINA AND THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID NOTED THAT WITH CHINA'S MODERNISATION AND THE CONSEQUENT EXPLOSION OF TWO-WAY TRADE, HONG KONG'S ROLE AS AN ENTREPOT FOR SOUTHERN CHINA HAD BECOME INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT.

A PHENOMENAL GROWTH IN RE-EXPORTS, VALUED AT \$183 BILLION, WAS RECORDED LAST YEAR, REPRESENTING AN INCREASE OF ALMOST 50 PER CENT OVER THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

"MOST OF THIS RE-EXPORT TRADE -- SOME 80 PER CENT OF IT -- IS TRADE TO OR FROM CHINA.

"THERE IS EVERY INDICATION TOO THAT THIS YEAR WILL SEE ANOTHER LARGE INCREASE," SIR DAVID SAID.

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FUNDS APPROVED FOR NEW VR OPEN CENTRE

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THE FINANCE COMMITTEE TODAY (WEDNESDAY) APPROVED FUNDS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN OPEN CENTRE FOR VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AT PILLAR POINT, TUEN MUN.

THE FUNDS TALLING \$79.15 MILLION ARE FOR THE CAPITAL COSTS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF PHASE I OF THE CENTRE.

MEMBERS WERE TOLD OF THE NEED FOR THE PROJECT AND THAT THE NEW OPEN CENTRE WOULD BE MANAGED AND OPERATED BY THE UNHCR.

THEY NOTED THE UNHCR'S COMMITMENT TO TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE NEW OPEN CENTRE, AND ITS INTENTION TO LAUNCH AN INTERNATIONAL APPEAL IN EARLY 1989 FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD THE CAPITAL COSTS OF THE PROJECT.

ALTHOUGH THERE ARE TWO PLATFORMS ON THE SITE FOR THE OPEN CENTRE, ONLY THE LOWER PLATFORM IS AVAILABLE FOR IMMEDIATE DEVELOPMENT.

/IT IS

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THE OPEN CENTRE, WHICH WILL BE BUILT ON THE LOWER PLATFORM, COULD EVENTUALLY ACCOMMODATE 5,500 REFUGEES.

THE PROJECT IS PLANNED FOR CONSTRUCTION IN PHASES TO FACILITATE EARLY INTAKE OF SOME 1,600 REFUGEES AROUND MID-1989 FROM THE TEMPORARY EMERGENCY CENTRE NOW ALREADY OPERATING AT PILLAR POINT.

AT TODAY'S MEETING, COMMITTEE MEMBERS ALSO NOTED THE NEED TO PROCEED WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF STAGE II OF THE DETENTION CENTRE FOR VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE AT WHITEHEAD, WU KAI SHA, AT A CAPITAL COST OF \$77.8 MILLION.

FUNDS COVERING TWO STAGES OF THE WHITEHEAD DETENTION CENTRE WERE ALREADY APPROVED BY THE FINANCE COMMITTEE IN AUGUST.

IN ADDITION, THE COMMITTEE NOTED THE DEVELOPMENTS ON REFUGEE MATTERS, IN PARTICULAR THOSE LEADING TO THE STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE UNHCR, AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON PUBLIC EXPENDITURE ON CARE AND MAINTENANCE OF VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE.

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EXPENDITURE FOR OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINTS
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THE FINANCE COMMITTEE TODAY (WEDNESDAY) APPROVED THE CREATION OF A NEW HEAD OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINTS TO REFLECT ITS INDEPENDENCE.

THE COMMITTEE ALSO APPROVED THE CREATION OF EIGHT SUBHEADS UNDER THE NEW HEAD OF EXPENDITURE TOGETHER WITH SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISION OF \$1,949,000 FOR 1988-89.

MEMBERS WERE TOLD THAT THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINTS WOULD BE AN INDEPENDENT ORGANISATION AND THE COMMISSIONER WOULD BE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR TO WHOM HE WOULD BE DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE.

TO REFLECT THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE OFFICE, IT WAS CONSIDERED THAT THE FINANCING OF THE OFFICE SHOULD GENERALLY FOLLOW THE MODEL OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION, AND ACCORDINGLY THE OFFICE SHOULD HAVE ITS OWN HEAD OF EXPENDITURE IN THE ESTIMATES.

THE OFFICE WILL COME INTO OPERATION ON A DAY TO BE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR BY NOTICE IN THE GAZETTE.

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PAC HEARINGS NEXT WEEK

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OPEN HEARINGS OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE WILL BE HELD NEXT WEEK FOLLOWING THE TABLING OF THE REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF AUDIT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THESE HEARINGS WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CHAMBER ON NOVEMBER 21 AND NOVEMBER 24, BOTH STARTING AT 9.30 AM.

CONTROLLING OFFICERS WILL APPEAR BEFORE THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO POINTS MADE IN THE REPORT.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE COMPRISES SEVEN MEMBERS RECENTLY APPOINTED TO THE COMMITTEE FOR THEIR NEW TERM OF APPOINTMENT OR ELECTION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

THEY ARE MR PETER POON (CHAIRMAN), MR STEPHEN CHEONG, MR CHUNG PUI-LAM, MR HO SAI-CHU, MR MARTIN BARROW, DR LEONG CHE-HUNG AND MR PETER WONG HONG-YUEN.

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DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMME FOR OWNER-MANAGERS DEVELOPED

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THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING COUNCIL ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT A COMPREHENSIVE DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMME FOR OWNERS AND MANAGERS OF SMALL BUSINESSES HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY DEVELOPED AND WILL BE OFFERED TO THE PUBLIC EARLY NEXT YEAR.

SPEAKING AT A CEREMONY TO MARK THE LAUNCHING OF THE PROGRAMME, THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE COUNCIL, MR HORACE KNIGHT, SAID IT WOULD POSSIBLY BE THE WORLD'S FIRST COMPREHENSIVE OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING PACKAGE FOR OWNER-MANAGERS AND THE FIRST MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME IN CHINESE PRODUCED BY THE MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (MDC).

THE PROGRAMME MATERIAL CONSISTS OF 27 SELF-CONTAINED TEXT MODULES AND EXERCISES ON A RANGE OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT AREAS. THESE ARE SUPPORTED BY A SERIES OF 12 CANTONESE VIDEOS.

"TRIALS ON THE PROJECT CARRIED OUT IN THE PAST YEAR WERE WELL RECEIVED AND SUCCESSFUL.

"IT IS ENCOURAGING THAT THE EXTRAMURAL DEPARTMENT OF THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY HAS AGREED TO TAKE UP THE PROGRAMME WITH THE FIRST COURSE COMMENCING AFTER THE CHINESE NEW YEAR," MR KNIGHT SAID.

/THE LEE

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THE LEE WAI LEE TECHNICAL INSTITUTE OF THE COUNCIL WOULD BE RUNNING ANOTHER PROGRAMME ON A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT BASIS, HE ADDED.

STUDIES COMMISSIONED BY THE COUNCIL HAD RECOMMENDED THAT RELEVANT LEARNING MATERIALS AND HELP SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE 200,000 OWNER-MANAGERS AS WELL AS A LARGE NUMBER OF SUPERVISORY AND MIDDLE MANAGEMENT STAFF THROUGH OPEN LEARNING METHODS.

A FEATURE OF THE MDC'S APPROACH WAS A HIGH DEGREE OF AUTONOMY AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SCOPE AND DEPTH OF THE LEARNING WHICH WAS GIVEN TO PARTICIPANTS.

THE MANAGER OF THE PROGRAMME, MR ALEXANDER WELSH SAID, "AN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING APPROACH PROVIDES A VALUABLE OPPORTUNITY FOR OWNERS TO IDENTIFY AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT, BOTH IN MANAGEMENT AND PROFITABILITY.

"USING THESE PACKAGES DEVELOPED BY THE MDC, OWNERS CAN ACHIEVE MANY IMPROVEMENTS, IN THEIR OWN TIME, AT THEIR OWN PACE, AND WITH A MINIMUM OF CONVENTIONAL TEACHING AND TUTORING."

TO EXPLAIN AND POPULARISE THE CONCEPTS BEHIND THE APPROACH AND TO SHOW THE PROGRAMME IN ACTION, A NINE-MINUTE PROMOTIONAL VIDEO HAD BEEN PRODUCED AND COPIES WERE AVAILABLE AT THE MDC, MR WELSH SAID.

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UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT AN IMPORTANT BOOST FOR SPEECH THERAPY

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PUBLIC AWARENESS OF SPEECH THERAPY WILL BE IMPROVED BY THE OPENING OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH AND HEARING SCIENCES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG, LADY WILSON SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY OF THE DEPARTMENT, LADY WILSON SAID SPEECH THERAPISTS PLAYED A VITAL ROLE IN THE PROVISION OF EDUCATIONAL, REHABILITATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES IN HONG KONG, WORKING FOR GOVERNMENT, SUBVENTED AND PRIVATE ORGANISATIONS.

SHE POINTED OUT THAT UNTIL THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COURSE OFFERED BY THE NEW DEPARTMENT, STUDENTS WISHING TO STUDY SPEECH THERAPY HAD TO GO ABROAD.

"THIS WILL BE THE FIRST COURSE IN HONG KONG TO OFFER PROVISION FOR THE EDUCATION OF FULLY QUALIFIED SPEECH THERAPISTS," SHE SAID.

PLANNING OF A COURSE TO EDUCATE QUALIFIED CANTONESE-SPEAKING SPEECH THERAPISTS HAD BEGUN OVER 10 YEARS AGO, SHE NOTED.

/"THE DEPARTMENT

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"THE DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH AND HEARING SCIENCES REPRESENTS THE FIRST UNIVERSITY COURSE ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD TO STUDY SPEECH THERAPY IN A CHINESE CONTEXT," LADY WILSON ADDED.

LADY WILSON ALSO SAID THAT THERE WERE STILL MANY AREAS TO DEVELOP IN SPEECH THERAPY, WITH ONE SUCH AREA BEING THE PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR ADULTS.

SHE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY INTERVENTION, SAYING "IN SPEECH THERAPY AS IN MANY SIMILAR FIELDS, THE IMPORTANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF DISCOVERING THE PROBLEM AT AN EARLY STAGE IS CRUCIAL".

THE FIRST STUDENTS ADMITTED TO THE NEW DEPARTMENT, LOCATED AT THE PRINCE PHILIP DENTAL HOSPITAL IN SAI YING PUN, BEGAN THEIR COURSE IN SEPTEMBER.

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CONTAINER PORT ROAD CONGESTION ON AGENDA

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THE KWAI TSING DISTRICT BOARD'S TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE WILL DISCUSS PROPOSALS RAISED BY A MEMBER TO SOLVE CONGESTION PROBLEMS IN CONTAINER PORT ROAD AT A MEETING TO BE HELD TOMORROW (THURSDAY).

A MEMBER WILL ALSO MOVE A MOTION REQUESTING THE GOVERNMENT TO SET UP A PEDESTRIAN CROSSING NEAR HO FUNG COLLEGE IN NEW SHING MUN ROAD AND AT CHING HONG ROAD NEAR THE CHEUNG CHING BUS TERMINUS.

A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS, INCLUDING LOCATIONS OF NEW COVERED BUS STOPS, WIDENING OF FOOTBRIDGES AT KWAI CHUNG ROAD AND PROPOSED DIVERSION OF TWO BUS ROUTES, WILL BE RAISED AT THE MEETING.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE MEETING OF THE KWAI TSING DISTRICT BOARD'S TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE WHICH WILL BEGIN AT 2.30 PM TOMORROW (THURSDAY) AT THE CONFERENCE ROOM, 10TH FLOOR KWAI HING GOVERNMENT OFFICES BUILDING, KWAI CHUNG.

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CLOSURE OF ILLEGAL BUILDING SOUGHT

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THE BUILDING AUTHORITY IS TO SEEK THE CLOSURE OF THE ILLEGAL BUILDING AT THE REAR LANE OF 361-363 LOCKHART ROAD, WAN CHAI, SO THAT IT CAN BE DEMOLISHED WITHOUT DANGER TO THE OCCUPIERS AND TO THE PUBLIC.

THE CLOSURE IS PART OF AN EXERCISE TO ENFORCE AN ORDER ISSUED UNDER THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE IN JUNE THIS YEAR REQUIRING THE DEMOLITION OF THE ILLEGAL BUILDING. HOWEVER, THE OWNER FAILED TO COMPLY WITH THE ORDER.

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPLY FOR A CLOSURE ORDER FROM THE DISTRICT COURT, HONG KONG ON MARCH 16 NEXT YEAR WAS POSTED ON A CONSPICUOUS PART OF THE BUILDING TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IT IS INTENDED THAT DEMOLITION WORK WILL BE CARRIED OUT IMMEDIATELY AFTER A CLOSURE ORDER IS OBTAINED.

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INTENTION TO APPLY FOR BUILDING CLOSURE ORDER

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THE BUILDING AUTHORITY IS TO SEEK THE CLOSURE OF A BUILDING AT 9 NORFOLK ROAD, KOWLOON, IN ORDER THAT THE ILLEGAL STRUCTURES ERECTED IN IT CAN BE DEMOLISHED WITHOUT DANGER TO THE OCCUPIERS OR TO THE PUBLIC.

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPLY FOR CLOSURE ORDER FROM THE SHA TIN DISTRICT COURT AT 9.30 AM ON JANUARY 18 NEXT YEAR WAS POSTED ON A CONSPICIOUS PART OF THE BUILDING TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE CLOSURE IS PART OF AN EXERCISE TO ENFORCE AN ORDER ISSUED UNDER THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE ON MAY 2 LAST YEAR REQUIRING THE DEMOLITION OF THE ILLEGAL STRUCTURES.

IT IS INTENDED THAT DEMOLITION WILL START IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE CLOSURE ORDER IS MADE.

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TEMPORARY URBAN CLEARWAYS IN CENTRAL, WESTERN
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THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED THAT THREE ROAD SECTIONS IN CENTRAL WILL BE DESIGNATED URBAN CLEARWAYS FROM 10 AM ON FRIDAY (NOVEMBER 18) FOR ABOUT SIX MONTHS TO FACILITATE ROAD RECONSTRUCTION WORKS.

CONNAUGHT ROAD CENTRAL WESTBOUND BETWEEN CLEVERLY STREET AND MORRISON STREET WILL BE MADE 7 AM TO 7 PM DAILY URBAN CLEARWAY.

IN ADDITION, CONNAUGHT ROAD CENTRAL EASTBOUND FROM ITS JUNCTION WITH MORRISON STREET TO A POINT 65 METRES EAST OF THE SAME JUNCTION; AND THE SLIP ROAD LEADING FROM CONNAUGHT ROAD CENTRAL TO THE MACAU FERRY TERMINAL WILL BOTH BECOME URBAN CLEARWAYS ROUND-THE-CLOCK.

AT THE SAME TIME, THREE ROAD SECTIONS IN WESTERN WILL BE DESIGNATED 7 AM TO 7 PM DAILY URBAN CLEARWAYS TO FACILITATE CABLE-DUCT LAYING AND PILING WORKS.

TWO OF THESE SECTIONS ARE: THE SOUTHERN KERBSIDE LANE OF DES VOEUX ROAD WEST FROM ITS JUNCTION WITH HILL ROAD TO A POINT ABOUT 20 METRES EAST OF THE SAME JUNCTION; AND THE SOUTHERN KERBSIDE LANE OF DES VOEUX ROAD WEST FROM A POINT ABOUT 120 METRES WEST OF ITS JUNCTION WITH HILL ROAD TO A POINT ABOUT 155 METRES WEST OF THE SAME JUNCTION.

THEY WILL BE MADE URBAN CLEARWAYS FOR ABOUT TWO WEEKS.

THE WESTERN KERBSIDE LANE OF WESTERN STREET FROM ITS JUNCTION WITH CONNAUGHT ROAD WEST TO A POINT ABOUT 30 METRES SOUTH OF THE SAME JUNCTION WILL BECOME AN URBAN CLEARWAY FOR ABOUT SIX WEEKS.

NO VEHICLES EXCEPT FRANCHISED BUSES WILL BE ALLOWED TO STOP FOR PASSENGERS OR GOODS WITHIN THE RESTRICTED AREAS.

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KWUN TONG RESTRICTED ZONES
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THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED THAT TWO ROAD SECTIONS IN KWUN TONG WILL BE DESIGNATED 7 AM TO MIDNIGHT DAILY RESTRICTED ZONES FROM 10 AM ON FRIDAY (NOVEMBER 18).

ALL VEHICLES EXCEPT FRANCHISED BUSES WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO STOP FOR PASSENGERS OR GOODS ALONG THE WESTERN KERBSIDE LANE OF HONG NING ROAD BETWEEN ITS JUNCTION WITH YEE ON STREET AND A POINT ABOUT 90 METRES NORTH OF THE SAME JUNCTION.

MOREOVER, ALL PUBLIC LIGHT BUSES WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO STOP FOR PASSENGERS ALONG THE WESTERN KERBSIDE LANE OF HONG NING ROAD BETWEEN A POINT ABOUT 28 METRES NORTH OF ITS JUNCTION WITH YEE ON STREET AND A POINT ABOUT 90 METRES NORTH OF THE SAME JUNCTION.

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