



## DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 1987

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SIMPLE TAX STRUCTURE SERVING HONG KONG WELL  
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SEPARATE TAXATION OF MARRIED WOMEN OR THE INTRODUCTION OF A WORKING-WIFE ALLOWANCE WAS NEITHER DESIRABLE NOR NECESSARY IN HONG KONG, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, SAID THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON.

WINDING UP THE DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1987 IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR JACOBS SAID: +OUR PRESENT SYSTEM, WHICH IS BASED ON THE ABILITY TO PAY, HAS SERVED US WELL BECAUSE IT IS SIMPLE TO UNDERSTAND AND COST EFFICIENT TO ADMINISTER.+

MR JACOBS NOTED THAT A NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL HAD ARGUED THAT SEPARATE TAXATION OF MARRIED WOMEN WAS DESIRABLE FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF SOCIAL JUSTICE.

THE HON PAULINE NG, HE SAID, HAD SUGGESTED THAT SEPARATE TAXATION WOULD BENEFIT THE LABOUR MARKET BY ENCOURAGING WOMEN TO JOIN THE WORKFORCE, WHILST OTHER MEMBERS HAD SUGGESTED THAT AN ALLOWANCE FOR WORKING WIVES BE INTRODUCED.

+THE INCOMES OF HUSBAND AND WIFE ARE AGGREGATED BECAUSE THEIR ABILITY TO PAY TAX DEPENDS ON THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF THEIR INCOME AND NOT UPON THE EXTENT TO WHICH EACH PARTNER RECEIVES THAT INCOME,+ MR JACOBS SAID.

THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF JOINT ASSESSMENT, HE WENT ON, RECOGNISED THE MARRIED COUPLE AS THE FISCAL UNIT OF CHARGE, AND MET THE REQUIREMENTS OF EQUITY BY ENSURING THAT TWO FAMILIES WITH EQUAL INCOMES WERE LIABLE TO IDENTICAL AMOUNTS OF TAX.

+ON THE BASIS OF EXISTING ALLOWANCES, SEPARATE TAXATION WOULD CREATE DIFFERENT RESULTS ON FAMILY TAX BURDENS DEPENDING ON THE RELATIVE INCOME SPLIT BETWEEN THE TWO WORKING SPOUSES, AND ON WHETHER ONE, OR BOTH, SPOUSES ARE INCOME EARNERS,+ HE SAID.

THE TOTAL TAX PAYABLE AFTER A COMPLICATED PROCESS FROM SEPARATE TAXATION COULD BE THE SAME AS THAT ASSESSED UNDER THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF AGGREGATION, HE ADDED.

MR JACOBS POINTED OUT THAT IF SEPARATE TAXATION WERE INTRODUCED, ONLY ABOUT 16.5 PER CENT OF SALARIES TAXPAYERS WOULD BENEFIT WHILE THE REMAINING 83.5 PER CENT WOULD NOT.

+IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES I QUESTION WHETHER THE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSAL COULD BE JUSTIFIED,+ HE SAID.

ADOPTION OF SEPARATE TAXATION OVERLOOKED A MARRIED INDIVIDUAL'S INEVITABLY CLOSE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL TIES WITH HIS OR HER PARTNER, HE ADDED.

/WITH REGARDS .....

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WITH REGARDS TO MRS NG'S COMMENTS, MR JACOBS SAID, THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT THE PRESENT SYSTEM INHIBITED WOMEN WHO WISHED TO WORK FROM JOINING THE WORKFORCE.

+ON THE CONTRARY, HONG KONG'S FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE AT 48.5 PER CENT ALREADY COMPARES FAVOURABLY WITH THAT IN MANY DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES,+ HE SAID.

TURNING TO SUGGESTIONS FOR INTRODUCTION OF A WORKING-WIFE ALLOWANCE, MR JACOBS SAID SUCH AN ALLOWANCE WOULD BE EXPENSIVE.

AN ANNUAL ALLOWANCE OF \$20 000 PROPOSED BY THE HON PETER POON WOULD COST \$530 MILLION AT 1986-87 LEVELS OF INCOME.

+ADDITIONALLY, THE INTRODUCTION OF A WORKING-WIFE ALLOWANCE WOULD UNDULY COMPLICATE OUR SIMPLE SYSTEM OF TAXATION, AND HAVE THE EFFECT OF CONFERRING BENEFITS ON A PARTICULAR GROUP OF TAXPAYERS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE GREATER MAJORITY,+ HE SAID.

MR JACOBS THANKED MEMBERS FOR THEIR COMMENTS DURING THE EARLIER DEBATE ON THE OTHER ASPECTS OF TAXATION, INCLUDING THE VIEWS ON A BALANCE BETWEEN DIRECT AND INDIRECT TAXES.

+I SENSED SOME APPRECIATION OF THE POTENTIAL VALUE OF A WIDER AND MORE STABLE TAX BASE - HOWEVER BALANCED BETWEEN DIRECT AND INDIRECT SOURCES.+

HE SAID HE AGREED WITH COMMENTS BY SENIOR MEMBER, THE HON LYDIA DUNN, THAT HONG KONG SHOULD NOT HAVE A VALUE ADDED TAX. +I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT A VALUE ADDED TAX WOULD BE RIGHT FOR HONG KONG,+ MR JACOBS SAID.

MR JACOBS SAID HE HAD DOUBTS ABOUT SOME MEMBERS' SUGGESTION THAT FURTHER +LUXURY+ ITEMS BE BROUGHT INTO THE INDIRECT TAX NET, AS TO WHETHER THIS WOULD EFFECTIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO HIS OBJECTIVE OF MORE STABLE TAX YIELDS AND A BROADER BASE.

+TO CONCENTRATE UPON THEM WOULD AMOUNT TO NO MORE THAN A TINKERING WITH THE EXISTING SYSTEM.+

HE REPEATED AN ASSURANCE THAT +NOTHING WILL BE PROPOSED WITHOUT THE MOST CAREFUL APPRAISAL AND CONSIDERATION OF THE POTENTIAL EFFECTS+.

+THE PRESENT TAX REGIME HAS SERVED US WELL AND WILL NOT BE LIGHTLY CHANGED,+ MR JACOBS SAID.

ALL ASPECTS OF THE TAX STRUCTURE WERE EXAMINED EACH YEAR, MR JACOBS SAID. +I WOULD NOT WANT ANYONE TO THINK THAT IN PUTTING TOGETHER OUR PROPOSALS OUR APPROACH IS ARBITRARY.+

/HE SAID .....

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HE SAID IT WAS NOT AN OVERSIGHT THAT THERE WAS A LACK OF AN INCREASE IN THE DEPENDENT PARENTS ALLOWANCE.

+SINCE THE ALLOWANCE HAD BEEN INCREASED AS RECENTLY AS 1986 I FELT THAT AN IMPROVEMENT IN CHILD ALLOWANCES DESERVED GREATER PRIORITY THIS YEAR,+ MR JACOBS SAID.

MR JACOBS SAID MISS DUNN SHARED HIS VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF A STRATEGY FOR THE MEDIUM TERM.

HOWEVER, HE SAID HE TOOK ISSUE WITH HER ON ONE POINT WHEN SHE QUESTIONED THE NEED TO MAINTAIN DUTY RATES IN REAL TERMS.

+TO MY MIND, ONE OF THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF OUR FISCAL STRATEGY IS THAT WE SHOULD NOT LET OUR SPECIFIC TAX RATES ERODE IN REAL TERMS IN THE GOOD TIMES AND THEN BE FACED WITH HAVING TO INCREASE INDIVIDUAL ITEMS SUBSTANTIALLY WHEN THINGS TURN AGAINST US. SHARP CHANGES IN DUTY RATES ARE DISRUPTIVE,+ HE SAID.

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ESTIMATED SURPLUS HIGHER THAN FORECAST  
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THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) REVISED THE ESTIMATED SURPLUS FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1986-87 FROM \$3.1 BILLION TO \$3.7 BILLION.

WINDING UP THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1987 IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR JACOBS NOTED THAT GENERAL REVENUE FOR THE YEAR HAD marginally improved FROM \$43.1 BILLION TO \$43.6 BILLION MAINLY DUE TO INCREASED STAMP DUTY FROM EVEN HIGHER LEVELS OF STOCK MARKET TURNOVER THAN PREVIOUSLY ANTICIPATED.

IN TERMS OF EXPENDITURE ON THE GENERAL REVENUE ACCOUNT, MR JACOBS FORESAW LITTLE CHANGE FROM THE REVISED ESTIMATES GIVEN IN HIS BUDGET SPEECH.

A SLOWER PACE OF EXPENDITURE ON THE CAPITAL WORKS UNDERTAKEN BY SUBVENTED BODIES WAS PARTLY OFFSET BY SLIGHTLY HIGHER PAYMENTS ON THE PURCHASE OF WATER FROM CHINA AND UNDER THE DEFENCE COSTS AGREEMENT, HE ADDED.

MR JACOBS SAID EXPENDITURE FROM THE VARIOUS FUNDS WAS LIKELY TO BE ABOUT \$250 MILLION LOWER DUE TO THE DELAY IN SOME PLANNED PURCHASES OF PROPERTY.

/BUT HE .....

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BUT HE SAID THIS WAS LARGELY OFFSET BY LOWER RECEIPTS ON THE HOME OWNERSHIP FUND FOLLOWING DELAY IN THE SALE OF FLATS.

OVERALL, THE NET POSITION ON THE FUNDS WAS NOT EXPECTED TO VARY SIGNIFICANTLY FROM THAT GIVEN IN HIS BUDGET SPEECH, HE SAID.

BUT HE SAID REVENUE WAS SUSCEPTIBLE TO LAST MINUTE VARIATIONS AND HIS COMMENTS TODAY REGARDING 1986-87 WERE STILL BASED ON ESTIMATES AS FIGURES FOR GOVERNMENT FINANCE WERE AVAILABLE ONLY TO THE END OF FEBRUARY.

MR JACOBS NOTED THAT EXTENSIVE COMMENTS HAD BEEN MADE ABOUT THE BUDGET, BUT HE REGARDED THE DESCRIPTION +SIMPLY MARVELLOUS+ AS A PROPER AND CONSIDERED JUDGEMENT OF HIS PROPOSALS.

HE DISAGREED WITH A SUGGESTION THAT HIS BUDGET WAS LACKING IN VISION, SAYING THAT HIS PROPOSALS WERE PREPARED IN RELATION TO WHAT HAD HAPPENED IN THE PAST AND WHAT WAS FORESEEN FOR THE FUTURE.

+I MIGHT ADD THAT I HAVE THEREFORE ALREADY BEGUN TO EXAMINE OPTIONS FOR 1988,+ HE SAID.

RESPONDING TO COMMENTS THAT THE BUDGET WAS NOT DOING ENOUGH FOR INDUSTRY, MR JACOBS POINTED OUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROMOTION OF INDUSTRY IN HONG KONG THROUGH SUCH BODIES AS THE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD, THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING COUNCIL AND THE HONG KONG PRODUCTIVITY COUNCIL.

+I BELIEVE THAT SO FAR OUR PROGRAMMES HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL. OF COURSE, THEY CAN BE FURTHER DEVELOPED AND THAT IS WHAT WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF DOING. IT IS AN ON-GOING TASK.+

HE ALSO SAID WHILE IT WAS EASY TO GIVE A RANGE OF FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FOR INDUSTRY, ALL TOO OFTEN THEY DID NOT HAVE THE DESIRED EFFECT.

+WE MUST ENSURE THAT WHATEVER WE DO GIVES VALUE FOR MONEY, AND THAT IS WHY IDEAS HAVE TO BE THOROUGHLY EXAMINED AND TESTED. WE MUST NOT BE AND ARE NOT COMPLACENT, BUT EQUALLY WELL WE DO NOT BELIEVE IN BEING HUSTLED INTO WASTEFUL EXPENDITURE,+ HE ADDED.

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STRONG ECONOMY PUTS OFF NEED TO REVISE FORECAST

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THE ECONOMY IS PERFORMING WELL AT PRESENT AND CURRENT EVIDENCE DOES NOT CALL FOR ANY REVISION IN THE ECONOMIC FORECAST FOR 1987, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

WINDING UP THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1987 IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR JACOBS NOTED THAT FIGURES FOR DOMESTIC EXPORTS IN THE FIRST TWO MONTHS OF 1987 INDICATED THAT THE GROWTH MOMENTUM BUILT UP IN THE LATTER PART OF LAST YEAR HAD CONTINUED.

+THE CURRENT ORDER BOOK POSITIONS OF MANUFACTURERS REMAIN STRONG.

+THIS AND THE FACT THAT RETAINED IMPORTS OF RAW MATERIALS AND SEMI-MANUFACTURES IN THE FOURTH QUARTER OF LAST YEAR WERE STILL BUOYANT, SUGGEST THAT THE MOMENTUM WILL BE SUSTAINED FURTHER INTO THE YEAR,+ HE SAID.

POINTING OUT THAT HONG KONG WAS STILL DERIVING SOME ADVANTAGE IN TERMS OF THE PRICE COMPETITIVENESS OF ITS PRODUCTS FROM THE DEPRECIATION OF THE U.S. DOLLAR, MR JACOBS SAID THIS FACTOR, HOWEVER, WAS EXPECTED TO HAVE LESS INFLUENCE ON EXPORT GROWTH IN THE FUTURE.

THUS, IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT THE GROWTH MOMENTUM OF HONG KONG'S DOMESTIC PRODUCTS COULD SLACKEN, GIVING A RELATIVELY LOWER GROWTH RATE IN THE SECOND HALF OF THIS YEAR THAN IN THE FIRST HALF, HE NOTED.

MR JACOBS SAID HE BELIEVED IT WAS LIKELY THAT IN 1987 WE WOULD SEE GREATER INFLATIONARY PRESSURES THAN IN 1986.

THE RATE OF INFLATION AT THE CONSUMER LEVEL ACCELERATED SOMEWHAT TOWARDS THE END OF LAST YEAR, HE SAID, ADDING THAT THE CONSUMER PRICE INDICES FOR THE FIRST TWO MONTHS OF 1987 SHOWED THAT THIS INFLATIONARY PRESSURE WAS PERSISTING.

+THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN RECENT MONTHS HAS BEEN AT AN ALL TIME LOW, WHILE THE NUMBER OF REPORTED VACANCIES HAS RISEN SHARPLY.

+THIS TIGHT SITUATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE TO EXERT AN UPWARD PRESSURE ON WAGES AND SALARIES,+ HE SAID.

HOWEVER, MR JACOBS POINTED OUT THAT THE MAIN THREATS TO HONG KONG'S CONTINUED GROWTH WERE EXTERNAL, AND CONSIDERABLE EFFORTS HAD BEEN MADE OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS THROUGH A SERIES OF OVERSEAS VISITS BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY TO ARGUE OUR CASE FOR FREE AND OPEN TRADE.

RECURRENT EXPENDITURE CONTROL VITAL

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THE CONTROL OF RECURRENT EXPENDITURE IS THE KEY TO ENSURING THAT TOTAL PUBLIC EXPENDITURE DOES NOT GROW FASTER THAN THE ECONOMY CAN AFFORD, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PERS JACOBS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

WINDING UP THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1987, MR JACOBS ASSURED MEMBERS THAT THIS WAS SOMETHING TO WHICH THE GOVERNMENT PAID CLOSE ATTENTION.

MR JACOBS SAID HE SHARED THE CONCERN EXPRESSED REGARDING THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTROLLING THE RECURRENT EXPENDITURE ON STAFF, DEPARTMENTAL OPERATING COSTS AND SO ON.

HE POINTED OUT THAT UNLIKE CAPITAL EXPENDITURE, RECURRENT EXPENDITURE TENDED TO BE CUMULATIVE AND ITS UPWARD TREND WAS POTENTIALLY MORE INEXORABLE.

ON THE TREATMENT OF THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY CORPORATION AND THE KOWLOON-CANTON RAILWAY CORPORATION IN THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS, MR JACOBS NOTED THAT THERE WERE DIFFERENT DEFINITIONS OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR WHICH WERE NEEDED FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES.

BUT HE SAID FOR GDP CALCULATIONS, THERE WAS AN INTERNATIONAL DEFINITION OF PUBLIC EXPENDITURE, WHICH WE MUST FOLLOW.

+AT THE SAME TIME, WE MUST NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THOSE ASPECTS OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR OVER WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS A DIRECT BUDGETARY INFLUENCE= THIS IS WHAT WE CURRENTLY TRY TO REFLECT IN THE CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT,+ HE SAID.

MR JACOBS SAID THAT THE CONCLUSION WAS THAT IT WAS LESS IMPORTANT TO FIND A SINGLE STATISTIC THAN IT WAS TO BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT EACH STATISTIC MEANT AND TO APPLY IT CONSISTENTLY AND IN THE CORRECT CONTEXT.

+A STEP WE HAVE TAKEN THIS YEAR IS TO SET OUT IN THE APPENDICES TO THE BUDGET SPEECH AN INDICATION OF HOW THE CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNT IS BUILT UP AND ITS RECONCILIATION WITH THE GDP MEASURE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR.

+WE WILL BE GIVING FURTHER CONSIDERATION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS SECTION OF THE APPENDICES,+ HE SAID.

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FREEDOM NEEDED FOR SECURITIES RELATED BUSINESS  
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IT IS GOVERNMENT'S GENERAL PHILOSOPHY THAT AUTHORISED INSTITUTIONS THAT DEAL WITH SECURITIES RELATED BUSINESS SHOULD BE GIVEN AS MUCH FREEDOM AS POSSIBLE SO LONG AS THEY ARE AWARE OF THE RISKS INVOLVED AND ARE ADEQUATELY CAPITALISED TO ASSUME THOSE RISKS, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

WINDING THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1987 IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, HE SAID THE SUBJECT OF SECURITIES DEALING BY AUTHORISED INSTITUTIONS WAS CURRENTLY BEING EXAMINED BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR BANKING.

+IT IS USEFUL TO REMEMBER IN THIS CONNECTION THAT THE NEW CAPITAL ADEQUACY REQUIREMENTS IN THE BANKING ORDINANCE ARE NOT SCHEDULED TO COME INTO EFFECT UNTIL SEPTEMBER 1988 AND THAT THE CAPITAL REQUIREMENTS IN THE SECURITIES ORDINANCE, DESIGNED FOR GOOD PRUDENTIAL REASONS FOR COMPLIANCE BY THOSE DEALING IN SECURITIES, ARE OF A DIFFERENT, AND MORE SPECIALISED NATURE,+ MR JACOBS SAID.

HE ADDED HOWEVER THAT IT MUST BE RECOGNISED THAT ARBITRAGING BETWEEN DIFFERENT SUPERVISORY REQUIREMENTS COULD BE DAMAGING TO MARKET REPUTATION AND TO THE INTERESTS OF DEPOSITORS AND INVESTORS.

+IT IS OUR AIM TO REMOVE ANY UNNECESSARY DUPLICATION OF REQUIREMENTS IN THESE TWO AREAS; HENCE MY DECISION ANNOUNCED SOME TIME AGO AND IMPLEMENTED LAST SEPTEMBER TO BRING TOGETHER UNDER THE SECRETARY FOR MONETARY AFFAIRS POLICY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE FINANCIAL MARKET,+ HE SAID.

ON A SUGGESTION THAT THE POTENTIAL DANGER ARISING FROM A LIQUIDITY CRISIS UNDER THE CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS WAS EVER PRESENT, MR JACOBS STRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD TRY ITS BEST TO KEEP AHEAD OF MARKET DEVELOPMENTS SO AS TO AVOID ANY POTENTIAL DANGERS.

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NEED TO KEEP REASONABLE AMOUNT OF RESERVES IN HAND  
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THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S RESERVES WERE THE BEST GUARANTEE OF STABILITY IN OUR PUBLIC FINANCES AND PRUDENCE DICTATED THAT A REASONABLE AMOUNT IN HAND WAS KEPT.

WINDING UP THE RESUMED DEBATE OF THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1987 IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR JACOBS SAID THIS WAS SOMETHING THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO WATCH CAREFULLY.

/ACKNOWLEDGING THAT .....

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ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE GENERAL TENOR OF REMARKS MADE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING THESE RESERVES, HE SAID THE FACT THAT THEY WERE RECOVERING FROM A PERIOD DURING WHICH THEY WERE FALLING IN REAL TERMS WAS REASSURING.

TO A SUGGESTION THAT HE DELIBERATELY DID NOT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE ECONOMY TO PRODUCE A MORE OBVIOUSLY POPULAR BUDGET, MR JACOBS SAID: +I DO NOT CONSIDER THAT BUDGETS SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO SECURE SHORT-LIVED POLITICAL KUDOS.+

MR JACOBS THANKED MEMBERS FOR THEIR VIEWS ON THE BUDGET AND ASSURED THAT THE CONTENTS OF THE DEBATE WOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE PROCESS OF PUTTING TOGETHER FUTURE BUDGETARY PROPOSALS.

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CIVIL SERVICE COMMITTED TO WELL-BEING OF HONG KONG  
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THE CIVIL SERVICE IS COMMITTED TO THE STABILITY AND PROSPERITY IN HONG KONG AND HELPING TO GOVERN IT EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON DAVID FORD, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

+THE STYLE OF THE GOVERNMENT MAY CHANGE, PERSONALITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS IN THIS COUNCIL MAY CHANGE, BUT I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE MUTUAL CONCERN OF MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC SERVICE TO DO WHAT IS BEST FOR THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG WILL CERTAINLY NOT CHANGE,+ HE ADDED.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1987, MR FORD SAID GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY OF GOVERNMENT ACTIONS HAD BECOME INEVITABLE AS HONG KONG PEOPLE WERE NOW MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE, MORE DEMANDING AND MORE PREPARED TO SPEAK THEIR MINDS.

+PUBLIC DEBATE ON GOVERNMENT BUSINESS HAS ALSO BECOME MORE LIVELY, SOMETIMES EVEN HEATED, AND THE FULLEST JUSTIFICATION FOR ANY GOVERNMENT MEASURE IS NOW EXPECTED AS A MATTER OF COURSE.

+THESE DEVELOPMENTS ARE HEALTHY AND GOOD FOR THE COMMUNITY AND WE IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE WELCOME THEM,+ HE SAID.

BUT MR FORD SAID WHEN THE CLAMOUR OF DEBATE WAS OVER, DECISIONS MUST BE TAKEN AND SOMETIMES THEY WERE NOT POPULAR WITH ALL SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY.

/+ALTHOUGH THERE .....

+ALTHOUGH THERE MAY BE ROOM FOR DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ON HOW ISSUES ARE BEST HANDLED, I HOPE AND BELIEVE THAT THE MOTIVATION OF THE GOVERNMENT IN REACHING DECISIONS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE, IS NOT IN QUESTION,+ HE STRESSED.

MR FORD ALSO SAID PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS FOR BETTER SERVICE, BETTER RESULTS AND MORE EMPHASIS ON COST EFFECTIVENESS IN PUBLIC SPENDING WERE RISING.

ON THE QUESTION OF EFFICIENCY OF THE CIVIL SERVICE, MR FORD ASSURED THE COUNCIL THAT THE MOMENTUM OF THE VALUE-FOR-MONEY EXERCISE WOULD BE MAINTAINED.

ON TOP OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF VALUE FOR MONEY STEERING GROUPS IN SEVEN DEPARTMENTS, MR FORD SAID SIMILAR GROUPS WOULD SHORTLY BE ESTABLISHED IN FOUR OTHER DEPARTMENTS AND HE HOPED ALL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED IN VALUE FOR MONEY STUDIES WOULD BE SO COVERED BY THE END OF MARCH 1988.

ON THE GROWTH OF THE CIVIL SERVICE, MR FORD SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD CONTINUED TO CONTAIN THE SIZE OF THE SERVICE.

+AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF FIVE YEARS OF ZERO GROWTH, THE PROVISION OF 3 454 NEW POSTS IN THE 1987-88 DRAFT ESTIMATES REPRESENTS AN INCREASE OF JUST 1.9 PER CENT OVER THE ESTABLISHMENT APPROVED FOR THE LAST FINANCIAL YEAR AND IS, I SUGGEST, NOT AN UNREASONABLE INCREASE,+ HE ADDED.

MR FORD SAID SOME EXPANSION WAS INEVITABLE AS THE POPULATION GREW AND NEW TOWNS WERE DEVELOPED TO ACCOMMODATE THAT GROWTH.

HE SAID PRESSURE ALSO BUILT UP TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EXISTING SERVICES AND FACILITIES IN THE OLDER ESTABLISHED AREAS PARTICULARLY IN THE FIELDS OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE.

HE ADMITTED THAT SOMETIMES THE QUALITY OF SERVICES, PARTICULARLY IN SOME AREAS OF SOCIAL WORK, HAD NOT ALWAYS KEPT PACE WITH PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS WHICH HAD RISEN SHARPLY AS HONG KONG HAD BECOME MORE AFFLUENT AND AWARE OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS.

+THERE HAS NOT BEEN ANY LACK OF WILL OR VISION BY THE DEPARTMENTS CONCERNED TO PROVIDE BETTER SERVICES BUT THEIR EXPANSION HAS BEEN RESTRICTED BY OUR CONTINUING POLICY OF WORKING TO CONTAIN THE GROWTH OF THE SERVICE AS A WHOLE,+ HE ASSERTED.

HE SAID PERSONAL FREEDOM AND ENTERPRISE WERE CENTRAL TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF A NON-INTERVENTION ECONOMIC POLICY WHICH HAD SERVED HONG KONG WELL.

+IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES SECTOR WE ARE ACUTELY AWARE OF THE NEED NOT TO STIFLE THE ASPIRATIONS AND INITIATIVE OF INDIVIDUALS WHO COLLECTIVELY CONTINUE TO TURN THE GREAT WHEEL OF SUCCESS FOR HONG KONG.+

BUT HE ADMITTED THAT +OUR LAUDABLE DESIRE NOT TO MOVE TOWARDS A 'WELFARE STATE' PHILOSOPHY TENDS TO INFLUENCE OUR DUTY AS A GOVERNMENT TO TAKE THE LEAD IN PROVIDING THE BEST POSSIBLE CARE FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT FEND FOR THEMSELVES OR WHO HAVE REAL SOCIAL PROBLEMS+.

HE ADDED THAT THE PROPORTION OF GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE ON SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES WAS COMPARATIVELY SMALL.

+GREAT STRIDES COULD BE MADE WITH SMALL INCREASES WITHOUT PUTTING AT RISK THE WORK ETHIC OF OUR PEOPLE.

+SOME INCREASES IN THE STRENGTH OF THE CIVIL SERVICE IN CERTAIN AREAS WOULD ALSO BE REQUIRED BUT, IN MY VIEW, THESE INCREASES WOULD ALSO REPRESENT VALUE FOR MONEY,+ HE SAID.

ON CIVIL SERVICE SALARY LEVELS, MR FORD AGREED THAT A MAJOR CONSIDERATION WAS THE PRINCIPLE OF FAIR COMPARISON WITH PAY FOR COMPARABLE EMPLOYMENT IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

+BUT I MUST ADD THAT CIVIL SERVICE SALARIES SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN CANDIDATES OF THE RIGHT CALIBRE IF WE ARE TO PROVIDE THE PUBLIC WITH AN EFFICIENT SERVICE WITH HIGH MORALE,+ HE SAID.

NOTING THE COMMENTS ON THE SYSTEM OF ANNUAL INCREMENTS, MR FORD SAID INCREMENTS WERE AWARDED IN RECOGNITION OF SERVICE GIVEN AND EXPERIENCE GAINED, AND COULD BE STOPPED OR DEFERRED ON GROUNDS OF MISCONDUCT OR LACK OF DILIGENCE.

HE ALSO POINTED OUT THERE WERE REAL DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN APPLYING AN INDUCEMENT AWARD RELATED TO PERFORMANCE TO THE CIVIL SERVICE, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT RULE OUT ITS POSSIBILITY.

ON PROMOTION CRITERIA, MR FORD SAID: +CIVIL SERVICE POLICY ON PROMOTION IS NOT BASED ON HOW FEW MISTAKES ONE MAKES BUT ON ABILITY, EXPERIENCE AND PERFORMANCE -- IN SHORT, ON MERIT.+

MR FORD ALSO SAID TRAINING WAS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE PROCESS OF INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY BY AIMING TO ENSURE THAT THE POTENTIAL OF STAFF WAS FULLY DEVELOPED AND USED.

+THERE IS, FOR EXAMPLE, PROVISION OF \$57 MILLION IN THE DRAFT ESTIMATES TO ENABLE THE CIVIL SERVICE TRAINING CENTRE TO PROVIDE THIS YEAR TRAINING FOR 8 000 OFFICERS TO IMPROVE THEIR PROFESSIONAL AND VOCATIONAL PERFORMANCE, 12 000 OFFICERS TO IMPROVE THEIR GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGERIAL ABILITY AND 8 000 OFFICERS TO IMPROVE THEIR LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS,+ HE SAID.

SOCIAL WELFARE FARING WELL IN 'CAKE-SLICING EXERCISE'  
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SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS TO BOTH THE QUANTITY AND QUALITY OF HEALTH AND WELTH SERVICES CAN BE MADE IN THE 1987-88 FINANCIAL YEAR, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING ON THE RESUMED DEBATE OF THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1987, MR CHAMBERS DISABUSED MEMBERS' IDEA THAT SOCIAL SERVICES DID NOT DO WELL IN THIS YEAR'S '+CAKE-SLICING EXERCISE+'.

THE TOTAL RECURRENT EXPENDITURE ON THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT, MEDICAL SUBVENTIONS, THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT INCLUDING SOCIAL SECURITY, SOCIAL WELFARE SUBVENTIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL IN 1987-88 WILL BE \$7.37 BILLION, AS COMPARED TO THE REVISED ESTIMATE OF \$6.65 BILLION IN 1986-87.

+MEDICAL SUBVENTIONS HAVE BEEN INCREASED BY 15 PER CENT AND THE PROVISION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, BY NO LESS THAN 82 PER CENT,+ MR CHAMBERS SAID.

AS FOR SOCIAL WELFARE, HE SAID THAT THE INCREASE WAS OVER 20 PER CENT AS COMPARED WITH LAST YEAR.

ON MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, MR CHAMBERS SAID A MAJOR ISSUE WHICH WOULD AFFECT THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SERVICES WAS THE DECISION ON WHETHER A HOSPITAL AUTHORITY SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED, AND IF SO, HOW.

HE SAID THAT THIS QUESTION HAD WIDE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STRUCTURE OF THE PUBLIC HOSPITAL SYSTEM, STAFF AND THE ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN THE SYSTEM, ITS FUNDING AND THE DELIVERY OF SERVICE. HE STRESSED SUCH AN IMPORTANT DECISION COULD BE RUSHED.

ON MEMBERS' SUGGESTION THAT THERE WERE OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE CONSULTANTS' REPORT WHICH COULD BE IMPLEMENTED UNDER THE EXISTING SYSTEM, HE SAID AN INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP HAD ALREADY COMPLETED PRELIMINARY DISCUSSIONS ON ALL THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE CONSULTANTS.

+ITS NEXT TASK WILL BE TO DRAW UP, IN ORDER OF PRIORITY, A LIST OF PROJECTS FOR IMPLEMENTATIONS. THIS WORK WILL PROCEED IN PARALLEL WITH THE DETAILED EXAMINATION OF THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY CONCEPT.+

/ONCE THE .....

ONCE THE MAJOR ISSUES RELATING TO THE MANAGEMENT OF THE HOSPITAL SYSTEM HAD BEEN RESOLVED, HE SAID THERE SHOULD BE A REVIEW ON THE WHOLE QUESTION OF PRIMARY CARE INCLUDING IMPROVEMENT OF MEDICAL RECORDS, DOCTOR/PATIENT RELATIONSHIPS, POST-GRADUATE TRAINING AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ADOPTING THE SYSTEM OF FAMILY MEDICAL CARE.

ON THE STAFFING SITUATION FOR ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS IN HOSPITALS, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE MEDICAL DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE HAD ADVISED THAT THE DOCTOR IN CHARGE SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST FIVE YEARS' EXPERIENCE IN HOSPITAL PRACTICE AND THIS WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED AS SOON AS MANPOWER RESOURCES PERMITTED.

MR CHAMBERS ALSO POINTED OUT THAT A SIMPLISTIC COMPARISON OF THE LEVEL OF FUNDING OF THE TWO TYPES OF PUBLIC HOSPITAL COULD BE MISLEADING.

+GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS, PARTICULARLY THE BIG REGIONAL HOSPITALS, ARE GENERALLY EQUIPPED AND STAFFED TO HANDLE THE MORE DIVERSE, COMPLEX AND ACUTE CASES WHILE SUBVENTED HOSPITALS NORMALLY CATER FOR LESS ACUTE OR CONVALESCENT CASES, WHICH DO NOT REQUIRE THE SAME LEVEL OF STAFFING OR EQUIPMENT.+

HE ADDED THAT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT OR REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS WERE IN HAND FOR MANY SUBVENTED HOSPITALS, WHICH WHEN COMPLETED WOULD RESULT IN SIGNIFICANT UPGRADING OF THE SERVICES THEY PROVIDED.

TURNING TO SOCIAL WELFARE, MR CHAMBERS DISPELLED THE FEAR EXPRESSED BY SOME MEMBERS THAT LIMITED PROVISION HAD BEEN MADE FOR IMPROVING THE STANDARD OF WELFARE SERVICES AND THAT THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE MIGHT BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED.

HE POINTED OUT THAT ABOUT \$20 MILLION HAD BEEN SET ASIDE FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF EXISTING SERVICES AND ABOUT \$25 MILLION FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW SERVICES.

+THESE FUNDS WILL ENABLE ADDITIONAL STAFF TO BE EMPLOYED TO REDUCE THE CASELOAD OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN FAMILY SERVICE CENTRES, IN THE MEDICAL SOCIAL SERVICE AND IN SOCIAL SECURITY FIELD UNITS.+

+THERE ARE ALSO PLANS TO INTRODUCE IMPROVEMENTS IN OTHER AREAS OF SOCIAL SERVICES SUCH AS HOSTELS FOR THE ELDERLY, COMMUNITY CENTRES AND CHILDREN'S HOMES,+ HE SAID.

REFERRING TO RECEIPTS FROM THE LOTTERIES FUND, HE SAID HE WOULD BE WATCHING THE SITUATION VERY CAREFULLY AND WOULD TAKE ACTION IF THERE APPEARED TO BE A RISK THAT THE FUND WAS FALLING DANGEROUSLY LOW.

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ON THE SUGGESTION THAT A SET OF CRITERIA BE FORMULATED FOR ASSESSING SUBVENTIONS TO MEET THE CENTRAL ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS OF AGENCIES, HE SAID IT WAS VERY DIFFICULT TO ESTABLISH SUCH GUIDELINES OF CRITERIA BECAUSE OF THE DIVERSITY IN SIZE, HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, NATURE OF WORK AND TYPE OF OFFICE ACCOMMODATION OCCUPIED BY AGENCIES.

HOWEVER, HE SAID THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE WAS PREPARED TO RE-EXAMINE THE QUESTION TO SEE WHETHER A MORE SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENT COULD BE ACHIEVED.

REFERRING TO A SUGGESTION THAT \$2.8 MILLION FROM THE SURPLUS WHICH WAS AVAILABLE FOR SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS SHOULD BE ALLOCATED TO ENABLE THE NEW RATIO OF ONE SOCIAL WORKER FOR 3 000 STUDENTS BE IMPLEMENTED FROM SEPTEMBER, MR CHAMBER SAID THAT THIS WOULD BE DISCUSSED BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE SHORTLY.

HE ADDED THAT THE COMMITTEE HAD AGREED THAT THE CRITERIA FOR THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE OUTREACHING SOCIAL SERVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE DEMAND FOR THIS SERVICE IN NEW TOWNS SUCH AS SHA TIN AND YUEN LONG SHOULD BE EXAMINED.

TURNING TO SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT VIEW WAS THAT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO THE ELDERLY WAS BEST PROVIDED THROUGH PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND OLD AGE ALLOWANCES RATHER THAN BY SUBSIDIES TO PUBLIC UTILITIES TO ENABLE THEM TO INTRODUCE CONCESSIONARY RATES.

CARE FOR THE ELDERLY WAS ONE OF THE TWO AREAS OF WELFARE SERVICES WHICH CALLED FOR HIGH PRIORITY, HE SAID.

+NOT ONLY ARE THE NUMBERS OF THE ELDERLY STEADILY INCREASING, BUT WITH CHANGES IN OUR SOCIETY THE NEED FOR A WIDE VARIETY OF SERVICES IS BECOMING MORE PRESSING.

+PERHAPS THE MOST ACUTE SHORTAGE IS IN CARE-AND-ATTENTION PLACES, BUT ALMOST EQUALLY IMPORTANT ARE THE SERVICES WHICH ENABLE ELDERLY PEOPLE TO CONTINUE TO LIVE IN THE COMMUNITY, SUCH AS HOME HELP COMMUNITY NURSING AND DAY CARE CENTRES.+

+THE OTHER PRIORITY AREA IS PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, SUCH AS OUTREACH AND SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK,+ HE SAID.

+WE SHOULD RECONSIDER OUR PRIORITIES AS BETWEEN THESE SERVICES AND THE PROGRAMME FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH CENTRES, UNIFORMED ORGANISATIONS AND GROUP ACTIVITIES, WHICH AT PRESENT RECEIVES ALMOST THREE TIMES AS MUCH FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AS THE PERSONAL SOCIAL WORK ACTIVITIES.+

/HE ADDED .....

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HE ADDED THAT THE ADVICE OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THESE QUESTIONS WOULD BE SOUGHT.

TURNING TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, MR CHAMBERS SAID THAT THE 82 PER CENT INCREASE IN THE RECURRENT PROVISION WAS DUE TO TWO MAIN FACTORS.

THE FIRST ONE, HE SAID, WAS THE RE-ORGANISATION OF POLLUTION CONTROL RESPONSIBILITIES AND THEIR CENTRALISATION IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT; AND THE SECOND INITIATION OF NEW MEASURES IN THE MAIN FIELDS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL - AIR, WATER, AND WASTE DISPOSAL.

HE SAID THAT IN THE PAST, TOO FEW RESOURCES HAD BEEN DEVOTED TO THE PROTECTION OF HONG KONG'S ENVIRONMENT, BUT DURING THE COMING YEAR, +WE SHALL BE TAKING ACTION ON TWO PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT PROBLEMS. NOISE AND THE DISPOSAL OF AGRICULTURAL WASTE.?

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EDUCATION COMMISSION SET ON PROPER COURSE  
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THE PROPER COURSE FOR THE EDUCATION COMMISSION TO FOLLOW IS TO CONTINUE TO PRODUCE ADVISORY REPORTS TO BE DEBATED FREELY AND OPENLY BY THE PUBLIC AND IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1987, MR BRIDGE ANSWERED SUGGESTIONS THAT THE EDUCATION COMMISSION SHOULD BE RESTRUCTURED AS THERE WAS INSUFFICIENT CO-ORDINATION BY THE COMMISSION OF THE VARIOUS ADVISORY BODIES INVOLVED IN EDUCATION.

+THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE COMMISSION HAS FOUND DIFFICULTY IN CO-ORDINATING THE WORK OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, THE UNIVERSITY AND POLYTECHNIC GRANTS COMMITTEE AND THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING COUNCIL,+ HE SAID.

+IT IS HARD, UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, TO SEE WHAT THE GRANTING OF ADDITIONAL EXECUTIVE POWER TO THE COMMISSION WOULD ACHIEVE.+

ON THE OTHER HAND, MR BRIDGE AGREED THAT IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE TO CO-ORDINATE EDUCATION FINANCING IN A MORE RIGOROUS MANNER.

/+PROGRESS HAS .....

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+PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATION IN REPORT NO. 2 FOR A CONSULTANT TO ADVISE ON THE CREATION OF COMPUTER MODELS FOR EDUCATIONAL FINANCIAL PLANNING,+ HE SAID.

AS REGARDS MEMBERS' DISSATISFACTION WITH THE LEVEL OF EDUCATION FUNDS IN THE BUDGET, MR BRIDGE POINTED OUT THE PROPOSED EXPENDITURE AMOUNTED TO NEARLY ONE-FIFTH OF THE TOTAL BUDGET.

SUBSTANTIAL ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURE WOULD ALSO ARISE OVER THE COMING YEARS WHEN THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN THE EDUCATION COMMISSION REPORT NO. 2 WERE IMPLEMENTED, HE SAID.

AS TO THE COMMENTS THAT RESULTS OF THE PRESENT EDUCATION SYSTEM WERE UNCERTAIN, MR BRIDGE SAID THE EDUCATION COMMISSION WOULD INCLUDE A STUDY OF CURRICULA AND BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND JUNIOR SECONDARY CLASSES IN ITS REPORT NO. 4, TO BE PUBLISHED IN 1988.

REGARDING THE POSSIBILITY OF A MORE BROADLY BASED REVIEW, MR BRIDGE NOTED IT WAS ONLY FIVE-AND-A-HALF YEARS SINCE THE LLEWELYN REPORT WAS PUBLISHED AND SINCE THEN TWO REPORTS BY THE EDUCATION COMMISSION.

+AFTER THIS PROLONGED PERIOD OF REPORTS AND DISCUSSION, TO BEGIN YET ANOTHER OVERALL REVIEW COULD ONLY BE ACHIEVED AT THE PRICE OF SERIOUS AND CONTINUED DISRUPTION TO OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM,+ HE SAID.

MR BRIDGE SAID THE DECISION TO SET UP A TRAINING INSTITUTE FOR TEACHERS OF NURSERIES AND KINDERGARTENS WAS STILL UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE ADMINISTRATION IN THE LIGHT OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION.

A PROGRAMME OF FEE INCREASES AT THE SENIOR SECONDARY AND SIXTH-FORM LEVEL WAS APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL LAST YEAR TO RESTORE OVER A FIVE-YEAR PERIOD THE REAL VALUE OF FEES ORIGINALLY SET IN 1978, HE ADDED.

A WORKING PARTY WAS NOW CONSIDERING THE PRINCIPLES IN THE FUTURE ON WHAT AMOUNTED TO A FAIR AND REASONABLE SHARE OF THE COST OF SENIOR SECONDARY, SIXTH-FORM AND TERTIARY COURSES.

ON THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AT THE FIVE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS, MR BRIDGE SAID ABOUT \$45 MILLION HAD BEEN SET ASIDE IN THE CURRENT TRIENNIUM AND MORE THAN DOUBLE THIS AMOUNT WOULD BE EARMARKED IN THE GRANT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 1988-91 TRIENNIUM.

TURNING TO LABOUR MATTERS, MR BRIDGE SAID HE FEARED THAT A PUBLIC CONSENSUS ON A PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME MIGHT BE DIFFICULT TO ATTAIN.

/+THERE SEEMS .....

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+THERE SEEMS TO ME TO BE A VERY BROAD DIVISION OF OPINION BETWEEN THOSE WHO FAVOUR A COMPULSORY SCHEME OF SOME KIND, WHETHER CENTRALLY ADMINISTERED OR RUN ON A REGULATED BUT DECENTRALISED BASIS, AND THOSE WHO FAVOUR VOLUNTARY ARRANGEMENTS,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID HE HOPED THE REPORTS BY THE TWO WORKING GROUPS ON THE ALTERNATIVES TO A COMPULSORY SCHEME, PROBABLY AVAILABLE BY THE END OF MAY, WOULD PROVIDE A BASIS FOR AN INFORMED DECISION AS TO WHICH APPROACH WAS MORE SUITABLE TO HONG KONG.

AS TO THE REMARK THAT LONG SERVICE PAYMENT WOULD HELP CAUSE PROPRIETORS IN LABOUR-INTENSIVE INDUSTRIES TO TRANSFER THEIR OPERATIONS TO CHINA, MR BRIDGE SAID IT ACCOUNTED FOR ONLY A VERY SMALL PART OF THE VARIABLES IN THE TOTAL COST EQUATION.

HOWEVER, HE ASSURED MEMBERS THAT THE LIKELY COST OF PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE LABOUR LEGISLATION WOULD ALWAYS BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

HE SAID THERE WERE PLANS TO UNDERTAKE A FURTHER REVIEW IN THE NEAR FUTURE OF THE OVERALL IMPACT OF LABOUR LEGISLATION ON PRODUCTION COSTS.

ON SETTING UP AN INDEPENDENT OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH COUNCIL, MR BRIDGE SAID THE PROPOSAL WAS ENDORSED BY BOTH EMPLOYEE AND EMPLOYER REPRESENTATIVES ON THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD AND WAS NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE EDUCATION AND MANPOWER BRANCH.

MR BRIDGE SAID HE DISAGREED WITH THE COMMENT THAT THE GOVERNMENT ATTACHED LITTLE IMPORTANCE TO THE WORK OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT, SAYING THAT THE DEPARTMENT'S PROVISION SOUGHT FOR 1987-88 EXCEEDED THE APPROVED ESTIMATE FOR THE CURRENT YEAR BY 12.5 PER CENT AND THAT FOR 1982-83 BY SOME 96 PER CENT.

SOME 78 NEW POSTS WOULD ALSO BE CREATED IN THE DEPARTMENT IN THE COMING FINANCIAL YEAR, AN INCREASE OF FIVE PER CENT OVER THE CURRENT ESTABLISHMENT, TO COPE WITH INCREASING WORKLOAD, HE SAID.

TURNING TO REHABILITATION SERVICES, WHILE NOTING THE CONCERN EXPRESSED ABOUT THE LOW PRIORITY TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF EXISTING SERVICES, MR BRIDGE SAID IT WAS REASONABLE THAT HIGHER PRIORITY SHOULD BE GIVEN TO MAINTAINING EXISTING STANDARDS OF SERVICES IN RESPONSE TO PRESSING DEMANDS.

MR BRIDGE ALSO INFORMED MEMBERS THAT THE DEMAND FOR RESIDENTIAL CARE SERVICES, BOTH LONG-STAY CARE CENTRES AND HALF-WAY HOUSES, WOULD BE MET IN FULL BY THE EARLY 1990'S, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR FORMER MENTAL PATIENTS WITH PREVIOUS TENDENCIES TO VIOLENCE.

ON MANPOWER RESOURCES, HE SAID THE MANNING SCALE FOR MEDICAL SOCIAL WORKER IN THE PSYCHIATRIC FIELD WOULD SHORTLY BE IMPROVED, AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING AND OVERSEAS STUDIES WOULD BE UNDERTAKEN TO HELP DEVELOP THE MANPOWER REQUIRED FOR SOCIAL WORK IN THIS PARTICULAR FIELD.

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RESOURCES SUFFICIENT FOR LAW AND ORDER MAINTENANCE  
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THE DISCIPLINED SERVICES ARE GETTING RESOURCES SUFFICIENT TO ENABLE THEM TO DISCHARGE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES EFFECTIVELY, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON DAVID JEAFFRESON, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE OF THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1987, MR JEAFFRESON SAID THAT RESPONSIBILITY IN THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNAL SECURITY RESTED FAIRLY AND SQUARELY WITH THE POLICE FORCE.

+THOROUGH PLANNING HAS ENSURED THAT OVER THE YEARS THE POLICE FORCE HAS RECRUITED THE MANPOWER, DEVELOPED THE ORGANISATION, PROVIDED THE TRAINING AND ACQUIRED THE EQUIPMENT NECESSARY FOR THIS TASK.

+THE ADMINISTRATION HAS EVERY CONFIDENCE IN THE ABILITY OF THE POLICE FORCE TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC ORDER IN HONG KONG,+ HE SAID.

TURNING TO THE ROLE OF THE BRITISH GARRISON IN HONG KONG, MR JEAFFRESON SAID THAT IN RECENT YEARS ITS MAIN DUTY HAD BEEN TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR THE CIVIL ADMINISTRATION AS REQUIRED, WHICH WAS PRIMARILY TO ASSIST THE POLICE FORCE IN PREVENTING ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION.

ON THE AMOUNT OF CONTRIBUTION MADE BY THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT TOWARDS THE COST OF THE BRITISH GARRISON AS A WHOLE AND OF THE BRITISH MILITARY HOSPITAL IN PARTICULAR, MR JEAFFRESON SAID THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE GARRISON AND ALL ITS FACILITIES WAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE.

PENDING THE DRAWING UP OF THE NEW DEFENCE COSTS AGREEMENT, MR JEAFFRESON SAID THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT MADE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE GARRISONS COSTS, BUT IT WAS IN THE MAIN UP TO THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE TO DETERMINE WHAT THE GARRISON REQUIRED AND WHAT CONSTITUTED NECESSARY EXPENDITURE.

ON THE PROBLEM OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS, MR JEAFFRESON SAID THAT WITH THE END OF THE TOUCH-BASE POLICY, CLOSER CO-OPERATION WITH CHINA, CONSTRUCTION OF THE BORDER FENCE AND THE RE-EQUIPPING OF THE MARINE POLICE FORCE, IT BECAME MORE DIFFICULT FOR WOULD-BE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS TO GAIN ACCESS TO HONG KONG IN THE FIRST PLACE.

THE NEW STYLE OF IDENTITY CARD AND THE REQUIREMENT TO CARRY IT AND TO PRODUCE IT FOR THE PURPOSE OF GAINING EMPLOYMENT HAD MADE IT VERY DIFFICULT FOR EVADERS TO STAY IN HONG KONG.

/+AND WHEN .....

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+AND WHEN THEY ARE DETECTED, THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY IS TO REPATRIATE ALL ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS,+ HE SAID.

ON VIETNAMESE REFUGEES, MR JEAFFRESON SAID THAT LAST YEAR, AS A RESULT OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO RELAX ITS FAMILY REUNION CRITERIA IN RESPECT OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG WITH RELATIVES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, THERE WERE NOW 7 922 REFUGEES IN CAMPS IN HONG KONG, THE LOWEST NUMBER SINCE 1979.

+BUT THE PROSPECTS FOR RESETTLEMENT FOR THE REST OF THIS YEAR ARE NOT ENCOURAGING.

+IN ACCORDANCE WITH MEMBERS' REQUEST DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE OF JANUARY 7, I SHALL BE REPORTING ON PROGRESS ON ASPECTS OF THE VIETNAMESE REFUGEE PROBLEM WITHIN SIX MONTHS FROM THAT DATE,+ HE SAID.

TURNING TO THE PROBLEM OF PSYCHOTROPIC DRUG ABUSE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE, MR JEAFFRESON SAID THAT THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE REPORTED TO THE CENTRAL REGISTRY OF DRUG ABUSE AS BEING INVOLVED IN PSYCHOTROPIC DRUGS IN 1986.

A LARGE-SCALE SCHOOL SURVEY ON PSYCHOTROPIC DRUG ABUSE TO BE CONDUCTED BY THE GOVERNMENT AT THE END OF THIS YEAR AND THE CONTINUOUS REPORTS FROM OUT-REACH SOCIAL WORKERS AND OTHER SOURCES WOULD PROVIDE A CLEARER PICTURE OF THE EXTENT OF PSYCHOTROPIC DRUG ABUSE AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE, HE SAID.

MR JEAFFRESON POINTED OUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S TOP CONCERN WAS TO SAVE YOUNG PEOPLE FROM FALLING PREY TO DRUG ADDICTION, AND IN 1987-88 FINANCIAL YEAR THE GOVERNMENT HAD AGAIN ACCORDED THE ANTI-NARCOTICS CAMPAIGN TOP PRIORITY.

ON THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL LIAISON IN ANTI-NARCOTICS STRATEGY, MR JEAFFRESON SAID THAT CLOSE AND EFFECTIVE LIAISON AND CO-OPERATION WAS IN FACT MAINTAINED WITH THE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN REGION AND BEYOND AND WITH THEIR DRUG LIAISON OFFICERS HERE IN HONG KONG.

+THE MEASURES WE ARE TAKING TO COMBAT TRIADS SHOULD HELP TO REDUCE THE SCALE OF ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFICKING,+ HE SAID.

TO A SUGGESTION THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF COMPULSORY TREATMENT FOR ADDICTS SHOULD BE LOOKED INTO, MR JEAFFRESON SAID THAT THIS NEEDED TO BE APPROACHED WITH SOME CARE.

/+IN THE .....

+IN THE PRESENT SITUATION WHERE THE NUMBER OF NEWLY REPORTED ADDICTS IS FALLING, WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE ADDICTS TO VOLUNTEER FOR TREATMENT AND SHOULD HOLD IN RESERVE THE POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER COMPULSORY TREATMENT PROGRAMMES.

+APART FROM THE HUMAN RIGHTS ASPECTS OF COMPULSORY TREATMENT FOR A MEDICAL CONDITION, WE SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT A BROADENING OF THE COMPULSORY TREATMENT PROGRAMMES COULD DRIVE THE ADDICTION PROBLEM FURTHER UNDERGROUND WHERE IT COULD THRIVE AND THE DEMAND FOR ILLICIT DRUGS INCREASE,+ HE SAID.

MR JEAFFRESON SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALSO MOST CONCERNED WITH THE RISING TREND IN JUVENILE CRIME AND DELINQUENCY.

ONE OF THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE'S MAJOR THRUSTS, HE SAID, WAS AGAINST TRIADS AND THEIR BAD INFLUENCE ON YOUNG PEOPLE.

HE ADDED THAT THE COMMITTEE HAD SUPPORTED THE PROPOSAL THAT THE NUMBER OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS SHOULD BE INCREASED FROM 1:4 000 STUDENTS TO 1:3 000 STUDENTS.

ON THE REGULATION OF THE SECURITY INDUSTRY AND OF BURGLAR ALARMS, MR JEAFFRESON SAID THAT THEY WERE BOTH BEING CONSIDERED BY THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE.

+WE HAVE RECENTLY HAD THE FIRST MEETING OF AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED WITH THE ADVICE OF THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE AND INCLUDING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SECURITY ASSOCIATION TO ADVISE THE GOVERNMENT ON THE LEGISLATION THAT NEEDS TO BE PREPARED TO IMPROVE AND TO MAINTAIN THE STANDARDS OF THE SECURITY INDUSTRY.

+OUR INTENTION IS THAT BY THIS TIME NEXT YEAR WE WILL HAVE A DRAFT BILL READY FOR MEMBERS' CONSIDERATION,+ HE SAID.

MR JEAFFRESON ALSO SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD ISSUED DRAFTING INSTRUCTIONS FOR NEW LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE FOR THE POLICE TO HAVE POWERS TO INSPECT ALARM SYSTEMS AND TO SUGGEST IMPROVEMENTS.

+SHOULD THEIR ADVICE BE IGNORED, WE ARE PROPOSING THAT THE POLICE SHOULD CEASE TO RESPOND TO THE PARTICULAR BURGLAR ALARMS INVOLVED,+ HE SAID.

+ALSO, BECAUSE OF THE CONSIDERABLE NOISE NUISANCE THESE FALSE ALARMS CAUSE, WE ARE PROPOSING THAT ALL ALARMS SHOULD BE FITTED WITH AUTOMATIC CUT-OFF DEVICES.+

MR JEAFFRESON SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE ABLE TO PUT APPROPRIATE DRAFT LEGISLATION TO THE COUNCIL DURING THE CURRENT SESSION.

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COMMITMENT TO HOUSING REMAINS TOP PRIORITY

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THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO HOUSING REMAINED ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF ITS POLICY, THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DONALD LIAO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1987, MR LIAO SAID THAT PROPOSALS ON HOW BEST PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTOR RESOURCES COULD BE OPTIMISED TO MEET HONG KONG'S HOUSING DEMAND BETWEEN NOW AND THE TURN OF THE CENTURY WERE CONTAINED IN A RECENTLY COMPLETED REVIEW.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY WOULD MAKE A STATEMENT ON THE LONG-TERM HOUSING STRATEGY REVIEW AT NEXT WEEK'S LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING, MR LIAO ADDED.

HE NOTED THAT SEVERAL MEMBERS HAD COMMENTED ON THE RATIO BETWEEN HOME OWNERSHIP AND PUBLIC RENTAL FLATS, LONG-TERM HOUSING DEMAND AND THE PROPOSED HOME PURCHASE LOAN SCHEME.

+IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT THERE HAS BEEN A MAJOR CHANGE IN THE PATTERN OF DEMAND FOR HOUSING WITH PEOPLE INCREASINGLY WISHING TO PURCHASE THEIR OWN HOME,+ SAID MR LIAO.

HE POINTED OUT THAT ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS FOR ESTABLISHING THE HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME WAS TO PUT GREATER EMPHASIS ON BUILDING A SENSE OF BELONGING AND COMMITMENT TO HONG KONG.

SUBJECT TO THE AVAILABILITY OF SUITABLE SITES IN THE URBAN AREA, MR LIAO SAID HE AGREED WITH SUGGESTIONS THAT THE SUPPLY OF HOME OWNERSHIP AND PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION SCHEME FLATS SHOULD BE INCREASED.

MR LIAO ALSO SAID THAT THE INCOME LIMIT FOR FAMILIES QUALIFYING FOR HOME OWNERSHIP FLATS WAS BEING REVIEWED REGULARLY.

+ON THE BASIS OF THE PRIMARY AIM OF THE PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE HOUSING FOR ALL AND TO GIVE PRIORITY TO THE CLAIMS OF THE MOST NEEDY, GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN CONSIDERING HOW THE DEMAND FOR HOUSING CAN BEST BE MET,+ HE SAID.

ON THE SUBJECT OF SPORTS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, MR LIAO SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS FULLY AWARE OF THE NEED TO MAINTAIN AN ADEQUATE LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR SPORTS AND WOULD CONSULT REGULARLY THE COUNCIL FOR RECREATION AND SPORT ON THIS SUBJECT.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS ENCOURAGING MORE PRIVATE SECTOR SUPPORT FOR CULTURAL, RECREATION AND SPORTS PROGRAMMES.

/+GENEROUS AND .....

+GENEROUS AND ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORTERS OF SPORTS AND CULTURE MAY BE INTERESTED TO LEARN THAT THE COMMISSIONER FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE HAS BEEN EXPLORING WITH THE COMMISSIONER OF INLAND REVENUE THE POSSIBILITY OF PROVIDING FURTHER TAX INCENTIVES TO DONORS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR,+ HE ADDED.

ON BUILDING MANAGEMENT, MR LIAO SAID THERE WERE PLANS TO ESTABLISH THREE ADDITIONAL DISTRICT BUILDING MANAGEMENT TEAMS IN THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR.

DISTRICT OFFICE STAFF HAD ALWAYS PROVIDED ASSISTANCE AND GUIDANCE TO RESIDENTS ON BUILDING MANAGEMENT MATTERS, AND SINCE NOVEMBER LAST YEAR, 82 ADDITIONAL OWNERS' CORPORATIONS AND 32 MUTUAL AID COMMITTEES HAD BEEN FORMED IN PRIVATE MULTI-STOREY BUILDINGS, HE SAID.

+THE FOUR DISTRICT BUILDING MANAGEMENT TEAMS SET UP OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS HAVE SO FAR PROVIDED ASSISTANCE TO RESIDENTS AND MANAGEMENT BODIES IN 142 BUILDINGS,+ MR LIAO SAID.

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POLICY OF ENGAGING CONSULTANTS TO BE STUDIED  
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THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, ASSURED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT A THOROUGH STUDY ON THE MERITS OF CONSULTANTS WOULD BE CONDUCTED BEFORE ENTERING INTO FURTHER COMMITMENTS.

SPEAKING DURING THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1987, MR BARNES EXPLAINED THAT UNDER POLICY ENDORSED BY THE PUBLIC WORKS SUB-COMMITTEE IN 1983 CONSULTANTS FOR ENGINEERING PROJECTS WERE NORMALLY EMPLOYED ONLY WHEN GOVERNMENT DID NOT HAVE EITHER THE NECESSARY EXPERTISE OR SUFFICIENT IN-HOUSE RESOURCES.

IN THE NEW TOWNS, IT WAS DECIDED TO EMPLOY CONSULTANTS IN THE EARLY 1970'S BECAUSE GOVERNMENT WISHED TO EMBARK ON A VERY MAJOR EXPANSION PROGRAMME VERY QUICKLY, AND IT WOULD HAVE DELAYED THAT PROGRAMME IF WE HAD ATTEMPTED TO RECRUIT OR REDEPLOY STAFF IN-HOUSE FOR THE JOB.

+HOWEVER, THE SCOPE OF THESE CONSULTANTS WILL REDUCE AS THE MAIN WORKS ARE COMPLETED, AND I WILL ENSURE THAT A THOROUGH STUDY OF THE MERITS OF THE SITUATION IS DONE BEFORE ENTERING INTO ANY FURTHER COMMITMENTS AND THAT THE EMPLOYMENT OF CONSULTANTS IS PROPERLY JUSTIFIED IN THE PUBLIC WORKS SUB-COMMITTEE IN EACH CASE,+ HE SAID.

/MR BARNES .....

MR BARNES SAID HE WAS ALSO CONCERNED TO BUILD UP THE EMPLOYMENT OF LOCAL PROFESSIONALS, AND WAS PLEASED TO SEE HOW MANY LOCALS WERE NOW EMPLOYED BY THE CONSULTANTS.

ON THE PLANNING OF TSING YI, MR BARNES SAID THE PLANNING POLICY FOR TSING YI MUST CLEARLY BE POPULATION IN THE EAST AND NORTH-EAST AND INDUSTRY AND PETROLEUM ETC. IN WEST AND SOUTH WITH THE MOUNTAIN RIDGE TO DIVIDE THEM.

+I AGREE THAT WE HAVE IN THE PAST PUT TOGETHER WHAT ARE NOW SEEN AS UNSUITABLE NEIGHBOURS IN EAST AND NORTH TSING YI, AND IN THE LONG TERM WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO TRY TO SORT THEM OUT WHENEVER OPPORTUNITY ARISES,+ HE SAID.

+WE ARE STUDYING THIS AND OTHER PLANNING PROBLEMS IN CONNECTION WITH WHAT WE CALL POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS INSTALLATIONS IN A SPECIAL COMMITTEE.

+WE WILL HOWEVER QUITE SOON HAVE A SECOND BRIDGE FOR TSING YI, WHICH WILL REDUCE DEPENDENCE ON A SINGLE ROUTE,+ HE SAID.

TURNING TO IMPROVEMENT OF RURAL AREAS, MR BARNES SAID GOVERNMENT WAS PUTTING SUBSTANTIALLY MORE RESOURCES INTO RURAL ACCESS ROADS AND SANITATION SCHEMES THIS YEAR THAN PREVIOUSLY AND THIS SHOULD PRODUCE MORE RESULTS.

HOWEVER, HE SAID HE ACCEPTED THE NEED FOR A SYSTEMATIC PROGRAMME OF UPGRADING RURAL SANITATION AND GOVERNMENT WAS EXAMINING HOW THIS SHOULD BEST BE ACHIEVED.

+RESUMPTION HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN AVOIDED BECAUSE OF THE SELF-HELP TRADITION OF LOCAL PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME, BUT I ACCEPT THAT SOME RESUMPTION MAY BE NECESSARY.

+I SHOULD POINT OUT HOWEVER THAT RESUMPTIONS MEAN BOTH TIME AND MONEY, AND IF ALL PRIVATE LAND REQUIRED TO IMPROVE THE RURAL AREAS MUST BE RESUMED, THIS IS LIKELY TO RESULT IN A MUCH LONGER PROGRAMME,+ HE SAID.

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PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVED  
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SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT NETWORK IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON MICHAEL LEUNG, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) CITING THE COMPLETION OF THE ELECTRIFICATION OF THE KCR AND THE MTR ISLAND LINE AS EXAMPLES.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1987, MR LEUNG SAID: +SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS HAS ALSO BEEN MADE WITH HIGHWAYS PROJECTS, FOR EXAMPLE THE OPENING OF THE TOLO HIGHWAY AND OTHER WORK ON THE NEW TERRITORIES CIRCULAR ROAD, AND THE ISLAND EASTERN CORRIDOR.

/+WORK HAS .....

+WORK HAS ALSO STARTED ON THE ROUTE 5 TUNNEL LINKING SHA TIN AND TSUEN WAN, THE TUNNEL BETWEEN JUNK BAY AND THE URBAN AREA, THE UPGRADING OF THE CONNAUGHT ROAD AND THE EASTERN HARBOUR CROSSING.

+AND MORE LARGE-SCALE PROJECTS ARE BEING PLANNED, SUCH AS THE TATE'S CAIRN TUNNEL AND THE KWUN TONG BYPASS AND, FURTHER INTO FUTURE ROUTE X, TO LINK THE NORTH-WEST NEW TERRITORIES AND THE URBAN AREA IN THE MID TO LATE 1990'S.

+THERE IS ALSO THE COMPUTERISED AREA TRAFFIC CONTROL SYSTEM, OPERATING AT PRESENT OVER MUCH OF KOWLOON AND PART OF HONG KONG ISLAND AND SHORTLY TO BE EXTENDED TO COVER THE WHOLE NORTH SHORE OF THE ISLAND.+

MR LEUNG SAID THAT WHEN RESULTS OF THE SECOND COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORT STUDY (CTS-2) BECAME AVAILABLE TOWARDS THE END OF THIS YEAR, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO DECIDE ON TRANSPORT LINKS TO THE WESTERN NEW TERRITORIES DURING 1988.

THE STUDY WAS STARTED LAST NOVEMBER WITH AN AIM TO PRODUCE RECOMMENDATIONS ON TRANSPORT POLICIES AND A PROGRAMME FOR THE PROVISION OF TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE THROUGH TO THE YEAR 2001.

+DURING THE COURSE OF ITS WORK, THE STUDY TEAM WILL BE ASSESSING THE VARIOUS OPTIONS AVAILABLE FOR EXPANSION OF OUR FIXED RAIL NETWORK, AND MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO WHAT LINES SHOULD BE BUILT AND WHEN,+ HE SAID.

MR LEUNG SAID THE KCRC AND THE MTRC WERE ALSO CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY OF A FIXED RAIL LINK TO EITHER TUEN MUN OR YUEN LONG.

WHILE TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE KCRC REPORT, AND OTHER WORK DONE IN THIS FIELD BY AGENCIES SUCH AS THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MTRC, THE STUDY TEAM WOULD ALSO EXAMINE VARIOUS OPTIONS IN TERMS OF THEIR ECONOMIC AND OTHER BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE, AS WELL AS THEIR FINANCIAL VIABILITY, HE ADDED.

ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT FARES, MR LEUNG SAID THE GOVERNMENT TOOK GREAT PAINS TO ENSURE THAT THEY WERE KEPT TO REASONABLE LEVELS. THIS PROCESS INVOLVED CLOSE SCRUTINY OF THE FIVE-YEAR PLANS OF FRANCHISED COMPANIES, TO ENSURE THAT THE LEVEL OF INVESTMENT PROPOSED MATCHED TRANSPORT NEEDS.

MR LEUNG ASSURED MEMBERS THAT FARE INCREASES WERE ONLY AGREED TO AFTER THE MOST CAREFUL CONSIDERATION, AND WERE KEPT TO THE MINIMUM NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN THE VIABILITY OF THE COMPANY CONCERNED WITHIN THE TERMS OF ITS SCHEME OF CONTROL, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME ENSURING AN ACCEPTABLE LEVEL OF SERVICE.

ON FISCAL RESTRAINTS ON PRIVATE CAR OWNERSHIP, MR LEUNG SAID THIS HAD RESULTED IN A DECREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PRIVATE CARS LICENSED FROM ABOUT 192 000 IN 1982 TO ABOUT 139 000 TODAY.

HE NOTED HOWEVER THAT THIS DECLINE HAD BEEN OFFSET BY AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF OTHER VEHICLES SO THAT THE TOTAL VEHICLE POPULATION WAS ABOUT THE SAME AS IN 1982.

ON THE PROBLEMS OF TRAFFIC CONGESTION, MR LEUNG SAID A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF CONGESTION WAS AN INEVITABLE FEATURE OF LIFE, +AND IN THIS RESPECT HONG KONG COMPARES FAVOURABLY WITH MANY OTHER MAJOR CITIES+.

HE SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO KEEP CONGESTION WITHIN LIMITS AND TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION WHEREVER IT COULD.

THIS WAS ANOTHER AREA WHERE THE CTS-2 STUDY WOULD GIVE THE GOVERNMENT SOME POINTERS AS TO THE MEASURES OPEN TO HONG KONG IN THE LONGER TERM, HE ADDED.

MR LEUNG SAID THE REAL SOLUTION TO THE CONGESTION PROBLEM AT THE LION ROCK TUNNEL LAY IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TATE'S CAIRN TUNNEL. IF APPROVED, CONSTRUCTION WORK WOULD START IN THE EARLY SUMMER OF 1988, WITH COMPLETION IN 1992.

+UNTIL THEN THE TASK WILL BE THAT OF TRYING TO KEEP CONGESTION WITHIN ACCEPTABLE LIMITS. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF WAYS IN WHICH WE HOPE TO DO THIS, BUT NONE OF THEM I AM AFRAID IS A PERFECT ANSWER,+ HE SAID.

MEASURES INCLUDED RESERVING THE NEW THIRD SOUTHBOUND LANE ON THE SHA TIN SIDE FOR BUSES IN THE MORNING PEAK HOUR; IMPROVEMENT WORKS TO THE OLD TAI PO ROAD WHICH WOULD BE COMPLETED BY STAGES OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS; AND THE OPENING OF ROUTE 5 IN LATE 1989 OR EARLY 1990.

+IN ADDITION, THE KCRC WILL BE TAKING DELIVERY OF 25 NEW THREE CAR UNITS FROM LATE THIS SUMMER. THESE WILL INCREASE THE RAILWAY CAPACITY BY 40 TO 50 PER CENT. ALL THESE WILL HELP AMELIORATE THE PRESENT SITUATION,+ HE ADDED.

MR LEUNG ALSO OUTLINED OTHER POSSIBLE MEASURES LIKE INCREASING THE COST OF USING THE TUNNEL TO SLOW DOWN THE BUILD-UP IN TRAFFIC, RESTRICTING THE USE OF THE TUNNEL BY CERTAIN CLASSES OF VEHICLES AT CERTAIN TIMES, OR BY MAKING DIFFERENTIAL CHARGES ACCORDING TO THE TIME OF DAY AND CLASS OF VEHICLE, AND, IN THE LONGER TERM, AUTOMATED TOLL COLLECTION. HE ADDED THAT A STUDY OF SYSTEMS ADOPTED ELSEWHERE WAS UNDERWAY.

HE ASSURED MEMBERS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS ACUTELY AWARE THAT MUCH REMAINED TO BE DONE IF HONG KONG WAS TO HAVE A TRANSPORT NETWORK ESSENTIAL FOR ITS CONTINUED ECONOMIC WELL-BEING, AND TO PROVIDE AN ACCEPTABLE, MODERN STANDARD OF FACILITIES AT A REASONABLE COST.

+THE SECOND COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORT STUDY WILL PROVIDE US WITH INSIGHT AS TO FURTHER STEPS NEEDED AND SHOULD IDENTIFY ANY NEW INITIATIVES REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE THIS OBJECTIVE ON A CONTINUING BASIS,+ HE SAID.

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GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT STRESSED  
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THE GOVERNMENT'S PART IN HONG KONG'S INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IS TO ENSURE THAT THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT EXISTS FOR INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT TO TAKE PLACE AND FOR BUSINESS TO FLOURISH, THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, THE HON ERIC HO, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATIONS BILL 1987, MR HO SAID GOVERNMENT HAD PROVIDED STRONG INFRASTRUCTURAL AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR, SOUND EDUCATIONAL AND MANPOWER TRAINING PROGRAMMES, SPECIAL INDUSTRIAL LAND AND OTHER PUBLIC WORKS, AND ENSURED THAT ESSENTIAL UTILITIES WERE AVAILABLE.

THE GOVERNMENT ALSO SUPPORTED INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND TECHNICAL SERVICES TO FACILITATE THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW TECHNOLOGY AND NEW MANUFACTURING PROCESSES, HE ADDED.

MR HO SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALSO CONSTANTLY ON THE LOOK-OUT FOR NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT.

+ON THE ADVICE OF THE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD (IDB) WE HAVE AN ON-GOING PROGRAMME OF TECHNO-ECONOMIC AND MARKET RESEARCH STUDIES OF VARIOUS INDUSTRIES.

+EACH STUDY INVOLVES IN-DEPTH INVESTIGATIONS BY EXPERTS OF THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES AS WELL AS FORECASTS OF POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE TYPE AND LEVEL OF WORLD DEMAND FOR THE PRODUCTS MADE BY THE INDUSTRY BEING STUDIED.+

ON THE PACE OF UPGRADING ACHIEVED BY THE ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY, MR HO SAID ON THE BASIS OF THE EVALUATION BY THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT AND THE HONG KONG PRODUCTIVITY COUNCIL, THE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD WAS SATISFIED THAT THE NEED FOR MORE ELECTRONIC ENGINEERS WAS IDENTIFIED.

+WE THEN RECOMMENDED THE TERTIARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, THROUGH THE UPGC, TO DEVOTE PRIORITY TO A LARGER OUTPUT OF ELECTRONIC ENGINEERS DURING THE NEXT TRIENNIUM.

+SECONDLY, AN IDENTIFIED GAP BETWEEN WHAT ELECTRONICS ENGINEERING UNDERGRADUATES WERE BEING TAUGHT AND WHAT THEIR PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYERS EXPECTED OF THEM WAS ALSO BROUGHT TO THE NOTICE OF THE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS SO THAT THEY MIGHT MODIFY THEIR CURRICULA WITH A VIEW TO THEIR GRADUATES BECOMING MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE IN COMPUTER AND MICROPROCESSOR TECHNOLOGIES.

+THIRDLY, HAVING ESTABLISHED A GROWING WORLD TREND TOWARDS THE USE OF APPLICATION SPECIFIC INTEGRATED CIRCUITS, THE DESIGN OF WHICH INVOLVES SKILLS WHICH ARE NOT YET BEING TAUGHT IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS, THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT SOUGHT THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDS FOR A PILOT SCHEME TO BE LAUNCHED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING COUNCIL TO ENABLE PRACTISING ENGINEERS TO LEARN THESE DESIGN SKILLS ABROAD.+

/MR HO .....

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MR HO SAID THAT ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS HAD BEEN INCLUDED IN THE DRAFT ESTIMATES TO EXTEND THE PRODUCTIVITY ENHANCEMENT SERVICES OF THE HONG KONG PRODUCTIVITY COUNCIL, AND THE QUALITY PROMOTION AND INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT PROMOTION SERVICES OF THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT.

HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS CURRENTLY TAKING AN ACTIVE PART IN THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE WORKING PARTY OF THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION OF BANKS TO STUDY VENTURE CAPITAL OPERATIONS.

REFERRING TO THE CALL FOR GOVERNMENT STIMULATION OF INVESTMENT OR RE-INVESTMENT IN INDUSTRY, MR HO SAID THIS WAS PROBABLY NOT A CODED MESSAGE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO START THINKING OF INVESTMENT GRANTS.

+THIS SORT OF THINKING IS JUST NOT ON. IN THE FIRST PLACE THERE IS NO CASE FOR TRANSFERRING ONE MANUFACTURER'S MONEY INTO THE POCKET OF ANOTHER.

+SECONDLY, SUBSIDIES ARE LIABLE TO BE NEUTRALISED ON THE IMPORTATION OF GOODS THUS PRODUCED BY COUNTERVAILING DUTIES.

+IF I MAY SAY SO THE BEST INCENTIVE TO INVESTMENT IS THE ABILITY OF THE ENTREPRENEUR TO KEEP HIS PROFITS IN HIS OWN POCKET.+

ON PROTECTIONISM, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS FULLY AWARE OF THE NEED TO COUNTER MOVES BY PROTECTIONISTS IN HONG KONG'S MAJOR MARKETS, AND WOULD LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED IN OUR MULTI-FACETED APPROACH TOWARDS THIS PROBLEM.

+IN THE UNITED STATES OUR RESOURCES WILL BE DEPLOYED TO EVEN BETTER EFFECT WHEN THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF IN THE AUTUMN FOR OUR SENIOR REPRESENTATIVE TO BE LOCATED IN WASHINGTON, AND OUR OFFICE THERE WILL ALSO BE MOVED TO MORE SPACIOUS NEW PREMISES TO ACCOMMODATE OUR HARDWORKING STAFF,+ HE SAID.

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SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION BY ERIC HO COMMENDED  
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THE ACTING GOVERNOR, SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) SAID THE GOOD SENSE AND CALM DETERMINATION OF THE RETIRING SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, THE HON ERIC HO, ENABLED MANY COMPLEX TRADE ISSUES TO BE RESOLVED, MOST NOTABLY THE RENEGOTIATION OF THE MULTI-FIBRE ARRANGEMENT AND ASSOCIATED BILATERAL TEXTILE AGREEMENTS.

IN A VALEDICTORY DELIVERED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, SIR DAVID SAID THAT MR HO SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTED THE REORGANISATION OF THE FORMER TRADE, INDUSTRY AND CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT.

/+THIS PERIOD .....

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+THIS PERIOD ALSO SAW HONG KONG PLAYING A GRADUALLY INCREASING ROLE IN THE GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE, INCLUDING THE SUCCESSFUL LAUNCHING OF THE URUGUAY ROUND OF MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS LAST YEAR, AND A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN OUR EFFORTS TO REDUCE THE LIKELIHOOD OF PROTECTIONIST PRESSURES IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ADVERSELY AFFECTING HONG KONG,+ HE ADDED.

+INTERNALLY, A MAJOR OVERHAUL OF THE TEXTILE QUOTA SYSTEM WAS SUCCESSFULLY CARRIED OUT.+

SIR DAVID SAID IN ALL THESE DEVELOPMENTS, THE JUDGMENT AND ADVICE OF MR HO PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN FORMULATING THE POLICIES IN THE MATTERS WHICH WERE SO VITAL TO HONG KONG'S CONTINUING PROSPERITY.

HE POINTED OUT THAT MR HO HAD ALSO MADE AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDUSTRY BY EXPANDING GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT SERVICES AND ENSURING THE EXISTENCE OF THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT FOR INDUSTRIAL GROWTH.

HE SAID MR HO JOINED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN APRIL 1977 ON HIS APPOINTMENT AS SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE COUNCIL, HE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTING A POLICY OF UNPRECEDENTED EXPANSION OF SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES, BRINGING TO THE TASK HIS GENUINE CARE AND CONCERN FOR OTHER PEOPLE.

HE ALSO SAID THAT MR HO'S CONTRIBUTION AS A MEMBER OF THE JOINT LIAISON GROUP HAD BEEN NO LESS SIGNIFICANT.

+WITH THE AGREEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, HONG KONG HAS, SINCE APRIL 1986, BEEN ACCEPTED AS A SEPARATE CONTRACTING PARTY TO THE GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE,+ SIR DAVID SAID.

LASTLY, HE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH MR HO WAS RETIRING FROM THE CIVIL SERVICE, HONG KONG WOULD CONTINUE TO HAVE THE BENEFIT OF HIS WISDOM AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERTISE AS HE WOULD TAKE UP APPOINTMENT AS CHAIRMAN OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION IN MAY.

+I AM SURE MEMBERS WILL WANT TO JOIN ME IN WISHING HIM SUCCESS IN HIS NEW APPOINTMENT AND WE WISH MR AND MRS HO MUCH HAPPINESS IN THE YEARS TO COME,+ HE SAID.

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LONG SERVICE OF RETIRING SECRETARY LAUDED  
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SENIOR LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBER, THE HON LYDIA DUNN, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PAID TRIBUTE TO THE RETIRING SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, THE HON ERIC HO, FOR HIS SERVICE IN THE COUNCIL.

IN A VALEDICTORY DELIVERED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MISS DUNN NOTED THAT MR HO WAS ONE OF THE LONGEST-SERVING MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL, BOTH AS SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL SERVICE AND AS SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, AND HAD BEEN ENLIGHTENING MEMBERS WITH HIS KNOWLEDGE AND WISE ADVICE FOR A TOTAL OF 10 YEARS.

MISS DUNN SAID MR HO'S RELATIONS WITH HIS COLLEAGUES ON THE COUNCIL HAD ALWAYS BEEN CHARACTERISED BY CALMNESS, SINCERITY AND GOOD HUMOUR, AND LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLORS' MANY FORMAL AND INFORMAL CONTACTS WITH HIM OUTSIDE THE CHAMBER HAD BEEN MADE SO MUCH EASIER AND MORE FRUITFUL BY HIS CHARMING, PATIENT AND UNDERSTANDING MANNER.

+I AM SURE THAT THESE QUALITIES HAVE PLAYED NO SMALL PART IN ENSURING THE SUCCESS OF RECENT IMPORTANT TRADE NEGOTIATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS IN THE JOINT LIAISON GROUP, WHICH HAVE RESOLVED A NUMBER OF DIFFICULT QUESTIONS AFFECTING OUR FUTURE TRADE WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD,+ SHE SAID.

MISS DUNN ADDED THAT FEW CIVIL SERVANTS COULD MATCH MR HO'S RICH AND VARIED EXPERIENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT.

+IT IS PERHAPS A MEASURE OF THE LENGTH OF HIS SERVICE THAT MOST OF THE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND BRANCHES IN WHICH HE HAS WORKED SO ABLY AND DEVOTEDLY NOW NO LONGER EXIST; THEY HAVE BEEN REORGANISED, RENAMED OR SUBDIVIDED,+ SHE SAID.

SHE NOTED THAT MR HO WAS RETIRING FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND FROM THE CIVIL SERVICE BUT WOULD CONTINUE TO SERVE HONG KONG IN HIS NEW POSITION AS CHAIRMAN OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION.

SHE SAID SHE COULD THINK OF NO PERSON BETTER QUALIFIED TO FILL THIS IMPORTANT AND RESPONSIBLE POSITION. SHE ALSO HOPED MR HO AND HIS WIFE GRACE EVERY HAPPINESS IN THE FUTURE.

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/29 .....

EX-GRATIA PAYMENTS AIMED AT REDUCING HARDSHIPS  
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EX-GRATIA ALLOWANCES ARE MADE TO REDUCE HARDSHIPS CAUSED TO PEOPLE WHOSE LIVELIHOODS ARE AFFECTED BY GOVERNMENT PROJECTS AND ARE NOT A LEGAL RIGHT TO ELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS, TUEN MUN DISTRICT OFFICER, MR STEPHEN SELBY, SAID THIS (WEDNESDAY) EVENING.

SPEAKING AT A MEETING OF THE Y'S MEN'S CLUB OF THE NEW TERRITORIES, MR SELBY SAID COMPENSATION AND EX-GRATIA ALLOWANCES SHOULD NOT BE CONFUSED AS THEY WERE ENTIRELY DIFFERENT POLICIES FROM EACH OTHER.

COMPENSATION PAYMENTS WERE MADE TO PEOPLE WHO LEGALLY HELD PROPERTY AND WERE AFFECTED BY GOVERNMENT CLEARANCES AND PROJECTS, WHILE EX-GRATIA ALLOWANCES WERE MADE AVAILABLE TO ELIGIBLE CLAIMANTS NOT LEGALLY ENTITLED TO COMPENSATION, HE SAID.

CITING SEVERAL EXAMPLES, MR SELBY SAID SOME COMMON AREAS WHERE GOVERNMENT MADE EX-GRATIA ALLOWANCES WERE CASES WHERE TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS BELIEFS WERE DISTURBED AS A RESULT OF CLEARANCES OR PROJECT WORKS.

+ONE SUCH BELIEF IS FUNG SHUI WHICH WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO PROVE IN A COURT OF LAW THAT ANY DISTURBANCE TO IT HAD CAUSED HARDSHIP TO A PARTICULAR AREA OR VILLAGE,+ MR SELBY SAID.

+WHILE THERE IS NO PROVISION IN THE LAW BY WHICH PEOPLE CAN CLAIM FUNG SHUI AS A RIGHT, THE GOVERNMENT HAS A VERY HIGH REGARD FOR CHINESE CUSTOMS AND WOULD ALMOST ALWAYS PAY OUT EX-GRATIA ALLOWANCES TO MEET THE COST OF RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES TO WARD OFF THE BAD EFFECTS OF FUNG SHUI DISTURBANCES,+ HE ADDED.

MR SELBY SAID ONE OF THE AIMS OF THE EX-GRATIA ALLOWANCE POLICY WAS TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE AFFECTED BY CLEARANCES OR PROJECTS TO CO-OPERATE WITH THE AUTHORITIES IN THE PUBLIC'S INTEREST.

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GENERAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY TO BE CONDUCTED  
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THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT WILL CONTINUE TO CONDUCT THE GENERAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY IN APRIL TO JUNE 1987.

THE SURVEY, CONDUCTED MONTHLY SINCE AUGUST 1981, COLLECTS INFORMATION ON EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT, AND THE GENERAL SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POPULATION.

SOME 5 000 HOUSEHOLDS ARE SELECTED AT RANDOM EACH MONTH FROM ALL DISTRICTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE SURVEY.

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ABOUT HALF OF THE HOUSEHOLDS INTERVIEWED THREE MONTHS AGO WILL BE SURVEYED AGAIN TO MEASURE MORE ACCURATELY THE CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED SINCE THEN.

AN OFFICIAL LETTER, IN ENGLISH AND CHINESE, HAS BEEN SENT TO THE SAMPLED HOUSEHOLDS TO EXPLAIN THE PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY AND TO SEEK THEIR COOPERATION.

ASSISTANT CENSUS AND SURVEY OFFICERS, EACH CARRYING AN IDENTITY CARD ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT, WILL VISIT THESE HOUSEHOLDS TO COLLECT THE REQUIRED INFORMATION.

ALL INFORMATION COLLECTED WILL BE TREATED CONFIDENTIALLY AND WILL NOT BE REVEALED TO ANY PERSON OR ORGANISATION OUTSIDE THE DEPARTMENT.

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TAI PO STORAGE SITE TO LET  
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A SITE AT DAI KWAI STREET ADJACENT TO TAI PO INDUSTRIAL ESTATE IS TO BE LET ON SHORT-TERM TENANCY BY THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT.

THE 4 000-SQUARE-METRE SITE IS FOR THE STORAGE OF BUILDING MATERIALS OR COMPONENTS.

THE TENANCY IS FOR ONE YEAR, RENEWABLE QUARTERLY AFTERWARDS.

TENDERS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY NOON ON APRIL 24.

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MEET THE MEDIA  
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THE DIRECTOR OF ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL SERVICES, MR GRAHAM OSBORNE, WILL MEET THE MEDIA TOMORROW (THURSDAY) AT 4 PM IN THE GIS PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM, FIFTH FLOOR, BEACONSFIELD HOUSE, CENTRAL.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE EVENT.

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OPENING OF NEW FACTORY

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THE DIRECTOR OF INDUSTRY, MR K.Y. YEUNG, AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE HONG KONG INDUSTRIAL ESTATES CORPORATION, MR STEPHEN CHEONG, WILL OFFICIATE AT THE OPENING OF A NEW FACTORY COMPLEX OF THE JAPANESE NIPPON HUME CONCRETE (HK) LTD. AT 2.30 PM ON FRIDAY (APRIL 3) AT THE YUEN LONG INDUSTRIAL ESTATE.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND.

TRANSPORTATION FOR MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES COVERING THE EVENT HAS BEEN ARRANGED BY THE COMPANY. THE COACH WILL BE WAITING OUTSIDE THE MAIN ENTRANCE OF REGENT HOTEL, TSIM SHA TSUI, AT 1 PM FOR THE TRIP TO THE FACTORY AT WANG LEE STREET, YUEN LONG INDUSTRIAL ESTATE.

SHEUNG SHUI SPEED LIMIT REVISED

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A SECTION OF THE NEW TERRITORIES CIRCULAR ROAD WILL BE SUBJECT TO A SPEED LIMIT OF 80 KILOMETRES PER HOUR FROM 4 PM ON FRIDAY (APRIL 3).

THE SECTION RUNS FROM A POINT OF ABOUT 150 METRES EAST OF SHEUNG SHUI ROUNDABOUT TO CHAU TAU, INCLUDING PAK SHEK AU INTERCHANGE.

MEANWHILE, THE EXISTING 50 KILOMETRES PER HOUR SPEED LIMIT RESTRICTED ZONE ON THE WESTBOUND CARRIAGEWAY OF THE NT CIRCULAR ROAD, FROM A POINT OF ABOUT 200 METRES EAST OF KAM TSIN VILLAGE HO TING SCHOOL TO A POINT OF ABOUT 150 METRES EAST OF SHEUNG SHUI ROUNDABOUT, WILL BE LIFTED.

THE EXISTING 80 KILOMETRES PER HOUR SPEED LIMIT ON THE EASTBOUND CARRIAGEWAY OF THE SAME SECTION OF THE NT CIRCULAR ROAD WILL ALSO BE RESCINDED.

AT THE SAME TIME, A NUMBER OF ROADS IN SHEUNG SHUI WILL BE SUBJECT TO A SPEED LIMIT OF 50 KILOMETRES PER HOUR.

THESE ROADS ARE ROAD SR9 AT TSUNG PAK LONG; ROAD SR6 NEAR PAK SHEK AU; AND CASTLE PEAK ROAD BETWEEN ROAD SR9 AND ROAD SR6.

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RESTRICTED ZONES ON NT CIRCULAR ROAD  
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A SECTION OF THE NEW TERRITORIES CIRCULAR ROAD WILL BE DESIGNATED A 24-HOUR RESTRICTED ZONE AND A PROHIBITED AREA FOR LEARNER DRIVERS FROM 4 PM ON FRIDAY (APRIL 3).

THE SECTION RUNS FROM A POINT ABOUT 200 METRES EAST OF KAM TSIN VILLAGE HO TUNG SCHOOL TO CHAU TAU, INCLUDING THE PAK SHEK AU INTERCHANGE.

NO VEHICLE WILL BE ALLOWED TO STOP FOR PASSENGERS OR GOODS WITHIN THE RESTRICTED AREA AND LEARNER DRIVERS WILL BE PROHIBITED FROM ENTERING THE ROAD SECTION.

ANOTHER SECTION OF THE ROAD WILL ALSO BE PROHIBITED TO ALL PUBLIC LIGHT BUSES.

THIS SECTION IS BETWEEN A POINT ABOUT 150 METRES EAST OF SHEUNG SHUI ROUNDABOUT AND CHAU TAU, INCLUDING THE PAK SHEK AU INTERCHANGE.

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TRAFFIC CHANGES ON HONG KONG ISLAND  
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ST. FRANCIS STREET IN WAN CHAI WILL BE CLOSED TO TRAFFIC FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY (APRIL 4) TO 7 AM ON APRIL 7 FOR ROAD WORKS.

ALSO FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY, NO VEHICLE WILL BE ALLOWED TO ENTER THE EASTBOUND TRAM TRACK IN WESTERN DISTRICT ON DES VOEUX ROAD WEST FROM ITS JUNCTION WITH WATER STREET TO A POINT ABOUT 50 METRES WEST OF THE SAME JUNCTION AT ANY TIME OF THE DAY.

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