



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES
BEACONSFIELD HOUSE, HONG KONG. TEL.: 5-8428777

MONDAY APRIL 9, 1990

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MINISTER OF STATE SPEAKS ON VBP ISSUE

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HONG KONG IS ENTITLED TO HOPE THAT THE BURDEN IT SUFFERED LAST YEAR WITH THE INFLUX OF VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE, WILL NOT BE REPEATED, THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS, MR FRANCIS MAUDE, SAID TODAY (MONDAY).

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AFTER VISITING THE WHITEHEAD VBP DETENTION CENTRE, MR MAUDE SAID THE ONLY WAY OF MAKING SURE THAT IT WON'T BE REPEATED, WAS TO GET THE MESSAGE FIRMLY ACROSS IN VIETNAM THAT ALL THEY FACED IF THEY CAME HERE WAS A SPELL IN A DETENTION CENTRE AND A RETURN TRIP TO VIETNAM.

"I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE ONE THING ABOVE ALL THAT GOT THAT MESSAGE ACROSS IN VIETNAM WAS US TAKING A DIFFICULT DECISION BACK IN DECEMBER TO RETURN A PLANELOAD OF PEOPLE, MANDATORY REPATRIATEES, IN ADDITION TO THE VOLUNTARY PROGRAMME REPATRIATION.

"THAT SENT A VERY CLEAR SIGNAL TO VIETNAM THAT THERE IS NOT AN OPTION ABOUT WHERE THEY GO FROM HERE. THOSE WHO AREN'T REFUGEES, THE ONLY PLACE FOR THEM TO GO IS BACK TO VIETNAM," MR MAUDE SAID.

HE POINTED OUT THAT HONG KONG WAS MAKING THE BEST POSSIBLE PROVISIONS AGAINST THERE BEING A NEW INFLUX OF BOAT PEOPLE THIS YEAR.

TURNING TO THE SCREENING POLICY, THE MINISTER SAID THERE WERE SOME INDICATIONS THAT THE NUMBERS OF NEW ARRIVALS THIS YEAR MIGHT BE LESS, ADDING: "SO I THINK THERE IS GROUND FOR HOPING THAT THE POLICY IS WORKING."

MR MAUDE SAID THOSE RUNNING THE DETENTION CENTRES HAD AN INTENSELY DIFFICULT TASK IN MAINTAINING ORDER AND PEACE, AND IN PROVIDING THE SORT OF CONDITIONS IN WHICH PEOPLE COULD SENSIBLY BE COUNSELLED ABOUT THEIR PROSPECTS.

"BECAUSE THESE ARE ALL PEOPLE HERE WHO ARE GOING TO GO BACK TO VIETNAM, AND THE SOONER IT CAN BE EXPLAINED TO THEM THAT THAT IS THE OPTION, THAT IS THE ONLY OPTION AVAILABLE, AND THE SOONER THEY CAN UNDERSTAND THAT AND TAKE THE DECISION, PREFERABLY VOLUNTARILY, TO GO BACK THEMSELVES, THE BETTER IT WILL BE FOR EVERYBODY," HE SAID.

MR MAUDE POINTED OUT THAT THERE WAS AN EXISTING AGREEMENT WITH VIETNAM WHICH ALLOWED NON-VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION TO TAKE PLACE.

"WE HAVEN'T SORT TO ACTIVATE THAT BECAUSE AT THE MOMENT WE'VE GOT A BACKLOG OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED TO GO BACK. THE MESSAGE OF THE FIRST MANDATORY REPATRIATION HAS, I BELIEVE, BEEN UNDERSTOOD IN VIETNAM.

"AND UNTIL WE'VE CLEARED THE BACKLOG OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED TO RETURN AND WHO ARE STILL WAITING IN CAMPS IN HONG KONG, I DON'T THINK IT'S SENSIBLE OR NECESSARY TO TRY TO USE THAT AGREEMENT ON MANDATORY REPATRIATION," HE SAID.

/"THE MAIN

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"THE MAIN THING I SORT TO ACHIEVE IN HANOI WAS A DRAMATIC INCREASE IN THE NUMBERS OF VOLUNTEERS WHO COULD RETURN, AND THAT IS HAPPENING, THE NUMBERS ARE INCREASING ALREADY, AND THE NUMBERS WILL BE SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED DURING APRIL, AGAIN IN MAY AND AGAIN IN JUNE," HE ADDED.

ASKED TO COMMENT ON THE PORT OF FIRST ASYLUM POLICY, MR MAUDE SAID: "I WOULD CERTAINLY VERY MUCH DISLIKE TO SEE THE POLICY OF FIRST ASYLUM DISAPPEARING.

"IF YOU RUN A SENSIBLE REFUGEE POLICY THEN FIRST ASYLUM IS IMPORTANT, BUT WHAT GOES WITH FIRST ASYLUM IS SCREENING OUT THOSE WHO ARE NOT REFUGEES AND RETURNING THEM TO THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN.

"AND I THINK IT'S VERY WELL UNDERSTOOD THAT UNLESS YOU HAVE ALL THE ELEMENTS OF THAT POLICY RUNNING TOGETHER, THE REPATRIATION AS WELL AS THE SCREENING AND AS WELL AS THE FIRST ASYLUM, IT BECOMES INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO SUSTAIN THE POLICY OF FIRST ASYLUM," THE MINISTER SAID.

"IT IS CERTAINLY SUSTAINABLE AT THE MOMENT, BUT HONG KONG WILL CERTAINLY LIKE TO SEE THE NUMBERS GOING OUT OF HONG KONG HIGHER THAN THE NUMBERS COMING IN, AND I THINK THERE WOULD BE DIFFICULTIES IF THERE WAS A SUBSTANTIAL INFLUX THIS YEAR WITHOUT THERE BEING COUNTERVAILING MEASURES TO INCREASE THE NUMBERS FLOWING OUT OF HONG KONG," MR MAUDE SAID.

THE MINISTER POINTED OUT THAT BRITAIN WAS COMMITTED TO THE OBLIGATION TO TAKE IN VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM HONG KONG.

AFTER VISITING THE WHITEHEAD VBP DETENTION CENTRE, MR MAUDE ATTENDED A LUNCH HOSTED BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID FORD. OTHER GUESTS AT THE LUNCH INCLUDED BUSINESSMEN, BANKERS AND INDUSTRIALISTS.

IN THE AFTERNOON, MR MAUDE WENT TO MAN KAM TO WHERE HE WAS BRIEFED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE POLICE AND THE ARMY ON THE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS AT THE BORDER. HE THEN VISITED THE LIU MAN SHEK TONG IN SHEUNG SHUI, AN ANCESTRAL HALL OF THE LIU CLAN WHICH WAS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN ERECTED IN 1751. THEREAFTER MR MAUDE VISITED TIN PING ESTATE WHERE HE WAS BRIEFED ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SHEUNG SHUI AND FANLING.

BEFORE FLYING BACK BY HELICOPTER TO CENTRAL TO ATTEND A MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF CIVIL SERVICE UNIONS, MR MAUDE STOPPED AT CHINA LIGHT AND POWER CASTLE PEAK PLANT TO SEE ITS OPERATION.

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AFTER THE MEETING, MR MAUDE SAID THAT HE HAD TALKED WITH THE CIVIL SERVICE UNIONS REPRESENTATIVES ABOUT THE NATIONALITY PACKAGE.

/"THE MAJORITY

"THE MAJORITY OF THOSE WHO SPOKE EXPRESSED VERY STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE PACKAGE AND EXPRESSED GREAT APPRECIATION FOR WHAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAD DONE. THEY RECOGNISED THAT IT WAS A COURAGEOUS DECISION TO GO AHEAD WITH THE PACKAGE GIVEN THE POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM. I WAS GRATEFUL FOR THE APPRECIATION THAT WAS SHOWN FOR THE DIFFICULT STANCE WHICH WE HAVE TAKEN AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE DETERMINATION WHICH WE HAVE TO TAKE THIS PACKAGE THROUGH.

"OBVIOUSLY THERE WERE A NUMBER OF POINTS RAISED, DETAILED POINTS ABOUT THE OPERATION OF THE SCHEME WHICH OBVIOUSLY I'VE UNDERTAKEN TO TAKE AWAY AND LOOK AT VERY CAREFULLY IN CONSULTATION WITH MY COLLEAGUES IN THE HOME OFFICE AND WITH THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT," HE SAID.

IN THE EVENING, MR MAUDE HAD A MEETING AND DINNER WITH OMELCO MEMBERS.

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PRICE AND VOLUME MOVEMENTS OF EXTERNAL TRADE IN JANUARY RELEASED
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THE VOLUME OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS DECREASED BY 5 PER CENT, WHILE THAT OF THE RE-EXPORTS GREW BY 1 PER CENT IN JANUARY 1990 AS COMPARED WITH THE SAME MONTH IN 1989, ACCORDING TO STATISTICS RELEASED TODAY (MONDAY) BY THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT.

TAKING THEM TOGETHER, THERE WAS AN OVERALL DECREASE OF 2 PER CENT IN THE VOLUME OF TOTAL EXPORTS. IMPORTS DECREASED BY 7 PER CENT IN VOLUME TERMS.

THE GROWTH IN THE VOLUME OF TRADE IS DERIVED FROM THE GROWTH IN TRADE VALUES, HAVING DISCOUNTED THE EFFECT OF PRICE CHANGES.

AS REGARDS PRICE CHANGES OVER THE SAME PERIOD OF COMPARISON, THE PRICES OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS AND RE-EXPORTS ROSE BY 2 PER CENT AND 5 PER CENT RESPECTIVELY, WHILE THOSE OF IMPORTS ROSE BY 3 PER CENT. AS A RESULT, THE TERMS OF TRADE INDEX (EXPRESSED AS A RATIO OF TOTAL EXPORT PRICE INDEX TO IMPORT PRICE INDEX) INCREASED BY 1 PER CENT.

PRICES ARE BASED ON UNIT VALUES WHICH DO NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT CHANGES IN THE COMPOSITION OR QUALITY OF GOODS TRADED, EXCEPT FOR SOME SELECTED COMMODITIES FOR WHICH SPECIFICATION PRICE INDEXES ARE AVAILABLE.

CARE SHOULD BE EXERCISED IN INTERPRETING THE CHANGES IN THE VOLUME OF TRADE IN ANY INDIVIDUAL MONTH IN ISOLATION, IN VIEW OF THE FLUCTUATIONS THAT MAY OCCUR FROM MONTH TO MONTH. IN PARTICULAR, THE TRADE FIGURES FOR THE FIRST TWO MONTHS OF THE YEAR ARE LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED BY THE TIMING OF THE LUNAR NEW YEAR HOLIDAYS.

COMPARING THE THREE MONTHS ENDING JANUARY 1990 WITH THE THREE MONTHS ENDING JANUARY 1989, THE VOLUME OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS DECREASED BY 6 PER CENT, WHILE THAT OF RE-EXPORTS INCREASED BY 1 PER CENT, SO THAT FOR TOTAL EXPORTS, A DECREASE OF 2 PER CENT WAS RECORDED IN VOLUME TERMS. THE VOLUME OF IMPORTS DROPPED BY 7 PER CENT.

OVER THE SAME PERIOD OF COMPARISON, PRICES OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS AND RE-EXPORTS ROSE BY 2 PER CENT AND 6 PER CENT RESPECTIVELY. IMPORT PRICES INCREASED BY 3 PER CENT.

EXTENDING THE PERIOD OF COMPARISON TO THE 12 MONTHS ENDING JANUARY 1990 WITH THE 12 MONTHS ENDING JANUARY 1989, THE VOLUME OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS SHOWED LITTLE CHANGE WHILE THAT OF RE-EXPORTS INCREASED BY 16 PER CENT, GIVING AN INCREASE OF 9 PER CENT IN THE VOLUME OF TOTAL EXPORTS. THE VOLUME OF IMPORTS ROSE BY 7 PER CENT.

OVER THE SAME PERIOD OF COMPARISON, PRICES OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS AND RE-EXPORTS INCREASED BY 3 PER CENT AND 6 PER CENT RESPECTIVELY, WHILE THOSE OF IMPORTS ROSE BY 3 PER CENT.

THE CHANGES IN THE VALUE, UNIT VALUE AND VOLUME OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS BY COMMODITY GROUP FOR JANUARY 1990 AS COMPARED WITH JANUARY 1989 ARE SHOWN IN TABLE 1.

AS CAN BE SEEN FROM TABLE 1, THE DOMESTIC EXPORT VOLUME OF MOST COMMODITY GROUPS DECREASED IN JANUARY 1990 COMPARED WITH JANUARY 1989 INCLUDING DOMESTIC ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES (-42 PER CENT); METAL MANUFACTURES (-29 PER CENT); RADIOS OF ALL KINDS (-27 PER CENT); FOOTWEAR (-26 PER CENT); METAL ORES AND SCRAP (-24 PER CENT); TEXTILE YARN AND THREAD (-21 PER CENT); TRAVEL GOODS, HANDBAGS AND SIMILAR ARTICLES (-21 PER CENT) AND ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS (-5 PER CENT).

INCREASES IN DOMESTIC EXPORT VOLUME WERE RECORDED IN WATCHES AND CLOCKS (+6 PER CENT); CLOTHING (+6 PER CENT) AND TEXTILE MADE-UPS AND RELATED ARTICLES (+2 PER CENT).

PRICES OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS OF MOST COMMODITY GROUPS INCREASED IN JANUARY 1990 COMPARED WITH JANUARY 1989. THESE INCLUDED TEXTILE YARN AND THREAD (+6 PER CENT); METAL MANUFACTURES (+6 PER CENT); TEXTILE MADE-UPS AND RELATED ARTICLES (+6 PER CENT); TEXTILE FABRICS (+5 PER CENT); TRAVEL GOODS, HANDBAGS AND SIMILAR ARTICLES (+5 PER CENT); CLOTHING (+3 PER CENT) AND FOOTWEAR (+2 PER CENT).

HOWEVER, DECREASES IN DOMESTIC EXPORT PRICES WERE RECORDED IN METAL ORES AND SCRAP (-3 PER CENT) AND WATCHES AND CLOCKS (-1 PER CENT). DOMESTIC EXPORT PRICES OF DOMESTIC ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES; ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS; AND RADIOS OF ALL KINDS SHOWED LITTLE CHANGE.

THE CHANGES IN THE VALUE, UNIT VALUE AND VOLUME OF IMPORTS BY END-USE CATEGORY FOR JANUARY 1990 AS COMPARED WITH JANUARY 1989 ARE SHOWN IN TABLE 2.

AS PRESENTED IN TABLE 2, IMPORTED FOODSTUFFS DECREASED BY 7 PER CENT IN VOLUME TERMS IN JANUARY 1990 COMPARED WITH JANUARY 1989. SIGNIFICANT DECREASES WERE RECORDED IN THE IMPORT VOLUME OF RICE; SUGAR; FISH AND FISH PREPARATIONS; AND ANIMALS OF THE BOVINE SPECIES. INCREASES WERE RECORDED IN THE IMPORT VOLUME OF FRUIT; MEAT AND MEAT PREPARATIONS; AND TEA AND COFFEE.

OVER THE SAME PERIOD OF COMPARISON, THE IMPORT VOLUME OF CONSUMER GOODS INCREASED BY 2 PER CENT. COMMODITY ITEMS WITH MORE SUBSTANTIAL INCREASES INCLUDED FOOTWEAR; MISCELLANEOUS MADE-UP ARTICLES OF TEXTILE MATERIALS AND TOBACCO MANUFACTURES. DECREASES IN IMPORT VOLUME WERE RECORDED FOR PASSENGER MOTOR CARS; ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES AND HOUSEHOLD TYPE ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES.

THE IMPORT VOLUME OF RAW MATERIALS AND SEMI-MANUFACTURES DECREASED BY 13 PER CENT IN JANUARY 1990 COMPARED WITH JANUARY 1989. THE MAJOR DECREASES WERE RECORDED IN THE IMPORT VOLUME OF WOOL AND OTHER ANIMAL HAIR; YARN OF WOOL AND MIXTURES; IRON AND STEEL AND OTHER BASE METALS. INCREASES IN IMPORT VOLUME WERE NOTED FOR WOOD, LUMBER AND CORK; CLAY AND REFRACTORY CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS, BUILDING MATERIALS, ETC., EXCEPT GLASS; FABRICS OF MAN-MADE FIBRES AND RAW COTTON.

IMPORTS OF FUELS DECREASED BY 34 PER CENT IN VOLUME TERMS IN JANUARY 1990 AS COMPARED WITH JANUARY 1989.

IN THE CAPITAL GOODS CATEGORY, THE IMPORT VOLUME DECREASED BY 11 PER CENT IN JANUARY 1990 OVER JANUARY 1989. THERE WERE DECREASES IN THE IMPORT VOLUME OF INDUSTRIAL MACHINERY OTHER THAN TEXTILE AND ELECTRICAL MACHINERY; AND TRANSPORT EQUIPMENT. INCREASES WERE RECORDED IN THE IMPORT VOLUME OF CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY AND OFFICE MACHINES.

COMPARING JANUARY 1990 WITH JANUARY 1989, IMPORT PRICES OF MOST END-USE CATEGORIES INCREASED: FUELS (+19 PER CENT); CONSUMER GOODS (+6 PER CENT); FOODSTUFFS (+4 PER CENT) AND CAPITAL GOODS (+2 PER CENT). THE IMPORT PRICE OF RAW MATERIALS AND SEMI-MANUFACTURES SHOWED LITTLE CHANGE.

THE CHANGES IN THE VALUE, UNIT VALUE AND VOLUME OF RE-EXPORTS BY END-USE CATEGORY FOR JANUARY 1990 AS COMPARED WITH JANUARY 1989 ARE SHOWN IN TABLE 3.

AS DEPICTED IN TABLE 3, THE RE-EXPORT VOLUME OF CONSUMER GOODS AND FUELS INCREASED BY 22 PER CENT AND 16 PER CENT RESPECTIVELY IN JANUARY 1990 AS COMPARED WITH JANUARY 1989. HOWEVER, THE RE-EXPORT VOLUME OF FOODSTUFFS, RAW MATERIALS AND SEMI-MANUFACTURES; AND CAPITAL GOODS DECREASED BY 23 PER CENT, 18 PER CENT AND 9 PER CENT RESPECTIVELY.

PRICES OF RE-EXPORTS OF ALL END-USE CATEGORIES INCREASED IN JANUARY 1990 COMPARED WITH JANUARY 1989: FUELS (+22 PER CENT); CONSUMER GOODS (+7 PER CENT); CAPITAL GOODS (+4 PER CENT); RAW MATERIALS AND SEMI-MANUFACTURES (+4 PER CENT) AND FOODSTUFFS (+3 PER CENT).

FURTHER DETAILS ARE CONTAINED IN THE JANUARY 1990 ISSUE OF THE "HONG KONG TRADE INDEX NUMBERS" WHICH WILL BE ON SALE AT THE GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS CENTRE, GROUND FLOOR, GPO BUILDING, CONNAUGHT PLACE, CENTRAL AROUND APRIL 12 AT \$3 PER COPY.

ENQUIRIES REGARDING REGULAR SUBSCRIPTION TO THIS REPORT MAY BE DIRECTED TO THE INFORMATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT AT FRENCH MISSION BUILDING, HONG KONG (TEL. NO. : 842 8802) AND ENQUIRIES ON TRADE INDEXES TO THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT (TEL. NO. : 823 4918).

TABLE 1: CHANGES IN DOMESTIC EXPORTS BY PRINCIPAL COMMODITY GROUP

COMPARING JANUARY 1990
WITH JANUARY 1989

COMMODITY GROUP	VALUE %	UNIT VALUE %	VOLUME %
CLOTHING	9	3	6
TEXTILE FABRICS	5	5	*
TEXTILE YARN AND THREAD	-17	6	-21
TEXTILE MADE-UPS AND RELATED ARTICLES	8	6	2
RADIOS OF ALL KINDS	-27	*	-27
ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS	-6	*	-5
FOOTWEAR	-24	2	-26
METAL MANUFACTURES	-25	6	-29
METAL ORES AND SCRAP	-26	-3	-24
WATCHES AND CLOCKS	5	-1	6
TRAVEL GOODS, HANDBAGS AND SIMILAR ARTICLES	-17	5	-21
DOMESTIC ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES	-42	*	-42
ALL COMMODITIES	-4	2	-5

* LESS THAN 0.5 PER CENT

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TABLE 2 : CHANGES IN IMPORTS BY END-USE CATEGORY

COMPARING JANUARY 1990
WITH JANUARY 1989

END-USE CATEGORY	VALUE %	UNIT VALUE %	VOLUME %
FOODSTUFFS	-3	4	-7
CONSUMER GOODS	8	6	2
RAW MATERIALS AND SEMI-MANUFACTURES	-13	*	-13
FUELS	-21	19	-34
CAPITAL GOODS	-9	2	-11
ALL COMMODITIES	-5	3	-7

* LESS THAN 0.5 PER CENT

TABLE 3 : CHANGES IN RE-EXPORTS BY END-USE CATEGORY

COMPARING JANUARY 1990
WITH JANUARY 1989

END-USE CATEGORY	VALUE %	UNIT VALUE %	VOLUME %
FOODSTUFFS	-20	3	-23
CONSUMER GOODS	30	7	22
RAW MATERIALS AND SEMI-MANUFACTURES	-14	4	-18
FUELS	41	22	16
CAPITAL GOODS	-5	4	-9
ALL COMMODITIES	6	5	1

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SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE (DESIGNATE) MEETS USD STAFF
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THE SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE (DESIGNATE), MR BARRIE WIGGHAM, TODAY (MONDAY) VISITED THE URBAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT TO GET AN INSIGHT INTO THE MULTI-FARIOUS FUNCTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT AND THE WIDE-RANGING SERVICES IT PROVIDES.

HE ALSO MET REPRESENTATIVES OF DEPARTMENT STAFF TO HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE GENERAL ISSUES FACING CIVIL SERVANTS AND THOSE PERTAINING PARTICULARLY TO THE URBAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT.

TODAY'S VISIT WAS PART OF A SERIES OF FAMILIARISATION TOURS OF VARIOUS GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS SINCE HE JOINED THE CIVIL SERVICES BRANCH EARLY THIS MONTH. MR WIGGHAM WILL OFFICIALLY ASSUME THE OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE ON APRIL 17.

MR WIGGHAM STARTED THE VISIT BY HOLDING DISCUSSIONS WITH THE DIRECTORATE STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT LED BY THE DIRECTOR OF URBAN SERVICES, MR JAMES SO, WHO BRIEFED HIM ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT'S PRIME OBJECTIVES AND ROLES IN UPGRADING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF URBAN RESIDENTS THROUGH THE PROVISION OF FIRST CLASS RECREATIONAL, ENVIRONMENTAL HYGIENE AND CULTURAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES.

MR WIGGHAM ALSO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY OF HIS VISIT TO ATTEND A MEETING OF THE DEPARTMENTAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE CHAIRED BY THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR (ADMINISTRATION), MRS LESSIE WEI, AND ATTENDED BY STAFF REPRESENTATIVES OF VARIOUS GRADES OF THE DEPARTMENT.

THE MEETING PROVIDED HIM WITH A FACE-TO-FACE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS WITH STAFF REPRESENTATIVES ON MANY TOPICS INCLUDING THE RESTRUCTURING OF, AND SPECIAL ALLOWANCE FOR, THE GENERAL DUTIES TEAMS, RECRUITMENT, THE ANNUAL PAY RISE AS WELL AS THE POSSIBILITY OF RELEASING PENSION TO STAFF WHO HAVE YET TO REACH RETIREMENT AGE BEFORE 1997.

MR WIGGHAM VISITED THE MARINE DEPARTMENT AND THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT LAST WEEK AND HE WILL BE VISITING THE CORRECTIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT, SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT, ROYAL HONG KONG POLICE FORCE AND EDUCATION DEPARTMENT LATER THIS MONTH.

HE HOSTED AN INFORMAL LUNCH FOR THE STAFF SIDE REPRESENTATIVES OF SENIOR CIVIL SERVICE COUNCIL AND A RECEPTION FOR ABOUT 100 REPRESENTATIVES OF 10 GENERAL GRADE STAFF ASSOCIATIONS LAST WEEK.

HE WILL ALSO MEET WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE MODEL SCALE I STAFF CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL AND THE DISCIPLINED SERVICES CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL ON APRIL 11 AND 12 RESPECTIVELY.

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AGREEMENTS REMOVE TECHNICAL TRADE BARRIER

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A POSSIBLE TECHNICAL BARRIER TO HONG KONG'S TRADE WITH AUSTRALIA AND THE UNITED STATES WAS REMOVED TODAY (MONDAY) WITH THE SIGNING OF MUTUAL RECOGNITION AGREEMENTS WITH LABORATORY ACCREDITATION SCHEMES OPERATING IN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

THE DIRECTOR OF INDUSTRY, MR T.H. BARMA, REPRESENTING THE HONG KONG LABORATORY ACCREDITATION SCHEME (HOKLAS), SIGNED MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU'S) WITH THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TESTING LABORATORIES (NATA) OF AUSTRALIA AND THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR LABORATORY ACCREDITATION (A2LA).

MR BARMA SAID THAT AGREEMENTS INDICATED THE IMPORTANCE HONG KONG PLACED ON ESTABLISHING LINKS WITH CREDIBLE AND MAJOR SCHEMES IN THE INTERNATIONAL TESTING COMMUNITY.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD JUST LAUNCHED A QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME TO ENCOURAGE MANUFACTURERS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THEIR GOODS THROUGH MODERN MANAGEMENT METHODS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE PRACTICES.

"LABORATORY TESTING PLAYS A VITAL ROLE IN QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN INDUSTRY AND IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT SUCH TESTING SERVICES PROVIDED BY LOCAL LABORATORIES ARE SHOWN TO BE COMPETENT AND RELIABLE AND TO HAVE ATTAINED RECOGNITION OVERSEAS," MR BARMA SAID.

HE SAID HOKLAS HAD DEVELOPED RAPIDLY OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS.

TODAY, THERE WERE 22 LABORATORIES ACCREDITED FOR A WIDE RANGE OF SERVICES AND MORE WERE IN THE PROCESS OF APPLYING AS THE BENEFITS OF ACCREDITATION WERE BEGINNING TO BE RECOGNISED.

UNDER THE TWO AGREEMENTS, MR BARMA SAID, TEST CERTIFICATES ISSUED BY HOKLAS ACCREDITED LABORATORIES WOULD BE ACCEPTED IN AUSTRALIA AND THE UNITED STATES WITH THE SAME VALIDITY AS IF THEY HAD BEEN ISSUED BY AUSTRALIAN AND AMERICAN ACCREDITED LABORATORIES.

LIKEWISE, CERTIFICATES ISSUED BY NATA AND A2LA ACCREDITED LABORATORIES WOULD BE ACCEPTED HERE WITHOUT QUESTION.

"IT FOLLOWS FROM THESE AGREEMENTS THAT TRADE IN GOODS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND AUSTRALIA AND HONG KONG, WHERE ACCOMPANIED BY ENDORSED TEST CERTIFICATES, WILL NO LONGER BE INTERRUPTED AT THE POINTS OF IMPORTATION BY CUSTOMS QUERIES OVER THE TECHNICAL INTEGRITY OR THE VERACITY OF TEST DATA," HE SAID.

"THIS DEVELOPMENT CAN, THEREFORE, FACILITATE TRADE BY ELIMINATING ONE OF THE TECHNICAL BARRIERS EXISTING IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE," HE ADDED.

/MR BARMA

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MR BARMA SAID THE AUSTRALIAN AND HONG KONG LABORATORY ACCREDITATION SCHEMES HAD MAINTAINED A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP SINCE NATA WAS ENGAGED AS THE CONSULTANT TO ADVISE AND ASSIST IN THE SETTING-UP AND DEVELOPMENT OF HOKLAS.

ESTABLISHED FOR OVER 40 YEARS, NATA WAS THE WORLD'S FIRST COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL LABORATORY ACCREDITATION SCHEME AND A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABORATORY ACCREDITATION CONFERENCE (ILAC), A FORUM WHICH HAD PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN SETTING THE CODES OF PRACTICE FOR LABORATORY ACCREDITATION SCHEMES THE WORLD OVER TO FOLLOW.

IN RESPECT OF A2LA, MR BARMA SAID THE ILAC DIRECTORY LISTED 80 DIFFERENT ACCREDITING BODIES OPERATING IN THE USA.

HE SAID, IN THE EARLY YEARS OF HOKLAS'S EXISTENCE, IT WAS RATHER DIFFICULT TO DECIDE WHICH OF THE AMERICAN SCHEMES WAS SUFFICIENTLY BROAD-BASED AND TRULY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE TESTING INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE TO ENABLE HONG KONG TO PURSUE AN AGREEMENT IN THE LONG TERM.

"AFTER A WHILE, IT BECAME CLEAR TO US THAT A2LA FULFILLED THAT ROLE," MR BARMA SAID.

"ALTHOUGH IT HAS SEVERAL HUNDRED LABORATORIES ACCREDITED, A2LA IS CONCERNED WITH FIELDS OF TESTING SIMILAR TO THOSE BEING ADDRESSED BY HOKLAS AND IN KEEPING WITH THE NEEDS OF OUR INDUSTRIES.

"CONSEQUENTLY, THERE WAS SCOPE FOR MUTUAL BENEFITS BETWEEN A2LA AND HOKLAS.

"FURTHERMORE, THE PROFESSIONALISM AND INTEGRITY OF THOSE RUNNING ACCREDITATION SCHEMES IS OF CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE TO US," MR BARMA SAID.

MR BARMA PAID SPECIAL TRIBUTE TO A2LA'S PRESIDENT, MR JOHN LOCKE, WHO HAD COME TO HONG KONG FOR THE PURPOSE OF SIGNING THE DOCUMENT, ADDING "HE IS ONE IN WHOM WE WOULD HAVE CONFIDENCE TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY SUPPORT FOR HOKLAS IN THE UNITED STATES."

MR BARMA ALSO THANKED THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF NATA, MR J.A. GILMOUR, AND ITS CORPORATE SERVICES MANAGER, MR A.J. RUSSELL, FOR THEIR CO-OPERATION AND HELP IN BRINGING ABOUT THE AGREEMENT AND ALSO FOR COMING TO HONG KONG TO ATTEND THE CEREMONY.

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LAB STUDIES PLAN TO COMPENSATE WORKERS FOR HEARING LOSS

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THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD TODAY (MONDAY) DISCUSSED FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PROPOSED COMPENSATION SCHEME FOR WORKERS SUFFERING FROM OCCUPATIONAL NOISE-INDUCED HEARING LOSS.

THE PROPOSED SCHEME HAD BEEN ACCEPTED IN PRINCIPLE BY THE BOARD AT ITS PREVIOUS MEETINGS.

A WORKER WILL BE ENTITLED TO COMPENSATION IF HE HAS 10 YEARS' EMPLOYMENT IN A NOISY INDUSTRY IN HONG KONG AND A PERIOD OF CONTINUOUS EMPLOYMENT IN SUCH INDUSTRY WITHIN THE 24 MONTHS BEFORE THE DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEME, OR WITHIN THE 12 MONTHS PRECEDING THE CLAIM FOR COMPENSATION.

THE MAXIMUM LEVEL OF COMPENSATION WILL BE NOT MORE THAN 48 MONTHS' EARNINGS FOR TOTAL DISABILITY SUBJECT TO A MAXIMUM OF \$394,000.

IT WAS PROPOSED AT TODAY'S MEETING THAT THE SCHEME SHOULD BE FINANCED BY A PERCENTAGE SURCHARGE ON THE PREMIUM PAID FOR EVERY EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION INSURANCE POLICY AND THAT COLLECTION OF SUCH A LEVY SHOULD BEGIN SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE SCHEME COMES INTO FULL OPERATION.

AFTER SOME DISCUSSION, MEMBERS GENERALLY ENDORSED THE PROPOSAL FOR A SURCHARGE BUT STRONGLY FELT THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROVIDE AN INTEREST-FREE LOAN. ALSO THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE SCHEME IN THE SAME WAY AS AN EMPLOYER IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

THE CHAIRMAN UNDERTOOK TO REFLECT THESE VIEWS TO THE GOVERNMENT.

THE MEETING ALSO CONSIDERED SOME PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE TO BETTER PROTECT EMPLOYEES' ENTITLEMENTS IN THE CALCULATION OF SEVERANCE PAYMENT AND LONG SERVICE PAYMENT.

THE EFFECT OF THE AMENDMENTS WILL BE THAT WHERE AN EMPLOYEE TERMINATES HIS CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT DUE TO OLD AGE OR ILL HEALTH, HE WILL BE DEEMED TO HAVE BEEN PAID FULL WAGES DURING THE RELEVANT PERIOD OF THE LAST 12 MONTHS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR THE PURPOSE OF CALCULATING LONG SERVICE PAYMENT OR SEVERANCE PAYMENT, PROVIDED HE HAS COMPLETED THE QUALIFYING YEARS OF SERVICE.

THIS WILL APPLY ALSO TO AN EMPLOYEE WHO DIES IN SERVICE AND WHOSE DEPENDANTS ARE ENTITLED TO LONG SERVICE PAYMENT.

IN ADDITION, AN EMPLOYEE WILL BE CONSIDERED TO HAVE BEEN PAID HIS FULL WAGES AS IF HE HAD WORKED NORMALLY DURING THE RELEVANT PERIOD IF HE HAS BEEN PUT ON SHORT-TIME WORK OR IF HE OR SHE HAS TAKEN NO-PAY SICK LEAVE OR NO-PAY MATERNITY LEAVE.

/THE MEETING

THE MEETING AGREED TO THESE AMENDMENTS SUBJECT TO FURTHER CLARIFICATION OF HOW A WORKER WILL BE CONSIDERED TO HAVE "WORKED NORMALLY DURING THE RELEVANT PERIOD".

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD ALSO AGREED TO AMEND THE ORDINANCE SO THAT THE REFERRAL OF A CLAIM TO THE LABOUR TRIBUNAL WILL NOT CONSTITUTE A BAR TO A CRIMINAL PROSECUTION BUT WILL ONLY ACT AS A STAY OF THE CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS.

ALSO NON-PAYMENT OF SEVERANCE PAYMENT WILL BE AN OFFENCE IF IT IS NOT PAID WITHIN SUCH TIME AS DIRECTED BY THE LABOUR TRIBUNAL OR IN THE ABSENCE OF SUCH DIRECTION, WITHIN 14 DAYS AFTER THE TRIBUNAL HAS CONFIRMED THAT THE EMPLOYER IS LIABLE TO PAY.

NON-PAYMENT OF WAGES OR OTHER PAYMENTS DUE ON TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT WILL BE CONTINUING OFFENCES AS LONG AS THEY REMAIN OUTSTANDING.

THE MEETING WENT ON TO DISCUSS PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION ORDINANCE TO CLARIFY AN INSURER'S LIABILITIES TOWARDS INJURED EMPLOYEES AND TO FACILITATE DIRECT CLAIMS BY EMPLOYEES AGAINST THE INSURER FOR COMPENSATION.

MEMBERS SUPPORTED THE PROPOSALS.

THE MEETING AGREED TO SEVERAL OTHER PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE ORDINANCE AIMED AT SOLVING TECHNICAL PROBLEMS AND STREAMLINING THE PROCEDURES INVOLVED IN CLAIMING COMPENSATION IN THE COURTS.

OTHER ITEMS ENDORSED AT TODAY'S MEETING INCLUDED A REVISED DEFINITION OF "EMPLOYEE" IN THE EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION ORDINANCE, THE NOMINATION OF MR CHEUNG LUN AND MR A.E. GAZELEY AS EMPLOYEES' AND EMPLOYERS' REPRESENTATIVES RESPECTIVELY TO ATTEND THE 77TH SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE IN GENEVA IN JUNE, AND AN INCREASE IN THE FEE FOR ISSUE OR RENEWAL OF AN EMPLOYMENT AGENCY'S LICENCE FROM \$500 TO \$650.

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NEW PIER TO BE BUILT AT LEUNG SHUEN WAN

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LEUNG SHUEN WAN WILL HAVE A NEW PIER BY THE END OF THE YEAR, AND CONSTRUCTION WORK IS EXPECTED TO START IN THE NEXT TWO MONTHS, THE SAI KUNG DISTRICT OFFICER, MR FREDERICK TONG, SAID TODAY (MONDAY).

HE WAS SPEAKING AT A CEREMONY TO CELEBRATE THE COMPLETION OF RENOVATION WORK FOR THE TIN HAU TEMPLE AT LEUNG SHUEN WAN.

MR TONG SAID LEUNG SHUEN WAN IS TRADITIONALLY A FISHING BAY AND HAS BECOME A POPULAR PLACE FOR OUTING. PIER FACILITY IS MOST ESSENTIAL TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ISLAND.

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"IN VIEW OF THIS, THE SAI KUNG DISTRICT OFFICE HAS DECIDED TO BUILD A PIER TO SERVE THE FISHERMEN, VILLAGERS AND HOLIDAY-MAKERS.

"COSTING MORE THAN \$500,000, THE PIER WILL TAKE SIX MONTHS TO COMPLETE AND RESIDENTS OF LEUNG SHUEN WAN CAN EXPECT TO HAVE THEIR OWN PIER BY THE END OF THE YEAR IF EVERYTHING GOES SMOOTHLY," HE SAID.

ON THE TIN HAU TEMPLE ON THE ISLAND, MR TONG SAID SEVERAL HUNDRED YEARS AGO, VILLAGERS AND FISHERMEN OF LEUNG SHUEN WAN POOLED THEIR RESOURCES AND EFFORTS TO BUILD THE TEMPLE SO THAT THEY COULD WORSHIP THE FAMOUS SEA GODDESS TIN HAU FOR HEALTH AND BLESSINGS.

"TODAY, THE JOINT EFFORTS OF THEIR DESCENDANTS TO RENEW THE TEMPLE IS SEEN TO BE MORE MEANINGFUL."

HE POINTED OUT THAT APART FROM THE \$50,000 SUBSIDY FROM THE CHINESE TEMPLES COMMITTEE, MORE THAN \$550,000 OF THE RENOVATION COSTS HAVE BEEN CONTRIBUTED BY LOCAL PEOPLE, REFLECTING THE HIGH DEGREE OF CO-OPERATION AMONG THE VILLAGERS AND FISHERMEN OF THE ISLAND.

THE LEUNG SHUEN WAN TIN HAU TEMPLE IS ONE OF THE OLDEST TEMPLES IN HONG KONG. IT IS BELIEVED THAT THE TEMPLE WAS BUILT AT LEAST 250 YEARS AGO.

AN IRON BELL, A LARGE SCULPTURE AND A DRAGON STYLE SEDAN CHAIR FOR USE BY THE GODDESS TIN HAU ARE THE TEMPLE'S PRECIOUS POSSESSIONS.

IN ADDITION TO THE LOCAL RESIDENTS, THE TEMPLE IS FREQUENTED BY MANY PEOPLE FROM VARIOUS PARTS OF SAI KUNG SUCH AS MAN YEE WAN AND SHA KOK MEI.

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DB TO DISCUSS CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES

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THE TUEN MUN DISTRICT BOARD WILL DISCUSS A REVIEW ON THE DISTRICT'S CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARIES AT ITS MEETING TOMORROW (MONDAY).

THE REVIEW HAS BEEN MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT IN PREPARATION FOR THE 1991 DB ELECTIONS, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT CONSIDERATIONS BOTH AT THE DISTRICT AND CONSTITUENCY LEVELS.

FIVE MEMBERS ARE EXPECTED TO PRESENT A PAPER, PROPOSING TO DISCUSS THE DRAFT BILL OF RIGHTS.

/ANOTHER AGENDA

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ANOTHER AGENDA ITEM IS THE BOARD'S PROVISIONAL BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES ARE INVITED TO COVER THE TUEN MUN DISTRICT BOARD MEETING TO BE HELD TOMORROW (TUESDAY) IN THE DB CONFERENCE ROOM, THIRD FLOOR, TUEN MUN GOVERNMENT OFFICES, 1 TUEN HI ROAD, TUEN MUN. THE MEETING WILL BEGIN AT 9.30 AM.

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DEPT OF HEALTH TO LAUNCH FOOD HYGIENE CAMPAIGN

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THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH WILL LAUNCH THE ANNUAL TERRITORY-WIDE FOOD HYGIENE CAMPAIGN THIS YEAR IN JUNE.

ANNOUNCING THIS TODAY (MONDAY), A SPOKESMAN FOR THE DEPARTMENT SAID THE CAMPAIGN, UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE URBAN AND REGIONAL COUNCILS, AIMS TO AROUSE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF GOOD FOOD AND PERSONAL HYGIENE PRACTICE SO AS TO MINIMISE THE CHANCES OF FOOD-BORNE DISEASES.

THE CAMPAIGN WILL LAST FOR THREE MONTHS.

DURING THE CAMPAIGN PERIOD, A TOTAL OF 25 FOOD HYGIENE SEMINARS ON "CLEAN PLACE, SAFE FOOD" WILL BE CONDUCTED FOR PEOPLE IN THE FOOD TRADE, INCLUDING LICENSEES AND STAFF OF LICENSED PREMISES, COOKED FOOD STALLS AND CANTEENS AT CONVENIENTLY-LOCATED VENUES THROUGHOUT THE TERRITORY.

THE SEMINARS, WHICH WILL BE EDUCATIONAL IN NATURE, WILL EACH COMPRISE A TALK, A SLIDE SHOW AND A FILM ON FOOD HYGIENE FOLLOWED BY AN OPEN DISCUSSION.

PRINTED EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS WILL ALSO BE DISTRIBUTED TO SUPPLEMENT THE TALK.

AT THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN, EACH PARTICIPANT WILL BE AWARDED A CERTIFICATE OF ATTENDANCE.

THE SPOKESMAN URGED PEOPLE IN THE FOOD TRADE TO TAKE PART IN THE SEMINARS TO WHICH ADMISSION IS FREE.

INVITATIONS HAVE BEEN SENT TO THE TARGET GROUPS. THOSE WHO WISH TO PARTICIPATE SHOULD RETURN THE COMPLETED ENTRY FORM BY APRIL 17.

AS FOR THOSE WHO HAVE NOT YET RECEIVED THE INVITATION, THEY MAY CONTACT THE ORGANISER ON TEL. 723 6234.

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ACTION ON UNAUTHORISED ALTERATIONS

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THE BUILDING AUTHORITY IS SEEKING TO CLOSE FLAT A, SECOND FLOOR, SHUNG SHUN HOUSE, 23 SUNG KIT STREET, TO KWA WAN, SO THAT THE UNAUTHORISED ALTERATIONS INSIDE THE UNIT CAN BE DEMOLISHED WITHOUT DANGER TO THE OCCUPANTS AND TO THE PUBLIC.

THE CLOSURE FORMS PART OF AN EXERCISE TO ENFORCE AN ORDER ISSUED UNDER THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE IN DECEMBER LAST YEAR REQUIRING THE DEMOLITION OF THE UNAUTHORISED ALTERATIONS.

A NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPLY FOR A CLOSURE ORDER FROM THE HONG KONG DISTRICT COURT ON JUNE 13 THIS YEAR WAS POSTED ON A CONSPICUOUS PART OF THE PREMISES TODAY (MONDAY).

IT IS EXPECTED THAT DEMOLITION WILL START IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE CLOSURE ORDER IS OBTAINED.

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WATER STORAGE FIGURE

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STORAGE IN HONG KONG'S RESERVOIRS AT 9 AM TODAY (MONDAY) STOOD AT 38.7 PER CENT OF CAPACITY OR 226.991 MILLION CUBIC METRES.

THIS TIME LAST YEAR THE RESERVOIRS CONTAINED 197.824 MILLION CUBIC METRES OF WATER, REPRESENTING 33.8 PER CENT OF CAPACITY.

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WATER CUT IN SHEUNG SHUI

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FRESH WATER SUPPLY TO CERTAIN VILLAGES IN SHEUNG SHUI WILL BE SUSPENDED FROM 9 AM TO 5 PM ON WEDNESDAY (APRIL 11) TO FACILITATE WATER WORKS.

THE SUSPENSION WILL AFFECT CERTAIN VILLAGES ALONG FAN KAM ROAD, INCLUDING LIN TONG MEI CHOI YUEN TSUEN, YEE ON SAN TSUEN, CHIU KENG TSUEN, LAI TAU TSUI, YING PUN TSUEN, PANG UK TSUEN, CHAN UK PO AND TAM SHUI HANG VILLAGE.

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