



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Wednesday, November 14, 1973

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TO REDUCE DROP-OUTS FROM SCHOOL

Problems Must Be Attacked At The Root

The Hon. Wilson T.S. Wang today proposed that efforts be made to either cut down speedily the number of children who dropped out of school before reaching the age of 14, or to take special care of them.

He told the Legislative Council that unless this was done, it would be wishful thinking to combat crime merely by inflicting heavy sentences on them, the effect of which would merely be similar to "cutting off a hydra's head."

Mr. Wang began his speech with the typical story of a primary school drop-out who later became a member of a street gang.

At the end of his story, Mr. Wang said: "Now he (the school drop-out) was frightened and at the crossroads. While he was at the moment of self-searching, he would probably ask himself: 'Who and What has put me in such a hopeless situation?'

"But how many people would give an honest answer to this question? As a matter of fact, instead of pondering over the question, we had better admit candidly that at present there are many, many children who are facing the same fate," Mr. Wang said.

He pointed out that the recently published report on the causes of crime revealed that the increase in crime rate in the 14 - 30 age group was the heaviest between 1968 and 1972. Among these offenders, 83 per cent had never received secondary education.

/"Undeniably

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"Undeniably we have to increase places in junior secondary schools as quickly as possible if we want to attack the problems at the roots."

But expedient measures should also be taken at the same time, and Mr. Wang suggested the following:

- * Abolition of the practice of non-repetition in classes: Pupils under 14 who have failed in the Secondary School Entrance Examination should be given the chance to repeat in their class and the same for backward students in all other classes. This should reduce the number of pupils who have to drop out and should also relieve children from being over-pressured with lessons harder than they could tackle.
- * Counselling service for children: Such a service can be accommodated in community centres or in City District Offices, with their functions being to render counselling to parents on problems arising from their children dropping out from school under the age of 14, and to help and advise these children on taking up some suitable occupation.
- ✓ * Modification of the Labour Ordinance which forbids the employment of children under 14: Provided that these children work under well supervised condition, such as limited working hours and good health and safety precautionary measures, they should be allowed to work with every possible assistance by the Government.

/* To increase

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- * To increase the number of children's recreation grounds: They should be well distributed over various districts, and full use of each ground should be made.
- * Caretakers or instructors at all playgrounds: They should put all children's activities under proper guidance. At present, it is precisely the lack of such provision that has caused these grounds to be encroached upon by bad elements, and to become the hot beds for the spread of all kinds of crime and for criminal dealings and gang war.

Commenting on the report by the Board of Education, Mr. Wang said he was greatly disappointed in the proposed target that it would take ten years to provide only 80 per cent of places up to Junior III.

He also felt that a scheme, outlined in the Green Paper on education, to increase the output of trained teachers to 400 annually was "too conservative."

"I believe that it should be doubled up both in the number and in speed, so that it would not hinder any future developments.

"Judging by Hong Kong's capacity for development and creativity in the past and by its financial and human resources at the present, the question is surely not whether we can do it but whether we really want to do it," he added.

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PRICE CONTROLS MAY RESULT IN SHORTAGES

Price controls are unlikely to be of much help to counter the high cost of living and will result in shortages and black markets, the Hon. P.G. Williams said in Legislative Council today.

"Indeed, in my view, it is the marketing skill and initiative of the Hong Kong businessman which will bring down prices by seeking out new supplies and bringing them to market," he added.

He thought it was justifiable, however, that the government took action when there was monopoly and restricted supply, as in the utility field and rents.

He pointed out that Hong Kong would have a period of sharply rising wages to meet rising prices, but he was not over-much worried about imported inflation.

"This may affect our competitive position, but imported inflation reflects a general world inflation and our relative position may not be greatly changed.

"There is another side to the coin. Inflation is change and I believe that we have the ability to take advantage of change quicker than others," he explained.

"Also, the present world inflation is a consequence of sustained world demand for consumer goods and here lies assurance of an outlet for our products," he added.

/Mr. Williams

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Mr. Williams was concerned, however, about internally generated inflation. He warned that the enormous plans for public works and high building activity in the private sector would put a great strain on the labour force.

This would, he thought, result in more competition for labour in the construction industry and even higher wages, and labour would be attracted from other industries, who in turn would have to raise wages to retain their workers.

Mr. Williams said he would like to hear the government's views on the sufficiency of labour resources for the rest of this decade.

In the case of the small businessmen who were often worst hit by inflation and shortages of materials, many of them might go out of business.

"This might be taken as a sign of recession but it may also be a hard but natural economic process resulting in larger and stronger business units," he said.

Mr. Williams was optimistic on the whole that the economy of Hong Kong would continue to prosper because competitors in less developed nations did not have the advanced and growing industrial and commercial base and infrastructure Hong Kong had, and Hong Kong's technological and commercial skills were unrivalled. Besides there was not a comparable level of investment and a stronger currency.

On other matters raised by the Governor in his opening address to the Council, Mr. Williams supported the establishment of a Council for Recreation and Sport and hoped that it would improve the organisation of sport in Hong Kong.

/ "I believe

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"I believe that organised competitive sport can stimulate in our young people a pride of location and a pride of place which will be of great importance," he said.

He agreed with the government's cautious approach to the problem of gambling and proposed that the off-course betting offices might be used for community purposes, such as for paying utility bills, when betting was not taking place.

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IMMEDIATE ACTION TO CHECK RISING FOOD PRICES URGED

The Hon. Li Fook-wo today called for the setting up of some form of government machinery to supervise prices of essential foodstuffs which directly affect the livelihood of the people.

Speaking at the Legislative Council, Mr. Li heartily endorsed the views of his fellow Councillors on the question of high cost of living and inflation.

"We seem to agree unanimously that immediate and remedial action should be taken," he said: "Admitting that Hong Kong cannot insulate itself from mounting inflationary pressures from the rest of the world, perhaps some method of self-help may be found.

"It would assure the members of the community a great deal if Government could make a statement that it will do something to stop spiralling prices before this problem undermines our aim of prosperity with social progress," Mr. Li said.

Touching on the banking system in Hong Kong, Mr. Li quoted statistics of bank deposits in the past year and noted that the situation could be considered as satisfactory.

The percentage of bank loans and advances against deposits was 72.01 per cent at the end of 1972. This percentage had risen to 88.26 per cent at the end of September.

/"It appears

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"It appears that this apparent high percentage of 88.26 per cent of loans against deposits represents a composite figure which does not really give a true picture of the loan/deposit ratio in the local banking system.

"I would ask for a statement to be made of the loan/deposit ratio for banks other than those whose head offices are overseas. In addition, I would urge that future statistics be published on an adjusted basis thus clarifying the true relationship between loans and deposits," Mr. Li said.

However, he added that the increase in loans and advances made by banks did show that banks in Hong Kong were doing their part in providing the necessary credits available for business and industry in the expanding economy.

With reference to the question of introducing legislation to regulate finance companies and other deposit-taking institutions, Mr. Li said he sincerely hoped that the time would soon come for the Government to make a decision in the interest of the public at large.

On education, he said he fully endorsed the proposed establishment of a fourth college of education. "However, I feel that it is important to raise the standard of the Teachers' Certificate.

"The quality of the teaching service, though adequate, should be improved, particularly having regard to the increasing requirements of secondary education."

Mr. Li further suggested that the lower stipulated qualifications for entry to the teacher training colleges be up-graded to a more "realistic level."

/Mr. Li

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Mr. Li welcomed the setting up of a Council for Recreation and Sport under the Secretary for Home Affairs to co-ordinate the organisation of much-needed facilities for recreation, leisure and sport for the community. He felt that the Council should consider developing the island of Hay Ling Chau into a youth centre, training centre or holiday centre.

Referring to the Government's participation in the work of family planning, he strongly urged the formulation of a long-advocated Government population policy to implement a family planning programme.

It was essential he said, that such a programme should co-ordinate all Government departments to embrace all phases of activities concerned with population growth.

Mr. Li propose that a Working Committee be formed to study the whole question of population and the most appropriate means of encouraging the reduction of future birth rates.

"I am sure that we all realise the implications of this population problem in terms of housing, health, education, social welfare and environment are serious indeed, and would have a basic effect on all of Government's long term plans in these areas," he said.

"The United Nations Organisation has designated 1974 as World Population Year in order to focus the attention of the world on this grave situation. Would it not be appropriate to observe that year by some positive action in Hong Kong?" he asked.

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NEED FOR GOVERNMENT TO SHOW CLEARLY IT CARES FOR THE PEOPLE
Inflation, Rising Living Costs Considered To Be More Immediate Problems

The Hon. Hilton Cheong-Leen today called on the Government to show through practical measures and through sincere and well-balanced declarations of intent that it really cared for the people.

"I would suggest that the Administration's image as a government with firm moral leadership has to come through even more clearly than it has in the past," he said.

Mr. Cheong-Leen was speaking at the resumed debate on a motion of thanks for the Governor's address at the Legislative Council.

He said the Government had to be pragmatic, flexible and adaptable in its plans and policies, but finely balanced by a sense of commitment, humanity and vision, if it is to retain the confidence and co-operation of the people.

Hong Kong, he said, was entering a different dimension of change and challenge, faced by inflation, industrial competition, environmental decline, crime, corruption, and the search of new moral standards by "our youth of today."

However, he said: "We are at a point in history where through a combination of circumstances and enlightened leadership, we are better equipped than ever before within certain constraints to shape our economic future and guide our social destiny."

/He pointed

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He pointed to a number of problems which called for attention. Among these he first listed inflation and the rising living costs, since "they are regarded by most people as even more serious immediate problems in day-to-day living than crime, corruption, transport and housing."

"Government should consider setting up an Economic Development Advisory Committee with all possible speed to foster economic growth, create employment and implement a balanced social policy," he said.

One of the first items this Committee should press for -- if set up -- would be an overall land policy, particularly for industrial development in the New Territories.

He warned that Hong Kong would lose out if the government was not to straighten out its policies and make quick decisions on applications for land for industrial development.

Referring to the need for stabilising prices of essential foodstuffs, Mr. Cheong-Leen pointed out that a pragmatic approach in providing regular supplies and efficient distribution of the commodity -- as had been done successfully with rice -- was required.

He said it was true that in the case of vegetables, fish and fresh meat, it was not possible to keep a three-month reserve supply as for rice, and that world prices of imported essential foodstuffs could not be controlled by the Hong Kong Government.

But it was within the power of the Government to regulate to some extent rampant speculation and profiteering on the local prices of essential commodities, he added.

/He urged ,.....

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He urged the Government to make a statement on the practicability of regulating, under existing circumstances, local prices of essential foodstuffs and to clarify whether a special committee or committees ought to be set up for the purpose.

Moving on to the field of housing, Mr. Cheong-Leen brought up the feasibility of selling Housing Authority flats to families in the middle income groups.

"A pilot home-ownership scheme will on the one hand enable the Housing Authority to generate a faster cash-flow in order to build more public housing.

"On the other hand, this scheme should represent a clear indication to the public that the Government is committed to encouraging home-ownership on the part of our middle-income groups, thus strengthening the sense of community identity and civic responsibility," he said.

Mr. Cheong-Leen said he would like to see also a faster rate of replacing old Mark I and II resettlement estates which at the present rate of rebuilding could take 10 years or more to house the 500,000 people affected.

He expressed the hope that the government would be able to say how soon a minimum of 50 square feet living space per person could be provided during the current 10-year housing programme.

/He also

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He also hoped that the government would soon announce, as part of its housing programme, how it was to re-accommodate the 17,000 small factories or workshops in domestic premises in urban areas.

On the work of the Buildings Ordinance Office, Mr. Cheong-Leen said it was known that due to staff shortages and pressure of work, only those unauthorised alterations or additions to buildings which were a danger to life or a fire risk were being dealt with.

"This means that there is a large backlog of complaints of unauthorised works which contravene building regulations and some of which are a serious nuisance to other tenants but which do not represent a life or fire risk," he said.

He stressed that a start should be made now in dealing at least with the more serious of these complaints and requested the Secretary for the Environment to give an assurance that the problem would be tackled with some urgency.

Turning to the need for a sense of community belonging and responsibility, which had been fostered by the Clean Hong Kong and Fight Violent Crime Campaigns, Mr. Cheong-Leen said he would like the Department of Home Affairs to study the possibility of setting up meetings of district leaders on a more formal basis by way of District Consultative Committees.

He proposed that these meetings should be held regularly and should be given greater publicity and recognition within the district.

.....
/The Unofficial

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The Unofficial Members, he said, should be appointed formally for a fixed period of at least one year and the Official Members should include representatives of key departments.

Later, he said, when non-English-speaking persons could sit on the Urban Council, the more experienced and capable of the district committee members could have the chance to serve on the Urban Council.

On the problem of corruption, Mr. Cheong-Leen said this bred on inefficiency, poor internal organization, deliberately created administrative delays, hastily drafted legislation, and ignorance and greed on the part of the public.

He said changes could not be brought about simply by enacting harsh legislation, and the causes of corruption could not be eliminated only with the setting up of an independent Anti-Corruption Commission.

"It also involves the active cooperation and the right attitudes on the part of all citizens who share the vision of a more just society," he said.

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SCHOOL MEDICAL SERVICE SCHEME

Participating Pupils Now Number More Than 70,750

Children taking part in the School Medical Service during the academic year 1972/73 totalled 70,758, according to the annual report of the School Medical Service Board tabled in the Legislative Council today.

The children came from 700 schools throughout the Colony, and were looked after by 181 doctors.

Of the total figure of participating pupils, 32,306 were under eight years of age, 16,824 were under 10, 16,210 under 12, and 5,418 older than 12.

Under the terms of the revised scheme which went into effect on October 1, 1972, pupils in kindergartens were excluded, and participation is now limited to pupils in primary schools, and secondary schools up to Form III. The revision brought the scheme into line with the Government's policy of providing nine years of aided education.

The School Medical Service provides economical medical treatment among normally healthy children. It is voluntary, and participating doctors are private medical practitioners. They receive \$25 a child a year — \$5 from the child, and \$20 from the Government.

The Service is subvented by the Government. On an enrolment of 70,758 at \$20 a head, and taking into account administrative expenses, the cost to the Government is now \$1.6 million a year.

/The report

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The report describes the present enrolment as "heartening," but at the same time regrets that the figure represents "less than 10 per cent of all those eligible."

"Many theories for the apparent lack of interest have been put forward, but the one most to the point is that fewer than a third of all eligible private schools make it possible for their pupils to enrol," a spokesman for the Board said.

He felt that to deny children the opportunity of economical medical treatment, even by default, seemed hard to justify.

The spokesman emphasised that even though the revised scheme excluded kindergarten children and pupils in the upper forms of secondary schools, there were still "more than a million children eligible for participation, 750,000 of whom are in primary classes."

He said the present scheme offered the normally healthy child economical medical treatment under one doctor chosen by the participating school because of the vicinity of his clinic. The child was given a full physical examination upon entry, and "any number of consultations a year, with free medicine, for a premium of less than 50 cents a month."

"This surely represents a sound and practical proposition. It is doubtful, for instance, whether the average child does not need a doctor at least twice a year, either for medication or the early diagnosis of less obvious ailments," he commented.

/The spokesman

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The spokesman explained that enrolment was simple, and not restricted to any given date. Pupils could join at any time of the year, and qualify for participation in the scheme for 12 months from the date of entry.

In addition, pupils in registered schools wishing to join the scheme even though their schools were not participating, could call at the Board's office in Lee Gardens, Hysan Avenue, for a participation card. It would cost them \$5.

The Board's chairman is Dr. Sir Albert Rodrigues. Members include Mr. Wilson T.S. Wang, Mr. N.W.H. Macleod, Mr. R.M. Cameron, Dr. Sylvia Chui, Dr. Peter C.Y. Lee, Dr. L.K. Ding, Dr. B.M.F. Kotewall, Dr. Lau Ong-ui, Dr. Ling Ke-dieh, Dr. Dhun Ruttonjee, Mr. Shum Choi-sang, Mrs. Joyce Symons, Mr. Weng Kwok-fong, and Dr. Woo Pak-foo.

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GOVERNMENT URGED TO SELL INDUSTRIAL LAND DIRECT TO USERS

To Prevent Inflation Of Costs

The Hon. James M.H. Wu today urged the Government to sell or rent new industrial land direct to the user to provide security and to prevent inflation of costs.

Speaking at the Legislative Council, he said this would not make landlords the "undeserving beneficiary of advance."

He noted that Hong Kong was still plagued with the indecision of supplying suitable land at economic prices for projects to be set up in the best public interest, while its competing neighbours had been rapidly broadening their industrial base.

"I am therefore very glad to know, Sir, that you are receptive of the idea of 'industrial parks' we have pursued for specific land-intensive supporting industries and can only request that the plan be implemented with the greatest urgency to boost up our present reduced production, and more important, to provide job opportunities for the hundreds of thousands that are to be housed in the New Territories.

"Again, we must remind ourselves that a high level of production constitute the keystone of effective economic security, upon which all our plans depend," he said.

Earlier, Mr. Wu said that for the first time in its industrial history, Hong Kong textiles and footwear would begin to lose its Commonwealth Preference, and exchange its former favourable position with such competitors as South Korea and the Philippines as from January next year.

/In addition,.....

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In addition, Hong Kong manufacturers would now have to pay, as a result of recent changes and shortages in materials supply, 15 to 30 per cent more for plastics, steel and other materials than their counterparts in other producing countries.

However, despite these and other difficulties, he said there was still plenty of opportunities for selling to these countries.

But he stressed that the products would have to be of high quality and sophisticated design, made only possible with advance technology and a much broader based industry support involving a higher extent of manufacturing and perhaps even the secondary processing of primary materials to feed the industrial needs.

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ALLOCATION OF GRANTS AND LOANS FROM LOTTERIES FUND

Procedure To Be Streamlined

Present procedure for allocating grants and loans from the Lotteries Fund will be streamlined to enable future applications to be dealt with more speedily.

The Financial Secretary, the Hon. C.P. Haddon-Cave, told the Legislative Council this today when he spoke on the second reading of the Government Lotteries (Amendment and Validation) Bill 1973.

Under the Bill, the requirement that every grant and loan shall be subject to the prior approval by resolution of the Council would be deleted, leaving the Financial Secretary as the final authority for approving allocations from the Fund.

However, Mr. Haddon-Cave proposed in turn to delegate this power to the Director of Social Welfare, acting on the advice of the Social Welfare Advisory Committee, and subject to certain conditions.

Allocations which do not satisfy these conditions, such as those involving exceptionally large sums or having substantial recurrent implications, would require his approval.

The Financial Secretary said he was confident that these changes would enable applications for allocations from the Lotteries Fund to be dealt with considerably faster than hitherto.

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Another object of the Bill is to enable rules to be made authorising the postponement of the drawing of a lottery during a typhoon.

It would also bring the law into line with the existing practice of keeping accounts of the Lotteries Fund, and make formal provision for the accounts of the Fund to be audited by the Director of Audit.

In addition, he said certain appropriations made in the past would be validated under this Bill.

In the past, some allocations from the Fund were made to social welfare services which had not been approved by the Governor under the Government Lotteries Ordinance, while other allocations were made without the prior consent of the Legislative Council under the Ordinance.

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MEET THE MEDIA

Note to Editors: A "Meet the Media" session will be held tomorrow (Thursday) at 3 p.m. in the G.I.S. 35 mm theatre, 5th floor, Beaconsfield House.

Attending the meeting will be the new Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr. D.C. Bray.

You are invited to send a reporter and photographer to cover tomorrow's session. Television representatives are requested to have their equipment set up before the start of the meeting.

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TRIBUTE TO MR. CATER

The Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, today thanked Mr. Jack Cater, for all the work he had put into the Legislative Council's affairs in various capacities over many years.

Mr. Cater, formerly the Secretary for Home Affairs, is Hong Kong's new Commissioner for Anti-Corruption.

In his valedictory speech, the Governor offered the Council's support and good wishes in his new appointment.

"We know the size of the problem he is to tackle, and the deep roots it has in our society: if it is to be killed and not just pruned it will require the devoted, imaginative and carefully directed work of many people over a considerable period, and the positive support and cooperation of all honest men and women." he said.

Sir Murray added that the Government was determined that the problem should now be tackled along lines very different to those in the past.

"The condition for success is nothing short of a quiet revolution in our Society.

"To achieve this is Mr. Cater's task. I know he is not daunted by the difficulties. They can and have been overcome elsewhere. I believe they can be overcome here.

/The Hon.

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The Hon. P.C. Woo, on behalf of his Unofficial colleagues, paid special tribute to the services which Mr. Cater had rendered to Hong Kong in the past.

He recalled that when Hong Kong was passing through dark days "he gave us strong and fearless leadership."

"Thereafter he has been at the forefront of the vital movement towards community involvement.

"He is one of those few men who is almost universally admired and trusted, for he combines the common touch with the wisdom of statesmanship -- not an easy combination."

Mr. Woo assured Mr. Cater and his staff of all possible support from the Unofficial Members of the Council.

He was sure that Mr. Cater would have the co-operation of the public at large.

"We do not under-estimate the difficulties which will face him, but we are confident that there will be results," Mr. Woo said.

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THE PRINCESS ANNE THANKS HK FOR WEDDING PRESENT

The Princess Anne has expressed her sincere thanks and appreciation to the Government and people of Hong Kong for their wedding present.

In a personal letter to the Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, the Princess thanked Hong Kong "very warmly indeed for the two beautiful small rugs and the lovely larger carpet."

She said "Captain Phillips and I much look forward to using these carpets in our new home, and for me personally they will always be a very happy reminder of my first visit to Hong Kong."

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MARINE FISH SAFE FOR CONSUMPTION

A spokesman for the Agriculture and Fisheries Department said today that the average daily landings of fresh marine fish sold through the Fish Marketing Organisation are in the region of 3,500 piculs.

Ninety-nine per cent of this fresh marine fish is caught by trawlers, liners, gill netters and purse seiners, operating within a range of 400 miles of Hong Kong.

The commonest species of marine fish consumed locally are: Golden Thread, Horse Head, Yellow Croaker, Mud Garoupa, Garoupa, Ginkgo Fish, Snapper, White Pomfret, Hair Tail, Macao Sole, Head Grunt, Conger Pike, Red Sea Bream and White Herring.

The spokesman said that the eating of fresh marine fish caught in those fishing grounds poses no danger whatever to the public health as the waters are un-polluted.

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SPEED LIMIT ON CLEAR WATER BAY ROAD

Speed restriction will be imposed on a section of Clear Water Bay Road in Kwun Tong, starting from Friday (November 16).

A spokesman for the Transport Department said that with effect from 10 a.m. on that day, vehicles travelling along the section of Clear Water Bay Road which runs through Tai Po Tsai Village should not exceed the speed of 30 miles per hour.

Appropriate road signs will be posted to guide motorists.

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BILLS PASSED

Five bills passed their committee stage and third reading in the Legislative Council meeting today and became law.

They were the Motor Vehicle Insurance (Third Party Risks) (Amendment) Bill 1973, the Telecommunication (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1973, the Education Scholarships Fund (Amendment) Bill 1973, the Landlord and Tenant (Consolidation) (Amendment) Bill 1973 and the Community Relief Trust Fund (Amendment) Bill 1973.

Seven other bills had their first and second reading.

In addition, three sessional papers were tabled. They were the Annual Report of the School Medical Service Board for the year ended 31st March 1973, the Annual Report by the Registrar of Trade Unions for the year 1972-73 and the Annual Report by the General Manager, Railway for the year 1972-73.

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LEGCO PROCEEDINGS RECORDED

Note to Editors: The proceedings in today's Legislative Council meeting have been recorded. You are welcome to consult the tapes in the Press Room, Government Information Services.

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NEW TERRITORIES DEVELOPMENT VITAL TO HONG KONG

The Hon. Q.W. Lee today spoke at length about development in the New Territories.

Speaking at the Legislative Council, he said that the development of the New Territories was vital to the development of Hong Kong as a whole.

He stressed: "The Government foresees the need of developing the New Territories but the delay of such development is mainly attributable to the indecisive land policy."

He recalled that as early as 1950, the Government had already announced its intention to develop and to make full use of the New Territories and since then, policies for resumption or surrender of land have been established.

"However, such policies are not only complicated but have also been changed so frequently that it has caused overall confusion, interruption and particularly undue delay, sometimes giving rise to corruption."

Mr. Lee made two points for early consideration by the government. One was the need for a revised formula for land resumption which would take into account the development value of land as distinct from its current value for agricultural purposes, when assessing the rate of compensation.

The other proposal was for the setting up of a permanent land tribunal which would be more efficient than the present system of appointing individual land compensation boards.

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This, he thought, should be just as much necessary for the impending developments in town, particularly the underground railway project, as it was for the New Territories.

He stressed the need for keeping good relationships between the government and the indigenous people of the New Territories, for experience had shown the usefulness of working in liaison with existing organisation such as the Heung Yee Kuk and the Rural Committees.

"It is also clearly shown how unwise it is for unilateral action to be taken by government departments in town without adequate prior consultation or without due weight being given to the views of the District Commissioner of New Territories," he said.

As a means to improve the situation, he urged the government to upgrade the post of the District Commissioner so that he could be in a position to talk on equal terms with the new Secretaries.

Mr. Lee praised the civil service in his speech, which he said, would have "quite unavoidably a few grey patches in the enormous establishment of 109,000."

"But occasional criticism of inefficiency and corruption cannot eclipse the brightness of our civil servants, the majority of whom are clean and devoted to their duty," he said.

He also asked that more people, and where possible, the younger generation, be enlisted to serve the various councils, boards, committees and organisations.

"Human resources are not limited if the best use is made of them. The question is, as a member of this Council said, 'How to tap these resources,'" he said.

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Release time: 9.00 p.m.