



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1992

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PUBLIC TO BE CONSULTED ON EXTENT OF
SEX DISCRIMINATION IN HK

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS WITHDRAWN ITS AMENDMENT TO A MOTION BY LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLOR, THE HON EMILY LAU, TO EXTEND TO HONG KONG THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW).

STATING THIS DURING THE MOTION DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TONIGHT (WEDNESDAY), THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MISS CHRISTINE CHOW, SAID IN SUGGESTING THE AMENDMENT, THE ADMINISTRATION'S ORIGINAL INTENTION WAS TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT IT WISHED TO CONSULT THE PUBLIC ON THIS IMPORTANT SUBJECT.

"ON REFLECTION, WE DO NOT CONSIDER IT NECESSARY TO MAKE AN ISSUE OVER THE PRINCIPLE OF CONSULTATION," MISS CHOW SAID.

SHE SAID THE EXTENSION OF CEDAW TO HONG KONG WOULD NOT, BY ITSELF, BRING ABOUT GENUINE IMPROVEMENTS UNLESS THERE WAS A WIDE SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY FOR SUCH ACTION.

IN THIS RESPECT, THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO CONSULT THE PUBLIC SOME TIME NEXT YEAR IN THE FORM OF A GREEN PAPER ON THE NEED FOR ACTION TO ENSURE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEN AND WOMEN IN SOCIETY.

THE DOCUMENT WILL EXPLAIN THE IMPLICATIONS OF EXTENDING CEDAW TO HONG KONG AND THE NATURE OF THE OBLIGATIONS ARISING.

IT WILL ALSO SEEK THE COMMUNITY'S VIEWS ON THE PERCEIVED EXTENT OF SEX DISCRIMINATION IN HONG KONG AND THE NEED TO ADDRESS THIS ISSUE.

MISS CHOW TOLD THE COUNCIL THAT THE EXTENSION OF CEDAW TO HONG KONG WOULD GIVE RISE TO SUBSTANTIAL NEW OBLIGATIONS, THE FIRST AND FOREMOST OF WHICH WAS THE REQUIREMENT TO ENACT LEGISLATION AGAINST SEX DISCRIMINATION, INCLUDING IN PARTICULAR EQUAL PAY LEGISLATION.

"SUCH LEGISLATION WOULD HAVE TO APPLY TO BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTIONS," SHE SAID.

"THIS WOULD INVOLVE A HIGH DEGREE OF GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN THE CONDUCT OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS ACROSS A WIDE RANGE OF AREAS."

TO CITE AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT THIS MIGHT ENTAIL, MISS CHOW SAID THE UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT, IN SIGNING AND RATIFYING THE CONVENTION, HAD FOUND IT NECESSARY TO ENTER A LARGE NUMBER OF RESERVATIONS COVERING SUCH DIVERSE AREAS AS IMMIGRATION, NATIONALITY, EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL SECURITY, TAXATION AND THE ADOPTION AND CUSTODY OF CHILDREN.

SECONDLY, MISS CHOW SAID, LEGISLATION NEEDED TO BE ENFORCED IF IT WAS TO BE EFFECTIVE.

BUT THIS IS NOT ALWAYS EASY IN THE CASE OF SEX DISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION SINCE OBJECTIVE EVIDENCE IS LIKELY TO BE DIFFICULT TO ADDUCE IN MANY CASES.

FOR EXAMPLE, AN EMPLOYEE WHO HAS LOST OUT IN A PROMOTION EXERCISE MAY COMPLAIN OF SEX DISCRIMINATION WHILE THE EMPLOYER MAY ARGUE THAT THE DECISION HAS BEEN BASED SOLELY ON MERIT.

"A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF SUBJECTIVE JUDGEMENT IS LIKELY TO BE INVOLVED ON BOTH SIDES, AND IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO ASCERTAIN WHICH PARTY IS AT FAULT.

"THE RESOURCES REQUIRED TO ADJUDICATE DISPUTES COULD THEREFORE BE CONSIDERABLE."

MISS CHOW ALSO CONSIDERED THAT IT WAS DEBATABLE THAT THE EXTENSION OF CEDAW AND THE ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION WERE THE BEST WAYS TO ELIMINATE SEX DISCRIMINATION.

ACCORDING TO STATISTICS IN THE 1991 CENSUS, THE RATIO OF WOMEN'S MEDIAN HOURLY INCOME TO MEN'S IN HONG KONG IS CURRENTLY ABOUT 80 PER CENT COMPARED WITH THE RATIO OF 77 PER CENT ATTAINED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM WHERE THE SEX DISCRIMINATION ACT HAS BEEN IN FORCE FOR 17 YEARS.

THE INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP SET UP BY THE GOVERNMENT IN MARCH THIS YEAR TO EXAMINE THE QUESTION OF SEX DISCRIMINATION HAS ALSO FOUND THAT, WHILE WAGE AND OTHER DIFFERENTIALS DO STILL EXIST BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN, THESE HAVE NARROWED SIGNIFICANTLY IN RECENT YEARS AND THE PROBLEM IS NOT PARTICULARLY SERIOUS.

"INDEED, GIVEN THE TIGHT LABOUR MARKET AND HIGH LABOUR MOBILITY, THERE IS LITTLE SCOPE FOR EMPLOYERS TO ADOPT DISCRIMINATORY EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES UNRELATED TO THE WORK CAPACITY OF THE EMPLOYEES," MISS CHOW SAID.

SHE WAS PLEASED TO NOTE THAT THE PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN EMPLOYED AS MANAGERS AND ADMINISTRATORS INCREASED FROM 0.8 PER CENT OF THE FEMALE WORKING POPULATION IN 1981 TO 2.8 PER CENT IN 1991, AND THAT OF WOMEN PROFESSIONALS AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSIONALS ALSO INCREASED FROM 6.7 PER CENT TO 15 PER CENT OVER THE SAME PERIOD.

"WE EXPECT THESE TRENDS TO CONTINUE AS MORE AND MORE WOMEN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES THEY ENJOY AND MOVE INTO JOBS ONCE STEREOTYPED AS BEING FOR MEN ONLY.

"THIS HAS HAPPENED EVEN IF CEDAW HAS NOT BEEN EXTENDED TO THIS TERRITORY.

"CONVERSELY, THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN MANY COUNTRIES WHICH ARE PARTIES TO CEDAW, AND WHICH HAVE ENACTED SOME FORM OF SEX DISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION, IS NOT NECESSARILY BETTER THAN THAT IN HONG KONG," MISS CHOW ADDED.

SCA ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS

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FOLLOWING IS THE FULL TEXT OF THE SPEECH BY SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SZE, WHEN WINDING UP THE MOTION DEBATE ON "CEDAW" IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TONIGHT (WEDNESDAY):

MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT,

TODAY'S DEBATE IS A WELCOME OPPORTUNITY FOR THE ADMINISTRATION TO HEAR VIEWS OF HONOURABLE MEMBERS ON THE COMPLEX ISSUE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS. ALTHOUGH THE ADMINISTRATION HAS HAD A REGULAR DIALOGUE WITH SOME WOMEN'S GROUPS ON THE QUESTION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN, WE HAVE YET TO HEAR MUCH FROM OTHER SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY ON THIS VERY IMPORTANT ISSUE. I HOPE THIS DEBATE, WHATEVER THE OUTCOME, WOULD ASSIST IN RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS ON THIS ISSUE AND RESULT IN THE EMERGENCE OF A WIDER SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC OPINION.

AS REGARDS THE ADMINISTRATION'S VIEWS, LET ME START BY REPEATING WHAT MY COLLEAGUE THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER HAS SAID AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS DEBATE, WHICH IS THAT THE ADMINISTRATION SUBSCRIBES TO THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY OF THE SEXES. CEDAW IS BUT ONE OF THE MEANS OF ACHIEVING THIS. THE ADMINISTRATION, HOWEVER, HAS SERIOUS DOUBTS AS TO WHETHER IT IS THE BEST OR THE MOST EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENT IN ACHIEVING THE OBJECT OF ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN.

AS THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER HAS EXPLAINED IN SOME DETAIL, THE EXTENSION OF CEDAW WOULD REQUIRE THE ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION AGAINST SEX DISCRIMINATION APPLICABLE TO BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS. SUCH LEGISLATION WOULD HAVE TO COVER A WIDE RANGE OF AREAS, AS CEDAW ITSELF STIPULATES STANDARDS IN A WIDE RANGE OF AREAS - ALMOST ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE. IT WOULD INVOLVE A HIGH DEGREE OF GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION IN THE OPERATION OF THE LABOUR MARKET AND GIVE RISE TO RIGIDITIES IN EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES.

MEMBERS ARE AWARE THAT IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TO EXERCISE MINIMUM INTERVENTION IN THE LABOUR MARKET AND THAT THIS HAS WORKED WELL FOR HONG KONG AS A WHOLE. THE GOVERNMENT WOULD HESITATE, WITHOUT WIDE CONSULTATION, TO DEPART FROM THE NON-INTERVENTIONIST POLICY AND TAKE THE MAJOR STEP OF INTRODUCING ANTI-DISCRIMINATION OR EQUAL PAY LEGISLATION AFFECTING THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT, WE WOULD ASK OURSELVES WHETHER THE EXTENSION OF CEDAW, GIVEN ITS FAR-REACHING WIDE IMPLICATIONS, IS PRACTICABLE AND DESIRABLE AT THIS STAGE. IS SEX DISCRIMINATION A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN HONG KONG? IS CEDAW THE ONLY WAY, OR AN EFFECTIVE ONE AT THAT, TO IMPROVING THE LOT OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY? WE HAVE NO CLEAR-CUT ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS YET. THE WORKING GROUP CHAIRED BY THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER HAS FOUND NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT SEX DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT IS A SERIOUS OR WIDESPREAD PROBLEM. IT IS ALSO QUESTIONABLE WHETHER THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN SOME OTHER COUNTRIES WHICH ARE PARTIES TO CEDAW IS HIGHER THAN THAT OF WOMEN IN HONG KONG.

BEFORE WE HAVE SORTED OUT THE ABOVE PROBLEMS AND ARE ABLE TO CONCLUDE THAT THERE ARE OVERALL PRACTICAL BENEFITS TO BE GAINED FROM THE EXTENSION OF CEDAW TO HONG KONG, IT WOULD NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO RECOMMEND THAT CEDAW BE EXTENDED FORTHWITH. ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION IN ITSELF IS A GOOD THING AND IT IS DIFFICULT FOR ANYBODY NOT TO SUPPORT IT. HOWEVER, SUPPORT FOR ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IS NOT THE SAME THING AS ACCEDING TO CEDAW.

WE WOULD LIKE TO ASCERTAIN WIDE PUBLIC VIEWS ON THE WHOLE QUESTION OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY, AND WOULD LIKE TO INCLUDE DIFFERENT SECTORS AND INTEREST GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY IN OUR CONSULTATION. WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND THAT A GREEN PAPER EXERCISE SHOULD BE UNDERTAKEN. ON ISSUES WHICH INCLUDE BUT ARE WIDER THAN JUST THE QUESTION OF EXTENSION OF CEDAW TO HONG KONG.

BEFORE I CONCLUDE, I WOULD LIKE TO RESPOND TO SOME OF THE POINTS MADE BY MEMBERS. THE QUESTION OF THE SO-CALLED DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES IN THE AREA OF SUCCESSION AND ELECTORAL RIGHTS APPLICABLE TO THE NEW TERRITORIES IS NOT AN ISSUE IN OUR CONSIDERATION OF WHETHER CEDAW SHOULD BE EXTENDED TO HONG KONG. TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY ARE BASED ON LAW, THEY FALL UNDER THE REMAINS OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS ORDINANCE. THIS IS, OF COURSE, NOT TO SAY THAT THEY ARE INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE BILL OF RIGHTS. INDEED, THE ADMINISTRATION HAS EXPLAINED ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS IN THIS COUNCIL THAT WE DID NOT BELIEVE SO. IT IS SIMPLY THAT THEY ARE NOT ISSUES AFFECTING OUR CONSIDERATION OF THE CEDAW QUESTION.

MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT, IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS FROM WHAT MY COLLEAGUE THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER AND I SAID THAT THE ADMINISTRATION DOUBTS THE WISDOM OF EXTENDING CEDAW TO HONG KONG FOREWITH. THE ADMINISTRATION IS THEREFORE NOT ABLE TO SUPPORT THE HON EMILY LAU'S MOTION. BUT AS WE HAVE REPEATEDLY SAID WE DID NOT TAKE ISSUE WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN. HOWEVER, LEST THAT THERE SHOULD BE ANY MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT MY SYMPATHIES ARISING FROM THE HONOURABLE MR MARTIN LEE'S REMARKS, I WISH TO MAKE CLEAR THAT I CERTAINLY SYMPATHISE WITH THE WELL-MEANING OBJECTIVES OF THOSE WHO ADVOCATE EXTENSION OF CEDAW TO HONG KONG.

MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT, WE DO NOT THEREFORE WISH TO TAKE A POSITION WHICH MIGHT BE CONSTRUED AS THE ADMINISTRATION OPPOSING THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN. THE EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS WILL THEREFORE ABSTAIN FROM VOTING.

SEM ON EDUCATION OBJECTIVE

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FOLLOWING IS THE FULL TEXT OF THE SPEECH BY THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MISS CHRISTINE K T CHOW, WHEN WINDING UP AN ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE OBJECTIVE OF SCHOOL EDUCATION TONIGHT (WEDNESDAY):

MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT,

INTRODUCTION

TODAY'S DEBATE HAS MADE AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION EXERCISE ON THE EDUCATION COMMISSION'S DRAFT STATEMENT OF AIMS FOR SCHOOL EDUCATION. I HAVE TAKEN CAREFUL NOTE OF THEIR VIEWS AND WILL CONVEY THEM TO THE COMMISSION. THE COMMISSION WILL TAKE FULL ACCOUNT OF THESE VIEWS, AS WELL AS THOSE RECEIVED FROM THE EDUCATION AND OTHER SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY DURING THE CONSULTATION EXERCISE, WHICH HAS NOW BEEN EXTENDED UNTIL THE END OF THIS MONTH. THE COMMISSION WILL THEN RECOMMEND A FINAL VERSION OF THE AIMS FOR ADOPTION AS A GOVERNMENT POLICY DOCUMENT.

WHAT IS IT

THE DRAFT STATEMENT OF AIMS SETS OUT WHAT THE PUBLIC SECTOR SCHOOL SYSTEM IS EXPECTED TO ACCOMPLISH. ALTHOUGH THERE HAVE BEEN STATEMENTS OF POLICY AIMS IN PAST WHITE PAPERS ON EDUCATION, THESE COVERED SPECIFIC LEVELS AND SUBJECTS AND THEREFORE LACKED COMPLETENESS AND COHESION. FOR THE FIRST TIME, WE ARE DRAWING UP A COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED SET OF AIMS FOR OUR SCHOOL EDUCATION. WE WILL BE PRODUCING SIMILAR STATEMENTS FOR OTHER SECTORS OF OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM LATER.

WHAT DOES THE STATEMENT TRY TO DO

EDUCATION AS DELIVERED THROUGH SCHOOLS IS A COMPLEX PROCESS. IT INVOLVES TEACHERS, PRINCIPALS, PARENTS, PUPILS AND SCHOOL MANAGERS, EACH GROUP PURSUING ITS RESPECTIVE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES. TO DO A PROPER JOB OF THAT, THEY SHOULD KNOW, AND BE INVOLVED IN SETTING, THE EXPECTED OUTCOME OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS. THE DRAFT STATEMENT SEEKS TO DO EXACTLY THAT. IT ALSO ANSWERS THE CALL IN THE EDUCATION COMMISSION'S REPORT NO. 4 FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO LAY DOWN AND KEEP UNDER REVIEW THE BASIC AIMS OF EDUCATION AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL.

/WHY NOW

WHY NOW

NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO SET COHERENT AND COMPREHENSIVE AIMS FOR SCHOOLS. FIRST, WE HAVE MET THE BASIC AIMS OF PROVIDING SCHOOL PLACES FOR THE YOUNG POPULATION. WE CAN THEREFORE DISCUSS THE FULL MEANING OF SCHOOLING MORE REALISTICALLY AND CONFIDENTLY. SECONDLY, WE HAVE ALREADY EARMARKED ON A SERIES OF POLICY INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION INCLUDING A NEW MECHANISM FOR SETTING AND DEVELOPING THE CURRICULUM, MORE AND BETTER TEACHERS, MORE MEANINGFUL ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING AND MORE REALISTIC USE OF THE TEACHING MEDIUM. HAVING CLEAR AIMS WILL FACILITATE THEIR IMPLEMENTATION. THIRDLY, SCHOOLS ARE BEING ENCOURAGED TO ASSUME MORE RESPONSIBILITY FOR EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF A SOUND EDUCATION. ALL CONCERNED WILL NEED TO BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT THEY ARE INVOLVED IN.

PRELIMINARY COMMENTS ON SOME OBSERVATIONS

MANY PEOPLE, INCLUDING THE MEMBERS WHO HAVE SPOKEN IN THIS DEBATE, HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR VIEWS ON THE DRAFT STATEMENT OF AIMS. I AM GRATEFUL FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS. AS THE DOCUMENT IS STILL IN THE CONSULTATION MODE, IT IS INAPPROPRIATE FOR ME TO GIVE DETAILED SPECIFIC ANSWERS AT THIS STAGE. BUT I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE JUST TWO POINTS.

FIRST, THE DRAFT STATEMENT IS INTENDED TO BE CONCISE, ALL-EMBRACING AND RELATIVELY TIMELESS, IN ORDER THAT THE COMMUNITY CAN EASILY UNDERSTAND AND IDENTIFY WITH IT. IT MAY NOT THEREFORE CONTAIN THE DEGREE OF SPECIFICITY THAT SOME MAY PREFER TO SEE. THE BREVITY OR EVEN THE ABSENCE OF SPECIFIC MENTION IN THE DOCUMENT DOES NOT HOWEVER, MEAN THAT A CONCEPT OR AN ISSUE IS EXCLUDED. WE HAVE NOT, FOR INSTANCE, OVERLOOKED THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING OUR STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF HONG KONG'S POST-1997 STATUS: THIS IS COVERED IN AIM 12 - SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND CIVIC AWARENESS.

SECONDLY, THE PROPOSED AIMS ARE STATEMENTS OF THE EXPECTED OUTCOME AND NOT PROPOSALS FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN THEMSELVES. THE TASK OF MAPPING OUT HOW TO GET TO THE DESIRED OUTCOME WILL HAVE TO BE ASSUMED BY PEOPLE IN THE FIELD WITH THE GOVERNMENT BACKING THEM UP WITH POLICIES AND RESOURCES. ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS IS THE WORK ALREADY DONE BY THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL TO PRODUCE A FAR MORE DETAILED SET OF CURRICULUM AIMS FOR SPECIFIC LEVELS OF SCHOOLING TO GUIDE TEACHERS AND CURRICULUM PLANNERS. THUS THE ABSENCE OF ANY MENTION OF DETAILED IMPLEMENTATION PLANS IS NOT A WEAKNESS OF THE DRAFT DOCUMENT.

WHAT NEXT

THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION PERIOD ON THE DRAFT STATEMENT OF AIMS RUNS UNTIL THE END OF DECEMBER. I HOPE THAT EDUCATORS AND OTHER INTERESTED INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS WILL LET US HAVE THEIR VIEWS BY THEN. ONCE ALL PUBLIC COMMENTS HAVE BEEN ANALYSED, THE COMMISSION WILL REVISE THE DOCUMENT WHERE NECESSARY. THE GOVERNMENT WILL THEN CONSIDER ADOPTING THE STATEMENT AS A FORMAL POLICY DOCUMENT. THANK YOU.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1992

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VEHICLE THIEVES TO FACE HEAVIER PENALTY

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A BILL SEEKING TO INCREASE THE LEVEL OF PENALTY TO DETER OFFENDERS FROM STEALING VEHICLES WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE MAXIMUM PENALTY FOR THE OFFENCE OF TAKING A CONVEYANCE WITHOUT AUTHORITY IS PROPOSED TO GO UP FROM THREE YEARS' TO SEVEN YEARS' IMPRISONMENT.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE THEFT (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID: "THIS PROPOSAL REFLECTS THE WISH OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC THAT STEPS MUST BE TAKEN TO REDUCE THE PROBLEM OF STOLEN AND MISSING VEHICLES."

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT ANTICIPATED THAT SOME 7,000 VEHICLES WOULD HAVE BEEN REPORTED MISSING DURING THIS YEAR, OF WHICH SOME 4,000 WOULD HAVE BEEN RECOVERED.

THIS REPRESENTS A 10 PER CENT INCREASE ON THE PREVIOUS YEAR IN THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VEHICLES MISSING, AND A 10 PER CENT DROP IN THE RECOVERY RATE.

MR ASPREY EXPLAINED THAT IN MOST CASES, THE POLICE HAD TO REPLY ON THE OFFENCE OF TAKING A CONVEYANCE WITHOUT AUTHORITY TO CHARGE THOSE WHO TOOK AWAY VEHICLES.

BUT THE PENALTIES IMPOSED BY THE COURTS FOR THE OFFENCE HAVE BEEN LOW, HE SAID.

IN THE PAST 18 MONTHS, OUT OF SOME 300 PERSONS CONVICTED OF THE OFFENCE, 34 WERE SENTENCED TO PERIODS OF IMPRISONMENT, NONE EXCEEDING 18 MONTHS.

A FURTHER 131 WERE FINED, THE HIGHEST FINE IMPOSED BEING \$4,000.

"AND THERE HAS BEEN A MARKED INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF DEFENDANTS CHARGED WITH THE OFFENCE WHO HAVE EITHER JUMPED BAIL OR REPEATED THE SAME OFFENCE A SECOND TIME WHILST ON BAIL," HE SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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GOVT SETS FOR PRO-COMPETITIVE TELECOMS POLICY

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TWO BILLS THAT REFLECT THE ADMINISTRATION'S COMMITMENT TO A PRO-COMPETITIVE TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY WERE INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

WHEN PASSED, THE NEW TELECOMMUNICATION ORDINANCE WILL GIVE THE GOVERNMENT KEY POWERS TO PROTECT CONSUMER INTERESTS AND FOSTER THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMPETITIVE MARKET THAT IS VITAL TO MAINTAINING HONG KONG'S POSITION AS A MAJOR REGIONAL FINANCIAL, COMMERCIAL AND SERVICES CENTRE.

INTRODUCING THE TELEPHONE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 AND TELECOMMUNICATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MRS ANSON CHAN, SAID: "I CAN THINK OF FEW BETTER ADVERTISEMENTS FOR ATTRACTING NEW PLAYERS INTO OUR TELECOMMUNICATIONS MARKET THAN THE INTRODUCTION AND PASSAGE OF THIS LEGISLATION."

THE TWO BILLS WILL VEST THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY WITH A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT NEW POWERS ARISING FROM THE INTRODUCTION OF PRICE-CAPPING AND THE LICENSING OF COMPETITIVE LOCAL FIXED NETWORKS.

"THIS IS INDICATIVE OF THE INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE PLAYED BY THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY IN ENSURING FAIR PLAY IN THE MARKET PLACE, ON WHICH INVESTMENT DECISIONS INVOLVING BILLIONS OF DOLLARS SO CRUCIALLY DEPEND."

THE ADMINISTRATION HAS NOW DECIDED THAT THE INCREASING IMPORTANCE, SCOPE AND COMPLEXITY OF THE WORK OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATION JUSTIFY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OFFICE OF THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY WITHIN GOVERNMENT, BUT SEPARATE FROM THE POST OFFICE, SHE SAID.

SUBJECT TO FINANCE COMMITTEE APPROVAL, THE OFFICE WILL BE A NEW GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT WITH ALL THE STAFF CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS MATTERS IN THE POST OFFICE TRANSFERRED TO IT.

MRS CHAN SAID THE PURPOSE OF THE TWO BILLS WAS TO FACILITATE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TWO KEY TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY INITIATIVES: A PRICE-CAPPING SCHEME FOR LOCAL TELEPHONE SERVICE CHARGES AND THE INTRODUCTION OF FIXED NETWORK COMPETITION.

IN ORDER TO INTRODUCE THE PRICE-CAPPING SCHEME, A CLAUSE IS PROVIDED IN THE TELEPHONE (AMENDMENT) BILL FOR THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY TO SPECIFY THE CHARGES THAT THE HONG KONG TELEPHONE COMPANY MAY LEVY FOR ITS SERVICES.

THE CLAUSE ALSO PROVIDES FOR THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES TO MAKE REGULATIONS GOVERNING REVISIONS TO THE SPECIFIED CHARGES.

MRS CHAN SAID THE ADMINISTRATION INTENDED TO REVIEW THE LEVELS OF THE OVERALL PRICE-CAP AND THE SUB-CAPS IN THE THIRD YEAR OF OPERATION OF THE PRICE-CAPPING SYSTEM.

IN ORDER TO COUNTER ANY TENDENCY THAT THE PRICE-CAPPING SCHEMES MAY CREATE AN INCENTIVE FOR THE REGULATED COMPANY TO CUT SERVICE STANDARDS TO BOOST PROFITABILITY, A CLAUSE OF THE TELEPHONE (AMENDMENT) BILL PROVIDES FOR THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY, AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE COMPANY, TO ISSUE CODES OF PRACTICE SPECIFYING SERVICE STANDARDS THAT IT MUST FOLLOW.

"THE USE OF SUCH CODES WILL BE OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE IN THOSE SECTORS OF THE MARKET WHERE THE HONG KONG TELEPHONE COMPANY MAINTAINS, FOR THE TIME BEING AT LEAST, A MONOPOLY POSITION," SHE SAID.

MRS CHAN ALSO SAID ANOTHER CLAUSE OF THE TELEPHONE (AMENDMENT) BILL WOULD REPEAL THE EXISTING SECTION OF THE TELEPHONE ORDINANCE, WHICH PROVIDED FOR THE COMPANY'S MAXIMUM LEVEL OF CHARGES TO BE SPECIFIED IN THE SCHEDULE TO THE ORDINANCE AND FOR THIS COUNCIL TO APPROVE AMENDMENTS TO THAT SCHEDULE BY RESOLUTION.

IT IS ALSO PROVIDED IN THE BILL FOR SERVICES AND CHARGES TO BE SPECIFIED BY THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY BY NOTICE IN THE GOVERNMENT GAZETTE AND REQUIRES THE COMPANY TO PROVIDE, FREE OF CHARGE, A LIST OF ITS SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER THE ORDINANCE AND THEIR CHARGES TO ANYONE REQUESTING IT.

IT IS PROPOSED IN THE TELEPHONE (AMENDMENT) BILL TO GIVE THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY THE POWER TO GIVE DIRECTIONS TO THE HONG KONG TELEPHONE COMPANY CONCERNING THE NUMBERING PLAN IN ORDER, IF THESE ARE DEEMED NECESSARY, TO ENSURE A FAIR AND REASONABLE ALLOCATION OF TELEPHONE NUMBERS BETWEEN OPERATORS.

IN OTHER WORDS, DAY-TO-DAY MANAGEMENT OF THE NUMBERING PLAN WOULD BE LEFT WITH THE COMPANY FOR THE TIME BEING.

BUT THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY WOULD HAVE SUFFICIENT POWERS TO ENSURE THAT THIS PRIVILEGE WAS NOT USED IN A WAY WHICH MIGHT PLACE COMPETING OPERATORS AT A DISADVANTAGE, SHE SAID.

REGARDING NETWORK INTERCONNECTION, EACH OF THE BILLS CONTAINED A CLAUSE PROVIDING THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY THE POWER TO DETERMINE THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THIS TAKES PLACE.

THIS POWER WILL BE USED TO ENSURE THAT SUCH TERMS AND CONDITIONS ARE FAIR TO BOTH PARTIES TO AN INTERCONNECTION ARRANGEMENT AND ARE NOT ANTI-COMPETITIVE WITH RESPECT TO OTHER OPERATORS, MRS CHAN SAID.

THE LAST MAIN AREA OF CONCERN ADDRESSED BY THE BILLS WITH RESPECT TO THE SMOOTH FUNCTIONING OF THE COMPETITIVE TELECOMMUNICATIONS MARKET-PLACE IS CROSS-OWNERSHIP BETWEEN LICENSEES.

DEBATES ON THE BILLS WERE ADJOURNED.

INTERPRETATION AND GENERAL CLAUSES (AMENDMENT) BILL INTRODUCED
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CHANGES PROPOSED IN THE INTERPRETATION AND GENERAL CLAUSES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 ARE OF A TECHNICAL NATURE AND MANY OF THE PROVISIONS WOULD SIMPLY REMOVE OUTDATED REFERENCES TO PRACTICES THAT HAVE CEASED.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE ACTING ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON JAMES FINDLAY, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, MR FINDLAY SAID IN ADDITION TO THE TECHNICAL MATTERS, THE BILL INCLUDED AN AMENDMENT TO SECTION 77 OF THE ORDINANCE.

HE SAID: "THAT SECTION RELATES TO UNITED KINGDOM ENACTMENTS THAT ARE INCORPORATED IN SOME OF OUR ORDINANCES BY REFERENCE.

"UNDER SECTION 77 AS IT NOW STANDS, AMENDMENTS MADE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM TO SUCH ENACTMENTS WILL, AS A GENERAL RULE, APPLY IN HONG KONG."

"IF THE BILL IS PASSED," MR FINDLAY SAID, "AMENDMENTS MADE TO SUCH ENACTMENTS ON OR AFTER JANUARY 1, 1994 WILL NOT, AS A GENERAL RULE, APPLY IN HONG KONG.

"THIS IS IN KEEPING WITH OUR POLICY OF LOCALISING OUR LAWS BY REMOVING DEPENDENCE ON SOME UNITED KINGDOM LAWS."

MR FINDLAY POINTED OUT THAT THE INTERPRETATION AND GENERAL CLAUSES ORDINANCE PLAYED A VITAL ROLE IN HONG KONG'S STATUTE BOOK.

THE ORDINANCE CONTAINS PROVISIONS RELATING TO THE CONSTRUCTION, APPLICATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE LAWS, DEFINES A LARGE NUMBER OF TERMS AND EXPRESSIONS USED IN LAWS AND IN PUBLIC DOCUMENTS.

IT IS WIDELY USED BY JUDGES AND LAWYERS AS AN ESSENTIAL AID IN INTERPRETING THE LAWS.

THE ORDINANCE WAS ENACTED IN ITS PRESENT FORM IN 1966.

IN 1987 THE LAW DRAFTSMAN ESTABLISHED A COMMITTEE WITHIN THE LAW DRAFTING DIVISION OF THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT TO REVIEW THE DRAFTING STYLES AND PRACTICES IN RELATION TO LEGISLATION.

THIS COMMITTEE FOUND THAT A NUMBER OF PROVISIONS IN THE ORDINANCE WERE INCONSISTENT WITH CURRENT PRACTICES OR WERE NO LONGER NEEDED.

MR FINDLAY SAID THE BILL HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

CHANGES PROPOSED FOR EXAMINATIONS AUTHORITY COMPOSITION
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A BILL THAT AIMS AT CHANGING THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE HONG KONG EXAMINATIONS AUTHORITY IN THE LIGHT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE HONG KONG EXAMINATIONS AUTHORITY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MISS CHRISTINE CHOW, SAID THE BILL PROPOSED TO END THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT UNDER WHICH THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG AND THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY HAD TWO REPRESENTATIVES EACH ON THE AUTHORITY, WHILE ALL THE OTHER TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS HAD ONLY ONE REPRESENTATIVE EACH.

IT ALSO SEEKS TO INCLUDE THE PRESIDENT OF THE LINGNAN COLLEGE AS AN EX-OFFICIO MEMBER, FOLLOWING THE RECENT ENACTMENT OF THE LINGNAN COLLEGE ORDINANCE.

IN VIEW OF THE PROGRESSIVE REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF COLLEGES REGISTERED UNDER THE POST SECONDARY COLLEGES ORDINANCE, MISS CHOW SAID THE BILL PROPOSED TO REPEAL THE PROVISION FOR THE AUTHORITY TO DRAW ONE OF ITS MEMBERS FROM THE PRESIDENTS OF THESE COLLEGES.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERSHIP WILL ALSO BE EXTENDED TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING COUNCIL, WHO ARE NOW SERVING ON THE AUTHORITY IN THEIR PERSONAL CAPACITIES AS MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR.

TO SIMPLIFY THE PROCEDURES FOR FUTURE AMENDMENTS TO THE COMPOSITION OF THE AUTHORITY, THE EXISTING PROVISIONS RELATING TO SUCH COMPOSITION WILL BE REPEALED AND CORRESPONDING PROVISIONS MADE IN A NEW SCHEDULE WHICH MAY BE AMENDED BY THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL.

MISS CHOW NOTED THAT THE CHANGES PROPOSED IN THE BILL HAD THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE AUTHORITY AND THE AGREEMENT OF THE INSTITUTIONS.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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GOVERNOR TO MEET LEGCO MEMBERS

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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PASSED A MOTION TO ENABLE THE GOVERNOR TO HAVE A MEETING WITH THE MEMBERS WHEN THE COUNCIL IS IN SESSION.

MOVING THE MOTION TO SUSPEND STANDING ORDERS 11 AND 12, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, SAID IT WAS INDICATED IN THE GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADDRESS THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO MAKE HIMSELF AVAILABLE TO ANSWER MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND TO DISCUSS GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PROPOSALS AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH WHEN THE COUNCIL WAS IN SESSION.

SIR DAVID SAID THE GOVERNOR, AS PRESIDENT OF THIS COUNCIL, HAD APPOINTED JANUARY 12 FOR A SITTING FOR THIS PURPOSE.

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GOVT COMMITTED TO ACHIEVING AIR QUALITY OBJECTIVES

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THE GOVERNMENT IS FIRMLY COMMITTED TO ACHIEVING THE STANDARDS SPECIFIED IN THE PROGRAMMES FOR ATTAINMENT OF THE AIR QUALITY OBJECTIVES RELEASED IN LATE NOVEMBER 1992.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHRISTINE LOH KUNG-WAI IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR EASON SAID THE ADMINISTRATION'S OVERALL POLICY OBJECTIVE FOR CONTROLLING AIR POLLUTION WAS TO ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN ACCEPTABLE AIR QUALITY STANDARDS AIMED AT SAFEGUARDING THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF THE COMMUNITY.

TO ACHIEVE COMPLIANCE WITH A SET OF AIR QUALITY OBJECTIVES FOR MAJOR AIR POLLUTANTS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, THE ADMINISTRATION HAD ADOPTED A NUMBER OF MEASURES TO CONTROL EMISSION OF AIR POLLUTANTS AT SOURCE WITH SOME SUCCESS.

"FOR EXAMPLE, THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AIR POLLUTION CONTROL (FUEL RESTRICTION) REGULATIONS IN APRIL 1990 REDUCED THE SULPHUR DIOXIDE LEVELS IN HONG KONG BY 40 PER CENT," MR EASON SAID.

"FOR SOME AREAS NEAR INDUSTRIAL CENTRES THE REDUCTION HAS BEEN AS GREAT AS 90 PER CENT."

FOR OTHER POLLUTANTS, PARTICULARLY NITROGEN DIOXIDE AND TOTAL SUSPENDED PARTICULATES, MR EASON EXPECTED THAT THESE WOULD BE ADDRESSED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NEXT REVIEW OF THE WHITE PAPER ON THE ENVIRONMENT IN MID-1993.

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LEGAL AID SERVICES UNDER REVIEW

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THE GOVERNMENT IS CONDUCTING A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE LAW, POLICY AND PRACTICE GOVERNING THE PROVISION OF LEGAL AID SERVICES, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

AN INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP IS ASSEMBLING THE NECESSARY FACTS AND IDENTIFYING ISSUES AND POSSIBILITIES.

HE SAID: "THE GROUP HOPES TO COMPLETE THIS PRELIMINARY STUDY IN MARCH NEXT YEAR."

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON SIMON IP SIK-ON, SIR DAVID SAID THE LEGAL PROFESSION WOULD BE INVOLVED AND CONSULTED DURING THE REVIEW.

ON THE BASIS OF THE PRELIMINARY FINDINGS OF THE WORKING GROUP, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD START DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LEGAL PROFESSION AND OTHER INTERESTED PUBLIC BODIES.

"THEIR VIEWS WILL BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT BEFORE THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REVIEW ARE FINALISED," HE SAID.

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INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL SHOULD BE MORE PROACTIVE

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MEMBERS OF THE INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL HAVE BROAD AGREEMENT THAT IT SHOULD BECOME MORE PROACTIVE, TAKING ON A STRONG LEADERSHIP ROLE TO HELP CO-ORDINATE THE PROVISION OF SUPPORT FOR INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT.

THIS WAS STATED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR T H CHAU, AS HE REPLIED TO A QUESTION BY THE HON NGAI SHIU-KIT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

"THE ADMINISTRATION IS NOW WRESTLING WITH THE DIFFICULT QUESTION OF HOW BEST TO TAKE THIS MATTER FORWARD, INCLUDING WHETHER THERE SHOULD BE A CHANGE IN THE FUNDING IN THIS IMPORTANT AREA," MR CHAU SAID.

THE COUNCIL WAS ESTABLISHED EARLY THIS YEAR AS GOVERNMENT'S MAIN CHANNEL OF ADVICE ON THE OVERALL DEVELOPMENT OF INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY IN HONG KONG.

IT HAS DEVOTED PART OF ITS ENERGIES DURING ITS FIRST YEAR TO A REVIEW OF ITS ROLE.

HE SAID THOUGH THE COUNCIL'S ADVICE WAS NOT NORMALLY PUBLISHED, HE WOULD KEEP THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL INFORMED OF FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN DUE COURSE.

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OPERATION OF NON-FRANCHISED BUS SERVICE

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A PASSENGER SERVICE LICENCE IS REQUIRED FOR THE OPERATION OF A NON-FRANCHISED BUS SERVICE UNDER THE ROAD TRAFFIC ORDINANCE AND ITS SUBSIDIARY LEGISLATION.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR MICHAEL LEUNG, IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ZACHARY WONG, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN CONSIDERING AN APPLICATION FOR SUCH A SERVICE, THE COMMISSIONER FOR TRANSPORT WAS REQUIRED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT NOT ONLY THE NEED FOR THE PROPOSED SERVICE, BUT ALSO SUCH OPERATING DETAILS AS STOPPING POINTS, ROUTEING, FARES AND FREQUENCY WHICH WERE SPECIFIED IN THE LICENSING CONDITIONS OF THE LICENCE ISSUED.

THESE OPERATING DETAILS WERE NORMALLY AGREED BETWEEN THE OPERATOR AND THE RESIDENTS CONCERNED AND INCLUDED IN THEIR JOINT APPLICATION FOR THE SERVICE.

"THUS THE FARES, ROUTEING AND OTHER OPERATING DETAILS INCLUDED IN THE LICENSING CONDITIONS REFLECT THE AGREEMENT BY THE RESIDENTS THEMSELVES OR THEIR AUTHORISED MANAGEMENT AGENT," HE SAID.

MR LEUNG SAID RESIDENTS MIGHT CHANGE THE OPERATOR IF THEY WERE DISSATISFIED WITH EITHER THE FARES OR THE QUALITY OF SERVICE PROVIDED.

"FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE LICENSING CONDITIONS MAY ALSO RESULT IN SUSPENSION OR NON-RENEWAL OF THE LICENCE," HE ADDED.

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CHANGE TO PUBLIC ATTITUDE TOWARDS ORGAN DONATION NEEDED

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MORE THAN THREE MILLION ORGAN DONATION CARDS HAVE BEEN DISTRIBUTED SINCE EASTER THIS YEAR THROUGHOUT THE TERRITORY AT DISTRICT OFFICES, GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, HOSPITALS AND CLINICS, BANKS, DEPARTMENT STORES AND SUPERMARKETS, OR WHENEVER ANY COMMUNITY GROUP REQUESTS THEM.

INDIVIDUAL CARDS HAVE ALSO BEEN ADDRESSED TO HOUSING AUTHORITY TENANTS AND VIA THE RATING BILLS TO PRIVATE PROPERTY OWNERS.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HUANG CHEN-YA IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, SAID IN PROMOTING COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF ORGAN DONATION, THE GOVERNMENT HAD MOUNTED A MAJOR PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN THIS YEAR.

THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH HAS ALSO LAUNCHED A MULTI-MEDIA EFFORT INVOLVING NO LESS THAN 10 CAMPAIGNS AND PUBLICITY DRIVES IN CO-OPERATION WITH PROFESSIONAL BODIES, PUBLIC UTILITIES, COMMUNITY GROUPS AND OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

IN ADDITION, THE DEPARTMENT'S CENTRAL HEALTH EDUCATION UNIT HOLDS TALKS AND PROVIDES EXHIBITS TO COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS AND OPERATES A 24-HOUR HOTLINE TO OFFER INFORMATION ON ORGAN DONATION.

"INDEED, OUR PAST EFFORTS ARE SHOWING SOME POSITIVE RESULTS," MRS WONG SAID. "FOR EXAMPLE, IN 1989, FOR EVERY 10 POTENTIAL DONORS WE APPROACHED, WE WERE SUCCESSFUL IN GETTING ONLY ONE DONOR.

"THIS YEAR, WE HAVE IMPROVED THE RATE TO ONE IN THREE. BUT THIS IS STILL NOT GOOD ENOUGH.

"WE BELIEVE THE ANSWER LIES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION AND IN ATTITUDE CHANGE," MRS WONG SAID, ADDING THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD INTENSIFY ITS EFFORTS IN CONCERT WITH CONCERNED GROUPS AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS.

ON WHETHER LEGISLATIVE MEASURES WILL BE INTRODUCED TO MEET THE NEED FOR A READY SUPPLY OF TRANSPLANT ORGANS, MRS WONG TOLD COUNCILLORS THAT THE MEDICAL (THERAPY, EDUCATION AND RESEARCH) ORDINANCE ALREADY PROVIDED FOR THE REMOVAL OF A PERSON'S ORGANS TO BE USED FOR TRANSPLANT AFTER HIS DEATH UNDER PRESCRIBED CIRCUMSTANCES.

"IN BRIEF," SHE EXPLAINED, "THESE ARE WHEN A DONOR EITHER CONSENTED IN WRITING AT ANY TIME OR CONSENTED ORALLY IN THE PRESENCE OF TWO OR MORE WITNESSES DURING HIS LAST ILLNESS.

"ALTERNATIVELY, THE NEXT OF KIN OF A DECEASED PERSON MAY CONSENT IN WRITING, AS LONG AS THE DECEASED HAD NOT INDICATED ANY PREVIOUS OBJECTION TO BEING A DONOR, IE NOT OPTED-OUT, AND HIS SPOUSE, CHILD OR PARENTS DO NOT OBJECT TO THE DONATION."

MRS WONG ALSO REVEALED THAT AN AD HOC GROUP OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WAS STUDYING THE HUMAN ORGAN TRANSPLANT BILL WHICH PROVIDED, INTER ALIA, FOR ORGAN DONATION BY LIVING RELATIVES AND SPOUSE AND FOR THE SETTING UP OF A HUMAN ORGAN TRANSPLANT BOARD.

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SPECIAL SECURITIES LEVY PROPOSED TO BE WITHDRAWN

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THE SECURITIES AND FUTURES COMMISSION IS CONSIDERING THE FORMULATION OF LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS TO RECOMMEND AN ORDERLY WIND-DOWN AND ELIMINATION OF THE SPECIAL LEVY IMPOSED ON SECURITIES TRANSACTIONS.

THIS WAS STATED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR MONETARY AFFAIRS, MR TAM WING-PONG, WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHIM PUI-CHUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

MR TAM SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD NO PLANS TO SPEED UP THE RECOVERY OF THE OUTSTANDING CREDIT FACILITIES EXTENDED TO THE THEN HONG KONG FUTURES GUARANTEE CORPORATION LTD AFTER THE 1987 STOCK MARKET CRASH.

THE BULK OF THE LOAN HAS BEEN REPAID AND THE OUTSTANDING AMOUNT WOULD BE FULLY REPAID BY EARLY 1994, DEPENDING ON THE MARKET TURNOVERS.

"THUS WE FEEL THAT THERE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE A NEED, NOR WOULD IT BE APPROPRIATE, TO TEMPER WITH THE EXISTING STATUTORY STRUCTURE OF THE SPECIAL LEVY TO ARTIFICIALLY ACCELERATE THE LOAN REPAYMENTS," HE SAID.

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NO HAEMOPHILIACS CONTRACT HIV AT PUBLIC HOSPITALS

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THERE IS NO RECORD AS TO WHETHER THE 61 HAEMOPHILIACS IN HONG KONG WHO ARE CONFIRMED TO HAVE BEEN INFECTED BY HIV HAVE CONTRACTED THE DISEASE THROUGH MEDICAL TREATMENT AT PUBLIC HOSPITALS.

THIS WAS STATED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MRS PEGGY LAM IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

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"THE GOVERNMENT WOULD ONLY BE LEGALLY LIABLE TO PAY COMPENSATION TO AN INDIVIDUAL WHO HAD CONTRACTED HIV THROUGH THE TRANSFUSION OF CONTAMINATED BLOOD PRODUCTS IF THE INDIVIDUAL WAS ABLE TO ESTABLISH THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN NEGLIGENT OR BREACHED A DUTY OF CARE IN RESPECT OF PREPARING THE BLOOD PRODUCTS FOR TRANSFUSION.

"THE GOVERNMENT ENSURES THAT ALL BLOOD PRODUCTS FOR TRANSFUSION ARE STERILISED ACCORDING TO INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED METHODS."

OF THE 61 HAEMOPHILIACS, NINE HAVE DEVELOPED AIDS AND FIVE HAVE DIED FROM THE DISEASE.

MRS WONG ALSO TOLD THE COUNCIL THAT HAEMOPHILIACS ELIGIBLE FOR DISABILITY ALLOWANCE WOULD CONTINUE TO RECEIVE THE APPROPRIATE ALLOWANCE WHILE UNDERGOING TREATMENT IN HOSPITALS.

HOWEVER, THOSE STAYING IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS FOR OVER 29 DAYS WOULD RECEIVE ONLY THE NORMAL DISABILITY ALLOWANCE SINCE THEY ARE ALREADY RECEIVING CONSTANT MEDICAL ATTENTION IN HOSPITALS WHICH ARE HEAVILY SUBSIDISED BY THE GOVERNMENT, SHE SAID.

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PORK CONSUMERS ASSURED OF SAFETY

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THE LIKELIHOOD OF INFECTED PORK REACHING CONSUMERS IS REMOTE AS PIGS ARE INSPECTED FOR FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE BEFORE THEY ARE SLAUGHTERED FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MRS ANSON CHAN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON TANG SIU-TONG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, SHE SAID IN THE VERY UNLIKELY EVENT THAT THIS DID HAPPEN, CONSUMPTION OF THE MEAT WOULD HAVE NO EFFECT ON A PERSON'S HEALTH.

THE DISEASE IS ENDEMIC TO HONG KONG AND OTHER PLACES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

MRS CHAN SAID AN EFFECTIVE AND RELATIVELY INEXPENSIVE VACCINE WAS READILY AVAILABLE AND MANY LOCAL PIG FARMERS HAD VACCINATED THEIR ANIMALS AS A PREVENTIVE MEASURE.

"THE RECENT OUTBREAK OF THE DISEASE WAS DUE MAINLY TO THE FAILURE OF SOME FARMERS TO VACCINATE THEIR PIGS," SHE SAID.

THE AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES DEPARTMENT IS HELPING TO CONTROL THE DISEASE BY MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH VACCINE MANUFACTURERS AND THEIR LOCAL AGENTS TO ENSURE SUFFICIENT VACCINE SUPPLY.

THE DEPARTMENT ALSO SENDS SAMPLES OF LOCAL VIRUSES TO THE WORLD REFERENCE LABORATORY FOR FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE FOR TESTING, MRS CHAN SAID.

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MEASURES TO DEAL WITH JUVENILE CRIME OUTLINED

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO PLANS TO SET UP A SPECIAL SQUAD DEDICATED SPECIFICALLY TO JUVENILE CRIME AS THIS PROBLEM IS NOT BECOMING INCREASINGLY SERIOUS.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON JAMES TO KUN-SUN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, STATED THAT IN FACT JUVENILE CRIME (THAT IS CRIME BY PERSONS AGED 15 AND UNDER) HAD DECREASED DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS.

HE EXPLAINED THAT THE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS CONCERNED WERE ALREADY PAYING CLOSE ATTENTION TO THE PROBLEM.

"THE POLICE MAINTAIN CLOSE LIAISON WITH SCHOOLS; THEY VISIT SCHOOLS REGULARLY AND HAVE DEVELOPED A PROGRAMME OF TALKS AND OTHER PUBLICITY IN SCHOOLS TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO STAY AWAY FROM CRIME," MR ASPREY SAID.

THE POLICE ALSO PLAN TO IMPLEMENT ON A TRIAL BASIS THE STUDENT CRIME INFORMATION FORM SCHEME TO ENABLE STUDENTS TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON CRIME WITHIN SCHOOLS, HE SAID.

THE SETTING UP OF POLICE SCHOOL SUPPORT TEAMS AND THE PROVISION OF TRAINING TO TEACHERS TO IDENTIFY TRIAD INFLUENCE IN SCHOOLS ARE ALSO BEING CONSIDERED, HE SAID.

MR ASPREY ALSO SAID THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON YOUNG OFFENDERS, WHICH REPORTED TO THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE, WAS TASKED WITH EXAMINING WAYS TO PREVENT POTENTIAL YOUNG OFFENDERS FROM OFFENDING.

THE COMMITTEE HAS COMMISSIONED A STUDY INTO THE SOCIAL CAUSES OF JUVENILE CRIME AND THIS MAJOR STUDY WILL BE COMPLETED IN EARLY 1994, HE ADDED.

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FUEL GAS MARKET COMPETITIVE

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THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MRS ANSON CHAN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NO INTENTION AT PRESENT TO FORMULATE ARRANGEMENTS TO LIMIT THE PROFIT MARGIN OR CONTROL THE TARIFF INCREASES OF THE HONG KONG AND CHINA GAS COMPANY.

THIS IS BECAUSE THE MARKET FOR THE SUPPLY OF FUEL GAS IS COMPETITIVE, SHE SAID IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LAU CHIN-SHEK IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

"HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SITUATION CLOSELY," SHE ADDED.

MRS CHAN REITERATED THE POLICY OF ENSURING CONSUMERS ENJOY A RELIABLE AND REASONABLY PRICED SUPPLY OF FUEL GAS, AND THAT THE PRIVATE SECTOR WAS ABLE TO PROVIDE SUCH A SUPPLY.

ONLY IF IT WAS EVIDENT THAT A MONOPOLISTIC SITUATION EXISTED IN THE SUPPLY OF FUEL GAS WOULD THE GOVERNMENT CONSIDER WHETHER SOME FORM OF REGULATION OR SCHEME OF CONTROL WAS NECESSARY, SHE SAID.

MRS CHAN SAID NO COMPANY HAD A MONOPOLY ON FUEL GAS SUPPLY IN HONG KONG.

ALTHOUGH THE HONG KONG AND CHINA GAS COMPANY IS THE SOLE SUPPLIER OF TOWN GAS AND SYNTHETIC NATURAL GAS (SNG), LIQUEFIED PETROLEUM GAS (LPG), SUPPLIED BY A NUMBER OF OIL COMPANIES, PROVIDES AN ALTERNATIVE CHOICE OF FUEL GAS, SHE ADDED.

NOTING THAT BOTH TYPES HAD RESPECTABLE MARKET SHARES, SHE SAID THE OIL COMPANIES HAD A 53 PER CENT SHARE OF THE MARKET IN TERMS OF NUMBER OF CUSTOMERS.

BUT IN TERMS OF SALES OF GAS ENERGY, THE MARKET SHARES OF LPG ON THE ONE HAND AND TOWN GAS AND SNG ON THE OTHER ARE ROUGHLY IN THE REGION OF 40:60.

THERE ARE ABOUT 1.78 MILLION FUEL GAS CUSTOMERS, OF WHICH ABOUT 829,000 OR 47 PER CENT USE PIPED TOWN GAS OR SNG, 342,000 OR 19 PER CENT USE PIPED LPG AND 609,000 OR 34 PER CENT USE LPG IN CYLINDERS.

THE HONG KONG AND CHINA GAS COMPANY'S POLICY IN DETERMINING CHARGES IS NOT SUBJECT TO MONITORING BY THE GOVERNMENT.

WITH EFFECT FROM JANUARY 1, THE FIXED MONTHLY SERVICE CHARGE WILL BE \$7 PER MONTH PER CUSTOMER AND THE BASIC TARIFF WILL RANGE FROM 15.05 CENTS TO 16.2 CENTS PER MEGAJOULE DEPENDING ON CONSUMPTION.

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PLANS IN HAND TO KEEP MA WAN CHANNEL SAFE

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FURTHER MEASURES TO ENSURE CONTINUING NAVIGATIONAL SAFETY AND EFFICIENCY IN THE USE OF THE MA WAN CHANNEL WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN PHASES AS TRAFFIC BUILDS UP.

THIS WAS STATED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MRS ANSON CHAN, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HOWARD YOUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

SHE SAID THE FIRST PHASE WAS INTENDED TO BEGIN IN 1993/94 SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS.

THIS PHASE INCLUDES :

- * ESTABLISHING AN IMMIGRATION ANCHORAGE OFF TUEN MUN SO THAT SMALL CRAFT DESTINED FOR WEST OF THE CHANNEL WILL NOT NEED TO BE CLEARED AT THE WESTERN IMMIGRATION ANCHORAGE AS AT PRESENT;

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- * ESTABLISHING A MARINE TRAFFIC CONTROL STATION AT GEMINI POINT AND DEPLOYING A DEDICATED PATROL LAUNCH FOR BETTER CONTROL OF SMALL CRAFT NEAR THE CHANNEL; AND
- * COMMISSIONING A RADAR STATION AT KAU YI CHAU TO STRENGTHEN SURVEILLANCE OF THE VESSEL TRAFFIC CENTRE OVER THE SOUTHERN APPROACHES OF THE CHANNEL.

MRS CHAN SAID FURTHER MEASURES MIGHT INCLUDE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE LIGHT BEACONS AT THE CHANNEL AND ESTABLISHING A FAIRWAY IN THE CHANNEL TOGETHER WITH HOLDING ANCHORAGES TO BE USED BY SMALL CRAFT WHENEVER A LARGE VESSEL WAS IN TRANSIT.

"THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE MEASURES WILL DEPEND ON THE TRAFFIC GROWTH."

A CONSULTANCY ON PORT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTED THAT BY 2006, SOME 17,000 OCEAN-GOING SHIPS AND 665,000 RIVER TRADE AND SMALL CRAFT WILL USE THE MA WAN CHANNEL.

PERIODIC IN-HOUSE SURVEYS SHOW THAT IN 1988 THERE WERE ABOUT 2,000 OCEAN-GOING SHIP MOVEMENTS AND 200,000 SMALL CRAFT MOVEMENTS THROUGH THE CHANNEL.

THE ESTIMATED FIGURES FOR THIS YEAR ARE 3,000 AND 270,000 RESPECTIVELY.

SHE SAID ADEQUATE AIDS TO NAVIGATION WERE AT PRESENT IN PLACE IN THE CHANNEL AND ITS APPROACHES.

ALSO, RADAR SIMULATION EQUIPMENT AT THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC HAS BEEN PUT TO BENEFICIAL USE IN STUDIES SIMULATING THE BEHAVIOUR OF LARGE SHIPS TRANSITING THE CHANNEL, SHE ADDED.

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FAIR AND EQUITABLE ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS
FOR VOTERS ACHIEVED

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THE ADMINISTRATION BELIEVES IT HAS BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVE OF PROVIDING FAIR AND EQUITABLE ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR VOTERS TO EXERCISE THEIR CHOICE FREELY.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SZE, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON PANG CHUN-HOI IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR SZE ALSO SAID THE EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONDUCTING ANNUAL REGISTRATION CAMPAIGNS SHOULD CONTINUE.

THE ADMINISTRATION WILL ALSO CONTINUE TO ORGANISE MAJOR REGISTRATION DRIVES DURING AN ELECTION YEAR TO PRODUCE THE NECESSARY IMPACT, HE ADDED.

/THE SECRETARY

THE SECRETARY ALSO SAID THE THREE PRONGED APPROACH ADOPTED FOR PREVIOUS REGISTRATION EXERCISES, THAT IS, HOME VISITS, PUBLICITY AND PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES, AND WIDE DISTRIBUTION OF REGISTRATION FORMS, HAD PROVED TO BE EFFECTIVE IN IMPROVING THE REGISTRATION RATE.

AS AT 1992, 52.5% OF ELIGIBLE ELECTORS HAS BEEN REGISTERED, WHICH COMPARES FAVOURABLY WITH A RATE OF 43.9% IN 1989.

AMONG THE VARIOUS ACTIVITIES, "HOME VISITS" HAS PROVED TO BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE.

OVER 60% OF ALL COMPLETED REGISTRATION FORMS RECEIVED BY THE REGISTRATION AND ELECTORAL OFFICE WERE COLLECTED THROUGH THIS CHANNEL, MR SZE SAID.

ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF REGISTRATION FORMS, HE SAID THE PRESENT NETWORK WAS ALREADY VERY EXTENSIVE.

THE ADMINISTRATION HAS FURTHER WIDENED THE NETWORK BY DISTRIBUTING REGISTRATION FORMS WITH NOTICES OF INTERIM VALUATION SENT BY THE RATING AND VALUATION DEPARTMENT TO NEWLY OCCUPIED PRIVATE ACCOMMODATION.

MORE, THE VOTER REGISTER IS REGULARLY CROSS CHECKED WITH THE RECORDS OF VEHICLE DRIVING LICENCE HOLDERS KEPT BY THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT.

REGISTRATION FORMS WILL BE SENT TO LICENCE HOLDERS WHO ARE NOT ALREADY ON THE VOTER REGISTER.

MR SZE SAID THE VOTER TURNOUT RATE IN ANY PARTICULAR ELECTION IS DEPENDENT ON A NUMBER OF FACTORS, INCLUDING THE NUMBER OF CANDIDATES, THE COMPETITIVENESS AMONG THEM, THE ADEQUACY OF POLLING FACILITIES, AND SO ON.

FURTHER TO THE GUIDELINES ON CIVIC EDUCATION TO SCHOOLS PROMULGATED IN 1986, MR SZE SAID THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT WOULD ISSUE TO TEACHERS EARLY NEXT YEAR AN "ACTION PLAN FOR THE PROMOTION OF CIVIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS" TO HELP THEM DESIGN A BETTER CIVIC EDUCATION PROGRAMME TO SUIT THE NEEDS OF THEIR OWN SCHOOLS.

IN ADDITION, A RESEARCH PROJECT IS BEING CONDUCTED BY THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TO EXAMINE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CIVIC EDUCATION PROGRAMMES IN DEVELOPING CIVIC AWARENESS OF PUPILS IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

QUESTIONNAIRES, SURVEYS AND CASE STUDIES ARE BEING CARRIED OUT IN 40 SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND 80 PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

THE FINDINGS, WHICH ARE EXPECTED TO BE AVAILABLE BY THE END OF NEXT YEAR, WILL FORM THE BASIS FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS TO THE CURRICULUM AND PROGRAMME FOR CIVIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS.

THE ADMINISTRATION ALSO LAUNCHES PROMOTION AND PUBLICITY ACTIVITIES ON A REGULAR BASIS TO ENHANCE THE GENERAL PUBLIC'S UNDERSTANDING OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT.

WORK ACCIDENTS IDENTIFIED EFFECTIVELY

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THE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM USED BY THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT HAS ENABLED IT TO IDENTIFY ANY GROWING TREND IN PARTICULAR TYPES OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS AND TO FOCUS ENFORCEMENT AND PREVENTION WORK ACCORDINGLY.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MISS CHRISTINE CHOW, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LAU CHIN-SHEK, MISS CHOW SAID THE SYSTEM USED IN COMPILING INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS STATISTICS LARGELY FOLLOWED THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION'S RECOMMENDATION ON THE METHOD OF CLASSIFICATION OF CAUSES OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS.

ACCORDING TO STATISTICS FOR THE LATE 1980'S PUBLISHED BY THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT, ACCIDENTS CAUSED BY MACHINERY WAS A MAJOR AREA OF CONCERN.

"AS A RESULT, MACHINERY SAFETY WAS TARGETED FOR SPECIAL ATTENTION DURING FACTORY INSPECTIONS IN THE PAST TWO YEARS," MISS CHOW SAID, ADDING THAT THE NUMBER OF MACHINERY RELATED ACCIDENTS DROPPED BY 26.5 PER CENT FROM 8,237 IN 1990 TO 6,013 LAST YEAR.

MORE RECENT ACCIDENT STATISTICS HAVE INDICATED A HIGH INCIDENCE OF ACCIDENTS INVOLVING "FALL OF PERSONS".

MISS CHOW SAID THIS WOULD BECOME ONE OF THE PRIORITY AREAS IN NEXT YEAR'S ACCIDENT PREVENTION PROGRAMME AND NEW INITIATIVES WERE BEING WORKED OUT.

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AMPLE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL DROP-OUTS

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AMPLE OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE "DROPPED OUT" OF SCHOOL INITIALLY TO CONTINUE WITH THEIR EDUCATION, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MISS CHRISTINE CHOW, SAID.

THESE INCLUDE ENROLMENT IN PREVOCATIONAL SCHOOLS, PRACTICAL SCHOOLS, SKILLS OPPORTUNITY SCHOOLS, APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING SCHEMES AND COURSES OFFERED BY THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING COUNCIL, SHE ADDED.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON. MRS SELINA CHOW IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), MISS CHOW SAID 5,574 CHILDREN BELOW THE AGE OF 15 "DROPPED OUT" FROM SCHOOL IN THE 1991/92 SCHOOL YEAR.

THIS COMPARES WITH 3,379 CHILDREN "DROPPED OUT" FROM SCHOOL SO FAR IN THE 1992/93 SCHOOL YEAR.

OF THE 1991/92 DROP-OUTS, 2,080 EITHER EMIGRATED OR LEFT HONG KONG FOR STUDIES ABROAD; 1,181 REACHED THE AGE OF 15 SHORTLY AFTER THEIR NON-ATTENDANCE WAS IDENTIFIED; AND 623 WERE SUBSEQUENTLY PLACED IN AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION.

OF THE REMAINING 1,690 CHILDREN, 392 REQUIRED INTENSIVE COUNSELLING; 11 WERE SUFFERING FROM ILL HEALTH; 115 WERE ABSENT FROM HONG KONG TEMPORARILY OR WERE CHILDREN OF FISHERMEN; 419 WERE AT VARIOUS STAGES OF BEING PROCESSED BY THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT; 563 WERE UNTRACEABLE; AND 190 WERE SENT TO BOYS' AND GIRLS' HOMES AFTER HAVING BEEN CONVICTED OF AN OFFENCE.

MISS CHOW NOTED THAT THERE WERE NO DIRECT STATISTICS ON THE PROPORTION OF SCHOOL DROP-OUTS WHO HAD EVENTUALLY BECOME MEMBERS OF JUVENILE GANGS.

"POLICE STATISTICS SHOW THAT, IN ADDITION TO THE 190 CASES INVOLVING BREACHES OF THE LAW, 45 CHILDREN BELOW 15 WHO HAD DROPPED OUT OF SCHOOL WERE ARRESTED DURING THE 1991/92 SCHOOL YEAR FOR MINOR THEFT AND SHOPLIFTING OFFENCES," SHE SAID, ADDING THAT THEY WERE DEALT WITH BY A SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENT DISCRETION SCHEME.

MISS CHOW ALSO SAID THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON YOUNG OFFENDERS HAD RECENTLY COMMISSIONED A CONSULTANCY STUDY ON THE SOCIAL CAUSES OF CRIME AMONGST YOUNG OFFENDERS.

SHE EXPECTED THAT THIS STUDY WOULD PROVIDE SOME MORE DEFINITIVE FIGURES TO DETERMINE THE SCALE OF CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR AMONG YOUNGSTERS WHO HAD LEFT SCHOOL EARLY.

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ACCESS TO CLASSIFIED RECORDS BEING STUDIED

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THE GOVERNMENT IS CONSIDERING WHETHER THE ARRANGEMENT FOR PUBLIC ACCESS TO UNCLASSIFIED RECORDS SHOULD BE EXTENDED TO CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE PURPOSE IS TO BRING HONG KONG IN LINE WITH PRACTICE IN OTHER PLACES WHICH ALLOW PUBLIC INSPECTION OF BOTH UNCLASSIFIED AND CLASSIFIED RECORDS AFTER A FIXED PERIOD OF CLOSURE, RANGING USUALLY BETWEEN 20 AND 60 YEARS.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ERIC LI KA-CHEUNG, HE SAID THE CURRENT PRACTICE WAS TO ALLOW PUBLIC ACCESS TO UNCLASSIFIED RECORDS OLDER THAN 30 YEARS AND TO CONSIDER REQUESTS FOR ACCESS TO OTHER RECORDS ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS.

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EDUCATION QUALITY OF KINDERGARTENS CLOSELY MONITORED

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THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION MAY SERVE A NOTICE UNDER THE EDUCATION ORDINANCE DIRECTING KINDERGARTENS (KGS) WHICH ADMIT CHILDREN BELOW THE MINIMUM ADMISSION AGE TO COMPLY WITH THE LAW.

FAILURE TO ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUCH A NOTICE CONSTITUTES AN OFFENCE AND THE SUPERVISOR AND EVERY OTHER MANAGER OF THE KINDERGARTEN WILL BE LIABLE, ON CONVICTION, TO A FINE OF \$25,000 AND TO IMPRISONMENT FOR TWO YEARS.

SIMILARLY, FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS ON PUPIL:TEACHER RATIOS CARRIES A FINE OF \$5,000 AND ONE YEAR IMPRISONMENT UPON CONVICTION.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MISS CHRISTINE CHOW, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ALBERT CHAN WAI-YIP IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MISS CHOW SAID DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICERS (DEOS) AND ADVISORY INSPECTORS OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT PAID REGULAR INSPECTION VISITS TO KGS TO ENSURE THE RELEVANT REGULATIONS WERE OBSERVED AS WELL AS TO MONITOR THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THEM.

DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICERS CARRY OUT REGULAR CHECKS ON KGS TO ENSURE THEIR HEADS ARE QUALIFIED KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS OR IN POSSESSION OF EQUIVALENT QUALIFICATIONS AND THAT OTHER REQUIREMENTS CONCERNING THE SAFETY AND HYGIENE OF THE PREMISES ARE ADHERED TO.

AS REGARDS CURRICULUM AND TEACHING METHODS FOR KGS, THE ADVISORY INSPECTORATE HAS PRODUCED A MANUAL OF KINDERGARTEN PRACTICE, A GUIDE TO THE KINDERGARTEN CURRICULUM AND OTHER RESOURCE MATERIALS.

IT ALSO CONDUCTS A WIDE-RANGE OF IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR KG TEACHERS.

TO ENABLE KGS TO PAY THEIR TEACHERS THE GOVERNMENT-RECOMMENDED SALARY SCALES, MISS CHOW SAID KG OPERATORS WERE ALLOWED TO INCREASE THE SALARY PORTION OF THEIR SCHOOL FEES.

"THE AIM OF THIS IS TO RETAIN TRAINED TEACHERS IN KGS AND TO ENCOURAGE MORE UNTRAINED TEACHERS TO SEEK TRAINING," SHE ADDED.

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EXPENDITURE ON SPONSORED VISITORS UNDER CLOSE MONITORING

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THE GOVERNMENT IS ALWAYS MINDFUL OF THE NEED TO ENSURE THAT THE EXPENDITURE ON THE SPONSORED VISITORS PROGRAMME IS GOOD VALUE FOR MONEY.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

/"IT IS

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"IT IS IMPORTANT TO BRING UNITED KINGDOM PARLIAMENTARIANS AND OPINION FORMERS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES TO HONG KONG TO SEE FOR THEMSELVES THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS SO THAT THEY HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HONG KONG," SIR DAVID SAID.

UNDER THE GOVERNMENT'S SPONSORED VISITORS PROGRAMME, A TOTAL OF 72 UNITED KINGDOM PARLIAMENTARIANS ACCEPTED THE INVITATIONS TO VISIT HONG KONG IN THE LAST THREE YEARS.

OF THESE 72 VISITORS, 25 BROUGHT THEIR SPOUSES. THE GOVERNMENT SPENT A TOTAL OF ABOUT \$2.5 MILLION ON THESE VISITS.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS SINCE 1985/86 BROADENED THE SCOPE OF THE PROGRAMME TO INCLUDE VISITORS FROM NORTH AMERICA, OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION, SIR DAVID SAID.

"WE NOW SPEND ABOUT 40 PER CENT OF OUR FUNDS ON SPONSORED VISITS BY UNITED KINGDOM PARLIAMENTARIANS."

IN ADDITION, UNDER A SEPARATE PROGRAMME THE GOVERNMENT SPONSORS GROUPS OF OFFICIALS FROM CHINA ON 10-DAY VISITS TO FAMILIARISE THEMSELVES WITH HONG KONG.

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MORE THAN 20,000 OPT FOR HOSPITAL AUTHORITY PAY PACKAGE

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A TOTAL OF 20,565 EX-GOVERNMENT AND EX-SUBVENTED HOSPITALS STAFF, EXCLUDING GENERAL GRADES STAFF, HAVE OPTED FOR HOSPITAL AUTHORITY (HA) EMPLOYMENT TERMS AS AT THE END OF NOVEMBER THIS YEAR, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE FIGURE AMOUNTS TO 61 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE STAFF WORKING IN THESE HOSPITALS, SHE SAID.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON LAM KUI-CHUN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MRS WONG SAID THE HA REMUNERATION PACKAGE WAS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF COMPARABLE COST TO THE EMPLOYER, I.E. THAT IT SHOULD BE SIMILAR IN COST TO CIVIL SERVICE TERMS.

"ADDITIONAL PROVISION HAS BEEN NECESSARY TO FACILITATE OFFER OF HA TERMS TO EX-SUBVENTED STAFF.

"THE OFFER OF AN OPTION TO ALL ELIGIBLE STAFF IS CONSIDERED AN EQUITABLE ARRANGEMENT, TO SAFEGUARD THEIR LEGITIMATE AND REASONABLE INTERESTS," SHE SAID.

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950 PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS IN 1991/92

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THERE WERE 950 PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS WITH AN APPROVED PROJECT ESTIMATE EXCEEDING \$10 MILLION IN THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1991/92.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON EMILY LAU WAI-HING, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR BLAKE SAID OF THE 152 NEW PROJECTS SCHEDULED TO START DURING THE SAME FINANCIAL YEAR, 45 ACTUALLY STARTED AS PROGRAMMED WHILE 38 WERE RESCHEDULED, REPACKAGED OR DROPPED IN THE COURSE OF THE YEAR FOLLOWING REVIEWS BY THE RELEVANT POLICY SECRETARIES OF PRIORITIES AND MATCHING RESOURCES.

"THIS FLEXIBILITY IS A DISTINCT FEATURE OF THE PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME IN HONG KONG, AND ALLOWS THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT CHANGING ASPIRATIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES," HE SAID.

MR BLAKE SAID THE REMAINING 69 PROJECTS WERE DELAYED BEYOND 1991/92 FOR REASONS INCLUDING LAND ACQUISITION PROBLEMS, STATUTORY OBJECTIONS, SITE RE-LOCATION, DESIGN AND PHYSICAL PROBLEMS, CHANGES IN CLIENT'S REQUIREMENTS, ADMINISTRATIVE DELAYS AND FUNDING.

THE ESTIMATED PROJECT COST FOR THESE 69 PROJECTS AMOUNTED TO A TOTAL OF \$30.2 BILLION, AND THE PROVISION INCLUDED IN THE 1991/92 EXPENDITURE ESTIMATED WAS \$1.8 BILLION, HE ADDED.

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ACTION AGAINST DOG-KEEPING IN PUBLIC HOUSING

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THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT HAS STEPPED UP PUBLICITY TO DISCOURAGE DOG-KEEPING AND ACTION AGAINST OFFENDERS IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES OR HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME (HOS) FLAT.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY REV THE HON FUNG CHI-WOOD IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"DOG-KEEPING IS NOT ALLOWED UNDER THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S TENANCY AGREEMENT WITH PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS AND THE DEED OF MUTUAL COVENANT WITH HOS FLAT OWNERS," MR EASON SAID.

THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT COULD EVICT A DOG-KEEPING TENANT BY SERVING A NOTICE-TO-QUIT OR BY WAY OF A COURT INJUNCTION TO BAN AN HOS FLAT OWNER FROM KEEPING DOGS, MR EASON SAID.

MR EASON SAID ABOUT 1,000 CASES OF DOG-KEEPING IN PUBLIC HOUSING AND HOS ESTATES WERE DETECTED IN EACH OF THE PAST TWO YEARS WITH THE MAJORITY RESOLVED WITH TENANTS' AND FLAT OWNERS' CO-OPERATION.

SINCE APRIL 1 THIS YEAR, EIGHT WARNING LETTERS THREATENING COURT ACTION HAVE BEEN ISSUED: FOUR TO PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS AND FOUR TO HOS FLAT OWNERS.

"SO FAR, SIX OF THESE CASES HAVE BEEN RESOLVED WITH THE DOGS BEING REMOVED FROM THE PREMISES AND ONE OFFENDER HAS BEEN REQUIRED TO PAY COURT COSTS AMOUNTING TO \$6,600," HE ADDED.

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MOTION ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS PASSED
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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TONIGHT (WEDNESDAY) PASSED A MOTION THAT CALLED ON THE ADMINISTRATION TO SUPPORT THE EXTENSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN TO HONG KONG.

A TOTAL OF 15 MEMBERS SPOKE IN THE TWO-HOUR DEBATE MOVED BY THE HON EMILY LAU.

THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MISS CHRISTINE CHOW, WITHDREW HER AMENDMENT TO THE ORIGINAL MOTION.

A MOTION PROPOSED BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, ON SUSPENSION OF THE STANDING ORDERS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TO ENABLE THE GOVERNOR TO ADDRESS THE LEGISLATORS ON JANUARY 12 WAS ALSO PASSED.

ANOTHER MOTION MOVED BY THE HON ELSIE TU UNDER HONG KONG ROYAL INSTRUCTIONS 1917 TO 1991 WAS ALSO PASSED.

IN ADDITION, EIGHT MEMBERS SPOKE IN AN ADJOURNMENT DEBATE RAISED BY THE HON TIK CHI-YUEN ON THE OBJECTIVE OF SCHOOL EDUCATION.

A TOTAL OF FIVE BILLS WERE PASSED BY THE COUNCIL.

FOUR OF THE BILLS WERE PASSED WITH AMENDMENTS.

THEY WERE LORD WILSON HERITAGE TRUST BILL, COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1992, SECURITIES AND FUTURES COMMISSION (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1992 AND OCCUPATIONAL RETIREMENT SCHEMES BILL.

THE EXEMPTIONS FROM REGISTRATION AND TRANSFER OF POWERS (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL WAS PASSED WITHOUT AMENDMENT.

FIVE OTHER BILLS WERE INTRODUCED FOR FIRST AND SECOND READINGS. DEBATES ON THEM WERE ADJOURNED.

THEY WERE INTERPRETATION AND GENERAL CLAUSES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, TELEPHONE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, TELECOMMUNICATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, HONG KONG EXAMINATIONS AUTHORITY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 AND THEFT (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992.

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ELECTION PROPOSALS WILL BE FORTHCOMING: GOVERNOR
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THE GOVERNOR, THE RT HON CHRISTOPHER PATTEN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT OUT OF THE PROCESS OF DISCUSSION AND DEBATE WOULD COME PROPOSALS FOR THE 1995 ELECTIONS ACCEPTABLE TO THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG AND AS ACCEPTABLE AS POSSIBLE TO BRITAIN AND CHINA.

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AFTER VISITING KWAI TSING DISTRICT, THE GOVERNOR SAID IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS WE WOULD SEE THE BEGINNING OF A MUCH MORE EXTENSIVE DEBATE AND MORE PEOPLE PUTTING FORWARD THEIR OWN THOUGHTS ON THE PROPOSALS HE SUGGESTED IN HIS POLICY ADDRESS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

"THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE, LIKE THE DISTRICT BOARD IN KWAI TSING, WHO THINK I SHOULD GO FURTHER. THERE ARE OTHERS WHO THINK I SHOULD GO LESS FAR," HE SAID.

"WE'RE TALKING ABOUT VERY MODEST AND LIMITED PROPOSALS FOR ENSURING THAT THE 1995 ELECTIONS ARE AS FAIR AND CLEAN AND OPEN AS POSSIBLE."

HE REPEATED THAT WHEREVER ANYBODY WANTED HIM TO TALK ABOUT THOSE MATTERS, HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO DO SO.

ASKED ABOUT COMMENTS BY SENIOR MINISTER OF SINGAPORE, MR LEE KUAN YEW ON MONDAY, THE GOVERNOR SAID VISITORS IN HONG KONG WERE VERY WELCOME TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH PRACTISED HERE.

"I THINK WHAT MATTERS IS THAT WE SHOULD HAVE VIGOROUS AND EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONS, A GOOD EXECUTIVE STAFFED BY THE VERY BEST CIVIL SERVANTS. I THINK WE NEED A CREDIBLE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

"I THINK WE NEED GOOD, INDEPENDENT COURTS BECAUSE IN ORDER TO SECURE HONG KONG'S PROSPERITY AND STABILITY FOR THE FUTURE, WE NEED NOT ONLY AN OPEN MARKET ECONOMY, BUT WE ALSO NEED THE RULE OF LAW, THE RULE OF LAW UNDERPINNED BY ALL THOSE THINGS THAT THE JOINT DECLARATION TALKS ABOUT INCLUDING A FREE PRESS AND A CREDIBLE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TO WHICH THE EXECUTIVE IS ACCOUNTABLE."

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GOVERNOR VISITS KWAI TSING
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THE GOVERNOR, THE RT HON CHRISTOPHER PATTEN, THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON SAW FOR HIMSELF THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE OF THE CONTAINER TERMINALS IN KWAI TSING.

MR PATTEN FIRST TOOK A PANORAMIC VIEW OF THE CONTAINER PORT WHICH IS BEING BILLED AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S BUSIEST, AND THE DISTRICT FROM A ROOFTOP OF YIN LAI COURT IN LAI KING, WHERE HE WAS BRIEFED ON LOCAL DEVELOPMENTS BY THE KWAI TSING DISTRICT OFFICER, MRS AGNES ALLCOCK.

/HE THEN

HE THEN WENT TO CHEUNG HANG ESTATE, THE LATEST PUBLIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ON THE TSING YI ISLAND, WHERE HE CHATTED TO SENIOR CITIZENS AT A SOCIAL CENTRE FOR THE ELDERLY RUN BY THE CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY ALLIANCE.

ON HIS WAY TO THE CENTRE, MR PATTEN ALSO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO BROWSE IN SHOPS IN CHEUNG HANG COMMERCIAL COMPLEX.

BEFORE CONCLUDING HIS VISIT, MR PATTEN MET WITH DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS AT A RECEPTION AT THE METRO PLAZA IN KWAI FONG.

MR PATTEN WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THE REGIONAL SECRETARY OF THE NEW TERRITORIES, MR ALBERT LAM; AND THE DISTRICT OFFICER, MRS AGNES ALLCOCK.

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ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY

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THE ADMINISTRATION HAS DECIDED THAT THE INCREASING SCOPE AND COMPLEXITY OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATION JUSTIFIED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEPARATE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MRS ANSON CHAN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE NEW DEPARTMENT WILL BE CALLED THE OFFICE OF THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY (OFTA).

SHE SAID: "THE POSTMASTER GENERAL HAS HITHERTO UNDERTAKEN SIMULTANEOUSLY THE DUTIES OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY AND HEAD OF THE POSTAL SERVICE WITH DEDICATION AND DISTINCTION.

"HOWEVER, THE RAPID EXPANSION OF SERVICES IN RECENT YEARS AND OUR POLICY OF LIBERALISATION HAVE NOT ONLY LED TO A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN WORKLOAD BUT WILL ALSO REQUIRE THE REGULATOR TO TAKE ON NEW POWERS IN RELATION TO NETWORK INTERCONNECTION, TELEPHONE NUMBERING AND PRICE CONTROL.

"IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE ENSURE THAT OUR REGULATORY STRUCTURE IS APPROPRIATE TO THESE NEW CHALLENGES."

SHE ADDED THAT SUBJECT TO FINANCE COMMITTEE APPROVAL, OFTA WOULD BE A NEW DEPARTMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT.

ALL THE CURRENT STAFF OF THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS BRANCH OF THE POST OFFICE WOULD BE TRANSFERRED TO THIS NEW DEPARTMENT AND WOULD REMAIN ON CIVIL SERVICE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE, SHE SAID.

"OUR PROPOSALS WILL REQUIRE THE CREATION OF A NEW POST FOR THE HEAD OF OFTA WHO WILL BE APPOINTED TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY.

"WE WILL ALSO BE SEEKING ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS REGULATION.

/"OUR PROPOSALS

"OUR PROPOSALS ARE CURRENTLY BEING FINALISED, PRIOR TO SUBMISSION TO FINANCE COMMITTEE FOR APPROVAL," MRS CHAN SAID.

ON THE TIMING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF OFTA, SHE SAID THIS WOULD ULTIMATELY DEPEND ON THE TIME TAKEN TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY APPROVALS FOR POSTS, FUNDING AND APPOINTMENT, WHICH WAS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT WITH CERTAINTY.

"HOWEVER, SHE INDICATED THAT SHE WOULD BE PUSHING FOR EARLY DECISIONS AND WAS HOPEFUL THAT THE OFFICE COULD BE ESTABLISHED EARLY IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF NEXT YEAR.

"OUR PROPOSALS FOR OFTA, TOGETHER WITH THE LEGISLATION, ARE A PRACTICAL DEMONSTRATION OF GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO ITS PRO-COMPETITIVE TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY.

"TELECOMMUNICATIONS PROVIDE A VITAL UNDERPINNING TO HONG KONG'S POSITION AS THE PRE-EMINENT FINANCIAL AND COMMERCIAL CENTRE IN THE REGION AND COMPETITION ENSURES THAT HONG KONG RETAINS ITS COMPETITIVE EDGE," MRS CHAN SAID.

SHE SAID THE BILLS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATION COUNCIL TODAY FOLLOWED ON THE MOTION DEBATE ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY HELD IN JUNE THIS YEAR.

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NEGOTIATIONS ON CT9 CONTINUING

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IN RESPONSE TO PRESS ENQUIRIES, A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT DISCUSSIONS WITH THE THREE CONSORTIA TO WHOM THE LAND GRANT FOR CONTAINER TERMINAL 9 (CT9) HAD BEEN OFFERED WERE CONTINUING.

THESE DISCUSSIONS WERE TECHNICALLY COMPLEX, HE EXPLAINED, BECAUSE OF SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW ROAD AND BRIDGE LINKS TO THE TERMINAL SITE, DETAILED REQUIREMENTS FOR SITE FORMATION AND MEETING ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS AND SO ON.

HE EMPHASISED THAT THE CONSORTIA INVOLVED HAD INDICATED THEIR INTENTION TO PROCEED WITH DISCUSSION ON THE PROPOSED LAND GRANT WHICH WOULD BE PROCESSED IN EXACTLY THE SAME WAY AS EARLIER TERMINALS.

HE ADDED THAT IT WAS ANTICIPATED THAT THE DISCUSSIONS WOULD CONTINUE INTO EARLY NEXT YEAR.

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APPLICATIONS FOR BN(O) PASSPORTS

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IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS, AN IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN CONFIRMED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THE NEED FOR BRITISH DEPENDENT TERRITORIES CITIZEN (BDTC) PASSPORTS TO BE EXCHANGED FOR BRITISH NATIONAL (OVERSEAS) (BN(O)) PASSPORTS WELL BEFORE 1997 IF THE HOLDERS WISHED TO HAVE BN(O) PASSPORTS.

THE SPOKESMAN EXPLAINED THAT THERE WOULD BE SIGNIFICANT ADMINISTRATIVE DIFFICULTIES IF PEOPLE LEAVE IT TOO LATE.

THE DEPARTMENT CONFIRMED THAT IF THE PRESENT TAKE-UP RATE OF BN(O)S REMAINS UNCHANGED, TO AVOID A LARGE NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS COMING IN AT THE SAME TIME CLOSE TO 1997, SOME SORT OF PHASED PROGRAMME SIMILAR TO THE PREVIOUS NEW IDENTITY CARD RE-ISSUE EXERCISE WOULD BE NECESSARY.

A SPOKESMAN REMINDED THE PUBLIC THAT AS AGREED UNDER THE MEMORANDUM ASSOCIATED WITH THE JOINT DECLARATION, HONG KONG BDTCs WILL CEASE TO BE SUCH CITIZENS ON JULY 1, 1997, BUT THEY WILL BE ELIGIBLE FOR BN(O) PASSPORTS SO THAT THEY CAN CONTINUE TO TRAVEL ON BRITISH PASSPORTS BEYOND 1997 IF THEY WANT TO.

NO NEW APPLICATION WILL BE POSSIBLE AFTER JUNE 30, 1997.

"OBVIOUSLY WE CANNOT SIT BACK AND WAIT FOR EVERYONE TO TURN UP ON THAT DAY," THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

"EVEN THOUGH WE CAN ASSUME NOT ALL POTENTIAL APPLICANTS WILL APPLY FOR A BN(O) PASSPORT, IF TOO MANY APPLIED TOO CLOSE TO 1997, THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO COPE WITH THE RUSH.

"WE ARE THEREFORE CONSIDERING HOW BEST TO DEAL WITH WHAT COULD BE A MAJOR ADMINISTRATIVE UNDERTAKING."

THE SPOKESMAN EMPHASISED THAT, UNLIKE THE NEW IDENTITY CARD RE-ISSUE EXERCISE, EVEN IF A PHASED PROGRAMME WERE BROUGHT IN, IT WOULD STILL BE ENTIRELY VOLUNTARY.

"NOBODY NEEDS TO TAKE UP A BN(O) PASSPORT AT ALL IF THEY DO NOT WANT TO. MANY PEOPLE DO NOT HOLD EITHER BDTC OR BN(O) PASSPORTS NOW.

"THOSE WHO ALREADY HAVE A BN(O) PASSPORT NEED NOT OF COURSE COME FORWARD.

"BUT THOSE WHO WISH TO CONTINUE THE FACILITY OF THE BDTC WILL NOT BE ABLE TO DO SO AFTER 1997 AND THEY SHOULD APPLY FOR A BN(O) EARLIER RATHER THAN LATER," HE SAID.

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GOVT TO MAINTAIN HK'S RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT

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THE GOVERNMENT WAS DETERMINED TO MAINTAIN THE TERRITORY'S REMARKABLE RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT AND TO GIVE THE NEW HONG KONG IN 1997 THE GREATEST POSSIBLE CHANCE OF SUCCESS, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, MR HAMISH MACLEOD, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE OPENING OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE TO MARK THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CENTRE OF ASIAN STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG, MR MACLEOD SAID THE GOVERNMENT'S AIMS IN RELATION TO THE ECONOMY AND THE COMMUNITY OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS WERE CLEAR, AND INCLUDED:

- ENCOURAGING HONG KONG'S PROSPERITY BY MAINTAINING PRUDENT AND SOUND ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL STRATEGIES; AND BY INVESTING HEAVILY IN OUR PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE;
- REMOVING OBSTACLES TO ECONOMIC GROWTH AND TO COMPETITIVENESS;
- ENSURING THAT HONG KONG REMAINS A LEVEL-PLAYING FIELD;
- PROTECTING THE POOR AND VULNERABLE BY IMPROVING STANDARDS THROUGHOUT THE SOCIAL SERVICES; AND
- ENSURING THAT THE GOVERNMENT WORKS FOR THE PEOPLE BY PROVIDING HIGH STANDARDS OF SERVICE IN ALL ITS DEALINGS WITH THE PUBLIC.

MR MACLEOD STRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS DETERMINED TO ENSURE THAT HONG KONG WOULD CONTINUE TO EXCEL IN THE COMING YEARS.

"THAT IS WHY WE ARE MAKING GREAT EFFORTS TO EXPAND TERTIARY EDUCATION, TO FURTHER DEVELOP OUR PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME, TO IMPROVE OUR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES, TO MAP OUT AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME AND TO DEVELOP OUR POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS.

"THAT IS WHY WE ARE EMBARKING ON MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENTS TO UNDERPIN HONG KONG'S ROLE.

"AND WHY WE ARE EMBARKING ON THE AIRPORT CORE PROGRAMME, BASED AROUND THE NEW AIRPORT AT CHEK LAP KOK," HE SAID.

LOOKING AHEAD, MR MACLEOD SAID EVERY INDICATOR SUGGESTED THAT HONG KONG WOULD REMAIN A THRIVING ECONOMY AND AN ENGINE FOR DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA DESPITE THE CHANGE IN SOVEREIGNTY IN 1997.

"OUR LOCATION - AT THE GATEWAY TO CHINA AND AT THE CROSSROADS OF ASIA - WILL NEVER CHANGE.

"THIS ENSURES THAT HONG KONG'S ECONOMIC ROLE WILL ALWAYS BE CENTRAL TO ASIA'S PROSPERITY," HE SAID.

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"WE EXPECT THE ECONOMY TO GROW BY AN AVERAGE FIVE PER CENT IN REAL TERMS ANNUALLY UP TO 1997," MR MACLEOD SAID.

LOOKING BACK ON THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE PAST 25 YEARS, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY LISTED AS SOME OF HONG KONG'S ACHIEVEMENTS THE 23 TIMES GROWTH IN PER CAPITA GDP AND THE MAINTENANCE OF UNEMPLOYMENT AT A MERE TWO PER CENT FOR ALMOST SIX CONSECUTIVE YEARS.

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NEW POST OFFICE OPENS IN TIN SHUI WAI
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A NEW BRANCH POST OFFICE OPENED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN TIN SHUI WAI TO SERVE LOCAL RESIDENTS.

THE TIN YIU POST OFFICE IS LOCATED AT UNIT 101, FIRST FLOOR, TIN YIU SHOPPING CENTRE, TIN YIU ESTATE.

IT PROVIDES A NORMAL RANGE OF COUNTER SERVICES. THE BUSINESS HOURS ARE:

MONDAY TO FRIDAY : 9.30 AM TO 1 PM
2.15 PM TO 5 PM

SATURDAY : 9.30 AM TO 1 PM

THE TELEPHONE NUMBER IS 445 9161.

THE POSTMASTER GENERAL, MR MICHELANGELO PAGLIARI, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE YUEN LONG DISTRICT BOARD, MR TAI KUEN, AND THE DISTRICT OFFICER (YUEN LONG), MR ROBIN IP MAN-FAI, OFFICIATED AT ITS OPENING CEREMONY THIS MORNING.

THIS BRINGS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF BRANCH POST OFFICES IN THE TERRITORY TO 122.

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STREET SLEEPERS HAVE A WARM NIGHT
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SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT STAFF DISTRIBUTED A TOTAL OF 545 BLANKETS TO STREET SLEEPERS THROUGHOUT THE TERRITORY LAST (TUESDAY) NIGHT.

OF THE STREET SLEEPERS, 188 WERE ON HONG KONG ISLAND, 55 IN EAST KOWLOON, 253 IN WEST KOWLOON, 31 IN NEW TERRITORIES EAST AND 18 IN THE NEW TERRITORIES WEST.

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SALT WATER CUT IN SOUTH KOWLOON

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FLUSHING WATER SUPPLY TO ALL PREMISES IN SOUTH KOWLOON WILL BE TURNED OFF FROM 11 PM ON FRIDAY (DECEMBER 18) TO 7 AM THE NEXT DAY.

THIS IS BECAUSE OF A SUSPENSION OF ELECTRICITY SUPPLY TO THE KOWLOON SOUTH SALT WATER PUMPING STATION.

THE AFFECTED AREAS INCLUDE ALL THE PREMISES LOCATED TO THE SOUTH OF BOUNDARY STREET, INCLUDING TAI KOK TSUI, MONG KOK, YAU MA TEI AND TSIM SHA TSUI.

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HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND
MONEY MARKET OPERATIONS

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\$ MILLION

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|--------------------------------|-------|
| OPENING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT | 1,500 |
| REVERSAL OF LAF | NIL |
| BALANCE AFTER REVERSL OF LAF | 1,500 |
| NET INJECTION/WITHDRAWAL TODAY | NIL |
| EFFECT OF LAF TODAY | NIL |
| CLOSING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT | 1,500 |

LAF RATE 2.00 BID/4.00 OFFER TWI 114.20 *-0.1* 16.12.1992

HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND

EF BILLS

HONG KONG GOVERNMENT BONDS

| TERMS | YIELD | TERM | ISSUE | COUPON | PRICE | YIELD |
|-----------|----------|-----------|-------|--------|--------|-------|
| 1 WEEK | 3.05 PCT | 15 MONTHS | 2402 | 5.50 | 100.53 | 5.08 |
| 1 MONTH | 3.61 PCT | 18 MONTHS | 2405 | 5.50 | 100.40 | 5.27 |
| 3 MONTHS | 4.00 PCT | 21 MONTHS | 2408 | 4.375 | 98.42 | 5.44 |
| 6 MONTHS | 4.08 PCT | 24 MONTHS | 2411 | 4.625 | 98.42 | 5.58 |
| 12 MONTHS | 4.70 PCT | | | | | |

TOTAL TURNOVER OF BILLS AND BONDS - 1,233 MN

CLOSED 16 DECEMBER 1992

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