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FS'S SPEECH ON NEW AIRPORT IN LEGCO ON WEDNESDAY
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MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT,

THE THEME RUNNING THROUGH SOME CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS DEBATE IS THAT THE ACP COSTS A LOT, THAT IT IS LIKELY TO COST FAR MORE THAN WE IN THE GOVERNMENT ARE PREPARED TO REVEAL OR ADMIT, AND THAT THESE COSTS WILL INCREASINGLY DEPRIVE THE PUBLIC OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND OTHER PUBLIC WORKS.

THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER CLAIMS IN THIS CHAMBER OR ELSEWHERE THAT WE ARE WITHHOLDING INFORMATION, AND THAT WE ARE FAVOURING BRITISH CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES AND CONSULTANTS WHEN AWARDING CONTRACTS.

A CONCERN TO ENSURE COST EFFECTIVENESS AND REDUCE THE RISKS OF COST OVERRUN IS ENTIRELY REASONABLE, AND INDEED ONE THAT I SHARE WHOLEHEARTEDLY. BUT THE OTHER SUBSIDIARY THEMES, ALLEGING A LACK OF INFORMATION AND CONTRACT FAVOURITISM, I REJECT TOTALLY AND WILL ANSWER FIRST.

OVER THE LAST SIX WEEKS WE HAVE RELEASED A GREAT DEAL OF FINANCIAL AND OTHER INFORMATION. ON APRIL 2, WE PUBLISHED OUR OVERALL ACP COSTS PAPER. THAT WAS FOLLOWED BY DETAILED PAPERS ON THE COSTS OF THE AIRPORT RAILWAY AND OF THE NEW AIRPORT ITSELF. LAST WEEK, WHEN WE ANNOUNCED THE TSING MA BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT, WE REVEALED PERHAPS MORE INFORMATION THAN EVER BEFORE ON THE TENDERS AND ON THE REASONS FOR OUR DECISION.

THIS IS REAL TRANSPARENCY AND I WELCOME IT. AT THE SAME TIME WE HAVE PRESENTED THESE PAPERS AND EXPLAINED THEIR CONTENTS TO THE LEGCO AD HOC GROUP, THE AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE AND THE PUBLIC THROUGH THE MEDIA. THIS EFFORT HAS INVOLVED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PROVISIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY AND THE MTRC, AS WELL AS THE GOVERNMENT.

THE PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS WILL CONTINUE. IN PARTICULAR, THE FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE AIRPORT AND THE RAILWAY WILL BE DISCUSSED BY THE LEGCO AD HOC GROUP AND THE AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE OVER THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. WE WILL RESPOND CONSTRUCTIVELY TO SPECIFIC AND REASONABLE REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION. IT IS DIFFICULT HOWEVER TO KNOW HOW TO RESPOND TO VAGUE ALLEGATIONS OF A LACK OF TRANSPARENCY OR DEMANDS THAT WE SHOULD FILL A BOTTOMLESS PIT LABELLED "MORE INFORMATION". FORESTS OF TREES HAVE ALREADY BEEN FELLED IN AN ATTEMPT TO SATISFY THE DEMANDS MADE ON US OVER THE PERIOD SINCE THE NEW AIRPORT WAS ANNOUNCED. IT MAY BE WORTH RECALLING FOR EXAMPLE THAT THE MATERIAL ON THE AIRPORT MASTER PLAN ALONE WAS THREE INCHES THICK. AND THAT THERE ARE NOW OVER 300 REPORTS, STUDIES ETC. RELEVANT TO THE ACP AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC IN THE AIRPORT AND PORT PROJECT RESOURCE CENTRE. I WONDER HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE READ THEM? THUS WE MUST DRAW A LINE SOMEWHERE. I AM PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS THAT WE SHOULD NOT PUBLICLY REVEAL COMMERCIALLY SENSITIVE INFORMATION THAT COULD, FOR EXAMPLE, UPSET FINANCIAL PLANS OR UNDERMINE COMPETITIVE TENDERING.

/IMPLICIT IN .....

IMPLICIT IN SOME OF WHAT HAS BEEN SAID IN THE DEBATE IS THE IDEA THAT ALL THIS COULD BE DONE AT LESS EXPENSE IF WE PROCEEDED MORE SLOWLY. CALCULATING ECONOMIC DISBENEFITS IS A SCIENCE THAT CAUSES A LOT OF CONTROVERSY AND I SHALL NOT TRY IT HERE : I WOULD RATHER APPEAL TO MEMBERS' COMMON SENSE. WHAT WOULD BE MADE CHEAPER BY SPENDING MORE TIME? BY EXTENDING THE PROJECT CASHFLOWS, WE WOULD JUST INCREASE THE OUT-TURN COSTS. BY EXTENDING THE REPAYMENT PERIOD FOR BORROWING BY THE MTRC AND THE AIRPORT AUTHORITY AND PUTTING OFF THE TIME WHEN OUR INVESTMENTS START TO GENERATE REVENUES, WE SHALL INCUR MORE INTEREST COSTS AND DELAY PAYMENT OF DIVIDENDS BACK TO THE PUBLIC. I AM AFRAID THAT IT JUST DOES NOT MAKE SENSE.

ON THE AWARD OF INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTS, WE WILL CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD. AS THE SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY SAID LAST WEEK : "THERE IS NEVER ANY FAVOURITISM TOWARDS ANY COMPANY OR ANY COUNTRY. HONG KONG THRIVES AS AN OPEN MARKET WITH FREE COMPETITION, AND THIS PRINCIPLE OF OPEN UNBIASED COMPETITION IS STRICTLY APPLIED BY THE GOVERNMENT WHEN EVALUATING ALL TENDERS". REPEATED ALLEGATIONS AND INNUENDOES TO THE CONTRARY ARE TOTALLY UNFOUNDED. REGRETTABLY THEIR REITERATION WITHIN THIS CHAMBER LENDS THEM A VENEER OF CREDIBILITY THAT THEY IN NO WAY MERIT.

THE TSING MA BRIDGE CONTRACT IS THE LARGEST ACP CONTRACT SO FAR, AND SHOULD BE REGARDED AS A POSITIVE AND ENCOURAGING START TOWARDS ENSURING THAT THE ACP GOES AHEAD AT FULL SPEED, ON TIME, AND WITHIN BUDGET. THE ANGLO-JAPANESE CONSORTIUM'S CONTRACT PRICE OF $7.144BN IN MONEY OF THE DAY IS WITHIN THE ORIGINAL BUDGET. LIKE MOST OTHER MAJOR CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS ON THE ACP, IT IS ON A LUMP SUM, FIXED PRICE BASIS - WHICH GIVES US THE BEST PROTECTION FROM UNFORESEEN PRICE INCREASES DURING CONSTRUCTION.

IMPRESSIVE PROGRESS IS EVIDENT ELSEWHERE. TENDERS ARE BEING INVITED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR OTHER ROAD AND BRIDGE CONTRACTS, AND FOR THE WESTERN HARBOUR CROSSING FRANCHISE.

THE WEST KOWLOON RECLAMATION IS WELL UNDER WAY, AND NEW LAND CAN BE SEEN EMERGING FROM THE SEA. TENDERERS HAVE BEEN PRE-QUALIFIED FOR . THE FIRST PHASE OF THE CENTRAL AND WANCHAI RECLAMATION. THE TUNG CHUNG NEW TOWN SITE PREPARATION CONTRACT HAS BEEN LET. AND, OF COURSE, ON FRIDAY WE SHALL BE SEEKING FUNDS FROM FINANCE COMMITTEE TO ENABLE WORK TO START ON THE TSING MA BRIDGE BY THE END OF THIS MONTH.

THE PAA HAS ALMOST COMPLETED ITS ADVANCE WORKS FOR SITE FORMATION. TENDERS HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED FOR THE MAIN SITE PREPARATION CONTRACT TO CONSTRUCT THE AIRPORT PLATFORM. THESE BIDS WERE TOO HIGH. SO THE PAA WILL GO BACK TO THEM WITH NEW IDEAS DESIGNED TO BRING DOWN THEIR PRICES - A CONCRETE EXAMPLE OF HOW DETERMINED WE ALL ARE TO CONTAIN COSTS.

THE PAA HAS ALSO DONE A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF OTHER VITAL WORK, BUILDING UP A CAPABLE TEAM FROM VIRTUALLY NOTHING, PRODUCING ITS MASTER PLAN AND FINANCIAL PLAN, AND GETTING WORK STARTED ON THE SITE.

/LET ME .....

LET ME NOW TURN TO THE FINANCING OF THE RAILWAY. WE HAVE PROPOSED TO INJECT EQUITY OF $3 BILLION INTO THE MTRC. THE MTRC WILL, INCIDENTALLY, PAY US BACK THE SAME AMOUNT, $3 BILLION, FOR PUBLIC WORKS TO SUPPORT THE BUILDING OF THE AIRPORT RAILWAY. WE PROPOSE TO OFFER FURTHER CALLABLE EQUITY OF $8.8 BILLION TO REASSURE THEIR LENDERS THAT THE MTRC'S BORROWINGS WILL BE REPAID, IF THINGS DO NOT TURN OUT AS WELL AS WE HAVE ANTICIPATED. THAT MONEY IS NOT SUPPOSED TO BE PAID OTHER THAN IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRUCMSTANCES : WE HAVE DESIGNED THE FINANCIAL PACKAGE SO THAT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT IT WOULD HAVE TO BE CALLED AT ALL.

THE PUBLIC WILL GET FOR $3 BILLION OF PUBLIC MONEY A MODERN, EFFICIENT, ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY RAILWAY WHICH COSTS $22.L BILLION TO BUILD. WHAT IS MORE, WE PROPOSE TO ALLOW THE MTRC TO DEVELOP SITES OVER AND AROUND THEIR STATIONS - LAND THAT WOULD BE LARGELY UNDEVELOPABLE AFTER THE STATIONS AND RAILWAY LINES HAD BEEN BUILT - AND THE MTRC WILL PAY THE GOVERNMENT AROUND $20 BILLION IN PREMIUM FOR IT BEFORE L997, WITH ANOTHER $20 BILLION GOING TO THE SAR LAND FUND.

THIS IS OUTSTANDING VALUE FOR MONEY. THE COMMUNITY WILL NOT ONLY GET SPEEDY ACCESS TO THE NEW AIRPORT BUT MUCH NEEDED RELIEF FOR THE TRAVELLING PUBLIC OF CONGESTION ON THE ROUTES BETWEEN CENTRAL AND KWAI CHUNG. IT WILL ALSO PROVIDE RAPID ACCESS TO TSING YI AND THE NEW TOWNS PLANNED FOR NORTH LANTAU. AND IT WILL MAKE RECREATIONAL AREAS ON LANTAU ACCESSIBLE FROM HONG KONG ISLAND AND KOWLOON IN 30 MINUTES.

TURNING NOW TO THE OVERALL COST OF THE ACP, THE INCREASE FROM $98.6 BILLION LAST YEAR TO $112.2 BILLION (IN MARCH 1991 PRICES) IS NOT EXCESSIVE, GIVEN THE ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF FINAL PLANNING AND OUTLINE DESIGN WORK THAT WAS CARRIED OUT IN THE LAST YEAR.

BUT WHAT IS MUCH MORE IMPORTANT TO THE TAXPAYER IS THE COST TO GOVERNMENT - THAT HAS REMAINED THE SAME SINCE JULY 1991, AT HK$59.3 BILLION (AT 1991 PRICES). MOREOVER, WE HAVE PUT IN PLACE SPECIAL COMPREHENSIVE PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND COST CONTROL SYSTEMS, TOGETHER WITH A PARTICULARLY STRICT FINANCIAL DISCIPLINE OVER GOVERNMENT WORKS.

TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR YOU TO SEE WHERE THERE ARE CHANGES IN REAL TERMS, WE HAVE CONTINUED TO PRESENT DATA IN MARCH 1991 FIGURES. SOMETIMES HOWEVER WE HAVE TO MOVE INTO MONEY OF THE DAY - FOR EXAMPLE WHEN BANKERS BECOME INVOLVED IN DISCUSSIONS ON MTRC AND PAA BORROWINGS. AND OF COURSE WHEN WE ARE AWARDING FIXED PRICE, LUMP SUM CONTRACTS, AS WITH THE TSING MA BRIDGE.

SO, LET US HAVE THE VISION AND COURAGE THAT HAS SUSTAINED US IN THE PAST, DESPITE THE SIREN VOICES OF THE CYNICS AND THE SCEPTICS. SUCH FEARS ARE NOT NEW.

BACK IN 1975, SOME LEADING MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY WERE SPREADING DOOM AND GLOOM FAR AND WIDE WITH FORECASTS OF MASSIVE COST OVER-RUN ON THE BUILDING OF THE MTRC'S INITIAL LINE FROM KWUN TONG TO CENTRAL. ONE EVEN SAID IT WAS A "LOSING GAMBLE".

WELL, IMAGINE WHAT HONG KONG WOULD BE LIKE TODAY WITHOUT THAT "GAMBLE". PICTURE THE ROADS CLOGGED SOLID WITH CARS AND BUSES; IMAGINE THE ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE THAT THE TRAFFIC POLLUTION WOULD HAVE CAUSED; THINK FOR A MOMENT ABOUT HOW IMPOSSIBLE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN TO HOUSE PEOPLE IN OUR NEW TOWNS.

/THERE WERE .....

THERE WERE DOUBTS EVEN AT THE END OF THE LAST CENTURY ABOUT ANOTHER PROJECT - NATHAN ROAD. PEOPLE THEN ARGUED THAT NO-ONE WOULD EVER TRAVEL ALONG NATHAN ROAD BECAUSE IT LED TO NOWHERE, BUT THE PADDY FIELDS OF YAU MA TEI AND SHAM SHUI PO. LATER THE DOUBTING THOMAS'S WERE IN BUSINESS AGAIN ON PLANS FOR THE FIRST CROSS-HARBOUR TUNNEL.

BUT AS WE NOW KNOW, HONG KONG'S SUCCESS HAS BEEN BUILT ON THE FOUNDATIONS OF SUCH VISIONARY PROJECTS AS THE MTR, AND THE CROSS HARBOUR TUNNELS. IF WE HAD NOT TURNED SUCH VISIONS INTO REALITY, HONG KONG WOULD NOT BE WHAT IT IS TODAY, NOR WOULD IT BE POISED FOR THE GROWTH OF THE COMING YEARS.

NOW THE VISION IS A NEW AIRPORT TO TAKE US INTO THE NEXT CENTURY, SERVED BY A RAILWAY, NEW HIGHWAYS AND A THIRD HARBOUR TUNNEL. THESE ROAD AND RAIL FACILITIES WILL PROVIDE THE FAST ROAD AND RAIL TRANSPORT NEEDED BY A MODERN AIRPORT OPERATING ROUND-THE-CLOCK. THE SIGNING OF THE SINO-BRITISH MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING HAS ALREADY CLEARLY INCREASED CONFIDENCE, MANIFESTED IN A HIGH LEVEL OF ACTIVITY IN THE STOCK MARKET AND BUSINESS GENERALLY.

THE LIVELIHOOD OF THE 350,000 PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THE CORRIDOR MOST AFFECTED BY KAI TAK AIRCRAFT NOISE WILL DRAMATICALLY IMPROVE WHEN THE NEW AIRPORT OPENS. KAI TAK ITSELF WILL BE RE-DEVELOPED.

BUT THE ACP DOES NOT ONLY PROVIDE US WITH A NEW AIRPORT, WHICH WE DESPERATELY NEED BY 1997, AND THE OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS, MANY OF WHICH WE WOULD HAVE TO BUILD ANYWAY IN THE MID-1990S.

IT ALSO PROVIDES THE SPRINGBOARD FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH. IN 1991, 30 PER CENT OF OUR DOMESTIC EXPORTS, 14 PER CENT OF OUR RE-EXPORTS, AND 18 PER CENT OF OUR IMPORTS WERE CARRIED BY AIR. ABOUT 80 PER CENT OF OUR TOURISTS ARRIVE AND DEPART BY AIR - LAST YEAR RECEIPTS FROM TOURISM AMOUNTED TO NEARLY $40 BILLION.

THESE STATISTICS ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO OUR ECONOMY, AND WE MUST ENSURE THAT THERE IS ROOM FOR THE ECONOMY TO CONTINUE TO GROW. WITH THE ACP BUILT, WE SHALL NOT ONLY BENEFIT FROM AN ASSURED ROUTE FOR THE GROWTH OF OUR TOURISM AND EXPORTS. WE SHALL ALSO BE WELL PLACED TO SHARE IN THE GROWTH OF SOUTHERN CHINA.

THE ACP ITSELF WILL THEREFORE MEET CONCERNS IMPLICIT IN THE MOTION. AND, AS WE HAVE FREQUENTLY SAID, OUR PROJECTIONS SHOW THAT OUR CAPITAL EXPENDITURE ON THE ACP WILL TAKE UP ONLY ABOUT ONE QUARTER OF OUR TOTAL ESTIMATED CAPITAL EXPENDITURE UP TO 1997.

THE OTHER THREE-QUARTERS WILL BE SPENT ON SCHOOLS, SOCIAL WELFARE FACILITIES, ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, AND LAW AND ORDER.

ON RECURRENT EXPENDITURE, I WOULD LIKE TO REFUTE THE REPEATED CHARGE THAT WE ARE CUTTING SOCIAL SERVICES ETC. WE ARE NOT, AS I MADE CLEAR IN MY BUDGET SPEECH. IF WE ARE DEALING IN THIS DEBATE WITH MYTHS, AS ONE SPEAKER SUGGESTED, THEN THIS IS THE MYTH WE MUST DEMOLISH.

/THE QUALITY .....

THE QUALITY OF LIFE IS THEREFORE NOT ONLY BEING WELL SAFEGUARDED. THE ACP WILL MATERIALLY ENHANCE OUR QUALITY OF LIFE. TO ARGUE THAT THE ORDINARY PUBLIC WILL NOT BENEFIT IS LIKE ARGUING THAT THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO BENEFITTED FROM THE MTR ARE THE CONTRACTORS WHO BUILT IT.

THERE WILL, OF COURSE, BE SCEPTICS, EVEN CYNICS, HERE AND ELSEWHERE, WHO WILL TRY TO TALK US OUT OF THIS OR THAT ASPECT OF THE AIRPORT CORE PROGRAMME. TO SLOW IT DOWN, OR EVEN TO ABANDON IT. I AM CONFIDENT THAT THEY ARE WRONG. THAT TO REFUSE TO RISE TO THE CHALLENGE, TO OPPOSE CHANGE, IS TO OPT FOR STAGNATION AND DECLINE. TO PROCEED CONFIDENTLY WITH THE ACP IS THE WAY TO ENSURE A GROWING ECONOMY, AND WITH IT A GROWING ABILITY TO FUND SOCIAL SERVICES AND THE OTHER ITEMS WHICH WILL NOT JUST SAFEGUARD BUT FURTHER IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG.

I APPEAL TO THIS COUNCIL TO GIVE A LEAD TO THE COMMUNITY BY SHARING THIS VISION AND SUPPORTING THE AIRPORT CORE PROGRAMME.

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ADVERSE WEATHER ARRANGEMENTS FOR SCHOOLS

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VIEWS EXPRESSED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE VARIOUS SCHOOLS COUNCILS AND TEACHERS' UNIONS AT A RECENT MEETING WITH THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT CONCERNING ARRANGEMENTS IN THE EVENT OF ADVERSE WEATHER HAVE BEEN INCORPORATED INTO A SCHOOL CIRCULAR ISSUED TODAY (THURSDAY).

AT THE MEETING, A SPOKESMAN FOR THE DEPARTMENT SAID REPRESENTATIVES AGREED THAT THE PRESENT TIMING OF 6.15 AM FOR MAKING THE FIRST ANNOUNCEMENT ON WHETHER MORNING (AM) SCHOOLS WOULD BE CLOSED, AND 11 AM FOR AFTERNOON (PM) SCHOOLS WAS GENERALLY APPROPRIATE AND SHOULD BE MAINTAINED FOR THE TIME BEING, PENDING THE RESULTS OF A SURVEY ON THE TIME AT WHICH STUDENTS SET OUT FOR SCHOOL.

"HOWEVER, SHOULD WEATHER AND ROAD CONDITIONS DETERIORATE RAPIDLY THEREAFTER TO THE EXTENT THAT CLASSES SHOULD BE SUSPENDED, IT WAS AGREED THAT THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION SHOULD MAKE A RADIO/TV ANNOUNCEMENT EVEN AFTER 6.15 AM OR 11 AM," THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT WILL INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING ADVICE:

* STUDENTS SHOULD REMAIN AT HOME IF THEY HAVE NOT YET SET OFF FOR SCHOOL; AND

* SCHOOLS SHOULD TAKE CARE OF THOSE STUDENTS WHO WOULD ARRIVE AT SCHOOL BECAUSE THEY HAVE ALREADY LEFT HOME. THEY SHOULD MAKE ADEQUATE AND SAFE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THESE STUDENTS TO RETURN HOME AT AN APPROPRIATE TIME.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID IT WAS ALSO AGREED THAT EACH SCHOOL SHOULD DRAW UP A CONTINGENCY PLAN IN ADVANCE TO COVER SUCH UNEXPECTED SITUATIONS.

THE PLAN SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE SCHOOL WILL BE OPEN AND THAT SOME TEACHERS LIVING NEARBY WILL BE PRESENT TO LOOK AFTER THOSE STUDENTS WHO HAVE ARRIVED.

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BUSINESS SURVEY RESULTS FOR FIRST QUARTER 1992 RELEASED

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MANUFACTURERS GENERALLY REPORTED A LESS FAVOURABLE BUSINESS SITUATION IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1992 COMPARED WITH THE FOURTH QUARTER OF 1991, ACCORDING TO THE RESULTS OF THE QUARTERLY BUSINESS SURVEY RELEASED TODAY (THURSDAY) BY THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT.

THIS WAS, HOWEVER, LARGELY DUE TO SEASONAL FACTORS, AS THERE WERE USUALLY LESS ORDERS AFTER THE CHRISTMAS DELIVERIES. THE RESULT WAS IN LINE WITH THE EARLIER EXPECTATIONS.

LOOKING AHEAD, MANUFACTURERS GENERALLY EXPECT AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE GENERAL BUSINESS SITUATION IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1992 COMPARED WITH THE FIRST QUARTER.

ABOUT 1,000 FIRMS FROM VARIOUS INDUSTRIES AND TRADES, FORMING A CROSS-SECTION OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY. THEY WERE ASKED ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS EXPERIENCES AND EXPECTATIONS AS WELL AS THE BUSINESS PROBLEMS THEY FACED.

DESPITE THE LESS FAVOURABLE OVERALL TREND FOR THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR, THE ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY REPORTED AN IMPROVED BUSINESS SITUATION IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1992.

BUSINESS EXPERIENCE IN THE FIRST QUARTER WAS SIMILAR IN MOST INDUSTRIES TO WHAT HAD EARLIER BEEN EXPECTED.

BUT THE FABRICATED METAL PRODUCTS INDUSTRY, WHICH HAD EXPECTED BUSINESS SITUATION TO REMAIN THE SAME, ACTUALLY EXPERIENCED A DETERIORATION IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1992. WHILE CAPACITY UTILISATION IMPROVED IN THE QUARTER, THE INDUSTRY WAS FACED WITH A GROWING PROBLEM OF HIGH WAGE RATES.

ON THE OTHER HAND, BOTH THE PRINTING AND PLASTICS INDUSTRIES FOUND THAT THE GENERAL BUSINESS SITUATION IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1992 REMAINED SIMILAR TO THE PRECEDING QUARTER, ALTHOUGH A DETERIORATION HAD EARLIER BEEN EXPECTED.

FOR THE PRINTING INDUSTRY, THERE WAS REDUCED CONCERN ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF EXCHANGE RATE FLUCTUATIONS.

FOR THE PLASTICS INDUSTRY, THERE WAS DECREASED WORRY ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF INSUFFICIENT BUSINESS ORDERS.

AS REGARDS THE BUSINESS PROSPECTS FOR THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1992, FIRMS IN MOST MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES ANTICIPATE THE GENERAL BUSINESS SITUATION TO IMPROVE OVER THE FIRST QUARTER.

IN THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR, FIRMS EXPERIENCED A MILD DETERIORATION IN THE GENERAL BUSINESS SITUATION IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1992 COMPARED WITH THE PRECEDING QUARTER.

/LOOKING AHEAD .....

LOOKING AHEAD, MANY FIRMS IN THE SECTOR ARE ENCOURAGED BY THE PROSPECTIVE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES FROM THE AIRPORT PROJECT. THEY EXPECT THE GENERAL BUSINESS SITUATION IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1992 TO REMAIN AT LEAST THE SAME AS THE FIRST QUARTER.

FIRMS IN THE WHOLESALE, RETAIL AND IMPORT/EXPORT TRADES EXPERIENCED A SLIGHTLY MORE FAVOURABLE BUSINESS SITUATION IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1992 AS COMPARED WITH THE PRECEDING QUARTER.

ON THE OTHER HAND, HOTELS REPORTED A LESS FAVOURABLE BUSINESS SITUATION IN THE FIRST QUARTER, WHICH WAS NORMALLY AN OFF-PEAK TOURIST SEASON.

AS FOR RESTAURANTS, AGAINST AN EXPECTATION OF AN IMPROVED BUSINESS SITUATION, THE ACTUAL EXPERIENCE IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1992 WAS ONLY SIMILAR TO THAT IN THE PRECEDING QUARTER.

REGARDING THE BUSINESS OUTLOOK FOR THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1992, CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT IS EXPECTED BY THE WHOLESALE, RETAIL AND IMPORT/EXPORT FIRMS. BUSINESS SITUATION FOR HOTELS WILL ALSO IMPROVE AS TOURISM STARTS ITS SEASONAL UPTREND AT THIS TIME OF THE YEAR.

IN CONTRAST, RESTAURANTS GENERALLY EXPECT THE BUSINESS SITUATION TO WORSEN IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1992, WHICH IS A RELATIVELY CALM PERIOD FOR THEIR BUSINESS.

IN THE OTHER SERVICES SECTOR, THE FIRMS SURVEYED GENERALLY EXPERIENCED A MILD IMPROVEMENT IN THE GENERAL BUSINESS SITUATION IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1992, COMPARED WITH THE PRECEDING QUARTER.

AMONG THEM, BANKS AND FIRMS ENGAGED IN REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED SERVICES EXPERIENCED A CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT OVER THE PAST FEW QUARTERS.

HOWEVER, BANKS HAD GENERALLY EXPECTED BUSINESS SITUATION TO REMAIN THE SAME IN THE FIRST QUARTER. THERE WAS ALSO SOME ALLEVIATION IN THE PROBLEMS OF SHORTAGE OF QUALIFIED STAFF AND RELATIVELY TIGHT CREDIT SITUATION DURING THE QUARTER.

ON THE OTHER HAND, THE GENERAL BUSINESS SITUATION IN THE TRANSPORT, STORAGE AND COMMUNICATION SERVICES WAS LESS FAVOURABLE IN THE FIRST QUARTER THAN THE PRECEDING QUARTER.

REGARDING THE PROSPECTS FOR THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1992, BANKS AND FIRMS ENGAGED IN REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED SERVICES ANTICIPATE A CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT IN THE GENERAL BUSINESS SITUATION.

FOR THE TRANSPORT, STORAGE AND COMMUNICATION SERVICES, AN IMPROVEMENT OVER THE LESS THAN SATISFACTORY SITUATION IN THE FIRST QUARTER IS EXPECTED.

IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1992, FIRMS IN THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR GENERALLY ENCOUNTERED THE COMMON PROBLEMS OF HIGH WAGE RATES AND PRICE COMPETITION. THESE PROBLEMS ARE EXPECTED TO CONTINUE INTO THE SECOND QUARTER.

DURING THE PAST FEW QUARTERS, HIGH WAGE RATES HAD EMERGED AS ONE OF THE MOST WIDELY REPORTED PROBLEMS IN THE SECTOR.

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IN THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR, PRICE COMPETITION, SHORTAGE OF SKILLED LABOUR AND INSUFFICIENT BUSINESS/CONTRACTS CONTINUED TO BE THE MAJOR PROBLEMS IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1992.

SHORTAGE OF SKILLED LABOUR IS EXPECTED TO BECOME MORE ACUTE, BUT THE PROBLEM OF INSUFFICIENT WORK IS LIKELY TO IMPROVE.

IN THE DISTRIBUTIVE AND CATERING TRADES SECTOR, PRICE COMPETITION AND HIGH STAFF COSTS CONTINUED TO BE THE COMMON PROBLEMS IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1992.

FIRMS IN THE OTHER SERVICES SECTOR ALSO EXPERIENCED PROBLEMS OF PRICE COMPETITION AND HIGH STAFF COSTS IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1992.

FURTHERMORE, HIGH STAFF TURNOVER WAS INCREASINGLY CITED AS A MAJOR PROBLEM FACED BY FIRMS ENGAGED IN REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT AND RELATED SERVICES.

ACCORDING TO THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT, RESULTS OF THE QUARTERLY BUSINESS SURVEY, OBTAINED WITH A MINIMUM TIME LAG, ARE INTENDED TO PROVIDE A SOURCE OF REFERENCE FOR MAKING A QUICK ASSESSMENT OF THE CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION OF HONG KONG FROM A SHORT-TERM PERSPECTIVE.

IN THE SURVEY, PARTICIPATING FIRMS WERE ASKED TO INDICATE WHETHER, IN THEIR OPINION, THE GENERAL BUSINESS SITUATION AND THE LEVEL OF CAPACITY UTILISATION HAD 'IMPROVED', 'REMAINED THE SAME' OR 'DETERIORATED' IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1992 AS COMPARED WITH THE PRECEDING QUARTER.

THEY WERE ALSO ASKED TO INDICATE WHETHER THE SITUATION IS EXPECTED TO 'IMPROVE', 'REMAIN THE SAME' OR 'DETERIORATE' IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1992.

THE OPINIONS OF RESPONDENTS WERE THEN ANALYSED AND THE SUMMARY FINDINGS PUBLISHED IN THE "REPORT ON QUARTERLY BUSINESS SURVEY, FIRST QUARTER 1992".

MOREOVER, THE SURVEY REPORT CONTAINS A SECTION ON THE BUSINESS PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED AND EXPECTED BY FIRMS IN DIFFERENT ECONOMIC SECTORS, AND A BREAKDOWN OF THE VIEWS OF FIRMS BY EMPLOYMENT SIZE GROUP.

THE DEPARTMENT CAUTIONED THAT, IN A SURVEY OF THIS NATURE, THE RESULTS SHOULD BE INTERPRETED WITH CAUTION AS IT IS DIFFICULT TO ESTABLISH PRECISELY THE EXTENT TO WHICH RESPONDENTS' RECOLLECTION OF THE PAST AND PERCEPTION OF THE FUTURE ACCORDS WITH THE UNDERLYING TRENDS.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC MAY PURCHASE COPIES OF THE SURVEY REPORT FROM THE GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS SALES CENTRE, GROUND FLOOR, GENERAL POST OFFICE BUILDING, CONNAUGHT PLACE, OR FROM THE PUBLICATIONS SALES COUNTER OF THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT, 19TH FLOOR, WANCHAI TOWER I, 12 HARBOUR ROAD, WAN CHAI, AT $9.0 PER COPY.

FURTHER DETAILS OF THE QUARTERLY BUSINESS SURVEY MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH SECTION OF THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT ON TEL 839 3250.

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CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY URGED TO MINIMISE WASTE
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THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, TODAY (THURSDAY) CALLED ON THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TO BE MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY CONSCIOUS AND TO ATTACH GREATER IMPORTANCE IN MINIMISING AND RECYCLING WASTE.

SPEAKING AT THE LUNCHEON MEETING OF THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF REAL ESTATES AND CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGY, MR EASON SAID LIKE OTHER COSTS INCLUDING LABOUR, RAW MATERIALS, TRANSPORT WHICH INDUSTRY HAD TO BEAR, THE COST FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AMONG CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, IF ANY, COULD BE MINIMISED.

HE SAID THE FACT THAT INDUSTRY COULD ACTUALLY SAVE MONEY OR REDUCE COSTS BY ADOPTING ENVIORNMENTAL PROTECTION AS A GOAL WAS STILL TOO OFTEN OVERLOOKED.

"THE KEY IS WASTE MINIMISATION - NOT A NEW IDEA BUT ONE WHICH NEEDS GREATER APPLICATION.

"FOR EXAMPLE, FEW INDUSTRIES, INCLUDING THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, IN A COMPETITIVE MARKET WOULD HIRE MORE STAFF THAN NECESSARY. IT IS SELF-EVIDENT THAT IT WOULD BE WASTEFUL.

"YET THE SAME ARGUMENT IS NOT ALWAYS APPLIED IN RELATION TO THE EXCESSIVE USE OF OTHER RESOURCES, SUCH AS POWER, WATER OR RAW MATERIALS," HE SAID.

MR EASON SAID THE ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WERE NOW CONSIDERING HOW TO MINIMISE THE WASTE OF TROPICAL HARDWOOD WHICH WERE CURRENTLY EITHER DISPOSED OF AT LANDFILLS OR BURNT ON SITE AFTER USE, THEREBY PRODUCING UNNECESSARY WASTE.

WITH THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, THE HONG KONG CONSTRUCTION ASSOCIATION IS LOOKING INTO THE POSSIBLITY OF AWARDING A CONSULTANCY TO ADVISE ON WHAT STEPS CAN BE IMPLEMENTED ON CONSTRUCTION SITES IN HONG KONG TO MINIMISE CONSTRUCTION WASTE AND REUSE MORE MATERIALS, HE SAID.

MR EASON SAID THERE WERE OTHER REASONS FOR CONSIDERING WAYS OF CUTTING BACK ON CONSTRUCTION WASTE, ONE OF THESE WAS PUBLIC CONCERN ON THE GROWING PROBLEM OF CONSTRUCTION WASTE BEING DISPOSED OF AT LANDFILLS.

"SOME 16,000 TONNES PER DAY ARE DISPOSED OF BY THIS METHOD. THIS IS FAST EATING INTO THE AVAILABLE SPACE AT LANDFILLS, POSING A MAJOR DISPOSAL PROBLEM IN THE SHORT TERM," HE SAID.

ALTHOUGH A PROGRAMME IS WELL UNDERWAY TO COMMISSION THREE MAJOR STRATEGIC LANDFILLS IN THE NEW TERRITORIES, MR EASON SAID UNLESS OTHER STEPS WERE TAKEN IN PARALLEL, THERE WAS A REAL RISK THAT THE AVAILABLE SPACE IN EXISTING LANDFILLS WOULD BE FILLED UP BEFORE THE NEW ONES COME ON LINE.

/MR EASON .....

MR EASON SAID ONE OF THE MEASURES BEING PURSUED TO HEAD OFF THIS PROBLEM WAS THE OPENING UP OF MORE PUBLIC DUMPS SO THAT CONSTRUCTION WASTE COULD BE PUT TO USE IN RECLAMATIONS.

"AT THE SAME TIME, WE ARE ASSESSING THE FEASIBILITY OF RECYCLING CONSTRUCTION WASTE TO MINIMISE THE DEMAND ON LANDFILL SPACE.

"THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CIVIL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT, HAD SET UP A TRIAL AT TSEUNG KWAN O AND WE ARE NOW ASSESSING THE RESULTS," HE SAID.

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REGISTRATION OF CHIROPRACTORS PROPOSED

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A BILL THAT SEEKS TO PROVIDE FOR THE REGISTRATION OF CHIROPRACTORS SO THAT ONLY THOSE PROPERLY TRAINED WOULD BE ALLOWED TO PRACTISE IN HONG KONG WILL BE INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SHORTLY.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE HEALTH AND WELFARE BRANCH SAID TODAY (THURSDAY) THAT CHIROPRACTIC IS A HEALTH CARE PROFESSION DISTINCT FROM THE PRACTICE OF WESTERN MEDICINE AND SURGERY.

UNLIKE MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS, CHIROPRACTORS ARE NOT SUBJECT TO CONTROL OVER THE STANDARD OF THEIR SERVICE TO PATIENTS OR THEIR PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT.

UNDER THE PROPOSED CHIROPRACTORS' REGISTRATION BILL, A CHIROPRACTORS COUNCIL WILL BE SET UP.

IT WILL CONSIST OF FIVE CHIROPRACTORS, FOUR NON-CHIROPRACTORS AND A PUBLIC OFFICER, ALL OF WHOM WILL BE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR. THE MEMBERS WILL ELECT A CHAIRMAN FROM AMONG THEMSELVES.

THE BILL EMPOWERS THE CHIROPRACTORS COUNCIL TO PRESCRIBE THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR REGISTRATION.

IT ALSO CATERS FOR THE PROMULGATION OF A CODE OF PRACTICE AND ADMINISTRATION OF DISCIPLINE BY THE CHIROPRACTORS COUNCIL.

AVENUES ARE ALSO PROVIDED FOR APPEALS AGAINST THE COUNCIL'S DECISION, EITHER IN REGARD TO REGISTRATION OR TO DISCIPLINE OF CHIROPRACTORS.

THE BILL WILL BE GAZETTED TOMORROW (FRIDAY).

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/11 .....

GRADING OF BEACH WATER QUALITY
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THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT (EPD) TODAY (THURSDAY) ANNOUNCED GRADES ON THE BACTERIOLOGICAL WATER QUALITY OF ALL BATHING BEACHES IN HONG KONG.

THE PURPOSE OF THE GRADING SYSTEM IS TO INFORM SWIMMERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC ABOUT THE STATE OF BACTERIOLOGICAL POLLUTION AT VARIOUS BEACHES.

AN EPD SPOKESMAN SAID THE GRADING WILL BE ANNOUNCED AT BIWEEKLY INTERVALS DURING THE BATHING SEASON, TO COINCIDE WITH THE FREQUENCY AT WHICH BEACH WATERS ARE USUALLY SAMPLED.

THE GRADING IS BASED ON THE MOST RECENT E.COLI DATA OBTAINED BY THE EPD IN ITS ROUTINE MONITORING PROGRAMME. AS WITH LAST YEAR, THE GRADING ALSO INCLUDES AN ESTIMATE OF THE RISK OF SUFFERING SOME MINOR SKIN OR GASTROINTESTINAL COMPLAINTS AS A RESULT OF SWIMMING AT A BEACH WHICH HAS SOME DEGREE OF POLLUTION.

THE ESTIMATE IS BASED ON A VERY LARGE BODY OF STATISTICAL INFORMATION GATHERED IN HONG KONG IN RECENT BATHING SEASONS.

THE GRADING OF SOME BEACHES MAY VARY DURING THE SUMMER. THIS REPRESENTS A NATURAL FLUCTUATION IN THE BACTERIOLOGICAL QUALITY OF BATHING WATERS IN MOST CASES, AS RAIN AND TIDES BRING MORE OR LESS POLLUTION TO THE BEACHES.

HOWEVER, THE GRADES GIVE A GOOD GENERAL PICTURE OF THE WATER QUALITY AT BATHING BEACHES AT THE TIME OF REPORTING AND FORM THE BEST AVAILABLE FORECAST FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

"BEACHES WITH HIGHLY DEVELOPED HINTERLANDS ARE LIKELY TO BE MORE POLLUTED THAN THE GRADES SUGGEST DURING AND AFTER HEAVY RAIN. BATHERS SHOULD AVOID SUCH BEACHES FOR TWO OR THREE DAYS AFTER A STORM, LONGER IF THE WEATHER REMAINS OVERCAST OR LESS IF THERE IS STRONG SUNSHINE."

THE SYSTEM FOR GRADING BEACH WATER QUALITY IS AS FOLLOWS :

* GRADE "1" INDICATES THAT THE WATER QUALITY IS GOOD. THE E. COLI COUNT IS NO MORE THAN 24 PER 100 MILLILITERS AT EACH BEACH SO GRADED, AND THE EXPECTED RISK OF MINOR ILLNESS TO SWIMMERS IS UNDETECTABLE.

* GRADE "2" INDICATES THAT THE WATER QUALITY IS FAIR. THE E. COLI COUNT IS NO MORE THAN 180 PER 100 MILLILITERS AT EACH BEACH SO GRADED, AND THE EXPECTED HEALTH RISK IS NO MORE THAN 10 CASES OF MINOR ILLNESS PER 1,000 SWIMMERS.

* GRADE "3" INDICATES THAT THE WATER QUALITY IS POOR. THE E. COLI COUNT IS NO MORE THAN 610 PER 100 MILLILITERS AT EACH BEACH SO GRADED, AND THE EXPECTED HEALTH RISK IS NO MORE THAN 15 CASES OF MINOR ILLNESS PER 1,000 SWIMMERS.

/* GRADE "4" .....

* GRADE "4" INDICATES THAT THE WATER QUALITY IS VERY POOR. THE E. COLI COUNT IS MORE THAN 610 PER 100 MILLILITERS AT EACH BEACH SO GRADED, AND THE EXPECTED HEALTH RISK IS MORE THAN 15 CASES OF MINOR ILLNESS PER 1,000 SWIMMERS.

THE DECISION ON WHETHER OR NOT TO CLOSE A BEACH TO SWIMMERS IS BASED ON A JUDGEMENT OF WHAT DEGREE OF POLLUTION IS ACCEPTABLE.

NORMALLY, THE CLOSURE OF A BEACH WOULD ONLY BE CONSIDERED BY THE URBAN COUNCIL OR REGIONAL COUNCIL IF A GRADE "4" OCCURRED REPEATEDLY, SO THAT THE AVERAGE HEALTH RISK OVER THE BATHING SEASON EXCEEDED 15 CASES PER 1,000 SWIMMERS.

SIMILARLY, THE REOPENING OF A CLOSED BEACH WOULD ONLY BE CONSIDERED IF A GRADE "3" OR BETTER WERE CONSISTENTLY OBTAINED.

AT PRESENT, TWO BATHING BEACHES, NAMELY CASTLE PEAK AND OLD CAFETERIA, HAVE BEEN DECLARED UNSUITABLE FOR SWIMMING PURPOSES, BASED ON THE WATER QUALITY DURING PAST SEASONS.

THEY ARE POLLUTED BY FAECAL WASTES AND FAIL TO ACHIEVE CONSISTENTLY THE HONG KONG STANDARDS. THE PUBLIC ARE ADVISED NOT TO SWIM IN THE WATER AT THESE TWO BEACHES.

IN ADDITION, ROCKY BAY BEACH HAS BEEN CLOSED FOR SWIMMING PURPOSES BY THE URBAN COUNCIL. THESE THREE BEACHES ARE IDENTIFIED BY AN "X" IN THE FOLLOWING LIST.

THE GRADES ON THE BACTERIOLOGICAL WATER QUALITY OF VARIOUS BEACHES IN HONG KONG TODAY ARE LISTED BELOW :

BEACH	PREVIOUS GRADING (AS AT 30.4.92)	PRESENT GRADING (AS AT 14.5.92)
HONG KONG SOUTH		
BIG WAVE BAY	3	3
CHUNG HOM KOK	2	1
DEEP WATER BAY	2	1
HAIRPIN	2	2
MIDDLE BAY	2	1
REPULSE BAY	1	1
SHEK O	2	2
SOUTH BAY	1	1
ST. STEPHEN'S	2	2
TURTLE COVE	2	2
STANLEY MAIN	2	2
ROCKY BAY	X	X
TO TEI WAN*	1	1

/TUEN MUN .....

TUEN MUN DISTRICT		
OLD CAFETERIA	X	X
NEW CAFETERIA	3	2
CASTLE PEAK	X	X
KADOORIE	3	3
BUTTERFLY	3	3
SAI KUNG DISTRICT		
CAMPERS	2	1
CLEAR WATER BAY 1ST BEACH	2	2
CLEAR WATER BAY 2ND BEACH	1	1
HAP MUN BAY	1	1
KIU TSUI	1	1
PAK SHA CHAU	2	1
SILVERSTRAND	3	2
TRIO (HEBE HAVEN)	2	2
ISLANDS DISTRICT		
CHEUNG SHA UPPER	1	1
CHEUNG SHA LOWER	2	2
DISCOVERY BAY*	3	3
HUNG SHING YEH	1	1
KWUN YAM WAN	2	2
TONG FUK	1	1
LO SO SHING	1	1
PUI O	2	2
SILVERMINE BAY	4	4
TUNG WAN, CHEUNG CHAU	2	2
TUNG O*	1	1
TSUEN WAN DISTRICT		
ANGLERS'	4	4
APPROACH	3	3
CASAM	3	3
GEMINI	3	3
HOI MEI WAN	3	3
LIDO	3	3
TING KAU	3	4
TUNG WAN, MA WAN	3	2

NOTE : "X" THE BEACH HAS BEEN CLOSED FOR SWIMMING PURPOSES.
* NON-GAZETTED BEACHES.

/THE FOLLOWING .....

THE FOLLOWING BEACHES HAVE CHANGED GRADING ON THIS OCCASION:

CHUNG HOM KOK, DEEP WATER BAY, MIDDLE BAY, CAMPERS, PAK SHA CHAU FROM "2" TO "1"; SILVERSTRAND, TUNG WAN (MA WAN), NEW CAFETERIA FROM "3" TO '2"; TING KAU FROM "3" TO "4".

THE CHANGES ARE WITHIN THE NORMAL RANGE OF FLUCTUATION OF THE BACTERIOLOGICAL WATER QUALITY OF THESE BEACHES.

IN ADDITION TO THE ROUTINE MONITORING OF BEACH WATER QUALITY, THE EPD IN COLLABORATION WITH THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY (DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AND FAMILY MEDICINE AND DEPARTMENT OF MICROBIOLOGY) WILL CONDUCT AN EPIDEMIOLOGICAL-MICROBIOLOGICAL STUDY AT REPULSE BAY BEACH AND BUTTERFLY BEACH STARTING JUNE THIS YEAR.

THE STUDY AIMS TO IDENTIFY AND QUANTIFY THE PATHOGENS THAT MIGHT CAUSE DISEASES AMONG BATHERS SWIMMING IN POLLUTED BEACH WATER, SO THAT APPROPRIATE STANDARD CAN BE USED AND EFFECTIVE POLLUTION CONTROL MEASURES CAN BE DEVISED.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

FOR FURTHER ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT PRINCIPAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OFFICER (WATER POLICY) OF EPD, MR PAUL HOLMES, ON TEL 835 1234.

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RURAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS UNDERWAY

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THE CITY AND NEW TERRITORIES ADMINISTRATION WILL CONTINUE TO ENSURE THAT STEADY PROGRESS IS MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RURAL PLANNING AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY (RPIS), THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SUEN, SAID THIS (THURSDAY) AFTERNOON.

DURING HIS VISIT TO THE HEUNG YEE KUK, MR SUEN POINTED OUT THAT ABOUT $60 MILLION WILL BE SPENT IN 1992-93 ON SOME 750 PROJECTS UNDER THIS SCHEME.

"WE WILL ALSO DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO ASSIST OTHER DEPARTMENTS TO IMPLEMENT THEIR LARGE-SCALE PROJECTS IN ORDER TO FURTHER IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF RURAL RESIDENTS," HE SAID.

MR SUEN ASSURED KUK MEMBERS THAT THEY WOULD BE KEPT FULLY IMFORMED, AND CONSULTED ON ALL MAJOR ISSUES CONCERNING THE NEW TERRITORIES.

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/15 .....

INITIAL FINDINGS OF 1991/92 PAY TREND SURVEY

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THE PAY SURVEY AND RESEARCH UNIT HAS COMPLETED THE 1991/92 PAY TREND SURVEY WHICH MEASURES PAY TRENDS IN A SELECTED GROUP OF COMPANIES DURING THE PERIOD APRIL 2 LAST YEAR TO APRIL 1 THIS YEAR.

THE INITIAL FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY INDICATED THAT THE FOLLOWING AVERAGE PAY INCREASES HAD BEEN AWARDED BY THE SURVEYED COMPANIES :

* 11.81% FOR EMPLOYEES EARNING LESS THAN $8,340 PER MONTH;

* 12.06% FOR EMPLOYEES EARNING BETWEEN $8,340 AND $25,565 PER MONTH;

* 12.50% FOR EMPLOYEES EARNING BETWEEN $25,566 AND $51,700 PER MONTH.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE PAY SURVEY AND RESEARCH UNIT EMPHASISED THAT THESE WERE INITIAL FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY AND THEY WERE SUBJECT TO VALIDATION BY THE PAY TREND SURVEY COMMITTEE.

THE COMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY A MEMBER OF THE STANDING COMMISSION ON CIVIL SERVICE SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE, MR ANDREW K.W. SO, WILL MEET SHORTLY TO EXAMINE AND VALIDATE THE SURVEY RESULTS.

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SPECIAL REVIEW ARTICLE ON CHANGES IN TRADE STATISTICS SYSTEM

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THE MARCH 1992 ISSUE OF THE HONG KONG MONTHLY DIGEST OF STATISTICS PUBLISHED TODAY (THURSDAY) CONTAINS A SPECIAL REVIEW ARTICLE DESCRIBING THE MAJOR CHANGES IN THE TRADE STATISTICS SYSTEM.

. THE CHANGES HAVE ARISEN FROM THE ADOPTION OF THE HONG KONG HARMONISED SYSTEM 1992 EDITION FOR IMPORT AND EXPORT DECLARATION, AND THE HONG KONG STANDARD INTERNATIONAL TRADE CLASSIFICATION REVISION 3 (HK SITC REV. 3) FOR STATISTICAL REPORTING, FROM JANUARY 1992.

THE ARTICLE DESCRIBES THE SALIENT FEATURES OF THE TWO NEW CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS, AND THEIR MAJOR DIFFERENCES IN COMPARISON WITH THE OLD CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS USED BEFORE 1992.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THESE CHANGES ON TRADE STATISTICS SYSTEM AND THE METHODOLOGY OF RE-COMPILING PAST STATISTICS IN HK SITC REV. 3 ARE ALSO MENTIONED IN THE ARTICLE.

MOREOVER, SOME SUMMARY TRADE STATISTICS ANALYSED UNDER THE NEW CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS ARE ALSO PRESENTED.

/THE HONG .....

THE HONG KONG MONTHLY DIGEST OF STATISTICS IS AVAILABLE AT $48 PER COPY.

IT IS ON SALE AT THE GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS SALES CENTRE, GROUND FLOOR, GENERAL POST OFFICE BUILDING, CONNAUGHT PLACE, HONG KONG, AND AT THE PUBLICATIONS SALES COUNTER OF CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT ON 19TH FLOOR, WANCHAI TOWER 1, 12 HARBOUR ROAD, WAN CHAI, HONG KONG.

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LADY WILSON OPENS TWO SCHOOLS FOR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED

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LADY WILSON TODAY (THURSDAY) OFFICIALLY OPENED TWO SPECIAL SCHOOLS IN TUEN MUN THAT CAN PROVIDE 300 PLACES FOR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN.

THE TUEN MUN MORNINGHILL SCHOOL AND TUEN MUN MORNINGLIGHT SCHOOL ARE THE 13TH AND 14TH REHABILITATIONS PROJECTS SPONSORED BY THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION FOR THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED.

SPEAKING AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE SCHOOLS, LADY WILSON SAID LIKE ALL CHILDREN IN HONG KONG AND ELSEWHERE, MENTALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN NEEDED A PROPER EDUCATION.

"I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT THE RIGHT EDUCATION WITH INDIVIDUAL NEEDS IN MIND, WITH TRAINING IN A CARING AND LOVING ENVIRONMENT ARE THE KEYS OF REHABILITATION.

"ONLY IN THIS WAY, CAN MENTALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN FIND ALL THE SUPPORT THEY NEED TO DEVELOP THEIR TALENTS TO THE FULL AND MEET THE CHALLENGES THAT FACE THEM," SHE SAID.

NOTING THAT THE TWO SCHOOLS WERE PURPOSE-BUILT WITH A PLEASANT LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE CHILDREN, LADY WILSON SAID SUBJECTS SUCH AS COMPUTER LITERACY, MUSIC, DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY, HOME ECONOMICS, AND ART AND CRAFT, COULD NOW BE TAUGHT IN SPECIALLY DESIGNED ROOMS.

"DEVELOPING THE PUPILS' POTENTIAL TO THE FULL WILL NOW BE POSSIBLE," SHE ADDED.

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POLL CARDS FOR BY-ELECTION ISSUED

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ELECTORS OF THE PAK TIN CONSTITUENCY WILL RECEIVE THEIR POLL CARDS THIS WEEK FOR THE SHAM SHUI PO DISTRICT BOARD BY-ELECTION ON MAY 24.

THE REGISTRATION OFFICER OF THE REGISTRATION AND ELECTORAL OFFICE, MR LAI KWAN-TAT, SAID TODAY (THURSDAY) THE CARDS HAD BEEN SENT OUT TO 12,521 VOTERS IN THE CONSTITUENCY EARLY THIS WEEK.

"ELECTORS WILL ALSO RECEIVE A VOTING GUIDE AND AN INTRODUCTORY LEAFLET ON CANDIDATES," HE SAID.

THE BY-ELECTION, WHICH FALLS ON A SUNDAY, WILL BE HELD FROM 7.30 AM TO 10.30 PM.

THE TWO POLLING STATIONS WILL BE LOCATED AT THE PAK TIN ESTATE COMMUNITY HALL AND HU KUANG CHAK ON KINDERGARTEN AT WAH CHAK HOUSE, CHAK ON ESTATE.

MR LAI ADVISED ELECTORS TO BRING ALONG THEIR POLL CARDS WHEN THEY GO TO THE BOOTHS.

HOWEVER, HE SAID ELECTORS MIGHT STILL BE ABLE TO VOTE WITHOUT THEIR POLL CARDS AS LONG AS THEY GO TO THE DESIGNATED POLLING STATION.

ENQUIRIES MAY BE MADE TO THE REGISTRATION AND ELECTORAL OFFICE ON TEL 827 1122.

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158 RETURN TO VIETNAM

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A GROUP OF 158 VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS TODAY (THURSDAY) RETURNED TO VIETNAM UNDER THE UNHCR'S VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION PROGRAMME.

COMPRISING 63 MEN, 42 WOMEN, 30 BOYS AND 23 GIRLS, THEY WERE THE 102ND BATCH TO GO BACK UNDER THE PROGRAMME.

THIS GROUP BROUGHT TO 3,862 THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS WHO HAVE RETURNED VOLUNTARILY THIS YEAR, AND TO 17,841 THE TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNEES SINCE THE PROGRAMME STARTED IN MARCH 1989.

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/18 .....

DISTRICT OFFICE LOOKS FOR PART-TIME STAFF

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THE KWUN TONG DISTRICT OFFICE IS LOOKING FOR PART-TIME COMMUNITY ORGANISERS TO HELP ITS COMMUNITY BUILDING WORK.

"THE COMMUNITY ORGANISERS WILL HELP OUR EXECUTIVE STAFF IN THEIR DAILY LIAISON WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS, WHICH INCLUDES THE FORMATION OF MUTUAL AID COMMITTEES AND OWNERS CORPORATIONS, AND PROMOTION OF THEIR ACTIVITIES," A DISTRICT OFFICE SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY (THURSDAY).

"THEY WILL ALSO HELP ORGANISE ACTIVITIES AT COMMUNITY CENTRES AND HALLS, AND IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THESE FACILITIES," HE ADDED.

A COMMUNITY ORGANISER WILL BE REQUIRED TO WORK IRREGULAR HOURS AND THE MONTHLY SALARY FOR THE POST IS $2,200.

APPLICANTS SHOULD HAVE COMPLETED FORM FIVE AND AGED BETWEEN 21 AND 45.

APPLICATION FORMS ARE AVAILABLE AT ALL DISTRICT OFFICES.

COMPLETED FORMS SHOULD BE RETURNED TO THE COMMUNITY BUILDING SECTION OF THE KWUN TONG DISTRICT OFFICE AT 6 TUNG YAN STREET, BEFORE JUNE 8 THIS YEAR.

ENQUIRIES CAN BE MADE ON TEL. 341 6315 EXTENSION 28.

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HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND
MONEY MARKET OPERATIONS

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	DATE	$ MILLION
CLOSING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT ON	13.5.92	1,033
EFFECT OF FORWARDS TO BE SETTLED ON	14.5.92	+15 *
EFFECT OF OPERATIONS THIS MORNING		-60
EFFECT OF OPERATIONS THIS AFTERNOON		NEUTRAL

* O/N ASSISTANCE TO BE REVERSED -45 MN
OTHER FORWARDS TO BE SETTLED +60 MN

TRADE WEIGHTED INDEX 111.8 *-0.2* 14.5.92

/HONG KONG .....

HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND

EF BILLS

TERMS	YIELD
1 WEEK	3.12 PCT
1 MONTH	3.27 PCT
3 MONTHS	3.43 PCT
6 MONTHS	3.66 PCT
12 MONTHS	4.08 PCT

HONG KONG GOVERNMENT BONDS

TERM	ISSUE	COUPON	PRICE	YIELD
18 MONTHS	2311	6.25	102.46	4.60
21 MONTHS	2402	5.50	100.86	5.04

TOTAL TURNOVER OF BILLS AND BONDS - 7,663 MN

CLOSED 14 MAY 1992

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