



# DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 1992

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RIGHTS AND INTERESTS OF LOCAL WORKERS WILL NOT BE NEGLECTED

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THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT NEGLECT THE RIGHTS AND INTERESTS OF LOCAL WORKERS UNDER THE CONTINUED LABOUR IMPORTATION SCHEME, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, REASSURED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

DURING THE MOTION DEBATE ON IMPORTATION OF LABOUR, MR CHAN EMPHASISED THAT THERE WAS BUILT-IN MECHANISM WITHIN THE SCHEME TO PROTECT THE JOB OPPORTUNITIES OF LOCAL WORKERS AS WELL AS PROVISIONS FOR TRAINING AND RETRAINING.

IN ADDRESSING MEMBERS' CONCERN THAT IMPORTATION OF LABOUR MAY ADVERSELY AFFECT AGED WORKERS, MR CHAN PROMISED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE NEEDS OF LOCAL WORKERS WHO WERE AGED AND WHO HAD LIMITED EDUCATION BACKGROUND IN IMPLEMENTING THE RETRAINING PROGRAMME.

"WE SHALL ALSO APPLY DUE DILIGENCE IN VETTING THE APPLICATIONS FOR IMPORTATION OF LABOUR TO ENSURE THAT EMPLOYERS HAVE NOT RESORT TO LAYING OFF LOCAL WORKERS DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY," HE SAID.

HE URGED EMPLOYERS TO APPLY FLEXIBILITY AND RELAXATION IN SETTING THE CRITERIA REGARDING AGE AND EDUCATION BACKGROUND IN CONSIDERATION OF APPLICATIONS FROM LOCAL WORKERS WHO RESPONDED TO THOSE VACANCIES REGISTERED WITH THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT.

MR CHAN SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO ADOPT MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN THE PROVISION OF TRAINING AND RETRAINING FOR LOCAL WORKERS.

WHILST WORKERS UNDERGOING TRAINING OR RETRAINING WILL BE GIVEN AN APPROPRIATE ALLOWANCE SO THAT THEY WILL NOT HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THEIR LIVELIHOOD, THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN RETRAINED WILL ALSO BE ASSISTED AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE IN FINDING NEW JOBS.

HE SAID SOME MEMBERS OF THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD HAD ALREADY BEEN INVITED TO SIT ON THE PROVISIONAL RETRAINING FUND BOARD WHICH WOULD BE SET UP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

"WE SHALL START WORK IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE LUNAR NEW YEAR HOLIDAYS AND IDENTIFY PRACTICAL RETRAINING NEEDS OF BOTH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES BEFORE COMING UP WITH THE MOST SUITABLE PROGRAMMES. WE EXPECT THAT COURSES WILL START SHORTLY," HE SAID.

SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS WILLING TO ADVANCE THE MONEY NEEDED FOR THE COURSES BEFORE THE QUOTA LEVY COULD BE COLLECTED FROM EMPLOYERS UNDER THE LABOUR IMPORTATION SCHEME, SO THAT THE RETRAINING PROGRAMME COULD TAKE OFF SMOOTHLY.

MR CHAN POINTED OUT THAT NEW MEASURES HAD BEEN ADOPTED UNDER THE SCHEME TO GIVE LOCAL WORKERS PRIORITY IN FILLING JOB VACANCIES.

/HE SAID .....

HE SAID: "WE HAVE STIPULATED THAT ALL EMPLOYERS APPLYING FOR IMPORTATION OF LABOUR MUST FIRST REGISTER THE VACANCIES WITH THE LOCAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT, AND OFFER THESE VACANCIES TO LOCAL WORKERS AT WAGES NOT LOWER THAN THE LOCAL MEDIAN WAGES."

"IF ANY EMPLOYER REJECTS THE APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED BY LOCAL WORKERS WITHOUT SUFFICIENT REASONS, HE MAY NOT BE GRANTED THE QUOTA HE HAS APPLIED FOR," HE ADDED.

REGARDING POSSIBLE DISMISSAL OF LOCAL WORKERS BY UNSCRUPULOUS EMPLOYERS AS A MEANS TO SECURE IMPORTED WORKERS, MR CHAN SAID: "THIS, OF COURSE, IS A BREACH OF THE CONDITIONS OF THE LABOUR IMPORTATION SCHEME. WE HAVE LAID DOWN CLEAR AND DEFINITE RULES WHICH PROVIDE THAT EMPLOYERS CANNOT REPLACE CURRENTLY EMPLOYED LOCAL WORKERS WITH IMPORTED ONES. IN CASE OF REDUNDANCY, EMPLOYERS ARE REQUIRED TO DISMISS IMPORTED WORKERS FIRST."

IN RESPONSE TO THE WORRY IN SOME QUARTERS THAT LABOUR IMPORTATION WILL BECOME A LONG-TERM AND EVEN PERMANENT MEASURE, MR CHAN SAID WHILST THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT PREDICT THE ACTUAL FUTURE DEMAND, IT WOULD REGULARLY MONITOR THE DEMAND AND SUPPLY IN THE LABOUR MARKET, CONTINUOUSLY REVIEW THE EFFECTS OF LABOUR IMPORTATION AND DECIDE, WHEN NECESSARY, WHETHER THE CEILING FOR IMPORTED WORKERS, CURRENTLY FIXED AT 25,000, SHOULD BE ADJUSTED.

MR CHAN ALSO CLARIFIED THE QUESTION OF RENEWAL OF CONTRACTS FOR IMPORTED WORKERS UP TO SIX YEARS. HE SAID: "RENEWAL OF CONTRACTS IS NOT AUTOMATIC. THE SCHEME STIPULATES THAT THE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT WITH AN IMPORTED WORKER CANNOT EXCEED TWO YEARS.

"WHETHER THE EMPLOYER CAN EMPLOY THE SAME WORKER AFTER TWO YEARS WILL DEPEND ON WHETHER THE SCHEME IS STILL IN FORCE AT THAT TIME, AND IF SO, WHETHER HE IS GRANTED THE QUOTA," HE SAID.

MR CHAN REFUTED THE ALLEGATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NOT SPECIFIED QUOTAS FOR INDIVIDUAL INDUSTRIES UNDER THE NEW SCHEME BECAUSE IT DID NOT HAVE A CLEAR IDEA OF THE ACTUAL DEMAND FOR MANPOWER.

HE SAID: "THERE IS IN FACT NOT MUCH DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE PROCEDURE ADOPTED THIS TIME AND THAT UNDER PREVIOUS SCHEME."

UNDER THE 1990 SCHEME, ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT DID HAVE A PRIORITY LIST BASED ON OCCUPATIONS, THE QUOTA DISTRIBUTION AMONG INDIVIDUAL INDUSTRIES WAS ONLY DETERMINED AFTER ALL THE APPLICATIONS WERE RECEIVED.

"THIS ARRANGEMENT IS AIMED AT MEETING THE ACTUAL DEMAND OF THE MARKET MORE CLOSELY IN THE ALLOCATION OF QUOTAS TO THOSE SECTORS WHERE THERE IS A GENUINE NEED," HE SAID.

"WHEN WE HAVE RECEIVED ALL THE APPLICATIONS, WE WILL PUBLISH THE CONSOLIDATED FIGURES AND FURTHER CONSULT THE OMELCO MANPOWER PANEL. WE WILL ALSO PUBLISH THE QUOTAS ALLOCATED TO DIFFERENT SECTORS AFTER ALLOCATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE," HE SAID.

MR CHAN EMPHASISED THAT THE LABOUR IMPORTATION SCHEME DID NOT SERVE TO PROVIDE CHEAP LABOUR FOR EMPLOYERS.

IN FACT, HE SAID, THE EXPENSES SUCH AS WAGES, TRAVELLING EXPENSES, ACCOMMODATION, ALLOWANCES AND QUOTA LEVY, BORNE BY AN EMPLOYER IN HIRING EACH IMPORTED WORKER, WILL DEFINITELY EXCEED THE LOCAL MEDIAN WAGE.

ALLAYING THE FEAR THAT IMPORTED WORKERS WOULD FACE UNLAWFUL WAGE DEDUCTION AND WOULD THUS BECOME CHEAP LABOUR ULTIMATELY, MR CHAN SAID: "THE GOVERNMENT HAS CLEARLY STIPULATED THAT ALL EMPLOYERS SHOULD PAY THE AGREED WAGES TO THE IMPORTED WORKERS THROUGH AUTOPAY."

FURTHERMORE, THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL HAS ENDORSED A BILL WHICH SEEKS TO RAISE THE MAXIMUM PENALTY FOR UNLAWFUL DEDUCTION OR UNDERPAYMENT OF WAGES FROM A FINE OF \$10,000 OR \$20,000 TO A FINE OF \$100,000 OR \$200,000 RESPECTIVELY PLUS IMPRISONMENT FOR ONE YEAR.

AS REGARDS OTHER RELATED OFFENCES OF GIVING FALSE INFORMATION, WITHHOLDING INFORMATION AND FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS, THE PENALTIES WILL CONCURRENTLY BE RAISED FROM \$10,000 TO \$100,000.

THE CRIMINAL LIABILITY OF EMPLOYERS WILL ALSO BE CLEARLY SET OUT UNDER A NEW SECTION OF THE PROPOSED BILL IN ORDER TO MAXIMISE THE DETERRENT EFFECT.

"AT THE SAME TIME, WE WILL TAKE ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES, WHERE APPROPRIATE, TO WITHDRAW THE QUOTA OF THE OFFENDING EMPLOYERS AND TO DENY THEM THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPLY FOR IMPORTATION OF LABOUR AGAIN," HE SAID.

SUMMING UP HIS SPEECH, MR CHAN STRESSED ONCE AGAIN THAT IN DECIDING TO CONTINUE IMPORTING LABOUR, THE GOVERNMENT WAS IN NO WAY SIDING WITH EMPLOYERS.

"IN FACT, THE CEILING OF 25,000 IMPORTED WORKERS FALLS FAR SHORT OF THE NUMBER REQUESTED BY INDUSTRIAL AND BUSINESS ORGANISATIONS AND EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATIONS.

"MOREOVER, SOME PROCEDURES UNDER THE LABOUR IMPORTATION SCHEME WILL, I AM AFRAID, NOT BE WELCOMED BY EMPLOYERS IN GENERAL," HE SAID.

HE REITERATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION WAS TO IMPORT FOREIGN LABOUR IN A RESTRICTED AND WELL-CONTROLLED MANNER TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE INTERESTS OF ALL PARTIES CONCERNED AND THE NEED TO SUSTAIN THE ECONOMIC GROWTH OF HONG KONG.

"WE BELIEVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION HAS STRUCK THE BEST BALANCE AND IS TOTALLY IN LINE WITH THE OVERALL INTERESTS OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE," HE SAID.

ON THE ABOVE BASIS, MR CHAN DID NOT SUPPORT THE CALL IN THE HON PANG CHUN HOI'S MOTION FOR THE SUSPENSION OF THE IMPORTATION OF LABOUR SCHEME.

FOREIGN AND LOCAL WORKERS ENJOY SAME PROTECTION UNDER HK LAWS  
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FOREIGN WORKERS ARE ENTITLED TO THE SAME PROTECTION AS LOCAL WORKERS UNDER HONG KONG LAWS, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE SAID BOTH THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT AND THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT WERE RESPONSIBLE TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE RELEVANT LABOUR OR IMMIGRATION LEGISLATION AS WELL AS SPECIFIC CONDITIONS IN THE EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT ENTERED BETWEEN THE FOREIGN WORKER AND THE EMPLOYER.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LAU CHIN-SHEK, MR CHAN POINTED OUT THAT THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT OFFERED CONCILIATION SERVICES WHEN THERE WAS A DISPUTE ON EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS BETWEEN THE FOREIGN WORKER AND HIS EMPLOYER.

HE SAID: "THE WORKER WILL BE ASSISTED TO PURSUE HIS CLAIM THROUGH THE APPROPRIATE LEGAL CHANNELS IF BOTH PARTIES FAIL TO REACH SETTLEMENT."

SUSPECTED BREACHES OF THE CONDITIONS SET BY THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT AND SUSPECTED CASES OF PROVISION OF FALSE INFORMATION BY THE EMPLOYING FIRM IN ITS APPLICATION TO EMPLOY FOREIGN WORKERS WERE EITHER TAKEN UP BY THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT DIRECT OR THROUGH REFERRAL BY THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT, HE ADDED.

MR CHAN SAID: "THE POLICY FOR PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF FOREIGN WORKERS IS UNDER CONSTANT REVIEW AND ADJUSTMENTS ARE MADE TO EXISTING PROVISIONS AND ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES AS NECESSARY."

HE CITED AS AN EXAMPLE AN AMENDMENT BILL WHICH WAS EXPECTED TO BE INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SHORTLY.

THE BILL SEEKS TO INCREASE THE MAXIMUM PENALTIES FOR UNLAWFUL DEDUCTION AND UNDERPAYMENT OF WAGES FROM \$10,000 AND \$20,000 TO \$100,000 AND \$200,000 RESPECTIVELY, PLUS A CUSTODIAL SENTENCE OF ONE YEAR.

"ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ARE DEPLOYED FOR ENFORCEMENT OF THE CONDITIONS OF THE IMPORTATION OF LABOUR SCHEMES," HE SAID.

MR CHAN ADVISED WORKERS TO APPROACH EITHER THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT OR THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT SHOULD THEY WISH TO SEEK VERIFICATION IN CASE OF LABOUR DISPUTES OR SUSPECTED ABUSE.

AS FAR AS FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKERS ARE CONCERNED, MR CHAN POINTED OUT THAT 46 EMPLOYERS HAD BEEN INVESTIGATED FOR FURNISHING FALSE INFORMATION IN THE PAST TWO YEARS AND 19 WERE PROSECUTED.

/IN ADDITION .....

IN ADDITION, THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT HAS PROSECUTED ONE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY FOR FURNISHING FALSE INFORMATION CONCERNING THE IMPORTATION OF WORKERS FROM OUTSIDE HONG KONG.

"SEVERAL CASES ARE CURRENTLY UNDER INVESTIGATION AND ADDITIONAL MEASURES HAVE BEEN TAKEN WITH A VIEW TO SECURING SUCCESSFUL PROSECUTION," HE SAID.

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STAMP DUTY BILL AIMS TO CURB PROPERTY SPECULATION

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THE PRINCIPAL AIM OF THE STAMP DUTY (AMENDMENT) (NO. 4) BILL 1991 REMAINS THE CURBING OF SPECULATIVE ACTIVITY IN THE RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY MARKET, BY MAKING STAMP DUTY PAYABLE ON SALE AND PURCHASE AGREEMENTS.

THIS WAS STATED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BY THE SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY, MR YEUNG KAI-YIN AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL.

MR YEUNG SAID IN HIS VIEW, THERE WAS NOTHING EXCEPTIONABLE OR EVEN OBJECTIONABLE OR EVEN INAPPROPRIATE IN TACKLING A MAJOR SOCIAL PROBLEM THROUGH AMENDMENTS TO TAX LEGISLATION.

"UNDER THIS BILL, WHERE THERE IS A SERIES OF AGREEMENTS IN RESPECT OF THE SAME PROPERTY, THE AMOUNT OF DUTY PAYABLE WILL MULTIPLY.

"THE BILL WILL THUS PROVIDE A MAJOR DISINCENTIVE FOR SPECULATORS. IT WILL BENEFIT GENUINE HOME BUYERS BY RESTORING THE BALANCE OF MARKET FORCES WHICH HAS SERIOUSLY BEEN DISTORTED BY SPECULATIVE ACTIVITY," MR YEUNG SAID.

HE NOTED THAT MR ARCULLI HAD FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO VOTE FOR THE BILL BECAUSE HE BELIEVED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT INTERVENE IN THE MARKETPLACE.

"WHILE I AGREE WITH MR ARCULLI THAT THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT HAS, BY AND LARGE, NOT INTERVENED IN THE WORKINGS OF THE MARKET BECAUSE ESPOUSE THE FREE MARKET MECHANISM; THE FACT IS THAT THE GOVERNMENT DOES INTERVENE IN THE MARKET WHEN IT IS CLEAR IN ITS MIND THAT IT IS IN THE LONG-TERM INTERESTS OF THE ECONOMY TO DO SO.

"IN THIS CASE, WE ARE CLEAR IN OUR MINDS THAT IT IS IN THE LONG-TERM INTERESTS OF BOTH THE ECONOMY AND THE PROPERTY MARKET TO DO SO, BUT WE HAVE CONCEDED THE POINT THAT IN THE CASE OF THE SPECULATIVE ACTIVITY THAT WE HAVE SEEN WE SHOULD INTERVENE FOR A LIMITED PERIOD, AND THAT IS WHY WE HAVE PUT A TIME LIMIT ON THIS MEASURE," MR YEUNG SAID.

/HE POINTED .....

HE POINTED OUT THAT COUNTER-INFLATIONARY MEASURES TENDED TO BE BLUNT INSTRUMENTS; AND PROVISION MUST BE CONSIDERED FOR JUSTIFIABLE EXCEPTIONS.

MR YEUNG SAID FOR EXAMPLE, THE MAIN EFFECT OF THE AMENDMENTS MOVED BY MRS MIRIAM LAU WOULD MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE REQUIREMENT TO PAY STAMP DUTY WOULD NOT APPLY TO AN AGREEMENT FOR SALE UNDER WHICH A PURCHASER TRANSFERRED HIS OR HER INTEREST IN A PROPERTY TO A PARENT, SPOUSE OR CHILD.

HE SAID THESE WERE ACCEPTABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT.

A SIGNIFICANT TECHNICAL AMENDMENT PROPOSED BY MR MOSES CHENG RELATED TO CHARGEABLE AGREEMENTS FOR SALE INVOLVING AN EXCHANGE OR PARTITION OF PROPERTY, IN ADDITION TO A MONETARY CONSIDERATION, MR YEUNG NOTED.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT AGREED THAT, IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, STAMP DUTY SHOULD ONLY BE PAYABLE ON THE MONETARY CONSIDERATION INVOLVED.

THE MOST IMPORTANT OF MR CHENG'S PROPOSED AMENDMENT WAS THE STRENGTHENING OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE BILL RELATING TO RELIEF FROM STAMP DUTY, MR YEUNG SAID.

"THE BILL ALREADY EXPRESSLY PROVIDED FOR EXEMPTION IN CASES INVOLVING DEFECTS IN TITLE.

"TO DRAFT INTO THE LEGISLATION TOO WIDE AN EXEMPTION COULD CREATE A MAJOR AVOIDANCE LOOPHOLE BUT WE ACCEPT, ON BALANCE, THAT GENUINE CASES OF HARDSHIP NOT EXPRESSLY PROVIDED FOR IN THE LAW COULD ARISE.

"ACCORDINGLY, THE REVISED CLAUSE 9 WOULD NOW ALLOW THE GOVERNOR OR HIS DELEGATE TO REMIT OR REFUND ANY STAMP DUTY PAID OR PAYABLE UNDER THE ORDINANCE. THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH THIS DISCRETION TO REMIT OR REFUND STAMP DUTY MIGHT BE EXERCISED WILL BE SPELLED OUT IN A PRACTICE NOTE TO BE ISSUED BY THE COMMISSIONER OF INLAND REVENUE," MR YEUNG SAID.

ON THE AMENDMENTS PROPOSED BY MR MARVIN CHEUNG WHICH WOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF EXCISING FROM THE BILL THE PROVISIONS RELATING TO LAND-HOLDING COMPANIES, MR YEUNG SAID THE ORIGINAL INTENTION OF THESE PROVISIONS WAS TO CLOSE AN EXISTING AVOIDANCE LOOPHOLE.

"THIS LOOPHOLE IS EXPLOITED WHEN A PERSON SETS UP A COMPANY, THE MAIN OR ONLY ASSET OF WHICH IS IMMOVABLE PROPERTY, AND THEN TRANSFERS PART OR ALL OF HIS INTEREST IN THAT PROPERTY BY SELLING HIS COMPANY'S SHARES.

"THESE TRANSACTIONS NOW ATTRACT STAMP DUTY AT THE CONTRACT NOTE RATE, WHICH IS MUCH LOWER THAN THAT PAYABLE ON PROPERTY CONVEYANCE.

"TO DISCOURAGE THIS FORM OF TAX AVOIDANCE, THE BILL ORIGINALLY FIXED THE STAMP DUTY TO BE PAID ON THE SALE OR PURCHASE OF SUCH SHARES AT THE HIGHER, CONVEYANCING RATE," MR YEUNG SAID.

/HE SAID .....

HE SAID HE COULD UNDERSTAND THE CONCERN EXPRESSED BY SOME MEMBERS THAT THE PROVISIONS, AS NOW DRAFTED, COULD AFFECT BOTH TRANSACTIONS BETWEEN GENUINE PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT COMPANIES AND SPECULATIVE SALES OF DOMESTIC FLATS.

"I ALSO UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE THE SENSE OF UNEASE AMONGST MEMBERS OF THE AD HOC GROUP REGARDING THE WORKABILITY OF THIS RELATIVELY SIMPLE BILL.

"BUT THERE IS NO ESCAPING THE FACT THAT THE USE OF SHELL COMPANIES TO TRANSFER INTERESTS IN PROPERTY IS WIDESPREAD. SUCH COMPANIES CAN EASILY BE PURCHASED FOR A FEW THOUSAND DOLLARS.

"THE GOVERNMENT REMAINS CONCERNED THAT, UNLESS THIS LOOPHOLE IS CLOSED, THE IMPACT OF THE PRESENT BILL COULD BE LIMITED. WE ARE ALSO CONCERNED THAT, IF PEOPLE ARE NOT DISCOURAGED FROM USING SHELL COMPANIES, PURCHASERS COULD BE ACQUIRING COMPANIES WITH HIDDEN LIABILITIES, HOWEVER GOOD THEIR LEGAL ADVICE MAY BE," MR YEUNG SAID.

MR YEUNG SAID FOR THIS REASON, THE GOVERNMENT COULD SUPPORT THE AMENDMENTS PROPOSED BY MR CHEUNG ONLY ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT IT WOULD MOVE FORWARD QUICKLY TO FIND AN ACCEPTABLE AND EFFECTIVE WAY OF CLOSING THE AVOIDANCE LOOPHOLE.

HE WELCOMED THE CONTINUATION OF THE AD HOC GROUP IN ITS EXAMINATION OF ANY PROPOSALS THAT THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT PUT FORWARD.

"FOR OUR PART, THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO BRING FORWARD NEW PROPOSALS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE FOR DISCUSSION WITH THE AD HOC GROUP IN THE FIRST INSTANCE," MR YEUNG SAID.

THE STAMP DUTY (AMENDMENT) (NO. 4) ORDINANCE WILL BE GAZETTED THIS FRIDAY (JANUARY 31) AND WILL COME INTO FORCE ON THE SAME DAY.

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#### USAGE OF DRUGS AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES IN HOSPITALS MONITORED

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THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY MONITORED THE USAGE OF DRUGS AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES IN HOSPITALS THROUGH A COMBINATION OF BUDGETARY MANAGEMENT AND INVENTORY CONTROL, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON CONRAD LAM, MRS WONG TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THAT IN TERMS OF BUDGETARY MANAGEMENT, EX-GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS CHANNELLED THEIR USAGE PATTERNS OF DRUGS AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES TO THE AUTHORITY THROUGH THE LEDGER ACCOUNTING FINANCIAL INFORMATION SYSTEM (LAFIS).

SHE SAID EX-SUBVENTED HOSPITALS MAINTAINING THEIR OWN ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS WERE REQUIRED TO SUBMIT MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTS TO THE AUTHORITY.

/"SUCH INFORMATION .....

"SUCH INFORMATION IS THEN EXAMINED BY THE HEAD OFFICE OF THE AUTHORITY TO DETECT POTENTIAL DEFICIENCIES AND DETERMINE THE NEED, IF ANY, FOR REDEVELOPMENT OF RESOURCES," SHE SAID.

AS REGARDS INVENTORY CONTROL, MRS WONG SAID, INDIVIDUAL HOSPITALS WERE CHARGED WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY TO MONITOR THEIR OWN SUPPLY AND USAGE OF DRUGS AND TO ALERT THE AUTHORITY TO THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.

"THIS IS EFFECTED IN THE MAIN THROUGH DRUG MONITORING COMMITTEES OR HOSPITAL PROFESSIONAL COMMITTEES COMPRISING ALL KEY PROFESSIONAL AND MANAGEMENT STAFF," SHE SAID.

THERE IS A FULLY COMPUTERISED SYSTEM FOR ORDERING AND INVENTORY CONTROL AT THE FIVE MAJOR EX-GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS - QUEEN MARY HOSPITAL, QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL, PRINCESS MARGARET HOSPITAL, PRINCE OF WALES HOSPITAL AND TUEN MUN HOSPITAL.

"THIS PROVIDES ESSENTIAL DATA ON STOCK LEVEL, USAGE RATES AND TRENDS AND OPTIMAL ORDERING INTERVALS," SHE SAID.

"THE CHIEF PHARMACIST AT THE AUTHORITY HEAD OFFICE REGULARLY MONITORS THE OVERALL SITUATION OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES AMONG THESE FIVE HOSPITALS THROUGH ON-LINE FACILITIES.

"CONSIDERATION IS BEING GIVEN TO EXTENDING THIS SYSTEM TO OTHER HOSPITALS AND SPECIALIST CLINICS IN THE LONG TERM," MRS WONG ADDED.

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#### PUBLIC HOUSING RENT INCREASE EXPLAINED

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THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED RENT INCREASE FOR PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES WAS ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TO TAKE EFFECT ON SEPTEMBER 1 LAST YEAR, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR BOWEN LEUNG, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LEE WING-TAT, MR LEUNG SAID THE HOUSING AUTHORITY DECIDED TO DEFER THE IMPLEMENTATION DATE FROM SEPTEMBER 1 LAST YEAR TO MARCH 1 THIS YEAR, HAVING REGARD TO THE MORATORIUM ON INCREASES IN DEPARTMENTAL FEES AND CHARGES IMPOSED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO CURB INFLATION.

THE LEVEL OF RENT INCREASE HAD NOT BEEN ADJUSTED TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF INCREASES IN COSTS AND OTHER FACTORS WHICH HAD TAKEN PLACE SINCE THE RENT REVIEW IN MAY LAST YEAR.

MR LEUNG SAID IT WAS THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S POLICY TO CHARGE DOMESTIC RENTS NOT EXCEEDING A MEDIAN RENT-TO-INCOME RATIO OF 15 PER CENT TO 18.5 PER CENT.

THE MEDIAN RENT-TO-INCOME RATIO WOULD BE 10.5 PER CENT AFTER THE NEXT INCREASE.

"THE AUTHORITY REVIEWS ITS RENTS EVERY TWO YEARS IN ORDER TO BRING THEM TO MORE REALISTIC LEVELS," MR LEUNG SAID.

"IN ALL RENT REVIEWS, THE HOUSING AUTHORITY GIVES REGARDS TO THE VALUE OF THE ESTATES IN TERMS OF ITS LOCATION, AMENITIES, ENVIRONMENT, SCHOOLS, EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, TRANSPORTATION AND OTHER FACILITIES AVAILABLE ON OR IN THE VICINITY OF THE ESTATES, AS COMPARED WITH OTHER ESTATES.

"THIS IS TO ENSURE THAT RENTS FOR COMPARABLE ESTATES ARE CONSISTENT," HE SAID.

MR LEUNG SAID IN DECIDING ON THE PRESENT RATE OF INCREASE, THE AUTHORITY TOOK INTO ACCOUNT OF THE INCREASE IN RATES, THE LEVEL OF MARKET RENTS, NOMINAL WAGE INDEX, INFLATION RATE AND THE INCREASE IN THE ESTATE WORKING EXPENSES.

THE RENT LEVELS OF THE ESTATES AFFECTED IN THE RECENT RENT INCREASE WILL BE REVISED FROM \$14.38 - \$24.21 PER SQUARE METRES TO \$16.88 - \$30.21 PER SQUARE METRES.

"83 PER CENT OF THE AFFECTED HOUSEHOLDS WILL BE REQUIRED TO PAY BETWEEN 12 PER CENT AND 26 PER CENT MORE THAN THEIR EXISTING RENT," HE SAID.

"THE ADDITIONAL REVENUE GENERATED BY THE INCREASE WILL BE \$491 MILLION FOR THE PERIOD UP TO AUGUST 31, 1993. AFTER THE RATES PAYMENT OF \$298 MILLION TO THE GOVERNMENT, THE NET GAIN TO THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WILL BE \$193 MILLION," HE SAID.

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#### SUPPLY OF SMALL PUBLIC HOUSING FLATS EXPLAINED

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A TOTAL OF 1,142 SMALL FLATS WITH SELF-CONTAINED FACILITIES WOULD BE PRODUCED BETWEEN THIS YEAR AND 1995 BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY UNDER THE CURRENT CONVERSION PROGRAMME, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR BOWEN LEUNG, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HUI YIN-FAT, MR LEUNG SAID THE PROGRAMME WAS A TEMPORARY MEASURE TO PRODUCE ADDITIONAL SMALL FLATS TO MEET URGENT OPERATION REQUIREMENTS SUCH AS REDEVELOPMENT AND CLEARANCE.

"A TOTAL OF 7,213 CONVERTED FLATS WITH SHARED FACILITIES HAD BEEN PRODUCED IN THE PAST ON AN AD HOC BASIS, OF WHICH, 2,907 FLATS WERE PRODUCED IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS," HE SAID.

MR LEUNG SAID ASSUMING THAT FLATS UNLET AFTER THREE MONTHS' OF HANDOVER WERE REGARDED AS VACANT, THE AVERAGE VACANCY RATE IN RESPECT OF THE CONVERTED FLATS WAS 25 PER CENT.

"THE MAIN REASON FOR THE VACANCY IS THAT MANY PROSPECTIVE TENANTS ARE RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT ACCOMMODATION WITHOUT SELF-CONTAINED FACILITIES AND THEY ALSO HAVE THEIR LOCATIONAL PREFERENCE.

"THE HOUSING AUTHORITY HAS RECENTLY APPROVED A NUMBER OF MEASURES TO ADDRESS THE OVERALL SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF SMALL FLATS ON A DISTRICT BASIS, THUS THERE WILL BE NO NEED FOR ANY FURTHER CONVERSIONS BEYOND WHAT IS ALREADY INCLUDED IN THE CURRENT PROGRAMME," MR LEUNG SAID.

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SMOKING (PUBLIC HEALTH) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991 PASSED

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THE SMOKING (PUBLIC HEALTH) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991, WHICH SEEKS TO INTRODUCE FURTHER MEASURES TO DISCOURAGE SMOKING, WAS PASSED WITH AMENDMENTS BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD ADOPTED A PROGRESSIVE AND PRAGMATIC APPROACH AND A REALISTIC AND A REASONABLE ATTITUDE IN IMPLEMENTING ITS LONG DECLARED POLICY TO DISCOURAGE SMOKING.

"WE TRY TO STRIKE A HEALTHY BALANCE. OUR INITIATIVES ARE REVIEWED FROM TIME TO TIME IN THE LIGHT OF THE ATTITUDE IN OUR COMMUNITY," SHE SAID.

THE SECRETARY REAFFIRMED THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT ON ANTI-SMOKING. "WE MUST TACKLE THE PROBLEM AT ITS ROOT, NOT SIMPLY TRIM THE BRANCHES," SHE SAID.

SHE SAID EDUCATION -- BOTH FORMAL THROUGH SCHOOLS AND INFORMAL THROUGH FRIENDS -- WAS AN IMPORTANT CO-FACTOR IN DISCOURAGING SMOKING, PARTICULARLY AMONGST PEOPLE.

MRS WONG NOTED THAT THE AD HOC GROUP TO REVIEW THE BILL WAS OF THE VIEW THAT THE SALE OF CIGARETTES TO ANYONE BELOW 18 SHOULD BE BANNED. ASSOCIATED WITH THIS, ANY OFFER OR GIFT OF CIGARETTES TO THEM FOR THE PURPOSE OF ADVERTISING SHOULD ALSO BE BANNED.

SHE SAID A BAN ON THE SALE OF CIGARETTES TO THOSE UNDER 18 MAY WELL GIVE THE RIGHT MESSAGE TO SOME AS TO GOVERNMENT'S EARNEST IN DISCOURAGING SMOKING PARTICULARLY AMONGST THE YOUNG.

"HOWEVER, TO OTHERS, AN UNENFORCEABLE BAN MIGHT SEND QUITE THE OPPOSITE MESSAGE. WE MUST THEREFORE CONSULT CAREFULLY, PARTICULARLY ON THE ASPECT OF ENFORCEMENT," SHE SAID.

MRS WONG UNDERTOOK TO EXAMINE SUGGESTIONS ON WHETHER TOBACCO ADVERTISING IN THE PRINT MEDIA SHOULD BE PROHIBITED AND WHETHER RESTAURANTS SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO DISPLAY A SIGN TO SAY THEY PROVIDE A NON-SMOKING AREA OR NOT.

"I WILL, OF COURSE, CONSULT THE RELEVANT PARTIES CONCERNED," SHE SAID.

SHE ADDED THAT THE AD HOC GROUP'S PURPOSE TO APPLY HEALTH WARNINGS TO PIPE TOBACCO AND CIGARS WAS ANOTHER AREA ON WHICH FURTHER CONSULTATION WOULD BE NECESSARY.

"GIVEN THE SMALL MARKET FOR THESE PRODUCTS IN HONG KONG, AND HAVING REGARD TO SHELF LIFE AND STOCK OF THE PRODUCTS IN HAND, THE REQUIREMENT FOR HEALTH WARNINGS MAY MAKE SOME BRANDS COMMERCIALY UNVIABLE AND LEAD TO THEIR BEING WITHDRAWN FROM THE MARKET ALTOGETHER," MRS WONG SAID.

"THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS ON CONSUMERS WILL OBVIOUSLY NEED CAREFUL EXAMINATION. THE INDUSTRY WILL ALSO NEED TO BE CONSULTED ABOUT THE LEAD TIME REQUIRED FOR ANY SUCH PROPOSAL TO BE IMPLEMENTED.

"ACCORDINGLY, I WILL TAKE STEPS TO INITIATE THE NECESSARY CONSULTATIONS," SHE SAID.

COMMENTING ON THE AD HOC GROUP'S PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO ALLOW FERRY WORKERS TO SMOKE IN AREAS OF FERRIES TO WHICH THE PUBLIC HAS NO ACCESS, MRS WONG SAID IT SEEMED ODD THAT THESE WORKERS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO SMOKE WHEN THE BILL SOUGHT A TOTAL BAN ON SMOKING IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT CARRIERS.

HOWEVER, SHE ACCEPTED THE ARGUMENT THAT FERRY WORKERS HAD A WORKING ENVIRONMENT UNIQUE AMONG TRANSPORT OPERATORS.

"THEY WORK LONG SHIFTS AND ARE UNABLE TO TAKE A BREAK AT THE END OF EACH JOURNEY LIKE OTHER TRANSPORT WORKERS. THEY MAY LIVE, EAT AND SLEEP ON BOARD THEIR VESSEL, IN AN AREA PHYSICALLY SEPARATED FROM THE PASSENGER COMPARTMENTS," SHE SAID.

PERMITTING FERRY WORKERS TO SMOKE IN AREAS WHERE THE PUBLIC HAD NO ACCESS COULD BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT CAUSING DISTURBANCE TO PASSENGERS AND WITHOUT COMPROMISING THE OVERALL OBJECTIVES OF OUR ANTI-SMOKING POLICY, SHE SAID.

MRS WONG, THOUGH AGREED WITH THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT, STRESSED THAT WHILE THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT MIGHT ALLOW FERRY WORKERS TO SMOKE. IT SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO DO SO.

"FOR THE SAKE OF THEIR OWN HEALTH AND FOR THE SAKE OF THOSE COLLEAGUES WHO DO NOT SMOKE, HERE I WOULD STILL URGE THEM NOT TO SMOKE," SHE SAID.

TURNING TO THE QUESTION OF THE SIZE OF THE HEALTH WARNING MESSAGE TO BE PRINTED WITHIN THE WARNING PANEL ON CIGARETTE PACKAGES AND IN ADVERTISING, MRS WONG EXPLAINED THAT THE PROPOSAL FOR 40 PER CENT COVERAGE WAS BASED ON THE OUTCOME OF CONSULTATIONS IN 1989/90.

"HOWEVER, MEMBERS' PROPOSED REQUIREMENT FOR 75 PER CENT COVERAGE INSTEAD WILL MEAN A MORE VISIBLE MESSAGE.

"THIS IS IN LINE WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVE OF ENHANCING AWARENESS OF THE DANGERS OF SMOKING. I WILL BEAR THIS IN MIND WHEN MAKING THE RELEVANT ORDER," SHE SAID.

BILL TO PERMIT OVERSEAS DOCTORS TO SERVE  
SPECIFIC COMMUNITY NEEDS IN HK

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A BILL WHICH SEEKS TO ALLOW DOCTORS WITH ACCEPTABLE OVERSEAS QUALIFICATIONS TO REGISTER AND PRACTISE IN HONG KONG TO MEET SPECIFIC COMMUNITY NEEDS ON SPECIFIED CONDITIONS WAS INTRODUCED TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, POINTED OUT THAT APPLICATIONS WOULD BE CONSIDERED ON THE MERITS OF EACH CASE AND LIMITED REGISTRATION WOULD BE GRANTED FOR SUCH PURPOSE AND PERIOD AS THE MEDICAL COUNCIL SPECIFIED.

SHE SAID THE DECISION ON WHOM TO ADMIT, AND ON WHAT CONDITIONS, WOULD REST ENTIRELY WITH THE MEDICAL COUNCIL.

TO MAINTAIN PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS, THE COUNCIL WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING THAT LIMITED REGISTRATION WAS GRANTED ONLY TO PROPERLY TRAINED AND DULY QUALIFIED FOREIGN DOCTORS.

"THIS AMENDMENT WILL NOT AFFECT STANDARDS. IT DOES NOT OPEN THE DOOR TO ANY QUACK OR SELF-PROFESSED EXPERT WHO WANTS TO PRACTISE HERE.

"IT WILL, HOWEVER, ENABLE US TO ADMIT THOSE QUALIFIED PRACTITIONERS WHOSE SPECIAL SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE CAN BENEFIT OUR COMMUNITY," MRS WONG EXPLAINED.

MRS WONG NOTED THAT THE EXISTING MEDICAL REGISTRATION ORDINANCE PROVIDED THAT ONLY A HOLDER OF A HONG KONG DIPLOMA, A HOLDER OF A UNITED KINGDOM, IRISH OR RECOGNISED COMMONWEALTH DIPLOMA OR LICENTIATE MIGHT BE REGISTERED TO PRACTISE MEDICINE IN HONG KONG.

IN ADDITION, A PERSON WHO IS IN THE FULL-TIME SERVICE OF GOVERNMENT OR THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY OR FOR THE PURPOSE OF TEACHING OR HOSPITAL WORK IN THE DEPARTMENT OF MEDICINE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG OR THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG MAY BE DEEMED TO BE REGISTERED.

"WHILE THE LAW IS INTENDED TO SERVE THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE, IT HAS BECOME APPARENT THAT THERE ARE CERTAIN GROUPS WHOSE NEEDS SHOULD BE SERVED BUT THOSE NEEDS ARE EITHER BEING MET AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHER SERVICES OR NOT BEING MET ADEQUATELY," MRS WONG SAID.

THE SECRETARY NOTED THAT ONE SUCH GROUP WAS THE WELL OVER 50,000 VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS CONFINED TO REMOTE CAMPS AND CENTRES CURRENTLY SERVED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH STAFF. ANOTHER WERE THE VARIOUS NON-ENGLISH AND NON-CHINESE-SPEAKING ETHNIC GROUPS IN OUR COMMUNITY WHO LIVE AND WORK HERE AND CONTRIBUTE TO OUR SOCIETY.

MRS WONG SAID IN THIS CONNECTION, THE ADMINISTRATION HAD RECEIVED REPRESENTATIONS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMITTEE, AND FROM THE JAPANESE CONSUL, TO ALLOW FOREIGN DOCTORS WITH CURRENTLY UNREGISTRABLE QUALIFICATIONS TO SERVE FOREIGN COMMUNITIES IN HONG KONG.

/SHE SAID .....

SHE SAID: "HONG KONG, BEING A CARING COMMUNITY, WOULD SURELY NOT WISH TO IGNORE THE NEED OF THESE PEOPLE FOR MEDICAL CARE IF LOCALLY REGISTRABLE DOCTORS CANNOT PROPERLY SERVE SOME GROUPS, THE MEDICAL COUNCIL SHOULD BE GIVEN SUITABLE POWERS TO ENSURE THAT SUCH MEDICAL NEEDS ARE MET.

"FOR MY PART, I DO NOT WISH TO FETTER THE MEDICAL COUNCIL'S ABILITY TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF ALL SECTORS OF OUR COMMUNITY."

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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#### APPLIED RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT SCHEME TO BE LAUNCHED

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THE GOVERNMENT IS LAUNCHING AN APPLIED RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT (R & D) SCHEME DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE COMPANIES TO INVEST IN INNOVATION.

THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR STUART HARBINSON, SPOKE ABOUT THE SCHEME DURING AN ADJOURNMENT DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL YESTERDAY (WEDNESDAY) ON GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT.

"OUR AIM IS TO FOSTER THE WIDER APPLICATION OF R & D IN INDUSTRY - AND IN THE LONGER TERM, TO INCREASE HONG KONG'S TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITY," MR HARBINSON SAID.

PREFERENCE WILL BE GIVEN TO THOSE TECHNOLOGIES WHICH HAVE A WIDE APPLICATION IN INDUSTRY AND THE POTENTIAL TO CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO UPGRADING OF THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR.

UNDER THE SCHEME, THE GOVERNMENT WILL FUND R & D PROJECTS JOINTLY WITH COMPANIES, CONTRIBUTING UP TO HALF THE COSTS.

THE GOVERNMENT INPUT WILL TAKE THE FORM OF AN INVESTMENT, AND WILL SHARE IN THE BENEFITS OF SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS.

"THE REQUIREMENT THAT COMPANIES PUT IN AT LEAST HALF OF THE COSTS SHOULD ENSURE THAT PROJECTS ARE MARKET-DRIVEN," HE SAID.

MR HARBINSON NOTED THAT LAST MONTH THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HAS APPROVED A SUM OF \$200 MILLION FOR THE PROJECT.

THE FUNDS FOR THE SCHEME WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE STARTING IN APRIL THIS YEAR, AND IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO INVITE AND PROCESS THE FIRST BATCH OF APPLICATIONS TO JOIN THE SCHEME FROM MID-1992.

THE SCHEME WILL BE ADMINISTERED WITH ADVICE FROM THE NEW INDUSTRY & TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (ITDC) WHICH WILL ESTABLISH A COMMITTEE WITH A WIDE RANGE OF EXPERTISE IN TECHNOLOGY TO ASSESS INDIVIDUAL PROPOSALS.

NOTWITHSTANDING THIS INITIATIVE, MR HARBINSON STRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S LONG-STANDING POLICY OF MINIMUM INTERVENTION REMAINED IN PLACE.

"IT IS FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO IDENTIFY COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITY FOR TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE INFRASTRUCTURE NOW BEING DEVELOPED," HE SAID.

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#### JOINT EFFORT TO CURB SMUGGLING

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THERE WAS INCREASED CO-OPERATION BETWEEN HONG KONG AND CHINA IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SMUGGLING ACTIVITIES, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MRS RITA FAN, MR ASPREY SAID SMUGGLING AND MEASURES TO CONTROL SMUGGLING, INCLUDING ACTION AGAINST HIGH-POWERED SPEEDBOATS, WERE TWO OF THE PRINCIPAL CONCERNS RAISED AT THE 10 FORMAL MEETINGS HELD LAST YEAR BETWEEN THE POLICE AND THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES.

"THESE CONCERNS WERE ALSO RAISED WHEN THE DIRECTOR OF THE GUANGDONG PROVINCIAL PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU VISITED HONG KONG AND WHEN THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE MADE A RETURN VISIT," MR ASPREY SAID.

THE ISSUES HAD ALSO BEEN RAISED THROUGH BORDER LIAISON CHANNELS, MOST RECENTLY AT THE ANNUAL BORDER LIAISON REVIEW MEETING WHICH TOOK PLACE ON JANUARY 27.

"THE GOVERNMENT HAVE PASSED TO THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES DETAILS OF THE LOCATIONS FROM WHICH WE BELIEVE THE SPEEDBOATS ARE OPERATING.

DETAILS OF HONG KONG'S LEGISLATION AGAINST THE CONSTRUCTION AND USE OF SPEEDBOATS DESIGNED FOR SMUGGLING PURPOSES HAD ALSO BEEN PROVIDED TO THE CHINESE SIDE.

MR ASPREY SAID THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES HAD CONSISTENTLY AFFIRMED THEIR RESOLVE TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST SMUGGLING ACTIVITY, AND HAD DONE SO.

"THE GOVERNMENT UNDERSTAND THAT ABOUT 200 SPEEDBOATS WERE SEIZED IN CRACKDOWNS AGAINST SMUGGLING IN MAY TO JULY AND NOVEMBER LAST YEAR.

"WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT SOME DISTRICTS ON THE MAINLAND ARE DRAWING UP REGULATIONS TO FORBID THE CONSTRUCTION OF SPEEDBOATS USED FOR SMUGGLING," HE SAID.

THE SECRETARY STRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONTINUING TO PRESS THE CHINESE TO TAKE FURTHER ACTION AGAINST SMUGGLING.

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COOPERATION IN DEVELOPING RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE URGED

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HONG KONG HAD IN PLACE THE MAKINGS OF A STRONG RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE, AND TO MAKE THIS INFRASTRUCTURE WORK, THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR MUST COLLABORATE WITH EACH OTHER.

THE MESSAGE CAME FROM THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, YESTERDAY (WEDNESDAY) DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ON GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT.

MR CHAN FOCUSED ON GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH WHILE THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR STUART HARBINSON SPOKE ON CONTRACT RESEARCH.

THEY BOTH RECOGNISED THAT THE TWO TYPES OF RESEARCH WE ARE OFTEN COMPLEMENTARY AND EACH COULD HAVE BENEFICIAL SPIN-OFFS FOR THE OTHER.

"HOW TO PROMOTE AND MAXIMISE THIS COMPLEMENTARITY IS AN ISSUE THAT DESERVES THE ATTENTION OF ALL CONCERNED," MR CHAN SAID.

MR CHAN POINTED OUT THAT THE CHALLENGE TO THE GOVERNMENT WAS TO FACILITATE THE CREATION OF A SUITABLE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH SUFFICIENT EXPERTISE, FACILITIES AND FUNDING COULD BE CREATIVELY COMBINED IN THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE FOR ITS OWN SAKE AND FOR THE SAKE OF HONG KONG; AND A SUITABLE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO THE WIDER APPLICATION OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT.

THIS IS AMIDST COMMUNITY INTEREST IN THE ACQUISITION AND TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE.

HE STRESSED THAT HIS PRIMARY CONCERN WAS TO PROVIDE A BASIC RESEARCH CAPABILITY FOR HONG KONG.

HE SAID THE BULK OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH HAD SO FAR BEEN MADE AVAILABLE TO THE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS TO MEET THEIR EDUCATIONAL NEEDS BY PROVIDING IMPROVED RESEARCH FACILITIES AND A WIDE SPECTRUM OF RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES WHICH HELPED ATTRACT AND RETAIN GOOD QUALITY ACADEMIC STAFF.

"SPECIFIC GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH IS A RELATIVELY RECENT PHENOMENON," MR CHAN SAID.

FOLLOWING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF AN UNIVERSITY AND POLYTECHNIC GRANTS COMMITTEE (UPGC) RESEARCH WORKING PARTY IN 1983, THE GOVERNMENT AGREED TO PROVIDE FOR THE 1988-91 TRIENNIUM A SUM OF \$120 MILLION FOR RESEARCH.

THIS FIGURE WAS AT THE TIME EQUIVALENT TO APPROXIMATELY TWO PER CENT OF THE BLOCK GRANT EXPENDITURE FOR THE TRIENNIUM.

/IN ADDITION .....

IN ADDITION, THE INSTITUTIONS WERE ENCOURAGED TO SPEND A SIMILAR AMOUNT FROM WITHIN THE BLOCK GRANTS TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE.

IN 1990 THE GOVERNMENT ACCEPTED THE UPGC'S RECOMMENDATIONS THAT SIGNIFICANTLY ENHANCED FUNDING SHOULD BE PROVIDED FOR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AT THE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS AND THAT A RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED WITH EFFECT FROM 1991 UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE UPGC TO OVERSEE ITS DISBURSEMENT.

THE GOVERNMENT SUBSEQUENTLY SET ASIDE A TOTAL OF \$510 MILLION FOR EARMARKED GRANTS FOR RESEARCH IN THE 1991-92 SINGLE GRANT YEAR AND THE 1992-95 TRIENNIUM.

THE INSTITUTIONS WERE ENCOURAGED TO CONTINUE SPENDING TWO PER CENT OF THEIR BLOCK GRANTS AMOUNTING TO APPROXIMATELY \$410 MILLION OVER THE SAME FOUR YEAR PERIOD ON RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE.

MR CHAN SAID GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH HAD INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY OVER RECENT YEARS.

THE SUM OF EARMARKED RESEARCH GRANTS AND THE TWO PER CENT OF BLOCK GRANT FUNDING FOR RESEARCH GREW BY 147 PER CENT FROM \$72 MILLION IN 1988-89 TO \$178 MILLION IN 1991-92 AND WILL BE FURTHER INCREASED BY 46 PER CENT TO NEARLY \$260 MILLION IN 1994-95.

IN ADDITION TO THE EARMARKED GRANT AND THE TWO PER CENT OF BLOCK GRANT FUNDING, A SUBSTANTIAL PROPORTION OF ACADEMIC STAFF TIME, EQUIPMENT, LIBRARY AND LABORATORY FACILITIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES WAS ALSO DEVOTED TO SUPPORTING THE INSTITUTIONS' RESEARCH ACTIVITIES.

MR CHAN GAVE AN ASSURANCE THAT GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO ENSURE THAT ADEQUATE FUNDING WAS PROVIDED FOR THESE PURPOSES.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE INSTITUTIONS HAD RECENTLY ADOPTED NEW POLICIES TO FOCUS AND STRENGTHEN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THEIR RESEARCH EFFORTS AND TO FORGE STRONGER LINKS WITH INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS.

CITING SOME EXAMPLES OF SUCH INTERACTION, MR CHAN MENTIONED THAT THROUGH FINANCIAL INCENTIVES AND RELEASED TIME FROM TEACHING, FACULTY MEMBERS HAD BEEN ENCOURAGED TO SEEK INDEPENDENT JOINT PROJECTS WITH LOCAL AND OVERSEAS INDUSTRIES.

ALSO, TO SUPPORT LONG TERM PROJECTS AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH INDUSTRY, THE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS HAD FORMED A NUMBER OF APPLIED RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND CENTRES TO ON-CAMPUS INDUSTRIAL CENTRES, A BROADLY BASED GROUP OF INDEPENDENT TECHNICAL CENTRES HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED, WITH FUNDING SUPPORT FROM THE GOVERNMENT, TO IMPROVE THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN HONG KONG'S BUSINESS CONTEXT.

IN MID-1991, THE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD, COLLABORATED IN THE PRODUCTION OF AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF FOUR AREAS OF TECHNOLOGY, NAMELY BIOTECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, MATERIAL TECHNOLOGY, AND ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY.

THE REPORT ENTITLED "TECHNOLOGY ROAD MAPS FOR HONG KONG" HAS BEEN PUBLISHED AND HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF A MAJOR FOLLOW-UP CONFERENCE AIMED AT IDENTIFYING FURTHER EMERGING HIGH-TECH BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES.

"SEVERAL SPECIFIC PRODUCTS' AND R & D PROJECTS IN THESE TECHNOLOGICAL FIELDS HAVE ALREADY BEEN PROPOSED AND WILL FORM THE BASIS OF CO-OPERATION," MR CHAN SAID.

WHEREVER PRACTICABLE, THE INSTITUTIONS WERE ENCOURAGED TO COLLABORATE WITH EACH OTHER AND WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO MAKE THE MOST EFFECTIVE USE OF RESOURCES, HE SAID.

IN THIS CONNECTION, THE UPGC AND RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL HAVE ESTABLISHED THEIR OWN SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE FOR EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH FUNDING AND EFFECTIVE MONITORING OF EXPENDITURE.

THESE INCLUDE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SPECIALIST PANELS AND AN EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF EXPERT ASSESSORS TO VET APPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH GRANTS AND REGULAR REPORTING BY THE INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUAL RESEARCHERS ON THE USE OF ALL RESEARCH FUNDING AND THE PROGRESS AND RESULTS OF INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PROJECTS.

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#### ASSESSMENT OF "INSTANT LOTTERY" PROPOSAL EXPLAINED

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THE LOTTERIES BOARD HAD SUGGESTED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MAJOR INSTANT LOTTERY WHICH WOULD BE ABLE TO CHANNEL FUNDS INTO PROJECTS CURRENTLY OUTSIDE ITS AMBIT, THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SUEN, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HUI YIN-FAT, MR SUEN SAID THE BOARD'S PROPOSAL STEMMED FROM ITS CONCERN OVER THE PROLIFERATION IN HONG KONG OF INSTANT LOTTERIES OFFERING NON-CASH PRIZES.

THESE LOTTERIES, MR SUEN SAID, WERE MAINLY USED FOR TRADE PROMOTION PURPOSES AND WERE LICENSED BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR TELEVISION AND ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING UNDER THE GAMBLING ORDINANCE.

IN VIEW OF THEIR POPULARITY AND IN LINE WITH SIMILAR DEVELOPMENTS OVERSEAS, THE LOTTERIES BOARD HAD APPROACHED THE GOVERNMENT WITH THE PROPOSAL THAT THEY BE PERMITTED TO CONDUCT AN INSTANT LOTTERY IN HONG KONG.

THE BOARD PROPOSED THAT THEY BE ALLOWED TO CONDUCT THE LOTTERY DURING THE RACING CLOSED SEASON, POSSIBLY IN THE SUMMER OF 1993.

"WE HAVE RECEIVED ONLY A PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL. FURTHER DETAILS WOULD HAVE TO BE PROVIDED BY THE BOARD BEFORE A PROPER CONSIDERATION COULD BE GIVEN TO IT," MR SUEN STRESSED.

BUT IN BROAD TERMS, MR SUEN EXPLAINED, THE LOTTERY WOULD BE ORGANISED OVER A FIXED PERIOD WITH VARIOUS LEVELS OF CASH PRIZES BEING AVAILABLE.

TICKETS WOULD COST ABOUT \$10, HE ADDED.

PROCEEDS WOULD BE SPLIT BETWEEN PRIZE MONEY, WELFARE AND COMMUNITY AGENCIES, BETTING DUTY AND ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.

"EXACTLY HOW THE FUNDS RAISED COULD BE USED HAS YET TO BE WORKED OUT IN DETAIL," MR SUEN SAID.

AS TO WHAT FACTORS THE GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ON DECIDING WHETHER TO ENDORSE THE BOARD'S APPLICATION, MR SUEN EMPHASISED THAT AT THIS STAGE, THE ADMINISTRATION WAS CONCENTRATING ON THE BROAD PRINCIPLES OF THE PROPOSAL.

"FACTORS WHICH ARE LIKELY TO AFFECT OUR VIEW INCLUDE THE GOVERNMENT'S ESTABLISHED POLICY ON GAMBLING.

"THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO RESTRICT OPPORTUNITIES FOR GAMBLING BUT TO ALLOW CONTROLLED OUTLETS FOR SUCH GAMBLING ACTIVITIES AS EXIST WHERE A COGENT NEED IS ESTABLISHED.

"THE INSTANT LOTTERY PROPOSAL IS BEING CONSIDERED IN THIS CONTEXT," MR SUEN SAID.

OTHER FACTORS, HE SAID, WOULD INCLUDE THE LIKELY EFFECT OF AN INSTANT LOTTERY ORGANISED BY THE LOTTERIES BOARD ON THE MARK SIX LOTTERY AND THE ANTICIPATED LEVEL OF INCOME WHICH MIGHT BE DERIVED FROM THIS SOURCE.

AS TO WHETHER THE VIEWS OF THE PUBLIC WOULD BE "WIDELY SOUGHT" BEFORE A DECISION ON THE PLAN IS TAKEN, MR SUEN SAID: "IF, AT THE END OF OUR INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSAL, GOVERNMENT ALLOWS THE LOTTERIES BOARD TO DEVELOP THEIR PLANS FURTHER, I WOULD EXPECT THE BOARD TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT PUBLIC OPINION ON THIS MATTER."

HE ASSURED MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CARRY OUT A FULL ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC OPINION BEFORE A FINAL DECISION WAS TAKEN ON THIS OR ANY SIMILAR PROPOSAL.

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AIRCRAFT MOVEMENT AT NEW AIRPORT DESIGNED TO LIMIT  
THE NEED FOR TERRAIN CUTS

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IN THE INITIAL YEARS OF THE OPERATION OF THE NEW AIRPORT AT CHEK LAP KOK, SPECIFIC PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING THE MOVEMENT OF AIRCRAFT HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO LIMIT THE NEED FOR TERRAIN CUTS TO THE BROTHERS ISLANDS, WITHOUT COMPROMISING SAFETY.

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

/MRS CHAN .....

MRS CHAN POINTED OUT THAT BASED ON THE CURRENT FORECASTS OF AIR TRAFFIC GROWTH AND PRESENT TECHNOLOGY, IT WAS ESTIMATED THAT FURTHER TERRAIN CUTS ON NORTH LANTAU AND TAI LAM COUNTRY PARK WERE UNLIKELY TO BE REQUIRED UNTIL 2005 AND 2015 RESPECTIVELY.

"NO FACTOR IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SAFETY IN THE PLANNING AND OPERATION OF AN AIRPORT," MRS CHAN SAID.

SHE POINTED OUT THAT THE NEW AIRPORT HAD BEEN PLANNED TO OPERATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE STANDARDS AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES OF THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANISATION (ICAO) AND IT WAS DESIGNED TO MEET THE FORECAST DEMAND UP TO THE YEAR 2040.

"RECOGNISING THAT THE AVIATION INDUSTRY IS A DYNAMIC INDUSTRY IN TERMS OF TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE, NEW AIRCRAFT TYPES AND SIZES, AND DEMAND FOR NEW SERVICES, VERY CLOSE ATTENTION HAS BEEN PAID AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE PAID TO DESIGNING AN AIRPORT CAPABLE OF ADAPTING TO FUTURE CIRCUMSTANCES," MRS CHAN SAID.

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BILLS TO EXEMPT CERTAIN DEBT INSTRUMENTS FROM PROFITS TAX, STAMP DUTY  
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TWO BILLS WHICH SOUGHT TO EXEMPT HONG KONG DOLLAR DENOMINATED DEBT INSTRUMENTS ISSUED BY CREDIT-WORTHY MULTILATERAL AGENCIES FROM STAMP DUTY AND PROFITS TAX WERE INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE BILLS WERE THE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 AND THE STAMP DUTY (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1992.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILLS, THE SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY, MR YEUNG KAI-YIN, SAID THEY CONFINED THE EXEMPTIONS TO FOUR MULTILATERAL AGENCIES - THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK, THE INTERNATIONAL BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT, THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCE CORPORATION AND THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK.

THE BILLS ALSO PROVIDE THAT ADDITIONS MAY BE MADE TO THE LIST OF EXEMPTED AGENCIES BY RESOLUTION OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

AT PRESENT, YIELDS FROM HONG KONG DOLLAR DENOMINATED DEBT INSTRUMENTS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF EXCHANGE FUND BILLS AND GOVERNMENT BONDS, ARE LIABLE BOTH TO PROFITS TAX AND STAMP DUTY.

MR YEUNG SAID OF THE FOUR EXEMPTED AGENCIES, ONLY THE INTERNATIONAL BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT HAD PREVIOUSLY ISSUED HONG KONG DOLLAR BONDS IN THE TERRITORY.

THE INTRODUCTION OF THE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 WAS PARTICULARLY TIMELY BECAUSE THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK HAD SCHEDULED THE SIGNING CEREMONY FOR ITS FIRST HONG KONG DOLLAR BOND ISSUE AT THE BANK'S ANNUAL MEETING IN HONG KONG IN MAY, HE SAID.

"A SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH MAY ATTRACT MORE FIRST CLASS ISSUES BY MULTILATERAL AGENCIES IN HONG KONG.

"THIS WILL IN TURN HELP TOWARDS THE EXPANSION OF THE HONG KONG DOLLAR CAPITAL MARKETS, AND SO FURTHER PROMOTE HONG KONG'S DEVELOPMENT AS AN INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL CENTRE," MR YEUNG SAID.

DEBATES ON THE BILLS WERE ADJOURNED.

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STAMP DUTY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 INTRODUCED

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A BILL TO EXEMPT INSTRUMENTS OF TRANSFER IN RESPECT OF SHARES REGISTERED OR DEPOSITED IN A RECOGNISED CLEARING HOUSE FROM HAVING TO BE ENDORSED AND FROM PAYMENT OF STAMP DUTY ON TRANSFER WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE STAMP DUTY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, THE SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY, MR YEUNG KAI-YIN, SAID THE BILL CONTAINED TWO MAIN PROVISIONS.

FIRST, IT WOULD REMOVE THE NEED FOR A BROKER, WHEN MAKING A SALE OR PURCHASE OF STOCK HELD BY A RECOGNISED CLEARING HOUSE TO ENDORSE THE INSTRUMENT OF TRANSFER TO THE EFFECT THAT STAMP DUTY HAS BEEN PAID ON THE RELEVANT CONTRACT NOTE.

SECONDLY, BY EXEMPTING SUCH TRANSFER DEEDS FROM DUTY, THE BILL WOULD PROVIDE AN INCENTIVE FOR SETTLEMENTS TO BE EFFECTED THROUGH A RECOGNISED CLEARING HOUSE.

MR YEUNG SAID THE BILL ALSO SOUGHT TO CLARIFY EXISTING PROVISIONS OF THE STAMP DUTY ORDINANCE, WHICH EXEMPTED FROM STAMP DUTY PERSONS BUYING PROPERTIES ON BEHALF OF THE CHINESE MEMBERS OF THE JOINT LIAISON GROUP AND THE LAND COMMISSION, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, AND THE CHINESE VISA OFFICE.

IN ADDITION, THE BILL WOULD EXTEND THE PERIOD FOR SUBMITTING REPORTS TO THE COLLECTOR OF STAMP REVENUE BY USERS OF LICENSED FRANKING MACHINES FROM ONCE A WEEK TO ONCE A MONTH.

"THE EXEMPTION FROM STAMP DUTY OF TRANSFERS REGISTERED IN A RECOGNISED CLEARING HOUSE WOULD INVOLVE A NOTIONAL REVENUE LOSS OF BETWEEN \$6 MILLION AND \$20 MILLION A YEAR," HE SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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CALL FOR CONCERTED EFFORTS TO CARE FOR THE HANDICAPPED

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THE GOVERNMENT WOULD KEEP UP ITS EFFORT TO BUILD NEW HOSTELS FOR THE SEVERELY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED UNTIL THE DEMAND WAS FULLY MET, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON VINCENT CHENG HOI-CHUEN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MRS WONG SAID SIX NEW HOSTELS AND TWO EXPANSION PROJECTS WOULD BE COMPLETED IN THE CURRENT AND NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR, PROVIDING 467 ADDITIONAL PLACES.

AMONG THEM, THE PO LEUNG KUK Y.C. CHENG CENTRE, A SPECIALLY DESIGNED HOSTEL CUM DAY ACTIVITY CENTRE WITH A CAPACITY OF 200 HOSTEL PLACES WILL BE OFFICIALLY OPENED AFTER THE CHINESE NEW YEAR.

"WE PLAN TO PROVIDE A FURTHER 390 ADDITIONAL PLACES, OF WHICH 340 PLACES ARE EXPECTED TO BE AVAILABLE BY 1994/95.

"ADDITIONALLY, WE HAVE JUST COMPLETED A PILOT SCHEME ON RESPITE SERVICE AND WE PLAN TO INTRODUCE A NEW CARE AND ATTENTION SERVICE."

"THREE SUCH HOMES PROVIDING A TOTAL OF 120 PLACES ARE EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED BY 1995/96," SHE SAID.

OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF 1,469 PERSONS AWAITING RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENT, 735 ARE SEVERELY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS.

REGARDING THE CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION TO RESIDENTIAL INSTITUTIONS, SHE SAID THE INDIVIDUAL MUST BE ASSESSED BY A CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST TO BE SEVERELY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED.

THE INDIVIDUAL MUST ALSO HAVE SPECIAL SOCIAL NEEDS, FOR EXAMPLE, THOSE WHO WERE HOMELESS, OR CAME FROM AN UNFAVOURABLE HOME ENVIRONMENT AND WHO COULD NOT LIVE INDEPENDENTLY, SHE ADDED.

"BARRING CASES REQUIRING MEDICAL CARE, SEVERELY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS ARE ADMITTED AS LONG AS THEY SATISFY THE ABOVE CRITERIA AND AS VACANCIES EXIST," SHE SAID.

MRS WONG NOTED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAD TAKEN A NUMBER OF MEASURES TO ASSIST FAMILIES TO LOOK AFTER THEIR SEVERELY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS.

APART FROM INCREASING THE NUMBER OF RESIDENTIAL PLACES, FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT YET IN THESE HOSTELS, A HIGHER DISABILITY ALLOWANCE, PRESENTLY AT \$1,450 PER MONTH PER INDIVIDUAL, HAS BEEN INTRODUCED SINCE 1987 TO HELP PARENTS LOOK AFTER THOSE WHO NEED SPECIAL CARE AT HOME.

ANY SEVERELY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PERSON WHO REQUIRES CONSTANT ATTENDANCE IN HIS DAILY LIFE BUT IS NOT RECEIVING SUCH CARE IN A GOVERNMENT OR SUBVENTED INSTITUTION IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE ALLOWANCE.

/SHE POINTED .....

SHE POINTED OUT THAT OF THE WHOLE RANGE OF SERVICES FOR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS, THERE WERE SPECIFICALLY FIVE HOME-BASED TRAINING TEAMS.

THESE TEAMS PROVIDE TRAINING TO 400 FAMILIES AT ANY ONE TIME, TO HELP FAMILIES TO LOOK AFTER THEIR SEVERELY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED RELATIVES AT HOME.

MRS WONG URGED NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS, THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE AND PARENTS TO WORK TOGETHER WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN PROVIDING BETTER CARE FOR THE HANDICAPPED.

"THE VALUE OF A CO-ORDINATED JOINT EFFORT HAS BEEN ADVANCED BY MANY LEADING AUTHORITIES IN THIS FIELD AND HAS BEEN RECOGNISED IN THE SIXTH ASIAN CONFERENCE ON THE SUBJECT OF SERVICES FOR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS AND, INDEED, HAS BEEN PRACTISED IN HONG KONG," SHE SAID.

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#### ADEQUATE SHELTERS AND BLANKETS FOR THOSE IN NEED

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PERSONS WHO NEED SHELTER FROM THE COLD CAN GO TO THE SHELTERS IN COMMUNITY CENTRES AND STREET SLEEPERS ARE GIVEN ADEQUATE BLANKETS TO KEEP THEM WARM.

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

MRS WONG SAID: "WHEN IT IS FORECAST THAT THE TEMPERATURE WILL FALL TO 10 DEGREES CELSIUS OR BELOW DURING COLD WEATHER, THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT WILL DISTRIBUTE BLANKETS AND SLEEPING BAGS TO STREET SLEEPERS.

"THE CITY AND NEW TERRITORIES ADMINISTRATION WILL OPEN SHELTERS IN COMMUNITY CENTRES AND ESTATE COMMUNITY CENTRES FOR PERSONS WHO NEED SHELTER FROM THE COLD."

SHE EMPHASISED THAT THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT HAD RECEIVED NO COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE QUALITY OF ITS BLANKETS AND SLEEPING BAGS.

"THERE IS VERY LITTLE DEMAND FOR WARM CLOTHING. ACCORDINGLY, ONLY BLANKETS AND SLEEPING BAGS ARE DISTRIBUTED DURING A COLD SPELL," SHE SAID.

SHE ADDED THAT STREET SLEEPERS COULD ASK FOR MORE THAN ONE BLANKET IF THERE WAS A NEED.

"THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR DISTRIBUTING BLANKETS AND SLEEPING BAGS AND OPENING SHELTERS WHEN IT IS FORECAST THAT THE TEMPERATURE WILL DROP TO 10 DEGREES CELSIUS OR BELOW ARE CONSIDERED SATISFACTORY," MRS WONG SAID.

ON THE CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN THE TWO DEPARTMENTS AND THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY, SHE SAID THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY ISSUED WEATHER FORECAST BULLETINS TWICE A DAY (AROUND NOON AND 4 PM) ON WEEKDAYS TO THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT.

THE CITY AND NEW TERRITORIES ADMINISTRATION TELEPHONED THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY AROUND 4.15 PM FOR A TEMPERATURE FORECAST FOR THE NIGHT WHEN NECESSARY.

ON SATURDAYS, SUNDAYS AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS, THE TWO DEPARTMENTS WOULD CONTACT THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY BY TELEPHONE FOR WEATHER FORECASTS.

IF THE WEATHER CHANGED UNEXPECTEDLY, THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY WOULD CONTACT THE TWO DEPARTMENTS, MRS WONG SAID.

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#### SEA PASSAGES FOR RETIRING CIVIL SERVANTS TO BE REPLACED

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THERE WERE PLANS TO REPLACE THE EXISTING SCHEME OF PROVIDING SEA PASSAGES TO ELIGIBLE OVERSEAS OFFICERS IN THE CIVIL SERVICE WITH AN EX-GRATIA PAYMENT, THE SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE, MR BARRIE WIGGHAM, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON STEPHEN NG, MR WIGGHAM EXPLAINED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONSIDERING WITHDRAWING THE SCHEME BECAUSE IT WAS NO LONGER JUSTIFIED IN PRESENT DAY CIRCUMSTANCES.

HE STRESSED THAT THE TOTAL COST OF EX-GRATIA PAYMENT WOULD NOT EXCEED THE COST OF MAINTAINING THE PRESENT SCHEME.

MR WIGGHAM SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD CONSULTED THE STAFF ASSOCIATIONS CONCERNED, AND WOULD BE SEEKING THE ADVICE OF THE STANDING COMMISSION ON CIVIL SERVICE SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE AND OTHER ADVISORY COMMITTEES ON CIVIL SERVICE PAY AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE.

HE HOPED THAT A DECISION COULD BE REACHED WITHIN THE NEXT TWO MONTHS, FOLLOWING WHICH THE GOVERNMENT WOULD APPROACH THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL FOR FUNDS TO FINANCE THE NEW SCHEME.

REFERRING TO THE EXISTING SCHEME, MR WIGGHAM POINTED OUT THAT OVERSEAS OFFICERS APPOINTED BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 1984 WERE ELIGIBLE FOR A SEA PASSAGE TO THEIR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN WHEN THEY LEAVE THE SERVICE PROVIDED THEY MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- \* PENSIONABLE OFFICERS WHO RETIRE AT THE AGE OF 50 OR OVER; AND
- \* AGREEMENT OFFICERS AGED 50 OR OVER ON SATISFACTORY COMPLETION OF NOT LESS THAN 15 YEARS OF PUBLIC SERVICE IN HONG KONG OR ANOTHER DEPENDENT TERRITORY.

/AN OFFICER'S .....

AN OFFICER'S SPOUSE AND DEPENDENT CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 19 WERE ALSO ELIGIBLE FOR A SEA PASSAGE, SUBJECT TO A MAXIMUM OF FIVE FULL-FARE PASSAGES, HE ADDED.

MR WIGGHAM SAID AT PRESENT, SEA PASSAGES WERE ONLY AVAILABLE BETWEEN HONG KONG AND THE UNITED KINGDOM ON THE 'CANBERRA', WHICH SAILS FROM HONG KONG ONCE A YEAR.

THE COST OF A SEA PASSAGE VARIED ACCORDING TO THE ROUTE WHICH MIGHT VARY FROM YEAR TO YEAR AND THE GRADE OF PASSAGE TO WHICH THE OFFICER WAS ENTITLED.

IN 1992, THE COST OF A SEA PASSAGE ON THE CANBERRA RANGED FROM \$39,200 TO \$68,502, MR WIGGHAM SAID.

"OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS," HE SAID, "SEA PASSAGES WERE GRANTED TO 98 CIVIL SERVANTS AND 92 DEPENDENTS. THE TOTAL EXPENDITURE, BASED ON PREVAILING PRICES AT THE TIME, WAS \$9.79 MILLION."

HE NOTED THAT OF THE 1,639 OVERSEAS OFFICERS APPOINTED BEFORE DECEMBER 1, 1984, ABOUT 780 WOULD HAVE REACHED THE AGE OF 50 AND COMPLETED 15 OR MORE YEARS OF SERVICE BY JUNE 30 1997.

THE GOVERNMENT ESTIMATED THAT AT CURRENT PRICES, THE COST UP TO JUNE 30, 1997 WOULD BE ABOUT \$29.5 MILLION, MR WIGGHAM SAID.

"THE INCREASE COMPARED WITH THE LAST FIVE YEARS IS LARGELY DUE TO THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE OFFICERS," HE ADDED.

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CASES OF RESISTING ARREST AND ASSAULTING POLICE EXPLAINED

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THE POLICE HAVE INSTITUTED PROSECUTIONS OF 3,413 CASES FOR RESISTING ARREST AND 2,602 CASES FOR ASSAULTS ON POLICE OFFICERS DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY REV THE HON FUNG CHI-WOOD AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR ASPREY SAID THE 3,413 CASES FOR RESISTING ARREST COMPRISED 1,030 CASES IN 1989, 1,178 CASES IN 1990 AND 1,205 CASES IN 1991. THE BREAKDOWN OF 2,602 CASES FOR ASSAULTS ON POLICE OFFICERS FOR THE SAME PERIOD WAS 807 CASES, 842 CASES AND 953 CASES RESPECTIVELY.

REGARDING DETAILS OF CONVICTION, ACQUITTAL AND PENALTIES FOR THOSE OFFENCES, MR ASPREY SAID THEY WERE AVAILABLE ONLY IN CASES WHERE ONE OF THOSE OFFENCES WAS THE PRINCIPAL CHARGE, AND NOT IN CASES WHERE IT WAS SUBSIDIARY TO A CHARGE FOR A MORE SERIOUS OFFENCE.

/HE SAID .....

HE SAID THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WOULD BE CHARGED BY THE POLICE FOR THE OFFENCES OF RESISTING ARREST OR ASSAULTING THE POLICE VARY FROM CASE TO CASE.

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN THE OFFENCE OF RESISTING ARREST WAS A FORCIBLE ATTEMPT TO AVOID ARREST; WHILE IN THE OFFENCE OF ASSAULTING A POLICE OFFICER, IT WAS THE INTENTIONAL OFFER OF VIOLENCE TO A POLICE OFFICER, HE EXPLAINED.

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#### MEASURES TO TACKLE FLOODING IN NORTHERN NEW TERRITORIES

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A NUMBER OF MEASURES ARE BEING INTRODUCED AS RECOMMENDED UNDER THE TERRITORIAL LAND DRAINAGE AND FLOOD CONTROL STRATEGY STUDY TO TACKLE THE FLOODING PROBLEM IN NORTHERN NEW TERRITORIES.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR BOWEN LEUNG, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TIK CHI-YUEN, MR LEUNG SAID THE DRAINAGE SERVICES DEPARTMENT WAS CLEARING UP ALL THE CROSS ROAD DRAINS AND CULVERTS TO ENABLE THE DRAINAGE NETWORK TO OPERATE AT MAXIMUM CAPACITY.

DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENT WORKS AT TAI HANG, GANGES RIVERS, KWU TUNG AND MUK WU, COSTING \$6.4 MILLION, WILL BE COMPLETED BY MID-1994.

"FURTHERMORE, A ROAD EMBANKMENT TO PROTECT SHEUNG SHUI TSUEN FROM FLOOD WATER AND A PUMP STORAGE SYSTEM TO DRAIN THE LOW LYING AREAS WERE COMPLETED IN 1990 AT A COST OF \$25 MILLION. THE TOTAL AREA PROTECTED BY THE SCHEME IS 26 HECTARES," HE SAID.

"LONG TERM PLANS TO INTRODUCE MAJOR CHANNEL IMPROVEMENTS WORKS AT RIVER INDUS AND OTHER STREAMCOURSES IN THE NORTH DISTRICT ARE ALSO BEING DRAWN UP."

MR LEUNG SAID THE DRAINAGE SERVICES DEPARTMENT WAS ALSO DESIGNING A COMPREHENSIVE PACKAGE OF DRAINAGE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL MEASURES FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE NEW TERRITORIES AS A WHOLE.

THESE MEASURES INCLUDE A FLOOD SIREN AND A REAL-TIME FLOOD FORECASTING SYSTEM WHICH WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED IN MAY THIS YEAR AND FEBRUARY 1993.

MR LEUNG POINTED OUT THAT NEW LEGISLATION WAS BEING PREPARED FOR INTRODUCTION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TOWARDS THE END OF THIS YEAR TO EMPOWER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS TO GAIN ACCESS TO PRIVATE LAND TO MAINTAIN WATERCOURSES.

/"DRAINAGE IMPACT .....

"DRAINAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENTS HAVE, SINCE DECEMBER 1990, BEEN REQUIRED OF ALL NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT PERMISSION WILL NOT BE GIVEN UNLESS SUCH DEVELOPMENTS WILL NOT AGGRAVATE THE FLOODING PROBLEM IN AREAS WITHIN DRAINAGE BASINS," HE SAID.

ON THE TRAINING OF SHENZHEN RIVER, MR LEUNG SAID IT WAS A JOINT PROJECT BETWEEN THE HONG KONG AND SHENZHEN AUTHORITIES AND HENCE THE INVOLVEMENT AND COOPERATION OF BOTH PARTIES WERE REQUIRED.

"ON THE SIDE OF THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT, THE DRAINAGE SERVICES DEPARTMENT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROJECT. DISCUSSIONS HAD BEEN HELD WITH THE SHENZHEN AUTHORITIES OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS BUT THERE IS NO FINAL CONCLUSION ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE PROJECT," HE SAID.

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REVIEW COMPLETED ON VISA REQUIREMENTS  
FOR FORMER SOVIET BLOC NATIONALS

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS COMPLETED A REVIEW OF VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR NATIONALS OF THE FORMER SOVIET BLOC COUNTRIES.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MARTIN BARROW IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR ASPREY SAID CHANGES TO SIMPLIFY THE PROCEDURES AND REDUCE PROCESSING TIME WOULD BE INTRODUCED FROM FEBRUARY 1.

UNDER A VISA WAIVER AGREEMENT CONCLUDED WITH POLAND LAST YEAR, POLISH NATIONALS MAY NOW ENTER HONG KONG FOR BUSINESS OR TOURIST VISITS OF UP TO SEVEN DAYS WITHOUT VISAS.

HONG KONG RESIDENTS WITH BRITISH DEPENDENT TERRITORIES CITIZEN OR BRITISH NATIONAL (OVERSEAS) PASSPORTS MAY SIMILARLY VISIT POLAND WITHOUT VISAS.

"WE ARE DISCUSSING RECIPROCAL VISA WAIVER ARRANGEMENTS WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND HUNGARY," MR ASPREY SAID.

HE ADDED THAT PENDING CONCLUSION OF SUCH AGREEMENTS, VISAS TO VISIT HONG KONG FOR BUSINESS OR TOURING COULD BE ISSUED TO NATIONALS OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND HUNGARY WITHIN THREE WORKING DAYS.

REGARDING NATIONALS OF AFGHANISTAN, ALBANIA, BULGARIA, CUBA AND MONGOLIA, THEY MAY ALSO OBTAIN BOTH BUSINESS AND TOURIST VISAS FOR HONG KONG WITHIN THREE WORKING DAYS.

MEANWHILE, NATIONALS OF CAMBODIA, LAOS, ROMANIA, THE FORMER SOVIET UNION (INCLUDING THE BALTIC STATES) AND VIETNAM CAN COME TO HONG KONG FOR BOTH BUSINESS AND TOURIST VISITS. THE VISA ISSUING TIME WILL IN FUTURE BE SEVEN WORKING DAYS.

/MR ASPREY .....

MR ASPREY SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD MAINTAINED PREVIOUS REQUIREMENTS FOR NATIONALS OF NORTH KOREA.

VISAS WILL BE ISSUED ONLY FOR BUSINESS VISITS; THE TIME TAKEN TO ISSUE SUCH VISAS IS NORMALLY SIX WEEKS.

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TWO WAYS TO DISCONTINUE CRIMINAL CASES IN HIGH COURT

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CRIMINAL CASES IN THE HIGH COURT CAN BE DISCONTINUED BY OR ON THE INSTRUCTION OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL IN TWO WAYS -- BY OFFERING OF NO EVIDENCE SO THAT AN ACQUITTAL WOULD FOLLOW, AND THE ENTRY OF A NOLLE PROSEQUI.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON JEREMY MATHEWS, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON JAMES TO.

MR MATHEWS SAID NO STATISTICS WERE KEPT OF CASES IN WHICH NO EVIDENCE WAS OFFERED.

STATISTICS FOR THE ENTRY OF A NOLLE PROSEQUI HAD BEEN KEPT SINCE 1986. IN THE PERIOD FROM JANUARY 1, 1986 TO DATE, A NOLLE PROSEQUI WAS ENTERED IN 26 CASES IN THE HIGH COURT.

ON THE REASONS FOR DECIDING EITHER NOT TO LAY CHARGES OR TO DISCONTINUE PROCEEDINGS, MR MATHEWS SAID THE FACTORS THAT WERE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT WHEN DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO PROSECUTE IN A PARTICULAR CASE WERE GIVEN BY HIS PREDECESSOR IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ON MARCH 25, 1987 AND THEY STILL APPLIED TODAY.

HE NOTED THAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH A NOLLE PROSEQUI MIGHT BE ENTERED WERE DESCRIBED BY HIM IN THE COUNCIL ON JANUARY 18, 1989.

"IN DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO COMMENCE PROCEEDINGS OR TO DISCONTINUE PARTICULAR PROCEEDINGS THAT HAVE ALREADY BEEN COMMENCED, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, OR HIS PROSECUTING COUNSEL WHERE RELEVANT, MAY CONSULT THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES TO SEEK THEIR VIEWS BUT THE DECISION REMAINS THAT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

"UNTIL 1989, A NOLLE PROSEQUI COULD BE SIGNED BY THE CROWN PROSECUTOR OR ONE OF HIS DEPUTIES UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY, BUT THE CURRENT PRACTICE IS FOR THE ATTORNEY GENERAL PERSONALLY TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO ENTER A NOLLE PROSEQUI," MR MATHEWS SAID.

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COMPLAINTS FULLY INVESTIGATED ON FALSE ALLEGATION  
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EACH CASE INVOLVING A COMPLAINT THAT A POLICE OFFICER HAS MADE A FALSE ALLEGATION OF A CRIMINAL OFFENCE AGAINST A PERSON IS THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATED.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY REV THE HON FUNG CHI-WOOD IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

"IF THERE IS EVIDENCE TO SHOW THAT AN OFFICER HAS INDEED MADE SUCH A FALSE ALLEGATION, HE IS LIABLE TO CRIMINAL CHARGES," HE SAID.

IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, 107 COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE OF FABRICATION OF EVIDENCE WERE INVESTIGATED.

NONE OF THESE COMPLAINTS HAD BEEN SUBSTANTIATED, THOUGH 15 REMAINED UNDER INVESTIGATION, HE SAID.

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CONSULTATION CONTINUES ON PLAN TO ABOLISH REPEATER ALLOWANCE  
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THE GOVERNMENT HAD CONSULTED AND WAS CONTINUING TO CONSULT EDUCATIONAL BODIES ON A PLAN TO ABOLISH THE REPEATER ALLOWANCE IN THE PLACES ALLOCATION SYSTEM FOR SCHOOLS, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON STEPHEN NG, MR CHAN SAID A DECISION ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE PLAN AND THE FINAL DETAILS OF THE MEASURE WAS AWAITING THE OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION.

HE SAID THE RATIONALE OF THE PLAN WAS TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PUPILS ALLOCATED TO A CLASS FROM 38 TO 40, THEREBY REDUCING THE NUMBER OF CLASSES (AND THE COSTS INVOLVED) TO BE PROVIDED THROUGH THE PUBLICLY FUNDED SCHOOL SYSTEM.

SCHOOLS WISHING TO ACCOMMODATE REPEATERS WOULD HAVE TO EXERCISE THE OPTION OF INCREASING CLASS SIZE UP TO 42, HE SAID.

THE SECRETARY SAID THE EFFECT OF THE PLAN WOULD BE TO INCREASE CLASS SIZE "MARGINALLY".

HE EXPLAINED THAT ALTHOUGH THE REPEATER ALLOWANCE OF TWO PUPILS PER CLASS HAD BEEN AVAILABLE TO SCHOOLS FOR YEARS, IT HAD NEVER BEEN TAKEN UP IN FULL.

IN 1991, ONLY 29 PER CENT, 49 PER CENT AND 54 PER CENT OF THE ALLOWANCE WAS TAKEN UP BY REPEATERS AT PRIMARY ONE, SECONDARY ONE AND SECONDARY FOUR RESPECTIVELY.

/MOREOVER, THE .....

MOREOVER, THE AVERAGE CLASS SIZE IN SCHOOLS HAD BEEN DECLINING OVER THE PAST DECADE AND NOW AVERAGED 34.68 FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND 36.7 FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

OF ALL CLASSES IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS RECEIVING STUDENTS UNDER THE PLACES ALLOCATION SYSTEMS NOW, A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION HAD LESS THAN 40 PUPILS, HE SAID.

MR CHAN SAID THE JUSTIFICATION FOR INTRODUCING THE MEASURE UNDER CONSIDERATION WAS BUDGETARY.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT AS A WHOLE MUST PRODUCE SAVINGS OF 2.6 PER CENT OF PROJECTED RECURRENT EXPENDITURE BY 1994-95.

"IN LINE WITH THIS GOVERNMENT DIRECTIVE WHICH APPLIES ACROSS THE BOARD, THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN ASKED TO PRODUCE SAVINGS OF ABOUT \$400 MILLION OVER THREE YEARS FROM 1992-93 TO 1994-95," HE SAID.

MR CHAN SAID THE PLAN WAS ESTIMATED TO PRODUCE TOTAL SAVINGS OF \$406.4 MILLION FOR 1992 TO 1995.

HE SAID: "THESE SAVINGS ARE AIMED AT SCALING BACK THE PROJECTED GROWTH IN RECURRENT EXPENDITURE AND WOULD NOT BE AVAILABLE FOR REDEPLOYMENT WITHIN THE EDUCATION AREA OR TO OTHER AREAS. IN THIS CONNECTION, THEY ARE SEPARATE AND DIFFERENT FROM EARLIER BASELINE SAVINGS WHICH HAVE ALREADY BEEN REDEPLOYED ON IMPROVING EDUCATION."

ON THE POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSED MEASURE, MR CHAN SAID ACCORDING TO AN ASSESSMENT MADE, THERE WOULD BE NO IMPLICATIONS FOR PARENTS OR CLASSES WITH A HIGH PROPORTION OF BAND FIVE PUPILS. THERE WOULD BE LITTLE EFFECT ON CLASSES WITH AN ENROLMENT OF 38 OR LESS BUT SOME EFFECT ON THE OTHER CLASSES. IN THE LATTER CASE, THE UNDESIRABLE EFFECT OF A LARGER CLASS OF 42 WOULD BE MARGINAL AND COULD BE EXPECTED TO BE REDUCED OVER TIME.

ANY INCREASE IN INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS' WORKLOAD WOULD BE SLIGHT, HE SAID.

THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT ESTIMATED THAT ABOUT 860 TEACHERS WOULD BE AFFECTED BY THE PROPOSED REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF CLASSES, BUT NO REDUNDANCIES WOULD OCCUR BECAUSE THEY COULD BE ABSORBED BY THE OVERALL DEMAND FOR TEACHERS.

THE RANKING OF PRIMARY SCHOOL HEADS WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THIS MEASURE, MR CHAN SAID.

MR CHAN SAID: "AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, THE GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS THAT IT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE, AS A SHORT TERM MEASURE, TO DISPENSE WITH THE PRESENT REPEATER ALLOWANCE."

HE SAID IN ADDITION TO ACHIEVING THE NECESSARY SAVINGS, THIS MEASURE WOULD MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF FLOATING CLASSES IN OVER-CROWDED SECONDARY SCHOOLS AS WELL AS FREE CLASSROOMS AND TEACHERS TO MEET THE CURRENT POLICY TARGET OF PROVIDING SECONDARY SIX PLACES FOR ONE-THIRD OF THE RELEVANT SECONDARY FOUR ENROLMENT.

HE SAID: " THIS PLAN HAS BEEN PROPOSED AFTER EXHAUSTIVE EXAMINATION OF ALTERNATIVES AND IS CONSIDERED THE ONLY REALISTIC AND LEAST DISRUPTIVE WAY TO PRODUCE THE NECESSARY SAVINGS, WHILE MINIMISING ANY ADVERSE EFFECTS ON THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED."

MR CHAN NOTED THAT THE PLAN WAS NOT SEEN BY THOSE BODIES CONSULTED AS A POSITIVE STEP BUT THAT THERE WAS ALSO GENERAL ACCEPTANCE THAT IT WAS A REALISTIC AND PROBABLY UNAVOIDABLE MEASURE IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

"FOLLOWING INITIAL DISCUSSIONS WITH INTERESTED PARTIES, THE ORIGINAL PLAN HAS BEEN MODIFIED TO CATER FOR THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF PUPILS MOST IN NEED OF TEACHERS SUPPORT. THESE DISCUSSIONS ARE STILL ON-GOING," HE SAID.

PARENT ASSOCIATIONS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC HAD NOT BEEN CONSULTED SPECIFICALLY PARTLY BECAUSE THE PROPOSED CHANGES INVOLVE TECHNICAL ADJUSTMENTS TO THE PLACES ALLOCATION SYSTEMS WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT AFFECT THEM INDIVIDUALLY, AND PARTLY BECAUSE SCHOOLS AND OTHER REPRESENTATIVE BODIES CONSULTED BY THE GOVERNMENT ALREADY PROVIDE AMPLE CHANNELS FOR PARENTAL VIEWS ON THE GENERAL THRUST OF THE PROPOSAL TO BE AIRED, THE SECRETARY ADDED.

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OVER 1,000 SCHOOLS RUN BY SPONSORING BODIES IN 1991/92

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THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT A TOTAL OF 449 SECONDARY AND 553 PRIMARY SCHOOLS WERE RUN BY 287 SPONSORING BODIES DURING THE 1991/92 SCHOOL YEAR.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHEUNG MAN-KWONG, HE SAID 39 SCHOOLS HAD BEEN ALLOCATED TO 28 SPONSORS IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS.

OF THESE APPLICATIONS, 13 WERE APPROVED IN ONE YEAR; 14 IN LESS THAN FIVE YEARS; EIGHT IN LESS THAN 10 YEARS, AND FOUR TOOK 10 OR MORE YEARS TO BE APPROVED.

ON THE CRITERIA FOR APPROVING SPONSORING BODIES' APPLICATIONS TO RUN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS, MR CHAN POINTED OUT THAT THE APPLICANT MUST BE PROPERLY INCORPORATED AS A NON-PROFIT-MAKING BODY AND BE EXEMPTED FROM TAXES UNDER SECTION 88 OF THE INLAND REVENUE ORDINANCE.

HE ADDED THAT ITS MEMORANDUM AND ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION SHOULD INCLUDE STANDARD CLAUSES AND ARTICLES SPECIFIED BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION.

/WHEN THESE .....

WHEN THESE BASIC REQUIREMENTS ARE MET AND NEW SCHOOLS ARE AVAILABLE FOR ALLOCATION TO SPONSORS, SELECTION IS MADE ON THE MERITS OF INDIVIDUAL APPLICANTS, HAVING REGARD TO EACH ORGANISATION'S EXPERIENCE IN EDUCATION, FINANCIAL CONDITION AND THE NUMBER AND LOCALITY OF SCHOOLS IT IS ALREADY OPERATING, HE SAID.

"OTHER FACTORS ARE ALSO TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT, SUCH AS THE RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION OF THE APPLICANT, THE NEED TO REPROVISION ITS EXISTING SCHOOLS, AS WELL AS ANY SPECIAL LINKAGE BETWEEN THE ORGANISATION AND THE DISTRICT CONCERNED," HE ADDED.

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MEASURES TO REDUCE TRAFFIC CONGESTION AT MAN KAM TO

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A NUMBER OF MEASURES HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED OR ARE BEING ACTIVELY PURSUED TO FURTHER REDUCE TRAFFIC CONGESTION AT THE MAN KAM TO BORDER CROSSING FOLLOWING THE FULL OPENING OF THE LOK MA CHAU CROSSING.

THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR MICHAEL LEUNG, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THIS TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON RITA FAN, MR LEUNG SAID THESE MEASURES INCLUDED THE ISSUE OF NEW CROSS-BORDER VEHICLE PERMITS ONLY FOR THE LOK MA CHAU CROSSING, SPEEDING UP THE PROCESSING TIME FOR VEHICLES AND FURTHER DIVERSION OF VEHICLES TO LOK MA CHAU.

MR LEUNG EXPLAINED THAT SINCE THE OPERATING PERIOD OF LOK MA CHAU BORDER CROSSING WAS EXTENDED FROM EIGHT TO 12 AND A HALF HOURS PER DAY, THE NUMBER OF VEHICLE CROSSINGS HAD INCREASED FROM UNDER 5,000 TO MORE THAN 5,500 PER DAY.

"THIS INCREASED UTILISATION HAS RESULTED MAINLY FROM THE CONTINUED DIVERSION OF VEHICLES FROM MAN KAM TO TO LOK MA CHAU.

"FOR A WHILE, THIS SEEMED TO HAVE EASED THE CONGESTION PROBLEM AT MAN KAM TO.

"HOWEVER, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE REDUCED TRAFFIC, DRIVERS OF GOODS VEHICLES WITH PERMITS TO USE MAN KAM TO HAVE BEEN MAKING ADDITIONAL TRIPS THROUGH THAT CROSSING, THEREBY MAINTAINING THROUGHPUT CLOSE TO ITS PRACTICAL CAPACITY OF 9,700 VEHICLES A DAY.

"PEAK HOUR CONGESTION HAS THEREFORE REMAINED A PROBLEM," HE SAID.

MR LEUNG SAID SINCE NOVEMBER 19 LAST YEAR, OFFICIALS ON BOTH SIDES HAD BEEN PROCESSING VEHICLES AT MAN KAM TO AT THE RATE OF ABOUT 200 TO 250 PER HALF HOUR.

"THIS IMPROVED RATE HAS SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED QUEUE LENGTHS AND THE ASSOCIATED WAITING TIME. THE NEW ARRANGEMENT HAS NOW BECOME PERMANENT."

ON FURTHER DIVERSION OF VEHICLES, MR LEUNG SAID MORE THAN 2,900 VEHICLES ORIGINALLY AUTHORISED TO USE MAN KAM TO HAD BEEN DIVERTED TO LOK MA CHAU SINCE ITS OPENING IN DECEMBER 1989. THIS NUMBER WOULD SOON INCREASE TO 3,170.

"IN ADDITION, WE ARE DISCUSSING WITH THE CHINESE SIDE THE POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER VEHICLE DIVERSIONS," HE SAID.

TRAFFIC DISCIPLINE ON NT EXPRESSWAYS ENFORCED

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THE POLICE HAD BEEN IN RECENT YEARS PROVIDED WITH 35 ADDITIONAL POSTS AND 10 EXTRA VEHICLES TO MAINTAIN TRAFFIC DISCIPLINE ON EXPRESSWAYS IN THE NEW TERRITORIES, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR MICHAEL LEUNG, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON SIMON IP SIK-ON, MR LEUNG SAID THIS HAD ALLOWED INCREASED PATROLLING OF THESE ROADS TO ENFORCE THE NEW LEGISLATION EFFECTIVELY.

"IN ADDITION, SPECIAL POLICE OPERATIONS ARE MOUNTED ON THE TOLO HIGHWAY AND OTHER NT EXPRESSWAYS FROM TIME TO TIME, TARGETTED AT SPECIFIC TRAFFIC OFFENCES INCLUDING THOSE COMMITTED UNDER THE NEW LEGISLATION.

"IN THE NEW TERRITORIES AS A WHOLE, THERE HAVE SO FAR BEEN 520 PROSECUTIONS FOR OFFENCES UNDER THE NEW EXPRESSWAYS LEGISLATION, INCLUDING 412 CASES OF UNAUTHORISED USE OF THE OFFSIDE LANE AND 44 CASES OF OVERTAKING IN THE NEARSIDE LANE," HE SAID.

MR LEUNG SAID THE POLICE USED RADAR AND OTHER SPEED DETECTION EQUIPMENT TO IDENTIFY VEHICLES EXCEEDING THE SPEED LIMITS ON THE TOLO HIGHWAY.

"IN THE PAST THREE MONTHS, THE POLICE HAVE ACTED ON 10,567 SPEEDING OFFENCES COMMITTED ON NT EXPRESSWAYS," HE SAID.

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## SALT WATER SYSTEM FOR FLUSHING UNDERWAY

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THE PERCENTAGE OF THE TERRITORY'S POPULATION USING SALT WATER FOR FLUSHING WILL BE ABOUT 90 PER CENT WHEN THE PROPOSED SALT WATER SYSTEMS ARE TO BE COMPLETED PROGRESSIVELY BY 1995.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON GILBERT LEUNG KAM-TO IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR BLAKE SAID IT WAS IMPRACTICAL AND UNECONOMICAL TO PROVIDE SALT WATER FOR FLUSHING FOR THE REMAINING 10 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

"NEVERTHELESS, THE SITUATION WILL BE CLOSELY MONITORED AND REVIEWS MADE WHENEVER THERE ARE NEW CIRCUMSTANCES," HE SAID.

MR BLAKE POINTED OUT THAT THE AMOUNT OF FRESH WATER USED FOR FLUSHING WAS CURRENTLY 33.3 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL CONSUMPTION OF FLUSHING WATER. THE AMOUNT OF FRESH WATER USED FOR FLUSHING WAS 6.9 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL CONSUMPTION OF POTABLE WATER.

AT PRESENT, THE AREAS USING FRESH WATER FOR FLUSHING PURPOSES ARE WAN CHAI, SHAU KEI WAN, AP LEI CHAU, POKFULAM, SHA TIN AND MA ON SHAN NEW TOWN, TSEUNG KWAN O NEW TOWN, TAI PO NEW TOWN, YUEN LONG, SHEUNG SHUI, FANLING, SAI KUNG AND THE OUTLYING ISLANDS.

EXCEPT FOR YUEN LONG, SHEUNG SHUI, FANLING, SAI KUNG AND THE OUTLYING ISLANDS, SALT WATER SUPPLY SYSTEMS ARE PROPOSED AND WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN A FEW YEARS' TIME.

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## 29 SPEAK IN LEGCO DEBATE ON IMPORTATION OF LABOUR

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A TOTAL OF 29 LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLORS DEBATED FOR FOUR AND A HALF HOURS ON A MOTION ON IMPORTATION OF LABOUR IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL YESTERDAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE MOTION MOVED BY THE HON PANG CHUN-HOI WHICH URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO REVIEW THE "GENERAL LABOUR IMPORTATION SCHEME" AND TO SHELVE THE SCHEME FOR THE TIME BEING WAS DEFEATED.

THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, SPOKE ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT.

EIGHT MEMBERS SPOKE ON ANOTHER MOTION, MOVED BY THE HON SELINA CHOW, ON THE APPOINTMENT OF A SELECT COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE 1991 LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS. THE MOTION WAS PASSED.

/IN ADDITION .....

IN ADDITION, NINE MEMBERS SPOKE IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, WHICH WAS RAISED BY DR THE HON SAMUEL WONG.

THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, AND THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR STUART HARBINSON, REPLIED FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

A TOTAL OF SIX BILLS WERE PASSED AT YESTERDAY'S MEETING.

THE NOISE CONTROL (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991, THE STAMP DUTY (AMENDMENT) (NO. 4) BILL 1991 AND THE SMOKING (PUBLIC HEALTH) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991 WERE PASSED WITH AMENDMENTS.

THE ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) (NO. 5) BILL 1991, THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991 AND THE COPYRIGHT (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991 WERE PASSED WITHOUT AMENDMENTS.

FOUR BILLS - STAMP DUTY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, STAMP DUTY (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1992; AND MEDICAL REGISTRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 - WERE INTRODUCED FOR FIRST AND SECOND READINGS. DEBATES ON THEM WERE ADJOURNED.

GOVERNOR VISITS ROYAL OBSERVATORY

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THE GOVERNOR, SIR DAVID WILSON, VISITED THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY TODAY (WEDNESDAY) TO SEE ITS OPERATIONS.

HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY, MR PATRICK SHAM.

SIR DAVID TOURED THE CENTRAL FORECASTING OFFICE WHERE HE WAS BRIEFED ON THE EQUIPMENT USED FOR WEATHER FORECASTING, INCLUDING MODERN DISPLAY UNITS SHOWING SATELLITE IMAGES OF CLOUD MOVEMENTS OVER THE REGION AND RADAR PICTURES OF RAIN FALLING ON AND AROUND HONG KONG.

HE TOOK A PARTICULAR INTEREST IN THE ELECTRONIC RAINGAUGE NETWORK USED FOR ASSESSING THE RISK OF FLOODS AND LANDSLIPS, AND THE EQUIPMENT AND PROCEDURES INVOLVED IN ISSUING TYPHOON WARNINGS.

SIR DAVID THEN VISITED THE EXHIBITION HALL TO SEE THE DISPLAYS SHOWING THE WORK OF THE OBSERVATORY FOR VISITORS AND SCHOOL GROUPS.

"THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY IS MAKING GOOD USE OF SOME VERY UP-TO-DATE EQUIPMENT," SIR DAVID SAID.

"ITS SERVICES ARE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. TYPHOONS AND HEAVY-RAIN FORECASTS SAVE LIVES. THERE ARE MANY, LIKE OUR FISHERMEN, WHO RELY HEAVILY ON WEATHER REPORTS," HE ADDED.

BEFORE LEAVING THE OBSERVATORY, SIR DAVID ATTENDED A TEA RECEPTION AT WHICH HE MET THE DEPARTMENT'S SENIOR STAFF AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE DEPARTMENTAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE.

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PUBLIC VIEWS ON RENEWAL OF FRANCHISE WITH CMB INVITED

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A CONSULTATION EXERCISE ON THE RENEWAL OF FRANCHISE WITH THE CHINA MOTOR BUS COMPANY (CMB) IS BEING CONDUCTED AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE INVITED TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS ON THE OPERATION AND SERVICES OF THE BUS COMPANY.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE TRANSPORT BRANCH SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THE TWO-YEAR FRANCHISE EXTENSION SOUGHT BY CMB WAS UNDER EXAMINATION.

"LIKE OTHER FRANCHISE RENEWAL EXERCISE, THE GOVERNMENT WILL NEGOTIATE ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLIC WITH CMB ON THE TERMS OF THE NEW FRANCHISE AGREEMENT."

"VIEWS EXPRESSED BY THE PUBLIC WILL BE CAREFULLY AND FULLY CONSIDERED BEFORE A DECISION IS MADE," HE SAID.

/THE SPOKESMAN .....

THE SPOKESMAN SAID THE CONSULTATION WOULD FOCUS MAINLY ON BROAD TERMS FOR FRANCHISE RENEWAL AND THE GENERAL DIRECTION IN WHICH BUS SERVICES ON HONG KONG ISLAND SHOULD FURTHER DEVELOP.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE INVITED TO GIVE THEIR VIEWS ON THE FOLLOWING KEY ISSUES:

- \* THE PUBLIC'S DESIRE FOR BETTER SERVICES;
- \* CMB'S PERFORMANCE AND ITS COMMITMENT TOWARDS FURTHER IMPROVEMENT IN SERVICES;
- \* WHETHER MORE BUS ROUTES SHOULD BE TENDERED OUT, TO PROMOTE HEALTHY COMPETITION;
- \* HOW TO MAKE THE TRANSPORT OPERATORS MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THEIR CUSTOMERS;
- \* THE NEED TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN THE MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS, INCLUDING MORE ACTIVE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION;
- \* WHETHER THE PROFIT CONTROL SCHEME SHOULD BE ROLLED FORWARD IN ITS PRESENT FORM; AND
- \* WHETHER THE FRANCHISEES OUGHT TO BE GIVEN SOME ASSURANCE ON THE RATE OF RETURN, AS A MEANS TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO PLAN AHEAD AND CONTINUE INVESTING.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID IT WAS ESTABLISHED POLICY FOR THE TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (TAC) TO BE CONSULTED ON ALL FRANCHISES RELATED TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

"TO ENSURE THAT THE TAC IS GIVEN THE FULLEST POSSIBLE RANGE OF PUBLIC VIEWS, MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE REQUESTED TO WRITE TO THE SECRETARY, TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE DIRECT C/O TRANSPORT BRANCH, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES, LOWER ALBERT ROAD, HONG KONG, OR EXPRESS THEIR OPINIONS THROUGH THE RELEVANT DISTRICT BOARDS ON OR BEFORE FEBRUARY 25," THE SPOKESMAN ADDED.

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#### CONSTRUCTION OF SECOND AP LEI CHAU BRIDGE APPROVED

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THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL HAS AUTHORISED THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SECOND BRIDGE LINKING AP LEI CHAU AND ABERDEEN.

THE NEW BRIDGE IS REQUIRED TO SERVE PLANNED DEVELOPMENT ON AP LEI CHAU UP TO 2011 WHEN OPTIMUM LEVELS OF DEVELOPMENT PERMITTED UNDER THE OUTLINE ZONING PLAN ARE LIKELY TO BE ACHIEVED.

/THE BRIDGE .....

THE BRIDGE WILL COST ABOUT \$145 MILLION AND WILL PROVIDE TWO ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC LANES ADJACENT TO THE EXISTING BRIDGE. CONSTRUCTION IS PLANNED TO START IN THE SECOND HALF OF THIS YEAR AND TO BE COMPLETED IN EARLY 1995.

A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) CONFLICTING VIEWS HAD BEEN EXPRESSED WITHIN THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT ON THE ALIGNMENT OF THE SECOND BRIDGE.

HE SAID OBJECTORS TO THE ALIGNMENT NOW AUTHORISED FAVOURED AN ALIGNMENT BETWEEN AP LEI CHAU MAIN STREET AND CENTRAL ABERDEEN.

OTHER RESIDENTS, HOWEVER, OBJECTED TO SUCH AN ALIGNMENT BECAUSE OF THE IMPACT THIS WOULD HAVE ON ABERDEEN HARBOUR AND NEARBY RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS IN ABERDEEN.

"A COMPARISON OF THE ALIGNMENTS HAS SHOWN THAT THE ALIGNMENT CHOSEN OFFERS THE QUICKEST, MOST COST EFFECTIVE MEANS TO KEEP PACE WITH THE DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT NEEDS OF AP LEI CHAU.

"THE ALTERNATIVE OF BUILDING A BRIDGE TO CENTRAL ABERDEEN WOULD HAVE OFFERED NO PARTICULAR TRANSPORT ADVANTAGE, COST MUCH MORE AND LEAD TO WIDESPREAD TRAFFIC CONGESTION DURING THE EXTRA 20 MONTHS REQUIRED FOR DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION," THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

"BUILDING THE BRIDGE ALONGSIDE THE EXISTING BRIDGE WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH USE OF THE HARBOUR AND IS MORE ACCEPTABLE IN ENVIRONMENTAL TERMS," HE ADDED.

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#### GOVT TO CONDUCT SECOND FOREIGN EXCHANGE MARKET SURVEY

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THE MONETARY AFFAIRS BRANCH WILL BE CARRYING OUT THE SECOND FOREIGN EXCHANGE MARKET SURVEY IN APRIL AS PART OF A GLOBAL SURVEY CO-ORDINATED BY THE BANK FOR INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENTS.

ANNOUNCING THIS TODAY (WEDNESDAY), A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID: "THE PREVIOUS SURVEY CONDUCTED IN APRIL 1989 REVEALED THAT THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE MARKET IN HONG KONG IS ONE OF THE LARGEST IN THE WORLD, WITH A DAILY TURNOVER OF US\$49 BILLION. THE FORTHCOMING SURVEY WILL PROVIDE VERY USEFUL INFORMATION ON THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS MARKET."

APART FROM HONG KONG, 24 CENTRES HAVE CONFIRMED THEIR PARTICIPATION. THEY ARE AUSTRALIA, AUSTRIA, BELGIUM, CANADA, DENMARK, FINLAND, FRANCE, GERMANY, GREECE, IRELAND, ITALY, JAPAN, LUXEMBOURG, NETHERLANDS, NEW ZEALAND, NORWAY, PORTUGAL, SINGAPORE, SOUTH AFRICA, SPAIN, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND, UK AND USA.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID QUESTIONNAIRES FOR THE SURVEY HAD JUST BEEN SENT OUT TO THE FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS CONCERNED. THEY WERE PREPARED AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION OF BANKS, THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION OF RESTRICTED LICENCE BANKS AND DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES AND THE HONG KONG FOREIGN EXCHANGE AND DEPOSIT BROKERS' ASSOCIATION.

THE REPORTING INSTITUTIONS HAVE BEEN REQUESTED TO REPORT THEIR FOREIGN EXCHANGE BUSINESS CONTRACTED DURING THIS APRIL AND TO RETURN THE COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRES TO THE MONETARY AFFAIRS BRANCH ON OR BEFORE MAY 27.

"SURVEY FINDINGS ON AN AGGREGATE BASIS WILL BE PUBLISHED BY AROUND SEPTEMBER," HE ADDED.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

ENQUIRIES ON THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE MARKET SURVEY CAN BE DIRECTED TO MISS PRISCILLA CHIU, SENIOR ECONOMIST AT THE OFFICE OF THE EXCHANGE FUND ON TEL. 527 8232.

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CLUBHOUSE OPERATORS REMINDED TO APPLY FOR CERTIFICATES OF EXEMPTION

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CLUBHOUSE OPERATORS WERE TODAY (WEDNESDAY) REMINDED TO APPLY FOR A CERTIFICATE OF EXEMPTION UNDER THE CLUBS (SAFETY OF PREMISES) ORDINANCE 1991 ON OR BEFORE MARCH 31.

THE APPEAL WAS MADE BY THE CHIEF OFFICER OF THE CITY AND NEW TERRITORIES ADMINISTRATION'S OFFICE OF THE LICENSING AUTHORITY, MR ROBIN HOWES, AT A BRIEFING SESSION ORGANISED FOR REPRESENTATIVES FROM 10 MAJOR TRADE ASSOCIATIONS AND DISTRICT ORGANISATIONS.

CO-ORDINATED BY THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT OFFICE, THE BRIEFING WAS AIMED AT GIVING PARTICIPANTS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS IN RESPECT OF THE ORDINANCE.

THE ORDINANCE, WHICH CAME INTO EFFECT ON NOVEMBER 1 LAST YEAR, PROVIDES FOR A CERTIFICATION SCHEME FOR THE REGULATION AND CONTROL OF CLUBS WITH REGARD TO THEIR FIRE AND STRUCTURAL SAFETY, AND HYGIENE STANDARDS.

CENTRAL AND WESTERN ASSISTANT DISTRICT OFFICER, MISS MARY TSANG, AND DISTRICT BOARD MEMBER, MR CHAN TAK-CHOR, ALSO ATTENDED TODAY'S BRIEFING.

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 1992

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52 PASS PART I OF LICENTIATE MEDICAL EXAM

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THE LICENTIATE COMMITTEE OF THE MEDICAL COUNCIL OF HONG KONG TODAY (WEDNESDAY) ANNOUNCED THAT 52 CANDIDATES HAD PASSED PART I OF THE LICENTIATE EXAMINATION FOR UNREGISTRABLE DOCTORS.

A TOTAL OF 201 CANDIDATES SAT FOR THE MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTION PAPER ON PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE ON JANUARY 7.

PART II OF THE EXAMINATION, DESIGNED TO TEST THE CANDIDATES' ENGLISH FOR PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES, WILL BE HELD ON MARCH 4 AND MAY 1 THIS YEAR.

IN ADDITION TO THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES FROM PART I, A FURTHER FOUR CANDIDATES WHO FAILED PART II IN PREVIOUS YEARS WILL BE SITTING FOR THIS PART OF THE EXAMINATION.

CANDIDATES MAY CHOOSE TO TAKE THE PART II LICENTIATE EXAMINATION ON EITHER DATE.

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130 VOLUNTARY RETURNEES BACK TO VIETNAM

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A GROUP OF 130 VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) RETURNED TO VIETNAM UNDER THE UNHCR'S VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION PROGRAMME.

COMPRISING 46 MEN, 31 WOMEN, 35 BOYS AND 18 GIRLS, THEY WERE THE 88TH BATCH TO GO BACK UNDER THE PROGRAMME.

THIS GROUP BROUGHT TO 1,191 THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS WHO HAVE RETURNED VOLUNTARILY THIS YEAR, AND TO 15,170 THE TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNEES SINCE THE PROGRAMME STARTED IN MARCH 1989.

TODAY'S FLIGHT WAS THE FIRST TO HO CHI MINH CITY SINCE THE VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION PROGRAMME BEGAN.

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LUNAR NEW YEAR WALKATHON FOR CENTRAL AND WESTERN RESIDENTS

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A LUNAR NEW YEAR WALKATHON WITH THE THEME "NATURE CONSERVATION" IS BEING ORGANISED FOR RESIDENTS OF THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT.

IT WILL BE HELD IN VICTORIA PEAK ON THE 13TH DAY OF THE LUNAR NEW YEAR (SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 16).

SPONSORED BY THE DISTRICT BOARD, THE EVENT IS BEING JOINTLY ORGANISED BY THE DISTRICT OFFICE, THE URBAN COUNCIL, THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT, THE DISTRICT'S RECREATION AND SPORTS ASSOCIATION AND A NUMBER OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS.

A DISTRICT OFFICE SPOKESMAN TODAY (WEDNESDAY) URGED THOSE INTERESTED TO PUT THEIR NAMES DOWN AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE BECAUSE ENTRIES, LIMITED ONLY TO 1,000 PARTICIPANTS, WILL BE ACCEPTED ON A FIRST-COME-FIRST-SERVED BASIS.

HE ADDED THAT PARTICIPANTS WILL BE GIVEN SOUVENIRS AND FREE DRINKS, AND ALSO HAVE THE CHANCE OF WINNING ATTRACTIVE PRIZES IN A LUCKY DRAW TO BE HELD AT THE FINISHING POINT.

STARTING AT 9 AM ON THAT DAY, WALKERS WILL SET OFF FROM THE CHIU SHEUNG SCHOOL IN POK FU LAM ROAD, VIA HATTON ROAD AND FINISH AT THE HIGHEST PICNIC AREA. THE WHOLE TRIP IS EXPECTED TO TAKE ABOUT TWO HOURS.

ENTRY FORMS ARE NOW AVAILABLE AT THE DISTRICT OFFICE, GROUND FLOOR, HARBOUR BUILDING, 38 PIER ROAD; AND AT THE DISTRICT RECREATION, AMENITIES AND SPORTS OFFICE, ROOM 1001, UC SHEUNG WAN COMPLEX, 345 QUEEN'S ROAD.

FURTHER ENQUIRIES CAN BE MADE ON TEL. 852 3002 AND 853 2566.

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 29, 1992

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HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND  
MONEY MARKET OPERATIONS  
\* \* \* \* \*

	DATE	\$ MILLION
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CLOSING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT ON	28.1.92	850
EFFECT OF FORWARDS TO BE SETTLED ON	29.1.92	-933*
EFFECT OF OPERATIONS THIS MORNING		+683
EFFECT OF OPERATIONS THIS AFTERNOON		NEUTRAL
* O/N ASSISTANCE TO BE REVERSED	-250 MN	
OTHER FORWARDS TO BE SETTLED	-683 MN	

TRADE WEIGHTED INDEX 110.3 \*-0.3\* 29.1.92

HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND

EF BILLS		HONG KONG GOVERNMENT BONDS				
TERMS	YIELD	TERM	ISSUE	COUPON	PRICE	YIELD
1 WEEK	4.35 PCT	22 MONTHS	2311	6.25	101.42	5.48
1 MONTH	4.16 PCT					
3 MONTHS	4.00 PCT					
6 MONTHS	4.03 PCT					
12 MONTHS	4.65 PCT					

TOTAL TURNOVER OF BILLS AND BONDS - 6,630 MN

CLOSED 29 JANUARY 1992

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