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WAYS TO IMPROVE CROSS HARBOUR TRAFFIC

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THERE IS VERY LITTLE THAT CAN BE DONE IN THE SHORT TERM TO INCREASE THE CAPACITY OF THE EXISTING CROSS HARBOUR TUNNEL TO TAKE MORE TRAFFIC, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT THE HON DEREK JONES SAID TODAY.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LYDIA DUNN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR JONES SAID HOWEVER CONSIDERATION WAS BEING GIVEN TO CERTAIN MINOR WORKS TO IMPROVE THE TRAFFIC FLOW IN THE APPROACH AREAS, AND TO POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS TO VEHICULAR FERRY SERVICES.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT'S CONSULTANTS HAD RECOMMENDED AGAINST THE TUNNEL COMPANY'S PROPOSAL TO BUILD A MEZZANINE DECK FOR CARS IN ONE OF THE TUBES OF THE EXISTING TUNNEL.

+THE PRINCIPAL REASONS ARE THE DISRUPTION TO TRAFFIC DURING CONSTRUCTION, PARTICULARLY IN THE APPROACHES TO THE TUNNEL, A GREATER RISK IN EMERGENCIES, PARTICULARLY FIRE RISK, AND THE COMPLICATIONS OF PROVIDING SAFE ACCESS INTO, AND EXIT FROM, THE PROPOSED MEZZANINE DECK,+ HE SAID.

MR JONES POINTED OUT THAT THE TSUEN WAN EXTENSION OF THE MTR AND KCR ELECTRIC TRAIN SERVICES BOTH COMING INTO SERVICE EARLY NEXT SUMMER WOULD PROVIDE A SIGNIFICANT ADDITION TO THE PASSENGER RAILWAY NETWORK AND WOULD TEMPT MORE CAR OWNERS TO USE PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

+TO THIS END, ALSO, THERE ARE PLANS FOR BUILDING CAR PARKING FACILITIES AT MORE MTR AND KCR STATIONS,+ HE ADDED.

IN THE MEDIUM TERM, HE SAID, THE GOVERNMENT'S AIM, IF FOUND FEASIBLE, WAS TO BUILD A BRIDGE ACROSS THE LEI YUE MUN CHANNEL TO CONNECT WITH THE ISLAND EASTERN CORRIDOR ROAD BEYOND SHAU KEI WAN BY ABOUT 1986 OR 87.

+THE PROBLEM HERE IS TO FIND OUT WHETHER SUCH A BRIDGE WOULD BE COMPATIBLE WITH AIRCRAFT SAFETY, MAINLY BECAUSE OF ITS POSSIBLE EFFECT ON THE INSTRUMENT LANDING SYSTEM.

+THIS QUESTION IS NOW UNDER ACTIVE STUDY BY THE PUBLIC WORKS AND CIVIL AVIATION DEPARTMENTS.+

IF IT TURNED OUT THAT NO SATISFACTORY SOLUTION COULD BE FOUND, THEN IT WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE TO BUILD A BRIDGE UNTIL THE 1990S AFTER THE AIRPORT HAD BEEN REMOVED FROM KAI TAK, HE SAID.

IN THAT CASE, HE ADDED, SERIOUS CONSIDERATION WOULD THEN BE GIVEN TO BUILDING A THIRD TUBE TO THE PRESENT TUNNEL.

+THIS WOULD, HOWEVER, HAVE THE DISADVANTAGE OF CONCENTRATING YET MORE TRAFFIC IN AREAS WHICH ARE ALREADY CONGESTED AND IT WOULD THEREFORE REQUIRE HEAVY ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURE ON ROAD WORKS,+ MR JONES SAID.

/THE COMPLETION .....

THE COMPLETION OF THE KCR ELECTRIFICATION PROJECT BY EARLY 1983 AND THE MTR ISLAND LINE BY 1985 AND 86 WOULD FURTHER EXTEND THE COVERAGE OF THE INTEGRATED RAIL TRANSIT NETWORK WHICH WAS AT THE CENTRE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS TO IMPROVE PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN HONG KONG.

HOWEVER, MR JONES SAID, IN THE 1990S, ANOTHER FIXED HARBOUR CROSSING WOULD BE NECESSARY IN THE WESTERN HARBOUR.

+THIS WILL BE EXTREMELY COSTLY TO CONSTRUCT AND IT WILL PROBABLY NEED TO BE PLANNED IN CONJUNCTION WITH FURTHER LAND RECLAMATIONS IN THAT AREA OF THE HARBOUR,+ HE SAID.

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TUEN MUN HIGHWAY

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THERE HAVE BEEN 422 TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS ON THE TUEN MUN HIGHWAY RESULTING IN 73 DEATHS SINCE IT OPENED IN MAY 1978, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON DEREK JONES, SAID IN ANSWER TO QUESTIONS BY THE HON LYDIA DUNN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

EXPRESSED AS ACCIDENTS PER MILLION VEHICLE KILOMETRES TRAVELLED, THEY ARE ONLY ABOUT A FIFTH OF THE NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS PER MILLION VEHICLE KILOMETRES ON ALL ROADS IN HONG KONG OVER THE SAME PERIOD, HE SAID.

+THE TUEN MUN ROAD IS THEREFORE A SAFER ROAD THAN THE GENERALITY OF OUR ROADS,+ HE SAID.

+HOWEVER, PRO RATA, THE NUMBER OF DEATHS FROM ACCIDENTS IS GREATER ON THE TUEN MUN ROAD, MAINLY BECAUSE OF THE HIGHER SPEEDS INVOLVED AND EVERY EFFORT MUST THEREFORE BE MADE TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS YET FURTHER,+ HE ADDED.

MR JONES SAID THAT THE MAJOR STEP BEING TAKEN TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION IS TO COMPLETE THE BUILDING OF THE SECOND CARRIAGEWAY AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE, THUS SEPARATING THE TRAFFIC MOVING IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS.

THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED BY JANUARY 1983, SIX MONTHS AHEAD OF THE ORIGINAL SCHEDULE AND SECTIONS WILL BE OPENED TO TRAFFIC AS SOON AS THEY ARE COMPLETED, HE SAID.

MEANWHILE, STEPS ARE BEING TAKEN TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION ON THE SECTIONS OF ROAD STILL SUBJECT TO TWO-WAY OPERATION.

+FIRST, THE VISIBILITY OF ROAD MARKINGS IN THE DARK ARE BEING INCREASED BY THE INSTALLATION OF REFLECTIVE ROAD STUDS AND BY ADDITIONAL CHEVRON SIGNS.+

+SECONDLY, THE POLICE PATROLS ON THE HIGHWAY WILL STEP UP THEIR EFFORTS TO ENFORCE THE 40 M.P.H. SPEED LIMIT AND TO PROSECUTE OTHER RECKLESS DRIVERS,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE INSERTING A SECTION ON THE PRINCIPLES OF MULTI-LANE HIGHWAY DRIVING IN THE NEW EDITION OF THE HIGHWAY CODE NOW BEING PREPARED.

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'BEST EFFORTS' BEING MADE TO CURB COUNTERFEITING

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THE GOVERNMENT IS DOING ITS BEST TO CURB COUNTERFEITING OF HONG KONG COINS AND BANKNOTES, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON JOHN BREMRIDGE SAID TODAY.

BUT HE DID NOT WISH TO DESCRIBE THE MEASURES BEING TAKEN, BECAUSE TO DO SO WOULD BE +CLEARLY OF ASSISTANCE TO CRIMINALS+, HE TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON ANDREW SO.

MR BREMRIDGE SAID THE RECENT REPLACEMENT OF THE OLD, TEN-SIDED $5-COIN WITH THE PRESENT ROUND ONE, WHICH HAS SPECIAL SECURITY FEATURES, WAS DUE PARTLY TO COUNTERFEITING OF THE OLD COINS.

+THIS INFORMATION IS NOW OF LITTLE USE TO COUNTERFEITERS, BECAUSE THE OLD COIN HAS BEEN DEMONETISED- BUT IF OUR INTENTION TO CHANGE THE DESIGN HAD NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC, SAY, 12 MONTHS AGO, IT WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY HAVE PROMPTED AN INCREASE IN THE PRODUCTION OF IMITATIONS.

+I MENTION THIS MERELY TO ILLUSTRATE WHY IT IS NECESSARY TO KEEP PLANS TO COUNTERACT COUNTERFEITING TO OURSELVES,+ HE SAID.

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BANK AND GOLDSMITH ROBBERY FIGURES

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THERE WERE SIX REPORTED CASES OF ARMED ROBBERIES OF BANKS AND 69 OF GOLDSMITH SHOPS BETWEEN JANUARY 1 AND SEPTEMBER 30 THIS YEAR, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON LEWIS DAVIES, SAID TODAY.

LAST YEAR, THERE WERE 30 ARMED BANK ROBBERIES AND 115 ARMED ROBBERIES OF GOLDSMITH SHOPS, HE SAID, IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON S.L. CHEN.

WHILE 16 ARRESTS HAD BEEN MADE IN CONNECTION WITH ROBBERIES OF GOLDSMITH SHOPS, NO ARREST HAD YET BEEN MADE IN THE CASE OF BANK ROBBERIES IN 1981, MR DAVIES SAID.

THE PENALTIES IMPOSED BY THE HIGH COURT THIS YEAR FOR SERIOUS ROBBERY OFFENCES RANGED FROM ONE YEAR'S TO 18 YEARS' IMPRISONMENT, WITH THE AVERAGE IMPOSED IN 62 CONVICTIONS IN 1981 BEING SEVEN-AND-A-HALF YEARS' IMPRISONMENT.

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MORE CENTRES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

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THE GOVERNMENT AIMS AT PROVIDING 11 NEW CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH CENTRES A YEAR, PREFERABLY AS COMBINED FACILITIES, IN ADDITION TO THE EXISTING 216 SUCH CENTRES, THE SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, THE HON ERIC HO, SAID AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

IN ADDITION, A COMMITTEE WAS STUDYING THE SOCIAL WORK CONTENT IN THE PROGRAMMES IN THE EXISTING CENTRES, WITH A VIEW TO RECOMMENDING HOW THEY COULD BE STRENGTHENED AND DEVELOPED, HE SAID.

THE STUDY IS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED EARLY NEXT YEAR. MR HO ADDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT AIMS ALSO TO PROVIDE 15 MORE COMMUNITY CENTRES, EIGHT ESTATE COMMUNITY CENTRES (OR AREA CENTRES) AND 16 COMMUNITY HALLS (OR NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES) IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

+OUR COMMUNITY AND YOUTH SERVICES AIM TO PROVIDE MUTUAL CARE AND RESPONSIBILITY, LEADERSHIP, CONCERN AND PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNAL PROBLEMS,+ MR HO SAID.

+COMMUNITY CENTRE FACILITIES HELP DEVELOP COMMUNITY SPIRIT AND AN AWARENESS OF LOCAL NEED, AND ARE USED TO ACCOMMODATE A WIDE VARIETY OF SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SERVICES, INCLUDING VOLUNTARY AGENCIES.

+CENTRES ARE PLANNED IN RELATION TO POPULATION,+ MR HO SAID.

ON PERSONAL SOCIAL WORK AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE, MR HO SAID THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THREE MAIN STREAMS IN THIS PROGRAMME -- SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK, OUTREACHING SOCIAL WORK AND FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION -- WAS BEING REVIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF ACTUAL FIELD EXPERIENCE.

THIS PROGRAMME AIMS TO PROMOTE POSITIVE SOCIAL ATTITUDES AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE, THROUGH BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR ROLES IN THE FAMILY, SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY.

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TOURISM HAS RECORD YEAR

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IT WAS ANOTHER RECORD YEAR FOR THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY, WITH THE NET TOURISM SURPLUS COMING TO ABOUT $1 800 MILLION, SAID THE HON DAVID NEWBIGGING, AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

IN TABLING THE HONG KONG TOURIST ASSOCIATION'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1980-81, MR NEWBIGGING, ITS CHAIRMAN, SAID THE SURPLUS WAS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GROSS TOURISM RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURE OF HONG KONG RESIDENTS TRAVELLING ABROAD.

THIS SURPLUS OFFSET 13.5 PER CENT OF THE VISIBLE TRADE DEFICIT EVEN AFTER TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE EXPENDITURE OF HONG KONG RESIDENTS TRAVELLING TO CHINA, HE SAID.

THE NUMBER OF VISITORS INCREASED BY FOUR PER CENT OVER THE PREVIOUS YEAR, ALTHOUGH PER CAPITA SPENDING FELL BY 1.6 PER CENT.

HOWEVER, GROSS EXPENDITURE BY VISITORS CAME TO $6.5 BILLION, AND HE EXPECTED THE FIGURE TO EXCEED $7 BILLION THIS YEAR.

THE QUESTION OF COURTESY AND SERVICE WAS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE ANNUAL REPORT.

+WHILE I BELIEVE IT IS OVER-STATING THE POSITION TO CLAIM THAT HONG KONG IS ONE OF THE RUDEST CITIES TO VISIT IN ASIA, WE DO NONETHELESS RECEIVE NUMEROUS COMPLAINTS ABOUT RUDENESS, LACK OF COURTESY AND POOR SERVICE.

+THIS DOES NOT APPLY GENERALLY TO THE HOTEL INDUSTRY BUT I WOULD TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY AGAIN TO URGE THE TOURIST INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE TO CONCENTRATE ON UPGRADING THE STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONALISM, COURTESY AND SERVICE.

+THE REMEDY RESTS WITH THE INDUSTRY IF THE GOOSE WHICH LAYS THE GOLDEN EGG IS NOT TO MEET AN UNTIMELY END.

+THE ASSOCIATION ITSELF CONTINUES WITH ITS OWN COURTESY CAMPAIGN,+ HE SAID.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT INITIATIVE OF THE ASSOCIATION WAS THE EXPANSION OF THE RANGE OF CULTURAL AND OTHER FORMS OF ENTERTAINMENT, ATTRACTING BOTH VISITORS AND RESIDENTS. HE WELCOMED THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO INVITE THE TOURIST ASSOCIATION TO ORGANISE A FIREWORKS DISPLAY ON THE EVE OF CHINESE NEW YEAR ON JANUARY 24.

/THE HONG .....

THE HONG KONG TOURIST ASSOCIATION, HE SAID, OPERATED ON A DISCIPLINED AND TIGHT EXPENDITURE BUDGET APPROVED BY THE GOVERNMENT, AND ALL COSTS WERE CAREFULLY SCRUTINISED BY THE BOARD AND MANAGEMENT WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF MAXIMISING THE +PRODUCTIVITY+ OF EACH DOLLAR SPENT.

HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT'S RECENT DECISION ON SALARIES WHICH AFFECTED THE TOURIST ASSOCIATION AS A SUBVENTED ORGANISATION, HAD MADE A MOCKERY OF THE ASSOCIATION'S BUDGETS.

WITH A 17/18 PER CENT INCREASE, AND PARTICULARLY THE RETROACTIVE ELEMENT, THE BUDGETARY CONTROLS IN THE CURRENT YEAR HAD BEEN DESTROYED. THIS WAS DISCOURAGING TO THE BOARD AND MANAGEMENT AND COMPOUNDED THE DIFFICULTY OF ANY FORM OF MEDIUM TO LONG TERM POLICY PLANNING.

WHAT WAS EVEN MORE DISCOURAGING WAS THAT PRIMARILY AS A RESULT OF THE RETROACTIVE ELEMENT, THE TOURIST ASSOCIATION NOW FACED A 45 PER CENT INCREASE IN HONG KONG STAFF EXPENSES ALONE FOR 1982/83 OVER THE ORIGINALLY APPROVED BUDGET FOR 1981/82.

+THIS WILL HAVE THE EFFECT OF THE ASSOCIATION BUDGETTING FOR A DEFICIT (IN OPERATIONAL TERMS) IN 1982/83 EVEN ASSUMING NO INCREASE IN EXPENDITURE IN HONG KONG DOLLAR TERMS FOR ADVERTISING, SALES PROMOTION, PUBLIC RELATIONS, FOREIGN REPRESENTATION, PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT, CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS AT A TIME WHEN INFLATION IS ANYWAY RUNNING AT TOO HIGH A LEVEL BOTH HERE AND WORLDWIDE.

+MUCH OF THE EXPENDITURE I HAVE REFERRED TO ARISES OVERSEAS, SO WITH A WEAK HONG KONG DOLLAR THE ASSOCIATION'S REAL EXPENDITURE IN 1982/83 WILL SHOW A MARKED DECLINE.

+AT A TIME OF INTENSE INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION IN TOURISM I BELIEVE WE SHOULD BE CONCENTRATING OUR EFFORTS ON MAINTAINING AND INCREASING THE EXISTING MOMENTUM: BUT THIS CANNOT BE DONE WITH A SLASHING OF THE REAL EXPENDITURE IN THE MOST IMPORTANT AREAS OF THE ASSOCIATION'S ACTIVITIES AND I WILL BE TAKING THIS MATTER UP SEPARATELY WITH THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY,+ HE SAID.

HE URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO CONSIDER REMOVING THE RETROACTIVE ELEMENT, MAKING JANUARY 1, THE EFFECTIVE DATE FOR SALARY INCREASES, AND REVIEWING THE METHODOLOGY USED TO ENSURE THAT A LIKE-FOR-LIKE COMPARISON IS BEING MADE WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

HONG KONG REMAINED AN EXTREMELY ATTRACTIVE PLACE FOR VISITORS, HE SAID.

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HEAVIER FINES SOUGHT FOR ILLEGAL DUMPING

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EXISTING LEGISLATION IS TO BE AMENDED BY EXTENDING LIABILITY FOR THE OFFENCE OF ILLEGAL DUMPING TO THE REGISTERED OWNER OR HIRER OF THE GOODS VEHICLE IN QUESTION.

THE DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS, THE HON IAN MACPHERSON, MOVED THE SECOND READING OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND URBAN SERVICES (AMENDMENT)(NO. 2) BILL 1981 IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

MR MACPHERSON SAID THE BILL PROVIDES FOR AN INCREASED PENALTY OF $5 000 AND SIX MONTHS' IMPRISONMENT FOR THE OFFENCE, SO AS TO HAVE ALL LITTERING OFFENCES SUBJECT TO THE SAME PENALTY.

+THE EXTENSION OF LIABILITY IS ESSENTIAL TO PLACE UPON GOODS VEHICLES OWNERS AND HIRERS THE PROPER RESPONSIBILITY FOR DRIVERS UNDER THEIR CONTROL AND TO ENSURE THAT THEIR VEHICLES DUMP LITTER AND WASTE ONLY IN THE PERMITTED AREAS,+ HE SAID.

MR MACPHERSON SAID THAT THE INTRODUCTION OF THIS PROPOSED LEGISLATION WAS TIMELY WITH THE IMMINENT START OF THE CLEAN HONG KONG CAMPAIGN.

DEBATE ON THE MOTION WAS ADJOURNED.

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FINANCIAL HELP FOR BLIND SCHOOLS FELT ADEQUATE

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FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO SPECIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE BLIND, AS WELL AS TO ORDINARY SCHOOLS INTEGRATING THE BLIND, WAS CONSIDERED ADEQUATE, THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, THE HON COLVYN HAYE, SAID AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

+BUT, OF COURSE, LEVELS OF GRANTS FOR TEACHERS AND RESOURCE MATERIALS ARE PERIODICALLY REVIEWED, AND SUCH A REVIEW IS IN PROGRESS,+ MR HAYE ADDED.

IN REPLYING TO QUESTIONS FROM THE REV THE HON JOYCE BENNETT, MR HAYE SAID ALSO THAT ALL BLIND STUDENTS IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS FOR THE BLIND, AND ALL THOSE INTEGRATED IN ORDINARY SECONDARY SCHOOLS, WERE SUPPLIED WITH BRAILLE BOOKS ON LOAN FREE OF CHARGE.

ON THE QUESTION OF TEXTBOOK GRANTS, HE SAID HE HAD RECENTLY PROPOSED THAT THE CURRENT RATE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEXTBOOK GRANTS FOR NEEDY PUPILS BE REVISED, AND THAT THE GRANT BE EXTENDED TO SIMILAR STUDENTS IN FORMS ONE TO THREE.

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SAFETY REGULATION FINES INCREASED

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THE MAXIMUM FINES RANGING FROM $10 000 TO $50 000 PROVIDED IN ANOTHER 14 SETS OF SAFETY REGULATIONS HAVE BEEN APPROVED.

AMENDMENT REGULATIONS PROVIDING FOR THE INCREASED PENALTIES WERE APPROVED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY). THEY ARE:-

(1) THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (BLASTING BY ABRASIVES) (AMENDMENT) SPECIAL REGULATIONS 1981-

(2) THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (FIRST AID IN REGISTRABLE WORKPLACES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1981-

(3) THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (NOTIFICATION OF OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1981-

(4) THE QUARRIES (SAFETY) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1981-

(5) THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (WOODWORKING MACHINERY) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1981-

(6) THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (ELECTROLYTIC CHROMIUM PROCESS) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1981-

(7) THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (CARGO HANDLING) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1981-

(8) THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (ABRASIVE WHEELS) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1981-

(9) THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (WORK IN COMPRESSED AIR) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1981-

(10) THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (SPRAYING OF FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1981-

(11) THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (GOODS LIFTS) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1981-

(12) THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (DRY BATTERIES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1981-

(13) THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (CARTRIDGE-OPERATED FIXING TOOLS) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1981- AND

(14) THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (PROTECTION OF EYES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1981.

/SEEKING APPROVAL .....

SEEKING APPROVAL OF THE AMENDMENT REGULATIONS, THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR, THE HON J.N. HENDERSON, RECALLED THAT IN APRIL THE COUNCIL HAD APPROVED THE FIRST BATCH OF FIVE SETS OF AMENDMENT REGULATIONS MADE UNDER THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS ORDINANCE TO RAISE THE MAXIMUM PENALTIES IN THOSE REGULATIONS, RANGING FROM $5 000 TO $50 000.

IN GRADING LEVELS OF MAXIMUM PENALTIES IN THE 14 REGULATIONS, HE POINTED OUT, HE HAD FOLLOWED THE SAME PRINCIPLE USED IN THE PREVIOUS FIVE REGULATIONS - AND THAT IS THAT ONLY THE MOST SERIOUS OFFENCES WILL ATTRACT THE MAXIMUM OF $50 000.

THE OFFENCES ARE FAILURE TO CONSTRUCT AND MAINTAIN SAFELY EVERY BULKHEAD, AIR LOCK, OR OTHER STRUCTURE IN COMPRESSED AIR WORK= FAILURE TO PROVIDE PROPER CONSTRUCTION, MAINTENANCE AND EXAMINATION OF GOODS LIFT= AND FAILURE TO FENCE A QUARRY OR TO PROVIDE PROPER SUPERVISION FOR QUARRY OPERATION.

FOR SERIOUS OFFENCES, SUCH AS FAILURE TO GUARD A WOODWORKING MACHINE OR AN ABRASIVE WHEEL, THE MAXIMUM FINE WOULD BE $30 000, WHILE THOSE FOR OTHER LESS SERIOUS OFFENCES WOULD RANGE FROM $10 000 TO $20 000.

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BILL TO RAISE INTEREST TAX EXEMPTION

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THE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT)(NO. 5) BILL 1981 WAS INTRODUCED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON JOHN BREMRIDGE.

THE BILL SEEKS TO RAISE FROM 11 PER CENT TO 13.5 PER CENT THE CEILING ON THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY'S AUTHORITY TO SPECIFY THE RATE OF EXEMPTION FROM TAX OF INTEREST PAYABLE BY THE GOVERNMENT, LICENSED BANKS AND CERTAIN SPECIFIED PUBLIC UTILITIES.

THE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT)(NO. 4) BILL, INTRODUCED EARLIER AND WHICH WOULD HAVE RAISED THE CEILING FROM 11 PER CENT TO 12 PER CENT, WAS WITHDRAWN AS IT WAS SUPERSEDED BY THE NEW BILL.

THE NO. 5 BILL WAS BROUGHT INTO FORCE ON OCTOBER 7 BY MEANS OF A REVENUE PROTECTION ORDER, FOLLOWING AN INCREASE IN THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION OF BANKS' RATE OF INTEREST ON SAVINGS ACCOUNT WHICH BROUGHT THE RATE TO 13.5 PER CENT, COMPARED WITH 11 PER CENT LAST DECEMBER.

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$57-MILLION IN SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

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THE SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS OF GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE FOR THE FOURTH QUARTER OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1980-81 AMOUNTED TO $57 MILLION.

THIS WAS DISCLOSED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON JOHN BREMRIDGE, WHEN HE INTRODUCED A MOTION IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY TO SEEK THE COUNCIL'S COVERING AUTHORITY FOR SUCH EXPENDITURE WHICH HAD BEEN APPROVED BY THE FINANCE COMMITTEE.

MR BREMRIDGE SAID OF THIS SUM, $22 MILLION WAS REQUIRED TO MEET INCREASES IN RATES OF PAYMENT FOR STANDARD ALLOWANCES, ADDITIONAL DUTY ALLOWANCES AND ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURE ON LAUNDRY FOR THE POLICE FORCE= $9 MILLION FOR VARIOUS PAY ADJUSTMENTS FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE AND $8 MILLION FOR THE HOUSING AUTHORITY FOR CERTAIN ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURE INCURRED ON ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE AUTHORITY ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT DURING 1979-80.

HE ALSO POINTED OUT THIS SCHEDULE BROUGHT THE TOTAL SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISION FOR 1980-81 TO $7 873 MILLION AND BECAUSE OF SAVINGS IN OTHER SUBHEADS, ACTUAL GROSS EXPENDITURE FOR THE FULL FINANCIAL YEAR 1980-81 WAS $23 593 MILLION AND ONLY $5 152 MILLION MORE THAN THE ORIGINAL ESTIMATE.

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SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS FOR FIRST QUARTER

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THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON JOHN BREMRIDGE TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY THAT THE SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1981-82 AMOUNTED TO $511 MILLION.

+THE MAJOR ITEMS INCLUDE $280 MILLION FOR PAYMENT OF A SPECIAL ONE-OFF GRANT TO THE URBAN COUNCIL TO ENABLE IT TO COVER ITS ESTIMATED DEFICIT IN 1981-82= $45 MILLION FOR EXPENDITURE ON A SCHEME FOR PRIVATE DENTAL TREATMENT FOR CIVIL SERVANTS AND THEIR DEPENDANTS= $40 MILLION TO ENABLE THE KOWLOON MOTOR BUS COMPANY (1933) LIMITED TO INTRODUCE A SCALE OF BUS FARES LOWER THAN THAT REQUIRED FOR THE COMPANY TO BREAK EVEN IN 1981,+ HE SAID.

OTHER ITEMS INCLUDE $40 MILLION FOR THE EXPENDITURE ON PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS= $35 MILLION FOR THE RE-ACTIVATION OF THE LOK ON PAI DESALTER AND $23 MILLION FOR PURCHASE OF ADDITIONAL SUPPLIES OF WATER FROM CHINA.

HE NOTED THAT THE PROVISION COVERED BY THE SCHEDULE RESULTED IN A NET INCREASE OF $35 MILLION IN THE EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR, THE REMAINDER WOULD BE OFFSET UNDER OTHER HEADS OF EXPENDITURE AND BY THE FREEZING OF FUNDS UNDER THE TWO ADDITIONAL COMMITMENTS VOTES.

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BILL TO INCORPORATE CARITAS

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A BILL WAS INTRODUCED BY THE HON ANDREW SO TO INCORPORATE THE CARITAS.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE CARITAS-HONG KONG INCORPORATION BILL, MR SO EXPLAINED THAT THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE BILL IS TO INCORPORATE THE COUNCIL OF CARITAS-HONG KONG WHICH IS THE OFFICIAL SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN HONG KONG.

IT ALSO AIMS TO TRANSFER TO THE CORPORATION PROPERTY AT PRESENT USED BY THE UNINCORPORATED BODY SO THAT THE CORPORATION CAN CARRY ON THE WORK AND ACTIVITIES HITHERTO CARRIED ON BY THE UNINCORPORATED BODY, HE ADDED.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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PATENT FEES RISE

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A RESOLUTION FOR AN INCREASE OF FEES FOR REGISTRATION OF PATENTS, MOVED BY THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, THE HON D.G. JEAFFRESON, WAS APPROVED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

IT WAS STATED THAT THE FEES HAD NOT BEEN REVISED SINCE 1974 AND THE COST OF RUNNING THE PATENTS REGISTRY OF THE REGISTRAR GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT HAD DOUBLED.

THE NEW FEES COME INTO EFFECT ON NOVEMBER 16 THIS YEAR.

AMONG OTHERS, THE FEE FOR A CERTIFICATE OF PATENT WILL BE RAISED FROM $120 TO $240.

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GUARANTEE FOR MTR LOANS

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GOVERNMENT GUARANTEES TO COVER REPAYMENT OF THREE LOANS TOTALLING $114 MILLION OF THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY CORPORATION WERE APPROVED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

THE MONEY WILL BE USED TO FINANCE PART OF THE ISLAND LINE CONTRACTS COVERING ADVANCE WORKS FOR STATIONS AT WAN CHAI, CAUSEWAY BAY, TIN HAU, TAI KOO SHING AND ADMIRALTY AND QUARRY BAY.

THIS BROUGHT THE GOVERNMENT'S TOTAL GUARANTEE COMMITMENT ON OUTSTANDING LOANS AVAILABLE TO THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY CORPORATION TO $5 826 MILLION.

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DETAILS OF NEW HOS PRICING POLICY OUTLINED

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THE SECRETARY FOR HOUSING, THE HON DONALD LIAO, TODAY OUTLINED DETAILS OF THE NEW PRICING POLICY FOR HOME OWNERSHIP FLATS ANNOUNCED BY THE GOVERNOR, SIR MURRAY MACLEHOSE, IN HIS ANNUAL REVIEW TO THE OPENING OF THE NEW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SESSION LAST WEEK.

MR LIAO WAS SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN SUPPORT OF A MOTION OF THANKS FOR THE GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS.

COPIES OF THE FULL TEXT OF MR LIAO'S SPEECH, TOGETHER WITH A SUMMARY, ARE AVAILABLE FOR COLLECTION FROM THE GIS PRESS BOXES.

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NEW DEPARTMENT FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS APPROVED THE FORMATION OF A NEW DEPARTMENT TO CO-ORDINATE RECREATIONAL AND SPORT ACTIVITIES FOR THE POPULATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS.

FROM TOMORROW (THURSDAY) THE RECREATION AND CULTURE DIVISION OF THE HOME AFFAIRS BRANCH WILL BE KNOWN AS THE RECREATION AND CULTURE DEPARTMENT.

THE NEW DEPARTMENT IS TO BE HEADED BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE, MR BARRIE WIGGHAM.

THE DEPARTMENT CONSISTS OF THE HEADQUARTERS AT CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES, WEST WING, AND THREE OPERATIONAL UNITS - THE RECREATION AND SPORT DIVISION, THE MUSIC OFFICE AND THE PERFORMING ARTS DIVISION, EACH UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF AN ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER.

MR WIGGHAM SAID THIS MOVE REFLECTED THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH GOVERNMENT TOOK ITS RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS, RECREATION AND CULTURE.

+IT IS AN IMPORTANT MILESTONE, A STARTING POINT FROM WHICH GOVERNMENT'S INVOLVEMENT IN SPORTING AND CULTURE ACTIVITIES WILL BE COHESIVELY PLANNED AND DEVELOPED.

+WE ARE PARTICULARLY CONCERNED TO SEE THAT YOUNG PEOPLE OF HONG KONG HAVE AMPLE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN HOW TO USE THEIR LEISURE TIME. WE CAN HELP THEM DEVELOP A SKILL AND TAKE PART IN LARGE-SCALE COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES,+ HE SAID.

+THE NEW DEPARTMENT WILL CONTINUE TO ORGANISE AND PROVIDE MORE OUTDOOR AND INDOOR ACTIVITIES FOR THE COMMUNITY- AND ITS CO-OPERATION WITH EXISTING CULTURAL AND SPORT ORGANISATIONS WILL BE FURTHER EXPANDED,+ HE ADDED.

THE DECISION TO FORM A NEW DEPARTMENT FOLLOWED A DETAILED REVIEW OF GOVERNMENT'S INVOLVEMENT IN RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND IN THE PERFORMING ARTS.

ACTIVE GOVERNMENT PROMOTION OF SPORTS AND RECREATION DATES BACK TO OCTOBER 1974 DURING WHICH THE RECREATION AND SPORT SERVICE WAS ESTABLISHED.

SINCE THEN, SOME TWO MILLION PEOPLE HAVE PARTICIPATED IN ONE OR MORE OF ITS 17 000 SPORTS PROJECTS.

/THE MUSIC .....

THE MUSIC OFFICE WAS ESTABLISHED IN OCTOBER 1977 TO PROVIDE TRAINING ON BOTH WESTERN AND CHINESE INSTRUMENTS, TO PROMOTE INTEREST IN MUSIC AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AND TO ORGANISE MUSIC ACTIVITIES.

MORE THAN 2 500 STUDENTS ARE RECEIVING WEEKLY TRAINING, AND SOME 560 CLASSES ARE HELD EACH WEEK AT THE FOUR MUSIC CENTRES, SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY CENTRES.

THE PERFORMING ARTS DIVISION - A COMPLETELY NEW UNIT - PROVIDES ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO CULTURAL ORGANISATION, IN THE FIELDS OF MUSIC, DANCE, DRAMA, OPERA AND SINGING IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERFORMING ARTS IN HONG KONG.

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AUGUST PWD CONTRACTS TOTAL $429 MILLION

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EIGHTY-FOUR CONTRACTS WORTH MORE THAN $429 MILLION, WERE AWARDED BY THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT IN AUGUST.

THE LARGEST CONTRACT, WORTH ABOUT $105 MILLION, WAS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A 5 200-METRE LONG WATER TUNNEL, RUNNING FROM TSING TAM IN YUEN LONG TO YAU KOM TAU IN TSUEN WAN.

THE WORKS FORM PART OF STAGE ONE OF A $1 300-MILLION SCHEME TO RECEIVE ADDITIONAL SUPPLIES OF WATER FROM CHINA OVER THE NEXT 12 YEARS.

OF THE CONTRACTS AWARDED DURING THE MONTH, 36 WERE RECOMMENDED BY THE CENTRAL TENDER BOARD AND THE OTHERS BY THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT TENDER BOARD.

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GOVERNMENT TACKLING TWO MAJOR PROBLEMS OF
ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY
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THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT IS TACKLING TWO MAJOR PROBLEMS FACING THE ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY, THE DIRECTOR OF TRADE INDUSTRY AND CUSTOMS, MR BILL DORWARD SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

ONE IS IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE INDUSTRY AND THE GOVERNMENT, AND THE OTHER IS THE BATTLE AGAINST PROTECTIONIST PRESSURES, HE TOLD THE AUDIENCE WHILE OPENING THE FIRST HONG KONG ELECTRONICS SHOW AT THE HOTEL MIRAMAR.

+I AM ACUTELY AWARE THAT ONE OF THE PROBLEMS FACING SECTORS OF HONG KONG'S INDUSTRY, WHERE THE TECHNOLOGY STANDARDS TEND TO CUT THE MANUFACTURER OFF FROM THE LAYMAN, IS THE MATTER OF COMMUNICATION WITH GOVERNMENT AND QUASI-GOVERNMENT BODIES. THIS IS PARTICULARLY IRONIC IN THE CASE OF THE ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY WHICH IS, MORE THAN ANY OTHER, DEDICATED TO THE BUSINESS OF COMMUNICATION,+ HE SAID.

MR DORWARD ANNOUNCED THAT A NEW DIVISION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WOULD BE BUILT UP IN 1982 TO PROVIDE A POINT OF CONTACT WITH INDUSTRY, WHERE GOVERNMENT SCIENTISTS AND TECHNOLOGISTS WILL BE AVAILABLE TO ACT AS INTERLOCUTORS BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND THE ADMINISTRATION.

MR DORWARD SAID THE PROBLEMS OF THE ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY WERE NOT, HOWEVER, CONFINED TO TECHNICAL MATTERS.

+AFTER TEXTILES IT IS PROBABLY THE INDUSTRY MOST IN THE FIRING LINE AS FAR AS PROTECTIONIST PRESSURES ARE CONCERNED. IT IS IRONIC THAT SO MUCH OF THIS SPACE-AGE INDUSTRY IS LABOUR INTENSIVE= WHICH MAKES IT A PRIME TARGET FOR CLAIMS IN THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES FOR PROTECTION AGAINST SO-CALLED 'LOW COST' COMPETITION.+

+I AM NOT LOOKING TO DISPUTE THAT CASE TODAY. I MERELY TAKE NOTE OF THE SITUATION, AND OF THE HANDFUL OF 'VOLUNTARY RESTRAINT AGREEMENTS' OR 'ORDERLY MARKETING ARRANGEMENTS' WHICH HAVE BEEN ENTERED INTO BY A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES IN THIS REGION,+ SAID MR DORWARD.

+THESE ARE PARTICULARLY CONCENTRATED ON TELEVISION SETS, AN AREA OF PRODUCTION WHICH I THINK WE CAN EXPECT TO SEE SIGNIFICANTLY EXPANDED IN HONG KONG IN THE NEAR FUTURE.+

MR DORWARD STRESSED THAT THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT WAS OPPOSED TO THE CONCEPT OF VOLUNTARY RESTRAINTS ON THIS OR ANY OTHER SECTOR OF TRADE, AND WOULD RESIST THEM WITH ALL VIGOUR.

/THE ELECTRONICS .....

THE ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY HAD MAINTAINED ITS GROWTH AHEAD OF TOTAL DOMESTIC EXPORTS - UP 20 PER CENT IN THE FIRST HALF OF THIS YEAR, OR RECORD EXPORT EARNINGS OF NEARLY $7 000 MILLION, HE SAID.

THIS WAS ACHIEVED WITH A REDUCTION IN THE LABOUR FORCE OF ABOUT 8 000 TO JUST OVER 84 000 IN MARCH 1980/81.

+THE EXPLANATION FOR THIS LIES TO A SUBSTANTIAL EXTENT IN GREATER USE OF THE MICRO-PROCESSOR WHICH HAS RAPIDLY BOOSTED BOTH PRODUCTIVITY AND QUALITY STANDARDS,+ HE SAID.

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RATING AND VALUATION DEPARTMENT MOVING TO HENNESSY CENTRE

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THE RATING AND VALUATION DEPARTMENT WILL BE MOVING TO ITS NEW OFFICES IN HENNESSY CENTRE, 500 HENNESSY ROAD, CAUSEWAY BAY, HONG KONG IN THREE STAGES BETWEEN OCTOBER 17 AND NOVEMBER 14.

THE FIRST STAGE WILL TAKE PLACE ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, AND WILL INVOLVE MOVING THE HEADQUARTERS, LEASING, SPECIAL PROPERTIES AND HOUSING ESTATES DIVISIONS AT PRESENT LOCATED AT NO. 1 GARDEN ROAD, CENTRAL.

THE SECOND STAGE WILL TAKE PLACE ON THE WEEKEND OF NOVEMBER 7 AND 8, WHEN THE RENT CONTROL DIVISION, KOWLOON RATING DIVISION AND HONG KONG RATING DIVISION, NOW LOCATED IN SUN HUNG KAI CENTRE AND NEW MERCURY HOUSE, WAN CHAI, WILL MOVE TO THE NEW LOCATION.

THE FINAL STAGE OF REMOVAL WILL TAKE PLACE ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, INVOLVING THE NEW KOWLOON RATING DIVISION AND NEW TERRITORIES RATING DIVISION, AT PRESENT LOCATED IN TAI SANG COMMERCIAL BUILDING, WAN CHAI.

THE WHOLE DEPARTMENT WILL BE OPERATING IN HENNESSY CENTRE FROM MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16. THE NEW TELEPHONE NUMBER OF THE DEPARTMENT IS 5-7957888- FOR ENQUIRIES CALL 5-7957666.

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