



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 1992

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FS SPEAKS AT RESUMED DEBATES ON BUDGET-RELATED BILLS

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THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE MODEST INCREASE OF 1% IN PROFITS TAX WOULD BLUNT HONG KONG'S COMPETITIVENESS AS A BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL CENTRE.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) (NO. 3) BILL 1992, HE SAID THE NEW LEVEL WAS STILL LOW BY ANY INTERNATIONAL STANDARD AND, INDEED LOWER THAN IT HAD BEEN IN HONG KONG IN SOME PREVIOUS YEARS.

"I AM PLEASED THAT THERE HAS BEEN SUPPORT FOR MY PROPOSAL FOR A 1% INCREASE IN PROFITS TAX PAYABLE BY CORPORATIONS. THIS INCREASE WILL YIELD A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT IN REVENUE TERMS : \$1.6 BILLION IN A FULL YEAR," HE SAID.

TURNING TO CLAUSE 4 OF THE BILL, WHICH PROPOSES SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN PERSONAL TAXATION ALLOWANCES, MR MACLEOD SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE POSITION OF THOSE MEMBERS WHO WOULD LIKE TO SEE INCREASES ON AN EVEN MORE GENEROUS SCALE.

"BUT I CAN ONLY EMPHASISE ONCE AGAIN THAT PERSONAL ALLOWANCES SINCE 1980 HAVE KEPT PACE WITH INFLATION, AND THAT IT IS OUR INTENTION TO ENSURE THAT THEY CONTINUE TO DO SO OVER TIME.

"IT IS ALSO WORTH REPEATING YET AGAIN THAT OVER HALF OF OUR WORKING POPULATION NOW PAYS NO SALARIES TAX AT ALL; THAT ONLY A VERY SMALL NUMBER INDEED PAY AT THE STANDARD RATE; AND THAT STANDARD RATE IS ITSELF ONE OF THE LOWEST IN THE WORLD.

"AS SAID, I HAVE GIVEN ASSURANCE ABOUT MY POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS INCREASING TAX ALLOWANCES AND TAX BANDS IN MY NEXT BUDGET," MR MACLEOD SAID.

ON THE DUTIABLE COMMODITIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, HE SAID THE BILL, ALTHOUGH SIMPLE IN CONCEPT, INVOLVED A NUMBER OF COMPLEX TECHNICAL POINTS ON WHICH THE GOVERNMENT'S EXCHANGES WITH AN AD HOC GROUP ON ALL THE BUDGET-RELATED BILLS CHAIRED BY DR HUANG CHEN-YA, WERE PARTICULARLY USEFUL.

SPEAKING AT THE COMMITTEE STAGE FOR THE BILL, MR MACLEOD SAID THE BILL, IF ENACTED, WOULD EXEMPT FROM DUTY ON DIESEL FUEL FRANCHISED BUSES RUNNING ON ROUTES SPECIFIED UNDER THE PUBLIC BUS SERVICES ORDINANCE.

"THIS WILL REPLACE THE PREVIOUS ARRANGEMENT UNDER WHICH FRANCHISED BUS COMPANIES RECEIVED A PARTIAL REFUND IN RESPECT OF DUTY PAID.

"THE ADMINISTRATION CONSIDERED THE POSSIBILITY OF INCREASING THE REFUND TO 100%. BUT IT WILL BE EASIER TO ADMINISTER AND TO MONITOR A SYSTEM OF SIMPLE EXEMPTION," HE SAID.

HOWEVER, HE POINTED OUT THAT A PRACTICAL DIFFICULTY, AROSE IN THE CASE OF THE NEW LANTAU BUS COMPANY.

/"THIS COMPANY'S

"THIS COMPANY'S BUSES ARE USED FOR PART OF THE DAY ON SPECIFIED ROUTES, AND FOR PART OF THE DAY ON NON-SPECIFIED ROUTES. IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THESE BUSES TO CHANGE FROM DUTY-FREE TO DUTIABLE FUEL DURING THE COURSE OF THE DAY, OR FOR SUCH A SYSTEM BE MONITORED.

"THE EFFECT OF THE AMENDMENT, THEREFORE, WILL BE TO ALLOW THE REFUND SYSTEM TO BE MAINTAINED IN RESPECT OF THIS PARTICULAR COMPANY, WITH THE LEVEL OF REFUND BEING INCREASED TO 100%," HE EXPLAINED.

ON THE STAMP DUTY (AMENDMENT) (NO. 3) BILL 1992, MR MACLEOD REITERATED THAT ITS MAIN PURPOSE WAS TO REDUCE FROM 0.5% TO 0.4% THE RATE OF STAMP DUTY ON CONTRACT NOTES.

"THIS REPRESENTS THE CONTINUATION OF A GRADUAL REDUCTION IN THE DUTY ON STOCK TRANSFERS, ESSENTIAL IF WE ARE TO MAINTAIN THE COMPETITIVENESS OF HONG KONG'S SECURITIES MARKET," HE SAID.

TURNING TO THE ENTERTAINMENTS TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID HE WAS GRATEFUL THAT THE AD HOC GROUP HAD DECIDED TO SUPPORT THIS SIGNIFICANT TAX CONCESSION WHICH WOULD DIRECTLY BENEFIT ORDINARY HOUSEHOLDS.

"I FULLY SHARE THE CONCERN EXPRESSED BY DR HUANG AND THE GROUP THAT THE BENEFIT OF THIS CONCESSION BE PASSED ON TO CONSUMERS TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE. DR HUANG HAS OUTLINED WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED IN THIS RESPECT AND I CONFIRM OUR INTENTION TO MONITOR THE SITUATION.

"I HAVE BEEN ASSURED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ASSOCIATION THAT ALL OR NEARLY ALL CINEMAS WILL FOLLOW THE LEAD SET IN THIS REGARD BY THE MAJOR CINEMA OPERATORS, WHICH HAVE AGREED TO REFRAIN FROM ANY PRICE INCREASE IN CINEMA TICKETS FOR A FULL YEAR," HE ADDED.

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STATEMENT BY FS ON BUDGET DEVELOPMENTS

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THE FOLLOWING IS THE STATEMENT BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, MR HAMISH MACLEOD, ON DEVELOPMENTS IN RELATION TO THE 1992 BUDGET IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY):

MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT,

IN MY SPEECH ON 1 APRIL CONCLUDING THE DEBATE ON THE SECOND READING OF THE APPROPRIATION BILL, I UNDERLINED THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING HEALTHY FISCAL RESERVES, WHICH WE CAN DRAW UPON IF WE ENCOUNTER ADVERSE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENTS. AT THE SAME TIME, I EXPLAINED THAT THE FORECAST FIGURE OF \$71 BILLION IN 1996-97 WAS ADEQUATE FOR THIS PURPOSE, AND THAT I HAD NO HIDDEN AGENDA TO BUILD UP THE RESERVES EVEN HIGHER.

UPDATED FIGURES FOR THE 1991-92 SURPLUS ARE NOW AVAILABLE AS A RESULT OF THE "FIRST CLOSING" OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ACCOUNTS. THESE INDICATE AN ADDITIONAL SURPLUS OF MORE THAN \$6 BILLION ON TOP OF THE REVISED ESTIMATE.

FIGURES FOR THE FINAL CLOSING OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ACCOUNTS WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE UNTIL THE SECOND PART OF MAY. THESE MAY VARY SLIGHTLY FROM THE FIRST CLOSING FIGURES. BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT WE NOW HAVE AN UNEXPECTED WINDFALL. I THOUGHT IT PROPER BOTH TO INFORM MEMBERS OF THIS, ALTHOUGH THE FIGURES ARE NOT FINAL; AND SINCE THE CHANGE IS SO SIGNIFICANT, TO REVIEW MY REVENUE PROPOSALS ACCORDINGLY.

LOOKING AT THE FIVE-YEAR PERIOD COVERED BY THE MEDIUM RANGE FORECAST, AND ALLOWING FOR INTEREST ON THIS ADDITIONAL SURPLUS, OUR ACCUMULATED RESERVES BY 1996-97 WILL BE MORE THAN \$7 BILLION HIGHER THAN WE HAD PREVIOUSLY FORECAST - AND OF PARTICULAR RELEVANCE, \$7 BILLION HIGHER THAN THE FORECAST AVAILABLE AT THE TIME OF MY BUDGET.

THIS DEVELOPMENT WAS NOT - AND COULD NOT HAVE BEEN - FORESEEN, BUT IT IS VERY WELCOME NEVERTHELESS. IT WILL ENABLE US TO CONTINUE WITH OUR PLANNED INCREASES IN EXPENDITURE; TO FUND THE PROPOSED TAX CONCESSIONS; AND TO MAINTAIN AN ADEQUATE "CUSHION" OF RESERVES. AT THE SAME TIME IT NO LONGER SEEMS NECESSARY TO RAISE ADDITIONAL REVENUE ON THE SCALE I HAD ORIGINALLY PLANNED.

THE AMOUNT OF THE RESULTING INCREASE IN OUR PROJECTED RESERVES IS, AS IT HAPPENS, ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO THE AMOUNT WHICH I HAD INTENDED TO RAISE BY INCREASING RATES BY HALF OF ONE PERCENTAGE POINT. I AM PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT, UNDER THESE CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES, THE ADMINISTRATION DOES NOT NEED TO PROCEED WITH AN INCREASE TO THE GENERAL RATES POUNDAGE THIS YEAR, ASSUMING OF COURSE THAT THE OTHER REVENUE MEASURES ARE AGREED. FOR THIS REASON, I WILL NOT BE INTRODUCING INTO THIS COUNCIL A RESOLUTION TO INCREASE RATES IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS BUDGET. ACCORDINGLY, APPROPRIATE ADJUSTMENTS WILL BE MADE TO SUBSEQUENT RATES DEMANDS. RATES, AS A STABLE AND PROGRESSIVE FORM OF TAXATION, WILL NEVERTHELESS CONTINUE TO MAKE AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO GENERAL REVENUE.

THE FACT THAT WE CAN NOW DO WITHOUT A RATES INCREASE IS CLEARLY GOOD NEWS TO THE PUBLIC AS WELL AS TO THE ADMINISTRATION. NEVERTHELESS, IT RAISES THE QUESTION OF HOW THE UNDER-ESTIMATION CAME ABOUT. THERE ARE TWO MAIN REASONS.

FIRST, REVENUE FROM STAMP DUTY, SALARIES AND PROFITS TAX AND FIRST REGISTRATION TAX HAVE BEEN HIGHER THAN EXPECTED, WITH THE RESULT THAT TOTAL REVENUE IS \$2.3 BILLION ABOVE THE REVISED ESTIMATE.

SECONDLY, SPENDING ON PUBLIC WORKS IS EXPECTED TO BE \$3 BILLION BELOW THE REVISED ESTIMATE, AS A RESULT OF FURTHER SLIPPAGE IN THE CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE FIRST CLOSING FIGURE AND THE REVISED ESTIMATE FIGURE FOR REVENUE IS ONLY 2%. REVENUE YIELDS ARE AFFECTED BY ECONOMIC FACTORS AND CANNOT BE PRECISELY FORECAST. RECENT ACTIVITY IN THE STOCK MARKET AND RELATIVELY HIGH PROPERTY PRICES HAVE, FOR EXAMPLE, CONTRIBUTED TO THE INCREASED REVENUE FROM STAMP DUTY.

/BY CONTRAST

BY CONTRAST, THE SLOWNESS IN IDENTIFYING THE MAGNITUDE OF THE UNDERSPENDING IN PUBLIC WORKS IS LESS READILY UNDERSTANDABLE, AND IS A MATTER FOR CONCERN. ALTHOUGH, IN THE LONGER TERM, SOME OF THE UNDERSPENDING THIS YEAR WILL BE MADE UP FOR IN SUBSEQUENT YEARS AS DELAYED PROJECTS ARE IMPLEMENTED, IT IS CLEARLY UNSATISFACTORY THAT WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO PREDICT THE PROGRESS OF OUR CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME WITH MORE ACCURACY. I HAVE THEREFORE ASKED THE SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY AND THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS TO LOOK URGENTLY AT HOW TO IMPROVE OUR ESTIMATING TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME, TO ENSURE THAT IN FUTURE YEARS A MORE ACCURATE PICTURE OF THE SITUATION EMERGES.

ALTHOUGH THIS WINDFALL SURPLUS WILL ENABLE US TO DEFER AN INCREASE IN GENERAL RATES, I AM ALSO ABLE TO ASSURE MEMBERS THAT THIS DOES NOT AFFECT OUR DETERMINATION TO LOOK AT POSSIBLE WAYS OF RESOLVING THE PROBLEMS FACED BY THE "SANDWICH CLASS". I STAND BY THE ASSURANCES WHICH I GAVE IN MY CONCLUDING SPEECH ON 1 APRIL. THAT IS, IF OUR FINANCES ARE IN LINE WITH EXPECTATIONS, I PLAN ANOTHER SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN SALARIES ALLOWANCES TOGETHER WITH A REVIEW OF TAX BANDS. THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS IS ALSO PRESSING FORWARD WITH OUR EXAMINATION OF POSSIBLE WAYS TO ALLEVIATE THE HIGH COST OF HOUSING FOR THE "SANDWICH CLASS", AND WILL PRODUCE RECOMMENDATIONS BY SEPTEMBER THIS YEAR.

FINALLY, THE FACT THAT WE ARE FORTUNATELY NOW ABLE TO AVOID AN INCREASE IN GENERAL RATES DOES NOT DETRACT FROM THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING THE INTEGRITY OF THE REMAINING BUDGET MEASURES. WE CAN AND MUST MOVE FORWARD WITH OUR CAREFULLY CONSTRUCTED PACKAGE OF CONCESSIONS, AS WELL AS WITH THE MODEST INCREASE IN PROFITS TAX, IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN OUR PLANNED LEVEL OF REVENUE AND FUND THE EXPENDITURE APPROVED BY MEMBERS IN THE APPROPRIATION BILL ON 1 APRIL.

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SPEECH BY FS ON BCC MOTION

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THE FOLLOWING IS THE FULL TEXT OF THE SPEECH BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, MR HAMISH MACLEOD, WHEN WINDING UP A MOTION DEBATE ON BCC INQUIRY IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY):

MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT,

AS I STATED IN THIS COUNCIL ON 15 MARCH 1992, IT IS THE CONSIDERED VIEW OF THE ADMINISTRATION THAT A FURTHER INQUIRY INTO THE BCCHK AFFAIR WOULD SERVE NO USEFUL PURPOSE UNLESS THERE WERE INDICATIONS FROM OUTSIDE HONG KONG OR ARISING IN THE COURSE OF THE LIQUIDATION OF BCCHK THAT THERE WERE OTHER IMPORTANT DIMENSIONS TO THE ISSUE WHICH REQUIRED SPECIAL EXAMINATION. THE POSITION REMAINS THAT, TO THE PRESENT, NO SUCH INDICATIONS HAVE ARISEN.

THE MOTION SETS OUT TWO PURPOSES FOR THE PROPOSED INQUIRY. THE FIRST IS TO INVESTIGATE THE BCCHK FAILURE AND TO SEE WHETHER ANY FURTHER ACTION NEEDS TO BE TAKEN. THE SECOND IS TO REVIEW THE EXISTING SUPERVISION MECHANISM OF THE BANKING SYSTEM. THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT CONSIDER THAT SUCH AN INQUIRY IS NECESSARY OR WOULD SERVE ANY USEFUL PURPOSE IN THESE RESPECTS.

/AS FAR

AS FAR AS THE FAILURE OF BCCHK IS CONCERNED, THE RELEVANT INFORMATION IS ALREADY IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN, INCLUDING THE COMMISSIONER OF BANKING'S REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR DATED 30 JULY 1991 AND THE COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINTS' REPORTS, BEARING IN MIND THAT THE COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINTS WAS GIVEN UNRESTRICTED ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT INFORMATION IN THE TWO COMPLAINTS HE INVESTIGATED.

AS REGARDS THE BANKING SYSTEM IN GENERAL, THE CLOSURE OF BCCHK LAST JULY HAS UNDERSTANDABLY CAUSED A GREAT DEAL OF DISTRESS. THIS IS A MATTER WHICH HAS BEEN OF GREAT CONCERN TO US ALL EVEN THOUGH THE ORIGINS OF THE CRISIS LAY OUTSIDE HONG KONG. THE INCIDENT, HOWEVER, DID NOT REFLECT ON THE FUNDAMENTAL SOUNDNESS OF OUR BANKING SYSTEM, WHICH HAS WITHSTOOD MANY SERIOUS TESTS. AND I MAY ADD THAT I DO NOT FIND ATTRACTIVE OR FAIR, RESPECTABLE OF SOME OF THE COMMENTS IN THIS DEBATE. COMMENTS ABOUT THE PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT AND EXPERTISE OF THOSE INVOLVED AND EVEN THE STATEMENT THAT SOME CIVIL SERVANTS MAY HAVE DELAYED THE CLOSURE SO AS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF INSIDE KNOWLEDGE TO REMOVE THEIR DEPOSITS. THESE ARE VERY SERIOUS STATEMENTS. THE ACCUSATION WAS MADE THAT THOSE INVOLVED WAS SIMPLISTIC FOR PLAYING A NUMBER'S GAME. I LEAVE IT TO THE PUBLIC TO JUDGE WHO IS TAKING A SIMPLISTIC VIEW OF THIS COMPLEX ISSUE, THAT SAID, I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE MANY OTHER BALANCED AND SUPPORTIVE COMMENTS IN THE DEBATE.

A CLEAR DEMONSTRATION OF THE INDUSTRY'S SOUNDNESS WAS THE BANKS' ABILITY TO SWITCH TO THE BASLE CAPITAL ADEQUACY FRAMEWORK AT THE END OF 1989. THIS CHANGEOVER WAS A FULL THREE YEARS BEFORE THE TARGET DATE FOR IMPLEMENTATION. SINCE THE MAJOR REGULATORY REFORMS WERE IMPLEMENTED IN THE MID-1980S, OUR BANKING SYSTEM HAS SUCCESSFULLY RIDDEN OUT SEVERAL PERIODS OF DIFFICULTIES, INCLUDING THE WORLDWIDE STOCK MARKET CRASH OF 1987 AND EVENTS IN CHINA IN 1989 AND INDEED THE AFTERMATH OF THE CLOSURE OF BCCHK. EMERGING FROM THESE DIFFICULTIES UNSCATHED THE BANKING SYSTEM HAS DEMONSTRATED ITS STRENGTH AND RESILIENCE AND CONTINUES TO GROW FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH.

IT MAY BE NOTED THAT ALL THE BANKS WHICH WERE THE SUBJECT OF UNFOUNDED RUMOURS LAST SUMMER HAD PARTICULARLY GOOD YEARS IN 1991 BOTH IN TERMS OF THE GROWTH OF BUSINESS AND PROFITABILITY. IN FACT, 1991 WAS AN EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD YEAR FOR THE BANKING SYSTEM IN GENERAL.

I HARDLY NEED TO SAY ANYTHING MORE ABOUT THE STRENGTH AND STABILITY OF OUR BANKING SYSTEM. THAT STRENGTH COULD NOT EXIST WITHOUT AN EFFECTIVE SUPERVISORY REGIME, AND WE CAN BE PROUD OF OUR REGULATORY FRAMEWORK WHICH COMPARES FAVOURABLY WITH THOSE IN OTHER FINANCIAL CENTRES. LET ME REITERATE THAT THE BCC GROUP'S PROBLEMS DID NOT ARISE IN HONG KONG. IT SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN THAT THERE WERE IN ALL SOME 70 JURISDICTIONS ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY THE BCC CRISIS. IT IS ALSO NOTEWORTHY THAT PRESENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE POSITION OF BCCHK WAS MUCH MORE FAVOURABLE THAN THAT OF THE REST OF THE GROUP. IT HAS BEEN ESTIMATED THAT, LEAVING ASIDE ANY CASH INJECTION BY THE ABU DHABI GOVERNMENT, THE CREDITORS OF BCCI S.A. AND BCC OVERSEAS WILL ONLY BE LIKELY TO RECEIVE DIVIDENDS OF AROUND 10% OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME. BCCHK DEPOSITORS, HOWEVER, HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED AN ADVANCE PAYMENT EQUAL TO 25% OF THEIR DEPOSITS UP TO A MAXIMUM OF \$500,000. FURTHERMORE, THE LIQUIDATOR OF BCCHK HAS INDICATED THAT HE HOPES TO PAY A FIRST ACROSS-THE-BOARD DIVIDEND HERE IN THE REGION OF 40% IN ABOUT FOUR MONTHS' TIME WITH THE DISTINCT POSSIBILITY OF A FURTHER DIVIDEND OR FURTHER DIVIDENDS BEING PAID DURING THE COURSE OF THE LIQUIDATION.

/WE MUST

WE MUST NOT, OF COURSE, BE COMPLACENT AND THERE ARE UNDOUBTEDLY SOME LESSONS TO BE LEARNT BY BANKING SUPERVISORS ACROSS THE WORLD, PARTICULARLY IN RESPECT OF THEIR STANCE TOWARDS BANKING GROUPS WITH DIFFUSED CORPORATE STRUCTURES. THE INTERNATIONAL GROUP OF BANK SUPERVISORS BASED IN BASLE IS CURRENTLY LOOKING AT THESE ISSUES AND WE WILL CERTAINLY WISH TO CONSIDER SERIOUSLY ANY RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH ARISE FROM THEIR DELIBERATIONS.

THE LOCAL SUPERVISORY SYSTEM IS UNDER CONSTANT REVIEW. WE ARE WELL ADVISED BY THE BANKING ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THE DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE IN THIS AREA. IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT WHEN THE BCCI GROUP CAME TO HONG KONG IN 1979, BY ACQUIRING THE METROPOLITAN BANK WHICH WAS SUBSEQUENTLY RENAMED BCCHK, THE POWERS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMISSIONER OF BANKING IN RESPECT OF THE ENTRY OF FOREIGN-OWNED BANKS WERE UNDOUBTEDLY INADEQUATE. SINCE THEN, THE SUPERVISORY FRAMEWORK HAS BEEN SUBSTANTIALLY STRENGTHENED, AND IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT THE BCCI GROUP WOULD HAVE GAINED ENTRY INTO HONG KONG UNDER THE CURRENT REGIME. THE COMMISSIONER OF BANKING NOW HAS THE POWER TO APPROVE CHANGES OF CONTROL OF AUTHORISED INSTITUTIONS IN ADVANCE AND TO TAKE MEASURES AGAINST EXISTING SHAREHOLDER CONTROLLERS WHO ARE NO LONGER CONSIDERED FIT AND PROPER. THE BANKING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 WAS INTRODUCED INTO THIS COUNCIL LAST WEEK WITH A VIEW TO IMPROVING THE SUPERVISORY SYSTEM EVEN FURTHER. THE PROPOSALS ARE MAINLY TO ENABLE AUDITORS TO PLAY A GREATER ROLE IN THE EXAMINATION OF THE INTERNAL CONTROLS OF BANKS. THIS IS PART OF OUR ON-GOING EXERCISE TO IMPROVE THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK.

APART FROM FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS TO THE SUPERVISORY SYSTEM, THE ADMINISTRATION IS CONSIDERING VARIOUS MEASURES TO OFFER BETTER PROTECTION TO DEPOSITORS IN THE EVENT OF A BANK FAILURE. THESE INCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF SOME FORM OF A DEPOSIT PROTECTION SCHEME, ON WHICH A CONSULTATION PAPER HAS BEEN ISSUED, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ACCORDING HIGHER PRIORITY TO SMALL DEPOSITORS IN THE EVENT OF BANK LIQUIDATIONS. IN ADDITION, THE NEW LIQUIDITY ADJUSTMENT FACILITY, TO BE INTRODUCED SHORTLY, IS DESIGNED TO HELP BANKS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THEIR LIQUIDITY.

GIVEN THE BCC INCIDENT WAS AN ISOLATED CASE WITH LITTLE RELEVANCE TO THE SOUNDNESS OF OUR BANKING SYSTEM AS A WHOLE, THAT PROPOSALS TO FURTHER IMPROVE THE SUPERVISORY SYSTEM ARE IN HAND, AND THAT MEASURES TO BETTER PROTECT SMALL DEPOSITORS ARE BEING CONSIDERED, IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE WHAT USEFUL PURPOSE AN INDEPENDENT INQUIRY COULD SERVE.

THE SCOPE OF THE PROPOSED INQUIRY IS VERY WIDE. THE USEFULNESS OF SUCH AN INQUIRY IS EXTREMELY DOUBTFUL SINCE ALMOST ALL THE RELEVANT FACTS HAVE BEEN WELL DOCUMENTED AND ARE PUBLICLY AVAILABLE. AN INQUIRY WILL TAKE UP SUBSTANTIAL RESOURCES, AND WILL DISTRACT ATTENTION FROM THE ONGOING TASK OF SUPERVISION. BCCHK IS NOW IN LIQUIDATION, AND THE TOP PRIORITY MUST BE FOR THAT PROCESS TO PROCEED WITH ALL REASONABLE SPEED SO THAT THE CREDITORS, INCLUDING DEPOSITORS CAN RECEIVE AS LARGE AND AS EARLY A PAYMENT AS POSSIBLE.

MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT, I OPPOSE THE MOTION.

WAYS TO REGULATE ESTATE AGENTS

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THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE LOOKING BEYOND SELF-REGULATION AND EXAMINING THE FORM OF POSSIBLE REGULATORY CONTROLS OF ESTATE AGENTS' OPERATIONS.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, WHEN WINDING UP AN ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON "PUBLIC CONCERN OVER THE PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND ETHICAL STANDARDS OF ESTATE AGENTS AND PROPERTY MANAGERS" IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR EASON SAID UNDERSTANDING HAD BEEN REACHED WITH TWO ESTATE AGENT ASSOCIATIONS THAT THE INTRODUCTION OF SOME FORM OF REGULATION OF ESTATE AGENTS THROUGH LICENSING SHOULD BE PURSUED.

THIS REQUIRES A BETTER DEFINITION OF THE LEVEL OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND PROVISION OF AN ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITY AND SUFFICIENT TIME FOR PRACTISING ESTATE AGENTS TO RECEIVE THE NECESSARY TRAINING AND TO ACHIEVE THE REQUIRED STANDARD.

ANY REGULATORY SYSTEM WILL NEED TO BE CAREFULLY WORKED OUT," HE SAID, ADDING THAT SIMPLY GRAFTING A FOREIGN SYSTEM ONTO HONG KONG WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE THE SOLUTION.

TAKING ACCOUNT OF HONG KONG'S PARTICULAR SITUATION, MR EASON SAID SOME QUESTIONS HAD TO BE ADDRESSED BEFORE A FULLY-FLEDGED REGULATORY SYSTEM COULD BE DEvised.

THESE INCLUDED SETTING THE REQUIRED STANDARDS TO BE ATTAINED BEFORE A PERSON CAN PRACTISE AS AN ESTATE AGENT OR OPERATE AN ESTATE AGENCY; WHETHER AN ESTATE AGENT SHOULD OPERATE AS AN INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN SELLER AND BUYER OR REPRESENT ONLY ONE PARTY'S INTERESTS, LIKELY EFFECTS ON THE COMMISSION CHARGING SYSTEM; AND POSSIBLE ENFORCEMENT MECHANISMS.

"IF LEGISLATION IS PROPOSED, RESOURCES WILL BE REQUIRED FOR ADMINISTRATION AND ENFORCEMENT. AS WE ARE ALL AWARE, ANY BID FOR SUCH RESOURCES WILL HAVE TO COMPETE WITH OTHERS FOR PRIORITY," HE SAID.

MR EASON SAID SOME HEADWAYS HAD ALREADY BEEN MADE IN BRINGING ABOUT THE SELF-REGULATION OF ESTATE AGENTS.

"THE TWO NEWLY-FORMED ASSOCIATIONS ARE PLANNING ACTIVITIES AIMED AT PROMOTING PROFESSIONALISM AMONG THEIR MEMBERS AND INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THEIR SERVICES.

"EFFORTS ARE ALSO BEING DIRECTED AT, FOR EXAMPLE, DRAWING UP A CODE OF PRACTICE, ORGANISING TRAINING COURSES IN CO-OPERATION WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND SETTING UP A PUBLIC COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE. THESE DEVELOPMENTS ARE ALL IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION," HE SAID.

"THE ADMINISTRATION WILL THEREFORE PURSUE ITS DISCUSSIONS WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TRADE, MONITOR THE PROGRESS OF THEIR EFFORTS AND LISTEN TO THEIR VIEWS AND THOSE OF OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES IN SEEKING THE WAY FORWARD," HE ADDED.

SHA SAYS MANAGEMENT OF BUILDINGS NORMALLY 'VERY SATISFACTORY'

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THE STANDARD OF MANAGEMENT IN MULTI-STOREY BUILDINGS IS NORMALLY VERY SATISFACTORY BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT ENCOURAGES FLAT OWNERS TO TAKE A DIRECT INTEREST IN THEIR OWN BUILDINGS, THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SUEN, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

WINDING UP AN ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE QUALIFICATIONS AND ETHICAL STANDARDS OF ESTATE AGENTS AND PROPERTY MANAGERS, MR SUEN SAID IN MANY INSTANCES, OWNERS' CORPORATIONS WERE FORMED IN PRIVATE BUILDINGS TO PROMOTE THAT INTEREST.

MR SUEN ALSO ASSURED MEMBERS THAT AN AMENDMENT BILL TO THE MULTI-STOREY BUILDINGS (OWNERS INCORPORATION) ORDINANCE WILL BE INTRODUCED INTO THE COUNCIL BEFORE THE END OF THE CURRENT SESSION.

THIS BILL, HE SAID, WILL COVER MOST OF THE POINTS RAISED BY THE COUNCILLORS AT YESTERDAY'S DEBATE.

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FS MOVES MOTION ON BETTING DUTY

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THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) MOVED A MOTION UNDER THE BETTING DUTY ORDINANCE TO INCREASE THE DUTY RATE ON STANDARD BETS (WIN, PLACE, DOUBLE AND QUINELLA) FROM 10.5% TO 11.5%, AND THAT ON EXOTIC BETS FROM 17% TO 17.5%.

THE NEW RATES WILL NOT COME INTO FORCE UNTIL SEPTEMBER 1 THIS YEAR WHEN THE NEXT RACING SEASON STARTS.

HE SAID THE JOCKEY CLUB HAD AGREED TO ABSORB THE ENTIRE ADDITIONAL DUTY ON EXOTIC BETS AND HALF OF THE ADDITIONAL DUTY ON STANDARD BETS.

"I DO NOT ANTICIPATE ANY EFFECT ON THE CLUB'S BUOYANT TURNOVER. THE ADDITIONAL YIELD TO REVENUE IN 1992-93 WILL BE APPROXIMATELY \$390 MILLION," MR MACLEOD SAID.

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BILL TO CHANGE AG'S POWER TO ISSUE NOLLE PROSEQUI

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THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 1992 INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY WILL REMOVE THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S POWER TO ISSUE A NOLLE PROSEQUI IN RESPECT OF OFFENCES THAT CAN BE TRIED ONLY SUMMARILY.

THE BILL WOULD FURTHER PROVIDE A PROCEDURE WHEREBY VENUE OF TRIAL MAY BE CHANGED BETWEEN THE MAGISTRATES COURT, DISTRICT COURT AND HIGH COURT, SAID THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON JEREMY MATHEWS, WHEN MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL.

MR MATHEWS SAID THE ATTORNEY GENERAL HAD A COMMON LAW RIGHT TO DISCONTINUE A CRIMINAL PROSECUTION IN THE HIGH COURT BY ENTERING A NOLLE PROSEQUI AND HAD SIMILAR STATUTORY POWERS IN THE DISTRICT AND MAGISTRATES COURTS.

A NOLLE PROSEQUI WOULD TERMINATE CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS, BUT WOULD NOT OPERATE AS AN ACQUITTAL, AND PROCEEDINGS MIGHT BE RECOMMENCED AFRESH FOR THE SAME OFFENCE.

"THE BILL ARISES FROM THE REVIEW OF THE NOLLE PROSEQUI PROCEDURE TO WHICH I REFERRED WHEN ANSWERING A QUESTION ON NOLLE PROSEQUI IN THIS COUNCIL ON JANUARY 18, 1989," MR MATHEWS SAID.

"IN THE LIGHT OF THAT REVIEW," HE SAID, "THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S POWER TO TERMINATE CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS BY WAY OF NOLLE PROSEQUI IS NOW EXERCISED BY ME PERSONALLY."

CLAUSE 13 OF THE BILL PROPOSED TO ABOLISH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S POWER TO ENTER A NOLLE PROSEQUI IN PURELY SUMMARY PROCEEDINGS.

THERE WERE TWO REASONS FOR THIS. FIRST, IT WAS ALREADY POSSIBLE FOR THE PROSECUTION TO WITHDRAW A SUMMONS WITH THE COURT'S LEAVE PRIOR TO PLEA, AND THEREAFTER ISSUE A REPLACEMENT SUMMONS IF NECESSARY.

SECONDLY, THE PUBLIC INTEREST WOULD BE BETTER SERVED BY FINALITY OF PROCEEDINGS RATHER THAN BY PERMITTING THE PROSECUTION TO PRESERVE ITS POSITION UPON MINOR OFFENCES AFTER PLEA.

THE PROPOSED ABOLITION WOULD NOT APPLY TO INDICTABLE OFFENCES BEING TRIED SUMMARILY.

THERE WERE THREE BROAD CATEGORIES REGARDING THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL WOULD CONSIDER USING A NOLLE PROSEQUI.

FIRSTLY, WHERE FOR HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS, IT WOULD BE OPPRESSIVE TO CONTINUE WITH A PROSECUTION. THIS MIGHT ARISE WHERE A DEFENDANT WAS TERMINALLY ILL.

SECONDLY, WHERE ANTICIPATED PROSECUTION EVIDENCE WAS NO LONGER AVAILABLE FOR THE COURT, BUT AN ACQUITTAL WAS NOT WARRANTED. THIS MIGHT ARISE WHERE A PROSECUTION WITNESS HAD BEEN INTIMIDATED TO ABSENT HIMSELF.

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LASTLY, WHERE OTHER PROCEEDINGS RENDERED THE CURRENT PROCEEDINGS UNNECESSARY, BUT AGAIN AN ACQUITTAL WAS NOT WARRANTED. THIS MIGHT ARISE WHERE A DEFENDANT WAS DUE TO BE EXTRADITED ON MORE SERIOUS CHARGES.

THE REVIEW ALSO HIGHLIGHTED THE CURRENT LACK OF STATUTORY PROVISIONS TO ENABLE A CASE TO BE TRANSFERRED TO A LOWER OR HIGHER COURT AFTER THE EMERGENCE OF NEW EVIDENCE SHOWING THAT THE OFFENCE WAS MORE OR LESS SERIOUS THAN ORIGINALLY THOUGHT.

WHERE THIS RESULTED IN THE SCHEDULED COURT BECOMING INAPPROPRIATE FOR THE PROCEEDINGS, THE USE OF A NOLLE PROSEQUI WAS THE ONLY METHOD BY WHICH THE PROCEEDINGS MIGHT BE TERMINATED IN ONE COURT AND RECOMMENCED IN ANOTHER MORE APPROPRIATE COURT.

MR MATHEWS SAID THE NOLLE PROSEQUI WAS NOT AN IDEAL TOOL FOR RESOLVING AN ESSENTIALLY SIMPLE PROCEDURAL DIFFICULTY. THE BILL WOULD ACCORDINGLY PUT IN PLACE SPECIFIC PROVISIONS TO ENABLE CHANGE OF TRIAL VENUE.

THE BAR ASSOCIATION AND LAW SOCIETY HAD BEEN CONSULTED AND SUPPORTED THE GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF THE BILL.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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BILL TO MODERNISE DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES FOR LAWYERS

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THE LEGAL PRACTITIONERS (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1992 WOULD MODERNISE AND STREAMLINE THE PROCEDURES LAID DOWN IN THE LEGAL PRACTITIONERS ORDINANCE FOR THE DISCIPLINE OF SOLICITORS AND BARRISTERS, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON JEREMY MATHEWS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, MR MATHEWS SAID THE PRESENT PROCEDURES WERE COMPLEX, CUMBERSOME AND TIME-CONSUMING.

ON THE NEW PROCEDURES FOR SOLICITORS, CLAUSE 4 OF THE BILL WOULD PERMIT THE LAW SOCIETY COUNCIL TO REQUIRE A SOLICITOR OR HIS OR HER FIRM TO PRODUCE FILES AND DOCUMENTS FOR INSPECTION.

IF THE COUNCIL CONSIDERED THE SOLICITOR TO BE UNFIT TO PRACTISE, IT COULD REFER THE MATTER TO THE SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL PANEL, AND SUSPEND THE SOLICITOR FROM PRACTICE UNTIL THE PANEL HAD DEALT WITH THE MATTER.

"THIS IS A USEFUL, PREVENTATIVE POWER FOR THE COUNCIL TO ACT SWIFTLY IN APPROPRIATE CASES IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC," SAID MR MATHEWS.

AT PRESENT, FOR SOLICITORS, TRAINEE SOLICITORS AND EMPLOYEES OF SOLICITORS, A DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE PANEL OF SENIOR SOLICITORS WAS APPOINTED BY THE CHIEF JUSTICE.

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THE PANEL COMPRISED OVER 200 SOLICITORS. IF A COMPLAINT WAS MADE TO THE LAW SOCIETY COUNCIL, AND THE COUNCIL CONSIDERED THAT THE PERSON'S CONDUCT REQUIRED INVESTIGATION, THEN THE COUNCIL MIGHT APPOINT A DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE TO LOOK INTO THE CASE.

THE COMMITTEE, CONSISTING OF NOT LESS THAN THREE MEMBERS OF THE PANEL, INVESTIGATED THE COMPLAINT AND MADE SUCH ORDER AS IT THOUGHT FIT.

MR MATHEWS SAID THE SIZE OF THE PANEL MADE IT TOO LARGE TO PERMIT CONSISTENCY OF APPROACH AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF EXPERTISE IN DISCIPLINARY MATTERS.

CLAUSE 5 OF THE BILL WOULD IMPROVE THIS PROCEDURE. IT PROVIDED FOR THE APPOINTMENT BY THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF A SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL PANEL MADE UP OF UP TO 30 SOLICITORS OF OVER 10 YEARS' EXPERIENCE AND 10 MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

MR MATHEWS SAID THE SIZE OF THE PANEL WOULD PROMOTE CONSISTENCY AND EXPERIENCE IN DISCIPLINE MATTERS.

IF THE LAW SOCIETY COUNCIL CONSIDERED A COMPLAINT AGAINST A SOLICITOR, TRAINEE SOLICITOR, OR A SOLICITOR'S EMPLOYEE SHOULD BE INVESTIGATED, A SOLICITORS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL WOULD BE SELECTED FROM THE PANEL.

THE TRIBUNAL, CONSISTING OF TWO SOLICITORS AND ONE LAY MEMBER, WOULD INVESTIGATE THE COMPLAINT, AND WOULD HAVE EXPANDED DISCIPLINARY POWERS, INCLUDING THE POWER TO IMPOSE A PENALTY OF UP TO \$500,000 AGAINST A SOLICITOR.

IN AN AMENDMENT UNRELATED TO DISCIPLINE, CLAUSE 27 OF THE BILL WOULD PERMIT THE LAW SOCIETY COUNCIL TO ORGANISE AND ADMINISTER ITS AFFAIRS MORE EFFICIENTLY.

THE COUNCIL WOULD BE ABLE TO DELEGATE ITS FUNCTIONS OTHER THAN ITS RULE-MAKING POWER TO ANY PERSON OR TO A COMMITTEE OF THE COUNCIL, THEREBY ENABLING IT TO CONCENTRATE UPON STRATEGIC AND OTHER MAJOR ISSUES, LEAVING OTHER PERSONS OR COMMITTEES TO CARRY OUT MANY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS PRESENTLY CARRIED OUT BY THE COUNCIL.

TURNING TO DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES FOR BARRISTERS, MR MATHEWS SAID PRESENTLY, IF A COMPLAINT WAS MADE TO THE BAR COUNCIL ABOUT A BARRISTER'S CONDUCT, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OR THE BAR COUNCIL MIGHT APPLY TO THE CHIEF JUSTICE TO APPOINT A COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY.

IF THE CHIEF JUSTICE WAS SATISFIED THAT THE APPOINTMENT WAS JUSTIFIED, A COMMITTEE WOULD BE APPOINTED. IN DUE COURSE, THE COMMITTEE WOULD SUBMIT ITS REPORT, INCLUDING ITS FINDINGS OF FACT AND LAW, TO THE REGISTRAR OF THE SUPREME COURT.

IF THE COMMITTEE CONSIDERED THAT A PRIMA FACIE CASE OF MISCONDUCT HAD BEEN MADE OUT, IT HAD TO SEND A FURTHER COPY OF THE REPORT, A TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE AND ANY EVIDENTIARY DOCUMENTS TO THE CHIEF JUSTICE.

WHERE A REPORT WAS SENT TO THE CHIEF JUSTICE, THE COURT OF APPEAL WOULD CONDUCT A FURTHER HEARING AND IMPOSE SUCH PENALTY AS IT THOUGHT FIT.

"UNDER THIS PROCEDURE THERE ARE FOUR SEPARATE OCCASIONS WHEN TO SOME DEGREE OR ANOTHER, SOMEONE CONSIDERS THE COMPLAINT: THE BAR COMMITTEE, THE CHIEF JUSTICE, A COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY AND THE COURT OF APPEAL. THE PROCEEDINGS TAKE A LONG TIME AND INVOLVE A CONSIDERABLE DUPLICATION OF EFFORT," MR MATHEWS SAID.

THE DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES IN THE BILL FOR BARRISTERS PARALLELED THOSE FOR SOLICITORS.

CLAUSE 19 PROVIDED FOR THE CHIEF JUSTICE TO APPOINT A BARRISTERS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL PANEL CONSISTING OF UP TO SIX QUEEN'S COUNSEL, SIX PRACTISING BARRISTERS AND FIVE MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

IF THE BAR COUNCIL CONSIDERED THAT A BARRISTER'S CONDUCT SHOULD BE INVESTIGATED, A BARRISTERS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL WOULD BE CHOSEN FROM THE PANEL.

THE TRIBUNAL, CONSISTING OF ONE QUEEN'S COUNSEL, ONE BARRISTER AND ONE LAY MEMBER, WOULD INVESTIGATE THE COMPLAINT, AND WOULD HAVE EXPANDED DISCIPLINARY POWERS, INCLUDING THE POWER TO IMPOSE A PENALTY OF UP TO \$500,000.

MR MATHEWS EMPHASISED THAT THE DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES FOR SOLICITORS AND BARRISTERS WOULD BE OF SUBSTANTIAL BENEFIT TO THE PUBLIC.

FIRST, THE APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO DISCIPLINARY PANELS MARKED AN IMPORTANT, PROGRESSIVE STEP FOR THE PROFESSION, AND WAS IN ACCORD WITH SIMILAR DEVELOPMENTS IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS.

"IT OPENS DISCIPLINARY MATTERS TO THE PUBLIC; THE PROFESSION PROVIDES LEGAL SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC, SO IT IS APPROPRIATE THAT THE PUBLIC SHOULD BE ABLE TO PARTICIPATE IN DISCIPLINE DECISIONS," HE SAID.

SECONDLY, UNDER CLAUSES 5 AND 19, IF THE LAW SOCIETY OR BAR COUNCILS DID NOT CONSIDER THAT A PERSON'S COMPLAINT AGAINST A SOLICITOR OR BARRISTER MERITED INVESTIGATION BY ITS DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL, THAT PERSON MIGHT APPLY TO THE CHIEF JUSTICE TO REFER THE COMPLAINT TO THE RELEVANT TRIBUNAL.

THIRDLY, UNDER CLAUSES 7 AND 21, IF A DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL INVESTIGATED A COMPLAINT AND FOUND THAT THE SOLICITOR OR BARRISTER SHOULD BE DISCIPLINED, IT COULD ORDER THE RETURN TO THE PERSON OF ANY FEES OR EXPENSES PAID IN RELATION TO THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE COMPLAINT.

THE PROPOSALS IN THE BILL ORIGINATED FROM THE LAW SOCIETY AND THE BAR ASSOCIATION.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

BILL TO CLARIFY POWER OF FIRE SERVICES

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A BILL THAT SEEKS TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT MEMBERS OF THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO BOARD A VESSEL ON THE OCCASION OF A FIRE OR OTHER CALAMITY WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE FIRE SERVICES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID IT ALSO PROPOSED TO AMEND THE DEFINITION OF VESSELS TO EXCLUDE WARSHIPS.

THIS IS TO ENSURE CONSISTENCY BETWEEN THE FIRE SERVICES ORDINANCE AND THE SHIPPING AND PORT CONTROL ORDINANCE, HE SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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IMMIGRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL INTRODUCED

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THE IMMIGRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 WHICH AIMS TO BRING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE IMMIGRATION ORDINANCE INTO LINE WITH THE BILL OF RIGHTS ORDINANCE WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID THE PROVISIONS RELATED MAINLY TO POWERS OF DETENTION AND TO CERTAIN PRESUMPTIONS IN THE ORDINANCE.

THE IMMIGRATION ORDINANCE IS ONE OF SIX PIECES OF LEGISLATION THAT, DURING A ONE-YEAR 'FREEZE' PERIOD, HAVE NOT BEEN SUBJECT TO THE BILL OF RIGHTS. THE PERIOD WILL END ON JUNE 8.

THE BILL AMENDS OR DELETES CERTAIN PROVISIONS ON THE DETENTION OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES.

MR ASPREY EXPLAINED THAT THEY WERE NO LONGER NECESSARY AS THEY HAD BEEN MADE OBSOLETE BY THE CHANGE IN POLICY IN JUNE 1988, UNDER WHICH ALL REFUGEES NOW LIVE IN OPEN CAMPS.

ONLY THOSE WHO ARE AWAITING SCREENING OR HAVE BEEN FOUND TO BE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS ARE HELD IN DETENTION.

THE BILL ALSO AMENDS PRESUMPTIONS RELATING TO THE OFFENCES OF EMPLOYING ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS AND OF BRINGING THEM TO HONG KONG BY SEA.

"I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THE CHANGES PROPOSED WILL IN PRACTICE MAKE IT HARDER TO BRING SUCCESSFUL PROSECUTIONS.

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"I CAN ASSURE MEMBERS THAT THESE CHANGES CERTAINLY DO NOT MEAN THAT WE ARE IN ANY WAY RELAXING OUR VIGILANCE OR OUR EFFORTS TO DETER ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION," MR ASPREY SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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BILL ON AERIAL ROPEWAYS INTRODUCED

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THE AIM OF THE AERIAL ROPEWAYS (SAFETY) (AMENDMENT) BILL IS TO GIVE TO THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS THE POWER TO MAKE REGULATIONS ON TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND RELATED MATTERS IN RESPECT OF AERIAL ROPEWAY SAFETY.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR A.G. EASON, SAID THIS POWER RESTS AT PRESENT WITH THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL AND THE INTENTION WAS THAT HE SHOULD NO LONGER BE REQUIRED TO CONSIDER SUCH ROUTINE, TECHNICAL MATTERS.

"THE POWER TO MAKE REGULATIONS FOR FEES WILL, HOWEVER, CONTINUE TO LIE WITH THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL," HE SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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FEARS ALLAYED ON OVERSEAS DOCTORS PRACTISING IN HK

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THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, DR S.H. LEE, SAID NEITHER THE MEDICAL COUNCIL NOR THE MEDICAL PROFESSION NEED HAVE ANY FEAR THAT THE PASSAGE OF THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 WOULD RESULT IN DROVES OF DOCTORS TRAINED OUTSIDE HONG KONG COMING HERE TO PRACTISE.

"IT IS UP TO THE MEDICAL COUNCIL TO SET STANDARDS, TO DETERMINE NUMBERS AND TO SPECIFY CONDITIONS AS APPROPRIATE TO SPECIFIC CASES IN QUESTION," HE SAID.

DR LEE WAS SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE BILL SEEKS TO ALLOW DOCTORS WITH ACCEPTABLE OVERSEAS QUALIFICATIONS TO REGISTER AND PRACTISE IN HONG KONG TO MEET SPECIFIC COMMUNITY NEEDS ON SPECIFIED CONDITIONS.

DR LEE SAID THE BILL, WHICH MARKS THE END OF ALMOST FIVE YEARS' EFFORTS BY THE ADMINISTRATION TO SEEK A SOLUTION TO MEET SPECIAL NEEDS, IS IMPORTANT FOR TWO REASONS.

"FIRST, BY INTRODUCING A SCHEME OF LIMITED REGISTRATION, IT MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR ADEQUATE MEDICAL SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO MEET SPECIAL NEEDS AS YET UNMET WITHOUT AFFECTING THE REGISTRATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR GENERAL MEDICAL PRACTICE IN HONG KONG.

"SECOND, AND PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT GIVES THE MEDICAL COUNCIL A NEW DISCRETIONARY POWER WHICH CAN BE SEEN TO BE EXERCISED OPENLY AND FAIRLY IN THE INTEREST OF OUR COMMUNITY," HE SAID.

HE SAID THE PROPOSED LIMITED REGISTRATION SCHEME GIVES THE MEDICAL COUNCIL ALL THE POWER, DISCRETION AND FLEXIBILITY IT NEEDS TO DETERMINE AND PROMULGATE WHERE NEEDS EXIST, DECIDE HOW MANY AND WHICH DOCTORS TO ADMIT, DESIGN WHAT PROCEDURES TO FOLLOW, LIMIT THOSE DOCTORS' PLACE AND PERIOD OF PRACTICE, AND DISCIPLINE THOSE DOCTORS NO DIFFERENTLY FROM FULLY REGISTRABLE PRACTITIONERS.

THUS, THE BILL EMPOWERS THE MEDICAL COUNCIL TO MEET ALL EXISTING NEEDS AND ANY FUTURE NEEDS THAT CANNOT BE ANTICIPATED AT THIS TIME.

IT ALSO ENABLES THE COUNCIL TO REGULATE THE SCHEME AND TO ENSURE THAT STANDARDS OF MEDICAL CARE ARE NOT COMPROMISED.

"THESE ARE FULL AND UNFETTERED POWERS OF DISCRETION," DR LEE SAID. "THESE ARE NEW POWERS THAT THE MEDICAL COUNCIL AND THE MEDICAL PROFESSION HAVE SOUGHT AND THESE ARE NEW POWERS THEY SHOULD BE GIVEN."

"IT IS THEN FOR THE MEDICAL COUNCIL TO SHOW THAT THEY CAN EXERCISE THESE NEW POWERS RESPONSIBLY AND RESPONSIVELY."

DR LEE SAID THE BILL AND THE COMMITTEE STAGE AMENDMENTS PROPOSED BY AN OMELCO AD HOC GROUP HAVE ADDRESSED ALL THE LEGITIMATE CONCERNS OF THE MEDICAL COUNCIL AND THE MEDICAL PROFESSION WHICH HAVE EARLIER REJECTED ALL THE GOVERNMENT'S PREVIOUS PROPOSALS.

HE CALLED ON COUNCILLORS NOT TO DELAY THE PASSAGE OF THIS BILL ANY MORE AS "THERE IS NO ROOM FOR PROTECTIONISM, NO ROOM FOR SELF INTEREST".

"LET US PUT ASIDE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL INTERESTS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF OUR COMMUNITY AND HONG KONG AS A WHOLE," DR LEE SAID.

"OUR INABILITY TO MEET THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY DOES HONG KONG NO CREDIT," HE SAID.

BA ANNUAL REPORT TABLED IN LEGCO
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THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY HAD PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN BRINGING ABOUT AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF BROADCASTING SERVICES FOR THE HONG KONG AUDIENCE, THE SECRETARY FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE, MR JAMES SO, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

PRESENTING THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORT (1990-91) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR SO SAID THE YEAR UNDER REPORT HAD BEEN A SIGNIFICANT ONE IN BROADCASTING DEVELOPMENT AND A PRODUCTIVE YEAR FOR THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY.

UNDER THE REPORT PERIOD, THE PUBLIC HAD WITNESSED THE LAUNCHING OF A HONG KONG-BASED PAN-ASIAN SATELLITE TELEVISION SERVICE, THE BIRTH OF A SECOND LOCAL COMMERCIAL RADIO STATION AND THE INTRODUCTION OF THE MULTI-CHANNEL SOUND TELEVISION BROADCAST SYSTEM, COMMONLY KNOWN AS NICAM, MR SO SAID.

HE PAID TRIBUTE TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE AUTHORITY FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION IN BOTH REGULATING THE FAST DEVELOPING BROADCASTING INDUSTRY AND IN ADVISING THE ADMINISTRATION IN FRAMING ITS BROADCASTING POLICY TO COPE WITH RAPID CHANGES IN THE INDUSTRY.

MR SO SAID TO MONITOR THE QUALITY OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY LOCAL BROADCASTERS, THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY HAD SET UP A COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE TO CONSIDER COMPLAINTS ON TELEVISION AND RADIO PROGRAMMES, ADVERTISEMENTS AND TECHNICAL ISSUES.

DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT, THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY AND ITS COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE PROCESSED A TOTAL OF 570 COMPLAINTS, 561 OF WHICH WERE RELATED TO TELEVISION BROADCAST AND 9 WERE ABOUT RADIO BROADCAST.

THIS COMPARES WITH 433 COMPLAINTS RECEIVED IN 1987/88, 611 IN 1988/89 AND 276 IN 1989/90.

THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY, HAVING CONSIDERED THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE, ISSUED A TOTAL OF FIVE SERIOUS WARNINGS, 13 WARNINGS AND 31 ADVISORY LETTERS TO THE TWO WIRELESS TELEVISION STATIONS.

THE MAJORITY OF THE WARNING CASES WERE RELATED TO THE CONTRAVENTION OF THE PROVISIONS IN THE CODE OF PRACTICE ON PROGRAMME STANDARDS GOVERNING THE PORTRAYAL OF VIOLENCE AND THE USE OF LANGUAGE ON TELEVISION.

AS REGARDS RADIO BROADCAST, ONE SERIOUS WARNING AND TWO WARNINGS WERE ISSUED IN RESPECT OF CONTRAVENTION OF THE CODES OF PRACTICE ON PROGRAMME AND ADVERTISING STANDARDS RELATING TO THE USE OF LANGUAGE AND MISLEADING ADVERTISEMENT.

"GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE STATIONS' RESPONSE TO THE BA'S WARNINGS AND ADVICE DISPLAYED A RESPONSIBLE ATTITUDE," MR SO SAID.

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DURING THE PERIOD UNDER REPORT, ON THE ADVICE OF ITS WORKING GROUP ON REVIEW OF CODES OF PRACTICE AND IN CONSULTATION WITH THE LICENCEES, THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY MADE A NUMBER OF CHANGES TO THE TELEVISION AND RADIO CODES OF PRACTICE ON PROGRAMME, ADVERTISING AND TECHNICAL STANDARDS.

MAJOR REVISIONS INCLUDED THE INTRODUCTION OF CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING, THE REQUIREMENT FOR IMPRACTICALITY IN CURRENT AFFAIRS AND DOCUMENTARY PROGRAMMES AND THE DRAWING UP OF PERFORMANCE SPECIFICATIONS FOR MULTI-CHANNEL SOUND TELEVISION BROADCAST.

THE WORKING GROUP ALSO DREW UP A SEPARATE SET OF CODES OF PRACTICE ON PROGRAMME AND ADVERTISING STANDARDS FOR THE REGULATION OF SATELLITE TELEVISION BROADCAST.

THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY ALSO COMMISSIONED AN INDEPENDENT COMPANY TO CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE TELEVISION BROADCASTING SURVEY, BASED ON A SAMPLE OF 2,000 HOUSEHOLDS.

THE RESULTS OF THE SURVEY PROVIDED USEFUL REFERENCE INFORMATION TO THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY IN DISCHARGING ITS RESPONSIBILITIES ESPECIALLY IN THE PROCESSING OF COMPLAINT CASES AND THE REVIEW OF THE CODES OF PRACTICE.

"THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY IS ALSO ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE CURRENT COMPREHENSIVE TELEVISION BROADCASTING REVIEW BEING CONDUCTED BY THE ADMINISTRATION," MR SO SAID.

"THE AUTHORITY HAS RECENTLY COMPLETED A REVIEW OF THE ADVERTISING CODES OF PRACTICE FOR TELEVISION AND HAS FORWARDED IT TO THE ADMINISTRATION FOR CONSIDERATION IN THE REVIEW.

"IT IS THE ADMINISTRATION AS WELL AS THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY'S WISH THAT THE LICENSING FRAMEWORK FOR SUBSCRIPTION TELEVISION SERVICES WILL BE FORMULATED SOON TO PROVIDE MORE CHOICES FOR VIEWERS," HE ADDED.

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NEW GOVERNOR WILL CONSIDER VIEWS ON CEREMONIAL DRESS

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THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, SAID THE NEW GOVERNOR WOULD NO DOUBT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT VIEWS EXPRESSED ABOUT THE APPROPRIATE STYLE OF DRESS WHICH HE SHOULD WEAR ON PUBLIC CEREMONIAL OCCASIONS.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MARTIN BARROW IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

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CS ON ADMINISTRATION OF JUDICIARY

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THE INFORMATION SYSTEMS STRATEGIC STUDY ON THE JUDICIARY NOW BEING CARRIED OUT SHOULD ENABLE THE JUDICIARY TO MAKE CONSIDERABLY MORE EXTENSIVE USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TO HELP JUDGES IN THEIR RESEARCH, CAPTURE KEY MANAGEMENT INFORMATION AND GENERALLY ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVES MORE EFFICIENTLY.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN A REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MOSES CHENG.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY SAID THE STUDY STARTED IN JULY LAST YEAR AND WAS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

SIR DAVID POINTED OUT THAT THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE JUDICIARY WAS PRIMARILY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE REGISTRAR, SUPREME COURT UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE.

"THAT SAID, THE JUDICIARY IS TREATED NO DIFFERENTLY FROM GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS ON MATTERS RELATING TO ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY," HE ADDED.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY SAID ANY MAJOR CHANGES WERE EXAMINED BY THE TWO RESOURCE BRANCHES OF FINANCE AND CIVIL SERVICE IN THE GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT AND THE ADMINISTRATION WING OF HIS OFFICE WHICH PROVIDED A POINT OF CONTACT WITH THE JUDICIARY WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION.

"TOGETHER, THEY WORK TO ENSURE THAT THE COURTS AND JUDGES RECEIVE THE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT THEY NEED IN CARRYING OUT THEIR JUDICIAL FUNCTIONS.

"THIS ARRANGEMENT IS SIMILAR TO THE ARRANGEMENTS IN THE UK WHERE THE LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT SUPPORTS THE CENTRAL ROLE OF COURTS AND JUDGES IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE," SIR DAVID SAID.

THE JUDICIARY WAS ALSO SUBJECT TO THE DIRECTOR OF AUDIT'S VALUE FOR MONEY AUDIT, WHICH EXAMINED, ON A REGULAR BASIS, THE ECONOMY, EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS WITH WHICH GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS USED PUBLIC MONEY, THE CHIEF SECRETARY ADDED.

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 1982

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CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION SEEKS TO CURB CRIME

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THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE AND A DELEGATION OF HIS SENIOR OFFICERS ARE NOW IN CHINA FOR HIGH-LEVEL DISCUSSIONS ON CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION ON CRIME.

SMUGGLING OF WEAPONS IS ONE OF THE MAIN AREAS HE WILL BE DISCUSSING.

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

MR ASPREY SAID THERE WAS NO SINGLE AGREEMENT WITH THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES ON JOINT EFFORTS TO CURB THE SMUGGLING OF WEAPONS INTO HONG KONG.

"BUT WE HAVE A NUMBER OF CHANNELS FOR CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION ON CURBING THIS AND OTHER ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES BETWEEN HONG KONG AND CHINA.

"THESE PROVIDE FOR DAY-TO-DAY CO-OPERATION IN ALL THE KEY AREAS OF CROSS-BORDER CRIME," HE SAID.

THE FIRST MEANS OF LIAISON WAS THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL POLICE ORGANISATION, COMMONLY KNOWN AS INTERPOL, OF WHICH BOTH HONG KONG AND CHINA WERE MEMBERS, THE SECRETARY SAID.

THIS PROVIDES HONG KONG AND CHINA, AS IT DOES POLICE FORCES ALL OVER THE WORLD, WITH A REGULAR CHANNEL THROUGH WHICH ONE POLICE FORCE MAY REQUEST THE ASSISTANCE OF THE OTHER IN COMBATTING CRIME.

MR ASPREY SAID THIS WAS REINFORCED BY CROSS-BORDER LIAISON THROUGH REGULAR VISITS BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE POLICE TO THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN CHINA AND VICE VERSA.

AT THE WORKING LEVEL, MR ASPREY SAID BORDER LIAISON CONTACTS TOOK PLACE REGULARLY TO DISCUSS AND RESOLVE PRACTICAL PROBLEMS OF CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION AGAINST CRIME.

THE CO-OPERATION EXTENDS TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF SUSPECTS INVOLVED IN CROSS-BORDER CRIMES AND INFORMATION ON THE SMUGGLING OF ARMS OR OTHER CONTRABAND.

HE SAID IT ALSO EXTENDED TO AREA SUCH AS CO-ORDINATED OPERATIONS TO TACKLE ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION, SMUGGLING, AND NARCOTICS.

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LINKS WITH INT'L BODIES WILL CONTINUE AFTER 97

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PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN HONG KONG SHALL CONTINUE TO BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN THEIR LINKS WITH THEIR RELATED INTERNATIONAL BODIES AFTER 1997.

THESE LINKS ARE PERMITTED BY THE JOINT DECLARATION AND THE BASIC LAW.

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

MANY PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS IN HONG KONG HAVE ESTABLISHED A VARIETY OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH INTERNATIONAL BODIES IN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS, INCLUDING MEMBERSHIP IN THESE BODIES.

HOW THEY WISHED TO MAINTAIN THEIR LINKS WITH THEIR RELATED INTERNATIONAL BODIES WAS PRIMARILY A MATTER FOR THOSE ORGANISATIONS, MR SZE SAID.

"WE WOULD, OF COURSE, BE HAPPY TO FACILITATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THOSE RELATIONSHIPS WHERE WE CAN," HE ADDED.

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OVERALL GROWTH OF CIVIL SERVICE MAINTAINED

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS MAINTAINED A POLICY OF CONTROLLING THE OVERALL GROWTH OF THE CIVIL SERVICE IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, THE SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE, MR BARRIE WIGGHAM, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THIS POLICY ALSO ALLOWS VARIATIONS BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS AND GRADES, SO AS TO ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO ANTICIPATE AND REACT TO CHANGES IN THE NATURE, PRIORITIES AND ORGANISATION OF ITS WORK, HE ADDED.

"THE INCREASING COMPLEXITY OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, AND RISING COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS REQUIRE GREATER POLICY INPUT AT THE DIRECTORATE LEVEL," MR WIGGHAM SAID, IN A REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LEE WING-TAT.

MR WIGGHAM SAID ALTHOUGH THE DIRECTORATE GREW FASTER IN PERCENTAGE TERMS THAN THE SERVICE AS A WHOLE DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS, THE NUMBER OF NEW DIRECTORATE POSTS YEAR ON YEAR HAD BEEN MODEST.

CITING STATISTICS, HE SAID THE STRENGTH OF THE DIRECTORATE AS AT JANUARY 1, 1989 WAS 1,129.

THIS WAS INCREASED BY 47 IN 1989, BY 96 IN 1990 AND BY 103 (INCLUDING STAFF WHO HAD LEFT THE SERVICE TO JOIN THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING COUNCIL AND THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY) TO 1,375 AT JANUARY 1 THIS YEAR.

"GENERALLY, INCREASES IN STAFF ARISE FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW TASKS, AND THE UPGRADING OF EXISTING SERVICES," MR WIGGHAM SAID.

AT MORE JUNIOR LEVELS, INCREASED COMPUTERISATION AND PRACTICES SUCH AS CONTRACTING OUT BASIC SERVICES TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR, HAS ENABLED THE GOVERNMENT TO CONTAIN GROWTH MORE EASILY.

ON THE CIVIL SERVICE AS A WHOLE, MR WIGGHAM SAID THE STRENGTH AS AT JANUARY 1, 1989 WAS 185,486. THE NUMBER WAS INCREASED BY 2,397 DURING 1989 AND BY 1,975 IN 1990.

"STRENGTH AS AT JANUARY 1 THIS YEAR WAS 187,006, WHICH EXCLUDES STAFF WHO HAD LEFT THE CIVIL SERVICE TO JOIN THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING COUNCIL AND THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY UP TO THAT DATE.

"IF WE INCLUDED SUCH STAFF THE TOTAL STRENGTH WOULD BE 191,936, OR AN INCREASE OF 2,078 OVER THE PREVIOUS YEAR," MR WIGGHAM ADDED.

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MEASURES TO CURB AIRCRAFT NOISE IN PIPELINE

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THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO INTRODUCE LEGISLATION, AMONG OTHER THINGS, IN THE COMING YEAR TO PROHIBIT THE ADDITION TO HONG KONG'S AIRCRAFT REGISTER OF SECOND GENERATION SUBSONIC AIRCRAFT WHICH DO NOT MEET NEW INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS OF NOISE.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MRS ANSON CHAN, WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MAN SAI-CHEONG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE SECRETARY SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WAS FULLY CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO MINIMISE NOISE NUISANCE TO RESIDENTS LIVING UNDER OR IN THE VICINITY OF THE FLIGHT PATH.

SHE ALSO SAID THE NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT LANDINGS OR TAKE-OFFS DURING CURFEW HOURS WOULD NOT BE INCREASED IN PROPORTION TO THE GENERAL INCREASE IN AIR TRAFFIC.

THE CIVIL AVIATION (AIRCRAFT NOISE) (LIMITATION ON LANDING AND TAKE OFF OF AIRCRAFT) NOTICE GAZETTED ON NOVEMBER 1, 1989 UNDER THE CIVIL AVIATION (AIRCRAFT NOISE) ORDINANCE (CAP 312) PROVIDES FOR VARIOUS DEGREES OF LIMITATION ON THE LANDING AND TAKING OFF OF AIRCRAFT ACCORDING TO THE TIME OF NIGHT.

UNDER THE TERMS OF THIS NOTICE, MRS CHAN SAID THE AIRPORT WAS, FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES, "CLOSED" BETWEEN THE HOURS OF MIDNIGHT AND 6.30 AM DURING WHICH AIRCRAFT MIGHT NOT LAND OR TAKE OFF EXCEPT WITH THE SPECIFIC PERMISSION OF THE AIR TRAFFIC SERVICES WATCH SUPERVISOR.

BUT IN PRACTICE SUCH PERMISSION WAS GIVEN ONLY IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH COULD NOT HAVE BEEN REASONABLY FORESEEN BY THE AIRCRAFT OPERATOR, SHE ADDED.

THE EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES INCLUDE :

- * MALFUNCTIONS OF THE AIRCRAFT OR UNSERVICEABILITY OF NAVIGATION AIDS;
- * DISRUPTION OF NORMAL OPERATIONS AT THE AERODROME OF ORIGIN OR DESTINATION;
- * CLOSURES OF AIRSPACE OR AIR TRAFFIC CONGESTION;
- * DISRUPTION TO NORMAL AIRPORT AND AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS DUE TO WAR, BOMB THREATS, INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE, SEARCH AND RESCUE FLIGHTS, AND MEDICAL EVACUATION; AND
- * DISRUPTION OF NORMAL OPERATIONS DUE TO ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS.

"FOR THESE REASONS IT IS NOT EXPECTED THAT THE NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT LANDINGS OR TAKE-OFFS DURING CURFEW HOURS WILL INCREASE IN PROPORTION TO THE GENERAL INCREASE IN AIR TRAFFIC," SHE ADDED.

THE SECRETARY SAID STATISTICS INDICATED THAT WHILE TOTAL AIRCRAFT MOVEMENTS HAD INCREASED THREE PER CENT FROM 105,000 IN 1990 TO 109,000 LAST YEAR, MOVEMENTS BETWEEN MIDNIGHT AND 6.30 AM HAD ACTUALLY DECREASED EIGHT PER CENT FROM 392 IN 1990 TO 360 LAST YEAR.

"I CAN ASSURE MEMBERS THAT THE CIVIL AVIATION DEPARTMENT WILL CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN A TIGHT CONTROL OVER THE APPROVAL OF OPERATIONS DURING THE CURFEW HOURS.

"HAVING SAID THIS, IT IS INEVITABLE THAT, AS KAI TAK BECOMES MORE AND MORE HEAVILY USED, THE DEMAND FOR DEPARTURE SLOTS IN THE LATE EVENING WILL INCREASE," SHE ADDED.

MRS CHAN SAID ULTIMATE RELIEF TO RESIDENTS LIVING IN THE VICINITY OF THE AIRPORT WOULD COME ONLY WHEN KAI TAK CLOSED DOWN.

SHE ADDED THAT EVERY EFFORT WAS THEREFORE BEING MADE TO COMPLETE THE NEW AIRPORT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 1992

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CONSTRUCTION WASTES RECYCLING UNDER STUDY

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THE GOVERNMENT IS EXAMINING HOW TO REDUCE THE AMOUNTS OF CONSTRUCTION WASTES PRESENTED FOR DISPOSAL AT LANDFILLS AND HOW SUCH WASTES MIGHT BE RECYCLED.

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

"IT HAS ALREADY BEEN AGREED THAT, SUBJECT TO FUNDING, CERTAIN FUTURE RECLAMATION PROJECTS SHOULD BE BROUGHT FORWARD TO ABSORB CONSTRUCTION WASTE BY PUBLIC DUMPING," HE SAID.

A PILOT SCHEME IS ALSO IN HAND TO TEST THE VIABILITY OF A RECYCLING PLANT FOR CONSTRUCTION WASTE.

IF THIS IS SUCCESSFUL, IT MAY BE PUT TO MORE PERMANENT AND EXTENSIVE USE, MR EASON SAID.

ALTHOUGH THERE HAD NOT BEEN A DRASTIC INCREASE IN THE QUANTITY OF COMMERCIAL WASTE BEING DISPOSED OF AT LANDFILLS IN RECENT YEARS, MR EASON NOTED THAT IT WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TO ENCOURAGE THE RECOVERY AND RECYCLING OF WASTES GENERALLY.

HE SAID HONG KONG ALREADY HAD A SUBSTANTIAL WASTE RECOVERY INDUSTRY, FOR EXAMPLE, MOST OF THE OFFICE PAPER WASTES PRODUCED IN THE MAIN OFFICE AREAS WERE RECOVERED AND EXPORTED FOR RECYCLING.

ON THE LEVYING OF CHARGES FOR DISPOSAL OF WASTES, MR EASON SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONSIDERING THE GENERAL FEASIBILITY OF IMPOSING SUCH CHARGES, ALTHOUGH DELIBERATIONS WERE AT AN EARLY STAGE.

HE SAID GIVEN THE HIGH COST OF PROVIDING ENVIRONMENTALLY ACCEPTABLE DISPOSAL FACILITIES, CLEARLY A CASE COULD BE MADE FOR LEVYING CHARGES, ON THE POLLUTER PAYS PRINCIPLE, FOR THE DISPOSAL OF SOLID WASTES AT LANDFILLS.

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CIVIL SERVICE WASTAGE STABILISING

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THE OVERALL WASTAGE RATE IN THE CIVIL SERVICE IS STABILISING AT AROUND FIVE PER CENT EACH YEAR IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, 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 HENRY TANG, MR WIGGHAM SAID THE NUMBER OF OFFICERS ON BOTH THE DIRECTORATE PAY SCALE AND THE MASTER PAY SCALE LEFT THE SERVICE IN 1989/90 WAS 10,790, INCLUDING 21 ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS (AO).

/THE WASTAGE

THE WASTAGE RATE WAS DROPPED TO 9,823 (INCLUDING 16 AOS) IN 1990/91 AND TO 7,601 (INCLUDING 13 AOS) BETWEEN APRIL 1991 AND JANUARY 1992.

THESE FIGURES DO NOT INCLUDE THOSE WHO LEFT THE CIVIL SERVICE TO JOIN THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING COUNCIL AND THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY.

"AS CAN BE SEEN, THE WASTAGE SITUATION HAS BEEN IMPROVING," MR WIGGHAM SAID.

"FOR ALL GROUPS THE WASTAGE RATE HAS BEEN DECLINING, AND THE OVERALL WASTAGE RATE IS STABILISING AT AROUND FIVE PER CENT.

"THAT BEING THE CASE, THE WASTAGE SITUATION SHOULD NOT HAVE ADVERSELY AFFECTED THE EFFICIENCY OF THE CIVIL SERVICE," HE ADDED.

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LAWS UPHELD TO PROTECT PROPERTY BUYERS

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THE GOVERNMENT WILL UPHOLD EXISTING LAWS CONCERNING FRAUD CRIMES COMMITTED IN HONG KONG. IN ORDER TO PREVENT THE PUBLIC FROM BEING DEFRAUDED WHEN PURCHASING PROPERTY OUTSIDE HONG KONG.

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

MR ASPREY SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALSO DISCUSSING WITH REAL ESTATE AGENTS MEANS OF ENHANCING STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONALISM AND CONSUMER PROTECTION.

HOWEVER, HE ADVISED THOSE WHO WISH TO BUY PROPERTY, OR MAKE OTHER MAJOR INVESTMENTS OVERSEAS, TO ENSURE THAT THEY RECEIVE SOUND PROFESSIONAL ADVICE BEFORE MAKING ANY FINAL COMMITMENT.

THE COMMERCIAL CRIME BUREAU (CCB) OF THE POLICE RECEIVED 56 COMPLAINTS IN 1989 AGAINST A PROPERTY AGENT CONCERNING THE SALE OF PROPERTY IN THE USA.

IN 1990, SIX COMPLAINTS WERE RECEIVED AGAINST AN AGENT CONCERNING THE SALE OF PROPERTY IN SHENZHEN AND NONE WAS RECEIVED LAST YEAR.

MR ASPREY SAID ALL THESE COMPLAINTS HAD BEEN INVESTIGATED AND THE CCB HAD CONCLUDED THAT THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OF A CRIMINAL OFFENCE BY THE AGENT IN HONG KONG IN ANY CASE.

THE MAJOR COMPLAINTS MADE WERE THAT TITLE DEEDS FOR PURCHASED PROPERTY WERE RECEIVED LATE, OR NEVER RECEIVED AT ALL AND THAT AGENTS REQUESTED ADDITIONAL PAYMENTS BEFORE THE TRANSFER OF THE TITLE.

"AS THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OF ANY CRIMINAL OFFENCE IN THE CASES INVESTIGATED IN 1989 AND 1990, THE COMPLAINANTS WERE ADVISED TO TAKE APPROPRIATE CIVIL ACTION," HE SAID.

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FIRE RETARDANT AGENTS NO RISK TO HEALTH

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CHEMICALS COMMONLY CONTAINED IN FIRE RETARDANT AGENTS ARE NOT HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH OR TO THE ENVIRONMENT WHEN PROPERLY USED UNDER NORMAL CONDITIONS.

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

A CODE OF PRACTICE PUBLISHED BY THE DIRECTOR OF FIRE SERVICES REQUIRES THE USE OF FIRE RETARDANT PRODUCTS AS LININGS FOR ACOUSTIC, DECORATIVE AND THERMAL INSULATION IN DUCTINGS, CONCEALED LOCATIONS AND PROTECTED MEANS OF ESCAPE IN BUILDINGS.

MR ASPREY SAID COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE WAS A REQUIREMENT BEFORE THE ISSUANCE OF AN OCCUPATION PERMIT BY THE BUILDING AUTHORITY.

ALTHOUGH GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS ARE EXEMPTED FROM THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE, THE CODE IS APPLIED EQUALLY TO GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS AS A MATTER OF POLICY.

ALSO, WHERE COMBUSTIBLE MATERIALS ARE USED AS FALSE CEILINGS, DRAPERIES OR CURTAINS IN PLACES OF PUBLIC ASSEMBLY LICENSED UNDER THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES ORDINANCE OR PLACES OF PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT ORDINANCE, THESE ITEMS ARE REQUIRED BY THE CODE TO BE TREATED WITH FIRE RETARDANT AGENTS.

MR ASPREY SAID THE REQUIRED TREATMENT MUST BE CERTIFIED BY A FIRE SERVICE INSTALLATION CONTRACTOR REGISTERED UNDER THE FIRE SERVICES (INSTALLATION CONTRACTORS) REGULATIONS, WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING THAT FIRE RETARDANT PRODUCTS WERE APPROVED BY THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND WERE USED AND APPLIED PROPERLY.

FIRE RETARDANT AGENTS ARE NORMALLY APPLIED IN THE COURSE OF MANUFACTURING.

THE MANUFACTURING OF FIRE RETARDANT PRODUCTS IS GOVERNED BY INDUSTRIAL SAFETY REQUIREMENTS ENFORCED BY THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT.

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ALTERNATIVE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES TO RELIEVE MTR CONGESTION

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ALTERNATIVE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES WILL BE FURTHER STRENGTHENED AS PART OF THE MEASURES TO HELP RELIEVE CONGESTION ALONG THE MTR NATHAN ROAD CORRIDOR.

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

/OVER THE

OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS, THE NUMBER OF FRANCHISED BUS ROUTES LINKING THE NEW TERRITORIES AND NORTH KOWLOON WITH DESTINATIONS SOUTH OF THE MTR PRINCE EDWARD STATION HAS INCREASED FROM 114 TO 140.

EIGHT MORE EXPRESS BUS ROUTES PROVIDING AIR-CONDITIONED SERVICES DIRECT TO TSIM SHA TSUI, CENTRAL AND WAN CHAI WOULD BE ADDED THIS SUMMER TO GIVE PASSENGERS MORE OPTIONS, HE SAID.

IN ADDITION, FOUR NEW CROSS-HARBOUR BUS ROUTES USING THE EASTERN HARBOUR CROSSING ARE BEING PLANNED IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS. CONSIDERATION IS ALSO GIVEN TO PROVIDE MORE RESIDENTIAL COACHES PARTICULARLY FOR THE NEW TERRITORIES TO SUPPLEMENT PEAK-HOUR SERVICES.

MR LEUNG SAID MEASURES HAD BEEN PLANNED TO ENCOURAGE GREATER USE OF THE KCR LINE SOUTH OF KOWLOON TONG BY THOSE WHO MIGHT OTHERWISE SWITCH TO THE MTR SYSTEM.

THESE INCLUDED BETTER FEEDER BUS SERVICES BETWEEN THE KCR HUM HOM STATION AND TSIM SHA TSUI, ADDITIONAL BUS PRIORITY MEASURES AND STOPPING SPACE AT THE TOLL PLAZA OF THE CROSS HARBOUR TUNNEL TO SPEED UP BUS SERVICES TO HONG KONG ISLAND.

FERRY SERVICES FROM TUEN MUN, TSUEN WAN AND TSING YI TO CENTRAL WILL ALSO BE ENHANCED. PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS THIS YEAR INCLUDE DEPLOYING A SECOND DOUBLE-DECKER AIR-CONDITIONED VESSEL IN JUNE, MORE SAILINGS DURING THE MORNING PEAK, AND EXTENDING SELECTED TRIPS TO WAN CHAI.

"THE LONG TERM SOLUTION LIES IN BUILDING THE AIRPORT RAILWAY BY MID-1997, WHICH WILL INCLUDE BOTH AN EXPRESS SERVICE TO THE NEW AIRPORT AND A LANTAU LINE PROVIDING EFFECTIVE RELIEF TO THE TSUEN WAN LINE," HE ADDED.

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INTENSIVE CARE BEDS IN QUEEN MARY HOSPITAL ADEQUATE

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THE PRESENT MIX OF HOSPITAL BEDS PROVIDED BY THE PAEDIATRIC INTENSIVE CARE UNIT OF THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE, UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG, AT QUEEN MARY HOSPITAL IS ADEQUATE TO COPE WITH PREVAILING DEMAND, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, DR S.H. LEE, SAID.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON CONRAD LAM KUI-SHING AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), DR LEE SAID THE UNIT PROVIDES 46 BEDS UPON FULL OPERATIONS.

AT PRESENT, 42 BEDS ARE IN USE - 11 BEDS FOR INTENSIVE CARE AND 31 FOR SPECIAL CARE.

"OPENING OF FURTHER INTENSIVE CARE BEDS WILL DEPEND ON CLINICAL DEMAND, OVERALL SERVICE CO-ORDINATION AND DEPLOYMENT OF RESOURCES," HE SAID.

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INCINERATOR TO GO AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

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IT IS STILL THE INTENTION TO CLOSE THE KENNEDY TOWN INCINERATOR AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE AFTER THE NEW HONG KONG ISLAND EAST REFUSE TRANSFER STATION (RTS) IS COMMISSIONED, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR A.G. EASON INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON YEUNG SUM, THE SECRETARY SAID ONE PROVISION WAS THAT ANY WASTES IN EXCESS OF CAPACITY OF THE RTS COULD BE DISPOSED OF IN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY ACCEPTABLE MANNER.

"THE AMOUNT OF SUCH EXCESS WASTES, IF ANY, AND HOW THEY MIGHT BE PROPERLY DISPOSED OF, IS NOW BEING EXAMINED BY THE ADMINISTRATION," HE SAID.

IN THE MAY 1991 FIRST REVIEW OF PROGRESS ON THE 1989 WHITE PAPER: POLLUTION IN HONG KONG - A TIME TO ACT, IT WAS NOTED THAT THE KENNEDY TOWN INCINERATOR WOULD BE CLOSED AFTER THE COMMISSIONING OF THE RTS, SCHEDULED FOR EARLY 1993.

MR EASON ADDED THAT THE INCINERATOR HAD BEEN FITTED WITH ELECTRO-STATIC PRECIPITATORS TO REDUCE THE AMOUNT OF PARTICLES ENTERING THE ATMOSPHERE.

IN THE 1989 WHITE PAPER, THE GOVERNMENT STATED ITS INTENTION TO PHASE OUT THE EXISTING MUNICIPAL INCINERATORS AS LAND-BASED DISPOSAL FACILITIES WERE INTRODUCED TO REPLACE THEM.

THE LAI CHI KOK INCINERATOR WAS THEREFORE CLOSED IN LATE 1990, AFTER THE COMMISSIONING OF THE KOWLOON BAY REFUSE TRANSFER STATION IN APRIL 1990.

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DREDGING CLOSELY MONITORED TO MINIMISE POLLUTION

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THROUGHOUT THE PERIOD OF DREDGING AND DISPOSAL OF MARINE MUD FOR THE AIRPORT PROGRAMMES, THE CONDITIONS OF THE AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT ARE CLOSELY MONITORED TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARE WITHIN ACCEPTABLE STANDARDS.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LI WAH-MING, MR BLAKE SAID TO CONTROL DREDGING, CONDITIONS WERE INCLUDED IN THE CONTRACT TO REQUIRE THE CONTRACTOR TO USE THE MOST APPROPRIATE DREDGING PLANT AND METHOD OF OPERATION TO ENSURE THAT THE POLLUTION CAUSED WOULD BE KEPT TO A MINIMUM.

/THESE CCNDITIONS

THESE CONDITIONS ALSO APPLIED TO NON-CONTAMINATED MUD TO MINIMISE THE RELEASE OF FINE SILT INTO THE SURROUNDING WATER, THE SECRETARY ADDED.

OF THE 10 AIRPORT CORE PROGRAMME (ACP) PROJECTS, EIGHT INVOLVE THE DREDGING AND DISPOSAL OF MARINE MUD.

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE PROJECTS AND THE ESTIMATED QUANTITIES REMAINING TO BE DREDGED:

PROJECT -----	QUANTITY ----- (MILLION CUBIC METRES)
WEST KOWLOON RECLAMATION	5
CENTRAL AND WANCHAI RECLAMATION	1
NORTH LANTAU EXPRESSWAY	6
NORTH LANTAU DEVELOPMENT	10
CHEK LAP KOK AIRPORT	80
WESTERN HARBOUR CROSSING	1
AIRPORT RAILWAY	1
LANTAU FIXED CROSSING	0.2

OF THE EIGHT PROJECTS REQUIRING DREDGING, ONLY TWO, WEST KOWLOON RECLAMATION AND THE CENTRAL AND WANCHAI RECLAMATION, WERE KNOWN AT THIS STAGE TO INVOLVE CONTAMINATED MATERIALS.

"THE CONTAMINANTS ARE PRIMARILY HEAVY METALS, LEAD AND COPPER IN WEST KOWLOON; MERCURY AND COPPER IN THE CENTRAL AND WANCHAI AREAS.

"THE TOTAL QUANTITY OF CONTAMINATED MUD IS ESTIMATED TO BE 1.75 MILLION CUBIC METRES," HE SAID.

MR BLAKE NOTED THAT CONTAMINATED MUD WOULD BE DISPOSED OF BY METHODS AGREED WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT.

THE AREA DESIGNATED ORIGINALLY FOR DISPOSAL IS DEEP BAY, BUT OTHER POSSIBLE LOCATIONS ARE BEING CONSIDERED.

AFTER THE MUD HAD BEEN PLACED, IT WOULD BE CAPPED WITH CLEAN MATERIAL, HE ADDED.

RECOGNISING THAT THE DREDGING AND DISPOSAL OF ANY MARINE MUD CAUSED ENVIRONMENTAL DISRUPTION, MR BLAKE EXPLAINED THAT ALL RECLAMATIONS WERE DESIGNED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO REDUCE TO A MINIMUM THE TOTAL VOLUME OF MARINE MUD TO BE REMOVED, CONSISTENT WITH PROGRAMMING REQUIREMENTS.

THE PRIMARY ALTERNATIVE TO DREDGING IS TO LEAVE THE MUD IN PLACE AND TO DRAIN THE MUD USING VERTICAL WICK DRAINS, MR BLAKE SAID.

"THIS ALTERNATIVE REQUIRES EXTRA TIME FOR PRIMARY CONSOLIDATION OF THE MARINE SEDIMENTS TO TAKE PLACE SUCH THAT ANY FURTHER SETTLEMENT WILL NOT EXCEED AN ACCEPTABLE LIMIT.

"THIS ALTERNATIVE HAS BEEN ADOPTED WHEN PROGRAMMING REQUIREMENTS PROVIDE THE NECESSARY TIME FOR PRIMARY CONSOLIDATION AND SETTLEMENT TO TAKE PLACE," MR BLAKE SAID.

THE SECRETARY SAID POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION DURING THE DREDGING AND DISPOSAL OF CONTAMINATED MUD WAS CAUSED WHEN THE SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE SOLUBLE PART OF TOTAL METALS CONTAINED IN THE MUD, WAS RELEASED THROUGH AERATION AND SLURRYING OF THE SEDIMENTS DURING THE PROCESS OF DREDGING AND DUMPING.

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NO EXPEDITION OF LAND EXCHANGE ENTITLEMENTS REDEMPTION

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MEASURES TO EXPEDITE THE REDEMPTION PROCESS OF UNREDEEMED LAND EXCHANGE ENTITLEMENTS (LEES) ARE NOT BEING CONSIDERED AT PRESENT.

NOR IS IT INTENDED THAT A PRECISE DEADLINE BE SET.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR A.G. EASON, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON GILBERT LEUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"THE ADMINISTRATION WILL REVIEW THE POSITION IN 1994 TO DETERMINE HOW MANY LEES REMAIN UNREDEEMED AND, IF POSSIBLE, WHY.

"IT WILL CONSIDER WHAT MIGHT NEED TO BE DONE IN THE LIGHT OF ITS FINDINGS AT THAT TIME," MR EASON ADDED.

AS AT MARCH 31 THIS YEAR, THERE ARE A TOTAL OF 5,480,000 SQUARE FEET OF UNREDEEMED LEES (LETTERS A AND B) IN THE NEW TERRITORIES (INCLUDING 210,000 SQUARE FEET OF BUILDING LAND AND 5,270,000 SQUARE FEET OF AGRICULTURAL LAND).

UNDER THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF OFFERING LAND FOR SALE BY LETTERS A/B TENDER AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE AMOUNT OF LAND PLANNED FOR DISPOSAL IN THIS WAY IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS, THE SECRETARY SAID IT WAS EXPECTED THAT THE VAST MAJORITY OF LEES WOULD BE REDEEMED BY MID-1994.

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GOVT CONSIDERING LABELS FOR GREEN PRODUCTS

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THE GOVERNMENT WILL DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO AWARD LABELS FOR ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PRODUCTS IN MARCH NEXT YEAR.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR A. G. EASON, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON PETER WONG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

MR EASON SAID A REVIEW HAD RECENTLY BEGUN OF THE POSSIBLE MEANS OF ASSISTING LOCAL MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES TO COMPLY WITH THE PROPOSALS SET OUT IN THE 1989 WHITE PAPER ON THE ENVIRONMENT WHICH WOULD AFFECT THEM.

"AS PART OF THIS REVIEW THE POSSIBILITY OF SETTING UP A SCHEME WHICH WOULD CERTIFY LOCALLY PRODUCED PRODUCTS AS ENVIRONMENTAL FRIENDLY (OR PRODUCED IN ACCORDANCE WITH ENVIRONMENTAL LEGISLATION) WILL BE ASSESSED. RESULTS ARE DUE IN MARCH 1993," HE SAID.

HOWEVER, HE SAID ANY PLANNING FOR THE AWARD OF LABELS FOR ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY PRODUCTS MUST RECOGNISE THAT MANY ITEMS SOLD IN HONG KONG WERE WHOLLY OR PARTLY MANUFACTURED OVERSEAS.

"THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF IMPORTED PRODUCTS CAN CHANGE FREQUENTLY AS THE MARKET SEEKS THE MOST ECONOMIC SOURCES OF SUPPLY," HE ADDED.

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LO WU PROJECT TO SPEED UP TRAVELLING

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WORK HAS STARTED ON A PROJECT AT LO WU TERMINAL TO SPEED UP THE MOVEMENT OF TRAVELLERS DURING RUSH HOURS, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE PROJECT WILL PROVIDE ADDITIONAL WAITING SPACE OF ABOUT 1800 SQUARE METRES AND INCREASE THE NUMBER OF COUNTERS FOR PASSENGER CLEARANCE FROM 88 TO 160.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR ASPREY SAID THE PROJECT WAS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED AT THE END OF 1994.

ON OTHER MEASURES TO COPE WITH PEAK-HOUR PASSENGER TRAFFIC, HE SAID THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT DEPLOYED STAFF FLEXIBLY TO MAN AS MANY IMMIGRATION COUNTERS AS POSSIBLE IN THE DIRECTION WHERE DEMAND WAS HIGHEST.

IN ADDITION, HONG KONG RESIDENTS ARE SEGREGATED FROM OTHER TRAVELLERS SO THAT HOLDERS OF HONG KONG IDENTITY CARDS CAN BE CLEARED MORE QUICKLY.

/ON AVERAGE

ON AVERAGE, SOME 86,000 PASSENGERS PASS THROUGH THE LO WU TERMINAL ON WEEKDAYS, AND SOME 102,000 ON SATURDAYS AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS.

THE VOLUME OF PASSENGER TRAFFIC IS HIGHER AT A NUMBER OF FESTIVALS SUCH AS THE LUNAR NEW YEAR AND CHING MING.

FORTY-SIX IMMIGRATION COUNTERS ARE MANNED ON WEEKDAYS, AND 60 AT WEEKENDS. ALL THE 88 COUNTERS ARE MANNED AT PERIODS OF PEAK DEMAND.

"WE AIM TO COMPLETE IMMIGRATION CLEARANCE OF ALL PASSENGERS WITHIN 30 MINUTES. THIS STANDARD IS GENERALLY ACHIEVED, INCLUDING AT THE LO WU TERMINAL.

"HOWEVER, DURING PERIODS OF PEAK DEMAND, SOME PASSENGERS MAY HAVE TO WAIT FOR LONGER THAN THIS," MR ASPREY SAID.

EXCLUDING FESTIVAL PERIODS, AVERAGE WAITING TIME DURING RUSH HOURS IS ABOUT 45 MINUTES.

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PERIODIC REVIEW ON DISABILITY ALLOWANCE RATE

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THE RATE OF THE DISABILITY ALLOWANCE IS REVIEWED PERIODICALLY IN THE LIGHT OF CHANGES IN THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE INDEX OF PRICES, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, DR S.H. LEE, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LAU CHIN-SHEK, DR LEE SAID THE RATE IS PEGGED TO THE BASIC RATE FOR A SINGLE PERSON UNDER THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE SCHEME.

"IRRESPECTIVE OF FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CLAIMANT, THE CURRENT RATE IS \$825 PER CLAIMANT PER MONTH.

"THOSE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE WILL BE PAID PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PLUS THE APPROPRIATE SUPPLEMENTS," HE SAID.

THE NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS FOR DISABILITY ALLOWANCE RECEIVED IN 1989-90 WAS 6,200. THIS WAS INCREASED TO 6,395 IN 1990-91 AND 6,496 IN 1991-92.

OF THE APPLICATIONS RECEIVED, 5,159 (OR 83 PER CENT) WERE APPROVED IN 1989-90, 5,434 (OR 85 PER CENT) IN 1990-91 AND 5,826 (OR 90 PER CENT) IN 1991-92.

THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF ALLOWANCES INVOLVED IN THE THREE-YEAR PERIOD WAS \$1,282 MILLION.

DR LEE SAID THE DISABILITY ALLOWANCE IS NON-CONTRIBUTORY AND NON-MEANS TESTED.

HE SAID A PERSON SUFFERING FROM PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND VISUAL DISABLEMENTS AS WELL AS PROFOUND DEAFNESS MAY QUALIFY FOR SUCH ALLOWANCE IF HE OR SHE:

- * HAS BEEN IN CONTINUOUS RESIDENCE IN HONG KONG FOR AT LEAST ONE YEAR IMMEDIATELY BEFORE CLAIMING THE ALLOWANCE;
- * CONTINUES TO RESIDE IN HONG KONG AFTER RECEIPT OF THE ALLOWANCE (AN ABSENCE OF UP TO A MAXIMUM OF 119 DAYS A YEAR IS ALLOWED); AND
- * HAS BEEN CERTIFIED BY THE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH OR DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS OF THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY OR, UNDER EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, BY A REGISTERED PRIVATE PRACTITIONER AS SEVERELY DISABLED WITHIN THE MEANING OF THE DISABILITY ALLOWANCE SCHEME FOR AT LEAST SIX MONTHS.

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BUDGET-RELATED BILLS PASSED IN LEGCO

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FOUR BUDGET-RELATED BILLS WERE TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PASSED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

OF THEM, DUTIABLE COMMODITIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1922 WAS PASSED WITH AMENDMENTS. THE THREE OTHER BILLS PASSED WERE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) (NO.3) BILL 1992, STAMP DUTY (AMENDMENT) (NO.3) BILL 1992 AND ENTERTAINMENT TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992.

ONE OTHER BILL PASSED WITH AMENDMENTS IN THE LEGCO WAS MEDICAL REGISTRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992.

SEVENTEEN LEGISLATORS DEBATED ON LONG-TERM HOUSING STRATEGY MOVED BY THE HON K.K.FUNG.

THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, SPOKE ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT. AN AMENDED MOTION MOVED BY THE HON W.S. LAU WAS EVENTUALLY PASSED.

ANOTHER MOTION MOVED BY DR THE HON HUANG CHEN-YA ON THE SETTING UP OF AN INDEPENDENT INQUIRY ON THE BANK OF CREDIT AND COMMERCE HONG KONG WAS DEFEATED. A TOTAL OF 12 LEGISLATORS SPOKE ON THIS MOTION WHICH LASTED ABOUT AN HOUR.

IN ADDITION, NINE LEGISLATORS SPOKE IN AN ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AND ETHICAL STANDARDS OF ESTATE AGENTS AND PROPERTY MANAGERS RAISED BY THE HON MAN SAI-CHEONG.

MR EASON AND THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SUEN, REPLIED FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

A TOTAL OF FIVE BILLS WERE ALSO INTRODUCED FOR FIRST AND SECOND READINGS. DEBATES ON THEM WERE ADJOURNED.

THEY WERE: ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 1992, LEGAL PRACTITIONERS (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) BILL 1992, FIRE SERVICES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, IMMIGRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 AND AERIAL ROPEWAYS (SAFETY) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992.

A MOTION MOVED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY UNDER THE BETTING DUTY ORDINANCE WAS ALSO PASSED.

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GOVERNOR CONDEMNS GANG ATTACK

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DURING A VISIT TO THE BORDER TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE GOVERNOR, LORD WILSON, SPOKE ABOUT THE ATTACK BY AN ARMED GANG ON A MAHJONG ESTABLISHMENT IN MONG KOK ON TUESDAY.

LORD WILSON SAID:

"I SHARE THE OUTRAGE OF THE WHOLE COMMUNITY ABOUT THIS AND OTHER RECENT ARMED ROBBERIES. I AM APPALLED BY THE CALLOUS DISREGARD FOR THE SAFETY OF THE PUBLIC SHOWN BY THESE CRIMINALS AND WANT TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE CAPTURE OF THIS AND ANY OTHER GANGS OF ARMED ROBBERS IS THE HIGHEST PRIORITY FOR THE POLICE FORCE. LAST WEEK'S SUCCESS WAS VERY ENCOURAGING AND A CLEAR DEMONSTRATION OF OUR DETERMINATION TO CAPTURE AND BRING TO JUSTICE THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR SUCH INCIDENTS."

LORD WILSON MADE THESE REMARKS DURING A VISIT TO THE BORDER TO SEE THE WORK OF THE FIELD PATROL DETACHMENT (FPD) OF THE ROYAL HONG KONG POLICE FORCE AND TO VISIT THE ROYAL HONG KONG REGIMENT (THE VOLUNTEERS) DURING ITS ANNUAL TWO-WEEK BORDER DEPLOYMENT.

HE CONGRATULATED THE FPD AND THE REGIMENT ON THEIR OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS IN PATROLLING THE BORDER.

THE BORDER VISIT WAS THE FIRST BY THE GOVERNOR SINCE THE GARRISON FORMALLY COMPLETED THEIR HANDOVER OF BORDER DUTIES TO THE FPD.

ACCOMPANIED BY THE ACTING COMMISSIONER OF POLICE, MR JOHN THORPE, LORD WILSON WAS BRIEFED ON THE PRESENT SITUATION AND DEPLOYMENT ALONG THE BORDER BY DEPUTY REGIONAL COMMANDER, NEW TERRITORIES, MR HUI CHIU-YIN AND FPD CHIEF STAFF OFFICER VINCE CHAPMAN.

THE GOVERNOR ALSO MET POLICE OFFICERS MANNING THE BORDER AT MAN KAM TO, LO WU AND MA CHO LUNG AND TOURED BORDER POSTS MANNED BY THE VOLUNTEERS AT PAK HOK CHAU AND TSIM BEI TSUI.

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GOVT WILL DO EVERYTHING TO BUST CRIME

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EVERYTHING POSSIBLE IS BEING DONE TO APPREHEND THE CULPRITS IN THE ARMED ROBBERY IN MONGKOK LAST NIGHT AND TO PREVENT THIS SORT OF CRIME FROM HAPPENING AGAIN, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID FORD, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BUILDING, SIR DAVID SAID THE POLICE HAD MOBILISED A TREMENDOUS NUMBER OF OFFICERS AND WERE DOING EVERYTHING THEY COULD TO DETECT THE CASE.

/"THEY HAVE

"THEY HAVE BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL UP TO NOW IN CAPTURING THE GANGS WHO CARRIED OUT THE PREVIOUS RAIDS," HE ADDED.

"THEY HAVE BEEN HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL BY ANY STANDARDS."

COMMENTING ON WAYS TO TACKLE THE CRIME, SIR DAVID SAID : "THE COMMISSIONER IS THERE AT THE MOMENT IN CHINA, DISCUSSING METHODS OF IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND WHAT CAN BE DONE TO CUT OFF THE FLOW OF PEOPLE AND ARMS WHICH ARE COMING ACROSS THE BORDER.

"THAT IS OBVIOUSLY THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM."

NOTING THAT THERE HAD BEEN GREAT CO-OPERATION BETWEEN HONG KONG AND CHINA, THE CHIEF SECRETARY SAID THE CHINESE AUTHORITY HAD STEPPED UP THEIR EFFORTS ON THEIR SIDE OF THE BORDER AGAINST CRIMINAL ELEMENTS.

THEY HAD ALSO PROVIDED INFORMATION TO HONG KONG POLICE AND ENABLED HONG KONG DETECTIVES TO GO ACROSS THE BORDER AND FOLLOW UP LEADS, HE ADDED.

ASKED ABOUT POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENT TO POLICE WEAPONS, SIR DAVID SAID THE POLICE FORCE HAD MAXIMUM SUPPORT FROM THE ADMINISTRATION.

"THERE WILL BE NO LACK OF WILLINGNESS ON OUR PART IN THE ADMINISTRATION TO GIVE THE POLICE TOTAL SUPPORT," HE SAID.

"IF THEY NEED NEW WEAPONS, WE SHALL PROVIDE THE MONEY FOR THEM. THERE IS NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT AT ALL."

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STATEMENT BY FS ON BUDGET DEVELOPMENTS

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IN A STATEMENT TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL EARLIER TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, MR HAMISH MACLEOD, ANNOUNCED THAT IT HAS NOW BECOME CLEAR THAT THE BUDGETARY SURPLUS FOR 1991-92 WILL BE ABOUT \$22 BILLION. THIS IS OVER \$6 BILLION MORE THAN EXPECTED WHEN THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY PRESENTED HIS BUDGET TO THE LEGCO ON APRIL 1. THE HIGHER THAN EXPECTED SURPLUS IS THE CONSEQUENCE OF UNDERSPENDING ON CAPITAL PROJECTS AND HIGHER THAN EXPECTED TAX REVENUES.

MR MACLEOD SAID:

"WE CLEARLY HAVE TO DO SOMETHING TO IMPROVE OUR FORECASTING ARRANGEMENTS AND THIS WORK IS NOW IN HAND. NONETHELESS, THE ADDITIONAL \$6 BILLION SURPLUS IS A WELCOME ONE-OFF WINDFALL AND IS ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO THE AMOUNT I HAD INTENDED TO RAISE BY INCREASING THE RATES BY A HALF OF ONE PERCENTAGE POINT. I HAVE THEREFORE BEEN ABLE TO ANNOUNCE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THAT, UNDER THESE CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES, THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT NEED TO PROCEED WITH THE PROPOSED RATES INCREASE."

/THE ADDITIONAL

THE ADDITIONAL \$6 BILLION SURPLUS ONLY RECENTLY BECAME APPARENT WHEN THE 'FIRST CLOSING' OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ACCOUNTS BECAME AVAILABLE. THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY HAS MOVED QUICKLY TO AMEND HIS PROPOSALS TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THIS BETTER THAN EXPECTED FINANCIAL POSITION.

MR MACLEOD SAID HE WAS PLEASED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HAD NOW PASSED HIS BUDGET PROPOSALS, THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENTS OF WHICH WERE A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN PERSONAL TAX ALLOWANCES RANGING FROM 12 - 15 PER CENT; A MODEST 1 PER CENT INCREASE IN CORPORATE PROFITS TAX; THE ABOLITION OF THE DUTY ON SOFT DRINKS AND THE TAX ON CINEMA TICKETS; THE EXEMPTION OF FRANCHISED BUSES FROM DUTY ON FUEL; AND A FURTHER REDUCTION IN STAMP DUTY ON STOCK TRANSFERS.

"THIS BUDGET WILL ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO GO ON IMPROVING PUBLIC SERVICES WHILE AT THE SAME TIME MAINTAINING A HEALTHY FISCAL RESERVE. TAKEN TOGETHER, THIS PACKAGE OF MEASURES WILL BENEFIT ORDINARY HOUSEHOLDS AND HAVE AN IMPACT IN REDUCING INFLATION."

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RATES INCREASE WITHDRAWN

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THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, MR HAMISH MACLEOD, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) ANNOUNCED THAT THE BUDGET PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE RATES PERCENTAGE CHARGE BY HALF A PERCENTAGE POINT WILL BE WITHDRAWN.

THIS MEANS THAT FROM APRIL 1, 1992 RATES WILL BE CHARGED AT 5.5% ON THE RATEABLE VALUE INSTEAD OF 6%.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE TREASURY EXPLAINED THAT THE SECOND QUARTER RATES DEMANDS WERE ISSUED BASED ON 6% RATES CHARGE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REVENUE PROTECTION ORDER SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR AND PUBLISHED IN THE GAZETTE ON MARCH 4, 1992.

ANY AMOUNT OVERPAID ON SUCH DEMANDS WILL BE DEDUCTED FROM THE THIRD QUARTER'S RATES DEMANDS TO BE ISSUED AT THE END OF JUNE.

THE AMOUNT DUE FOR THE THIRD QUARTER DEMANDS WILL BE BASED ON 5.5% RATES CHARGE.

NO INTEREST WILL BE PAYABLE ON THE AMOUNTS REFUNDED AS RATES WERE CHARGED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REVENUE PROTECTION ORDER AND THERE IS NO PROVISION FOR PAYING INTEREST ON ANY REVENUE REFUNDED DUE TO SUBSEQUENT CANCELLATION OR AMENDMENT OF A REVENUE PROTECTION ORDINANCE.

FINAL NOTICES SENT TO THOSE WHO HAVE NOT YET SETTLED THEIR SECOND QUARTER DEMANDS WILL REFLECT THE REVISED RATES CHARGE. ANY SURCHARGES IMPOSED WILL ALSO BE CALCULATED BASED ON THIS REVISED RATES CHARGE.

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 1992

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LORD WILSON TO LEAVE HK IN JULY

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A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE GOVERNOR, LORD WILSON, WILL LEAVE HONG KONG ON JULY 3 (FRIDAY).

HIS SUCCESSOR, MR CHRISTOPHER PATTEN, WILL ARRIVE IN THE TERRITORY ON JULY 9 (THURSDAY).

SIR DAVID FORD WILL BE THE ACTING GOVERNOR DURING THE PERIOD BETWEEN LORD WILSON'S DEPARTURE AND THE ARRIVAL OF MR PATTEN.

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YAXLEY HOSTS RECEPTION TO SAY "THANK YOU"

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MR CHRIS PATTEN, THE GOVERNOR-DESIGNATE, ATTENDED A FAREWELL RECEPTION TODAY (WEDNESDAY) HOSTED BY THE HONG KONG COMMISSIONER, MR JOHN YAXLEY, AT HIS WESTMINSTER RESIDENCE FOR RETIRING MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WHO HAD SHOWN AN INTEREST IN HONG KONG AFFAIRS AND WERE GOOD FRIENDS OF THE TERRITORY.

DURING THE RECEPTION, MR YAXLEY PASSED ON A SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR, LORD WILSON, TO THE GUESTS WHO NUMBERED OVER 30 MP'S AND PEERS - MOST OF THEM FORMER MEMBERS OF THE BRITISH-HONG KONG PARLIAMENTARY GROUP (BHPG).

THE GOVERNOR THANKED THEM, FOR ALL THE INTEREST THEY HAD TAKEN IN HONG KONG AFFAIRS WHILE IN PARLIAMENT AND FOR THE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM HAD MADE.

THE GOVERNOR HAD A SPECIAL WORD OF THANKS FOR SIR RICHARD LUCE AND MR FRANCIS MAUDE FOR THEIR ROLES AS FOREIGN OFFICE MINISTERS WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR HONG KONG, AND SIR PETER BLAKER FOR ALL THAT HE HAD DONE AS CHAIRMAN OF THE BRITISH-HONG KONG PARLIAMENTARY GROUP.

LORD WILSON HOPED THEY WOULD NOT LOSE INTEREST IN THE TERRITORY, AND SAID HONG KONG WOULD CERTAINLY NOT FORGET THEIR EFFORTS. HE ADDED THAT THEY WOULD ALWAYS BE WELCOME IN HONG KONG.

AMONG THE GUESTS AT THE RECEPTION WERE MR ALASTAIR GOODLAD, THE FOREIGN OFFICE MINISTER WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR HONG KONG, DR JOHN MAREK AND MR ROGER SIMS. FORMER VICE-CHAIRMAN AND TREASURER RESPECTIVELY OF THE BHPG AND THE FORMER GOVERNOR OF HONG KONG, LORD MACLEHOSE.

EARLIER IN THE DAY MR YAXLEY CALLED ON MR PATTEN AT THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE AS PART OF THE GOVERNOR-DESIGNATE'S BRIEFING PROGRAMME BY THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT OFFICE IN LONDON.

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HK ENJOYS ICT STATUS

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THE U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHED IN ITS FEDERAL REGISTER YESTERDAY (TUESDAY) DETAILS OF ITS EXTENSION OF INTRA-COCOM TRADE (ICT) LICENSING BENEFITS TO HONG KONG.

WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT, HONG KONG WILL BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE SIMPLIFIED EXPORT LICENSING PROCEDURES AVAILABLE UNDER U.S. LAW TO PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES OF THE CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR MULTILATERAL EXPORT CONTROLS (COCOM).

THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR T.H. CHAU, WELCOMED THE ANNOUNCEMENT WHICH PROVIDED FOR THE LIBERALISATION OF LICENSING REQUIREMENTS FOR EXPORTS OF COCOM-CONTROLLED GOODS FROM THE U.S. TO HONG KONG.

HE BELIEVED THIS WOULD LESSEN THE BURDEN ON U.S. EXPORTERS AND HONG KONG IMPORTERS.

"THIS IS A POSITIVE AND SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT.

"THE UNITED STATES IS THE LARGEST SUPPLIER OF HIGH-TECH GOODS TO HONG KONG AND THE RELAXATION OF LICENSING PROCEDURES WILL LEAD TO A FASTER AND EASIER FLOW OF HIGH-TECH GOODS FROM THE UNITED STATES TO HONG KONG," MR CHAU SAID.

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HIGH COURT JUDGE APPOINTED

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THE JUDICIARY ANNOUNCED THE APPOINTMENT OF A HIGH COURT JUDGE, MR WOO KWOK-HING, Q.C, EFFECTIVE FROM TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR WOO WAS BORN IN HONG KONG IN JANUARY 1946 AND WAS EDUCATED AT LAI CHAK MIDDLE SCHOOL, TAK YAN SCHOOL AND YING WAH COLLEGE.

IN 1965 HE ATTENDED BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITY IN ENGLAND AND OBTAINED HIS LL.B. DEGREE IN 1968.

HE THEN WENT TO UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON, WHERE HE OBTAINED AN LL.M. IN 1969. IN THE SAME YEAR MR WOO WAS ADMITTED TO THE BAR IN ENGLAND.

HE THEN RETURNED TO HONG KONG WHERE HE SERVED PUPILLAGE WITH MR RONALD ARCULLI.

SINCE THEN, MR WOO HAS BEEN IN CONTINUOUS PRACTICE AT THE BAR IN HONG KONG. IN HIS FIRST FEW YEARS HE DID NOT SPECIALISE BUT UNDERTOOK BOTH CIVIL AND CRIMINAL CASES.

SINCE 1977, HIS PRACTICE HAS MAINLY BEEN IN CIVIL MATTERS, INCLUDING GENERAL COMMERCIAL MATTERS, BANKING, TAXATION, CORPORATION, LAND, TRUSTS AND ESTATES.

BETWEEN 1973 AND 1986, MR WOO TAUGHT LAW PART-TIME IN HONG KONG SHUE YAN COLLEGE, AND HAS HELD THE POSITION OF HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LAW AND BUSINESS SINCE APRIL 1985.

HE WAS APPOINTED QUEEN'S COUNSEL IN MAY 1987.

IN 1981, 1983 AND 1985, MR WOO SAT AS A DEPUTY JUDGE OF THE DISTRICT COURT.

IN OCTOBER 1988, HE WAS APPOINTED DEPUTY JUDGE OF THE HIGH COURT AND SAT FOR TWO PERIODS IN 1991. HE HAS ALSO SAT AS A DEPUTY HIGH COURT JUDGE SINCE APRIL 21 THIS YEAR.

MR WOO IS MARRIED WITH THREE CHILDREN.

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TV SERIES TO PROMOTE FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION

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A 13-EPIISODE TELEVISION SERIES TO PROMOTE HAPPY MARRIAGE AND RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD - THE MAIN THEME OF THE FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN - WILL BE SHOWN ON ATV'S HOME CHANNEL FROM NEXT MONDAY (MAY 11).

THIS WAS ANNOUNCED BY THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE, MR M.D. CARTLAND, WHILE SPEAKING AT THE PREMIERE OF THE SERIES ENTITLED "UNDER THE SAME ROOF" IN A TSIM SHA TSUI HOTEL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

EACH EPISODE TRIED TO BRING TO THE AUDIENCE A FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION MESSAGE, HE SAID.

TO ILLUSTRATE THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION, HE SAID THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF WORKING MOTHERS HAD MEANT THAT MORE FAMILIES WERE EXPERIENCING STRAIN AND PRESSURE.

"AS A RESULT, THERE IS AN EVOLUTION TAKING PLACE IN THE RESPECTIVE ROLES OF THE FATHER AND THE WORKING MOTHER WITH REGARD TO SHARING THE PARENTING AND HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES," MR CARTLAND SAID.

THEREFORE, HE SAID TWO SUB-THEMES OF THIS YEAR'S CAMPAIGN WERE FATHERING AND DUAL-WORKING PARENTS, WHICH AIM IS TO HIGHLIGHT THE VALUE OF GOOD COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN AND THE NEED TO SPEND TIME TOGETHER.

"ANOTHER IMPORTANT RELATED SUB-THEME IS PRE-MARITAL PREPARATION DESIGNED TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS IN THEIR LIFESTYLE UPON ESTABLISHING A FAMILY," HE ADDED.

/THE DIRECTOR

THE DIRECTOR OF HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE, MR HUI YIN-FAT, THANKED THE COMMITTEE ON FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN AND RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG FOR PRODUCING THE TELEVISION PROGRAMME.

"THE PROMOTION OF FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION IS ESSENTIAL TO THE GOOD PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY," MR HUI ADDED.

ALSO OFFICIATING AT THE EVENT WAS AN ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF BROADCASTING, MS MARIA WAN.

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HK TO TAKE PART IN STAMP EXPO
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THE POSTMASTER GENERAL, MR DOMINIC S.W. WONG, ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE HONG KONG POST OFFICE WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE WORLD COLUMBIAN STAMP EXPO '92 TO BE HELD IN CHICAGO, USA FROM MAY 22 TO 31.

A \$10 DEFINITIVE STAMP SHEETLET (NO. 4) WILL BE ISSUED ON MAY 22 TO COMMEMORATE HONG KONG POST OFFICE'S PARTICIPATION.

A SPECIAL DATESTAMP AND A CACHET WILL ALSO BE INTRODUCED.

SOUVENIR COVERS AT \$1 EACH WILL BE ON SALE AT ALL POST OFFICES FROM MAY 15. EACH CUSTOMER IS ENTITLED TO BUY 10 SHEETLETS ON THE DAY OF ISSUE.

A HAND-BACK SERVICE WILL BE PROVIDED AT ALL POST OFFICES ON MAY 22 FOR OFFICIAL AND PRIVATELY MADE COVERS BEARING AN INDICATION OF THE STAMP EXPO.

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TWO LOTS OF LAND IN KOWLOON EAST TO LET
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THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT IS INVITING TENDERS FOR SHORT-TERM TENANCIES ON TWO PIECES OF GOVERNMENT LAND IN KOWLOON EAST.

THE FIRST SITE IS AT THE JUNCTION OF FUNG TAK ROAD AND YING FUNG LANE. IT HAS AN AREA OF ABOUT 2,550 SQUARE METRES.

SITUATED AT JORDAN VALLEY SOUTH ROAD, THE SECOND SITE HAS AN AREA OF ABOUT 5,350 SQUARE METRES.

BOTH SITES ARE INTENDED FOR OPEN STORAGE (EXCLUDING STORAGE OF CONTAINERS) AND/OR PARKING OF MOTOR VEHICLES.

/THE PREMISES

THE PREMISES OR ANY PART THEREOF SHALL NOT BE USED FOR PARKING OF CONTAINER VEHICLES WITH THEIR TRAILERS/CHASSIS ATTACHED OR AS A FEE-PAYING PUBLIC CAR PARK.

THE TENANCY OF THE FIRST SITE IS FOR NINE MONTHS AND QUARTERLY THEREAFTER WHILE THAT FOR THE SECOND ONE IS FOR ONE YEAR AND QUARTERLY THEREAFTER.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF TENDERS IS NOON ON MAY 22.

FORMS OF TENDER, TENDER NOTICES AND CONDITIONS MAY BE OBTAINED FROM, AND TENDER PLANS OF THE TWO SITES INSPECTED AT THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT, 14TH FLOOR, MURRAY BUILDING, GARDEN ROAD, HONG KONG; AND THE DISTRICT LANDS OFFICE, KOWLOON EAST, 10TH FLOOR, YAU MA TEI CARPARK BUILDING, 250 SHANGHAI STREET.

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FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING ON FRIDAY

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THE FINANCE COMMITTEE WILL HOLD A MEETING AT 2.30 PM ON FRIDAY (MAY 8) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE WELCOME TO OBSERVE THE COMMITTEE'S PROCEEDINGS FROM THE CHAMBER'S PUBLIC GALLERIES.

THEY MAY MAKE RESERVATIONS BY CALLING 869 9492.

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ATTENTION NEWS EDITORS:

THE COMMITTEE'S PAPERS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR ADVANCE READING FROM 2.30 PM ON THURSDAY AT THE OMELCO PRESS OFFICE. PLEASE NOTE THAT THE CONTENT OF THE PAPERS WILL BE EMBARGOED FOR USE UNTIL THE MEETING ENDS.

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HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND
MONEY MARKET OPERATIONS

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	DATE ----	\$ MILLION -----
CLOSING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT ON	5.5.92	988
EFFECT OF FORWARDS TO BE SETTLED ON	6.5.92	+157
EFFECT OF OPERATIONS THIS MORNING		-157
EFFECT OF OPERATIONS THIS AFTERNOON		NEUTRAL

TRADE WEIGHTED INDEX 112.6 *-0.1* 6.5.92

HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND

EF BILLS

HONG KONG GOVERNMENT BONDS

TERMS	YIELD	TERM	ISSUE	COUPON	PRICE	YIELD
1 WEEK	3.64 PCT	19 MONTHS	2311	6.25	101.95	4.97
1 MONTH	3.55 PCT	22 MONTHS	2402	5.50	100.35	5.36
3 MONTHS	3.64 PCT					
6 MONTHS	3.84 PCT					
12 MONTHS	4.30 PCT					

TOTAL TURNOVER OF BILLS AND BONDS - 6,356 MN

CLOSED 6 MAY 1992