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WHITE PAPER MAPS OUT EXPANSION PLANS
FOR SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES
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A PROGRAMME OF IMPROVEMENTS AND EXPANSION IN SOCIAL SECURITY AND DIRECT WELFARE SERVICES, COSTING AN ESTIMATED $2,000 MILLION IN ADDITIONAL CAPITAL AND RECURRENT EXPENDITURE OVER THE NEXT EIGHT YEARS, IS OUTLINED IN A WHITE PAPER PUBLISHED TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE COMPREHENSIVE WHITE PAPER, ENTITLED +SOCIAL WELFARE INTO THE 1980'S,+ SETS OUT THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS TO IMPROVE SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS, TO INTRODUCE AN ASSISTANCE SCHEME FOR TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS, AND TO EXPAND DIRECT WELFARE SERVICES, PARTICULARLY FOR THE ELDERLY AND YOUNG PEOPLE.

THE DISABILITY ALLOWANCE WILL BE EXTENDED TO COVER THE PROFOUNDLY DEAF, AND A DISABILITY SUPPLEMENT WILL BE INTRODUCED WITHIN THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE SCHEME.

SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY WILL BE IMPROVED ON A WIDE FRONT AND WILL INCLUDE INSTITUTIONAL AND HEALTH CARE, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND ACCOMMODATION IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK, FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION AND OUTREACHING SOCIAL WORK WILL BE EXPANDED FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO HELP PREVENT ANTI-SOCIAL AND DELINQUENT BEHAVIOUR.

THE WHITE PAPER IS THE CULMINATION OF WIDE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE THREE GREEN PAPERS ON SOCIAL SECURITY DEVELOPMENT, SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY AND PERSONAL SOCIAL WORK AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE, AND IT COVERS OTHER WELFARE SERVICES AS WELL. IT EXCLUDES REHABILITATION SERVICES WHICH ARE COVERED BY A SEPARATE WHITE PAPER PUBLISHED IN 1977.

THE PLANS ENVISAGED IN THE PAPER REPRESENT REALISTIC GOALS BUT WILL BE REVIEWED AND ADJUSTED ANNUALLY AGAINST CHANGING NEEDS.

THE PRINCIPAL MEASURES ARE:

SOCIAL SECURITY

A DISABILITY SUPPLEMENT WITHIN THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE SCHEME WILL BE INTRODUCED NEXT YEAR TO PROVIDE IMPROVED SUPPORT FOR THE PARTIALLY DISABLED AND THEIR FAMILIES.

THIS SUPPLEMENT WILL BE HALF THE BASIC PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RATE FOR A SINGLE PERSON AND WILL BE ADDED TO THE SCALE OF ALLOWANCE FOR ANYONE WITH A 50 PER CENT OR MORE LOSS OF EARNING CAPACITY AS DEFINED IN THE WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION ORDINANCE, OR WHO IS SUFFERING FROM A MENTAL OR PHYSICAL CONDITION MEDICALLY CERTIFIED AS BEING BROADLY EQUIVALENT.

IN VIEW OF PUBLIC SUPPORT, THE GOVERNMENT WILL EXTEND NEXT YEAR THE NON-MEANS TESTED DISABILITY ALLOWANCE TO COVER THE PROFOUNDLY DEAF WHO ARE CONSIDERED TO BE ANOTHER +VULNERABLE GROUP+ IN NEED OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

/AN ASSISTANCE .....

AN ASSISTANCE SCHEME WILL BE IMPLEMENTED NEXT MONTH TO PROVIDE QUICK CASH RELIEF FOR TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS OR THEIR DEPENDANTS REGARDLESS OF WHO WAS AT FAULT.

DISCUSSIONS ARE ALSO IN HAND WITH THE ACCIDENT INSURANCE ASSOCIATION ON THE SETTING UP OF A MOTOR INSURER'S BUREAU, WHICH WOULD ENABLE A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIM TO OBTAIN MORE ADEQUATE COMPENSATION IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE HE IS UNABLE TO DO SO AT PRESENT.

THESE IMPROVED SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS WILL BE ADDITIONAL TO THOSE GREEN PAPER PROPOSALS ALREADY IMPLEMENTED:

* THE INTRODUCTION FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS OF A LONG-TERM SUPPLEMENT, AN OLD AGE SUPPLEMENT AND A SYSTEM OF DISREGARDED INCOME=

* THE EXTENSION OF THE SPECIAL NEEDS ALLOWANCE (PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS THE WELFARE ALLOWANCE) TO COVER PEOPLE UNDER INSTITUTIONAL CARE=

* THE LOWERING OF THE QUALIFYING AGE FOR OLD AGE ALLOWANCE FROM 75 TO 70= AND

* THE SETTING UP OF AN INDEPENDENT SOCIAL SECURITY APPEAL BOARD.

ON THE GREEN PAPER PROPOSAL FOR A VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTORY SICKNESS, INJURY AND DEATH BENEFIT SCHEME, CONSIDERATION IS CONTINUING SEPARATELY IN ORDER NOT TO DELAY PUBLICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VARIOUS PROPOSALS IN THE WHITE PAPER.

SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY

ON INSTITUTIONAL CARE FOR THE ELDERLY, THE GOVERNMENT WILL GIVE PRIORITY TO THE EXPANSION OF CARE AND ATTENTION HOMES PROVIDING PERSONAL AND NURSING CARE. AN EXTRA 1,400 PLACES ARE PLANNED FOR BY 1982-83, WHILE THE LONG-TERM TARGET IS TO PROVIDE FOUR PLACES FOR EVERY 1,000 POPULATION AGED 60 AND OVER.

THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO PLAY A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN THE PROVISION OF THESE FACILITIES AND IS NOW EXAMINING THE BEST MEANS OF DOING SO.

THE PROVISION OF HOMES FOR THE AGED WILL ALSO BE EXPANDED AND 1,600 ADDITIONAL PLACES ARE PLANNED BY 1982-83, WITH A CARE AND ATTENTION SECTION TO BE INCLUDED IN NEW HOMES WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

ON HOUSING, AN ESTIMATED 177,000 OLD PEOPLE ARE LIVING IN HOUSING AUTHORITY ESTATES, AND A FURTHER 134,000 WILL BE REHOUSED UNDER THE EXISTING CRITERIA BY 1987-88.

IN ADDITION, THE HOUSING AUTHORITY HAS ACCEPTED A COMMITMENT OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS TO REHOUSE 10,000 ELDERLY IN ONE OR TWO-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS WHO ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR HOUSING UNDER THE EXISTING CRITERIA. OF THIS NUMBER, HALF WILL BE ACCOMMODATED IN HOSTELS.

/THE HOUSING .....

THE HOUSING SOCIETY WILL ALSO ASSIST IN RE-HOUSING OLD PEOPLE, NOT ONLY THROUGH THEIR NORMAL HOUSING PROGRAMME BUT ALSO THROUGH THEIR SELF-CONTAINED FLAT SCHEMES FOR THE ELDERLY AT ITS CHO YIU CHUEN ESTATE AND IN FUTURE NEW ESTATES.

TO IMPROVE HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY AS WELL AS OTHER CLIENT GROUPS, THE GOVERNMENT WILL EXPAND ITS GENERAL COMMUNITY NURSING SERVICES, WITH A TARGET TRAINING FIGURE OF 350 ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY NURSES OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, SUPPLEMENTED BY MORE PLACES IN DAY HOSPITALS, GERIATRIC WARDS OR CLINICS, AND CARE AND ATTENTION HOMES, AS WELL AS THROUGH BETTER HEALTH EDUCATION.

ON COMMUNITY SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY, THE GOVERNMENT WILL PROVIDE AN EXTRA 117 SOCIAL CENTRES BY 1982-83 WITH AN ULTIMATE TARGET OF ONE CENTRE FOR EVERY 20,000 OF THE POPULATION. SEVEN OF A MINIMUM OF 17 MULTI-SERVICE CENTRES REQUIRED ARE ALSO PLANNED FOR BY 1980-81.

PERSONAL SOCIAL WORK AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE

THE GOVERNMENT WILL FURTHER DEVELOP PERSONAL GUIDANCE AND HELP FOR VULNERABLE YOUNG PEOPLE BY REACHING THEM AT HOME, AT SCHOOL AND IN SOCIETY AT LARGE, WITH AN OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF REDUCING AND PREVENTING ANTI-SOCIAL AND DELINQUENT BEHAVIOUR.

THE MEASURES WILL BE TO EXPAND SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK TO COVER ALL SCHOOLS, TO PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION PROGRAMME BY 1982 IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR, AND TO EXTEND OUTREACHING SOCIAL WORK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHEN THEY ARE NOT AT HOME OR AT SCHOOL.

TO INCREASE COMMUNITY AND YOUTH FACILITIES, 14 COMMUNITY CENTRES, 11 ESTATE COMMUNITY CENTRES AND 23 COMMUNITY HALLS ARE PLANNED TO BE BUILT OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, IN ADDITION TO THE PROVISION EACH YEAR OF 11 CHILDREN'S CENTRES AND 11 YOUTH CENTRES.

FAMILY WELFARE AND PROBATION AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

THE GOVERNMENT WILL PUBLISH A GREEN PAPER WHICH WILL INCORPORATE THE FINDINGS OF A WORKING PARTY ON THE CARE AND EDUCATION OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN.

THE PROBATION SERVICES WILL CONTINUE TO BE STRENGTHENED TO MEET DEMANDS, WITH PLANS TO EXPAND THE VOLUNTEER SCHEME FOR PROBATIONERS, AND TO INCREASE THE NUMBERS OF PROBATION HOSTEL PLACES AND PROBATION REPORTING CENTRES. IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR, HOSTELS ARE PLANNED BOTH FOR REFORMATORY LICENSEES AND FOR DISCHARGED PRISONERS CONSIDERED NOT READY FOR REINTEGRATION INTO THE COMMUNITY.

/SUPPORTING SERVICES

SUPPORTING SERVICES

TO HELP MEET A SHORTFALL IN TRAINED MANPOWER, THE UNIVERSITIES AND POLYTECHNIC WILL EXPAND THEIR SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENTS TO CATER FOR AN ADDITIONAL 10 TO 30 PER CENT OF STUDENTS.

THE GOVERNMENT WILL ALSO GIVE HIGH PRIORITY TO IN-SERVICE TRAINING, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE IDENTIFIED NEED FOR TRAINED STAFF WHO ARE NOT GRADUATES IN SOCIAL WORK.

FINANCING

IN VIEW OF THE SCALE OF DEVELOPMENTS ENVISAGED IN THE COMING DECADE, THE GOVERNMENT HOPES TO PROPOSE SHORTLY FOR DISCUSSION WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR AN IMPROVED SOCIAL WELFARE SUBVENTION SYSTEM IN ORDER TO GIVE GREATER FINANCIAL SECURITY TO AGENCIES PROVIDING SERVICES IN HIGH PRIORITY AREAS.

AS SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS HAVE BEEN CONSIDERABLY IMPROVED IN RECENT YEARS, IT IS CONSIDERED NOT UNREASONABLE FOR THOSE WHO RECEIVE SUCH BENEFITS TO BE ASKED TO MAKE SOME CONTRIBUTION TO THE COST OF SERVICES THEY ENJOY.

ON FEE CHARGING IN GENERAL, THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW IS THAT THE USER OF A SERVICE SHOULD PAY A REASONABLE FEE ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT INTENDED THAT THE FULL ECONOMIC COST SHOULD BE CHARGED, NOR SHOULD IT BE PITCHED SO HIGH AS TO DISCOURAGE POTENTIAL CLIENTS FROM USING THE SERVICE.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPOSALS ENVISAGED IN THE WHITE PAPER WILL INVOLVE HEAVY CAPITAL AND RECURRENT EXPENDITURE. THE ADDITIONAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE FOR NEW OR IMPROVED SERVICES, INCLUDING ALLOCATIONS FROM THE LOTTERIES FUND, IS ESTIMATED TO BE ABOUT $100 MILLION FROM 1979-80 TO 1986-87, WHILE ADDITIONAL RECURRENT EXPENDITURE IS ESTIMATED TO BE $1,953 MILLION FOR THE SAME PERIOD, INCREASING FROM $163 MILLION IN 1979-80 TO $304 MILLION IN 1986-87.

TOTAL RECURRENT EXPENDITURE IN SOCIAL SECURITY PAYMENTS IS EXPECTED TO INCREASE FROM $422 MILLION IN 1979-80 TO $617 MILLION BY 1986-87, WHEN SOME 108,400 PEOPLE WILL BENEFIT FROM THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE SCHEME, 40,000 FROM THE DISABILITY ALLOWANCE, AND 203,500 FROM THE OLD AGE ALLOWANCE.

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PUBLIC COMMENTS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN
SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES WHITE PAPER
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THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE, THE HON. THOMAS LEE, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THE WHITE PAPER +SOCIAL WELFARE INTO THE 1980'S+ HAD TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION THE POINTS RAISED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DEBATE ON THE SUBJECT LAST YEAR.

SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR. LEE SAID ACCOUNT HAD ALSO BEEN TAKEN OF THE COMMENTS BY THE PUBLIC AND INTERESTED ORGANISATIONS ON THE THREE GREEN PAPERS FROM WHICH THE WHITE PAPER, TABLED AT THE COUNCIL THIS AFTERNOON, HAD DEVELOPED.

HE SAID FURTHER CONSULTATIONS HAD BEEN HELD WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR THROUGH THE HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE, AND THE ADVICE OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE HAD BEEN OBTAINED.

THE THREE GREEN PAPERS, ON SOCIAL SECURITY DEVELOPMENT, SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY AND PERSONAL SOCIAL WORK AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE, WERE PUBLISHED IN 1977 FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION AND COMMENT.

MR. LEE SAID THE WHITE PAPER ALSO INCLUDED STATEMENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT IN THE OTHER SOCIAL WELFARE AREAS COVERED BY THE 1973 WHITE PAPER +THE WAY AHEAD+, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES WHICH WERE THE SUBJECT OF A SEPARATE WHITE PAPER PUBLISHED IN 1977.

HE SAID WHILE THE EXPANSION OF SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF THE 1973 WHITE PAPER HAD BEEN DRAMATIC, ONE OF THE MAJOR CONSTRAINTS ON DEVELOPMENT OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS WAS LIKELY TO BE THE SHORTAGE OF TRAINED SOCIAL WORKERS.

HOWEVER, HE SAID, THE GOVERNMENT IS ACTIVELY TAKING STEPS TO INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF TRAINED MANPOWER, FOR EXAMPLE, BY AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOLS OF SOCIAL WORK AT THE UNIVERSITIES AND THE POLYTECHNIC, AND TO ENSURE THAT THE MANPOWER AVAILABLE IS USED IN THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY.

+I BELIEVE, THEREFORE, THAT THE PROPOSALS MADE IN THIS WHITE PAPER ARE REALISTIC GOALS THAT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THIS AND OTHER POSSIBLE LIMITING FACTORS,+ HE SAID.

THERE IS, MOREOVER, WELL-ESTABLISHED MACHINERY FOR REVIEWING AND ADJUSTING ALL SOCIAL WELFARE PLANNING TARGETS ANNUALLY IN THE LIGHT OF CHANGING NEEDS AND IMPROVED PLANNING INFORMATION, HE ADDED.

+TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION ALL THESE FACTORS, I BELIEVE THAT THE WHITE PAPER LAID ON THE TABLE TODAY PROVIDES A SOUND AND POSITIVE BASIS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES IN THE 1980'S,+ HE SAID.

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TRADE DEFICIT NARROWING --- FS
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THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON. PHILIP HADDON-CAVE, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT HONG KONG'S TRADE DEFICIT IS NARROWING AND THAT INFLATIONARY PRESSURES ARE BEGINNING TO BE CONTAINED.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE OF THE EXCHANGE FUND BILL, MR. HADDON-CAVE SAID TRADE STATISTICS FOR MARCH, WHICH WERE RELEASED TODAY, SHOWED THE GROWTH RATE OF TOTAL EXPORTS IN MONEY TERMS IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF THIS YEAR, COMPARED WITH THAT OF 1978, AT 38 PER CENT HAD OVERTAKEN THE GROWTH RATE OF TOTAL IMPORTS AT 30 PER CENT.

THE FIGURES ALSO SHOWED THAT THE GROWTH RATE OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS AT 31 PER CENT HAD OVERTAKEN THE GROWTH RATE OF RETAINED IMPORTS AT 28 PER CENT.

+THESE FIGURES ARE EVEN BETTER THAN I ESTIMATED THEY WOULD BE TWO WEEKS AGO USING INCOMPLETE DATA FOR MARCH,+ MR. HADDON-CAVE SAID, ADDING THAT THIS IS THE REVERSE OF THE SITUATION HONG KONG EXPERIENCED IN 1978 COMPARED WITH 1977.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY ALSO POINTED OUT THAT IN ABSOLUTE TERMS, THE DEFICIT FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF THIS YEAR AT $3,233 MILLION WAS ONLY 18.4 PER CENT OF TOTAL IMPORTS.

COMPARED WITH THE DEFICIT FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF LAST YEAR OF $2,725 MILLION IT WAS AS MUCH AS 20.8 PER CENT OF TOTAL IMPORTS.

+THIS DECLINE IN THE RATIO OF THE TRADE DEFICIT TO TOTAL IMPORTS --- THE PROPORTION OF THE COST OF TOTAL IMPORTS NOT COVERED BY EARNINGS FROM EXPORTS --- IS ENCOURAGING AND REVERSES THE TREND OF THE POST-RECESSION YEARS, + MR. HADDON-CAVE SAID.

+THERE IS NOW EVIDENCE THAT THE RATE AT WHICH THE TRADE DEFICIT IS WIDENING IS BEGINNING TO SLOW DOWN, BUT THIS TREND MUST BE REALLY WELL ESTABLISHED BEFORE WE CAN BE REALLY CONFIDENT THAT THE GROWTH RATE OF TOTAL FINAL DEMAND AND THE GROWTH RATE OF THE ECONOMY'S OUTPUT ARE MOVING BACK INTO BALANCE,+ HE ADDED.

ON INFLATIONARY PRESSURES, MR. HADDON-CAVE SAID THERE WAS FURTHER POSSIBLE EVIDENCE THAT THE ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM, SUITABLY AIDED, WAS BRINGING THE ECONOMY BACK INTO BALANCE AND THAT, THEREFORE, INFLATIONARY PRESSURES WERE BEGINNING TO BE CONTAINED.

HE POINTED OUT THAT RECENT WEEKLY STATISTICS PROVIDED BY BANKS SUGGESTED THAT THE ANNUALISED GROWTH RATE OF MONEY SUPPLY (NOTES AND COINS IN CIRCULATION AND DEMAND DEPOSITS AT LICENSED BANKS PLUS TIME DEPOSITS AND SAVINGS DEPOSITS) WAS AROUND 20 PER CENT WHEREAS THE FORECAST GROWTH RATE OF THE GDP IN MONEY TERMS IN 1979 WAS 16 PER CENT.

/+THIS REPRESENTS .....

+THIS REPRESENTS A SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTION FROM THE GROWTH RATE OF (MONEY SUPPLY) IN 1978 OF 26 PER CENT WHICH WAS WELL IN EXCESS OF THE GROWTH RATE OF THE GDP IN MONEY TERMS FOR THAT YEAR OF JUST OVER 16 PER CENT,+ MR. HADDON-CAVE SAID.

HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT ANNUALISED GROWTH RATE OF LOANS AND ADVANCES CALCULATED FROM WEEKLY STATISTICS SEEMED TO BE AROUND 40 PER CENT, AN IMPROVEMENT ON THE GROWTH RATE IN 1978 OF OVER 43 PER CENT.

+HOWEVER,+ HE SAID, +THE TREND AT LEAST SEEMS TO BE DOWNWARD AND THE EFFECT OF THE FIVE INCREASES IN LENDING RATES SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS YEAR MUST BEGIN TO BITE HARDER SOON.+

MR. HADDON-CAVE EMPHASISED THAT AN OBJECTIVE LOOK AT HONG KONG'S CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION SUPPORTED THE MEASURES HE PROPOSED IN THE BUDGET SPEECH TO SLOW DOWN THE GROWTH RATE OF DOMESTIC DEMAND AND SO TO CONTAIN THE INFLATIONARY PRESSURES WHICH HAD BEEN BUILDING UP FOR SOME TIME.

HE ALSO STRESSED THAT THE BANKS WITH WHOM THE EXCHANGE FUND'S BALANCES ARE PLACED WOULD COOPERATE WITH THE GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE THAT THE CREDIT CREATION POTENTIAL OF THESE BALANCES WAS LIMITED IN FUTURE IN THE WAY AND TO THE EXTENT INTENDED.

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HK'S BASIC ECONOMIC ELEMENTS AS STRONG AS EVER

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THERE HAS BEEN ENCOURAGING SIGNS THAT THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF HONG KONG'S ECONOMY ARE AS STRONG AS EVER DESPITE A +TURBULENT AND WORRYING+ TREND OF EVENT OVER THE PAST TWO MONTHS.

THERE HAS ALSO BEEN SIGNS THAT GIVEN THE DETERMINATION, LEADERSHIP AND IMAGINATIVE REMEDIAL MEASURES, IT MIGHT NOT BE TOO DIFFICULT FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY TO OVERCOME ITS PRESENT ADVERSITY.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE HON. JAMES M.H. WU WHEN HE SUPPORTED WITH +RESERVATIONS+ THE EXCHANGE FUND (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979 AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REFERRING TO RECENT TRADE FIGURES FOR THE MONTH OF JANUARY AND FEBRUARY WHICH SHOWED INCREASES OVER THE SIMILAR PERIOD LAST YEAR, MR. WU NOTED THAT THE VALUE OF IMPORTS STOOD AT $11,048 MILLION AND THAT THE TRADE DEFICIT OF MORE THAN $2,000 MILLION WAS +MUCH TOO HIGH FOR OUR COMFORT.+

HE ATTRIBUTED THE FOLLOWING CAUSES TO THE TRADE DEFICIT, IN ADDITION TO EVENTS WHICH DEVELOPED DURING THE LAST TWO YEARS, TO HONG KONG'S DISADVANTAGE:

* GREATLY INCREASED PUBLIC EXPENDITURE PARTICULARLY IN PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS.

* HUGE EXPENDITURE IN REAL-ESTATES DEVELOPMENT DUE TO REAL DEMAND AS WELL AS SPECULATION IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

/* INCREASED .....

* INCREASED PROPENSITY TO SPEND ON EXPENSIVE IMPORTED FOOD AND GOODS BY THE POPULATION, DUE TO IMPROVED EARNINGS AND ASPIRATION FOR BETTER LIVING.

* BIG INCREASE IN TRAVEL DUE TO INCREASED AND LONGER HOLIDAYS BY PRACTICALLY EVERY SECTOR OF THE COMMUNITY.

* THE PRESSURE ON THE HONG KONG DOLLAR WITH CHINA'S INCREASED PURCHASES FOR THE FOUR MODERNISATION PROGRAMMES WITH U.S. DOLLARS EXCHANGED WITH HONG KONG DOLLARS IT EARNED FROM EXPORTS TO HONG KONG.

THE INDICATED REMEDIAL MEASURES WOULD THEREFORE HAVE TO BE CUTTING DOWN ON SPENDING AND INCREASING EARNINGS THROUGH EXPORTS OF GOODS AND SERVICES, SAID MR. WU.

+IN THE PROCESS, PEOPLE WOULD EXPECT THOSE CONCERNED, AND IN PARTICULAR THE GOVERNMENT MACHINE, TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE WITH EFFECTIVE FINANCIAL AND OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES,+ HE NOTED.

MR. WU THEN RECALLED A STATEMENT MADE BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY IN WINDING UP THE BUDGET DEBATE, IN WHICH THE HON. PHILIP HADDON-CAVE WAS QUOTED AS SAYING +I MUST CONFESS THAT I AM NOT AWARE THAT THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR OF OUR ECONOMY IS PRESENTLY EXPERIENCING ANY DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING FUNDS FOR COMMERCIALLY VIABLE PROJECTS.+

REFERRING TO THE INCREASE OF PRIME INTEREST RATES FROM 4.75 PER CENT TO 13 PER CENT, MR. WU SAID IF AN INDUSTRIAL PROJECT WAS CONSIDERED VIABLE AT 4.75 PER CENT INTEREST FOR INVESTMENT, IT COULD FALL FAR SHORT OF BEING SO AT TODAY'S RATE.

+IN THE MEANTIME, INVESTMENT WOULD BE INHIBITED, EXPORT EARNING POWER DECREASED AND PRODUCTIVE JOBS LOST,+ HE ADDED.

+IN ADDITION, IF THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY AT THE PRESENT STATE OF OUR ECONOMY WOULD NOT DIFFERENTIATE FINANCIAL FACILITIES TO REAL ESTATE SPECULATION AND HIRE-PURCHASE LOANS FOR CARS ETC. WITH INVESTMENT IN EXPORT-EARNING INDUSTRIES, COULD HE STILL ENJOY OUR COMPLIMENTS FOR POSSESSING HIS USUAL GOOD SENSE OF PRIORITY?+ HE ASKED.

MR. WU SAID IT WAS FOR THESE COMPELLING AND URGENT REASONS THAT HE ADVOCATED IN HIS SPEECH ON THE BUDGET DEBATE THAT PREFERENTIAL LOAN TREATMENT BE EXTENDED TO THE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES, AS WAS GENERALLY DONE BY HONG KONG'S COMPETITORS.

+I ALSO SAID THAT THE INCREASE IN INTEREST RATES WAS HURTING INDUSTRY MORE AND I AM GLAD TO LEARN THAT AT LEAST ONE OF OUR LEADING BANKS IS LISTENING AND PLANNING FOR AN IMMEDIATE RELIEF.

+I AM ALSO GLAD THAT MY CONFIDENCE ON THEIR JUDGMENT AND BUSINESS SENSE HAS NOT BEEN MISPLACED, WHEN I SUGGESTED THAT GOVERNMENT LEAVE IT TO THEM, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY TO ADMINISTER THE ROLE OF AN INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK FOR OUR IMMEDIATE NEED,+ HE ADDED.

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MEASURES NOT SUFFICIENT TO RESTRAIN INFLATIONARY TREND
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RESTRICTING PUBLIC EXPENDITURE AND LIMITING THE EXTENT OF CREDIT CREATION BASED ON EXCHANGE FUND BALANCES WILL NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO RESTRAIN CURRENT INFLATIONARY TRENDS.

THIS APPEARS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE FURTHER DECLINE IN THE EXCHANGE VALUE OF THE HONG KONG DOLLAR AND THE CONTINUING GROWTH RATE IN IMPORTS, THE HON. LI FOOK-WO SAID AT THE SECOND READING OF THE EXCHANGE FUND (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979 IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR. LI HAD DOUBTED WHETHER THE MEASURES PROPOSED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY IN HIS BUDGET SPEECH WOULD BE ADEQUATE WHEN HE SPOKE AT THE BUDGET DEBATE LAST (MARCH) MONTH.

+THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY HAS NOW ADMITTED THAT THE GROWTH RATE OF DOMESTIC DEMAND DOES NOT SEEM TO BE SLOWING DOWN, AND THAT THE GROWTH RATE OF BANK LOANS AND ADVANCES ACTUALLY ACCELERATED DURING THE MONTHS OF JANUARY AND FEBRUARY THIS YEAR,+ HE SAID.

MR. LI SAID THAT EVEN IF ALL THE BALANCES OF THE EXCHANGE FUND, TOGETHER WITH THOSE OF THE TREASURY, WERE TO BE CONVERTED TO CALL OR SHORT NOTICE DEPOSITS, THE MAXIMUM POTENTIAL EXTRA LIQUID ASSETS REQUIRED BY THE BILL WOULD ONLY BE A FURTHER $4,700 MILLION.

THAT WOULD BE ROUGHLY SEVEN PER CENT OF TOTAL DEPOSIT LIABILITIES AND WOULD RAISE THE LIQUID ASSETS WHICH MUST BE HELD BY THE BANKS TO ABOUT 32 PER CENT.

HOWEVER, AVERAGE LIQUID ASSETS OF THE BANKS IN FEBRUARY, AFTER DEDUCTING THEIR 100 PER CENT COVER ON INTER-BANK BORROWINGS, WERE NO LESS THAN $31,366 MILLION OR 45.6 PER CENT OF THEIR DEPOSIT LIABILITIES.

+IN OTHER WORDS, IF THOSE BALANCES WERE HELD BY THE GENERALITY OF LICENSED BANKS, THE ENACTMENT OF THIS BILL WOULD BE AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY,+ MR. LI SAID.

SINCE THE BALANCES ARE HOWEVER DEPOSITED WITH ONLY A FEW BANKS, THE BILL'S POTENTIAL IMPACT WILL BE MUCH LARGER, BUT IT IS DOUBTFUL WHETHER IT WILL BE STRONG ENOUGH TO BE REALLY EFFECTIVE.

+SOMETHING MUCH MORE RADICAL WILL BE NECESSARY BEFORE THE GENERAL SITUATION SHOWS THE IMPROVEMENT SO ANXIOUSLY AWAITED BY EVERYONE IN THIS COMMUNITY,+ HE SAID.

HE CONCEDED THAT, COUPLED WITH THE RECENT INCREASE IN LENDING RATES, ENACTMENT OF THE BILL COULD PROVIDE THE PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT TO SLOW DOMESTIC DEMAND, AND THAT ANY SUCH MEASURES WOULD TAKE SOME TIME TO BECOME EFFECTIVE.

HE THOUGHT IT REASONABLE TO GIVE THE BILL A TRY AND SUPPORTED IT WITH RESERVATIONS.

/THE HON. CHARLES .....

THE HON. CHARLES YEUNG SPOKE IN SUPPORT OF THE BILL BUT REGRETTED THAT THE LOOPHOLE OPEN TO POTENTIAL BORROWERS THROUGH THE INTER-BANK MARKET, WHICH HE POINTED OUT DURING THE BUDGET DEBATE, HAD NOT BEEN PLUGGED.

HE NOTED THAT THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY HAD NOT DISPUTED THE EXISTENCE OF THE LOOPHOLE BUT TRUSTED THE GOODWILL AND CO-OPERATION OF THE BANKING COMMUNITY IN ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVE OF THE BILL.

IT WOULD BE A CASE OF GREAT MISCHIEF, HE SAID, IF THE EFFECTS OF THE BILL ARE CAPABLE OF BEING FRUSTRATED IN WHOLE OR IN PART BY THOSE MEMBERS OF THE BANKING COMMUNITY WHO HAVE HAD TO RELY ON THE INTER-BANK MARKET FOR HONG KONG DOLLAR FUNDS WITH WHICH TO +ON-LEND+ TO THEIR NON-BANK CUSTOMERS.

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BILL SEEKS TO ENLARGE LOITERING LAW

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A BILL WHICH SEEKS TO ENLARGE THE LOITERING LAW TO HELP IN CRIME PREVENTION AND GENERALLY HELP THE POLICE FORCE TO MINIMISE THE PUBLIC MANIFESTATIONS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF THUGS OR BULLIES RECEIVED ITS SECOND READING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN MOVING THE CRIMES (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) BILL 1979, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON. JOHN HOBLEY SAID THE AIM MUST BE TO OBTAIN MASTERY OF THE GANGS, WHICH HE STRESSED +IS ESSENTIAL IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE PUBLIC CO-OPERATION WHICH IS NEEDED IF THE REAL ACTIVITIES OF THE GANGS ARE TO BE TACKLED SUCCESSFULLY.+

THE BILL, HE SAID, PROPOSED THE FOLLOWING CHANGES IN THE LAW.

FIRST, THE CURRENT LOITERING OFFENCE IS LIMITED TO LOITERING BETWEEN SUNSET AND 6 A.M. AND REQUIRES THE DEFENDANT ONLY TO GIVE A SATISFACTORY ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF. THE PROPOSED PROVISION OMITS THE RESTRICTION AND, IN ADDITION TO REQUIRING THE DEFENDANT TO ACCOUNT FOR HIMSELF, SPECIFICALLY REQUIRES HIM TO ACCOUNT FOR HIS PRESENCE IN THE PLACE WHERE HE WAS LOITERING.

SECOND, THE PROPOSED PROVISION MAKES IT AN OFFENCE TO LOITER IN A WAY WHICH OBSTRUCTS THE USE OF PUBLIC PLACES AND THE COMMON PARTS OF BUILDINGS BY OTHERS.

THIRD, SUB-SECTION 1 (C) OF THE PROPOSED SECTION 160, WHICH IS OF PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE, IS AIMED AT THE MENACE WHICH GANGS PRESENT EVEN THOUGH THEIR BEHAVIOUR ON ANY PARTICULAR OCCASION MAY BE PASSIVE.

IT MAKES IT AN OFFENCE IF THE PRESENCE OF A PERSON WHO LOITERS IN A PUBLIC PLACE OR THE COMMON PARTS OF A BUILDING, EITHER ON HIS OWN OR WITH OTHERS, GIVES ANOTHER PERSON CAUSE TO BE CONCERNED FOR HIS SAFETY OR WELL-BEING.

/MR. HOBLEY .....

MR. HOBLEY SAID A DIFFICULTY IN DEVISING A LAW IN THE CRIME PREVENTION FIELD IS TO MAKE IT SUFFICIENTLY +REAL+ TO INDUCE THE RIGHT RESPONSE FROM THE COURTS.

+AN OFFENCE WHICH IS DESIGNED TO PREVENT CRIME, AND TO STRIKE AT PEOPLE AT A STAGE WHEN THEIR MERE ASSOCIATION TOGETHER MAY PROVIDE A STIMULUS FOR CRIME, IS INEVITABLY SOMEWHAT IMPRECISE,+ MR. HOBLEY SAID.

HOWEVER, HE POINTED OUT THAT THE CONCEPT OF LOITERING WAS ONE WHICH WAS WELL-KNOWN TO THE COURTS AND +IT IS MY BELIEF THAT THE PROPOSED ENLARGEMENT OF THE OFFENCE OF LOITERING WILL BE UNDERSTOOD AND ACCEPTED.+

MR. HOBLEY SAID THAT SINCE THE BILL WAS PUBLISHED A FEW DAYS AGO, QUITE A BIT HAD BEEN SAID AND WRITTEN ABOUT THE DANGER OF ABUSE.

+THERE IS ALWAYS SOME RISK OF ABUSE WITH AN OFFENCE OF THIS KIND, ~~BUT AS I HAVE SAID LOITERING IS NOT A NEW LEGAL CONCEPT.~~ THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW IS THAT THE PROPOSED ENLARGEMENT OF THE LOITERING OFFENCE IS NECESSARY.+

HE SAID THAT TO COMBAT ABUSE +WE MUST PLAINLY RELY ON THE MAJOR STEPS THAT HAVE BEEN TAKEN IN THE PAST TWO YEARS WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CAPO (COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE POLICE OFFICE) AND THE VITAL MONITORING ROLE PERFORMED BY THE UMELCO GROUP.+

EARLIER, MR. HOBLEY SAID THE GANG ACTIVITY IN THE CRIMINAL FIELD HAD LONG BEEN A PROBLEM IN HONG KONG, AS IN NEARLY ALL LARGE CITIES EVERYWHERE.

HOWEVER, HE SAID THE PROBLEM WAS MORE SINISTER IN HONG KONG BECAUSE OF THE ASSOCIATION IN THE PUBLIC MIND OF GANGS WITH THE OLD-STYLE TRIAD SOCIETIES WHICH WERE A SOURCE OF GREAT TERROR.

MR. HOBLEY SAID THAT THE CURRENT PROBLEM +IS NOT THE OLD-STYLE TRIAD PROBLEM AS SUCH.+ THE CURRENT PROBLEM, HE STRESSED, WAS ONE OF A LARGE NUMBER OF SEPARATE GANGS, VARYING IN SIZE BUT NOT USUALLY HAVING MORE THAN ABOUT 20 MEMBERS.

+NEVERTHELESS, THE GANGS TAKE THE NAME OF ONE OR OTHER OF THE FORMER TRIAD SOCIETIES AND THERE IS USUALLY, BUT NOT INVARIABLY, A MINIMUM PROCESS OF TRIAD STYLE INITIATION WHEN A NEW MEMBER JOINS A GANG.

+IT IS THIS THAT PERPETUATES THE IMAGE OF THE FORMER TRIAD SOCIETIES, AND THUS THE FEAR WHICH TRIAD SOCIETIES ENGENDERED. THERE ARE HOWEVER NO LONGER ANY LARGE OR POWERFUL TRIAD SOCIETIES DOMINATED BY A SINISTER CENTRAL MANAGEMENT,+ MR. HOBLEY SAID.

HOWEVER, HE SAID, THE CHANGED NATURE OF THE MODERN TRIAD GANG DOES NOT MEAN THAT THEY POSE LESS OF A THREAT TO LAW AND ORDER. +THEY POSE A VERY REAL THREAT.+

HE EMPHASISED THAT PART OF THEIR STRENGTH +IS THEIR ASSOCIATION IN THE MINDS OF THE PUBLIC WITH THE TRIAD SOCIETIES OF THE PAST, BUT AS IN OTHER COUNTRIES THE EFFECT OF GROUPS OF GANG MEMBERS BEHAVING IN A MENACING OR BULLYING OR INSULTING OR OFFENSIVE WAY IS IN ITSELF CONSIDERABLE.+

/+THE PHYSICAL .....

+THE PHYSICAL PRESENCE OF A GANG IS A SOURCE OF FEAR. NUMBERS GIVE STRENGTH. IT IS NUMBERS THAT CAUSE FEAR,+ MR. HOBLEY SAID.

+SO, ALTHOUGH THE OLD-STYLE TRIAD SOCIETIES HAVE FOR SOME TIME NOW CEASED TO POSE ANY THREAT, THEY HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY A GANG PROBLEM WHICH IS NO LESS SERIOUS,+ HE ADDED.

MR. HOBLEY SAID THE ORDINARY LAW WAS GENERALLY ADEQUATE TO ENABLE THE POLICE FORCE TO COPE WITH GANGS WHERE THEY ARE DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN CRIME OR PROTECTION RACKETS.

BUT THEY HAVE FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO COPE ADEQUATELY WITH GROUPS OF THUGS OR BULLIES SKULKING AROUND IN THE STREET OR PUBLIC PARTS OF BUILDINGS, BEHAVING IN AN OFFENSIVE OR MENACING WAY WITHOUT ACTUAL AGGRESSION.

+THIS IS A VERY REAL DAY-TO-DAY PROBLEM FOR SOME SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY, AND IT IS NO EXAGGERATION TO SAY THAT THE INABILITY OF THE POLICE FORCE TO ACT EFFECTIVELY HAS SOMETIMES CREATED AN APPEARANCE OF IMPOTENCE ON THE PART OF THE AUTHORITIES, WHICH CAN ONLY WORK TO THE ADVANTAGE OF THE GANGS.+

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS ASSISTANCE SCHEME STARTS NEXT MONTH

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THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT IS GEARED FOR IMPLEMENTING NEXT MONTH A +NO FAULT+ ASSISTANCE SCHEME TO PROVIDE QUICK CASH RELIEF FOR PEOPLE INJURED OR KILLED IN TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS.

THE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS ASSISTANCE SCHEME, COSTING AN ESTIMATED TOTAL OF $45 MILLION IN 1979-80, IS DESIGNED AS A WELFARE MEASURE TO TIDE A VICTIM OR HIS DEPENDANTS OVER THEIR FINANCIAL HARDSHIP RESULTING FROM REDUCED OR LOST EARNINGS.

ANNOUNCING DETAILS OF THE SCHEME AT A LUNCHEON MEETING OF THE ZONTA CLUB OF HONG KONG, THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE, MR. THOMAS LEE, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) AN ESTIMATED 8,000 INJURED PEOPLE MAY APPLY THIS YEAR.

MR. LEE SAID THE SCHEME PROVIDES FOR A SIMPLE PROCEDURE OF GIVING EARLY CASH ASSISTANCE TO ALL TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS, OR THEIR DEPENDANTS IN CASES OF DEATH, REGARDLESS OF WHO WAS AT FAULT IN CAUSING THE ACCIDENT.

HE SAID THE SCHEME IS NON-MEANS TESTED, TO BE FINANCED BY THE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS ASSISTANCE FUND AND ADMINISTERED BY THE DEPARTMENT AS ONE OF ITS SOCIAL SECURITY SCHEMES.

THE SCHEME, HE SAID, WILL APPLY TO TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS WHICH HAPPEN ON OR AFTER MAY 1 THIS YEAR AND WHICH HAVE BEEN REPORTED TO THE POLICE. IN ADDITION, APPLICATIONS MUST BE MADE WITHIN SIX MONTHS OF THE ACCIDENT, AND THE INJURIES SUSTAINED HAVE CAUSED THE LOSS OF AT LEAST SEVEN DAYS' EARNING CAPACITY.

/APPLICATIONS .....

APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE MADE IN A SPECIFIED FORM, WHICH WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM NEXT MONTH AT THE ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SECTION OF EACH DISTRICT TRAFFIC POLICE HEADQUARTERS, AND AT THE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS ASSISTANCE SECTION (TAVA SECTION) OF THE DEPARTMENT, HE SAID.

ENQUIRIES ABOUT THE SCHEME CAN BE MADE AT THE TAVA SECTION ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF THE FIRE BRIGADE BUILDING AT 46 CONNAUGHT ROAD CENTRAL, HONG KONG (TEL. NOS. 5-222392 AND 5-223254), HE ADDED.

+NORMALLY, THE POLICE OFFICER INVESTIGATING THE ACCIDENT WILL EXPLAIN THE SCHEME TO THE VICTIM OR TO HIS NEXT OF KIN,+ HE SAID.

MR. LEE SAID THE APPLICANT, UNLESS PREVENTED BY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OR IMMOBILITY, WILL BE REQUIRED TO ATTEND AN INTERVIEW AT THE TAVA SECTION FOR THE PURPOSE OF ASSESSING ELIGIBILITY AND THE AMOUNT OF PAYMENTS.

PAYMENTS UNDER THE SCHEME WILL BE AT THE SAME LEVELS AS THOSE CONTAINED IN THE PAYMENT SCHEDULE OF THE EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND WHICH IS REVIEWED AND ADJUSTED FROM TIME TO TIME, HE SAID.

THE CURRENT LEVELS OF A DEATH GRANT FOR THE LOSS OF THE SOLE WAGE EARNER IN A FAMILY RANGE FROM $9,500 TO $14,300, AND THE MAXIMUM LEVEL OF AN INJURY GRANT AND A DISABILITY GRANT IS $3,600 AND $11,900 RESPECTIVELY, HE SAID.

FOR A WAGE EARNER, AN ADDITIONAL GRANT CAN BE MADE TO COVER THE LOSS OF EARNINGS UP TO A MAXIMUM OF $2,400, HE ADDED.

MR. LEE EXPLAINED THAT AS THE SCHEME IS INTENDED AS A WELFARE MEASURE, IT WILL NOT AFFECT THE APPLICANT'S RIGHT TO CLAIM AGAINST ANY PERSON IN THE USUAL WAY IN RESPECT OF THE SAME ACCIDENT.

+IF A VICTIM SUBSEQUENTLY RECEIVES DAMAGES OR SOME OTHER FORM OF COMPENSATION, HE WILL BE REQUIRED TO REFUND THE SUMS PAID TO HIM, INITIALLY, UNDER THE SCHEME,+ HE SAID.

IN THIS CONNECTION, HE SAID, THE APPLICANT WILL HAVE TO SIGN AN UNDERTAKING AS A STATUTORY OBLIGATION, FIRST, TO NOTIFY THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE WITHIN ONE MONTH OF ANY CLAIM OR LEGAL PROCEEDINGS BY HIM IN RESPECT OF THE ACCIDENT, AND, SECOND, TO NOTIFY ANY PERSON, AGAINST WHOM HE MAKES A CLAIM, OF THE AMOUNT OF MONEY HE HAS RECEIVED FROM THE SCHEME.

THE PERSON NOTIFIED WILL THEN BE LEGALLY REQUIRED TO NOTIFY THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE OF ANY PAYMENT HE MAKES TO THE APPLICANT NOT LESS THAN 72 HOURS BEFORE THE DAY ON WHICH THE PAYMENT IS TO BE MADE, HE SAID.

IT WILL BE AN OFFENCE TO WILFULLY BREACH THE UNDERTAKING, HE SAID.

/MR. LEE SAID .....

MR. LEE SAID THE SCHEME ALSO PROVIDES A SPEEDY MEANS OF REDRESS FOR ANY APPLICANT NOT SATISFIED WITH THE DECISION MADE BY THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE.

HE MAY APPEAL TO AN INDEPENDENT SOCIAL SECURITY APPEAL BOARD, COMPRISING UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS, ON MATTERS CONCERNING REFUSAL OF PAYMENT, THE AMOUNT OF PAYMENT OFFERED OR THE ISSUING OF PAYMENT TO A PERSON OTHER THAN THE APPLICANT, HE SAID.

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557 BOAT FAMILIES ON PUBLIC HOUSING WAITING LIST
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A TOTAL OF 557 BOAT FAMILIES ARE KNOWN TO BE ON THE WAITING LIST FOR PUBLIC HOUSING, THE SECRETARY FOR HOUSING, THE HON. A.J. SCOTT, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE WAS REPLYING TO THE HON. ANDREW SO, WHO HAD ASKED HOW MANY BOAT DWELLERS THERE ARE AND HOW MANY HAD APPLIED FOR HOUSING.

MR. SCOTT SAID THE 1976 BY-CENSUS FIGURE FOR THE MARINE POPULATION WAS 59,050, OF WHOM IT WAS ESTIMATED 25,000 PEOPLE WERE LIVING IN SOME 2,400 DWELLING BOATS AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS.

THE BALANCE WERE LIVING ON THEIR WORKING CRAFT.

CONCERNING BOAT DWELLERS' APPLICATIONS FOR HOUSING, MR. SCOTT SAID IT WAS NOT KNOWN HOW MANY BOAT PEOPLE HAD USED A FORWARDING ADDRESS, AND NOT THEIR BOAT NUMBERS, AND AN EXAMINATION OF ALL 144,000 +LIVE+ APPLICATIONS WOULD BE NECESSARY TO DETERMINE HOW MANY HAD DONE THIS.

HOWEVER, IT WAS KNOWN THAT 557 FAMILIES HAD GIVEN BOAT NUMBERS AS THEIR ADDRESSES.

MR. SCOTT REFERRED MEMBERS TO A REPLY HE GAVE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN OCTOBER 1977 ON THE SAME SUBJECT, WHEN HE SAID THAT OPPORTUNITIES FOR REHOUSING WERE THE SAME FOR BOAT SQUATTERS AS FOR LAND SQUATTERS.

+IF THEY ARE AFFECTED BY DEVELOPMENT CLEARANCES THEY ARE AUTOMATICALLY OFFERED HOUSING,+ HE SAID.

+IF THEY ARE NOT SO AFFECTED, THEY MAY REGISTER ON THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT'S WAITING LIST IN THE NORMAL WAY.

+IF AT ANY TIME THEIR BOATS FOR ANY REASON BECOME UNSAFE, THEY ARE OFFERED IMMEDIATE TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION.+

MR. SCOTT SAID 80,000 BOAT DWELLERS HAD BEEN REHOUSED AS A DIRECT RESULT OF DEVELOPMENT WORKS SINCE 1960, AND THAT 1,000 MORE HAD BEEN REHOUSED SINCE NOVEMBER 1977, FOLLOWING MARINE AND HOUSING DEPARTMENT INSPECTIONS.

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TAX CONCESSION BILL
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THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON. PHILIP HADDON-CAVE, THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON MOVED THE SECOND READING OF THE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) (NO. 4) BILL 1979 WHICH CONTAINS TWO TAX CONCESSIONS.

THE BILL SEEKS TO GIVE LEGISLATIVE EFFECT TO THE TWO PROPOSALS -- ONE INVOLVING A REDUCTION FROM 15 PER CENT TO 10 PER CENT IN THE +CLAW-BACK+ OF THE SUPPLEMENTARY PERSONAL ALLOWANCE GRANTED TAXPAYERS, AND THE OTHER INVOLVES THE ABOLITION OF THE 30 PER CENT RATE APPLICABLE TO NET CHARGEABLE INCOME IN EXCESS OF $50,000 A YEAR.

+SUPPLEMENTARY PERSONAL ALLOWANCES OF $2,500 FOR A SINGLE PERSON AND $5,000 FOR A MARRIED PERSON WERE INTRODUCED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 1977,+ MR. HADDON-CAVE SAID.

+THEY HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO A REDUCTION BY 15 PER CENT OF THE AMOUNT BY WHICH THE TAXPAYER'S NET CHARGEABLE INCOME EXCEEDS $12,500 FOR A SINGLE PERSON AND $25,000 FOR A MARRIED PERSON, UNTIL THE ENTIRE SUPPLEMENTARY ALLOWANCES ARE ELIMINATED. CLAUSE TWO OF THE BILL PROVIDES THAT THE RATE OF REDUCTION SHALL BE 10 PER CENT INSTEAD OF 15 PER CENT.+

THE BILL ALSO PROPOSES TO ABOLISH THE 30 PER CENT RATE AT PRESENT APPLICABLE TO NET CHARGEABLE INCOME IN EXCESS OF $50,000 A YEAR, SO THAT IN FUTURE 25 PER CENT WILL BE THE TOP MARGINAL RATE ON NET CHARGEABLE INCOME IN EXCESS OF $40,000 A YEAR.

+THE EFFECT OF THESE TWO PROPOSALS, TAKEN TOGETHER, WILL BE TO LIFT THE LEVEL OF INCOME AT WHICH THE STANDARD RATE APPLIES, TO STRETCH THE PROGRESSION OF EFFECTIVE RATES AND TO REDUCE THE EFFECTIVE RATE OF TAX PAYABLE BY A TAXPAYER,+ MR. HADDON-CAVE ADDED.

THESE PROPOSALS WILL APPLY FOR THE YEAR OF ASSESSMENT 1978-79 (OTHER THAN ASSESSMENTS OF PROVISIONAL SALARIES TAX FOR THAT YEAR) AND ALL SUBSEQUENT YEARS OF ASSESSMENTS, AT A COST TO THE REVENUE IN 1979-80 OF $57 MILLION.

DEBATE ON THIS MOTION WAS ADJOURNED.

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ESTABLISHING AGE OF YOUNG OFFENDERS
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THE DETERMINATION OF AGE (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 1979, WHICH DEALS WITH THE AGE OF YOUNG OFFENDERS, WAS READ THE SECOND TIME AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL, THE HON. JOHN HOBLEY SAID THE BILL SEEKS TO INTRODUCE INTO THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ORDINANCE A PROVISION FOLLOWING SECTION 80(3) OF THE ENGLISH CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT 1948.

THE PROVISION FOLLOWED A SUGGESTION MADE BY THE HON. PETER C. WONG DURING THE DEBATE IN JUNE LAST YEAR ON THE DETENTION CENTRES (AMENDMENT) BILL.

MR. WONG THEN EMPHASISED THE IMPORTANCE, IN RELATION TO THE SENTENCING AND TREATMENT OF YOUNG OFFENDERS, OF ESTABLISHING THEIR AGE WITH DUE REGARD TO ALL AVAILABLE EVIDENCE.

+WHILE IT IS UNDOUBTEDLY TRUE TO SAY THAT A COURT WOULD CONSIDER THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE AS A MATTER OF COURSE, MR. WONG DREW THE COUNCIL'S ATTENTION TO SECTION 80(3) AND URGED THE INTRODUCTION OF A SIMILAR PROVISION HERE.

+THAT SUB-SECTION SPECIFICALLY REQUIRES A COURT TO HAVE REGARD TO THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE OF AN OFFENDER'S AGE AND THEN PROVIDES THAT ONCE A COURT HAS DETERMINED AGE THE FINDING IS CONCLUSIVE NOTWITHSTANDING THAT IT MAY SUBSEQUENTLY TRANSPIRE THAT THE OFFENDER'S ACTUAL AGE IS DIFFERENT,+ SAID MR. HOBLEY.

THE NEW PROVISION WILL APPLY TO ALL COURTS, AND IS OF GENERAL APPLICATION.

MR. HOBLEY POINTED OUT THAT THE BILL ALSO PROPOSES SPECIFIC AMENDMENTS TO THE REFORMATORY SCHOOLS ORDINANCE AND THE JUVENILE OFFENDERS ORDINANCE SO AS TO INSERT PROVISIONS REQUIRING COURTS DEALING WITH YOUNG OFFENDERS UNDER EITHER OF THOSE ORDINANCES TO HAVE REGARD TO THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE AS TO AGE.

THOSE ORDINANCES ALREADY CONTAIN A PROVISION MAKING A COURT'S DETERMINATION OF AGE CONCLUSIVE.

THE OPPORTUNITY IS BEING TAKEN TO AMEND THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND JUVENILES ORDINANCE TO ADD TO THAT ORDINANCE ALSO A PROVISION FOLLOWING SECTION 80(3), WHICH WILL APPLY WHERE A COURT IS DEALING WITH JUVENILES IN NEED OF CARE AND PROTECTION, SAID MR. HOBLEY.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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HEAVIER FINES NO DETERRENT FOR BUILDING OFFENCES
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THE FIVE-FOLD INCREASE IN FINES FOR VIOLATION OF BUILDING REGULATIONS IS INSIGNIFICANT COMPARED WITH THE HUGE AMOUNT OF MONEY INVOLVED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A BUILDING, THE HON. S.L. CHEN SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE INCREASE, FROM $50,000 TO $250,000, IS UNLIKELY TO HAVE MUCH EFFECT ON THE +DETERMINED+ OFFENDERS, HE SAID IN COMMENTING ON THE BUILDINGS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979.

INSTEAD, HE SUGGESTED THAT THE EXISTING ORDINANCE BE REVIEWED TO FIND A MORE BASIC SOLUTION. HE ALSO MADE FOUR OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR GOVERNMENT'S CONSIDERATION.

FIRST, IF THE OFFENCE IS SERIOUS ENOUGH, THE NAME OF THE OFFENDER SHOULD BE REMOVED FROM THE STATUTORY REGISTER, EITHER TEMPORARILY OR PERMANENTLY, DEPENDING ON THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE MISCONDUCT.

THIS WOULD BE A MORE EFFECTIVE DETERRENT THAN HEAVIER FINES, HE SAID.

SECOND, THE EXISTING PRINCIPAL ORDINANCE SHOULD BE STRICTLY ENFORCED SO THAT THE +AUTHORISED PERSON+ OR +REGISTERED STRUCTURAL ENGINEER+ WOULD BE REQUIRED TO MAINTAIN AND SUBMIT ON REQUEST A COMPLETE RECORD OF HIS SUPERVISION GIVEN TO THE BUILDING WORKS.

THESE PERSONS ARE REQUIRED UNDER THE ORDINANCE TO SUPERVISE THE CARRYING OUT OF THE BUILDING WORKS IN THE PRESCRIBED MANNER.

+IT CAN BE EXPECTED, THEREFORE, THAT IF ADEQUATE AND PROPER SUPERVISION IS GIVEN, THE QUALITY OF THE MATERIAL USED AND THE WORKMANSHIP IN THE EXECUTION OF THE BUILDING WORK AT ALL STAGES OF PROGRESS WOULD HAVE BEEN ACCURATELY RECORDED,+ MR. CHEN SAID.

THIRD, ALL PARTIES INVOLVED, INCLUDING GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN THE BUILDING AUTHORITY, SHOULD SHARE THE OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE BUILDING WORK.

MR. CHEN POINTED OUT THAT WHILE THE +AUTHORISED PERSON+ AND +REGISTERED CONTRACTORS+ ARE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR PROFESSIONAL WORK, AND FAILURE ON THEIR PART IS SUBJECT TO SEVERE PENALTIES, THERE IS NO SIMILAR LEGAL OBLIGATION ON THE OFFICIALS FOR THEIR PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE.

FOURTH, THE DESIGN OF THE BUILDING SERVICES, SUCH AS FIRE SERVICE INSTALLATION, ELECTRICAL POWER DISTRIBUTION, VENTILATION AND AIR-CONDITIONING, JUST AS THE ARCHITECTURAL PLANNING AND DESIGN OF THE BUILDING FOUNDATION AND STRUCTURE, SHOULD BE SAFEGUARDED BY STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS.

FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF SAFETY, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS, THE INTEGRITY OF THESE SERVICES IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AND VITAL, MR. CHEN SAID.

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WITH THE ADVENT OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AND SOPHISTICATED UTILISATION OF MATERIALS, BUILDING SERVICES NOW FORM AN IMPORTANT INTEGRAL PART OF A BUILDING, HE ADDED.

ALTHOUGH CONTRACTORS FOR BUILDING SERVICES WORKS ARE REQUIRED TO BE REGISTERED, THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT THEIR SERVICE IS ADEQUATELY DESIGNED. +SINCE THE CONTRACTOR HAS A VESTED INTEREST IN THE SUPPLY OF EQUIPMENT, THE LESS ETHICAL ONES MAY EVEN SACRIFICE QUALITY IN ORDER TO SECURE THE BUSINESS,+ HE SAID.

HE THEREFORE SUGGESTED SETTING UP A STATUTORY REGISTER OF PERSONS RECOGNISED AS +BUILDING SERVICE ENGINEERS+ IN THEIR RESPECTIVE AREAS OF EXPERTISE, SIMILAR TO THE REGISTER OF +AUTHORISED PERSONS+ AND +REGISTERED STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS.+

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RECORDS HELP IDENTIFY SCHOOL DROP-OUTS

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THE SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACEMENT AND ALLOCATION RECORDS SHOULD ENABLE THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TO IDENTIFY SCHOOL DROP-OUTS, THE HON. KENNETH TOPLEY, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

HE WAS MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979 WHICH SEEKS TO EXTEND THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION'S POWER TO ENFORCE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF CHILDREN BETWEEN THE AGES OF SIX TO 15.

FROM THIS SEPTEMBER, IT WILL COVER CHILDREN AGED 14 AND BELOW AND EXTENDED TO 15 IN SEPTEMBER, 1980.

THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT, THE REGIONALISATION OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND THE SETTING UP OF THE STUDENT GUIDANCE OFFICER SCHEME BY THE DEPARTMENT HAD ALSO ASSISTED IN DETECTING CASES OF NON-ATTENDANCE, MR. TOPLEY SAID.

+THE APPOINTMENT OF STUDENT GUIDANCE OFFICERS BEGAN IN 1978 AND WHEN FULLY IMPLEMENTED IN 1980 THE SCHEME SHOULD ADMINISTER SATISFACTORILY COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL, AND MAY BE EXTENDED EVENTUALLY TO THE JUNIOR SECONDARY FORMS,+ HE SAID.

THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION'S AUTHORITY TO ISSUE A SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ORDER WOULD CONTINUE TO BE DISCRETIONARY AND BE CONFINED TO CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE IT APPEARED TO HIM THAT THE PARENT WAS WITHHOLDING THE CHILD FROM ATTENDING PRIMARY OR SECONDARY SCHOOL WITHOUT REASONABLE EXCUSE.

+THE PARENT ON WHOM AN ATTENDANCE ORDER IS ISSUED RETAINS, AS UNDER THE PRESENT EDUCATION ORDINANCE, A RIGHT OF APPEAL TO THE BOARD OF REVIEW. PROCEDURE ON APPEAL REMAINS UNCHANGED,+ MR. TOPLEY ADDED.

/HOWEVER, ...

HOWEVER, CERTAIN CHILDREN OF ELIGIBLE AGE WILL BE EXEMPTED FROM ATTENDING SCHOOL.

THESE INCLUDE CHILDREN WHO COMPLETE FORM III BEFORE REACHING THE AGE OF 15, REGISTERED APPRENTICES UNDER THE APPRENTICESHIP ORDINANCE, CHILDREN IN INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS RESIDENTIAL CARE CENTRES OR CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND CHILDREN IN LONG-TERM CARE IN HOSPITALS.

+IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO EXERCISE DISCRETION IN THE CASE OF MENTALLY RETARDED CHILDREN,+ MR. TOPLEY SAID, ADDING THAT ESTIMATES OF NEED AND SCALE OF PROVISION OF SCHOOL PLACES FOR THESE CHILDREN WERE UNDER CONSTANT SCRUTINY BY THE REHABILITATION DEVELOPMENT CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE.

+THE MAJORITY OF THESE CHILDREN CAN BE PROVIDED FOR IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS, IN SPECIAL CLASSES IN ORDINARY SCHOOLS, OR IN OTHER INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS CHILDREN'S TRAINING CENTRES,+ HE SAID.

REGARDING THE CHILDREN OF BOAT PEOPLE AND CHILDREN LIVING IN REMOTE AREAS OR ITINERANT HOMES, THE DIRECTOR SAID: +EACH PROBLEM CALLS FOR, AND IS RECEIVING, A CONCERTED APPROACH BY VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS OF GOVERNMENT.+

ANOTHER PROBLEM IN ENFORCING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL IS THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO THE 12-14 YEAR OLDS.

A SEPARATE BILL PROPOSING TO EXTEND BY STAGES THE PROHIBITION ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN TO 14-YEAR-OLDS AND TO NON-INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS WILL BE SUBMITTED LATER TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL FOR CONSIDERATION, MR. TOPLEY SAID.

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RESIDENCE CRITERION FOR PUBLIC HOUSING SUGGESTED

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THE HON. HILTON CHEONG-LEEN SUGGESTED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY REVISE ITS POLICY SO THAT FAMILIES IN NORMAL CLEARANCES WILL ONLY BE ALLOCATED PUBLIC HOUSING IF THE HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD HAS LIVED IN HONG KONG FOR FIVE OR MORE YEARS.

MR. CHEONG-LEEN WAS SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AT THE COMMITTEE STAGE OF THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1979.

+THE MOUNTAINOUS INFLUX OF IMMIGRANTS WILL MAKE IT EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OF PROVIDING DECENT HOMES FOR ALL HONG KONG FAMILIES BY 1985,+ HE EXPLAINED.

HE SAID RISING RENTS HAVE BEEN CONTRIBUTING TO DOMESTIC INFLATION AND SINCE THE RENT CONTROL LEGISLATION IS COMING UP FOR REVIEW, +IT IS TIME WE TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT THE OVERALL HOUSING SITUATION.+

/+CERTAINLY .....

+CERTAINLY THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CLOSER CO-OPERATION AND COMPLEMENTARY EFFORT BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE ENTERPRISE IN PROVIDING MORE HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEMES TO MIDDLE-INCOME FAMILIES HAVE YET TO BE FULLY EXPLOITED,+ HE SAID.

MR. CHEONG-LEEN ALSO COMMENTED ON THREE OTHER ASPECTS OF GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION COVERED BY THE APPROPRIATION BILL.

ON EDUCATION SUBVENTION, MR. CHEONG-LEEN ASKED FOR A SPECIAL PROGRAMME TO PROVIDE ALL RETARDED CHILDREN WHO ARE SUITABLE WITH SCHOOL PLACES UP TO THE AGE OF 15 OR 16 BY THE MID-80'S.

HE ALSO WANTED TO KNOW HOW COMPULSORY EDUCATION IS BEING IMPLEMENTED FOR THE CHILDREN OF BOAT PEOPLE.

REFERRING TO THE LARGE NUMBER OF IMMIGRANT WORKERS, MR. CHEONG-LEEN SUGGESTED THAT THE INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATIONS IN THE HOUSING AUTHORITY FLATTED FACTORY ESTATES BE CONSULTED AND THEIR ASSISTANCE SOUGHT IN ORGANISING SHORT-TERM INDUSTRIAL TRAINING FOR THESE PEOPLE.

THIS WOULD FACILITATE THEIR INTEGRATION INTO THE LABOUR FORCE AND COULD RELIEVE SOME OF THE LABOUR SHORTAGES, HE SAID.

COMMENTING ON THE FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES BEING EXPERIENCED BY SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED FACTORIES, MR. CHEONG-LEEN HOPED THAT MEMBERS OF THE EXCHANGE BANKS' ASSOCIATION, WITH ENCOURAGEMENT FROM GOVERNMENT, WILL MAKE LOANS AVAILABLE TO THEM AT CURRENT PRIME RATE TO THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE EXTENT.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THESE FACTORIES DO NOT HAVE THE FACILITY OF ESTABLISHED FACTORIES TO BORROW AT THE PRIME RATE.

+IT IS ALL TOO PAINFULLY OBVIOUS THAT GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET ACQUIRED THE ART OF 'FINE TUNING' IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR OF THE ECONOMY, IN SO FAR AS THE NEEDS OF SMALL INDUSTRY IS CONCERNED,+ HE SAID.

ALTHOUGH A SUBSIDIARY WORKING GROUP OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DIVERSIFICATION IS EXAMINING SOURCES OF FINANCE FOR INDUSTRY, WITHOUT KNOWING HOW LONG THE CURRENT HIGH INTEREST RATE WILL LAST, ONE CAN ONLY HOPE THAT NOT MANY SMALL FACTORIES WILL FOLD UNTIL GOVERNMENT COMES UP WITH SOME CONCRETE PROPOSALS, HE SAID.

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REASONS FOR CONGESTION IN IMMIGRATION OFFICES
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THE CAUSE OF CONGESTION IN IMMIGRATION OFFICES IS THE UNPRECEDENTED INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE TRAVELLING TO AND FROM HONG KONG, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON. LEWIS DAVIES TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO THE HON. WONG LAM, MR. DAVIES SAID THE INCREASE INCLUDED +TOURISTS AND THOSE COMING TO HONG KONG FROM VIETNAM, ALL OF WHOM REQUIRE EITHER PROCESSING OR SOME FORM OF TRAVEL DOCUMENT.+

+THIS INCREASE WAS NOT FORESEEN AND THERE HAS BEEN SEVERE PRESSURE ON ACCOMMODATION AND STAFF AS A RESULT,+ MR. DAVIES POINTED OUT.

TO EASE THE PROBLEM, MR. DAVIES SAID, THE FOLLOWING MEASURES HAVE ALREADY BEEN TAKEN OR BEING TAKEN TO RELIEVE CONGESTION:

* ADDITIONAL ACCOMMODATION IS BEING PROVIDED IN FIVE BRANCH OFFICES AS A MATTER OF URGENCY. A NEW OFFICE IN VICTORIA BARRACKS TO PROCESS ALL IMMIGRANTS FROM CHINA WILL BE OPENED IN MAY=

* 115 ADDITIONAL OFFICERS HAVE BEEN APPOINTED TO THE DEPARTMENT SO FAR THIS YEAR=

* 70 CASUAL WORKERS HAVE BEEN APPOINTED TO SUPPLEMENT THE WORK FORCE=

* STAFF HAVE BEEN REDEPLOYED TO INCREASE COUNTER FACILITIES, AND

* PROCEDURES HAVE BEEN REVIEWED AND STREAMLINED TO SPEED UP THE WORK, BUT WITHOUT ANY LOWERING OF THE STANDARDS.

MR. DAVIES ALSO GAVE STATISTICS ON TRAVEL TO AND FROM HONG KONG AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS ISSUED FOR 1977, 1978 AND THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1979.

/THEY ARE:

THEY ARE:

	1977		1978		1979 (TO 31ST MARCH)	
	TOTAL	AVERAGE MONTHLY RATE	TOTAL	AVERAGE MONTHLY RATE	TOTAL	AVERAGE MONTHLY RATE
A) PASSENGERS TRAVELLING TO AND FROM CHINA AT LO WU	2,195,143	182,929	2,808,783	234,065	1,424,996	474,999
B) LEGAL IMMIGRANTS FROM CHINA	26,449	2,204	71,571	5,964	32,084	10,695
C) ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS FROM CHINA REGISTERED WITH ROP OFFICE	7,912	659	23,382	1,949	19,239	6,413
D) ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS FROM CHINA PROCESSED FOR RETURN	1,779	148	8,192	683	10,898	3,633
E) PASSENGERS TRAFFIC THROUGH KAI TAK (ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES)	5,092,276	424,356	5,460,345	455,029	1,370,377	456,792
F) PASSENGERS TRAFFIC THROUGH MACAU FERRY TERMINAL (ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES)	5,160,803	430,067	5,418,584	451,549	1,523,911	507,970
G) PASSPORTS ISSUED	70,744	5,895	90,538	7,545	24,068	8,023
H) RE-ENTRY PERMITS ISSUED	624,569	52,047	720,803	60,067	274,824	91,608
I) ENTRY PERMITS FOR VISITS FROM TAIWAN	109,755	9,146	158,710	13,226	89,259	29,753
J) REVENUE COLLECTED	$45,376,618	$3,781,385	$57,528,552	$4,794,046	$19,493,839	$6,497,946

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GRANTS COMMITTEE --- STRIKING A DIFFICULT BALANCE
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THE UNIVERSITY AND POLYTECHNIC GRANTS COMMITTEE HAS TO HOLD A DIFFICULT BALANCE BETWEEN ITS OBLIGATIONS TO THE TWO UNIVERSITIES AND THE POLYTECHNIC AND TO THE GOVERNMENT, THE HON. JOHN BREMRIDGE SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE SAID THE COMMITTEE, BESIDES BEING CLOSELY CONCERNED WITH COSTS, IS ALSO CONCERNED THAT NO ONE SHOULD THINK +THE EDUCATION WE NEED CAN BY SOME SORT OF MAGIC BE OBTAINED MORE EASILY, AND MORE CHEAPLY, IN HONG KONG THAN ANYWHERE ELSE.+

MR. BREMRIDGE, CHAIRMAN OF THE GRANTS COMMITTEE, SAID THIS IN TABLING THE SIXTH BIENNIAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE.

HE EXPLAINED THAT THERE ARE NO CHEAP AND EASY ROUTES TO GOOD EDUCATION: +STANDARDS HAVE TO BE PAID FOR. GIVEN SOUND AND ECONOMICAL MANAGEMENT IN THE FIRST PLACE, RADICALLY REDUCED COSTS WILL MEAN RADICALLY DIFFERENT --- AND LOWER --- STANDARDS.+

WHILE HE DID NOT THINK THE UPGC HAS PRESSED THE THREE INSTITUTIONS TOO CLOSELY TO KEEP COSTS DOWN, HE BELIEVED THAT FOR THE TIME BEING THE COMMITTEE PROBABLY HAS GONE AS FAR AS IS REASONABLE.

HE WAS CONCERNED AT THE LEAPING CAPITAL COSTS OF THE MAJOR NEW BUILDING PROGRAMME AT THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY WHICH REFLECTED NOT ONLY THE KNOWN ESCALATION IN BUILDING COSTS BUT ALSO THE VERY DIFFICULT SITES MADE AVAILABLE TO THE UNIVERSITY BY THE GOVERNMENT.

HE SAID THERE MUST ALWAYS BE A FAIR, EVEN IF NOT GENEROUS, PROVISION FOR TRUE LEARNING AND RESEARCH, THE END PRODUCTS OF WHICH CANNOT BE QUANTIFIED BY A COST ACCOUNTANT.

THE UPGC REPORT COVERS A MAJOR ISSUE OF GREAT COMPLEXITY AFFECTING ALL THE THREE INSTITUTIONS --- THE DEVELOPMENT OF FACILITIES FOR ADDITIONAL MEDICAL EDUCATION, FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF DENTAL EDUCATION AND FOR A LARGE EXPANSION OF PARA-MEDICAL AND PARA-DENTAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

MR. BREMRIDGE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE PRICE OF THIS +STIMULATING BOOKLET+ HAS BEEN SET AT A SURPRISING $38.

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ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR LAW STUDENT ENROLMENT
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THREE MORE CATEGORIES OF PEOPLE ARE TO BE ACCEPTABLE FOR ENROLMENT AS STUDENTS WITH THE LAW SOCIETY UNDER THE LEGAL PRACTITIONERS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979 WHICH WAS PASSED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE BILL ORIGINALLY RESTRICTED ENROLMENT TO THOSE WHO HOLD EITHER RECOGNISED LAW DEGREES OR THE POST-GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN LAW (PCLL) AWARDED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG.

AT THE SUGGESTION OF A LEGISLATION SCRUTINY GROUP OF UNOFFICIAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLORS WHO HAVE HELD A SERIES OF MEETINGS WITH THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE DEPUTY LAW DRAFTSMAN, AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LAW SOCIETY, THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE ARE ALSO ELIGIBLE FOR ENROLMENT:

* THOSE WHO HAVE PASSED PART I OF THE QUALIFYING EXAMINATION SET BY THE ENGLISH LAW SOCIETY=

* THOSE WHO HAVE PASSED THE NEW COMMON PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATION (CPE) IN ENGLAND, AND

* THOSE WHO HAVE OBTAINED EXEMPTION FROM THE ENGLISH LAW SOCIETY FROM TAKING EITHER OF THE TWO EXAMINATIONS.

THE HON. PETER C. WONG, SPEAKING AT THE BILL'S SECOND READING, SAID THE RESTRICTION WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THE THREE AMENDMENTS INTRODUCED BY THE BILL.

THE FIRST AMENDMENT, WHICH CLARIFIED THAT A SOLICITOR SEEKING AN UNCONDITIONAL PRACTISING CERTIFICATE MUST HAVE BEEN BONA FIDE EMPLOYED IN THE PRACTICE OF A SOLICITOR IN HONG KONG FOR AT LEAST TWO YEARS, WAS CONSIDERED FAIR AND REASONABLE BY THE UNOFFICIALS.

THE OTHER AMENDMENT, WHICH RECONSTITUTED THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON LEGAL EDUCATION (ACLE) AND BROADENED THE SCOPE OF ITS ACTIVITIES, WAS SLIGHTLY CHANGED ON THEIR SUGGESTION TO ALTER THE COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE SO THAT THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG WILL HAVE TWO MEMBERS AND THE LAW SOCIETY THREE.

AS TO THE AMENDMENT ON ENROLMENT RESTRICTIONS, MR. WONG SAID IT HAS BEEN ADVERSELY CRITICISED SINCE, BY IMPLICATION, IT RESTRICTED THE WAYS WHICH UP TO NOW WERE OPEN TO ENROLLED STUDENTS TO QUALIFY AS SOLICITORS.

THE UNOFFICIALS OBTAINED THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S AGREEMENT THAT IT WOULD ONLY BE A TEMPORARY HOLDING MEASURE AND THAT THE MORATORIUM WOULD EXPIRE AT THE END OF THIS YEAR, UNLESS EXTENDED BY RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL.

THIS WILL GIVE THE RECONSTITUTED ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON LEGAL EDUCATION SUFFICIENT TIME TO EXAMINE MORE THOROUGHLY THE VERY COMPLICATED ISSUES INVOLVED AND TO REPORT ITS RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNOR, MR. WONG SAID.

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IN THE COURSE OF THEIR DELIBERATIONS, THE UNOFFICIALS HAVE ALSO EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT ALTERNATE WAYS TO TRAIN AND EXAMINE LAW STUDENTS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED.

THEY THOUGHT THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG AND THE POLYTECHNIC SHOULD BE ASKED WHETHER THEY WOULD BE PREPARED TO PROVIDE LAW COURSES, IN THE CASE OF THE UNIVERSITY, EXTRA-MURAL COURSES LEADING TO AN EXTERNAL LAW DEGREE.

THEY ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE LAW SOCIETY COULD SET UP AN EXAMINATION BOARD COMPRISING BOTH OVERSEAS AND LOCAL EXAMINERS.

MR. WONG HIMSELF GAVE SOME OF HIS PERSONAL VIEWS ON THE EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS OF LAW STUDENTS.

HE THOUGHT THE AVERAGE NON-GRADUATE, PARTICULARLY +SCHOOL-LEAVERS+ IN HONG KONG, MAY NOT HAVE THE NECESSARY COMMAND OF ENGLISH TO PERFORM HIS DUTIES AS A SOLICITOR SATISFACTORILY, BEARING IN MIND THAT HIS MOTHER TONGUE IS CHINESE.

HE ALSO FELT THAT THE AVERAGE YOUNG NON-GRADUATE MAY NOT HAVE A SUFFICIENTLY BROAD EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIETY, WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL FOR A SOLICITOR TO ADVISE HIS CLIENTS PROPERLY.

IF NON-GRADUATES ARE TO BE PERMITTED TO ENROL AS LAW STUDENTS, THEN A HIGH STANDARD OF TRAINING IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL, HE SAID.

HE POINTED OUT THAT QUALITY SHOULD NOT BE SACRIFICED FOR QUANTITY. +ON THE ONE HAND, WE SHOULD TRY OUR BEST TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF LAWYERS= ON THE OTHER THE QUALITY OF THE PROFESSION SHOULD BE MAINTAINED AND IMPROVE FROM TIME TO TIME,+ HE SAID.

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BILL TO INCREASE VEHICLE REGISTRATION TAX

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A BILL TO INCREASE THE RATES OF FIRST REGISTRATION TAX ON PRIVATE CARS, MOTORCYCLES AND MOTOR TRICYCLES WAS READ THE SECOND TIME AT TODAY'S (WEDNESDAY) LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING.

IN MOVING THE MOTOR VEHICLES (FIRST REGISTRATION TAX) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON. PHILIP HADDON-CAVE SAID THE PROVISIONS OF THE BILL BECAME EFFECTIVE FROM MARCH 1, 1979, AS A RESULT OF AN ORDER SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR UNDER THE PUBLIC REVENUE PROTECTION ORDINANCE.

THE ESTIMATED YIELD TO THE REVENUE FROM THE NEW RATES, HE SAID, IS $35 MILLION FOR 1979-80.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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PATENTS BILL AMENDED
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THE REGISTRATION OF UK PATENTS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979 HAS BEEN AMENDED TO GIVE A BROADER DEFINITION OF +INFRINGEMENT+ AT THE SUGGESTION OF THE HON. PETER C. WONG.

MR. WONG ALSO DREW ATTENTION TO A PROPOSAL TO INCORPORATE SECTION 64 OF THE PATENTS ACT 1977 IN THE PRINCIPAL ORDINANCE, WHEN HE SPOKE AT THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THIS SECTION GIVES A PERSON THE RIGHT TO CARRY ON DOING WHAT HE HAS DONE OR MADE PREPARATIONS TO DO SO BEFORE THE PRIORITY DATE OF A PATENT.

HOWEVER, SINCE THE ORDINANCE STATES THAT REGISTRATION IN HONG KONG WOULD CONFER ON THE APPLICANT THE PRIVILEGES AND RIGHTS OF THE UK PATENT AND SINCE ADOPTING THE SECTION AT THIS STAGE WOULD REQUIRE VERY CAREFUL THOUGHT AND DRAFTING, MR. WONG AGREED NOT TO PURSUE THE PROPOSAL IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PRESENT BILL.

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EXEMPTION LIMIT OF ESTATE DUTY ON GIFTS
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A BILL WHICH SEEKS TO LIFT THE PRESENT EXEMPTION LIMIT OF ESTATE DUTY ON GIFTS -- INTER VIVOS FROM $5,000 TO $50,000 -- WAS INTRODUCED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE ESTATE DUTY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON. HADDON-CAVE EXPLAINED THE PROPOSAL IS TO PROVIDE THAT, FOR THE PURPOSE OF ASSESSING ESTATE DUTY, GIFTS INTER VIVOS MADE BY THE DECEASED WHICH, IN THE CASE OF ANY ONE DONEE, DID NOT EXCEED IN THE AGGREGATE $50,000, WILL BE EXEMPTED.

+THE AMENDMENT SHALL APPLY TO THE ESTATES OF PERSONS DYING ON OR AFTER APRIL 1, 1979,+ HE SAID.

+THE COST TO THE REVENUE OF THIS PROPOSAL IS ESTIMATED AT $200,000 A YEAR,+ HE ADDED.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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MOTOR VEHICLE LICENCE FEE INCREASE PROPOSED
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MOTOR VEHICLE LICENCE FEES, WHICH WERE DELIBERATELY TAX LOADED IN 1974, ARE DESIGNED NOT ONLY TO COVER THE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS OF THE LICENSING PROCESS BUT ALSO TO INCLUDE A TAX ELEMENT.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON. PHILIP HADDON-CAVE, AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE ROAD TRAFFIC (REGISTRATION AND LICENSING OF VEHICLES) REGULATIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979.

THE BILL SEEKS TO IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSAL FOR INCREASES IN ANNUAL VEHICLE LICENCE FEES FOR CERTAIN CLASSES OF VEHICLES.

MR. HADDON-CAVE SAID THE NEW FEES ARE DESIGNED BOTH TO RESTORE THE FULL TAX-LOADING, AND TO REMOVE CERTAIN ANOMALIES.

THE ESTIMATED YIELD TO THE REVENUE FROM THE NEW RATES IS $41 MILLION FOR 1979-80, HE ADDED.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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CS THANKS FINANCE COMMITTEE
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THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HAS COMPLETED EXAMINATIONS OF THE DRAFT ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR 1979-80 AND ITS REPORT WAS TABLED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON. SIR JACK CATER, IN STATING THIS, ADDED: +I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY OF PLACING ON RECORD THE GOVERNMENT'S APPRECIATION OF THE VERY CONSIDERABLE TIME AND EFFORT THAT MEMBERS OF FINANCE COMMITTEE HAVE DEVOTED TO THE SCRUTINY OF PUBLIC EXPENDITURE, BOTH AT THE SPECIAL MEETINGS AT WHICH THEY EXAMINED THE DRAFT ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE AND AT REGULAR MEETINGS HELD THROUGHOUT THE YEAR WHEN REQUESTS FOR SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS ARE CONSIDERED.+

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11 BILLS PASSED
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ELEVEN BILLS WERE PASSED INTO LAW AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THEY ARE THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1979, EXCHANGE FUND (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979, BANKING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979, DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979, CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) BILL 1979, BANKRUPTCY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979, LEGAL PRACTITIONERS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979, AUXILIARY FORCES PAY AND ALLOWANCES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979, BUILDINGS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979, REGISTRATION OF UNITED KINGDOM PATENTS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1979 AND EMPLOYMENT (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) BILL 1979.

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PROVISIONAL TRADE FIGURES FOR MARCH 1979
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THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PUBLISHED THE PROVISIONAL FIGURES FOR HONG KONG'S EXTERNAL MERCHANDISE TRADE DURING MARCH 1979.

THE VALUE OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS FOR MARCH WAS $3,814 MILLION, IMPORTS TOTALLED $6,482 MILLION AND RE-EXPORTS $1,559 MILLION. THE TRADE DEFICIT WAS $1,109 MILLION.

THE FIGURES FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO MARCH 1979 (LATEST THREE MONTHS) SHOWED INCREASES, BY VALUE, COMPARED WITH THE SAME PERIOD JANUARY TO MARCH 1978 OF 31.1 PER CENT FOR DOMESTIC EXPORTS, 34.1 PER CENT FOR IMPORTS AND 58.6 PER CENT FOR RE-EXPORTS.

DOMESTIC EXPORTS AND RE-EXPORTS TOGETHER ROSE BY 38.1 PER CENT.

COMPARED WITH THE SAME MONTH IN 1978, INCREASES, BY VALUE, OF $954 MILLION OR 33.4 PER CENT IN DOMESTIC EXPORTS, $1,600 MILLION OR 32.8 PER CENT IN IMPORTS AND $572 MILLION OR 57.9 PER CENT IN RE-EXPORTS WERE RECORDED.

THE SHORT TERM CHANGES, MARCH 1979 COMPARED WITH FEBRUARY 1979, SHOWED INCREASES OF $1,380 MILLION OR 56.7 PER CENT FOR DOMESTIC EXPORTS, $880 MILLION OR 15.7 PER CENT FOR IMPORTS AND $255 MILLION OR 19.6 PER CENT FOR RE-EXPORTS.

THE FIGURES FOR THE 12-MONTH PERIOD FROM APRIL 1978 TO MARCH 1979 COMPARED WITH THOSE OF THE PREVIOUS 12-MONTH PERIOD SHOWED INCREASES, BY VALUE, OF 21.6 PER CENT FOR DOMESTIC EXPORTS, 33.3 PER CENT FOR IMPORTS AND 44.4 PER CENT FOR RE-EXPORTS.

THE MARCH PROVISIONAL EXTERNAL MERCHANDISE TRADE FIGURES ARE:

MERCHANDISE:

DOMESTIC EXPORTS	: $3,814 MILLION
IMPORTS	: $6,482 MILLION
RE-EXPORTS	: $1,559 MILLION
TRADE BALANCE	: $1,109 MILLION (IN DEFICIT)

/COMPARATIVE FIGURES

COMPARATIVE FIGURES

LATEST 3 MONTHS	JANUARY-MARCH 1979	JANUARY-MARCH 1978	INCREASE OR DECREASE	
	$ MN.	$ MN.	$ MN.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS (% OF TOTAL EXPORTS)	10,100 (70.6%)	7,705 (74.4%)	+ 2,395	+31.1
IMPORTS	17,530	13,076	+ 4,454	+34.1
RE-EXPORTS (% OF TOTAL EXPORTS)	4,197 (29.4%)	2,646 (25.6%)	+ 1,551	+58.6
TRADE BALANCE	- 3,233	- 2,725	- 508	

SAME MONTH LAST YEAR	MARCH 1979	MARCH 1978	INCREASE OR DECREASE	
	$ MN.	$ MN.	$ MN.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS (% OF TOTAL EXPORTS)	3,814 (71.0%)	2,860 (74.3%)	+ 954	+33.4
IMPORTS	6,482	4,882	+ 1,600	+32.8
RE-EXPORTS (% OF TOTAL EXPORTS)	1,559 (29.0%)	987 (25.7%)	+ 572	+57.9
TRADE BALANCE	- 1,109	- 1,035	- 74	

LAST MONTH	MARCH 1979	FEBRUARY 1979	INCREASE OR DECREASE	
	$ MN.	$ MN.	$ MN.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS (% OF TOTAL EXPORTS)	3,814 (71.0%)	2,434 (65.1%)	+ 1,380	+56.7
IMPORTS	6,482	5,602	+ 880	+15.7
RE-EXPORTS (% OF TOTAL EXPORTS)	1,559 (29.0%)	1,303 (34.9%)	+ 255	+19.6
TRADE BALANCE	- 1,109	- 1,865	+ 756	

LAST 12 MONTHS	APRIL 1978 TO MARCH 1979	APRIL 1977 TO MARCH 1978	INCREASE OR DECREASE	
	$ MN.	$ MN.	$ MN.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS	43,107	35,438	+ 7,668	+21.6
IMPORTS	67,509	50,635	+16,875	+33.3
RE-EXPORTS	14,748	10,213	+ 4,535	+44.4
TRADE BALANCE	- 9,654	- 4,984	- 4,670	

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U.S.-HK TEXTILE TALKS CONCLUDED
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IN A JOINT STATEMENT ISSUED TODAY (WEDNESDAY), AMBASSADOR MICHAEL B. SMITH, LEADER OF THE U.S. DELEGATION, AND MR. LAWRENCE MILLS, LEADER OF THE HONG KONG DELEGATION, SAID THEY HAD CONCLUDED THE TEXTILE CONSULTATIONS WHICH BEGAN IN JANUARY THIS YEAR AND CONTINUED IN LONDON IN MARCH.

APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTS HAD BEEN DRAWN UP AND THE TWO DELEGATIONS WOULD NOW RECOMMEND THEM TO THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT FOR ACCEPTANCE, THE STATEMENT SAID.

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RECLAMATION CONTRACT
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THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT IS TO RECLAIM A SMALL AREA IN TSUEN WAN BAY FOR STAGE II OF THE TSUEN WAN BYPASS PROJECT.

A CONTRACT FOR THIS WORK, WORTH ABOUT $2 MILLION, WAS SIGNED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY MR. ROBIN SAUNDERS, CHIEF ENGINEER OF THE TSUEN WAN DEVELOPMENT OFFICE, AND MR. CHAN HON-SHEUNG, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF SHING KEE BUILDING CONTRACTORS LTD.

IT MARKS THE BEGINNING OF STAGE II OF THE TSUEN WAN BYPASS, WHICH WILL INVOLVE THE CONSTRUCTION OF A TWO-KILOMETRE ROAD RUNNING FROM TEXACO ROAD ACROSS TSUEN WAN BAY TO LINK WITH TUEN MUN ROAD AT CHAI WAN KOK.

WORK ON THE CONTRACT WILL START NEXT WEEK AND WILL TAKE ABOUT SIX MONTHS TO COMPLETE.

TENDERS FOR THE MAIN CONTRACT FOR THE SECOND STAGE OF THE TSUEN WAN BYPASS WILL BE INVITED IN THE FIRST HALF OF NEXT YEAR.

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MONG KOK DISTRICT CULTURAL, RECREATIONAL AND SPORTS ASSOCIATION TO BE INAUGURATED

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MR. A.G. EASON, CITY DISTRICT COMMISSIONER (KOWLOON WEST), MR. GORDON SIU, MUSIC ADMINISTRATOR AND MISS E.S. MAIR, PRINCIPAL EDUCATION OFFICER (PHYSICAL EDUCATION, RECREATION AND SPORTS) WILL OFFICIATE AT THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY OF THE MONG KOK DISTRICT CULTURAL, RECREATION AND SPORTS ASSOCIATION LTD. TOMORROW (THURSDAY).

THE MONG KOK DISTRICT CULTURAL AND SPORTS ASSOCIATION LTD. WAS FORMED WHEN THE MONG KOK DISTRICT SPORTS ASSOCIATION LTD. (INCORPORATED IN OCTOBER 1971) AND THE MONG KOK DISTRICT CULTURAL, RECREATIONAL AND SPORTS COUNCIL, FORMED IN 1975, MERGED RECENTLY.

THE MERGER IS TO PROVIDE BETTER SERVICES TO RESIDENTS.

APART FROM ITS IMMEDIATE PLANS FOR HOLDING A DAY FOR THE ELDERLY IN JUNE AND A SWIMMING GALA IN JULY, THE ASSOCIATION HAS APPLIED FOR A SITE OF ABOUT 2,500 SQ. FT. IN TAI KOK TSUI TO BUILD A 10-STOREY INDOOR CULTURAL, RECREATIONAL AND SPORTS CENTRE INCORPORATING THE MUCH-NEEDED FACILITIES SUCH AS BADMINTON COURTS, PHYSICAL EXERCISE ROOMS, MUSIC ROOM AND SO ON.

THE CENTRE WILL BE THE FIRST OF ITS KIND WHEN COMPLETED AND WILL COST ABOUT $3 MILLION.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

MR. A.G. EASON, CITY DISTRICT COMMISSIONER (KOWLOON WEST), MR. GORDON SIU, MUSIC ADMINISTRATOR AND MISS E.S. MAIR, PRINCIPAL EDUCATION OFFICER (PHYSICAL EDUCATION, RECREATION AND SPORTS) WILL OFFICIATE AT THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY OF THE MONG KOK DISTRICT CULTURAL, RECREATIONAL AND SPORTS ASSOCIATION TOMORROW (THURSDAY) AT THE CHAN HING SOCIAL SERVICES CENTRE AT 45, FUK TSUEN STREET, TAI KOK TSUI.

YOU ARE INVITED TO SEND REPRESENTATIVES TO COVER THE CEREMONY WHICH BEGINS AT 5.30 P.M.

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CONCERTS BY THE PHILIPPINE YOUTH ORCHESTRA AND HK'S YOUNG MUSICIANS
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THE MUSIC ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE AND ACADEMIC COMMUNITY HALL WILL BE PRESENTING TWO CONCERTS BY THE PHILIPPINE YOUTH ORCHESTRA, THE HONG KONG YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND THE HONG KONG YOUTH SYMPHONIC BAND ON THURSDAY, MAY 3 AND FRIDAY, MAY 4.

THE TWO CONCERTS WILL BE HELD AT THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY HALL, BAPTIST COLLEGE, WATERLOO ROAD.

THE FIRST CONCERT WILL BE GIVEN BY THE PHILIPPINE YOUTH ORCHESTRA. THE CONDUCTOR WILL BE PROF. SERGIO Z. ESMILLA. THE PROGRAMME WILL INCLUDE WORKS BY BEETHOVEN, MOZART, RICHARD WAGNER AND OTHER FAMOUS PHILIPPINE COMPOSERS.

THE SECOND CONCERT WILL BE GIVEN BY THE PHILIPPINE YOUTH ORCHESTRA TOGETHER WITH THE HONG KONG YOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AND HONG KONG YOUTH SYMPHONIC BAND OF THE MUSIC ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE. THE CONDUCTORS WILL BE PROF. SERGIO Z. ESMILLA, MR. THOMAS WANG AND MR. JOHN CHENG.

THE PROGRAMME WILL INCLUDE WORKS BY STRAUSS, TSCHAIKOWSKY, BEETHOVEN AND VERDI.

ADMISSION TICKETS AT $3 EACH ARE AVAILABLE AT THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY HALL= TOM LEE PIANO CO. LTD. (ALL BRANCHES) AND SING TAO OFFICES AT LI YUEN STREET WEST, MINDEN PLAZA, OCEAN CENTRE, THE KOWLOON RAILWAY STATION, HUNG HOM AND MEI FOO SUN CHUEN.

THE PHILIPPINE YOUTH ORCHESTRA WAS FORMED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF PHILIPPINES BOARD OF REGENTS IN 1974 AND HAS BEEN PLAYING MUSIC TO A WHOLE SPECTRUM OF AUDIENCES IN THE PHILIPPINES RANGING FROM THE PLAIN FILIPINO WORKING FOLK TO THE COUNTRY'S STATE DIGNITARIES AND THEIR DISTINGUISHED FOREIGN GUESTS.

IT HAS BEEN RECOGNISED BY THE CULTURAL CENTRE OF THE PHILIPPINES AS ONE OF ITS RESIDENT PERFORMING GROUPS AND HAS BEEN GIVING SEASONAL CONCERTS THERE SINCE 1975.

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RESTRICTED ZONE
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THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT FROM 10 A.M. ON FRIDAY, THE EXISTING RESTRICTED ZONE IN QUARRY BAY FOR ALL MOTOR VEHICLES EXCEPT FRANCHISED BUSES (FROM 7 A.M. TO 7 P.M.) ON THE SOUTHEAST SIDE OF HOI TAI STREET WILL BE ADJUSTED SO THAT IT WILL START ABOUT 35 METRES TO THE SOUTHWEST OF THE HOI TAI STREET-HOI WAN STREET JUNCTION.

THE ARRANGEMENT IS MADE IN CONNECTION WITH RECLAMATION WORKS NEAR FINNIE STREET.

TRAFFIC SIGNS WILL BE SET UP TO INDICATE THE EXACT LIMITS OF THE RESTRICTED ZONE.

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WATER CUT
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THE WATER SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT FRESH WATER SUPPLY TO A NUMBER OF PREMISES IN TAI HANG WILL BE SUSPENDED ON FRIDAY FROM 11 P.M. TO 6 A.M. THE FOLLOWING DAY FOR LEAKAGE TESTS.

THE AREA AFFECTED IS BOUNDED BY HOUSE NO. 152, 154, 156, 325-345, 338-336, TAI HANG ROAD, HOUSE NO. 43A-155, 86-140 BLUE POOL ROAD, 1-15 BRIAR AVENUE, 1-7 BROOM ROAD AND GREEN LANE.

MEANWHILE, SALT WATER SUPPLY TO A NUMBER OF PREMISES IN KWUN TONG WILL BE TURNED OFF FROM 8 A.M. ON FRIDAY TO 10 A.M. ON MONDAY FOR DIVERSION WORKS.

THE AFFECTED AREA INCLUDES LAM TIN AND SAU MAU PING ESTATES, SHUN LEE TSUEN, CHOI WAN ESTATE, UNITED CHRISTIAN HOSPITAL, HIP WO STREET, HIU KWONG STREET, KUNG LOK ROAD, HONG NING ROAD AND HONG LEE ROAD.

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