



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1979

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1979

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RESUMED WATER CHARGES DEBATE
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THE IMPACT ON MANUFACTURING COSTS OF THE 37.5 PER CENT INCREASE IN WATER CHARGES FOR TRADE SUPPLIES DOES SEEM LARGE, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON. PHILIP HADDON-CAVE TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

BUT HE SAID IT WOULD BE MISLEADING TO CONCENTRATE ON THE INCREASE IN CHARGES WITHOUT CONSIDERING THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF WATER CHARGES IN OVERALL COSTS.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON WATER CHARGES, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID AS HE POINTED OUT THREE WEEKS AGO WATER CHARGES REPRESENTED ONLY +A VERY SMALL PART OF THE OVERALL MANUFACTURING COSTS.+

+THUS THE INCREASES IN CHARGES WILL BE, IN MOST CASES, SMALL BOTH IN ABSOLUTE TERMS AND IN THEIR IMPACT ON TOTAL COSTS.+

THERE ARE, HOWEVER, SOME TRADE CONSUMER WHO USE LARGE QUANTITIES OF WATER AND FOR WHOM WATER COSTS FORM A CONSIDERABLY MORE IMPORTANT PART OF A TOTAL COST THAN FOR MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE, MR. HADDON-CAVE SAID.

+HOWEVER, EVEN AMONG THESE USERS, NEITHER WE NOR THE FEDERATION OF HONG KONG INDUSTRIES HAVE FOUND ANY TRADE CONSUMER FOR WHOM WATER CHARGES CONSTITUTE MORE THAN EIGHT PER CENT OF HIS TOTAL PRODUCTION COSTS.+

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID THAT IN LINE WITH HIS VIEW THAT THE IMPACT ON MANUFACTURING COSTS OF THE INCREASED CHARGES WILL BE SMALL, HE DOES NOT EXPECT THAT THEY WILL HAVE MUCH IMPACT ON EXPORT PRICES OR ON EXPORTERS' PROFIT.

+SUCH INDUSTRIES AS TEXTILE FINISHING AND DYEING AND ELECTRO-PLATING, ON WHOSE BEHALF IT IS ARGUED THAT THE IMPACT OF THE INCREASED CHARGES ON THEIR COSTS WILL BE CONSIDERABLE, ARE NOT MAJOR DIRECT EXPORTERS AND ARE ONLY PART OF A LONGER PRODUCTION CHAIN.

+TO THAT EXTENT, EVEN IF THEY HAND ON THEIR INCREASED WATER CHARGES IN FULL, THE INCREASE IN COST OF THE EXPORTED PRODUCT WHICH IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO HIGHER WATER CHARGES WILL BE SMALL, SMALLER THAN THE INCREASES IN OTHER COSTS THAT THE MANUFACTURERS OF THESE PRODUCTS HAVE ABSORBED IN RECENT YEARS.+

ON THE EFFECT THAT THE NEW STRUCTURE WILL HAVE ON DOMESTIC CONSUMERS, MR. HADDON-CAVE HAD THIS TO SAY : +A COMMON THEME IN PRESS COMMENTS AND CRITICISMS IS THAT THE NEW PRICE STRUCTURE WILL IMPOSE A HEAVY BURDEN ON DOMESTIC CONSUMERS.

+IF THIS THEME REFLECTS THE GENERAL CONCERN IN THE COMMUNITY ABOUT THE THREAT OF INFLATION, I CAN ONLY SAY THAT I SHARE THIS CONCERN AND INTEND TO SPEAK TO IT IN A FORTNIGHT'S TIME.

/+BUT IF.....

+BUT IF THIS THEME IS SIMPLY A DISGUISED FORM OF CRITICISM OF THE NEW PRICE STRUCTURE ITSELF AND AN ATTEMPT TO ARGUE THAT HIGHER WATER CHARGES WILL HAVE A SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE ON PRICES GENERALLY, I SIMPLY DO NOT ACCEPT IT.

+AS I HAVE SAID BEFORE IN THIS COUNCIL, THE INCREASE IN THE FREE ALLOWANCE ON POTABLE WATER SUPPLIES, WHEN TAKEN TOGETHER WITH THE PROPOSALS FOR FLUSHING SUPPLIES, WILL MEAN THAT AS MANY AS 55 PER CENT OF ALL DOMESTIC CONSUMERS WILL CONTINUE TO PAY NOTHING OR TO PAY LESS THAN AT PRESENT.+

MR. HADDON-CAVE SAID THAT IN THE CASE OF DOMESTIC DWELLINGS SHARING A COMMUNAL METER THE BILL IS ADJUSTED SO AS TO GIVE EACH SEPARATE DWELLING THE FULL FREE ALLOWANCE, AND METHOD OF CHARGING FOR CONSUMPTION WILL CONTINUE UNDER THE NEW PRICE STRUCTURE.

HOWEVER, HE ADMITTED THAT IN THE CASE OF A DOMESTIC DWELLING WITH A LARGE NUMBER OF OCCUPANTS AND SHARING A COMMUNAL METER, THE NEW PRICE MAY RESULT IN LARGER BILLS.

+FOR FAMILIES WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS ALREADY PROVIDE PAYMENTS TO ASSIST TOWARDS WATER CHARGES AND THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO REVIEW THE EXISTING LEVELS OF THESE PAYMENTS.+

EARLIER, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SPOKE ON MR. S.L. CHEN'S REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT'S ASSURANCE THAT THE WATER UNDERTAKING +IS OPERATING EFFICIENTLY AND ECONOMICALLY.+

+THIS ASSURANCE CAN BE GIVEN BY BROAD REFERENCE TO THE TOTAL OPERATION OF THE WATERWORKS.

FIRST, IN THE PROVISION OF RESOURCES TO MEET FUTURE DEMAND WITHIN STIPULATED SUPPLY CRITERIA, PROPOSALS ARE FORMULATED BY THE DIRECTOR OF WATER SUPPLIES HAVING REGARD TO KNOWN FACTORS AND VARIOUS ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE.

+THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF SUCH PROPOSALS ARE ALSO CONSIDERED BY THE WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, AND, SUBJECT TO THEIR ADVICE AND ENDORSEMENT, THESE PROPOSALS ARE SUBMITTED TO YOUR EXCELLENCY IN COUNCIL FOR DECISION.

+SECONDLY, THE INTEGRITY OF PLANT, EQUIPMENT AND CIVIL ENGINEERING STRUCTURES USED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ALL NEW RESOURCES IS ASSURED BY THE APPLICATION OF INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED STANDARDS.

+THIRDLY, THE MANNER IN WHICH THE WATERWORKS RESOURCES ARE OPERATED PROVIDES FOR TAKING WATER FROM THE CHEAPEST SOURCE, WHERE ALTERNATIVES EXIST.

+THE SOURCE WATER IS REGULARLY MONITORED TO CHECK ITS QUALITY AND TO ENABLE REMEDIAL ACTION TO BE TAKEN WHERE THIS IS INDICATED.

+FOURTHLY, AS A MEASURE OF THE EFFICIENCY OF THE WATER UNDERTAKING, A VIEW IS REQUIRED AS TO UNRECORDED CONSUMPTION.

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+UNRECORDED CONSUMPTION IS REPRESENTED BY THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TOTAL INPUT OF WATER FROM TREATMENT WORKS INTO DISTRIBUTION IN A GIVEN PERIOD AND CONSUMPTION BY INDIVIDUAL CONSUMERS OVER THE SAME PERIOD.

+UNRECORDED CONSUMPTION IS ESTIMATED AT 26 PER CENT OF TOTAL WATER CONSUMPTION AT PRESENT, THE PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS BEING LEAKAGE IN THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM, ILLEGAL DRAIN-OFF, THE MEASUREMENT ERRORS OF METERS, CONSUMPTION FOR FIRE-FIGHTING, LOSSES THROUGH BURST MAINS AND IRRECOVERABLE WASH WATER FROM TREATMENT WORKS.

+A FIGURE OF 26 PER CENT FOR UNRECORDED CONSUMPTION MAY APPEAR LARGE, BUT WHEN THE REMEDIAL MEASURES BEING TAKEN BY THE DIRECTOR OF WATER SUPPLIES ARE FULLY IMPLEMENTED THIS FIGURE WILL PROBABLY BE REDUCED TO ABOUT 20 PER CENT, WHICH IS NOT UNREASONABLE IN COMPARISON WITH CITIES AND WATER AUTHORITIES ELSEWHERE.+

HOWEVER, MR. HADDON-CAVE STRESSED THAT THE DIRECTOR OF WATER SUPPLIES WAS NOT COMPLACENT AND +IS EXPLORING WAYS AND MEANS OF IMPROVING ACTIVITIES TO REDUCE LOSSES.+

TURNING TO THE COLLECTION OF WATER CHARGES, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY HAD THIS TO SAY : +MODERNISATION OF THE WATER ACCOUNTING SYSTEM IS IN HAND BY COMPUTERISING THE BILLING FUNCTION AND COMPUTERISED TRADE ACCOUNTS ARE ALREADY BEING ISSUED.

+WHEN ALL THE ACCOUNTS ARE COMPUTERISED, IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO PROVIDE EVEN MORE EFFICIENT AND RAPID SERVICE TO CONSUMERS, AS WELL AS PROVIDING MANAGEMENT INFORMATION WHICH CANNOT BE PROVIDED AT PRESENT OR PROVIDED BY LABORIOUS MANUAL METHODS.

+FULL COMPUTERISATION WILL IN TURN ENABLE THE WATERWORKS TO PURSUE BAD DEBTS MORE EFFECTIVELY AND TO ENSURE RAPID ACTION IS TAKEN FOR THE COLLECTION OF OUTSTANDING ACCOUNTS.+

ON SUGGESTIONS THAT THE LOK ON PAI DESALTER BE PHASED DOWN AND EVENTUALLY DISPOSED OF SO AS TO ELIMINATE A LARGE PROPORTION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S (PROJECTED) ANNUAL DEFICITS ON THE WATERWORKS ACCOUNT, MR. HADDON-CAVE SAID : +I HAVE ALSO BEEN TOLD THAT THE RATE AT WHICH WE DEPRECIATE FIXED ASSETS HAVE BEEN 'INFLATED', THUS CONTRIBUTING NEEDLESSLY TO THE PROJECTED DEFICIT IN THE WATERWORKS ACCOUNT, AND THAT A SURPLUS WOULD EMERGE IN THE FORECAST PERIOD, EVEN AT CURRENT LEVELS OF CHARGES, IF A MORE REASONABLE VIEW WERE TO BE TAKEN ON DEPRECIATION.

+I AM AFRAID THAT THE SHORT ANSWER TO MR. TIEN'S SUGGESTION IS THAT WE CANNOT DISPOSE OF THE DESALTER BECAUSE IT CONSTITUTES A GUARANTEED SOURCE OF SUPPLY WHICH WE HAVE TAPPED IN TIMES OF DROUGHT.

+FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE LAST FIVE AND A HALF MONTHS OF 1977-78, WHEN THE DESALTER WAS IN FULL OPERATION, ITS DAILY OUTPUT REPRESENTED MORE THAN 18 PER CENT OF DAILY CONSUMPTION DURING THOSE MONTHS.

/+NOTWITHSTANDING.....

+NOTWITHSTANDING THE RELATIVELY HIGH COST OF OPERATING THE DESALTER, I AM CONFIDENT THAT THIS COMMUNITY IN GENERAL, AND TRADE CONSUMERS IN PARTICULAR (AS THEY ENJOY A 24-HOUR SUPPLY DURING WATER RESTRICTIONS), WOULD MUCH PREFER TO PAY MORE THAN SUFFER THE FURTHER RESTRICTIONS THAT WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE HAD TO BE IMPOSED HAD THE DESALTER NOT BEEN BROUGHT FULLY INTO OPERATION.

+NOR CAN I AGREE THAT THE COST OF THE DESALTER BE LEFT OUT OF THE WATERWORKS ACCOUNTS AND CHARGED TO GENERAL REVENUE UNDER A SEPARATE ACCOUNT.+

THIS, MR. HADDON-CAVE STRESSED, WOULD NOT MAKE SENSE BECAUSE THE DESALTER IS PART OF THE TOTAL FIXED ASSETS OF WATER UNDERTAKING.

ON DEPRECIATION POLICY, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID THE RATES AT WHICH +WE DEPRECIATE THE WATER UNDERTAKING'S FIXED ASSETS DEPENDS ON A VIEW BEING TAKEN OVER THE LIFE EXPECTANCY OF INDIVIDUAL ASSETS, WHICH EXCLUDE THE VALUE OF TRACTS OF LAND REQUIRED FOR STORAGE AND CATCHMENT AREAS, AND I CAN GIVE HONOURABLE MEMBERS AN ASSURANCE THAT A REASONABLE VIEW HAS BEEN TAKEN.

+OVERALL, THE ANNUAL DEPRECIATION CHARGES AMOUNT TO LESS THAN TWO PER CENT OF THE TOTAL COST OF FIXED ASSETS AND HONOURABLE MEMBERS WILL WISH TO NOTE THAT WE DEPRECIATE ON THE BASIS OF HISTORICAL RATHER THAN CURRENT COSTS.

+SO THERE IS NO QUESTION OF DEPRECIATION CHARGES IN THE FORECAST PERIOD HAVING BEEN INFLATED, AND I CAN ALSO SAY THAT EVEN IF THE DEPRECIATION CHARGES FOR THE DESALTER WERE TAKEN OUT OF THE WATERWORKS ACCOUNTS, THE WATER UNDERTAKING WOULD STILL BE LEFT WITH A VERY SUBSTANTIAL DEFICIT AT THE END OF THE FORECAST PERIOD IF WATER CHARGES WERE NOT REVISED.

ON PRICING POLICY, MR. HADDON-CAVE SAID HE HAD RECEIVED REPRESENTATIONS SUGGESTING THAT THE NEW PRICE STRUCTURE WOULD RESULT IN TRADE CONSUMERS SUBSIDISING DOMESTIC CONSUMERS BECAUSE TRADE CONSUMERS WILL BE PAYING MORE THAN THE ESTIMATED COST OF PRODUCTION.

+THIS BELIEF IS SHARED BY MR. JAMES WU WHEN HE SAID THAT 'TRADE AND INDUSTRY, USING ONLY ABOUT 30 PER CENT OF TOTAL WATER CONSUMPTION, WOULD BE REQUIRED TO PAY 73 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL COST FOR WATER SUPPLY IN HONG KONG AS A WHOLE.'

+THIS IS NOT SO AND I DO NOT UNDERSTAND HOW MR. WU ARRIVED AT HIS FIGURES. AS I HAVE SAID WHEN MOVING THE MOTION, THE PROPOSED CHARGE OF \$5.50 PER UNIT FOR TRADE SUPPLIES REPRESENTS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ESTIMATED WEIGHTED AVERAGE PRODUCTION COST AND THE ESTIMATED WEIGHTED AVERAGE CONTRIBUTION FROM RATES OVER THE FOUR YEARS 1979-80 TO 1982-83.

+THUS, THE PROPOSED CHARGE FOR TRADE SUPPLIES IS LESS THAN THE ESTIMATED COST OF PRODUCTION. MOREOVER, THE PRODUCTION COST FOR DOMESTIC SUPPLIES IS FULLY COVERED BY THE CONTRIBUTION FROM RATES THE CONTRIBUTION FROM GENERAL REVENUE IN RESPECT OF THE FREE ALLOWANCES AND THE PROPOSED CHARGES FROM DOMESTIC CONSUMERS.

+IN OTHER WORDS THERE IS NO QUESTION OF ONE CLASS OF CONSUMERS SUBSIDISING ANOTHER UNDER THE NEW PRICE STRUCTURE.+

REPRESENTATIONS ON REVISED WATER CHARGES

OUT OF 85,000 TRADE CONSUMERS, ONLY ABOUT 200 USING MORE THAN 6,000 UNITS OF WATER IN A FOUR-MONTH BILLING PERIOD WILL LIKELY BENEFIT FROM THE CONCESSIONARY TARIFF ANNOUNCED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON. JAMES WU SAID AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THIS 'DISCRIMINATION' TO THE OVER 99 PER CENT OF TRADE CONSUMERS WAS POINTED OUT BY THE FEDERATION OF HONG KONG INDUSTRIES AND THE CHINESE MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION IN THEIR REPRESENTATIONS ON THE REVISED WATER CHARGES.

MR. WU HOPED THIS AND OTHER POINTS THEY RAISED WOULD BE ANSWERED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY.

THE TWO BODIES HAD ALSO MADE THE POINT THAT MOST OF THOSE EXCLUDED FROM THE CONCESSION WERE SMALLER TO MEDIUM-SIZED FIRMS, SOME OF WHICH ARE ENGAGED +IN A VITAL BUT NOT SO PROFITABLE INDUSTRY OF DYEING AND FINISHING.+

IT WAS SAID THAT THE COST OF DYEING AND FINISHING IN HONG KONG IS 30 TO 40 PER CENT HIGHER THAN NEIGHBOURING COMPETITORS AND WITH THE 37.5 PER CENT INCREASE IN WATER COSTS, THE MEAGRE 2.72 PER CENT GROSS PROFIT WILL BE FURTHER CUT DOWN TO BELOW (2) PER CENT, WHICH *TWO* HARDLY ENCOURAGES THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS +VITAL ARM OF OUR PREDOMINANT TEXTILE AND GARMENT INDUSTRY.+

+INSTEAD,+ MR. WU SAID, +THERE HAS BEEN A NOTICEABLE DECREASE FROM 322 TO 303 FIRMS IN THIS SECTOR, WHILST WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IS NEW INVESTMENT TO ESTABLISH EVEN HIGHER QUALITY DYEING AND FINISHING FACILITIES.+

HE SAID THE ELECTROPLATING INDUSTRY WHICH AGAIN VITALLY SUPPORTS ELECTRONICS AND WATCHES INDUSTRIES IS ANOTHER IMPORTANT USER OF WATER.

+IN ALL, THESE THREE INDUSTRIES SHOULD ACCOUNT FOR SOME 65 PER CENT OF OUR TOTAL DOMESTIC EXPORTS ON WHICH WE RELY SO MUCH,+ HE SAID.

THE OTHER POINTS RAISED BY THE FEDERATION AND THE ASSOCIATION CONCERNED THE NO-SUBSIDY PRINCIPLE ADVOCATED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY.

MR. WU SAID IF THE PROPOSED RATES ARE TO BE ADOPTED, TRADE AND INDUSTRY, USING ONLY ABOUT 30 PER CENT OF TOTAL WATER CONSUMPTION, WOULD BE REQUIRED TO PAY 73 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL COST FOR WATER SUPPLY AS A WHOLE, IN EFFECT SUBSIDISING DOMESTIC USE.

AS TO THE REASONS GIVEN BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO SUPPORT THE PRINCIPLE, THESE ARE LESS THAN CONVINCING BECAUSE INDUSTRIALISTS ARE ALREADY MAKING ECONOMIC USE OF WATER IN THEIR PROCESSES AND CANNOT BE EXTRAVAGANT USERS BECAUSE OF THE VERY HIGH WATER RATES IN HONG KONG.

/ALSO, WITH

ALSO, WITH IMPROVING RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, IT IS NOT LIKELY THAT THERE WILL BE THE KIND OF HEAVY EXPENDITURES AS IN THE PAST TO OBTAIN ADDITIONAL SUPPLY, MR. WU SAID.

ANOTHER POINT MADE IN THE REPRESENTATIONS WAS THAT THE WATER-WORKS ACCOUNTS WOULD BE BALANCED WITH NO INCREASE IN WATER RATES, IF ONLY THE OPERATING EXPENSES AND NOT SUCH ITEMS AS THE DEBATEABLE CHARGES FOR INTEREST FOR CAPITAL OUTLAY AND MAINTENANCE AND DEPRECIATION FOR THE DESALTER WERE TO BE FIGURED.

MR. WU THOUGHT THE PRESENT ABILITY TO DISPENSE WITH THE USE OF THE DESALTER WAS ACTUALLY A BLESSING IN DISGUISE AND HE BELIEVED NO ONE WOULD COMPLAIN IF WE WERE TO WRITE OFF THE INVESTMENT FOR THE DESALTER IN ONE GO.

THE HON. FRANCIS TIEN ALSO SPOKE OUT FOR THE SMALLER FACTORIES WHICH WILL BE EXCLUDED FROM THE CONCESSIONARY TARIFF.

HE SAID IT WOULD BE FAIRER TO EXTEND THE TARIFF TO COVER ALL THOSE FACTORIES HEAVILY DEPENDENT ON WATER, THE COST OF WHICH IS A SIGNIFICANT PRODUCTION FACTOR.

HE URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO REDUCE THE 6,000 UNITS MINIMUM LIMIT TO A LOWER, MORE REALISTIC AND EQUITABLE FIGURE, AND TO REVIEW THE MATTER AT THE END OF THE GRACE PERIOD RATHER THAN WITHDRAWING THE CONCESSION.

+THIS REVIEW IS NECESSARY BECAUSE IT MAY WELL TRANSPIRE THAT CONSERVATION AND RECYCLING OF WATER IS NOT ECONOMICALLY VIABLE DUE TO INSUFFICIENT SPACE FOR THE INSTALLATION OF SUCH FACILITIES AS A RESULT OF THE HIGH COST OF LAND IN HONG KONG,+ HE SAID.

HE ALSO SUGGESTED THE DESALTER AT LOK ON PAI BE PHASED DOWN AND EVENTUALLY DISPOSED OF ALTOGETHER, IN VIEW OF THE AMICABLE RELATIONS WITH CHINA, FROM WHOM WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO OBTAIN AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF WATER AT A REASONABLE PRICE.

IF SUCH A DECISION IS TAKEN, HE SAID, IT MAY WELL BE UNNECESSARY TO HAVE TO REVISE THE WATER CHARGES, OR AT THE VERY MOST, BY ONLY A SMALL UPWARD ADJUSTMENT.

HE REPEATED A SUGGESTION HE MADE AT THE ANNUAL POLICY DEBATE LAST NOVEMBER FOR THE DESIGNATION OF A SPECIAL INDUSTRIAL ZONE IN THE NEW TERRITORIES TO SET UP DYEING AND FINISHING MILLS.

IN SUCH A SPECIAL ZONE, POLLUTION COULD BE EFFECTIVELY AND COLLECTIVELY CONTROLLED AND UNTREATED WATER FROM THE EAST RIVER COULD BE PIPED IN FOR THE BULK USERS AT A LOWER COST, HE SAID.

THE HON. S.L. CHEN, WHO HAD ADVOCATED A STEEP DOMESTIC TARIFF STRUCTURE TO DETER EXTRAVAGANT WATER USERS IN THE BUDGET DEBATE LAST YEAR, WELCOMED THE PROPOSED NEW CHARGES.

HE SAID THE POINT WHERE A CONSUMER PAYS THE SAME ON THE NEW AS ON THE EXISTING TARIFF IS ABOUT 10 UNITS PER FOUR-MONTH BILLING PERIOD, REPRESENTING A CONSUMPTION OF ABOUT 75 LITRES (16.5 GALLONS) PER PERSON PER DAY FOR A FAMILY OF FIVE.

IF CONSUMPTION IS BELOW 10 UNITS, THE COST WILL BE LESS. ON THE OTHER HAND, FOR AN EXCESSIVE USER OF SAY 30 UNITS, THE COST IS 1.66 TIMES MORE, AND FOR AN EXTRAVAGANT USER OF 100 UNITS, THE BILL WILL BE ALMOST TWICE HIGHER.

MR. CHEN NOTED THAT WHILE HE ENDORSED THE PRINCIPLE OF NO SUBSIDY, HE WANTED AN ASSURANCE THAT THE SUPPLY AUTHORITY IS OPERATING EFFICIENTLY AND ECONOMICALLY. +OTHERWISE THE CONSUMER WILL BE UNFAIRLY CHARGED FOR THE COST ARISING FROM INEFFICIENCY,+ HE SAID.

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CALL FOR REASONABLE TAXI FARE STRUCTURE
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THE HON. HILTON CHEONG-LEEN MOVED A RESOLUTION IN TODAY'S (WEDNESDAY) LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TO AMEND THE SCHEDULE OF URBAN TAXI FARES FROM THE EXISTING \$2.50 FOR THE FIRST MILE AND 50 CENTS EACH SUBSEQUENT ONE-FIFTH OF A MILE TO \$3 AND 30 CENTS RESPECTIVELY.

HE BELIEVED SUCH A FARE STRUCTURE IS MORE REASONABLE AND ACCEPTABLE TO MOST PEOPLE TAKING TAXIS.

THE REV. THE HON. JOYCE M. BENNETT ALSO SPOKE IN SUPPORT OF A LOWER RATE OF TAXI FARES. THE RESOLUTION WAS NOT CARRIED.

GIVING HIS REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL, MR. CHEONG-LEEN SAID THE FARES RECENTLY INTRODUCED WERE PITCHED SO HIGH FOR DISTANCES OVER THREE MILES THAT MOST TAXI USERS FEEL THEY SIMPLY CANNOT AFFORD TO TAKE A TAXI EVEN WHEN PRESSED FOR TIME.

THIS +UNFORESEEN SIDE EFFECT+ REFERRED TO BY THE SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, THE HON. DEREK JONES, IS THE RESULT OF MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION BUT AT THE WRONG PACE, HE SAID.

WHILE THERE HAS BEEN NO PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE INCREASE IN NEW TERRITORIES TAXI FARES, THE CHINESE PRESS RIGHT ACROSS THE BOARD HAVE SAID THE INCREASES FOR THE URBAN AREAS WERE TOO DRASTIC, HE ADDED.

MR. CHEONG-LEEN SAID THE SUGGESTION THAT DRIVERS COULD POSSIBLY OFFER LOWER FARES THAN THE LEGAL MAXIMUM WAS +MORE THEORETICAL THAN PRACTICAL+ BECAUSE NEARLY 80 PER CENT OF THE TAXI DRIVERS ON BOTH SHIFTS ARE NOT OWNERS AND HAVE TO ACCOUNT FOR THE FULL AMOUNT OF THE PERMITTED INCREASE.

IT CUTS DEEPLY INTO THE POCKETS OF THE MAJORITY OF PASSENGERS IF THEY ARE FORCED BY CIRCUMSTANCES TO TAKE TAXIS FOR MEDIUM AND LONGER DISTANCES.

/THE SAME

THE SAME HAPPENS TO THE LOWER-INCOME GROUPS WHEN THEY TAKE PUBLIC LIGHT BUSES WHICH HAVE INCREASED FARES BY 50 CENTS TO AS MUCH AS \$2 ON CERTAIN ROUTES AT PEAK HOURS OR WHENEVER THE OPERATORS THINK THEY CAN GET AWAY WITH IT, FOLLOWING UP ON THE HIGH TAXI FARES.

+WHY SHOULD THERE BE LAISSEZ FAIRE FOR THE PLBS AND STIFF CONTROL FOR THE TAXIS? IN THIS RESPECT, GOVERNMENT'S ANSWER IS FOUND WANTING,+ MR. CHEONG-LEEN SAID.

AS FOR BUS SERVICES, HE SAID HE HAD RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE PROMISE THAT A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF NEW BUSES WOULD BE ARRIVING WITHIN THE NEXT YEAR OR TWO.

EVEN WITH THE BEST EFFORTS ON THE PART OF THE BUS COMPANIES, THIS WILL PROBABLY NOT HAPPEN BECAUSE OF THE CURRENT WAVE OF STRIKES IN BRITAIN. FURTHERMORE, HE SAID, IN THREE YEARS' TIME, THE POPULATION WILL HAVE SWOLLEN TO OVER FIVE MILLION.

MR. CHEONG-LEEN URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO INITIATE A REVIEW OF THE SITUATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, RATHER THAN WAIT UNTIL THE END OF THIS YEAR. TO DO SO IS JUST A WAY OF SAYING TO THE PUBLIC: +YOU WILL ALL HAVE TO GET USED TO SUCH FARES BY THAT TIME,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID THERE WAS ALSO, RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, A WIDESPREAD PUBLIC FEELING THAT THE SEVERE INCREASE IN TAXI FARES HAS STIMULATED MORE INFLATION AND HIGHER LIVING COSTS, PARTICULARLY FOR THE MIDDLE AND LOWER INCOME GROUPS.

+LET US NOT FORGET,+ HE SAID, +THAT IN THE HONG KONG ENVIRONMENT, TAXIS ARE NOT ONLY FOR THE WELL-TO-DO, BUT ALSO FOR THE MAN-IN-THE-STREET WHEN HE GOES HOME LATE OR WHEN HE HAS TO GO SOMEWHERE IN A HURRY.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE CURRENT TAXI FARES, IF REDUCED, +CAN ALWAYS BE READJUSTED SLIGHTLY UPWARDS NEXT YEAR IF AFTER MONITORING SUCH IS FOUND NECESSARY.+

MISS BENNETT, IN SUPPORTING MR. CHEONG-LEEN, SAID THE STEEP RISE IN TAXI FARES WAS CONTRARY TO ACCEPTED GOVERNMENT POLICY ON PRICE INCREASES AND WILL GREATLY ENCOURAGE MORE PEOPLE TO BUY THEIR OWN CARS AND INCREASE THE NUMBER OF VEHICLES ON THE ROADS.

SHE SAID THE INCREASE FOR SHORT JOURNEYS WAS REASONABLE. FOR LONGER JOURNEYS, HOWEVER, THE INCREASE FOR THE OLD \$5 FARE WAS 100 PER CENT, FOR THE OLD \$7 FARE 114 PER CENT, AND THE OLD \$8 FARE 118 PER CENT.

+THIS IS A VERY DANGEROUS PRECEDENT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO SPONSOR. I AM NOT SURPRISED TO HEAR THE PUBLIC FEARS OTHER PRICES WILL RISE IN SIMILAR PROPORTIONS. THE SPECTRE OF A HIGHER RATE OF INFLATION STALKS THE ROADS OF HONG KONG IN THE WAKE OF THESE INCREASES,+ SHE SAID.

THE BENEFITS OF THE INCREASES WERE NOT ACCRUING TO THE DRIVERS TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO STOP THEIR MALPRACTICES, BUT TO THE OWNERS AND OWNER-OPERATORS, SHE ADDED.

AFTER HEARING THE SPEECHES ON THE ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) NO. 4 BILL ON JANUARY 10 SHE WAS CONVINCED TAXI DRIVERS ARE NOT EASILY CONTROLLED BY ANY REGULAR COMPANIES, AND THERE SEEMS LITTLE CONTROL CAN BE EXERCISED OVER ROGUE DRIVERS.

SHE THEREFORE HOPED THE PROGRESS REPORT ON THE TAXI TRADE COULD BE PRODUCED BY THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT AFTER FOUR AND NOT NINE MONTHS.

SHE POINTED OUT THAT FAR FEWER PEOPLE ARE RIDING IN TAXIS AND TAXI RANKS ARE SO FULL THAT OTHER VEHICLES HAVE BEEN HINDERED. TAXIS ARE ALSO CRUISING SLOWLY ALONG TO ATTRACT PASSENGERS TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE SMOOTH FLOW OF TRAFFIC.

+THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY IS TO INCREASE THE PASSENGER-CARRYING CAPACITY OF ALL THE VEHICLES ON THE ROADS. THIS STEEP RISE IN THE TAXI FARE SEEMS TO BE DEFEATING THIS OBJECT,+ SHE SAID.

THE SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, IN HIS REPLY, REMINDED THE TWO SPEAKERS OF THE SITUATION WITH TAXIS BEFORE THE FARE INCREASE CAME INTO EFFECT.

MR. JONES SAID THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION IN RAISING FARES WAS TAKEN AFTER LONG DELIBERATION AND MUCH DEBATE.

THERE WAS NO DOUBT TAXIS ARE NOW AVAILABLE AND THAT DRIVERS ARE WILLING TO TRAVEL LONGER DISTANCES.

+THERE IS NO DOUBT ALSO, FROM THE REPORTS SO FAR AVAILABLE, THAT THERE HAS BEEN A DRAMATIC FALL IN MALPRACTICES AND AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE MANNERS OF TAXI DRIVERS.

+IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE AGAIN TO TELEPHONE FOR A TAXI AND TO OBTAIN ONE. OR, IN OTHER WORDS, IN THE LITTLE TIME THAT HAS ELAPSED, THERE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF TAXI SERVICES.+

ALL THIS, HE SAID, HAS BEEN A GAIN BUT HE WAS NOT CLAIMING THE RIGHT BALANCE HAS NECESSARILY BEEN STRUCK AND THAT PERFECTION HAS BEEN ACHIEVED.

+AFTER A PERIOD IN WHICH THE SITUATION HAD BEEN STEADILY DETERIORATING AND WAS GETTING VERY CLOSE TO A FREE FOR ALL, FIRM ACTION WAS NECESSARY TO RESTORE SANITY,+ MR. JONES SAID.

+BUT IT MAY BE THAT, IN THE LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE, SOME ELEMENTS IN THE PACKAGE, INCLUDING THE LEVEL OF FARES, WILL NEED ADJUSTMENT. THIS IS QUITE NATURAL AND IT MEANS THAT THE SITUATION WILL NEED TO BE MONITORED AND REVIEWED AFTER A REASONABLE PERIOD.

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+THIS THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO DO AND FULL SURVEYS OF THE TAXI TRADE WILL BE CONDUCTED NEXT MONTH, IN MARCH, AND IN MAY OF THIS YEAR,+ HE SAID.

WHEN THIS HAPPENED AND THE SITUATION WAS REVIEWED, HE SAID MR. CHEONG-LEEN'S IDEAS MIGHT, OR MIGHT NOT, COMMEND THEMSELVES. ANY ACTION TAKEN AFTER THE REVIEW WOULD NOT PRECLUDE FURTHER CHANGES IN FARES --- IT WOULD NOT PRECLUDE PROPOSALS TO RAISE, LOWER OR READJUST THE BALANCE OF THE FARES OR, TO LEAVE THEM AS THEY ARE.

HE SAID HE WOULD STRONGLY REFUTE THE SUGGESTIONS BY THE TWO SPEAKERS THAT GOVERNMENT'S ACTION WILL ENCOURAGE INFLATION.

+I WOULD REMIND THEM THAT, APART FROM ONE ADJUSTMENT IN THE FLAG FALL CHARGE FROM \$1.50 TO \$2 IN 1974, TAXI FARES ON HONG KONG ISLAND HAD REMAINED UNCHANGED SINCE 1946, THAT IS FOR 33 YEARS.

+IN REAL TERMS THE NEW FARES ARE STILL, ON AVERAGE, LOWER THAN THEY WERE, SAY, 10 YEARS AGO AND MUCH LOWER THAN IN EARLIER YEARS AND I CANNOT SEE HOW, IN ITSELF, THIS CAN BE CONSIDERED INFLATIONARY.

+SO I HOPE THESE SORT OF ACCUSATIONS ARE NOT MEANT TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY,+ MR. JONES SAID.

IN GOVERNMENT'S VIEW, HE SAID, THE PACKAGE WHICH HAS BEEN INTRODUCED FOR TAXIS, INCLUDING FARE INCREASE, MUST BE GIVEN TIME TO WORK BEFORE A PROPER ASSESSMENT COULD BE MADE OF ITS EFFECTS.

+THIS WILL BE DONE IN THE LIGHT OF THE FULL REVIEWS I HAVE REFERRED TO AND, IF NECESSARY, FURTHER ADJUSTMENTS IN FARES WILL THEN BE PROPOSED.

+IN THE MEANTIME IT IS FELT THAT THIS MOTION IS PREMATURE AND IT MUST THEREFORE BE OPPOSED,+ HE SAID.

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PLEA TO AIR-CONDITION THIRD CLASS HOSPITAL WARDS

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AN UNOFFICIAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBER APPEALED TO THE GOVERNMENT TO EXTEND AIR-CONDITIONING TO THIRD CLASS WARDS IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS.

THE PLEA WAS MADE BY THE HON. PETER C. WONG AT THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY). HE ASKED A QUESTION ON THE SAME SUBJECT IN THE COUNCIL LAST AUGUST.

HE SAID THE IMPROVEMENT WOULD NOT BE A LUXURY BUT A NECESSITY AND WOULD BENEFIT THE LESS FORTUNATE MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY. HE LISTED THESE REASONS :

- * HIGH TEMPERATURE AND HUMIDITY NOT ONLY CAUSE GREAT DISCOMFORT BUT ARE ALSO LIKELY TO DISTURB THE METABOLISM OF PATIENTS, PARTICULARLY EXPECTANT MOTHERS AND THOSE HEAVILY BANDAGED OR WITH LIMBS OR TRUNK IN PLASTER=
- * SYMPTOMS SUCH AS RESTLESSNESS, SLEEPLESSNESS AND DEPRESSION MAY ALSO DEVELOP IN A PATIENT AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY AFFECT HIS RESPONSE TO TREATMENT=
- * CONTROLLED ROOM TEMPERATURE IS ESSENTIAL FOR CERTAIN MEDICAL CONDITIONS, SUCH AS HYPERPYREXIA, SKIN AND NEUROSURGICAL DISEASES AND BURNS=
- * IT ALLEVIATES THE PROBLEM OF DUST AND LACK OF VENTILATION CAUSED BY INSECT SCREENING IN CERTAIN WARDS=
- * ALTHOUGH THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS IN NON-AIR-CONDITIONED WARDS ARE NO WORSE THAN THOSE IN MOST PATIENTS' HOMES BUT THERE THEY ARE WELL AND STRONG AND NOT BED-RIDDEN=
- * AIR-CONDITIONING WOULD ALLEVIATE SOME OF THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF OVERCROWDING WHICH HAS REACHED ALMOST SERIOUS PROPORTIONS IN CERTAIN HOSPITALS AND
- * IT WOULD ALSO CREATE A FAVOURABLE WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR NURSES WHICH IS ESSENTIAL FOR PERFORMING THEIR DUTIES EFFICIENTLY.

MR. WONG QUOTED COMMENTS BY THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK IN SUPPORT OF HIS REQUEST.

THE ADB, WHICH PROVIDED THE LOAN FOR THE SHA TIN HOSPITAL-POLYTECHNIC PROJECT, HAD SUGGESTED AIR-CONDITIONING THE HOSPITAL TOTALLY, +IN VIEW OF THE LEVEL OF SOPHISTICATION BEING SOUGHT AND ACHIEVED IN MEDICAL PRACTICE IN HONG KONG, THE HIGHLY TECHNICAL AND EXPENSIVE DIAGNOSTIC AND THERAPEUTIC EQUIPMENT BEING PROVIDED, AND THE PROVISION OF MORE MODERN MEDICAL FACILITIES BEING ACHIEVED.+

HE URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO DECIDE QUICKLY ON AIR-CONDITIONING ALL NEW HOSPITAL PROJECTS SUCH AS THE PROPOSED NEW SHA TIN AND TUEN MUN HOSPITALS OTHERWISE, HE SAID, EXTRA WORK AND COSTS WOULD BE INCURRED UNNECESSARILY.

HE RECOGNISED THAT IN EXISTING HOSPITALS, THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE OF COMPLEX DESIGN INVOLVING ARCHITECTURAL AND STRUCTURAL MODIFICATIONS BUT THE DISTURBANCE COULD BE MINIMISED BY PROVIDING AIR-CONDITIONING IN PHASES.

FROM PRELIMINARY ENQUIRIES HE LEARNED THAT THE COST OF TOTALLY AIR-CONDITIONING A HOSPITAL WITH A FLOOR AREA OF ABOUT 12,000 SQUARE METRES WOULD BE ABOUT \$3 MILLION. +BUT EVERYTHING HAS A PRICE AND AIR-CONDITIONING OF THIRD CLASS WARDS IS A PRICE WELL WORTH PAYING FOR= THESE WARDS ACCOMMODATE A DAILY TOTAL AVERAGE OF ABOUT 10,000 PATIENTS,+ HE SAID.

DR. THE HON. RAYSON HUANG, SPEAKING IN SUPPORT, ASKED HOW HONG KONG COULD, +AT A TIME WHEN EVEN CERTAIN ANIMALS IN HONG KONG ARE PRIVILEGED TO ENJOY THE LUXURY OF AIR-CONDITIONING, DENY THE SAME COMFORT TO HUMAN BEINGS WHO ARE ILL ENOUGH TO REQUIRE TREATMENT IN HOSPITAL.+

HE ALSO ASKED WHY THE RELATIVELY SPACIOUS FIRST AND SECOND-CLASS WARDS ARE AIR-CONDITIONED WHILE THE OFTEN OVERCROWDED THIRD CLASS WARDS ARE NOT.

+THE LESS AFFLUENT SUFFER FROM ILLNESS AS SUCH AS, IF NOT MORE THAN, THE RICH,+ HE SAID.

DR. HUANG AGREED THAT AIR-CONDITIONING WOULD IMPROVE THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF NURSES AND IMPROVE THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH PATIENTS.

THEIR ENERGY AND PATIENCE SHOULD NOT BE DETRACTED BY THE DEBILITATING HEAT OF SUMMER WHEN HONG KONG COULD WELL AFFORD TO AIR-CONDITION ALL HOSPITAL WARDS, HE SAID.

HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT SOME THIRD-CLASS WARDS ARE MADE EVEN HOTTER AND MORE STUFFY IN SUMMER BY BEING COVERED WITH WIRE GAUZE TO KEEP OUT MOSQUITOES AND OTHER INSECTS.

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SOME WARDS ARE LOCATED AT THE TOP OF BUILDINGS WITH INADEQUATELY INSULATED ROOFS. THERE ARE ALSO HOSPITALS NEAR INDUSTRIAL AREAS WHICH ARE CONSTANTLY SUBJECT TO ATMOSPHERIC AND NOISE POLLUTIONS.

AIR-CONDITIONING WOULD BE THE EASIEST WAY OF REDUCING THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF THESE NUISANCES, HE SAID.

IN SUPPORTING THE MOTION, THE SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, THE HON. E.P. HO SAID IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE ON MEDICAL GROUNDS THAT GENERAL HOSPITALS, AT LEAST IN THE ACUTE AND PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS, SHOULD BE AIR-CONDITIONED.

+HOWEVER,+ MR. HO ADDED, +THIS IS BUT ONE OF THE MANY DESIRABLE IMPROVEMENTS THAT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN OUR PUBLIC SERVICES, AND IT IS NOT POSSIBLE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE THE ASSUMPTION IMPLICIT IN MR. WONG'S CONCLUDING REMARKS THAT EXPENDITURE ON SUCH AIR-CONDITIONING WOULD ONLY BE A DROP IN THE BUCKET.+

ACCORDINGLY, MR. HO SAID, IT WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR GOVERNMENT TO CONSIDER THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS IN EVERY INDIVIDUAL CASE AND TO CONSIDER THE PRIORITY TO BE ACCORDED TO IT IN THE LIGHT OF THE MANY COMPETING CLAIMS ON OUR LIMITED RESOURCES.

+IN THE SPECIFIC CASE OF THE NEW SHA TIN HOSPITAL, I, TOO, HOPE THAT THE ULTIMATE CONCLUSION WOULD BE THAT ITS COMPLETE AIR-CONDITIONING WAS NOT ONLY DESIRABLE BUT ALSO EFFICACIOUS IN MEDICAL AS WELL AS FINANCIAL TERMS,+ MR. HO CONCLUDED.

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CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS INSTITUTED OVER TAK TAI INDUSTRIAL BUILDING

CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS HAVE BEEN INSTITUTED OVER THE TAK TAI INDUSTRIAL BUILDING DECLARED LIABLE TO BECOME DANGEROUS EARLY THIS MONTH, THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS, THE HON. DAVID MCDONALD TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

BUT THE PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR ADDED THAT IT WOULD BE IMPROPER FOR HIM TO COMMENT IN GREATER DETAIL BECAUSE OF THIS AND OTHER POSSIBLE LEGAL ACTION.

MR. MCDONALD WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. ROGER LOBO.

THE DIRECTOR RECALLED EVENTS LEADING TO THE DISCOVERY OF THE DANGEROUS BUILDING IN KWAI CHUNG.

MR. MCDONALD SAID THAT AFTER THE CLOSURE AND SUBSEQUENT DEMOLITION OF THE CHINA ENGINEERS INDUSTRIAL BUILDING IN 1977 THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OFFICE MADE VISUAL INSPECTIONS OF ALL BUILDINGS KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE SAME AUTHORISED PERSON OR CONSTRUCTED BY THE SAME REGISTERED CONTRACTOR.

THIS WAS IN ADDITION TO THE ROUTINE INSPECTIONS OF BUILDINGS ON WHICH REPORTS OF DEFECTS HAD BEEN RECEIVED BY B.O.O., HE SAID.

+OF THE MORE THAN 80 BUILDINGS EXAMINED IN THIS EXERCISE MOST WERE FOUND TO BE STRUCTURALLY SOUND BUT MORE INTENSIVE INVESTIGATIONS WERE ORDERED FOR SIX BUILDINGS WHICH SHOWED SIGNS OF STRESS,+ MR. MCDONALD SAID.

THE TAK TAI INDUSTRIAL BUILDING, COMPLETED IN 1970, WAS ONE OF THE SIX.

IN THIS STRUCTURE SOME SHEAR CRACKING OF BEAMS WAS FOUND AND A NOTICE WAS SERVED ON THE OWNER TO INITIATE A DETAILED INVESTIGATION OF THE BUILDING.

THIS INVESTIGATION SHOWED THE STRUCTURE TO BE SERIOUSLY SUB-STANDARD AND A NOTICE OF INTENTION TO CLOSE THE BUILDING WAS ISSUED.

+OF THE REMAINING FIVE BUILDINGS ON WHICH DETAILED CHECKS WERE ORDERED, TWO ARE STILL UNDER EXAMINATION AND THREE ARE LIKELY TO HAVE NOTICES OF INTENTION TO CLOSE ISSUED WITHIN THE NEXT TWO WEEKS,+ MR. MCDONALD SAID.

+CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS HAVE BEEN INSTITUTED IN RELATION TO THE TAK TAI INDUSTRIAL BUILDING. THAT, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF OTHER LEGAL ACTION MAKES IT IMPROPER FOR ME TO COMMENT IN GREATER DETAIL.+

/ON PREVENTING

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ON PREVENTING THE CONSTRUCTION OF FURTHER DANGEROUS BUILDINGS, MR. MCDONALD POINTED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH IN THE PAST INSPECTIONS OF WORKS IN PROGRESS WERE LIMITED TO INTERMITTENT VISUAL CHECKS THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OFFICE HAD, SINCE SEPTEMBER 1971, BEEN CARRYING OUT COMPREHENSIVE INSPECTIONS, INCLUDING TESTS OF REINFORCED CONCRETE STRUCTURES BY INSTRUMENTS WHICH GIVE READINGS OF THE APPROXIMATE CONCRETE STRENGTH.

+ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL STAFF WAS EMPLOYED TO COPE WITH THE EXTRA WORKLOAD AND MORE TECHNICAL STAFF HAS BEEN REQUESTED TO FURTHER INTENSIFY ACTIVITY IN THIS FIELD,+ HE ADDED.

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SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISION

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THE SCHEDULE OF SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISION FOR THE FIRST QUARTER (APRIL 1 TO JUNE 30) OF THE 1978-79 FINANCIAL YEAR COVERS \$192 MILLION, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON. PHILIP HADDON-CAVE TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE SAID THIS IN MOVING THE MOTION FOR COUNCIL APPROVAL OF THE SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS FOR THE FIRST QUARTER THIS YEAR.

OF THE TOTAL, HE SAID, PUBLIC WORKS NON-RECURRENT ACCOUNTED FOR ALMOST \$185 MILLION BECAUSE OF MORE RAPID PROGRESS ON A NUMBER OF EXISTING PROJECTS AND THE UPGRADING OF 17 PROJECTS TO CATEGORY A OF THE PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME.

+THE SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISION COVERED BY THE SCHEDULE WILL NOT RESULT IN A NET INCREASE OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR AS OFFSETTING SAVINGS HAVE BEEN FOUND UNDER OTHER SUBHEADS OF EXPENDITURE, OR BY THE FREEZING OF FUNDS UNDER HEAD 52 MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES SUBHEAD 100 ADDITIONAL COMMITMENTS,+ THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID.

HE ADDED THAT THE FINANCE COMMITTEE HAS APPROVED ALL ITEMS IN THE SCHEDULE.

THE MOTION WAS APPROVED.

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RESETTLEMENT OFFERS FOR VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

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RESETTLEMENT OFFERS FOR VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM OTHER COUNTRIES USUALLY TAKE THE FORM OF A QUOTA, SOMETIMES FOR THE REGION AND SOMETIMES FOR HONG KONG ALONE, AND FOR A SPECIFIED PERIOD.

IN THE CASE OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, THERE IS AN ONGOING PROGRAMME FOR RESETTLEMENT OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FROM THE REGION, INCLUDING HONG KONG.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON. LEWIS DAVIES AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN REPLY TO QUESTIONS FROM THE HON. LYDIA DUNN.

MR. DAVIES ADDED: +FIRM OFFERS OF RESETTLEMENT ARE ONLY MADE TO INDIVIDUALS ONCE PROCESSING, SPONSORSHIP AND SO ON HAS BEEN ARRANGED.+

+BEARING THESE POINTS IN MIND, THERE ARE 2,340 QUOTA PLACES ON OFFER TO BE FILLED THIS YEAR OR, IN THE CASE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, AN OFFER UP TO MARCH 31, 1980.+

IN ADDITION, MR. DAVIES SAID 6,000 REFUGEES SHOULD BE RESETTLED UNDER THE U.S. GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME THIS YEAR.

SINCE JANUARY 1, AND UP TO FEBRUARY 12, 462 REFUGEES HAVE DEPARTED -- 357 TO THE USA= 60 TO GERMANY= 25 TO CANADA= 18 TO NORWAY AND TWO TO THE UNITED KINGDOM.

THIRTY HAVE BEEN GRANTED PERMISSION TO REMAIN IN HONG KONG.

MR. DAVIES SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAVE STEPPED UP MEASURES TO IDENTIFY VESSELS BEFORE ENTERING HONG KONG WITH A VIEW TO PREVENTING ANY CARRYING EXCESS PASSENGERS FROM ENTERING WITHOUT AUTHORITY.

+THE ROYAL NAVY, THE ROYAL HONG KONG AUXILIARY AIR FORCE AND THE MARINE POLICE ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGED ON THIS TASK,+ HE ADDED.

EXPLAINING HOW THE SHIP SKY LUCK ENTERED HONG KONG UNDETECTED ON THE NIGHT OF FEBRUARY 6, MR. DAVIES HAD THIS TO SAY:

+ALL SHIPS HAD BEEN ADVISED AT FOUR-HOURLY INTERVALS BY THE MARINE DEPARTMENT OF THE NEED TO PROVIDE DETAILS OF THEIR SHIP BEFORE ENTERING HONG KONG WATERS.

+THE SKY LUCK DID NOT DO SO, NOR DID IT TRANSMIT ANY OTHER MESSAGE TO THE MARINE DEPARTMENT,+ HE STRESSED.

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GOVT GUARANTEE \$56M MTR LOAN
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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) ADOPTED A MOTION SEEKING AUTHORITY FOR A GOVERNMENT GUARANTEE FOR A LOAN OF \$56 MILLION FROM A BRITISH BANK FOR SIGNALLING EQUIPMENT FOR THE TSUEN WAN EXTENSION OF THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY.

MOVING THE MOTION, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON. PHILIP HADDON-CAVE SAID THE GUARANTEE WOULD BRING THE GOVERNMENT'S TOTAL GUARANTEE COMMITMENT IN RESPECT OF THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY CORPORATION TO \$7,890 MILLION.

BUT MR. HADDON-CAVE POINTED OUT +NOT ALL THE FACILITIES COMPRISING THIS FIGURE WILL NECESSARILY BE DRAWN DOWN.+

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POLICE RECOVERED 15 OUT OF 17 GUNS STOLEN IN 1976-78
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POLICE RECOVERED 15 OF THE 17 GUNS SNATCHED OR STOLEN FROM THEIR OFFICERS IN THE 1976-78 PERIOD, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON. LEWIS DAVIES TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR. DAVIES SAID, IN REPLY TO QUESTIONS FROM THE HON. PETER C. WONG, THAT THOSE RECOVERED INCLUDED TWO SEIZED BY POLICE AT THE SCENE OF THE INCIDENT; TWO FOUND BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND RETURNED TO POLICE AND 11 RECOVERED BY POLICE THROUGH THEIR INVESTIGATIONS.

HE TOLD THE COUNCIL HE WAS UNABLE TO SAY WITH CERTAINTY HOW MANY OF THOSE GUNS WERE USED IN THE COMMISSION OF OFFENCES SUCH AS ROBBERIES.

+A POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION OF A WEAPON CAN ONLY BE MADE ONCE A SHOT FIRED FROM IT IS RECOVERED AND THEN COMPARED WITH A ROUND FIRED FROM THE SAME GUN ONCE IT IS RETURNED TO THE POLICE,+ MR. DAVIES SAID.

BEARING IN MIND THIS LIMITATION HE SAID THAT IN THE LAST THREE YEARS FIVE POLICE REVOLVERS OUT OF THOSE STOLEN HAD BEEN POSITIVELY IDENTIFIED AS HAVING BEEN USED IN THE COMMISSION OF ROBBERIES.

HE SAID THAT FOR OFFENCES CONNECTED WITH THE STEALING OF POLICE GUNS:

* 18 PEOPLE WERE ARRESTED, 22 CHARGES LAID AND NINE CONVICTIONS WERE MADE IN 1976=

* THERE WERE NO ARRESTS LAST YEAR OR SO FAR THIS YEAR.

+ALL POLICE OFFICERS,+ HE SAID, +RECEIVE TRAINING IN BASIC SELF-DEFENCE. UNIFORMED OFFICERS HAVE THEIR REVOLVERS SECURED TO THEIR PERSON BY MEANS OF A LANYARD.

+IN ADDITION, THE INTRODUCTION OF THE BEAT RADIO SYSTEM WITHIN THE URBAN AREA HAS IMPROVED CONSIDERABLY THE SPEED WITH WHICH POLICE RESPOND TO CRIME, INCLUDING INCIDENTS WHERE AN OFFICER IS ATTACKED.+

THE BEAT RADIO SET, HE SAID, IS EQUIPPED WITH AN EMERGENCY SWITCH BY MEANS OF WHICH AN OFFICER MAY INDICATE WHEN HE IS IN NEED OF URGENT ASSISTANCE.

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REASONS GIVEN FOR CLOSING AES CLINIC

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THE ACTION COMMITTEE AGAINST NARCOTICS (ACAN) HAS UNANIMOUSLY DECIDED THAT THE ACUPUNCTURE ELECTRO-STIMULATION EXPERIMENT SHOULD CEASE AFTER 18 MONTHS AS ORIGINALLY PLANNED SO THAT A MORE THOROUGH REVIEW COULD BE MADE BOTH BY THE COMMITTEE AND THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON DRUG ABUSE (NIDA) OF THE UNITED STATES.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, DR. THE HON. K.L. THONG AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. T.S. LO.

EXPLAINING THE REASONS FOR, AND THE RESULTS OF, THE CLOSURE OF THE AES CLINIC, DR. THONG SAID PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT BY ACAN SHOWED THE EXPERIMENT +MAY NOT BE REGARDED AS AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS AND THE EXACT ROLE AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF AES AS A TREATMENT MODALITY IN HONG KONG HAVE YET TO BE EVALUATED AND DETERMINED.+

HE SAID THE AES CLINIC WAS AN EXPERIMENTAL PROJECT FROM THE BEGINNING WHICH +GIVES NO GUARANTEE OF PERMANENCE.+

A REPORT HAS ALSO BEEN SENT TO NIDA WHICH COMMISSIONED AND FINANCED THE EXPERIMENT IN THE FIRST INSTANCE AND WHICH IS NOW IN THE PROCESS OF ASSESSING THE REPORT, HE ADDED.

AFTER THE CLINIC CLOSED, DR. THONG WENT ON, ACAN HAS BEEN CAREFULLY CONSIDERING THE FUTURE INTEREST AND WELFARE OF THE PATIENTS AND THE STAFF EMPLOYED ON THE PROJECT.

WHEN THE PROJECT ENDED ON DECEMBER 31 LAST YEAR THERE WAS A DAILY ATTENDANCE OF AROUND 14 CASES WHICH INCLUDED ON AN AVERAGE ONE NEW CASE PER DAY, SAID DR. THONG.

+THE NUMBERS INVOLVED WERE SMALL AND, ALSO, BY FAR THE MAJORITY OF THE PATIENTS WERE ALREADY BEING TREATED BY METHADONE.+

+THERE SHOULD, THEREFORE, BE NO DIFFICULTIES FOR THE GOVERNMENT METHADONE PROGRAMME OR OTHER PROGRAMMES SUCH AS THAT OPERATED BY THE SOCIETY FOR THE AID AND REHABILITATION OF DRUG ABUSERS (SARDA) TO CATER FOR THE NEEDS OF THESE PATIENTS,+ HE SAID.

AS TO THE STAFF, DR. THONG SAID THEY WERE EMPLOYED ON A MONTH-TO-MONTH BASIS BY THE TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS INITIALLY ONLY FOR A 12-MONTH PERIOD AND LATER EXTENDED FOR SIX MONTHS.

IT WAS CLEARLY STATED IN THE CONTRACT THAT THEIR MONTH-TO-MONTH SERVICE MIGHT BE TERMINATED PROVIDED THAT ONE MONTH'S NOTICE OR SALARY IN LIEU WAS GIVEN.

/DR. THONG

DR. THONG SAID HE WAS INFORMED BY THE TUNG WAH HOSPITALS AUTHORITIES THAT THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE AS LAID DOWN IN THE CONTRACTS HAVE BEEN HONOURED STRICTLY AND SATISFACTORILY.

+THUS THE WELFARE AND INTEREST OF BOTH PATIENTS AND STAFF HAVE BEEN CATERED FOR APPROPRIATELY AND THERE SHOULD BE NO UNDUE ILL EFFECTS RESULTING FROM THE CLOSURE OF THE PROJECT,+ HE ADDED.

THE DIRECTOR REITERATED THAT ENDING THE PROJECT BY ITSELF +DOES NOT IMPLY THAT AES AS A METHOD OF TREATMENT IS ABSOLUTELY RULED OUT IN HONG KONG.+

ELABORATING ON THE PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE AES EXPERIMENT, DR. THONG SAID THE FOLLOWING FACTS EMERGED:

- * OUT OF 300 PATIENTS ENROLLED FOR THE EXPERIMENT, 77, OR 26.5 PER CENT, COMPLETED THE 14-DAY TREATMENT PERIOD=
- * 223 PATIENTS, OR 74.4 PER CENT, DROPPED OUT AT VARIOUS STAGES=
- * 47, OR 16 PER CENT, WHO COMPLETED THE 14-DAY TREATMENT PERIOD SHOWED PRESENCE OF OPIATES IN THEIR URINE TESTS=
- * 30, OR 10 PER CENT, SHOWED NEGATIVE RESULTS IN THEIR URINE TESTS ON THE 14TH DAY=
- * OUT OF THE 30 CASES, 22 HAD RECEIVED AES COMBINED WITH METHADONE, WHILE ONLY EIGHT HAD BEEN TREATED BY AES ALONE=
- * A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF PATIENTS ATTENDING AES PROGRAMME WERE ALSO UNDERGOING METHADONE TREATMENT IN THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMME CONCURRENTLY=
- * NO INFORMATION REGARDING FOLLOW-UP MEASURES OF PATIENTS AFTER THE 14-DAY TREATMENT PERIOD WAS AVAILABLE=
- * AES TREATMENT WHEN USED TOGETHER WITH METHADONE SIMULTANEOUSLY PRODUCED BETTER RESULTS AND,
- * IN GENERAL, AES TREATMENT SEEMED TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE AMONG ADDICTS OF AN OLDER AGE GROUP WHOSE DRUG ABUSE BEHAVIOUR WAS COMPARATIVELY LESS APPARENT.

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PROTECTION FOR CONSUMERS

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THE GOVERNMENT'S GENERAL POLICY ON CONSUMER PROTECTION IS BASED ON THE VIEW THAT THE BEST PROTECTION FOR CONSUMERS IS FOR CONSUMERS THEMSELVES TO TAKE CARE OVER THEIR PURCHASES.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. WONG LAM, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, THE HON. D.G. JEAFFRESON TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD INTERVENE ONLY TO PROTECT CONSUMERS WHEN THEY COULD NOT PROTECT THEMSELVES.

MR. JEAFFRESON RECALLED THAT WHEN MR. WONG FIRST RAISED THE QUESTION IN 1976 ON WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT PLANNED TO INTRODUCE MEASURES TO REGULATE THE OPERATIONS OF TRAVEL AGENCIES, THE THEN CHIEF SECRETARY REPLIED IN THE NEGATIVE.

+THE CHIEF SECRETARY DREW ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT THE CONSUMER COUNCIL WAS INVESTIGATING A NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE WAY IN WHICH SOME TRAVEL AGENTS HAD OPERATED PACKAGE TOURS ORIGINATING FROM HONG KONG.

+THE CONSUMER COUNCIL COMPLETED ITS 'REPORT ON TRAVEL AGENTS IN HONG KONG' IN JUNE 1978 AND BASICALLY RECOMMENDED LICENSING AND REGULATION OF ALL TRAVEL AGENTS THROUGH LEGISLATION AND THE ESTABLISHMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF A CENTRAL COMPENSATION FUND,+ MR. JEAFFRESON SAID.

HIS INITIAL REACTION, HE SAID, TO THE CONSUMER COUNCIL'S REPORT WAS THAT IT HAD NOT DEMONSTRATED CONVINCINGLY WHY CONSUMERS COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO PROTECT THEMSELVES IN THE PURCHASE OF PACKAGE HOLIDAYS.

+BUT IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT THE REPORT WAS GIVEN SERIOUS AND UNBIASED CONSIDERATION, I ASKED MY STAFF TO EXAMINE IT INDEPENDENTLY OF MY OWN VIEWS= THIS HAS TAKEN SOME TIME, BUT I UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE NEARLY READY TO GIVE THE COUNCIL A FORMAL ANSWER.+

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PROTECTION FOR FLAT PURCHASERS
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THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN HOLDING WIDESPREAD DISCUSSIONS WITH PROFESSIONAL AND COMMERCIAL BODIES ON IMPROVED PROTECTION FOR FLAT PURCHASERS AS RECOMMENDED IN THE CONSUMER COUNCIL REPORT, THE SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, MR. DEREK JONES TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON. OSWALD CHEUNG WHO ASKED IF GOVERNMENT WOULD COMMENT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS.

MR. JONES SAID THESE CONSULTATIONS WERE TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT PARTICULAR CHANGES IN PROFESSIONAL AND COMMERCIAL PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES WOULD PROVIDE MORE EFFECTIVE PROTECTION THAN NEW LEGISLATION AND, IF LEGISLATION WAS NEEDED, WHAT FORM IT SHOULD TAKE.

HE NOTED THAT THESE CONSULTATIONS HAD BEEN SOMEWHAT PROTRACTED, BUT THEY ARE HOPED TO BE COMPLETED SOON.

A DECISION WOULD THEN NEED TO BE MADE ON WHETHER OR NOT LEGISLATION WOULD IN FACT BE REQUIRED, HE SAID.

+IN MAKING THIS DECISION,+ HE ADDED, +GOVERNMENT WILL BEAR FULLY IN MIND THE IMPORTANCE OF ENSURING THAT ADEQUATE WAYS AND MEANS ARE PROVIDED TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF PURCHASERS OF UNCOMPLETED FLATS.+

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CONSULTATIONS WITH SWEDEN TO BE CONTINUED NEXT MONTH
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MR. LAWRENCE MILLS, DIRECTOR OF TRADE, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THAT A FIRST ROUND OF CONSULTATIONS HAD BEEN CONCLUDED ON THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG'S EXPORTS OF TEXTILES TO SWEDEN AFTER MARCH 31, 1979, WHEN THE CURRENT RESTRAINT ARRANGEMENTS EXPIRE.

+THE SWEDISH DELEGATION PUT FORWARD CERTAIN PROPOSALS FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE RESTRAINT ARRANGEMENTS AND WE EXAMINED THESE IN SOME DETAIL,+ MR. MILLS SAID.

OTHER TECHNICAL MATTERS CONCERNING THE OPERATION OF THE PRESENT AGREEMENT WERE ALSO DISCUSSED.

THE HONG KONG AND SWEDISH DELEGATIONS WILL RESUME CONSULTATIONS IN COPENHAGEN IN THE WEEK BEGINNING MARCH 5, 1979.

THE CONSULTATIONS WERE HELD IN HONG KONG FROM FEBRUARY 12 TO TODAY. THE SWEDISH DELEGATION WAS LED BY AMBASSADOR B. DENNIS FROM THE SWEDISH MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THE HONG KONG DELEGATION WAS LED BY MR. MILLS.

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71 CASES OF MARRIAGE DISSOLUTIONS

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THE HOME AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT MAINTAINS A REGISTER OF DISSOLUTIONS OF MARRIAGE BY MUTUAL CONSENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE MARRIAGE REFORM ORDINANCE.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. HENRY HU AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE DIRECTOR OF HOME AFFAIRS, MR. JOHN WALDEN, SAID AT PRESENT THE REGISTER CONTAINS 71 CASES.

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ADVICE SOUGHT OF ENABLING THE DEAF TO ENJOY TV

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THE TELEVISION AUTHORITY IS SEEKING ADVICE ON ENABLING THE DEAF TO UNDERSTAND AND ENJOY TELEVISION, THE SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL SERVICES, THE HON. E.P. HO TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON.

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. HILTON CHEONG-LEEN, MR. HO SAID THE MATTER WAS RAISED IN THE REHABILITATION DEVELOPMENT CO-ORDINATING MEETING LAST MONTH.

MR. HO ADDED THAT THE TELEVISION AUTHORITY WAS ALREADY SEEKING ADVICE FROM THE INDEPENDENT BROADCASTING AUTHORITY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM ON THIS SPECIALISED SERVICES.

DISCUSSIONS WERE ALSO HELD WITH THE TELEVISION STATIONS IN HONG KONG, HE SAID.

+BOTH STATIONS HAVE EXPRESSED SYMPATHY FOR THE PROBLEM BUT NEITHER OF THEM IS AT PRESENT IN A POSITION TO PROVIDE SUCH SPECIALISED SERVICES.+

BUT MR. HO STRESSED THAT THE TELEVISION AUTHORITY WAS KEEPING THIS MATTER UNDER REVIEW AND +IS MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH THE STATIONS AND THE INDEPENDENT BROADCASTING AUTHORITY REGARDING POSSIBLE FUTURE TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS FIELD.+

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OFF-COURSE BETTING CENTRES

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THE VIEWS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS AND ORGANISATIONS SUCH AS MUTUAL AID COMMITTEES, KAIFONG AND RESIDENTS ASSOCIATIONS ARE SOUGHT BEFORE APPROVAL IS GIVEN TO THE ROYAL HONG KONG JOCKEY CLUB TO OPEN AN OFF-COURSE BETTING CENTRE.

THIS IS CARRIED OUT INFORMALLY BY THE CITY DISTRICT OFFICER CONCERNED, OR THE DISTRICT OFFICER IN THE CASE OF THE NEW TERRITORIES.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. HILTON CHEONG-LEEN, THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, THE HON. F.K. LI ADDED: +HE USES HIS OWN JUDGEMENT IN ASSESSING THE VIEWS HE HAS COLLECTED AND ADVISES ME WHETHER OR NOT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OFF-COURSE BETTING CENTRE IN THE PROPOSED LOCALITY IS LIKELY TO MEET WITH OPPOSITION BY THE RESIDENTS IN THAT NEIGHBOURHOOD.+

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ELDERLY COUPLE OFFERED TEMPORARY HOUSING

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THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT FIRST OFFERED ACCOMMODATION IN A TEMPORARY HOUSING AREA TO AN ELDERLY YAU MA TEI COUPLE IN FEBRUARY LAST YEAR, AND THE OFFER REMAINS OPEN.

THE SECRETARY FOR HOUSING, THE HON. ALAN SCOTT SAID THIS AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. HILTON CHEONG-LEEN ABOUT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE CASE OF THE COUPLE WHO LIVE IN AN ILLEGAL STRUCTURE ON THE PAVEMENT OUTSIDE NO. 5 TUNG FONG STREET.

MR. SCOTT SAID FURTHER EFFORTS HAD BEEN MADE TO PERSUADE THE COUPLE TO ACCEPT TEMPORARY HOUSING BUT THEY CONTINUED TO REFUSE IT, AND TO REPEAT A CLAIM FOR COMPENSATION OF \$200,000 WHICH HAD NO BASIS AT ALL.

+IN HIS INTERIM REPLY ON JANUARY 16 TO THE UMEICO OFFICE, THE CITY DISTRICT OFFICER, YAU MA TEI, OUTLINED THE UNHAPPY HISTORY OF MR. CHEUNG KWOK-MING AND HIS WIFE, THE CLEARANCE AND REAPPEARANCE OF THEIR STRUCTURE ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, AND THE OFFERS OF ASSISTANCE MADE TO THEM BY SEVERAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND OUTSIDE AGENCIES OVER THE YEARS,+ MR. SCOTT SAID.

+HE ALSO RELATED HOW THIS ELDERLY COUPLE HAS SO FAR REFUSED ALL EFFORTS TO ASSIST, EXCEPT FOR PAYMENTS UNDER THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE SCHEME.+

MR. SCOTT SAID ALL EFFORTS TO MOVE THE COUPLE SO FAR HAD BEEN BASED ON PERSUASION, BUT IT MIGHT SOON BECOME NECESSARY TO DEMOLISH THE STRUCTURE, AND TO RE-ACCOMMODATE THEM AGAINST THEIR WISHES.

+NATURALLY, NO-ONE WANTS TO DO THIS TO AN ELDERLY AND ON OCCASION CONFUSED COUPLE, AND I HOPE THAT OUR EFFORTS AT PERSUASION WILL SOON BE SUCCESSFUL,+ HE SAID.

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STANDARD OF CLEANLINESS IN N.T. IMPROVING

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ABOUT 1,200 MORE LABOURERS WILL BE RECRUITED AND 335 VEHICLES ORDERED IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS TO LOOK AFTER THE CLEANLINESS IN THE TOWNS, VILLAGES, POPULATED AREAS, ROADS AND COUNTRY LANES IN THE NEW TERRITORIES, THE SECRETARY FOR THE NEW TERRITORIES, THE HON. DAVID AKERS-JONES SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. CHARLES YEUNG, MR. AKERS-JONES REVEALED THAT VILLAGES AND COUNTRY AREAS WERE UNDER VERY HEAVY PRESSURE FROM URBAN OVERSPILL OF VARIOUS KINDS AND SERVICING THEM WAS OFTEN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT BUT SOME IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE IN RECENT YEARS.

AS FOR ROADS AND THE URBAN AREAS, HE POINTED OUT THE PROBLEM WAS ONE OF MATCHING MEN AND MACHINES TO COPE WITH THE RAPID CHANGES BROUGHT ABOUT BY DEVELOPMENT.

+OUR PLANS HERE ARE, TO SOME EXTENT, BEING FRUSTRATED BY DIFFICULTIES IN RECRUITING LABOURERS, AND IN QUICKLY OBTAINING THE VEHICLES WE REQUIRED.

+AT PRESENT WE HAVE 533 VACANT POSTS OUT OF 3,323, AND WE ARE AWAITING DELIVERY OF 40 VEHICLES OUT OF A TOTAL OF 213,+ MR. AKERS-JONES SAID.

HE SAID THE QUESTIONS ON HOW TO USE THE PRESENT STAFF AND EQUIPMENT TO BEST EFFECT AND HOW MANY MORE WOULD BE NEEDED IN THE LONG RUN WERE BEING EXAMINED.

+OUR PROPOSALS ARE FOR ABOUT 1,200 MORE STAFF AND 335 MORE VEHICLES IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.+

HOWEVER, MR. AKERS-JONES BELIEVED THE NEW TERRITORIES WOULD BE MUCH CLEANER AND TIDIER IF RESIDENTS AND VISITORS SHOW A GREATER SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY.

HE CALLED ON THE DISTRICT ADVISORY BOARDS TO TAKE GREATER INTEREST IN THE PROBLEMS OF KEEPING THE N.T. CLEAN IN THE COMING YEAR.

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PLAY-LEADERSHIP SCHEMES WELL UNDERWAY

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THE GOVERNMENT IS GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH THE PROGRAMME OF DEVELOPMENT OF PLAY-LEADERSHIP SCHEMES AS PROPOSED IN THE GREEN PAPER ON PERSONAL SOCIAL WORK AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE.

REPLYING TO THE HON. HENRY HU AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE, THE HON. THOMAS LEE, SAID THERE ARE AT PRESENT 34 PLAYGROUNDS WHERE PLAY-LEADERSHIP PROJECTS ARE OPERATING.

HE SAID THE NEW PROGRAMME HAD IDENTIFIED 16 DISTRICTS WHERE PLAY-LEADERSHIP SERVICE ON PLAYGROUNDS SHOULD BE PROVIDED AS A MATTER OF PRIORITY.

+BY CONCENTRATING EFFORTS IN THESE AREAS+, MR. LEE ADDED, +GOVERNMENT HOPES TO HELP AS MANY OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK AS POSSIBLE.+

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PAID ANNUAL LEAVE SCHEME WORKING WELL

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OVERALL, THE SEVEN DAYS PAID ANNUAL LEAVE SCHEME WHICH CAME INTO EFFECT LAST JANUARY, HAS WORKED WELL WITH EMPLOYEES GENERALLY WELCOMING ITS INTRODUCTION AND MOST EMPLOYERS READILY COMPLYING WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW.

BUT SOME EMPLOYERS HAD ATTEMPTED TO EVADE THEIR OBLIGATIONS, SAID THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR, THE HON. J.N. HENDERSON IN MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE EMPLOYMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

+A NUMBER OF DISPUTES HAVE ARISEN, USUALLY OUT OF MISUNDERSTANDING OR ON MATTERS OF INTERPRETATION, AND THE LABOUR RELATIONS SERVICE OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT HAS HAD TO CONCILiate AND EXPLAIN TO THE PARTIES CONCERNED WHAT THE LAW INTENDED AND HOW IT SHOULD BE COMPLIED WITH,+ HE SAID.

MR. HENDERSON SAID THE OPERATION OF THE SCHEME HAS BEEN REVIEWED RECENTLY AND, BASED ON THE EXPERIENCE OF THE LABOUR RELATIONS SERVICE, A NUMBER OF MINOR AMENDMENTS ARE NOW BEING PROPOSED.

/+I MUST

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+I MUST STRESS THAT THESE AMENDMENTS INTRODUCE NO CHANGES OF POLICY, OR ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS, BUT MERELY SEEK TO CLARIFY THE EXISTING WORDING OF THE LAW TO HELP ENSURE THAT EMPLOYEES GET THEIR LEAVE AS INTENDED,+ HE TOLD THE COUNCIL.

CLAUSE 2 (A) OF THE BILL SETS OUT THE MANNER IN WHICH THE LEAVE IS TO BE GRANTED BY THE EMPLOYER AND TO BE TAKEN BY THE EMPLOYEE.

CLAUSE 2(B) MAKES IT CLEAR THAT IF A REST DAY OR HOLIDAY FALLS WITHIN ANY PERIOD OF ANNUAL LEAVE GRANTED, IT SHALL BE COUNTED AS ANNUAL LEAVE AND ANOTHER REST DAY OR HOLIDAY SHALL BE SUBSTITUTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH EXISTING PROVISIONS GOVERNING SUCH SUBSTITUTIONS.

+THIS SECTION IS NOW SO WORDED THAT DEVIIOUS EMPLOYERS MAY NO LONGER CLAIM THAT BOTH THE REST DAY OR HOLIDAY, AS THE CASE MAY BE, HAS BEEN GRANTED AND THE 'PERIOD OF NOT LESS THAN SEVEN CONSECUTIVE DAYS OF ABSENCE FROM WORK' SIMULTANEOUSLY OBSERVED AND TAKEN, AS BEING IN FULL COMPLIANCE WITH THE PAID ANNUAL LEAVE PROVISIONS,+ MR. HENDERSON EXPLAINED.

CLAUSE 2(C) ADDS A NEW SUBSECTION TO SECTION 41A FOR THE AVOIDANCE OF DOUBT.

CLAUSE 3 MAKES CLEAR THAT EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THE SEVEN DAYS OF THE ANNUAL LEAVE SHALL BE A PAID DAY TO COMPLY WITH THE SPIRIT OF SEVEN DAYS OF PAID ANNUAL LEAVE.

CLAUSE 4(A) SEEKS TO REMOVE AN APPARENT ANOMALY IN THE PRESENT LAW IN THAT PERSONS WHOSE EMPLOYMENT HAS BEEN TERMINATED FOR CAUSE ARE DECLARED TO BE ENTITLED TO PAID ANNUAL LEAVE, WHILE NO MENTION IS MADE OF THOSE WHOSE EMPLOYMENT IS TERMINATED UNDER OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES.

CLAUSE 4(B) MERELY CLARIFIES THE ORIGINAL INTENTION, NAMELY, THAT A PERSON COMPLETING THREE MONTHS OF SERVICE WILL BE ENTITLED, PRO RATA, TO PAID ANNUAL LEAVE.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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POLYTECHNIC -- UNPARALLELED IN ANY OTHER INSTITUTIONS
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THE GROWTH OF THE POLYTECHNIC TO ITS PRESENT SCALE IS SAID BY WELL-KNOWN ACADEMIC LEADERS TO BE UNPARALLELED IN ANY OTHER SIMILAR INSTITUTIONS, THE HON. JAMES WU TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON.

TABLING THE POLYTECHNIC'S 1977-78 ANNUAL REPORT, MR. WU EXPRESSED GRATITUDE FOR THE SUPPORT IT RECEIVED +PARTICULARLY DURING THE CRUCIAL YEARS OF 1974 AND 1975 WHEN, DESPITE SETBACKS, THE POLYTECHNIC WAS ALLOWED TO EXPAND AT TOP SPEED.

MR. WU, DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE NEWLY CONSTITUTED COUNCIL OF THE POLYTECHNIC, REPORTED A DRAMATIC GROWTH AND INCREASE IN ALL AREAS, WITH ALMOST 6,000 FULL-TIME AND 17,500 PART-TIME STUDENTS, SHOWING A 25 PER CENT INCREASE OVER THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

MR. WU ALSO STRESSED THAT THERE WAS A FURTHER DECREASE OF FULL-TIME POLYTECHNIC GRADUATES UNABLE TO FIND EMPLOYMENT.

+THIS FIGURE HAS DROPPED TO AN ALL-TIME LOW OF 3.6 PER CENT AND IT IS PARTICULARLY ENCOURAGING,+ HE SAID, +THAT DESPITE EARLIER FEARS TO THE CONTRARY IN CERTAIN QUARTERS, A GREATLY INCREASED OUTPUT OF STUDENTS FROM TERTIARY TECHNICAL EDUCATION IS NOT RESULTING IN MORE GRADUATES COMPETING FOR FEWER JOBS.

+INDEED IT WOULD APPEAR THAT AT PRESENT, JOBS ARE BEING CREATED AT A FASTER RATE THAN THE POLYTECHNIC CAN PRODUCE MORE GRADUATES TO FILL THEM, AND THAT THERE ARE FAR TOO FEW PLACES FOR ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS, IN SOME CASES, AS FEW AS ONE FOR 100,+ HE EMPHASISED.

MR. WU SAID THE NEW SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK COMPLETED ITS FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION UNDER THE POLYTECHNIC'S ROOF, AND A NEW INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH CARE BECAME OPERATIONAL LAST SEPTEMBER.

+THESE TWO UNITS ARE OF COURSE A VITAL COMPLEMENT TO GOVERNMENT'S PLANS TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE THE RANGE OF SOCIAL SERVICE AVAILABLE TO THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG,+ HE ADDED.

MR. WU NOTED THAT THE ENLARGED POLYTECHNIC COUNCIL HAS BROUGHT A WIDER SPECTRUM OF EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF THE POLYTECHNIC'S AFFAIRS +WHICH WILL STAND US IN GOOD STEAD IN THE YEARS OF CONSOLIDATION WHICH LIE AHEAD.+

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SHOP-LIFTING NOT INCREASING

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THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT SHOP-LIFTING IS ON THE INCREASE, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON. LEWIS DAVIES TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR. DAVIES SAID THIS IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM DR. THE HON. HO KAM-FAI ON WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WAS AWARE OF THE HIGH INCIDENCE OF SHOP-LIFTING COMMITTED BY STUDENTS.

IF SO, DR. HO ASKED, WHAT MEASURES WERE BEING TAKEN TO REDUCE THIS TYPE OF JUVENILE OFFENCE.

MR. DAVIES SAID 30 PER CENT (366) OF THE 1,189 CONVICTIONS FOR THEFTS FROM SHOPS RECORDED LAST YEAR INVOLVED PEOPLE WHO DESCRIBED THEMSELVES AS STUDENTS, COMPARED WITH THE 1.2 MILLION STUDENTS HERE.

+THE POLICE CRIME PREVENTION BUREAU IS AVAILABLE TO ADVISE SHOPOWNERS ON HOW TO IMPROVE THEIR SECURITY SO AS TO MINIMISE THE RISK OF PILFERING,+ HE SAID.

BUT MODERN SELLING METHODS, HE EXPLAINED, IN WHICH GOODS ARE ARRANGED IN TEMPTING DISPLAYS AND IMMEDIATELY ACCESSIBLE TO POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS, POSE PROBLEMS IN ACHIEVING A DETERRENT.

+SOME SHOPS COMBAT THIS BY FITTING SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS AND A FEW EMPLOY STORE DETECTIVES,+ MR. DAVIES SAID.

+PARENTAL CONTROL AND THE INCULCATION OF STANDARDS OF HONESTY AND GOOD BEHAVIOUR IN SCHOOLS AND IN ORGANISATIONS LIKE JUNIOR POLICE CALL ARE THE BEST METHODS OF DEALING WITH THIS SITUATION,+ HE ADDED.

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EXHIBITION CENTRE

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO APPOINT CONSULTANTS TO DEFINE THE DEMAND FOR AND VIABILITY OF AN EXHIBITION CENTRE IN HONG KONG, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, THE HON. D.G. JEAFFRESON TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. ALLEN LEE, MR. JEAFFRESON SAID THAT AS REGARDS TO A SITE, THE GOVERNMENT HAD EARMARKED AN AREA IN TSIM SHA TSUI EAST FOR THIS PURPOSE.

REITERATING WHAT HE TOLD THE COUNCIL IN NOVEMBER 1977, MR. JEAFFRESON AGAIN STRESSED THAT AN EXHIBITION CENTRE WOULD BE EXPENSIVE, IN TERMS BOTH OF FINANCE AND OF LAND.

+SO BEFORE GOING AHEAD WITH THE PROJECT, THE GOVERNMENT MUST BE SATISFIED THAT THE DEMAND FOR A CENTRE IS THERE AND THAT THE CENTRE WOULD BE VIABLE.+

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LAW COVERS NO. OF LORRY PASSENGERS

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THERE ARE LEGISLATIVE CONTROL OVER THE NUMBER OF PASSENGERS THAT CAN BE CARRIED IN LORRIES OUTSIDE OF THE CAB, THE HON. DEREK JONES, SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE REV. THE HON. JOYCE M. BENNETT ON WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WOULD INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO PREVENT LORRIES CARRYING PASSENGERS OTHER THAN IN THE CAB, MR. JONES SAID IT WOULD NOT BE PRACTICABLE TO BAN PASSENGERS ALTOGETHER FROM TRAVELLING IN LORRIES OUTSIDE THE CAB.

IT WAS OFTEN NECESSARY FOR THESE VEHICLES TO CARRY THE WORKERS NEEDED TO LOAD AND UNLOAD, HE SAID.

BUT THERE ARE CONTROLS OVER THE NUMBER OF PASSENGERS THAT CAN BE CARRIED, HE SAID.

+UNDER REGULATION 96 OF THE ROAD TRAFFIC (CONSTRUCTION AND USE) REGULATIONS, A LORRY WEIGHING LESS THAN TWO TONS CAN CARRY ONLY ONE PERSON ON THE REAR PLATFORM AND A LORRY EXCEEDING TWO TONS MAY CARRY UP TO SIX PASSENGERS.

+IN CERTAIN LIMITED CIRCUMSTANCES, ALSO, THE COMMISSIONER FOR TRANSPORT IS EMPOWERED TO ISSUE EXCESS PASSENGER PERMITS IN CASES WHERE MORE PEOPLE NEED TO BE CARRIED,+ HE SAID.

HE EXPLAINED THAT IT IS MAINLY DONE FOR GOODS VEHICLES CARRYING FARMERS AND THEIR PRODUCE TO MARKET IN THE NEW TERRITORIES AND FOR PUBLIC UTILITY VEHICLES TAKING WORKMEN TO EMERGENCY REPAIR JOBS.

MR. JONES SAID THE COMMISSIONER FOR TRANSPORT CONSIDERS THESE ARRANGEMENTS LAST REVIEWED IN 1976, ARE GENERALLY WORKING SATISFACTORILY.

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REVIEW OF HOUSING CO-OPS PROPOSED

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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REVIEW THE QUESTION OF ALLOWING GOVERNMENT OFFICERS' HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES TO SELL OR RE-DEVELOP THEIR PROPERTIES, THE HON. MARTIN ROWLANDS, SECRETARY FOR CIVIL SERVICE, SAID AT TODAY'S (WEDNESDAY) LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING.

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. LEUNG TAT-SHING, MR. ROWLANDS SAID IT WAS DOZEN YEARS OR MORE SINCE THE GOVERNMENT GAVE ANY FORMAL CONSIDERATION TO ALLOWING THE GOVERNMENT OFFICERS' HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES WHICH HAVE FULLY REPAID THEIR GOVERNMENT LOANS TO SELL OR RE-DEVELOP THEIR PROPERTIES.

UNTIL NOW, HE SAID, THE ISSUE HAS BEEN LARGELY AN ACADEMIC ONE, SINCE OUT OF A TOTAL OF 236 GOVERNMENT CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING SOCIETIES ONLY SIX HAVE FULLY REPAID THEIR LOANS.

BUT, MR. ROWLANDS RECOGNISED THAT +FROM NOW ON THIS WILL BECOME AN INCREASINGLY LIVE ISSUE+ THUS HE PROPOSED THE GOVERNMENT TO EMBARK ON A REVIEW OF THE WHOLE QUESTION DURING THE COMING YEAR.

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BAGGAGE TROLLEYS FOR AIRPORT PASSENGERS

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THERE ARE 380 BAGGAGE TROLLEYS AVAILABLE FOR PASSENGERS AT KAI TAI AIRPORT, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, THE HON. D.G. JEAFFRESON, SAID AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON. ALEX WU.

REGARDING THE SUPERVISORY ARRANGEMENTS MADE, MR. JEAFFRESON SAID THE COLLECTION AND RETURN OF TROLLEYS WAS CARRIED OUT BY STAFF OF THE HONG KONG AIR TERMINAL SERVICES (HATS) ENGAGED SPECIFICALLY FOR THIS WORK.

THE AIRPORT MANAGEMENT, HE POINTED OUT, ALSO CARRIED OUT FREQUENT CHECKS AND REPORTED ANY INADEQUACIES TO THE HATS MANAGEMENT.

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HAWKER PERMITTED PLACE

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THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT FROM NEXT MONDAY (FEBRUARY 19), A SECTION OF YIU TUNG STREET, SHEK KIP MEI WILL BE DECLARED AS A HAWKER PERMITTED PLACE.

THE EXACT LOCATION IS IN FRONT OF HOUSE NOS. 15 AND 16 YIU TUNG STREET.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE DEPARTMENT EXPLAINED THAT THE SETTING UP OF THE NEW HAWKER PERMITTED PLACE WAS TO ACCOMMODATE FIVE FIXED HAWKERS RESITED FROM WOH CHAI STREET, SHEK KIP MEI.

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TWO BILLS PASSED

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TWO BILLS WERE PASSED INTO LAW TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

THEY ARE THE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT)(NO. 2) BILL 1979 AND THE SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (1977-78) BILL 1979.

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RESITING OF BUS TERMINI

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THE EXISTING BUS TERMINI FOR ROUTES 33B AND 33C IN KWAI CHUNG WILL BE RESITED ON FRIDAY FROM 10 A.M., THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE RESITING IS TO FACILITATE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY WORK ON KWAI FONG AND KWAI HING STATIONS.

THE BUS TERMINUS FOR ROUTE 33B IN HING FONG ROAD WILL BE MOVED TO THE SLIP ROAD BETWEEN KWAI HING ESTATE AND KWAI CHUNG CENTRE WITHOUT AFFECTING THE PRESENT ROUTING.

THE BUS TERMINUS FOR ROUTE 33C WILL BE MOVED FROM WITHIN KWAI FONG ESTATE TO KWAI FOY ROAD AND THE NEW ROUTING TO SHAM SHUI PO FERRY WILL BE FROM KWAI FOY ROAD TO KWAI CHUNG ROAD VIA HING FONG ROAD AND KWAI ON ROAD.

AT THE SAME TIME, BUS ROUTE 37 WILL NO LONGER ENTER KWAI FONG ESTATE. NEW ROUTING FOR THIS SERVICE WILL BE FROM TAI WO HAU ROAD, HING FONG ROAD, KWAI FUK ROAD, CONTAINER PORT ROAD, CONTAINER PORT ROAD FLYOVER TO REJOIN KWAI CHUNG ROAD.

AN ADDITIONAL BUS STOP WILL BE PROVIDED IN KWAI FONG ROAD FOR THE CONVENIENCE OF PASSENGERS.

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ACCESS ROAD CLOSED TEMPORARILY
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THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE KOWLOON-BOUND CARRIAGEWAY OF CASTLE PEAK ROAD FROM ITS JUNCTION WITH THE ACCESS ROAD LEADING TO KADOORIE BEACH TO ABOUT 150 METRES SOUTHWARD WILL BE CLOSED TO VEHICULAR TRAFFIC FROM MONDAY (FEBRUARY 19) TO MARCH 18.

THE TEMPORARY CLOSURE IS TO FACILITATE ROAD AND DRAINS CONSTRUCTION WORKS.

DURING THIS PERIOD, THE NEW TERRITORIES-BOUND CARRIAGEWAY OF THIS CASTLE PEAK ROAD SECTION WILL BE OPENED TO TRAFFIC FROM BOTH DIRECTIONS ALTERNATIVELY.

TRAFFIC FLOW WILL BE REGULATED BY SIGNALS AND SIGNS WILL BE SET UP TO GUIDE MOTORISTS.

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URBAN CLEARWAY AND BOX JUNCTION RESTRICTIONS
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THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT FROM 10 A.M. ON SATURDAY, THE SECTION OF WUHU STREET BETWEEN MA TAU WEI ROAD AND DOCK STREET WILL BE DESIGNATED AS A RESTRICTED ZONE TO ALL MOTOR VEHICLES EXCEPT FRANCHISED BUSES FROM 7 A.M. TO 10 A.M. AND FROM 4 P.M. TO 7 P.M. DAILY.

ALL MOTOR VEHICLES EXCEPT FRANCHISED BUSES ARE PROHIBITED FROM STOPPING FOR PASSENGERS OR GOODS WITHIN THIS RESTRICTED ZONE.

WITH EFFECT ALSO FROM 10 A.M. ON SATURDAY, A +BOX JUNCTION+ RESTRICTION WILL BE IMPOSED AT THE JUNCTION OF MA TAU WEI ROAD, FAT KWONG STREET AND MAN YUE STREET TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC FLOW.

TRAFFIC SIGNS WILL BE SET UP TO GUIDE MOTORISTS.

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WATER CUT
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WATER SUPPLY TO A NUMBER OF HOUSES IN KWUN TONG AND KOWLOON TONG WILL BE TURNED OFF FROM MIDNIGHT TO 6 A.M. ON SATURDAY FOR LEAKAGE TEST.

IN KWUN TONG, THE AFFECTED HOUSES ARE BOUNDED BY KWUN TONG ROAD, HOI YUEN ROAD, HOW MING STREET AND TSUN YIP LANE.

THE PREMISES AFFECTED IN KOWLOON TONG ARE BOUNDED BY HEREFORD ROAD, LA SALLE ROAD, LANCASHIRE ROAD AND WATERLOO ROAD, INCLUDING WILTSHIRE ROAD, DURHAM ROAD, HAMPSHIRE ROAD, SELKIRK ROAD, MORAY ROAD AND CAMBRIDGE ROAD.

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