



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1986

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BAN STRICTLY A HEALTH MEASURE
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HONG KONG IS NOT ALONE IN ASIA IN TAKING ACTION TO STEM THE DANGERS OF SMOKELESS TOBACCO AS A PRODUCT WITH A GREAT POTENTIAL ATTRACTION FOR THE YOUNG, FOR WHOM IT MAY EASILY BE AN INTRODUCTION TO NICOTINE DEPENDENCE FOR LIFE AS WELL AS POSING A SERIOUS CANCER RISK.

THIS WAS STATED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, IN WINDING UP THE DEBATE ON THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1986.

THANKING THE HON CHIU HIN-KWONG AND THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN FOR THEIR REMARKS ON THE BILL, MR CHAMBERS SAID IT WAS STRICTLY A HEALTH MEASURE, WHICH HAD NO CONNECTION WHATSOEVER WITH TRADE POLICY AS HAD BEEN SUGGESTED BY REPRESENTATIONS MADE BY ONE OF THE MAJOR PRODUCERS OF SMOKELESS TOBACCO.

HOWEVER, CONCERNING THE POINT MADE BY MR CHEONG-LEEN, HE SAID HE WOULD CERTAINLY CONTACT THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE U.S. TOBACCO COMPANY CONCERNED TO CLARIFY THE MATTER ABOUT THE VIEWS OF THE U.S. SURGEON-GENERAL.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THAT THE EFFECT OF THE BILL AND THE PROPOSED REGULATIONS WOULD BE A COMPREHENSIVE BAN ON LOCAL MANUFACTURE AND SALE AS WELL AS ON IMPORTATION.

+THIS WILL EFFECTIVELY PREVENT ANY LOCAL MANUFACTURER FROM STARTING PRODUCTION HERE FOR THIS OR ANY OTHER MARKET,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID HE WAS TOLD THAT AT A MAJOR WORLD MEDICAL CONFERENCE IN SINGAPORE LAST WEEK SMOKELESS TOBACCO WAS RECOGNISED AS AN SERIOUS HEALTH RISK WHICH WAS OF CONCERN TO A NUMBER OF ASIAN COUNTRIES.

+SEVERAL COUNTRIES IN WHICH, LIKE HONG KONG, IT IS NOT YET A GENERALLY ESTABLISHED HABIT, ARE NOW TAKING AN INTEREST IN HONG KONG'S ACTION,+ HE SAID.

+I UNDERSTAND THAT THE SINGAPORE DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH HAS STATED THAT HIS MINISTRY IS TAKING IMMEDIATE STEPS TO LOOK INTO THE POSSIBILITY OF A BAN UNDER THEIR HEALTH REGULATIONS ON SIMILAR LINES TO THE MEASURE BEFORE MEMBERS TODAY,+ HE ADDED.

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STRICT CONTROL NEEDED IN PUBLIC INTEREST
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LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLORS HAVE AGREED THAT IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST HONG KONG SHOULD EXERCISE STRICT CONTROL OVER SMOKELESS TOBACCO PRODUCTS.

SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1986 DURING ITS SECOND READING IN THE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), DR THE HON CHIU HIN-KWONG SAID COUNCILLORS BELIEVED HEALTH RISKS WERE ASSOCIATED WITH SMOKELESS TOBACCO.

DR CHIU POINTED OUT THAT THE BILL AIMED AT ENABLING REGULATIONS TO BE MADE BY THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL TO PROHIBIT THE IMPORTATION, MANUFACTURE, SALE, OFFERING OR POSSESSION FOR SALE OF SMOKELESS TOBACCO PRODUCTS.

AS THE CONVENER OF A LEGCO AD HOC GROUP WHICH STUDIED THE BILL, DR CHIU SAID IN DECIDING ON WHAT KIND OF CONTROL SHOULD BE ADOPTED, THOUGHTS HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THE FOLLOWING THREE OPTIONS:

- * A VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT WITH THE TOBACCO COMPANIES TO RESTRICT THE PROMOTION OF SMOKELESS TOBACCO PRODUCTS SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE TARGETTED AT YOUNG PEOPLE;
- * BY REQUIRING THE PLACEMENT OF HEALTH WARNING LABELS ON THE SMOKELESS TOBACCO PACKAGE WHICH WARNED THE CONSUMER THAT THE PRODUCT MIGHT CAUSE ORAL CANCER, GUM DISEASE AND LOOSENING OF TEETH; AND
- * TO IMPOSE A TOTAL BAN ON THE IMPORTATION, MANUFACTURE AND SALE OF SUCH PRODUCTS.

AFTER CAREFUL CONSIDERATION, THE AD HOC GROUP DECIDED THAT THE MOST SEVERE MEASURE WAS NECESSARY BECAUSE THE PROTECTION OF PUBLIC HEALTH SHOULD BE THE OVER-RIDING CONCERN, AND THAT THE MOST CAUTIOUS ATTITUDE SHOULD BE ADOPTED IN DEALING WITH MATTERS OF THIS NATURE, HE SAID.

DR CHIU ADDED THAT THE GROUP HAD CONSIDERED REPRESENTATIONS AGAINST THE BILL MADE BY AN AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY; AND THEIR VIEWS AND SUBMISSIONS WERE DISCUSSED IN DETAIL IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BILL AT TWO LEGCO IN-HOUSE MEETINGS.

LASTLY, DR CHIU POINTED OUT THAT THE BILL, ONCE ENACTED, WOULD BE APPLICABLE TO ALL BRANDS OF SMOKELESS TOBACCO PRODUCTS, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR MANUFACTURER OR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN.

/ALSO SPEAKING

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ALSO SPEAKING DURING THE DEBATE ON THE BILL, THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN URGED THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE TO PROVIDE THE AMERICAN TOBACCO COMPANY THE INFORMATION WHICH SHOWED THAT THE U.S. SURGEON GENERAL SUPPORTED A BAN BEING IMPOSED HERE.

HE SAID A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMPANY CALLED TO SEE HIM YESTERDAY IN CONNECTION WITH A LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY WHICH MENTIONED THAT THE U.S. SURGEON GENERAL WAS +ON RECORD+ SUPPORTING THE BAN.

HOWEVER, THE REPRESENTATIVE TOLD MR CHEONG-LEEN THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAD NOT PROVIDED HIM WITH THE RELEVANT INFORMATION.

+IF THIS INFORMATION HAS NOT YET BEEN SUPPLIED BY THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, I WOULD URGE THAT IT BE DONE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE,+ HE SAID.

+I AM CONCERNED THAT IF GOVERNMENT DOES NOT FULLY CLARIFY THIS POINT IN PARTICULAR, THERE MIGHT BE UNNECESSARY MISUNDERSTANDINGS THAT THE PASSAGE OF THIS BILL COULD BE MISCONSTRUED AS AN ANTI-U.S. IMPORT RESTRICTION, AS I AM INFORMED, SUGGESTED BY THE REPRESENTATIVE, AND WHICH I DO NOT BELIEVE TO BE THE CASE,+ MR CHEONG-LEEN SAID.

+CERTAINLY HONG KONG BELIEVES IN AND CONSISTENTLY PRACTISES FREE TRADE PRINCIPLES, AND WE IN HONG KONG HAVE NO INTENTION AT ALL TO DEPART FROM SUCH PRINCIPLES,+ HE ADDED.

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CANCER-CAUSING CHEMICALS BANNED

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REGULATIONS SEEKING TO PROHIBIT THE MANUFACTURE OR USE OF CARCINOGENIC SUBSTANCES IN ANY INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKING WERE APPROVED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE RESOLUTION SEEKING APPROVAL OF THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (CARCINOGENIC SUBSTANCES) REGULATIONS, 1986, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE, SAID FOUR CHEMICALS KNOWN TO CAUSE CANCER WOULD BE PROHIBITED FROM BEING MANUFACTURED OR USED IN INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS.

HE ADDED THAT EXEMPTION FROM THE PROHIBITION WAS PROVIDED FOR UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, SUCH AS WHERE SUCH SUBSTANCES WERE MANUFACTURED OR USED FOR RESEARCH, TESTING OR INVESTIGATION.

/AS FOR

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AS FOR THESE CHEMICALS SUSPECTED OF BEING CANCER-INDUCING, MR BRIDGE SAID THE MANUFACTURE AND USE OF FOUR OTHER CHEMICALS AND ANY OF THEIR SALTS, AND THE MANUFACTURE OF AURAMINE AND MAGENTA WERE ALSO CONTROLLED BY THE REGULATIONS.

HE EXPLAINED THAT THE REGULATIONS REQUIRED INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS TO:

- * TAKE ALL PRACTICABLE STEPS TO PREVENT PEOPLE EMPLOYED IN A PROCESS INVOLVING ANY CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE OR ITS SALTS FROM BEING EXPOSED TO THE RISK OF INHALING, INGESTING OR OTHERWISE ABSORBING THE SUBSTANCE ;
- * ISSUE WRITTEN PRECAUTIONARY INSTRUCTIONS TO ANY EMPLOYEE WHO MAY HAVE TO HANDLE SUCH SUBSTANCES ;
- * KEEP CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES IN CLOSED AND PROPERLY LABELLED RECEPTACLES ; AND
- * ARRANGE PERIODIC MEDICAL EXAMINATION, BY A COMPETENT MEDICAL PRACTITIONER, OR EMPLOYEES HANDLING CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES.

PENALTIES FOR CONTRAVENING THE REGULATIONS RANGED FROM \$10 000 TO \$30 000.

MR BRIDGE POINTED OUT THAT THE SUBSTANCES TO BE PROHIBITED OR CONTROLLED WERE USED MAINLY AS DYESTUFFS AND WERE NOT MANUFACTURED OR USED IN HONG KONG AT PRESENT.

+THESE REGULATIONS ARE THEREFORE PRECAUTIONARY IN NATURE AND ARE UNLIKELY TO HAVE ANY ADVERSE EFFECT UPON INDUSTRY,+ HE ADDED.

HE ALSO SAID A GUIDE ON THESE REGULATIONS WOULD BE PUBLISHED.

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TIMELY MOVE TO BAN HARMFUL SUBSTANCES
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PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE, PROF THE HON POON CHUNG-KWONG SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (CARCINOGENIC SUBSTANCES) REGULATIONS 1986.

THE REGULATIONS PROHIBIT THE MANUFACTURE AND USE OF FOUR CHEMICAL COMPOUNDS AND REQUIRE SIX OTHER CHEMICAL SUBSTANCES TO BE USED IN THE SAFEST PRACTICABLE MANNER.

/PROF POON,

PROF POON, CONVENER OF A LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AD HOC GROUP WHICH STUDIED THE REGULATIONS, SAID THAT PROVIDING A SAFEGUARD IN ADVANCE OF A POTENTIAL HAZARD WAS DEFINITELY A MOVEMENT IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.

BEING A UNIVERSITY TEACHER AND RESEARCH WORKER IN CHEMISTRY BY PROFESSION, HE SAID HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE ADEQUACY OF SAFETY PRECAUTIONS IN THE USE OF CARCINOGENIC SUBSTANCES FOR VARIOUS PURPOSES.

+IN RECENT YEARS, THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS RESULTING IN EXPLOSIONS CAUSED BY CHEMICALS,+ HE SAID.

+IN FACT, BESIDES EXPLOSIONS, ANOTHER INDICATOR OF A SERIES HAZARD IN THE USE OF CHEMICALS IS CANCER.

+THEREFORE, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT MORE EMPHASIS ON THE SAFETY ASPECT SHOULD BE PUT ON THE REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE USE OF CARCINOGENIC SUBSTANCES.+

PROF POON WAS GLAD THAT CONSIDERATION WAS GIVEN TO RESEARCH WORK IN DRAFTING THE REGULATIONS.

HE SAID THE FLEXIBILITY PROVIDED IN THE REGULATIONS FOR THE USE OF CARCINOGENIC SUBSTANCES IN MEDICAL OR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH, INVESTIGATION OR TESTING WAS VERY SENSIBLE.

+THE EXEMPTION INDICATED IN THE REGULATIONS FOR RESEARCH WORK WILL ENSURE THAT RELEVANT SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN UNIVERSITIES AND TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS WILL NOT BE AFFECTED BY THE REGULATIONS,+ HE ADDED.

THE HON NGAI SHIU-KIT, ALSO A MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AD HOC GROUP, SAID HE BELIEVED NO SAME PROPRIETOR WOULD OPPOSE PROPER PROMOTION OF OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH FOR WORKERS.

HE SUGGESTED THAT, PROVIDED RESOURCES PERMITTED, OTHER CANCER-INDUCING SUBSTANCES USED IN INDUSTRY AND IN ANY OTHER TRADES SHOULD BE PINPOINTED AND PUT UNDER PROPER CONTROL.

MR NGAI SAID THAT ONE OF THE REGULATIONS, WHICH PRESCRIBED SAFETY PRECAUTIONS TO BE OBSERVED BY THE PROPRIETOR WHERE THE NAMED CHEMICALS WERE CONCERNED, WAS NOT CLEARLY DEFINED AND EXPLAINED.

+HOWEVER, THANKS TO THE ADMINISTRATION, WE WERE ASSURED THAT THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION IS PRECAUTIONARY IN NATURE AND IS DIRECTED AGAINST GENUINELY IRRESPONSIBLE EMPLOYERS,+ HE SAID.

AS THE LEGISLATION SERVED A PRECAUTIONARY PURPOSE, MR NGAI FURTHER SUGGESTED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION SHOULD INCLUDE AS MANY SAFETY STEPS AS POSSIBLE IN THE GUIDE TO THE REGULATIONS WHICH WOULD BE DISTRIBUTED TO RELEVANT INDUSTRIAL CONCERNS.

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FURTHER STEP IN IMPROVING INDUSTRIAL SAFETY
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REGULATIONS MADE UNDER THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS ORDINANCE REPRESENTED ONE MORE STEP DOWN THE ROAD TO IMPROVING INDUSTRIAL SAFETY IN PROTECTING EMPLOYEES IN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES FROM THE DANGERS OF HAZARDOUS MATERIALS, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR BRIDGE WAS WINDING UP DEBATE ON A MOTION CONCERNING THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (CARCINOGENIC SUBSTANCES) REGULATIONS 1986, WHICH THE COUNCIL SUBSEQUENTLY APPROVED.

HE NOTED THAT THE HON NGAI SHIU-KIT HAD OBSERVED THAT THE USE OF THE WORD +PRACTICABLE+ IN REGULATION 6 WAS NOT DEFINED.

+THE AIM IS TO DEAL WITH SITUATIONS WHICH ARE NOT PROVIDED FOR OR ANTICIPATED IN THE REGULATIONS AS PROCESSES AND CONDITIONS MAY CHANGE. THE SPIRIT OF THIS PROVISION IS TO IMPOSE A GENERAL DUTY ON THE EMPLOYER IN ADDITION TO ANY SPECIFIC PROVISIONS IN THE LAW,+ HE SAID.

+IT IS NOT THE INTENTION TO IMPOSE UNNECESSARY BURDEN ON EMPLOYERS AND THE FACTORY INSPECTORS WILL DO ALL THEY CAN TO ADVISE EMPLOYERS ON THE SAFETY MEASURES THAT MAY BE REQUIRED IN ANY PARTICULAR CIRCUMSTANCES.+

MR BRIDGE CONFIRMED THAT THE GUIDE TO THE REGULATIONS WOULD INCLUDE ADVICE ON HOW TO COMPLY WITH THE PROVISIONS.

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STIFFER PENALTIES FOR ILLEGAL MEDICAL PRACTICE
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A BILL SEEKING TO FACILITATE THE PROSECUTION OF OFFENCES RELATING TO THE ILLEGAL PRACTICE OF MEDICINE AND DENTISTRY AND TO INCREASE THE PENALTIES FOR SUCH OFFENCES WAS INTRODUCED TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE PENALTIES FOR PRACTICE OF MEDICINE AND DENTISTRY BY UNREGISTERED PERSONS (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 1986, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID THE NEED FOR THESE AMENDMENTS BECAME EVIDENT AS A RESULT OF A COURT CASE IN DECEMBER 1984 FOLLOWING COMPLAINTS BY A NUMBER OF PATIENTS WHO HAD SUFFERED SERIOUS PERMANENT DISABILITIES AFTER RECEIVING TREATMENT AT AN ILLEGAL CLINIC.

/+THE COURT

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+THE COURT CASE HIGHLIGHTED A NUMBER OF DEFECTS IN THE EXISTING LAW,+ MR CHAMBERS SAID.

HE SAID THE NEW BILL SOUGHT TO RECTIFY THE DEFICIENCIES IN THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION ORDINANCE, THE MEDICAL CLINICS ORDINANCE, AND THE DENTISTS REGISTRATION ORDINANCE.

CLAUSE 4 AMENDED SECTION 27 OF THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION ORDINANCE SO THAT FRAUDULENT REGISTRATION AS A MEDICAL PRACTITIONER BECAME AN INDICTABLE OFFENCE AND CARRIED A HIGHER PENALTY.

CLAUSE 5 AMENDED SECTION 28 OF THE ORDINANCE SO THAT ILLEGAL PRACTICE WOULD BE MADE AN OFFENCE TRIABLE SUMMARILY OR ON INDICTMENT AND WOULD BE SUBJECT TO MUCH MORE SEVERE PENALTIES.

+IN CASES WHERE SUCH ILLEGAL PRACTICE RESULTS IN INJURY, IT IS PROPOSED THAT THE PENALTY SHOULD BE A MAXIMUM FINE OF \$100 000 AND IMPRISONMENT FOR THREE YEARS ON SUMMARY CONVICTION AND IMPRISONMENT FOR SEVEN YEARS ON CONVICTION ON INDICTMENT,+ MR CHAMBERS SAID.

THE BILL ALSO AMENDED THE MEDICAL CLINICS ORDINANCE. CLAUSE 8 PROVIDED THAT PROSECUTIONS RELATING TO OFFENCES OF MANAGING OR PRACTISING MEDICINE IN AN UNREGISTERED CLINIC MIGHT PROCEED BY INDICTMENT.

+AS IN THE CASE OF THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION ORDINANCE, AN ADDITIONAL INDICTABLE OFFENCE WITH HEAVIER PENALTIES IS CREATED TO DEAL WITH CASES WHERE THE TREATMENT GIVEN RESULTS IN INJURY,+ HE SAID.

THE BILL ALSO AMENDED THE DENTISTS REGISTRATION ORDINANCE (CAP 156) ALONG SIMILAR LINES.

MR CHAMBERS EMPHASISED THAT ALTHOUGH THE BILL SOUGHT TO INCREASE THE PENALTIES FOR THE ILLEGAL PRACTICE OF MEDICINE, THE PROVISIONS WOULD NOT APPLY TO THE PRACTICE OF TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE OR TO PRACTICE BY REGISTERED PHARMACISTS, PHYSIOTHERAPISTS, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS, OPTOMETRISTS, MEDICAL LABORATORY TECHNICIANS OR RADIOGRAPHERS OR TO FIRST AID TREATMENT.

+NOR WILL CHINESE DOCTORS TRAINED IN WESTERN MEDICINE BE AFFECTED SINCE THEY CAN CONTINUE TO BECOME QUALIFIED TO PRACTISE IN HONG KONG UNDER THE LICENTIATE SCHEME,+ MR CHAMBERS ADDED.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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HIGHER PENALTIES SOUGHT FOR ANTIBIOTICS OFFENCES

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A BILL SEEKING TO RAISE THE LEVEL OF PENALTIES FOR THE UNLAWFUL SALE AND POSSESSION OF ANTIBIOTICS WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE ANTIBIOTICS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID THE MEASURES PROPOSED IN THE BILL WOULD ALSO EXTEND THE TIME LIMIT FOR SUMMARY PROCEEDINGS TO BE COMMENCED FROM SIX MONTHS TO 12 MONTHS FROM THE DATE OF THE COMMISSION OF THE OFFENCE.

+THESE PROPOSALS ARE IN LINE WITH SIMILAR PROVISIONS FOR THE CONTROL OF PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTS AND POISONS UNDER THE PHARMACY AND POISONS ORDINANCE,+ MR CHAMBERS SAID.

HE EXPLAINED THAT THE BILL, SEEKING TO AMEND SECTION 10 OF THE ANTIBIOTICS ORDINANCE, STEMMED FROM THE SAME CASE AS THE PENALTIES FOR PRACTICE OF MEDICINE AND DENTISTRY BY UNREGISTERED PERSONS (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 1986, WHICH HE MENTIONED EARLIER IN THE MEETING. THIS CASE INVOLVED THE OPERATOR OF AN ILLEGAL CLINIC.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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TIME RIPE TO BRING POLICY ON ELDERLY UP-TO-DATE

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AS THE PRESENT POLICY FOR THE ELDERLY WAS LAID DOWN NEARLY 20 YEARS AGO IT MAY BE TIME TO UPDATE THE POLICY IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

WINDING UP THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON CARE AND SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE BASIC GOVERNMENT POLICY ON THE CARE OF THE ELDERLY AS SET OUT IN THE 1979 WHITE PAPER +SOCIAL WELFARE INTO THE 1980'S+ WAS TO PROMOTE THE WELL-BEING OF SENIOR CITIZENS AGED 60 AND OVER BY PROVIDING SERVICES THAT WOULD ENABLE THEM TO RETAIN THEIR SELF-RESPECT AND REMAIN IN THE COMMUNITY FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE AND WHERE NECESSARY TO PROVIDE RESIDENTIAL CARE SUITED TO THE VARYING NEEDS OF THIS AGE GROUP.

/ON FINANCIAL

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ON FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, HE NOTED THAT AT PRESENT ALL RESIDENTS IN HONG KONG AGED 70 OR OVER WERE ENTITLED TO AN OLD AGE ALLOWANCE WHICH WAS NOT MEANS TESTED.

AN ELDERLY PERSON WHO DID NOT HAVE ANY MEANS OF SUPPORT MIGHT APPLY FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, HE ADDED.

HE ALSO ASSURED MEMBERS THAT RATES OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND OLD AGE ALLOWANCE WERE REVISED PERIODICALLY TO PRESERVE THEIR REAL PURCHASING POWER.

AS FOR FORMER HONG KONG RESIDENTS LIVING IN CHINA TO CONTINUE TO RECEIVE THESE PAYMENTS, MR CHAMBERS SAID THERE WERE CONSIDERABLE PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES IN ADOPTING THIS SUGGESTION.

MR CHAMBERS NOTED THAT SEVERAL MEMBERS HAD EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR THE PROPOSED CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME.

HE SAID CONSULTATION ON THIS PROPOSAL HAD JUST BEGUN AND IT WOULD NOT BE APPROPRIATE TO PRE-EMPT ITS OUTCOME AT THIS STAGE.

+THE DECISION WHETHER TO ESTABLISH A CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND WILL OF COURSE INEVITABLY HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR POLICY ON CARE FOR THE ELDERLY,+ HE ADDED.

ON COMMENTS THAT PRESENT SUPPORT SERVICES WERE INADEQUATE, MR CHAMBERS POINTED OUT THAT EXPANSION PROGRAMMES EXISTED FOR ALL THESE SERVICES AND THE PLANNED PROVISION OVER THE NEXT SIX YEARS INCLUDED 76 SOCIAL CENTRES, 14 DAY-CARE CENTRES, AND 10 MULTI-SERVICE CENTRES. FOR HOME HELP SERVICES THE PLAN WAS TO PROVIDE 10 ADDITIONAL TEAMS EACH YEAR.

+THIS EXPANSION SHOULD BE ABLE TO MEET THE ESTIMATED NEED FOR THE VARIOUS SERVICES ON THE PRESENT PLANNING RATIOS, BUT WE SHALL NEED TO RE-EXAMINE THESE RATIOS FROM TIME TO TIME TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARE STILL APPROPRIATE,+ HE SAID.

MR CHAMBERS SAID PROPOSALS FOR NEW COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES WOULD BE CONSIDERED FURTHER. THESE PROPOSALS INCLUDED AN OUTREACHING SERVICE FOR THE ELDERLY, RESPITE SERVICES FOR THOSE WHO LOOKED AFTER ELDERLY PEOPLE, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AND SHELTERED WORKSHOPS FOR THE ELDERLY; AS WELL AS PRE-RETIREMENT AND EDUCATION PROGRAMMES.

+TO ENCOURAGE ELDERLY PEOPLE TO LIVE WITH THEIR FAMILIES IT IS THE POLICY OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO GIVE FAMILIES WITH ELDERLY MEMBERS PRIORITY TREATMENT IN APPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC HOUSING,+ HE SAID.

/HE ADDED

HE ADDED THAT PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES WERE RESERVED EACH YEAR FOR COMPASSIONATE REHOUSING ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT. THE DEPARTMENT ALSO OPERATED A SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEME IN PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS IN WAN CHAI AND SHA TIN.

ON THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF ELDERLY SINGLE PEOPLE LIVING IN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE WORKING GROUP ON BEDSPACE APARTMENTS RECENTLY CARRIED OUT AN IN-DEPTH STUDY OF THE PROBLEMS OF THESE APARTMENTS AND IDENTIFIED FIRE SAFETY AS BEING A MAJOR AREA OF CONCERN.

+THE SECURITY BRANCH IS NOW ENGAGED IN A MORE DETAILED STUDY OF THIS PROBLEM AND I UNDERSTAND THEY ARE VERY CLOSE TO BEING ABLE TO INSTITUTE SOME IMPROVEMENTS,+ HE ADDED.

HOWEVER, HE NOTED THAT THE QUESTION OF FIRE SAFETY IN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS WAS NOT AN EASY ONE. SOME UNDOUBTEDLY POSED SERIOUS HAZARDS BUT IT WOULD CLEARLY NOT BE DESIRABLE TO IMPOSE CONDITIONS WHICH WOULD RESULT IN ELDERLY PEOPLE BEING MADE HOMELESS.

THERE WERE AT PRESENT 40 HOSTELS AND HOMES FOR THE EDLERLY PROVIDING 4 850 PLACES.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THIS WAS NOT ADEQUATE TO MEET THE DEMAND, AND ANOTHER 3 700 PLACES WERE PLANNED FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS TO SATISFY DEMAND.

HE ALSO SAID THERE WAS AN URGENT NEED TO EXPAND THE PROVISION OF PLACES IN CARE AND ATTENTION HOMES.

MORE HOMES OF THIS TYPE WERE NOW BEING PLANNED IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES AND IT WAS PROPOSED TO INCORPORATE SIMILAR FACILITIES IN HOMES FOR THE ELDERLY, HE SAID.

THE SOCIAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, MR CHAMBERS SAID, RECENTLY ADVISED THAT FOR THE TIME BEING THERE WAS NO IMMEDIATE NEED TO ENACT LEGISLATION TO CONTROL PRIVATE HOMES FOR THE ELDERLY, ALTHOUGH THIS MIGHT BE NECESSARY IN THE FUTURE.

ON MEMBERS' SUGGESTION THAT PRIVATE HOMES SHOULD BE PROVIDED WITH SUBVENTIONS TO HELP RAISE THEIR STANDARDS OF SERVICE, HE SAID THIS PRESENTED CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTY AS +WE DO NOT NORMALLY GIVE SUBVENTIONS TO PROFIT-MAKING ORGANISATIONS.+

HE ALSO SAID THE SUGGESTION THAT THE SYSTEM OF VOLUNTARY REGISTRATION SHOULD BE SET UP TO REGISTER THOSE HOMES WHICH MET THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE CODE WAS +CERTAINLY WORTHY OF CONSIDERATION+.

/TURNING TO

TURNING TO MEDICAL FACILITIES FOR THE ELDERLY, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE EXISTING 120 PLACES IN DAY HOSPITALS WOULD BE INCREASED TO ENABLE PEOPLE WHO DID NOT NEED FULL-TIME MEDICAL CARE TO LIVE AT HOME RATHER THAN TO OCCUPY VALUABLE HOSPITAL BEDS.

HE ALSO SAID THAT IN ORDER TO ASCERTAIN MORE EXACTLY THE REQUIREMENT FOR INFIRMARY AND CARE AND ATTENTION HOME PLACES, A SURVEY WAS BEING JOINTLY CONDUCTED BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT, THE RESULTS OF WHICH WOULD BE AVAILABLE EARLY NEXT YEAR.

ON DENTAL CARE FOR THE ELDERLY, MR CHAMBERS SAID AT PRESENT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NO PLAN TO INTRODUCE FREE OR SUBSIDISED DENTAL SERVICES EITHER FOR THE PUBLIC AS A WHOLE OR FOR THE ELDERLY AS THIS WOULD BE +A VERY MAJOR UNDERTAKING WITH SERVICES RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS+.

ON THE INTRODUCTION OF CONCESSIONARY RATES FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT, AND FOR CULTURAL ACTIVITIES, HE SAID THAT THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE WAS IN TOUCH WITH PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATORS AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS ABOUT THE PROPOSAL, AND THEIR RESPONSES WERE STILL AWAITED.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THE POLICY IN ADMINISTRATION OF SOCIAL WELFARE SUBVENTIONS WAS AT PRESENT THE SUBJECT OF A REVIEW BY A GOVERNMENT WORKING GROUP, AND THE PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVEMENT MADE WOULD CERTAINLY BE GIVEN DUE CONSIDERATION.

HE NOTED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE SHOULD DO EVERYTHING IT COULD TO HELP ELDERLY PEOPLE TO CONTINUE TO LIVE A FULL LIFE IN THEIR LATER YEARS.

+IT IS PERHAPS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT THAT THE MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY UNIT SHOULD TRY TO UNDERSTAND AND SYMPATHISE WITH THEIR ELDER'S DIFFICULTIES,+ HE ADDED.

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COMMISSIONER FOR THE ELDERLY PROPOSED

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A COMMISSIONER FOR THE ELDERLY SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED TO CO-ORDINATE SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY PEOPLE, DR THE HON HO KAM-FAI SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

LEADING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON CARE AND SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY AS CONVENER OF THE AD HOC GROUP STUDYING THE ISSUE, DR HO SAID THE PURPOSE OF THE DEBATE WAS TO BRING TO THE ATTENTION OF GOVERNMENT A WIDE SPECTRUM OF SERVICES ON WHICH THE ELDERLY MIGHT DEPEND FOR THEIR WELL-BEING.

+AS THE ELDERLY HAVE MADE THEIR SHARE OF CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY OF OUR COMMUNITY, WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE THEM SPEND THEIR TWILIGHT YEARS IN DIGNITY, DECENCY AND PEACE+, HE SAID.

DR HO SAID THAT PLANNING OF SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY SHOULD TAKE A WHOLISTIC APPROACH IN ORDER TO BE EFFECTIVE.

CO-ORDINATION AND COLLABORATION AMONG THE RELEVANT GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS WAS ESSENTIAL.

HE SAID HE FELT THAT THE CO-ORDINATING MACHINERY MUST BE VESTED WITH SUFFICIENT AUTHORITY AND GIVEN EASY AND QUICK ACCESS TO THE TOP LEVEL OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IN ORDER TO ENSURE SPEEDY AND FULL CO-OPERATION.

+IN THE INTEREST OF EFFICIENT IMPLEMENTATION, A POLICY DIRECTIVE FROM THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT IS THEREFORE IMPERATIVE,+ HE ADDED.

HE NOTED THAT A CENTRAL CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE ON SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY WAS SET UP IN 1981 AND DISSOLVED IN 1985 AFTER MAKING SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS IN PLANNING AND MONITORING THE PROGRESS OF VARIOUS PROGRAMMES IN SPITE OF ITS SHORT LIFE SPAN.

+IN VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PROPER CO-ORDINATION AND OF THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF AUTHORITY, I PROPOSE THAT A COMMISSIONER FOR THE ELDERLY, EQUIVALENT TO THE COMMISSIONER FOR REHABILITATION, BE ESTABLISHED IN THE GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT,+ HE SUGGESTED.

DR HO ALSO NOTED WITH PLEASURE THAT AN INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP WAS SET UP IN MAY 1985 TO EXAMINE WAYS AND MEANS TO IMPROVE THE GENERAL SAFETY AND LIVING CONDITIONS OF SENIOR SINGLETONS LIVING IN BED-SPACE APARTMENTS IN DILAPIDATED CONDITIONS.

HE SAID HE WANTED TO KNOW WHAT RECOMMENDATIONS THE WORKING GROUP HAD PROPOSED AND HOW THE GOVERNMENT HAD REACTED TO THEM.

+A DEGREE OF URGENCY SHOULD BE ACCORDED TO THIS ISSUE, BECAUSE THE BENEFICIARIES ARE FRAIL AND AGED PERSONS,+ HE SAID.

IN PARALLEL TO THE VARIOUS HOUSING SCHEMES FOR THE ELDERLY PEOPLE, DR HO COMMENDED THE GOVERNMENT FOR HAVING IMAGINATIVELY PLANNED TO PROVIDE SHELTERED HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY IN NEW PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE POLICY THRUST OF THIS SCHEME WAS TO ENABLE ELDERLY PEOPLE TO REMAIN ACTIVE IN THE COMMUNITY FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, WITH THE SUPPORT OF A NETWORK OF SERVICES IN THE VICINITY TO MEET THEIR PERSONAL NEEDS.

/HE STRESSED

HE STRESSED THAT THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHEME HINGED HEAVILY ON THE COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVISIONS AT THE IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL.

+THE SPONSORS FOR THESE COMMUNITY SERVICES MUST BE SECURED WELL AHEAD OF TIME, AND THE OPERATION OF THESE SERVICES MUST BE CAREFULLY SYNCHRONISED WITH THE MOVING IN OF THE ELDERLY RESIDENTS,+ HE SAID.

DR HO SAID MA ON SHAN, WHERE THE FIRST PROJECT OF THE SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEME WOULD BE SITUATED AND OPERATING AT THE END OF THIS YEAR, WAS FAR FROM A FULL-FLEDGED, SELF-CONTAINED COMMUNITY, AS A RESULT OF WHICH THE ELDERLY RESIDENTS THERE WOULD HAVE TO RELY ON THE SERVICES AND FACILITIES AVAILABLE IN SHA TIN TO MEET THEIR NEEDS.

+THIS WILL INEVITABLY CAUSE MUCH INCONVENIENCE AND HARDSHIP FOR RESIDENTS, WHO, APART FROM DEALING WITH THEIR ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH SETTLING DOWN IN A NEW ENVIRONMENT, HAVE TO COPE WITH PERSONAL PROBLEMS ARISING FROM THE PROCESS OF AGEING,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID HE FEARED THAT THE PHYSICAL FEEBLENESS AND MOBILITY DIFFICULTY OF THESE ELDERLY WOULD HINDER THEM FROM TAKING ADVANTAGE OF COMMUNITY SERVICES ACROSS TOLO HARBOUR IN SHA TIN, BECAUSE TRANSPORT BETWEEN THESE TWO PLACES WAS NOT VERY CONVENIENT.

HE THEREFORE URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO EXERCISE GREAT CARE IN ENSURING DOVETAILED THE SERVICE PROVISION WITH THE OCCUPANCY OF THESE SHELTERED HOUSING UNITS.

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HOTLINE SERVICE TO HANDLE ELDERLY ABUSE
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GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN URGED TO INTRODUCE A HOTLINE SERVICE TO HANDLE CASES OF ABUSE OF THE ELDERLY.

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY TODAY (WEDNESDAY), DR THE HON HENRIETTA IP SAID THOUGH CHINESE FAMILIES ON THE WHOLE RESPECTED THE OLD, ELDERLY ABUSE DID EXIST.

IN FACT, THE EXISTENCE OF SUCH ABUSE HAD BEEN WELL DOCUMENTED IN A PILOT SURVEY DONE BY THE HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE IN 1983, SHE SAID.

/+I CONSIDER

+I CONSIDER THAT IT IS NOW APPROPRIATE FOR GOVERNMENT TO CREATE A HOTLINE SERVICE WHEREBY ANY GOOD CITIZEN, NEIGHBOUR OR RELATIVE CAN TELEPHONE TO SEEK FOR URGENT HELP ON ANY MATTERS RELATED TO THE ELDERLY.

+SUCH MATTERS CAN THEN BE INVESTIGATED AND SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY CO-ORDINATED TO OFFER REMEDY TO PRESSING PROBLEMS,+ SHE SAID.

DR IP QUOTED A COMMENT MADE BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL IN HIS SPEECH ON THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BILL IN WHICH HE SAID: +THE KNOWN FIGURES MAY BE RELATIVELY SMALL, BUT I TAKE THE VIEW THAT THIS ... WOULD BE JUSTIFIED EVEN IF THERE WAS ONLY ONE CASE WHERE THE VICTIM OF VIOLENCE WISHED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ITS PROVISIONS.+

+THE SAME GOES FOR WHAT SUCH A GOVERNMENT HOTLINE SERVICE CAN OFFER IN THE HANDLING OF ELDERLY ABUSE,+ SHE SAID.

TURNING TO ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS INVOLVING ELDERLY PEDESTRIANS DR IP SAID EDUCATING THE OLD ON TRANSPORT SAFETY HAD ITS VALUE, BUT IT MUST BE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE ALTERNATIVES OPENED TO THEM WAS TO GET UP AND DOWN ONE OR MORE FOOTBRIDGES.

SHE SAID SHE HAD NO PERFECT CURE FOR HONG KONG'S TRAFFIC PROBLEMS BUT ON TOP OF BETTER DESIGN OF ROADS AND FACILITIES FOR CROSSING AND EDUCATION ON ROAD SENSE, IT MIGHT NOT BE A BAD IDEA TO FOLLOW WHAT THE CANADIAN CHINESE WERE DOING FOR THEIR SENIOR CITIZENS.

+WE CAN CUSTOM-DESIGN A USEFUL CONSPICUOUS APPAREL TO BE WORN OR CARRIED BY OUR SENIOR CITIZENS TO ALERT THE TRAFFIC.

+FOR THIS IDEA TO BE SUCCESSFUL, THE DESIGN OF THE APPAREL MUST BE PLEASING TO THE ELDERLY AND USEFUL FOR HIM TO GO ABOUT HIS DAILY ACTIVITIES.

+FOR IT TO STAND OUT ENOUGH TO ALERT MOTOR DRIVERS, *IT MUST BE OF A BRIGHT COLOUR DURING THE DAY AND FLOURESCENT AT NIGHT, AND THE DESIGN MUST BE MADE TO IDENTIFY WITH THE ELDERLY,+ SHE SAID.

DR IP SAID THE ZONTA CLUB OF HONG KONG TOGETHER WITH THE ROYAL HONG KONG POLICE HAD JUST LAUNCHED SUCH A COMPETITION TO GAIN PUBLIC AWARENESS.

QUOTING A NUMBER OF COMMUNITY HEALTH SURVEYS, DR IP SAID NUMEROUS ELDERLY PEOPLE WERE SUFFERING FROM PAIN, INABILITY TO CHEW PROPERLY AND DISCOMFORT EMANATING FROM THEIR ORAL STATUS.

/SHE SAID

SHE SAID WHAT THE GOVERNMENT DENTAL SERVICE OFFERED WAS IN FACT THE LEAST OF WHAT AN ELDERLY PATIENT WANTED.

+WHAT THE ELDERLY DESIRE IS A GOOD SET OF DENTURES FOR HIM TO ADEQUATELY ENJOY HIS FOOD IN THE LAST YEARS OF HIS LIFE,+ SHE SAID.

SHE SUGGESTED THE GOVERNMENT TO LOOK INTO THE FEASIBILITY OF OFFERING DENTAL SERVICE TO THE SENIOR CITIZENS OF THE COMMUNITY IN THE FOLLOWING WAY:

- * TO EXTEND THE SERVICES OF THE DENTAL THERAPIST NOW SERVICING SCHOOLCHILDREN, TO THE ELDERLY BY TEACHING THEM ORAL HYGIENE;
- * TO OFFER PART SUBVENTION IN THE FORM OF A REBATE TO THOSE EXISTING NON-PROFIT MAKING DENTAL CLINICS OF SUBVENTED ORGANISATIONS WHEN THEY OFFERED DENTAL SERVICE TO ELDERLY PATIENTS OVER THE AGE OF 65 YEARS;
- * TO REDIRECT SOME OF THE DENTAL EXTRACTION CLINIC SESSIONS NOW OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, TO SERVICE THE DENTAL NEEDS OF ELDERLY PATIENTS.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MAINTENANCE OF GOOD MENTAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH IN OLD AGE WAS ALSO EMPHASISED.

+ELDERLY PEOPLE MUST GET OUT OF THE HOUSE, MEET PEOPLE, KEEP IN CONTACT, KEEP IN TUNE, ENJOY THE LEISURE OF LIFE, FEEL USEFUL AND CONTRIBUTORY ... BE CONTRIBUTORY.

+WE MUST AS A COMMUNITY DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO ENSURE THAT ELDERLY PERSON CAN DO ALL THESE THINGS.

+WE MUST ENSURE THAT THEY CAN MOVE ABOUT SAFELY DESPITE THEIR PHYSICAL DISABILITY. WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT THEIR FAILING VISION IS COMPENSATED WITH GLASSES. WE MUST MAKE SURE THEY ARE SUPPLEMENTED WITH A HEARING AID.

+WE MUST MAKE SURE THAT THEY GET TO ENJOY ALL THE LEISURES IN LIFE THAT WE CAN, AND FREE, AT TIMES WHEN WE ARE WORKING AND UNLIKELY TO BE COMPETING TO USE SUCH FACILITIES,+ DR IP SAID.

SHE ALSO PAID TRIBUTE TO THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT FOR ITS SERVICES TO THE ELDERLY PEOPLE.

+THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT HAS SUPERSEDED EVEN THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT IN GIVING PRIORITY TO THE ELDERLY, IN THAT IN MOST CLINICS, ALL ELDERLY PATIENTS OVER THE AGE OF 65 YEARS ARE SEEN FIRST WITHOUT WAITING.

+THIS PRACTICE HAS BEEN IN EXISTENCE FOR SOME 20-30 YEARS ... A GOOD PRACTICE I MUST SAY, FOR ALL TO FOLLOW,+ SHE SAID.

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SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN PRESENT POLICY
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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ADDRESS ITSELF TO THE PROBLEM OF THE ELDERLY AND DRAW UP A NEW POLICY ON THE PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR THEM, DR THE HON CONRAD LAM SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THERE WERE SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN THE PRESENT POLICY AS WELL AS IN THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF SERVICES PROVIDED FOR THE ELDERLY, HE SAID.

DR LAM SAID IT SEEMED THAT WHILE THE GOVERNMENT WAS CARRYING OUT A REVIEW OF POLICY SOME VOLUNTARY AGENCIES WERE TOTALLY IGNORANT OF IT.

IT SHOWED THAT THERE WAS A LACK OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN BOTH PARTIES, HE SAID.

HE SUGGESTED THAT A CENTRAL COMMITTEE SHOULD BE SET UP TO FORMULATE POLICY.

DR LAM SAID THERE HAD BEEN AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF OLD PEOPLE WHO HAD BECOME PHYSICALLY DISABLED AND REQUIRED LONG-TERM TREATMENT. THE MEAGRE SUM PROVIDED BY DISABILITY AND INFIRMARY ALLOWANCES AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE GENERALLY COULD NOT SATISFY THEIR NEEDS.

HE FELT THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SET UP A COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES SCHEME AND PROVIDE REGULAR MEDICAL CHECK-UPS AND HEALTH EDUCATION FOR OLD PEOPLE, SO AS TO IMPROVE THEIR HEALTH AND TO PROTECT THEM FROM ILLNESS.

HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT GOVERNMENT SHOULD IMMEDIATELY IMPROVE THE PRESENT SITUATION UNDER WHICH GERIATRIC WARDS ONLY ACCOUNTED FOR A SMALL PORTION OF THE ENTIRE MEDICAL PROGRAMME. THERE WAS AN URGENT DEMAND, HE SAID.

DAY TREATMENT FACILITIES IN HOSPITALS AND CLINICS SHOULD BE EXPANDED, AND THE COMMUNITY NURSING SERVICE SHOULD BE REINFORCED.

COMMUNITY NURSING, ESPECIALLY PHYSIOTHERAPY, WAS VERY IMPORTANT, HE SAID.

LASTLY, DR LAM BELIEVED THAT THE SETTING UP OF A SATISFACTORY CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME FOR THE ELDERLY WOULD HELP RELIEVE FINANCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURES ON THEM.

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1986

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NEW PROGRAMME REQUIRED TO MEET PRACTICAL NEEDS

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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD RECONSIDER ITS OVERALL CONCEPT OF PROVIDING SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY IN THE LIGHT OF EXISTING RESOURCES AND PRODUCE A NEW PROGRAMME THAT WOULD BE ABLE TO MEET ELDERLY PEOPLE'S PRACTICAL NEEDS, THE HON LIU LIT-FOR SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON CARE AND SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY, HE SAID THAT, FIRSTLY, MORE FUNDS SHOULD BE ALLOCATED FOR PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY.

NOTING THAT THE POLICY ON FUND ALLOCATION FOR SERVICES WAS FORMULATED SEVEN YEARS AGO, MR LIU SAID IT APPEARED SUPPLY COULD NOT MEET DEMAND.

+AS A RESULT, THERE IS STILL A FAIRLY SERIOUS SHORTAGE OF FACILITIES SUCH AS COMMUNITY CENTRES, CARE AND ATTENTION HOMES AND HOSPITAL BEDS FOR THE AGED,+ HE SAID.

SECONDLY, MR LIU FELT THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD GIVE MORE FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT TO VOLUNTARY AGENCIES WHICH HAD ALL ALONG BEEN PLAYING AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN PROVIDING WELFARE SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY.

HE SAID THAT IF INCREASING NUMBERS OF AGED PEOPLE WERE NOT PROPERLY TAKEN CARE OF, THE SITUATION WOULD DEVELOP INTO A SOCIAL PROBLEM.

+IN THIS RESPECT, I FULLY SUPPORT THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND THE RELEVANT VOLUNTARY AGENCIES IN THEIR EFFORTS TO PROMOTE FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION,+ HE SAID.

ONLY THROUGH GOOD FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION COULD THE PUBLIC APPRECIATE THE CONTRIBUTION THAT THE ELDERLY HAD MADE TO SOCIETY AND THUS ATTACH MORE IMPORTANCE TO PROMOTION OF THEIR WELL-BEING, HE SAID.

MR LIU SAID HE REGARDED AS MEANINGFUL THE SOCIAL SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES ORGANISED FOR THE ELDERLY BY SCHOOL STUDENTS. THESE ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED.

HE ALSO URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO RECONSIDER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A PREFERENTIAL SCHEME UNDER WHICH THE ELDERLY WOULD BE ENTITLED TO USE PUBLIC TRANSPORT, CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES FREE OF CHARGE OR AT A SPECIAL RATE.

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1986

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CALL TO REINFORCE SERVICES FOR ELDERLY
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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REINFORCE ITS PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY, WHO HAD IN THEIR DAYS MADE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO HONG KONG, THE HON PAULINE NG SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON CARE AND SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY, SHE SAID THAT FIRST OF ALL THE AUTHORITIES SHOULD FOLLOW THE LEAD OF WESTERN COUNTRIES BY INTRODUCING CONCESSIONARY SCHEMES FOR THE ELDERLY BECAUSE THEIR INCOME WOULD DIMINISH AFTER RETIREMENT.

MRS NG NOTED THAT IN MANY DISTRICTS IN HONG KONG, THERE WERE ALREADY A NUMBER OF SERVICES AND SCHEMES OFFERING A VARIETY OF BENEFITS TO THE ELDERLY INCLUDING FREE MEDICAL CHECK-UPS, CONCESSIONARY FARES ON PUBLIC LIGHT BUSES AND MAXICABS AND DISCOUNTS AT LOCAL SHOPS.

HOWEVER, SHE SAID, MOST SCHEMES WERE LAUNCHED BY THE DISTRICT BOARDS WITH THE SUPPORT AND PARTICIPATION OF LOCAL RESIDENTS, WHICH NOT ONLY INVOLVED CONSIDERABLE COST IN TERMS OF MANPOWER AND RESOURCES TO INDIVIDUAL DISTRICT BOARDS BUT ALSO REDUCED EFFICIENCY.

SHE THEREFORE SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD COORDINATE AND IMPLEMENT SUCH SERVICES AND SCHEMES FOR THE ELDERLY SO AS TO EXTEND THEIR COVERAGE AND INCREASE THEIR EFFICIENCY.

ON THE RECENTLY PUBLISHED +CODE OF PRACTICE FOR PRIVATE HOME FOR THE ELDERLY+, MRS NG SAID IT DID SET OUT A NUMBER OF DETAILED AND CLEAR GUIDELINES.

+PROVIDED THAT OPERATORS OF PRIVATE HOMES FOR THE ELDERLY ARE WILLING TO LEARN FROM OVERSEAS EXPERIENCE, RECOGNISE THE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF HONG KONG AND FOLLOW GOOD EXAMPLES OF HOMES RUN BY WELFARE ORGANISATIONS, I BELIEVE THEY TOO CAN PROVIDE QUALITY SERVICE TO OUR OLD PEOPLE UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT,+ SHE SAID.

MRS NG ALSO URGED THE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO PROVIDE MORE SINGLETON UNITS FOR THE AGED AND THAT THE NUMBER OF BEDS IN OLD PEOPLE'S HOMES AND CARE CENTRES SHOULD ALSO BE INCREASED.

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1986

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LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT PLAN ON ELDERLY SERVICES NEEDED
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GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES SHOULD WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY WORK TOGETHER TO FORMULATE A COMPREHENSIVE POLICY AND A LONG-TERM PLAN ON PROVIDING SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY.

THIS CALL WAS MADE BY DR THE HON CHIU HIN-KWONG DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON CARE AND SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

DR CHIU SAID OLD PEOPLE HAD A VARIETY OF NEEDS WHICH COULD ONLY BE MET BY THE JOINT EFFORTS OF DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS USING A MULTI-DISCIPLINE APPROACH.

HE SAID HE HOPED THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE PROGRAMME PLAN FOR THE ELDERLY SO AS TO PRODUCE A FUNDAMENTAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM.

+THE PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY SHOULD AIM AT ENABLING THEM TO LEAD A DIGNIFIED AND MEANINGFUL LIFE.

+THESE SERVICES WOULD NOT HAVE SERVED THE PURPOSE IF THEY MERELY ALLOW OUR ELDERLY TO LINGER ON IN THEIR TWILIGHT YEARS,+ HE SAID.

DR CHIU NOTED THAT THE OMELCO HEALTH SERVICES PANEL, WHEN CONSIDERING THE OCCUPATION OF HOSPITAL BEDS BY OLD PEOPLE, FOUND IT NOT TOO DIFFICULT TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM IN PRACTICAL TERMS, WHEREAS FORCING FAMILY MEMBERS TO TAKE OLD PEOPLE BACK FOR HOME CARE MIGHT LEAD TO UNPREDICTABLE RESULTS.

+THE OCCUPATION OF HOSPITAL BEDS BY OLD PEOPLE IS ESSENTIALLY THE OPEN AND PRACTICAL MANIFESTATION OF A HIDDEN PROBLEM,+ HE SAID.

HE STRESSED THAT UNLESS THE LACK OF SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY WAS SOLVED THE OCCUPATION OF HOSPITAL BEDS WOULD CONTINUE.

HE SAID HE BELIEVED THAT ADEQUATE COMMUNITY NURSING SERVICES MIGHT HELP IMPROVE THE BED OCCUPATION SITUATION.

DR CHIU ALSO POINTED OUT THAT IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE OF ENABLING OLD PEOPLE TO REMAIN AN INTERGRAL PART OF THE COMMUNITY, IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT EMPLOYMENT ADVISORY SERVICES BE INTRODUCED AND MORE JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND SHELTERED WORKSHOP FACILITIES BE PROVIDED.

HE ADDED THAT ADJUSTMENTS TO THE FACILITIES AND APPLICATION CRITERIA FOR PUBLIC HOUSING AND HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEMES SHOULD BE MADE BEFORE PROMOTING THE +CARE IN THE COMMUNITY PLAN+.

+IF WE SIMPLY IGNORE THE EXISTENCE OF OLD PEOPLE WHEN PLANNING OUR HOUSING, OUR EFFORTS WILL BE WASTED NO MATTER HOW HARD WE TRY TO PROMOTE THE 'CARE IN COMMUNITY' CONCEPT,+ HE SAID.

COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR ELDERLY ADVOCATED
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THE SETTING UP A COMMITTEE TO COORDINATE AND PLAN SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY WAS ADVOCATED BY THE HON LEE YU-TAI TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON ELDERLY SERVICES IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR LEE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF COORDINATING THE PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY WHICH INVOLVED A NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS INCLUDING HOUSING, SOCIAL WELFARE, MEDICAL AND HEALTH, EDUCATION AND LABOUR.

HE NOTED THAT GOVERNMENT HAD RECENTLY SET UP A CENTRAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON YOUTH POLICIES, AND QUESTIONED WHY THERE WAS NO SUCH BODY FOR THE ELDERLY.

POINTING OUT THAT ELDERLY PEOPLE IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES USUALLY ENJOYED HALF-FARE BENEFITS FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT SPENT SOME \$200 MILLION EACH YEAR ON THE STUDENT TRAVEL SCHEME, HE SAID ELDERLY PEOPLE HERE ENJOYED NO PRIVILEGED TREATMENT AT ALL EXCEPT FOR SOME MAXICAB SERVICES.

MR LEE SAID HE FELT THAT HOSTEL SERVICE SHOULD BE IMPROVED IN PROPORTION TO POPULATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND SUPPORT SERVICES SUCH AS HOUSEKEEPING ASSISTANCE AND COMMUNITY NURSING SERVICE BE STRENGTHENED.

HE SAID THAT IF MORE HOUSEKEEPING ASSISTANCE OR COMMUNITY NURSING SERVICE COULD RENDERED TO OLD PEOPLE, MORE FAMILIES WOULD BE WILLING TO LIVE WITH THEIR ELDERS, THUS HELPING TO RELIEVE THE DEMAND FOR HOSTELS.

HE ALSO PROPOSED SETTING UP A CENTRAL EMPLOYMENT REGISTRY FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE LOOKING FOR PART-TIME JOBS AND STRENGTHENING EMPLOYMENT COUNSELLING SERVICES FOR RETIRED PEOPLE.

ON EDUCATION, MR LEE SAID HONG KONG SHOULD FOLLOW THE EXAMPLES OF SOME ADVANCED COUNTRIES IN DEVELOPING ADULT EDUCATION.

THE PROPOSAL TO USE THE TEMPORARY PREMISES OF THE CITY POLYTECHNIC AS A CENTRE FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION SHOULD ALSO BE CONSIDERED, HE SAID.

URGENT REVIEW OF SUBVENTION SYSTEM NEEDED

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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD URGENTLY RETHINK AND REVIEW ITS PRESENT SUBVENTION POLICIES AND PLACE SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY AT THE HIGHEST PRIORITY, THE HON DAVID LI SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR LI SAID VOLUNTARY AGENCIES WHICH DID NOT PRACTISE +CREATIVE ACCOUNTING+ WERE BEING UNFAIRLY PENALISED BY THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF SUBVENTION.

IN HIS OVER 16 YEARS OF VOLUNTARY SERVICE, MR LI SAID, HE HAD SEEN A GOOD DEAL OF +CREATIVE ACCOUNTING+ AS PRACTISED BY VOLUNTARY AGENCIES.

+IT IS NOT CREATIVITY BY CHOICE, BUT AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INFLEXIBLE SUBVENTION POLICIES,+ HE SAID.

THEREFORE, HE ADDED, HE WELCOMED THE RECENT CALL BY THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF THESE SUBVENTION POLICIES SHOULD BE REVIEWED.

MR LI SAID THE PRESENT SUBVENTION SYSTEM HAD CREATED A +NO-WIN+ SITUATION FOR VOLUNTARY AGENCIES WHICH WERE CAUGHT IN THE SUBVENTION CROSSFIRE BETWEEN THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND THE COMMUNITY CHEST.

+THE AGENCIES ARE THE VICTIMS OF A CONTINUOUS 'MORE OR LESS' BATTLE OVER SUBVENTIONS, A BATTLE THAT BENEFITS NO ONE, LEAST OF ALL THE ELDERLY,+ HE SAID.

HE QUESTIONED THE WISDOM OF A SUBVENTION SYSTEM WHEREBY VOLUNTARY AGENCIES WERE ALLOWED NO ROOM TO GROW AND HAD NO CERTAINTY THAT SUBSIDIES WOULD BE GUARANTEED IN THE LONG TERM.

MR LI NOTED THAT UNDER THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT'S CLASSIFICATION, PERSONAL EMOLUMENTS FOR DAY CARE AND HOME HELP SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY WERE ENTITLED TO A FULL SUBVENTION.

HOWEVER, THE SUBVENTION SUM WAS CALCULATED ACCORDING TO A MODEL SYSTEM, WITH THE RESULT THAT THE AGENCIES USUALLY SUSTAINED A DEFICIT, HE SAID.

HE THEREFORE URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO BE MORE REALISTIC IN COSTING THE MODEL SYSTEM, AND TO TAKE VARYING SALARY SCALES AND SERVICES INTO CONSIDERATION.

MR LI ALSO POINTED OUT THAT PERSONAL EMOLUMENTS IN REGARD TO SOCIAL CENTRES FOR THE ELDERLY WERE ENTITLED TO ONLY 70 PER CENT OF THE MODEL SUBVENTION.

/HE SAID

HE SAID HE FELT THAT THIS LEVEL OF SUBVENTION SHOULD BE RAISED TO AT LEAST 100 PER CENT TO LESSEN THE AGENCIES' BURDEN IN PAYING STAFF SALARIES, AND TO ELIMINATE THE NEED FOR THEM TO TURN TO THE PUBLIC AND TO THE COMMUNITY CHEST FOR THE BALANCE IN FUNDS.

ON THE ANNUAL REVIEW OF SUBVENTIONS FOR AGENCIES' PROGRAMMES AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES, MR LI SAID A MUCH MORE REALISTIC ASSESSMENT BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT WAS NEEDED SO THAT AGENCIES COULD RECEIVE INCREASES AT THE VERY LEAST ON A PAR WITH THE RATE OF INFLATION.

HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT SHOULD PAY OUT SUBVENTIONS ON A PROMPT MONTHLY BASIS INSTEAD OF ON A QUARTERLY BASIS, OR ALTERNATIVELY SHOULD PROVIDE FUNDS TO ENABLE THE AGENCIES TO CARRY OUT THE ADDITIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE AND ACCOUNTING WORK INVOLVED IN REPAYMENT OF INTEREST ON SUBVENTION FUNDS.

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POLICY SHOULD TAKE POSITIVE APPROACH
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HONG KONG'S FUTURE POLICY ON SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY SHOULD BE A POSITIVE ONE OF COMMUNITY CARE RATHER THAN A PASSIVE ONE OF RELIEF.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE HON CHUNG PUI-LAM IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON CARE AND SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY.

HE SAID THE PRINCIPLE OF SUCH NEW POLICY SHOULD AIM AT ASSISTING THOSE AGED 60 OR OVER TO FEND FOR THEMSELVES.

MR CHUNG PUT FORWARD THREE SUGGESTIONS IN THIS RESPECT.

FIRSTLY, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SPEED UP ITS EXPANSION PROGRAMME AND IMPROVE THE SERVICES OF THAT COMMUNITY NURSING SERVICE CENTRES OFFERED TO THE ELDERLY.

AT PRESENT, THERE WERE ONLY 45 SUCH CENTRES IN THE TERRITORY AND THE RANGE OF THEIR SERVICES WAS INADEQUATE.

/IF ACCOMMODATION

IF ACCOMMODATION UNITS AND THE RANGE OF SERVICES WERE INCREASED, MR CHUNG BELIEVED THE HEALTH OF THE ELDERLY COULD BE PROTECTED DIRECTLY AND THE DEMAND FOR HOSPITAL BEDS AND OUT-PATIENT CLINIC SERVICES WOULD BE REDUCED INDIRECTLY.

A COMPREHENSIVE MEDICAL SERVICE SCHEME COULD BE SET UP FOR THE ELDERLY IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN THE SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE COMMUNITY NURSING CENTRES. THIS COULD BE IMPLEMENTED ON A REGIONAL BASIS.

SECONDLY, MR CHUNG PROPOSED THAT CENTRES FOR THE ELDERLY SHOULD BE DEVELOPED IN PROPORTION TO DEMOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION.

+THIS SHOULD PREFERABLY BE BASED ON AN INTEGRATION OF HOME CARE AND COMMUNITY NURSING SERVICES WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE ELDERLY WHO JOIN THE CENTRES TO SPEND THE NIGHT WITH THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS,+ HE SAID.

TURNING TO GOVERNMENT'S PLAN TO SET UP ONE CENTRE FOR EVERY 30 000 ELDERLY PERSONS, MR CHUNG SAID THE SIMPLEST AND QUICKEST WAY TO MATERIALISE THIS PLAN WAS TO SELECT SUITABLE PRIVATE PREMISES FOR THE PROVISION OF HIGH-QUALITY SERVICES.

THIRDLY, MR CHUNG SAID THE STANDARD OF EQUIPMENT, STAFFING, CARE SERVICES AND SAFETY MEASURES IN PRIVATE HOMES FOR THE AGED SHOULD BE CLOSELY MONITORED.

HE SAID A CODE OF PRACTICE WHICH WAS NOT ENFORCED BY THE LAW WOULD NOT BE EFFECTIVE.

HE THEREFORE SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD GRANT A SPECIAL ALLOWANCE TO ELDERLY RESIDENTS IN PRIVATE HOMES, PROVIDE SUBSIDIES AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO PROPERLY RUN PRIVATE HOMES AND GIVE GUIDANCE AND ASSISTANCE TO THOSE HOMES WHICH REQUIRED IMPROVEMENTS, BEFORE ENOUGH PLACES COULD BE PROVIDED BY GOVERNMENT-SUBVENTED HOMES.

+ACTUALLY, MOST OF OUR ELDERLY RESIDENTS WHO ARE OVER 60 YEARS OLD ARE STILL VERY ENERGETIC,+ HE SAID.

+THEY SELDOM WITHDRAW FROM TAKING PART IN ACTIVITIES EVEN AFTER THEY HAVE BEEN 'FORCED' TO RETIRE FROM WORK.+

THROUGH A SECURITY PROGRAMME FEATURING PROGRESSIVE SUBVENTION AND SUITABLE GUIDANCE, THE VALUABLE KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF THE VETERANS COULD TILL BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY.

MR CHUNG ALSO WELCOMED THE INTRODUCTION OF A +HOUSING SCHEME FOR THE ELDERLY+ IN NEWLY COMPLETED HOUSING ESTATES.

HE ADDED THAT IT WAS HIGH TIME TO CONSIDER MAKING ARRANGEMENTS TO FURTHER RAISE THE DEPENDENT PARENT ALLOWANCE AND TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND OLD AGE ALLOWANCES.

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ELDERLY SERVICES FAIL TO MEET GROWING NEEDS
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SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMMES FOR THE ELDERLY ARE LAGGING BEHIND THE GROWING NEEDS OF THE AGED POPULATION IN HONG KONG, THE HON HUI YIN-FAT SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON CARE AND SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY, MR HUI ATTRIBUTED THE SITUATION TO THE ABSENCE OF REGULAR REVIEWS ON THE PROGRAMME PLAN ON SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY.

HE SAID THE LACK OF AN OPEN FORUM HAD PREVENTED BOTH VOLUNTARY AGENCIES AND GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS FROM EXAMINING DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED IN IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMME PLAN, IDENTIFY LOOPHOLES AND SEEK ADJUSTMENTS OF THE PLAN.

HE ALSO SAID THERE HAD BEEN POOR CO-ORDINATION AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES INVOLVED IN PROVIDING DIFFERENT TYPES OF SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY.

HE SAID HE SUPPORTED DR THE HON HO KAM-FAI'S CALL FOR A WHOLISTIC REVIEW ON THE OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES OF GOVERNMENT POLICY ON CARE FOR THE AGED, TO BE FOLLOWED BY REGULAR PROGRAMME PLAN REVIEWS.

MR HUI POINTED OUT THAT THE CHANGING NEEDS AND PROFILES OF THE ELDERLY POPULATION AS A RESULT OF RAPID SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHANGES IN HONG KONG WERE LIKELY TO PRODUCE SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND THREATEN HONG KONG'S STABILITY AND PROSPERITY.

HE URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO DESIGN A WIDE RANGE OF SERVICE PROGRAMMES TO MEET THE HETEROGENEOUS NEEDS OF BOTH THE PROVIDERS AND RECEIVERS OF SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY.

+THE SOONER WE CAN HARNESS THE FORSEEABLE PROBLEMS BEFORE THEY GROW OUT OF PROPORTION, THE BETTER IT WILL BE FOR OURSELVES AND OUR SENIOR CITIZENS,+ HE SAID.

NOTING THAT THE CURRENT SOCIAL WORK TREND WAS TO ENABLE THE ELDERLY TO REMAIN AS LONG AS POSSIBLE AS MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY, MR HUI SAID HE WAS DISAPPOINTED THAT THERE WERE INADEQUATE FORMAL SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE AND SAID ALL CATEGORIES OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES WERE IN URGENT NEED OF EXPANSION.

+SINCE CARING FOR THE AGED INVOLVED HIGH RISKS OF FINANCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL STRESS FOR THE CARE-GIVERS, PROLONGED SHORTAGE OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT IS IMPOSING ENORMOUS STRAINS ON BOTH THE ELDERLY AND THEIR FAMILIES,+ HE SAID.

/HE SAID

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HE SAID THAT GROSS INADEQUACY OF SUPPORT SERVICES LEFT FAMILIES WITH NO CHOICE BUT TO PUT THE FRAIL ELDERLY INTO INSTITUTIONS, THUS DEFEATING THE CARE IN COMMUNITY CONCEPT WHICH THE GOVERNMENT CLAIMED TO PROMOTE.

IN ORDER TO FULFIL THE COMMUNITY CARE OBJECTIVE, MR HUI MADE THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS:

FIRSTLY, A COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT NETWORK LINKING UP FORMAL AND INFORMAL SUPPORT SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED; SECONDLY, GAPS IN SERVICE PROVISIONS SHOULD BE IDENTIFIED AND STEPS TAKEN TO INCREASE THE NUMBER AND RANGE OF SERVICE PROVISIONS; THIRDLY, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD GIVE SUPPORT TO INNOVATIVE SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY SUCH AS OUTREACHING SERVICE AND RESPITE SERVICES FOR CARE GIVERS; FOURTHLY, STAFF AND RESOURCES SHOULD BE ALLOCATED TO VOLUNTARY AGENCIES TO PROVIDE MORE SERVICES TO FAMILIES; AND LASTLY APART FROM TAX REDUCTIONS, OTHER INCENTIVES SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO ENCOURAGE FAMILIES TO CARE FOR THE OLD.

MR HUI SAID ALTHOUGH COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES WOULD MAKE LIFE EASIER FOR THOSE ELDERLY WHO COULD LEAD AN INDEPENDENT SOCIAL LIFE, THEY COULD NOT IMPROVE THOSE CHRONICALLY-ILL AND BED-RIDDEN ELDERLY.

HE NOTED THAT THERE WERE A SHORTFALL OF 1 590 INFIRMARY PLACES AND AN UNMET DEMAND FOR INTENSIVE CARE FOR 4 698 APPLICANTS ON THE WAITING LIST FOR CARE AND ATTENTION HOMES IN 1985 AND URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO PAY IMMEDIATE ATTENTION TO THE SITUATION.

MR HUI SAID THAT INCOME MAINTENANCE FOR RETIRED PERSONS WAS ANOTHER PROBLEM THAT WOULD GROW WITH THE INCREASING AGED POPULATION.

+WITH MORE AND MORE ELDERLY GETTING LITTLE OR NO SUPPORT FROM THEIR FAMILIES, TO MAINTAIN A DECENT LIVING STANDARD WITHOUT HAVING TO DEPEND ON PUBLIC WELFARE REQUIRES A COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAMME IN THE FORM OF A CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID THAT A CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME NOT ONLY GAVE PEOPLE HUMAN DIGNITY BUT ALSO ENSURED BETTER PRODUCTIVITY IN THE LIGHT OF SECURED BENEFITS AFTER RETIREMENT.

REFERRING TO THE RECENTLY RELEASED CODE OF PRACTICE FOR PRIVATE HOMES, MR HUI SAID HE REGRETTED THAT IT ONLY CONTAINED THE MINIMUM STANDARDS AND FELT THESE SHOULD BE RAISED TO THE SAME LEVEL AS OLD AGE HOMES RUN BY SUBVENTED WELFARE AGENCIES.

SINCE THE CODE OF PRACTICE DID NOT HAVE ANY MANDATORY POWER, HE SUGGESTED THAT THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT SHOULD ADOPT MORE POSITIVE MEASURES TO ENCOURAGE VOLUNTARY REGISTRATION OF PRIVATE OLD AGE HOMES WHICH MET THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS OF THE CODE.

HE ADDED THAT PUBLIC EDUCATION WAS NEEDED TO ENABLE CONSUMERS TO ASSESS AND MONITOR THE QUALITY OF SERVICE, AND TO GIVE THE PUBLIC MORE CONFIDENCE IN SEEKING RESIDENTIAL SERVICES FOR THEIR ELDERLY.

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SET UP PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME FOR ELDERLY
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IT IS NOW THE RIGHT TIME TO MAKE PREPARATIONS FOR SETTING UP A PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME FOR THE ELDERLY AS WE CAN NO LONGER RELY SOLELY ON PUBLIC ASSISTANCE SERVICES TO SOLVE THEIR FINANCIAL PROBLEM, THE HON ROSANNA TAM SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE DEBATE ON ELDERLY SERVICES MRS TAM SAID THAT, THROUGH SOME SORT OF CONTRIBUTION TO THE SCHEME THE AGED COULD MAINTAIN A CERTAIN SOURCE OF FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE AFTER RETIREMENT, THUS REDUCING THEIR RELIANCE ON SOCIETY.

SHE SUGGESTED THAT THE PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME BE ESTABLISHED THROUGH LEGISLATION.

+A COMPREHENSIVE PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME SHOULD BE PROMULGATED, REQUIRING EACH AND EVERY COMPANY TO ESTABLISH AND MANAGE ITS OWN SCHEME.

+THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT IS THAT ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN TO ENSURE THAT WHEN AN EMPLOYEE CHANGES JOB OR OCCUPATION, HIS PREVIOUS CONTRIBUTIONS AND YEARS OF SERVICE WILL BE PUT INTO THE RECORD,+ SHE SAID.

MRS TAM SAID SHE FIRMLY BELIEVED THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME WOULD NOT ONLY HELP SOLVE THE FINANCIAL PROBLEM OF THE AGED BUT ALSO INDUCE THE PUBLIC TO SAVE MORE MONEY AT A TIME WHEN HONG KONG WAS CONFRONTED WITH AN AGEING POPULATION.

SHE POINTED OUT THAT THE CRUX OF THE PRESENT PROBLEM OF THE ELDERLY LAY IN THE LACK OF FINANCIAL RESOURCES WHICH PROHIBITED OLD PEOPLE FROM CHOOSING THEIR PREFERRED WAY OF LIVING AND DEPRIVED THEM OF THEIR FAMILY AND SOCIAL STATUS.

THEY WERE EASILY NEGLECTED AND FORGOTTEN, SHE ADDED.

MRS TAM SAID BEFORE A PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME WAS SET UP, A FEASIBLE WAY TO IMPROVE THE ELDERLY'S LIVING CONDITION WAS TO REVIEW THE AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE GIVEN TO THEM AND EXTEND THE SCOPE OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE.

SHE PREDICTED THAT BY THE 21ST CENTURY, THE NUMBER OF OLD PEOPLE AGED 65 AND ABOVE WOULD INCREASE TO 720 000.

+BY THEN THE EXPENDITURE ON PROVIDING SUPPORT SERVICES TO THE ELDERLY WOULD INCREASE TO \$8 BILLION WHICH WOULD POSE A CONSIDERABLE ECONOMIC BURDEN ON THE COMMUNITY,+ SHE SAID.

THEREFORE, SHE SAID THE INTRODUCTION OF A PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME WAS THE BEST LONG-TERM SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM.

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NOTIFICATION REGISTER FOR BEDSPACE APARTMENTS PROPOSED

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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE URGENT STEPS TO ESTABLISH A NOTIFICATION SYSTEM TO REGISTER BED-SPACE APARTMENTS, THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

OPERATORS OF THESE APARTMENTS, OFTEN REFERRED TO AS +CAGE-MEN'S HOSTELS+, WOULD THEN BE REQUIRED TO FURNISH PARTICULARS FOR A SIMPLE ASSESSMENT OF THE SAFETY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS, HE SAID.

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON CARE AND SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY, MR CHEONG-LEEN SAID THERE WERE SEVERAL HUNDRED SUCH APARTMENTS, ACCOMMODATING 10 000 TO 15 000 RESIDENTS, ABOUT 25 PER CENT OF WHOM WERE AGED 60 OR OVER.

MOST OF THESE APARTMENTS WERE POTENTIAL DEATH-TRAPS IF A FIRE OCCURRED ANYWHERE IN THE BUILDING WHERE THESE HOSTEL RESIDENTS LIVED IN A TERRIBLY OVERCROWDED SITUATION, HE SAID.

THEREFORE, MR CHEONG-LEEN PROPOSED TO SET UP A NOTIFICATION REGISTER, WHICH WOULD BE KEPT BY THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT.

AN INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT, SHOULD BE SET UP WITH THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT WITH OTHER DIRECTLY CONCERNED DEPARTMENTS PARTICIPATING, HE SAID.

+THE COMMITTEE WILL MEET AS AND WHEN REQUIRED, SO THAT ALL CONCERNED PARTIES CAN BE INFORMED OF WHAT ACTION THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT INTEND TO TAKE IN CONNECTION WITH THOSE BEDSPACE APARTMENTS WHICH REPRESENT THE GRAVEST FIRE HAZARDS, AND JOINT ACTION TAKEN ACCORDINGLY,+ HE SAID.

MR CHEONG-LEEN ALSO URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO CONSIDER CHANGING THE FIRE SERVICES ORDINANCE IF THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT REQUIRED MORE STATUTORY POWER TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST FIRE RISKS CAUSED BY GROSS OVERCROWDING IN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS IN OLD TENEMENT BUILDINGS.

ON OLD AGE ALLOWANCE AND OTHER PUBLIC ASSISTANCE GRANTS, MR CHEONG-LEEN SUGGESTED THAT THE CURRENT PAYMENT PROCEDURES BE REVIEWED TO MAKE IT AS CONVENIENT AS POSSIBLE FOR ELDERLY RESIDENTS TO RETIRE IN CHINA AND TO CONTINUE RECEIVING THEIR ALLOWANCES THUS RELIEVING TO SOME EXTENT THE OVERCROWDED LIVING CONDITIONS IN URBAN AREAS.

/HE SAID

HE SAID HE ALSO BELIEVED IT WAS WORTHWHILE FOR GOVERNMENT TO INVITE A PUBLIC REVIEW OF ITS POLICIES AND PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY IN THE LIGHT OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES AND CHANGING ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES.

+THIS PUBLIC REVIEW NEED NOT BE BY WAY OF A GREEN PAPER, BUT MORE IN THE NATURE OF AN INTERIM REVIEW PENDING A FUTURE FULL-SCALE REVIEW ON THE NEEDS FOR THE NEXT DECADE,+ HE SAID.

+I SUGGEST THAT THE ADMINISTRATION PREPARE A GENERAL INFORMATION PAPER ON THE SUBJECT AND INVITE PUBLIC RESPONSE FROM ALL SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY,+ HE ADDED.

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IMPORTANCE OF ELDERLY POLICY REVIEW STRESSED
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THE IMPORTANCE TO REVIEW THE POLICY ON PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY AND TO HAVE A MORE LONG-TERM PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUCH SERVICES WAS STRESSED BY THE HON TAI CHIN-WAH TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE, MR TAI SAID THIS WAS NECESSARY BECAUSE HONG KONG'S POPULATION WAS FACING A CHANGING AGE STRUCTURE WITH THE ELDERLY OCCUPYING AN INCREASING PROPORTION.

MR TAI POINTED OUT THAT MOST OLD PEOPLE IN SOCIETY WERE NOT WELL-INFORMED OF THE KIND OF WELFARE SERVICES THEY WERE ENTITLED TO AND THE VARIOUS CHANNELS THEY MIGHT APPROACH FOR HELP DUE TO THEIR POOR EDUCATION STANDARD.

HE SAID OLD PEOPLE LIVING ALONE OR WITH OTHER OLD PEOPLE ENCOUNTERED ALL SORTS OF PROBLEMS AND IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT APPROPRIATE SERVICES WERE PROVIDED TO THOSE WHO NEEDED THEM.

HE SAID HE BELIEVED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD PLAY A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN THE PROVISION OF HOSTEL ACCOMMODATION AND RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES, AND IN ALLOCATING UNITS FOR THE ELDERLY IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES.

/HE SUGGESTED

HE SUGGESTED THAT MORE TAX ALLOWANCE SHOULD BE GIVEN TO PEOPLE WHO TOOK CARE OF THEIR PARENTS FINANCIALLY.

MR TAI NOTED THAT THE INADEQUATE PROVISION OF INFIRMARY PLACES HAD RESULTED IN MANY OLD PEOPLE CONTINUING TO OCCUPY ALREADY CROWDED HOSPITAL WARDS WHEN THEY COULD BE CARED FOR IN LESS EXPENSIVE INFIRMARIES.

HE SAID THE BUILDING OF MORE INFIRMARIES WAS A MORE COST-EFFECTIVE WAY TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM.

MR TAI SUGGESTED THAT CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO FURTHER EXPAND THE COMMUNITY NURSING PROGRAMME TO PROVIDE HOUSE-CARE HEALTH SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY SO AS TO EASE THE SHORTAGE OF PLACES IN HOSPITALS AND INFIRMARIES.

HE SAID THAT COMMUNITY PROGRAMMES SHOULD ALSO BE PROVIDED FOR THE ELDERLY TO INTEGRATE THEM BACK TO THE COMMUNITY AND URGED THAT BETTER PUBLICITY BE GIVEN TO THESE SERVICES.

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ASSISTANCE OFFERED TO FAMILIES OF BUS ACCIDENT VICTIMS
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THE FAMILIES OF THE VICTIMS IN THE RECENT DOUBLE-DECKER BUS ACCIDENT IN TUEN MUN HAVE BEEN OFFERED ASSISTANCE TO COPE WITH THE TRAGIC SITUATION, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON HARNAM GREWAL, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TAI CHIN-WAH, MR GREWAL SAID THE ASSISTANCE INCLUDED COUNSELLING, TEMPORARY PLACEMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN, ADVICE ON OTHER COMMUNITY RESOURCES SUCH AS LEGAL AID AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE UNDER THE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS ASSISTANCE SCHEME (TAVA).

FAMILIES WITH FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES WERE BEING ASSISTED TO APPLY FOR WAIVER OF HOSPITAL CHARGES AND FOR CASH GRANTS FROM CHARITABLE TRUST FUNDS, HE ADDED.

MR GREWAL WENT ON TO SAY THAT UNDER THE TAVA SCHEME, BURIAL GRANTS OF UP TO \$3 000 FOR EACH VICTIM HAD BEEN OFFERED, AS HAD CASH GRANTS TO MEET OTHER NEEDS EITHER UNDER THE SCHEME OR FROM OTHER CHARITABLE TRUST FUNDS.

/TO DATE,

TO DATE, FOUR FAMILIES WERE RECEIVING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, AND A NUMBER OF FAMILIES CONCERNED WERE CONSIDERING WHETHER THEY WISHED TO SEEK SUCH ASSISTANCE.

MR GREWAL SAID ONE PERSON HAD APPLIED FOR LEGAL AID TO DATE, AND OTHERS MIGHT DO SO AT THE LEGAL AID DEPARTMENT'S MAIN OFFICE AT 66 QUEENSWAY OR AT THE BRANCH OFFICE AT RITZ BUILDING, AND ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE MADE ON REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS TO BE COMPLETED AT THE HOSPITAL.

TURNING TO INVESTIGATION OF THE ACCIDENT, MR GREWAL SAID THIS WAS BEING CARRIED OUT BY THE POLICE.

UP TO 100 STATEMENTS WOULD HAVE TO BE TAKEN AND THE EVIDENCE OF EXPERTS COLLECTED, INCLUDING FORENSIC EVIDENCE, HE SAID.

ON COMPLETION OF THE INVESTIGATION, A REPORT WOULD BE MADE TO THE CORONER WHO WOULD DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT A PUBLIC HEARING SHOULD BE HELD, AND THE POLICE FILE WOULD BE REFERRED TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S CHAMBERS FOR CONSIDERATION ON WHETHER THERE WERE ANY GROUNDS FOR PROSECUTION.

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE REPORT ITSELF WOULD NOT BE MADE PUBLIC OTHER THAN THROUGH THE COURTS OF HONG KONG, MR GREWAL SAID.

STILL ON THE QUESTION OF BUSES, MR GREWAL SAID THE MEASURES ADOPTED BY GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE VEHICLE SAFETY INCLUDED DESIGN APPROVAL FOR EACH BUS TYPE; FULL INSPECTION OF EACH INDIVIDUAL BUS BEFORE LICENSING; ANNUAL VEHICLE INSPECTION; A MAJOR OVERHAUL OF BUSES AT INTERVALS OF BETWEEN THREE TO FIVE YEARS FOLLOWED BY A MORE SEARCHING EXAMINATION BY THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT; SPOT-CHECKS ON BUSES ON SAFETY ASPECTS; AND MONITORING OF MAINTENANCE FACILITIES AND MAINTENANCE PROGRAMMES OF THE OPERATORS.

MR GREWAL SAID MEASURES WERE ALSO TAKEN TO PROMOTE THE SAFE OPERATION OF BUSES. THESE INCLUDED AGREEMENT WITH THE COMPANIES ON BUS DRIVER TRAINING PROGRAMMES; TESTING OF BUS DRIVERS FOR LICENSING; ADJUSTMENT OF SCHEDULES TO MEET TRAFFIC CONDITIONS; TRIAL RUNS USING THE PROPOSED BUS TYPE ON A PROPOSED NEW ROUTE; DESIGN OF ROADS TO ENSURE SAFETY; AND ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION AND PROMPT REMEDIAL ACTION WHERE NECESSARY.

MR GREWAL ASSURED THE COUNCIL THAT ANY LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM THE TUEN MUN BUS ACCIDENT WOULD BE FULLY TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT AND REFLECTED IN GOVERNMENT'S PROCEDURES OR REQUIREMENTS, OR TAKEN UP WITH THE BUS COMPANIES, AS APPROPRIATE.

BUILDING SITE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS TIGHTENED
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THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT ALL GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS NOW REQUIRE CONTRACTORS TO TAKE PROPER PRECAUTIONS TO FENCE, GUARD, LIGHT AND DRAIN ALL OPEN-PITS AND TRENCH EXCAVATIONS WHICH COULD POSE A DANGER TO THE PUBLIC, PARTICULARLY TO CHILDREN.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON WONG WANG-FAT, MR BARNES SAID IN ORDER TO ENFORCE THESE REQUIREMENTS INSTRUCTIONS HAD BEEN ISSUED TO ALL STAFF CONCERNED WITH THE CONTROL OF SITES.

THESE INSTRUCTIONS DREW ATTENTION TO THE NECESSARY STEPS TO BE TAKEN TO FENCE EXCAVATIONS ADEQUATELY AND TO PREVENT PONDS FORMING ON SITES.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFETY ON PRIVATE SITES LAY WITH AUTHORISED PERSONS AND CONTRACTORS. A NOTE HAD BEEN ISSUED TO AUTHORISED PERSONS DRAWING ATTENTION TO THE REQUIREMENT FOR FENCING OF SITES AND OTHER MEASURES TO SAFEGUARD THE PUBLIC.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTRUCTION SITES (SAFETY) REGULATIONS, ENACTED IN 1983, REQUIRED ADEQUATE FENCING OF EXCAVATIONS TO PREVENT ACCIDENTS, HE SAID.

IN ADDITION, THE NEW FACTORY AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (SAFETY OFFICER AND SAFETY SUPERVISORS) REGULATIONS, SHORTLY TO COME INTO FORCE, WOULD IMPOSE A NEW REQUIREMENT FOR SAFETY OFFICERS ON CONSTRUCTION SITES.

+A FULL-TIME SAFETY OFFICER WILL HAVE TO BE EMPLOYED ON ALL CONSTRUCTION SITES HAVING MORE THAN 200 WORKERS, AND ANY SITE WITH MORE THAN 20 WORKERS WILL REQUIRE A SAFETY SUPERVISOR,+ HE SAID.

THESE OFFICERS WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING THAT OPEN PITS AT CONSTRUCTION SITES WERE MADE SAFE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAW AND CONTRACT CONDITIONS TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF WORKERS AND THE PUBLIC.

+I AM SATISFIED THAT THE MEASURES BEING TAKEN TO REDUCE HAZARDS ON CONSTRUCTION SITES TO A MINIMUM ARE ADEQUATE,+ MR BARNES SAID.

+HOWEVER, IN CONCLUSION, I WOULD SAY THAT, NOTWITHSTANDING THE ADDITIONAL LEGAL REQUIREMENTS INTRODUCED IN RECENT YEARS TO MINIMISE RISKS, CONSTRUCTION SITES ARE DANGEROUS PLACES, PARTICULARLY TO CHILDREN.

+THEY SHOULD NEVER BE CONSIDERED AS 'ADVENTURE PLAYGROUNDS', AND PARENTS ALSO SHOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO INSTIL INTO THEIR CHILDREN THE DANGERS OF ENTERING SUCH SITES,+ HE SAID.

STEPS TAKEN AT PLANNING STAGE TO CONTROL ROAD NOISE
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MEASURES ARE TAKEN AT THE PLANNING STAGE OF NEW ROAD WORKS TO CONTAIN NOISE AND OTHER POLLUTION BY CAREFUL SELECTION OF THE ROUTES AND BY SITING NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AWAY FROM THE ROAD.

THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN ANSWERING QUESTIONS FROM DR THE HON DANIEL TSE ON NOISE POLLUTION AFFECTING RESIDENTS LIVING ON BOTH SIDES OF THE FLYOVER IN KOWLOON CITY ROAD.

DR TSE QUOTED A DISTRICT BOARD SURVEY WHICH FOUND THE NOISE LEVELS EXCEEDED THE MAXIMUM TOLERATION LIMIT STIPULATED IN THE HONG KONG PLANNING STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES.

MR BARNES SAID IN ADDITION, DURING THE DESIGN STAGE, AN ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW WAS NOW CARRIED OUT ON ALL NEW MAJOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS INCLUDING HIGHWAYS AND FLYOVERS.

THE PURPOSE WAS TO ENSURE THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS STIPULATED IN THE PLANNING STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES PUBLISHED IN NOVEMBER 1985 WERE MET, WHEREVER PRACTICABLE, BY THE INCORPORATION OF APPROPRIATE NOISE REDUCTION MEASURES.

+SO WE ARE NOW DOING ALL THAT IS REASONABLY POSSIBLE TO AVOID SERIOUS NOISE PROBLEMS WHEN WE BUILD FLYOVERS,+ HE SAID.

THIS HAD NOT ALWAYS BEEN THE CASE IN THE PAST AND COMPLETE AVOIDANCE OF THE PROBLEM HAD NOT BEEN POSSIBLE DUE TO VERY CROWDED CONDITIONS.

+THE ONLY REAL ANSWER TO THE EXTREME CASES, IN WHICH I WOULD INCLUDE KOWLOON CITY ROAD, LIES IN THE RE-PLANNING AND RE-DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUILDINGS AFFECTED,+ MR BARNES SAID.

+BUT WE CAN ONLY ACHIEVE THIS, IF AT ALL, FAIRLY SLOWLY.+

HE SAID HE DID NOT THINK THAT COMPENSATION, EITHER STATUTORY OR EX-GRATIA, WAS THE ANSWER.

SINCE THE KOWLOON CITY ROAD FLYOVER SYSTEM WAS COMPLETED, OWNERSHIP AND OCCUPATION OF MANY OF THE PROPERTIES AFFECTED HAD CHANGED AND DOUBTLESS WOULD CONTINUE TO DO SO.

+I SEE NO WAY IN WHICH A SYSTEM OF EITHER STATUTORY OR EX-GRATIA COMPENSATION PAYMENTS COULD BE OPERATED,+ HE SAID.

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ASBESTOS IN BUS SHELTERS NOT APPRECIABLE HEALTH HAZARD
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BUS SHELTERS WHICH CONTAIN ASBESTOS DO NOT POSE ANY APPRECIABLE HEALTH HAZARD TO THE PUBLIC, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

ANSWERING A QUESTION FROM THE HON PAULINE NG, MR BARNES SAID THE ASBESTOS WAS CONTAINED IN AN ASBESTOS CEMENT ROOFING MATERIAL WHERE THE ASBESTOS FIBRES WERE HELD FAST BY THE CEMENT.

+RELEASE OF FIBRES INTO THE AIR WOULD ONLY OCCUR IF THE MATERIAL WAS BADLY DAMAGED,+ MR BRANES SAID.

THE BUS COMPANIES WHO WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR BUILDING THE SHELTERS ALSO MAINTAINED THEM, AND IF THERE WAS ANY NEED TO REPLACE ROOFING PANELS, A SUBSTITUTE WHICH DID NOT CONTAIN ASBESTOS CEMENT WAS NOW USED.

+IN THE COURSE OF TIME, UNDER THE NORMAL MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME, ALL ASBESTOS CEMENT WILL ULTIMATELY BE REPLACED,+ HE SAID.

+NO ASBESTOS MATERIALS ARE NOW USED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW BUS SHELTERS.

+SO I THINK I CAN CONFIDENTLY ASSURE MRS NG THAT BUS SHELTERS ARE SAFE TO THE PUBLIC,+ HE SAID.

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HONORARIUM FOR DB MEMBERS TO BE REVIEWED
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A REVIEW ON THE LEVEL OF HONORARIUM FOR DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS WOULD BE CARRIED OUT NEXT YEAR, THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DONALD LIAO, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM DR THE HON CONRAD LAM IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR LIAO SAID IT WAS THE INTENTION OF GOVERNMENT TO INTRODUCE A MECHANISM WHEREBY THE LEVEL OF HONORARIUM FOR DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS WILL BE REVIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF THE RESULTS OF THE PAY TREND SURVEY CONDUCTED EVERY YEAR.

+THIS MEANS THAT A REVIEW WILL BE CARRIED OUT EARLY NEXT YEAR SO THAT AN INCREASE IN THE LEVEL OF HONORARIUM WILL TAKE EFFECT FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR,+ HE ADDED.

/MR LIAO

MR LIAO SAID THE PROPOSED ARRANGEMENT WOULD ALLOW REVIEWS ON A SIMILAR BASIS TO BE CONDUCTED AT REGULAR INTERVALS IN THE FUTURE.

HE SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD ALSO RECOMMEND THE IMMEDIATE INTRODUCTION OF A MONTHLY RENT ALLOWANCE TO ASSIST BOARD MEMBERS IN SETTING UP THEIR OWN OFFICES FOR THE PURPOSE OF MEETING THEIR CONSTITUENTS AND CARRYING OUT OTHER ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THEIR WORK AS DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS.

THESE PROPOSALS WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL EARLY NEXT MONTH, HE ADDED.

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IMMEDIATE ACTION TAKEN ON DANGEROUS SIGNS
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WHEN THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT RECEIVES INFORMATION, EITHER FROM THE PUBLIC OR FROM OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, THAT A SIGN APPEARS TO BE DANGEROUS IT IS IMMEDIATELY INSPECTED BY A BUILDING SURVEYOR, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN, MR BARNES SAID THAT IF THIS CONFIRMED THAT ACTION WAS REQUIRED TO MAKE THE SIGN SAFE, A NOTICE WAS SERVED ON THE OWNER OF THE SIGN REQUIRING IT TO BE REMOVED OR REPAIRED WITHIN A SPECIFIED TIME.

+IF THE OWNER CANNOT BE FOUND, OR IF HE DOES NOT TAKE THE NECESSARY ACTION WITHIN THE SPECIFIED TIME, THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT ARRANGES FOR THE SIGN TO BE REMOVED OR REPAIRED, AND WHERE POSSIBLE RECOVERS THE COST FROM THE OWNER.+

MR BARNES SAID IF THE INSPECTION SHOWED THE SIGN TO BE IMMEDIATELY DANGEROUS, THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT WOULD HAVE IT REMOVED IMMEDIATELY, AGAIN SUBSEQUENTLY RECOVERING THE COSTS FROM THE OWNER.

+THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT TAKES SIMILAR ACTION TO REMOVE SIGNS THAT PRESENT A DANGER TO TRAFFIC OR OBSTRUCT TRAFFIC SIGNS ON REQUEST FROM THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT,+ HE ADDED.

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NEW BEAUTY TREATMENT, FITNESS TECHNIQUES BEING MONITORED
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THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE MONITORING NEW TECHNIQUES INTRODUCED FOR BEAUTY TREATMENT AND PHYSICAL FITNESS TO DETERMINE WHETHER ANY FORM OF REGULATION WAS REQUIRED, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LEE YU-TAI, MR CHAMBERS SAID TREATMENT AT BEAUTY TREATMENT CENTRES INVOLVING MEDICAL AND SURGICAL OPERATIONS OR THE USE OF DRUGS WAS GOVERNED BY THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION ORDINANCE (CAP 161), THE PHARMACY AND POISONS ORDINANCE (CAP 138), AND ANTIBIOTICS ORDINANCE (CAP 137) AND COULD ONLY BE PERFORMED BY PERSONS QUALIFIED AND REGISTERED UNDER THOSE ORDINANCES.

+THE MAJORITY OF PHYSICAL FITNESS CENTRES ARE OPERATED AS PRIVATE CLUBS AND THE ACTIVITIES THEY PROMOTE, IF SUPERVISED BY TRAINED INSTRUCTORS AND IF PRECEDED BY A MEDICAL CHECK-UP, ARE CONSIDERED TO BE CONDUCIVE RATHER THAN HAZARDOUS TO HEALTH,+ HE SAID.

MR CHAMBERS ADDED THAT THERE WAS AT PRESENT NO LEGISLATION SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED TO REGULATE THE ACTIVITIES OF PHYSICAL FITNESS CENTRES OR ORGANISATIONS PURPORTING TO OFFER BEAUTY TREATMENT SERVICES.

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PROVIDENT FUND HAS FAR-REACHING IMPLICATIONS
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THE GOVERNMENT'S PRESENT POSITION TOWARDS THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND IS THAT BECAUSE OF ITS FAR-REACHING IMPLICATIONS, THE PROPOSAL NEEDS TO BE CONSIDERED WITH GREAT CARE, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HUI YIN-FAT, MR BRIDGE SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WAS NOW SEEKING THE VIEWS OF APPROPRIATE CONSULTATIVE BODIES, IN PARTICULAR THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD, WHICH REPRESENTED THE VIEWS OF BOTH EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS AND THE SOCIAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, WHICH REPRESENTED THE VIEWS OF A WIDE RANGE OF WELFARE ORGANISATIONS.

+SINCE THE PROPOSAL ALSO HAS FAR REACHING ECONOMIC, ACTUARIAL AND MONETARY IMPLICATIONS, THE ADMINISTRATION IS ALSO CONSULTING THREE BODIES WITH EXPERTISE IN THESE AREAS -- THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION OF BANKS, THE LIFE INSURANCE COUNCIL OF HONG KONG AND THE DISCUSSION GROUP ON THE HONG KONG ECONOMY,+ HE SAID.

WHEN ALL THESE VIEWS HAVE BEEN OBTAINED A DECISION WILL BE TAKEN AS TO WHAT FORM ANY FURTHER CONSULTATION SHOULD TAKE.

HE EMPHASISED THAT THE VIEWS OF COUNCIL MEMBERS WOULD BE SOUGHT BEFORE ANY DECISION WAS REACHED.

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OVERSEAS SCHOOLS NOT SUBJECT TO SCRUTINY
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OVERSEAS EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, WHICH ARE NOT PROVIDING ANY FORM OF SERVICE IN HONG KONG, BUT SEEKING ONLY TO ADVERTISE HERE, ARE NOT SUBJECT TO ANY FORM OF SCRUTINY, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LIU LIT-FOR, MR BRIDGE SAID AS THE INSTITUTIONS CONCERNED HAD NO LOCAL PRESENCE, IT WOULD NOT BE PRACTICABLE TO UNDERTAKE AN ASSESSMENT OF THEIR SERVICES.

AS TO WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT HAD PROVIDED REFERENCE MATERIALS ON THESE INSTITUTES IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF LOCAL STUDENTS WHO INTENDED TO STUDY ABROAD, MR BRIDGE SAID THERE WERE A NUMBER OF WAYS IN WHICH STUDENTS COULD OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT OVERSEAS INSTITUTIONS.

+THE OVERSEAS STUDENTS AND SCHOLARSHIP SECTION OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HAS A LARGE COLLECTION OF REFERENCE MATERIALS ON EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, THE COMMONWEALTH AND THE UNITED STATES.

+STUDENTS WISHING TO KNOW MORE ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDY OVERSEAS CAN SEEK DETAILED ADVICE FROM OFFICERS OF THE SECTION IN THE LIGHT OF THEIR OWN SPECIFIC NEEDS. SCHOOLS ARE REGULARLY ADVISED BY CIRCULAR OF THESE SERVICES,+ HE SAID.

MR BRIDGE POINTED OUT THAT IN ADDITION, THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT'S CAREERS EDUCATION SECTION, WHICH MAINTAINED CLOSE LIAISON WITH THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION OF CAREERS MASTERS AND GUIDANCE MASTERS, COULD ALSO ASSIST STUDENTS SEEKING INFORMATION ABOUT OVERSEAS STUDY.

HE ADDED THAT MOST OF THE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS MAINTAINED STOCKS OF REFERENCE MATERIALS FOR STUDENTS' USE, THE BRITISH COUNCIL COULD PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT A WIDE RANGE OF BRITISH INSTITUTIONS AND CONSULATES AND COMMISSIONS OF OVERSEAS COUNTRIES COULD ALSO BE APPROACHED.

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TELEPHONE APPOINTMENT FOR CLINIC PATIENTS SOON
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A TELEPHONE APPOINTMENT SYSTEM WILL BE ADOPTED AS STANDARD PRACTICE IN ALL GOVERNMENT SPECIALIST CLINICS SOON, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON CHIU HIN-KWONG, MR CHAMBERS SAID HE AGREED THAT SUCH A SYSTEM WOULD BE MORE EFFICIENT AND CONVENIENT TO PATIENTS ALTHOUGH IT WAS UNUSUAL FOR THEM TO HAVE TO WAIT FOR AS LONG AS HALF A DAY TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT.

HE SAID THE SYSTEM WAS ALREADY THE PRACTICE IN TWO OUT OF THE EIGHT SPECIALIST CLINICS AND THAT WITH EFFECT FROM NEXT MONTH IT WOULD BE ADOPTED IN ALL GOVERNMENT SPECIALIST CLINICS EXCEPT FOR THE SAI YING PUN JOCKEY CLUB CLINIC.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THAT BECAUSE OF THE LARGE NUMBER OF SESSIONS BEING OPERATED IN THIS CLINIC, IT WOULD TAKE A LITTLE LONGER TO INTRODUCE THE NEW ARRANGEMENTS.

+IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO OPERATE A TELEPHONE APPOINTMENT SYSTEM IN THIS CLINIC IN ABOUT THREE MONTHS' TIME,+ HE ADDED.

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TRADES REFERENCE IN OZP NOTES MAY BE DROPPED
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THE TOWN PLANNING BOARD WILL BE ASKED TO CONSIDER DELETING REFERENCE TO CERTAIN TRADES UNDER THE COLUMNS +USES ALWAYS PERMITTED+ AND +USES THAT MAY BE PERMITTED ON APPLICATION TO THE TOWN PLANNING BOARD+ IN NOTES ATTACHED TO OUTLINE ZONING PLANS.

THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, STATED THIS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON POON CHI-FAI.

MR POON HAD ASKED IN VIEW OF PUBLIC COMPLAINTS ABOUT LAW AND ORDER, AS WELL AS ENVIRONMENTAL AND NOISE PROBLEMS CREATED BY COMMERCIAL BATHHOUSES, MASSAGE ESTABLISHMENTS AND PRINTING-PUBLISHING AND ALLIED INDUSTRIES BEING OPERATED IN BUILDINGS IN COMMERCIAL-RESIDENTIAL AND RESIDENTIAL (A) ZONES, WOULD GOVERNMENT CONSIDER DELETING THE REFERENCES AS TO THE +USES+ IN THE NOTES ATTACHED TO OUTLINE ZONING PLANS.

/MR BARNES

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MR BARNES SAID THAT NOTES REGARDING USES WERE PARTS OF STATUTORY TOWN PLANS AND WERE APPROVED IN RESPECT OF EACH DRAFT PLAN PUBLISHED BY THE TOWN PLANNING BOARD.

HE ADDED THAT HE WOULD ACCORDINGLY ASK THE BOARD WHAT IT THOUGHT OF MR POON'S SUGGESTION.

MR BARNES SAID COMMERCIAL BATHHOUSES, MASSAGE ESTABLISHMENTS AND PRINTING-PUBLISHING BUSINESSES WERE A NECESSITY AND HAD TRADITIONALLY OPERATED IN BOTH COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL AREAS.

+MOREOVER BY NO MEANS ALL OF SUCH OPERATIONS GIVE ANY WORRIES TO THEIR NEIGHBOURS.

+THE BOARD WILL THUS HAVE TO CONSIDER A BALANCE BETWEEN THE VARIED INTERESTS INVOLVED AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF ANY SUCH AMENDMENTS TO THE NOTES,+ HE ADDED.

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ONE BILL PASSED
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THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES (AMENDMENT)(NO. 2) BILL 1986 WAS PASSED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

TWO OTHER BILLS -- THE PENALTIES FOR PRACTICE OF MEDICINE AND DENTISTRY BY UNREGISTERED PERSONS (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 1986 AND THE ANTIBIOTICS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986 WERE READ A SECOND TIME AND DEBATE ON THEM WAS ADJOURNED.

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED TO NOVEMBER 19.

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CS: MORE FACTS ON LOCALISATION SHORTLY
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THE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT HE WOULD GIVE MORE FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT LOCALISATION IN ABOUT 10 DAYS' TIME IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AT THE GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONY FOR THE HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL'S HIGH SCHOOL IN TAI TAM, HE SAID HE WOULD BE DEALING WITH LOCALISATION IN HIS SPEECH IN REPLY TO THE DEBATE ON THE MOTION OF THANKS.

SIR DAVID EMPHASISED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS FOLLOWING A POLICY WHICH HAD BEEN PURSUED OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME.

+WE ARE NOT RUSHING INTO THIS,+ HE SAID.

ON THE QUESTION OF GOVERNMENT OFFICERS EMPLOYED ON CONTRACT TERMS, THE CHIEF SECRETARY SAID: +THE PEOPLE WHO'RE ON CONTRACT, FOR THE MOST PART, ARE THERE BECAUSE THEY WANT TO BE ON CONTRACT AND TO RECEIVE THE BENEFITS OF CONTRACT SERVICE.

+THAT IS, AT THE END OF YOUR CONTRACT YOU'LL GET A CHOICE AND AN OPPORTUNITY TO LEAVE, IF YOU WISH, AND TAKE WITH YOU A GRATUITY.+

IN RESPONSE TO A SUGGESTION THAT CONTRACT STAFF WERE NOT ENCOURAGED TO APPLY TO BECOME PERMANENT AND PENSIONABLE CIVIL SERVANTS, SIR DAVID SAID THAT WHAT THE GOVERNMENT ADOPTED AS A POLICY WAS TO TRY AND LOOK SOME YEARS AHEAD TO SEE WHETHER THERE WAS A LOCAL OFFICER WHO WOULD HAVE REACHED THE NECESSARY AGE, EXPERIENCE AND QUALIFICATION TO FILL THAT POST.

+IF THAT IS SO, THEN OF COURSE THE QUESTION OF LOCALISATION OF THAT POST BECOMES A VERY REAL ONE,+ HE SAID.

BUT, HE ADDED, IN GENERAL THE NUMBER OF EXPATRIATES EMPLOYED BY THE GOVERNMENT NEXT YEAR WOULD PROBABLY BE GREATER THAN THE NUMBER EMPLOYED THIS YEAR.

THIS WAS BECAUSE OF THE EXPANSION OF GOVERNMENT WORK GENERALLY AND, OF COURSE, IN SOME CASES THE RENEWAL OF CONTRACTS, HE EXPLAINED.

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION ABOUT THE CONVERGENCE OF THE BASIC LAW, SIR DAVID SAID THE BASIC LAW WAS PURSUING A STEADY COURSE.

WHAT WAS IMPORTANT WAS THAT BY ABOUT 1989-90, THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG WOULD HAVE A FAIR IDEA OF WHAT THE BASIC LAW WAS GOING TO BE IN 1997 FOR THE SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION, HE SAID.

/+IT IS

+IT IS NOT SOMETHING WHICH I THINK THAT HONG KONG PEOPLE WOULD WISH TO RUSH. THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO GET IT RIGHT, BECAUSE IT WILL SET DOWN THE BASIC LAW AND FRAMEWORK FOR THE SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION FROM 1997 UNTIL THE YEAR 2047.

+AND I'M SURE NONE OF YOU WOULD WISH THAT PROCESS TO BE RUSHED,+ HE ADDED.

AS TO CONVERGENCE, SIR DAVID SAID THE GOVERNMENT'S GREEN PAPER ON THE REVIEW OF THE REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM WOULD BE PUBLISHED NEXT YEAR.

+AND IT IS PART OF THIS PROCESS OF GROWING TOGETHER AND MAKING SURE THAT THE SYSTEM WE HAVE IN HONG KONG BEFORE 1997 IS ONE WHICH IS COMPATIBLE WITH THE SYSTEM AFTER 1997. WE DON'T WANT ABRUPT CHANGES AND BREAKS IN 1997. SO IT IS A CAREFUL PROCESS.

+WE MUST ALL BE VERY PATIENT ABOUT IT AND WE MUST ALL THINK VERY CAREFULLY ABOUT IT. IT IS NOT SOMETHING TO TAKE UP EXTREME POSITIONS. IT IS SOMETHING WHICH ALL OF YOU AND ALL OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG, MUST THINK VERY CAREFULLY ABOUT,+ HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT HONG KONG PEOPLE MUST NOT JUST THINK ABOUT THE SUPERFICIAL, EXTREME PROBLEMS BUT ABOUT THE PROBLEMS OF DETAIL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY REFUTED A SUGGESTION THAT THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT IS GIVING THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY PREFERENCE BY GIVING HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL THE SITE TO BUILD THE NEW SCHOOL.

+NO, I THINK THE POLICY WHICH WE HAVE ADOPTED WITH REGARD TO INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS WHICH WISH TO SET UP IN HONG KONG IS THAT THE SCHOOL SHOULD HAVE IN IT A STREAM WHICH IS AVAILABLE TO HONG KONG PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN IF THEY WISH TO PURSUE EDUCATION THROUGH THE SCHOOLS, AND TO PROVIDE FOR ANY SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE COMMUNITY, AND WE'VE HAD THIS POLICY FOR A VERY LONG TIME. AS A RESULT, SCHOOLS LIKE THE GERMAN, SWISS SCHOOL AND SO ON HAVE BEEN BUILT.

+SOME SCHOOLS WHICH WISH TO PURSUE EDUCATION THROUGH THEIR OWN LANGUAGE AND WHICH DON'T OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY REALLY FOR HONG KONG STUDENTS TO GO THROUGH THAT SYSTEM UNLESS THEY HAPPEN TO SPEAK THAT PARTICULAR LANGUAGE DON'T GET THE SAME TREATMENT,+ HE SAID.

SIR DAVID POINTED OUT THAT MANY LOCAL STUDENTS GO TO HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN PREFERENCE TO OTHER SCHOOLS AND THEN EVENTUALLY GO INTO THE AMERICAN SYSTEM OF EDUCATION.

+IN THIS INTERNATIONAL COSMOPOLITAN COMMUNITY OF OURS, A DIVERSITY OF EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY IS A VERY WELCOME DEVELOPMENT, AND IT'S SOMETHING THAT WE SHOULD WELCOME,+ HE CONTINUED.

ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THE ENGLISH SCHOOLS FOUNDATION WOULD HAVE GOT THE SITE IF THEY WANTED IT, HE SAID: +I'M NOT SURE IN FACT IF THE ESF WANTED THE SITE, BUT YOU KNOW WE TRY TO MAKE SITES AVAILABLE FOR ALL THE SCHOOLS THAT NEED SITES AT ANY PARTICULAR TIME. I HAVEN'T HEARD THAT THE ESF WERE COMPETING FOR THIS SITE. I DON'T THINK THEY WERE. I THINK THE ESF HAVE GOT ALL THE SITES THEY NEED AT THE PRESENT TIME.+

ASKED IF HE THOUGHT BRITISH INFLUENCE WAS WANING AND HONG KONG WAS BECOMING MORE AMERICANISED, HE REPLIED: +NO, I SEE IT AS I SAID IN MY SPEECH, HONG KONG IS BECOMING A MUCH MORE INTERNATIONAL PLACE AND THIS IS WHAT ONE WOULD EXPECT.

+AFTER ALL, AMERICA IS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PACIFIC BASIN. BRITAIN IS SEVERAL OCEANS AWAY. I WOULD EXPECT THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN HONG KONG TO GROW AND IT IS NOW LARGER THAN THE BRITISH COMMUNITY,+ HE NOTED.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY ADDED THAT THE SIZE OF THE AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, WHICH IS OUR MAJOR TRADING PARTNER, IS NOW THE LARGEST EVER WITH OVER 2 000 MEMBERS. +WE DEPEND UPON NORTH AMERICA FOR A LOT OF OUR EXPORT TRADE,+ HE SAID.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

A PICTURE TAKEN AT THE GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONY WILL BE ISSUED VIA FACSIMILE LATER.

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SCHOOL EXTENSION A SIGN OF CONFIDENCE
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THE DECISION TO BUILD AN EXTENSION TO THE HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IS A WELCOME AND VALUED INDICATION OF THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY'S CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG AND OF ITS DETERMINATION TO PLAY A CONTINUING ROLE IN THE TERRITORY'S FURTHER GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

+THE STEADY GROWTH OF AMERICAN INVESTMENT IN HONG KONG IN RECENT YEARS IS ANOTHER INDICATION OF THIS DETERMINATION,+ HE SAID AT THE GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONY FOR WORK ON THE EXTENSION TO THE SCHOOL AT TAI TAM.

/+THE RESULTING

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+THE RESULTING INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF AMERICAN COMPANIES WHICH HAVE ESTABLISHED LOCAL OR REGIONAL OFFICES IN HONG KONG HELPS TO EXPLAIN WHY THE HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IS IN NEED OF THE ADDITIONAL SPACE WHICH THIS EXTENSION WILL PROVIDE.+

SIR DAVID NOTED THAT THE SCHOOL WAS FOUNDED 20 YEARS AGO AS A NON-PROFIT-MAKING, CO-EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION PROVIDING INSTRUCTION FROM THE KINDERGARTEN TO THE HIGH-SCHOOL LEVEL.

IT WAS DESIGNED TO MEET THE PARTICULAR REQUIREMENTS OF A SECTION OF THE COMMUNITY PREFERRING ITS CHILDREN TO RECEIVE AN EDUCATION IN THE AMERICAN TRADITION AND ACCORDING TO THE AMERICAN MODEL.

+THE DEMAND FOR THIS TYPE OF EDUCATION HAS INCREASED STEADILY OVER THE YEARS AND HAS FINALLY OUTSTRIPPED THE CAPACITY OF THE PRESENT SCHOOL PREMISES,+ HE SAID.

SIR DAVID SAID THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN ANY COMMUNITY WAS OF COURSE, A REFLECTION OF THAT COMMUNITY'S HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT. HONG KONG WAS NO EXCEPTION IN THAT RESPECT.

+TRADITIONALLY, HONG KONG HAS HAD TWO PRINCIPAL TYPES OF SCHOOLS, THE ANGLO-CHINESE AND THE CHINESE MIDDLE, BASED ON THE BRITISH AND CHINESE MODELS RESPECTIVELY AND REFLECTING THE TERRITORY'S STRONG LINKS WITH BOTH BRITAIN AND CHINA.

+BUT HONG KONG, AS A CENTRE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE, FINANCE AND COMMUNICATIONS, HAS DEVELOPED NEW LINKS.

+IT HAS GROWN INTO A MULTI-NATIONAL COMMUNITY WHICH ENCOURAGES OTHER TRADITIONS TO FLOURISH.

+THE ESTABLISHMENT AND GROWTH SINCE THE 1960'S OF A NUMBER OF FINE SCHOOLS DESIGNED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF DIFFERENT NATIONAL AND LINGUISTIC GROUPS IS A REFLECTION OF THIS INTERNATIONAL OUTLOOK,+ HE SAID.

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CASH AID FOR BUS ACCIDENT VICTIMS
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MORE VICTIMS OF THE TUEN MUN BUS ACCIDENT ON NOVEMBER 5 ARE RECEIVING CASH ASSISTANCE FROM THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT THROUGH THE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS ASSISTANCE (TAVA) SCHEME AND OTHER CHARITABLE FUNDS.

SO FAR, THE DEPARTMENT HAS ARRANGED CASH AID AMOUNTING TO \$74 000 FOR 22 VICTIMS OR THEIR FAMILIES.

THIS AMOUNT COVERED BURIAL AND SPECIAL GRANTS FOR THE FAMILIES OF THE FIVE PERSONS KILLED, AND GRANTS MADE TO 17 OF THE INJURED.

APPLICATIONS FROM FOUR OTHER VICTIMS ARE BEING PROCESSED, WHILE 21 OF THE INJURED INDICATED THAT THEY DID NOT REQUIRE ASSISTANCE OR WERE NOT ELIGIBLE UNDER THE TAVA SCHEME.

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TENANCY SOUGHT FOR KOWLOON BAY SITE

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THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT IS OFFERING A KOWLOON BAY SITE FOR RENT ON SHORT-TERM TENANCY.

THE SITE, AT THE SOUTHERN END OF KOWLOON BAY RECLAMATION, MEASURES ABOUT 3 100 SQUARE METRES.

UNDER THE TENANCY TERMS, IT WILL BE USED FOR STORAGE, DISTRIBUTION AND SALE OF CEMENT, NATURAL SAND AND AGGREGATE AND OR CONCRETE-ASPHALT BATCHING.

THE TENANCY IS INITIALLY FOR THREE YEARS, RENEWABLE QUARTERLY AFTERWARDS.

THE CLOSING DATE FOR TENDERS IS NOON ON NOVEMBER 28.

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WEEK-DAY EVENINGS BEST FOR JUVENILE ID CARDS

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THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT TODAY (WEDNESDAY) ADVISED PARENTS WHO HAVE TO OBTAIN NEW JUVENILE IDENTITY CARDS FOR THEIR CHILDREN IN THE CURRENT IDENTITY CARD REPLACEMENT EXERCISE TO MAKE USE OF WEEK-DAY EVENINGS INSTEAD OF SATURDAYS.

THE CURRENT PHASE INVOLVES CHILDREN BORN IN 1970, 1971 AND 1972.

A DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN SAID THE REASON FOR CHOOSING SATURDAYS WAS OBVIOUS AS MOST CHILDREN IN THIS AGE GROUP HAD TO ATTEND SCHOOL ON WEEK-DAYS.

/+HOWEVER, THE

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+HOWEVER, THE NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS THE ISSUE OFFICES CAN HANDLE ON SATURDAYS IS LIMITED.

+IT IS NECESSARY TO GET THE PARENTS' CO-OPERATION IN BRINGING THEIR CHILDREN TO THE ISSUE OFFICES FOR CARD RENEWAL ON WEEK-DAYS,+ HE SAID.

ALL EIGHT ISSUE OFFICES ARE OPEN UNTIL 9.30 PM DAILY AND THOSE WHO CANNOT ATTEND DURING THE DAYTIME CAN VISIT THE OFFICES IN THE EVENINGS.

THE SPOKESMAN ADVISED THAT SOME CHILDREN IN THIS AGE GROUP ARE ALREADY HOLDING THE NEW TYPE JUVENILE IDENTITY CARD AND THEREFORE ARE NOT REQUIRED TO OBTAIN A REPLACEMENT UNTIL REACHING THE AGE OF 18.

+THEY INCLUDE THOSE CHILDREN WHO OBTAINED THEIR JUVENILE CARDS AFTER THE IDENTITY CARD REPLACEMENT SCHEME STARTED IN MARCH 1983 AND OTHERS WHO HAD LOST OR DAMAGED THEIR IDENTITY CARD AND OBTAINED A REPLACEMENT AFTER THAT DATE,+ HE SAID.

THE PRESENT JUVENILE IDENTITY CARD REPLACEMENT EXERCISE WILL CONTINUE UNTIL DECEMBER 27.

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HILLSIDE ESCALATOR LINKS TO BE DISCUSSED
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MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT BOARD TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE WILL DISCUSS A PROPOSED ESCALATOR LINK BETWEEN CENTRAL AND MID-LEVELS AT THEIR MEETING TOMORROW (THURSDAY).

THE HILLSIDE ESCALATOR LINK IS ONE OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS PUT FORWARD BY A CONSULTANT IN A STUDY OF THE TRANSPORTATION REQUIREMENTS OF MID-LEVELS AND CENTRAL DISTRICT IN 1984.

A TRAFFIC ENGINEER (CENTRAL AND WESTERN) OF THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT, MR TSANG KING-MAN, WILL ATTEND THE MEETING TO REPORT ON THE LATEST PROGRESS OF THE PROJECT.

MEMBERS WILL ALSO DISCUSS THE ROUTE 7 DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND A PROGRESS REPORT ON THE RECONSTRUCTION OF DES VOEUX ROAD CENTRAL.

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THEY WILL ALSO DISCUSS A PROPOSED 1986-88 YEAR PLAN FOR THE COMMITTEE AND THE DISTRICT'S ROAD SAFETY CAMPAIGN THIS YEAR.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE MEETING AT 2.30 PM TOMORROW IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE DISTRICT BOARD ON THE 14TH FLOOR OF HARBOUR BUILDING, 38 PIER ROAD, CENTRAL.

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COMMITTEE PLANS NEXT YEAR'S ACTIVITIES
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THE COMMUNITY BUILDING COMMITTEE OF MONG KOK DISTRICT BOARD WILL MEET TOMORROW (THURSDAY) TO CONSIDER PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR'S ACTIVITIES.

MEMBERS WILL BE ASKED TO EXPRESS VIEWS ON THE WORK TARGETS AND ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR THE COMING FINANCIAL YEAR.

THE COMMITTEE WILL ALSO BE ASKED TO ALLOCATE FUNDS FOR A DANCE TO BE HELD ON NEW YEAR'S EVE FOR RESIDENTS.

THE EVENT IS AIMED AT ENHANCING NEW YEAR'S ATMOSPHERE AND TO PROMOTE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN DISTRICT ACTIVITIES.

MEMBERS WILL ALSO CONSIDER 11 APPLICATIONS FROM LOCAL ORGANISATIONS FOR FUNDS TO ORGANISE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROJECTS.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE MEETING TOMORROW AT 2.30 PM IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF MONG KOK DISTRICT OFFICE, FIRST FLOOR, 157 PRINCE EDWARD ROAD.

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1986

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RESTRICTED ZONE SET UP IN YUEN LONG
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THE NORTHBOUND CARRIAGEWAY OF THE ACCESS ROAD LEADING TO WONG UK IN YUEN LONG WILL BE DESIGNATED A 24-HOUR DAILY RESTRICTED ZONE FROM 10 AM ON FRIDAY (NOVEMBER 14).

THE AFFECTED SECTION RUNS FROM ITS JUNCTION WITH CASTLE PEAK ROAD TO A POINT ABOUT 35 METRES NORTH OF THE SAME JUNCTION.

NO VEHICLE OTHER THAN FRANCHISED BUSES WILL BE ALLOWED TO STOP FOR PASSENGERS OR GOODS WITHIN THE RESTRICTED AREA.

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RESTRICTED ZONES IN CAUSEWAY BAY
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TO FACILITATE THE REPLACEMENT OF GAS MAINS ALONG LOCKHART ROAD BETWEEN EAST POINT ROAD AND CANNON STREET IN CAUSEWAY BAY, TWO ROAD SECTIONS WILL BE DESIGNATED 24-HOUR DAILY RESTRICTED ZONES FROM 10 AM ON FRIDAY (NOVEMBER 14).

THESE ARE THE WESTERN KERBSIDE LANE OF EAST POINT ROAD- AND THE SOUTHERN KERBSIDE LANE OF LOCKHART ROAD FROM HOUSE NO. 514 TO ITS JUNCTION WITH EAST POINT ROAD.

THE MEASURES WILL LAST FOR ABOUT FIVE WEEKS. NO VEHICLE OTHER THAN FRANCHISED BUSES WILL BE ALLOWED TO STOP WITHIN THE RESTRICTED ZONES FOR GOODS OR PASSENGERS.

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TO KWA WAN WATER CUT
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FRESH WATER SUPPLY TO CERTAIN PREMISES IN TO KWA WAN WILL BE TURNED OFF FROM 9 PM ON FRIDAY (NOVEMBER 14) TO 6 AM THE FOLLOWING DAY FOR MAINS WORK.

THE AFFECTED PREMISES ARE BOUNDED BY KOWLOON CITY ROAD, MOK CHEONG STREET, TO KWA WAN ROAD AND MA TAU KOK ROAD.

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