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DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1993

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1993

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GOVERNOR HOPES ELECTION TALKS OUTCOME ACCEPTED TO HK

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THE GOVERNOR, THE RT HON CHRISTOPHER PATTEN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) HE VERY MUCH HOPED THAT AFTER THE TALKS ON THE 1994/95 ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS HAD BEEN PURSUED PATIENTLY AND CONSTRUCTIVELY, THERE WOULD BE A SETTLEMENT WHICH WOULD BE FULLY DEBATED IN HONG KONG AND ACCEPTED TO HONG KONG.

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AFTER OPENING THE GOVERNMENT'S CHEMICAL WASTE TREATMENT CENTRE ON TSING YI ISLAND, MR PATTEN SAID: "THAT'S MY ASPIRATION AND THAT'S MR GOODLAD'S AS WELL."

ASKED TO COMMENT ON MR GOODLAD'S REMARKS LAST NIGHT AFTER HIS MEETING WITH LEGCO, THE GOVERNOR SAID IT WAS A RESTATEMENT OF WHAT HAD BEEN SAID ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS.

"THERE ARE TWO POINTS THAT I THINK EVERYBODY IS AWARE OF," MR PATTEN SAID.

"FIRST AS I'VE SAID ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS AND THE BRITISH MINISTER HAS SAID ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS, I CAN'T CONCEIVE THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH WE WOULD ACCEPT A SETTLEMENT THAT WE DIDN'T THINK WAS ACCEPTABLE TO HONG KONG AND WE DIDN'T THINK WAS ACCEPTABLE TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL REPRESENTING THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG.

"SECONDLY, ANY AGREEMENT THAT WE REACH WITH CHINA WILL HAVE TO BE TRANSLATED INTO LEGISLATION IN ORDER TO SET IN PLACE THE ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR 1994/95 AND THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WILL OF COURSE HAVE A FULL OPPORTUNITY OF DEBATING THAT LEGISLATION LINE BY LINE."

"I THINK WHAT MR GOODLAD WAS TALKING ABOUT WAS A HYPOTHETICAL SITUATION," HE ADDED.

"BUT AS I'VE SAID ALREADY, I CAN'T IMAGINE THAT WE WOULD WANT TO PUT TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PROPOSALS THAT WE DIDN'T THINK THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WOULD ACCEPT.

"BUT THE POSITION UNDER THE CONSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS IN HONG KONG IS ENTIRELY CLEAR WHEN IT COMES TO LEGISLATION. I THINK LEGISLATORS THEMSELVES WOULD BE AWARE OF THE CONSEQUENCES."

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SPECIAL TEAM TO INVESTIGATE HOIST ACCIDENT

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THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT HAS SET UP A SPECIAL TEAM OF FACTORY INSPECTORS TO INVESTIGATE THE CAUSE OF THE INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENT IN NORTH POINT TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AT THE SCENE THIS EVENING, THE ACTING CHIEF FACTORY INSPECTOR, MR KAN HON-SANG, SAID THAT THE TEAM WILL LOOK INTO VARIOUS ASPECTS CONCERNING THE OPERATION AND USE OF THE PASSENGER HOIST.

HE SAID THAT THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT'S FACTORY INSPECTORS WILL LAUNCH A SPECIAL CAMPAIGN FROM TOMORROW (THURSDAY) TO INSPECT PASSENGER HOISTS ON CONSTRUCTION SITES THROUGHOUT THE TERRITORY.

"OUR OFFICERS WILL FOCUS THEIR INSPECTIONS ON SAFETY MEASURES BEING TAKEN BY CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTORS.

"THEY INCLUDE PERIODIC TESTS AND EXAMINATIONS OF HOISTS BY COMPETENT EXAMINERS, WEEKLY INSPECTIONS BY COMPETENT PERSONS, EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT ARRESTING DEVICE IN CASE OF OVER-SPEEDING AND THE DISPLAY OF WARNING NOTICES INDICATING THE NUMBER OF PASSENGERS ALLOWED.

"UNDER THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS ORDINANCE, ALL CONTRACTORS SHOULD EXERCISE STRICT AND DILIGENT SUPERVISION TO ENSURE THAT SAFETY MEASURES ON PASSENGER HOISTS ARE TAKEN," HE ADDED.

HE ALSO APPEALED TO CONSTRUCTION SITES WORKERS TO OBSERVE SAFETY RULES WHILE USING PASSENGER HOISTS.

MR KAN SAID THAT PROSECUTIONS WILL BE TAKEN AGAINST CONTRACTORS VIOLATING SAFETY LAWS.

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CONTRACT AWARD FOR ROUTE 3 RAMBLER CHANNEL BRIDGE

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THE CENTRAL TENDER BOARD HAS ACCEPTED A \$670 MILLION TENDER SUBMITTED BY DRAGAGES/BACHY SOLETANCHE GROUP/PENTA OCEAN JOINT VENTURE FOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROUTE 3 RAMBLER CHANNEL BRIDGE.

THE ROUTE 3 RAMBLER CHANNEL BRIDGE CONTRACT IS A MAJOR ELEMENT IN THE HIGHWAYS NETWORK OF THE AIRPORT CORE PROGRAMME (ACP) LINKING TUNG CHUNG NEW TOWN AND THE AIRPORT AT CHEK LAP KOK TO KOWLOON AND CENTRAL DISTRICT IN HONG KONG.

ROUTE 3 IS PLANNED AS A MAJOR NORTH-SOUTH HIGHWAY LINKING THE BORDER AND NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES WITH WEST KOWLOON VIA TSING YI.

/THE RAMBLER

THE RAMBLER CHANNEL BRIDGE IS ONE OF THE THREE SECTIONS OF THE PART OF ROUTE 3 WHICH FALLS WITHIN THE ACP.

CONTRACTS FOR THE OTHER TWO SECTIONS, CHEUNG CHING TUNNEL AND KWAI CHUNG VIADUCT, WERE AWARDED RESPECTIVELY IN FEBRUARY AND APRIL THIS YEAR. CONSTRUCTION OF THESE TWO SECTIONS IS NOW UNDER WAY.

THE RAMBLER CHANNEL BRIDGE CONTRACT COMPRISES THE CONSTRUCTION OF A 0.5-KILOMETRE-LONG BRIDGE OVER THE RAMBLER CHANNEL, TOGETHER WITH A 0.6-KILOMETRE VIADUCT.

THE WHOLE SECTION WILL BE A DUAL THREE-LANE EXPRESSWAY LINKING CHEUNG CHING TUNNEL AND KWAI CHUNG VIADUCT.

TENDERS WERE RECEIVED FROM SEVEN PREQUALIFIED TENDERERS AND THE FRENCH/JAPANESE JOINT VENTURE BETWEEN DRAGAGES ET TRAVAUX PUBLICS, BACHY SOLETANCHE GROUP AND PENTA OCEAN CONSTRUCTION CO LTD SUBMITTED THE LOWEST PRICED BID OF \$670 MILLION.

CONSTRUCTION WORK WILL START LATER THIS MONTH AND IS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED IN THE FIRST HALF OF 1996.

THE AWARD OF THE RAMBLER CHANNEL BRIDGE CONTRACT BRINGS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT-FUNDED CONTRACTS AWARDED ON THE ACP TO 22, WITH A TOTAL VALUE OF ABOUT \$25 BILLION.

ALL 22 CONTRACTS WERE AWARDED WITHIN BUDGET AND ARE ON SCHEDULE FOR COMPLETION ON TIME.

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ASIA'S FIRST CHEMICAL WASTE TREATMENT CENTRE OPENS

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THE GOVERNOR, THE RT HON CHRISTOPHER PATTEN, TODAY (WEDNESDAY), OPENED THE \$1,300 MILLION CHEMICAL WASTE TREATMENT CENTRE, THE FIRST INTEGRATED CHEMICAL WASTE TREATMENT FACILITY BUILT IN HONG KONG OR IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION.

THE CENTRE, BUILT BY ENVIROPACE LIMITED FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT, IS A MAJOR PROJECT UNDER THE GOVERNMENT'S 10-YEAR PLAN TO TACKLE POLLUTION AS LAID DOWN IN THE 1989 POLICY WHITE PAPER, "POLLUTION IN HONG KONG -- A TIME TO ACT".

THE TREATMENT CENTRE WILL PROVIDE A MUCH-NEEDED DISPOSAL FACILITY FOR THE ESTIMATED 100,000 TONNES OF CHEMICAL WASTE GENERATED IN HONG KONG EACH YEAR.

IN THE PAST, MOST OF THE WASTE, COMING FROM SOME 9,000 WASTE PRODUCERS, WAS DISPOSED OF BY ENVIRONMENTALLY UNACCEPTABLE MEANS.

THE CENTRE, LOCATED ON SOUTH TSING YI, COMPRISES NINE SEPARATE PROCESSES, INCLUDING AN OIL/WATER SEPARATION SYSTEM, VARIOUS PHYSICAL/CHEMICAL TREATMENT SYSTEMS, AND A HIGH TEMPERATURE INCINERATION SYSTEM.

"THE CHEMICAL WASTE TREATMENT CENTRE MARKS AN IMPORTANT STEP IN THE FIGHT TO CLEAN UP HONG KONG'S ENVIRONMENT," DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, DR STUART REED, SAID.

"IT PROVIDES FACILITIES FOR THE SAFE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND DISPOSAL OF CHEMICAL WASTE IN THE TERRITORY AND WILL SERVE AS HONG KONG'S DESIGNATED FACILITY UNDER THE MARPOL CONVENTION WHICH PREVENTS POLLUTION AT SEA," HE SAID.

"IT WILL ALSO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR CHEMICAL WASTE PRODUCERS TO COMPLY WITH THE NEW CHEMICAL WASTE REGULATION," HE ADDED.

THE CHEMICAL WASTE REGULATION, WHICH BECAME FULLY EFFECTIVE ON MAY 3, REQUIRES PRODUCERS OF CHEMICAL WASTE TO REGISTER WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT AND PROPERLY DISPOSE OF THEIR WASTE.

THE REGULATION WAS ENACTED TO STOP THE WIDESPREAD MALPRACTICE OF DUMPING UNTREATED CHEMICAL WASTE INTO THE TERRITORY'S SEWERS AND SURFACE WATERS AND THEREBY IMPROVE THE WATER QUALITY IN VICTORIA HARBOUR.

"WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHEMICAL WASTE REGULATION AND THE OPENING OF THE TREATMENT CENTRE, WE ARE NOW IN A MUCH BETTER POSITION IN TERMS OF REVITALISING OUR FRAGRANT HARBOUR," DR REED SAID.

THE PROJECT HAS BEEN DEVELOPED UNDER A DESIGN, BUILD AND OPERATE CONTRACT ARRANGEMENT WHEREBY THE CONTRACTOR IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL ASPECTS OF THE FACILITY AND HAS A 15-YEAR OPERATION COMMITMENT WHICH MUST BE PERFORMED TO THE DEPARTMENT'S STRINGENT REQUIREMENTS.

THE CONTRACT WAS AWARDED TO ENVIROPACE LIMITED IN NOVEMBER 1990. ENVIROPACE IS A JOINT VENTURE COMPANY COMPRISING PACIFIC WASTE MANAGEMENT LIMITED (PART OF WASTE MANAGEMENT INTERNATIONAL, PLC BASED IN LONDON, UK), CITIC PACIFIC LIMITED AND KIN CHING BESSER LIMITED.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF WASTE MANAGEMENT INTERNATIONAL PLC MR ED FALKMAN, SAID: "THE CHEMICAL WASTE TREATMENT CENTRE IS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF HOW THE WASTE MANAGEMENT GROUP IS USING ITS ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES TO SOLVE TOUGH ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS."

"WE ARE COMMITTED TO WORKING WITH GOVERNMENTS AND INDUSTRIES THROUGHOUT ASIA TO MEET THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES FACING THE REGION," HE ADDED.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CENTRE WAS COMPLETED ON SCHEDULE IN DECEMBER 1992 AND WAS FORMALLY ACCEPTED BY THE DEPARTMENT ON APRIL 13 AFTER A COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE TEST.

WHEN THE FACILITY IS AT FULL CAPACITY, ENVIROPACE WILL EMPLOY OVER 300 PEOPLE, MANY OF THEM SPECIALLY TRAINED PROFESSIONALS.

COMPUTER SYSTEMS WILL MONITOR EVERY ASPECT OF THE TREATMENT CENTRE'S OPERATION.

IN ADDITION, THE DEPARTMENT'S STAFF WILL BE STATIONED AT THE CENTRE TO MONITOR ITS OPERATION REGULARLY.

IN ADDITION TO OPERATING THE FACILITY, ENVIROPACE WILL PROVIDE A FULL RANGE OF WASTE COLLECTION AND TRANSPORT SERVICES FOR CHEMICAL WASTE PRODUCERS.

COLLECTION SERVICES WILL BE PROVIDED BY A FLEET OF SPECIALLY DESIGNED LORRIES AND TANKERS, AND A PURPOSE-BUILT MARPOL COLLECTION BARGE.

INCOMING AND TREATED WASTE WILL BE TESTED AND MONITORED IN A STATE-OF-THE ART LABORATORY.

CHEMICAL WASTE TO BE TREATED WILL INCLUDE ACIDS AND ALKALIS; SOLVENTS; CYANIDES AND SULFIDES; HEAVY-METAL-BEARING WASTE; WASTE LUBRICANTS; AND MARPOL WASTE FROM SHIPS USING HONG KONG'S PORT FACILITIES.

WATER, HEAT ENERGY, AND COPPER OXIDE WILL BE RECOVERED IN THE PROCESS OF TREATING THE WASTE.

ENVIROPACE WILL ALSO OFFER SUPPORT SERVICES DESIGNED TO HELP WASTE PRODUCERS UNDERSTAND THE CHEMICAL WASTE REGULATION AND TO SAFELY HANDLE THEIR CHEMICAL WASTE.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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LEGISLATION FOR STRICTER CONTROL OF CHEMICAL WASTE

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THE GOVERNMENT WILL STRICTLY ENFORCE "CRADLE TO GRAVE" LEGISLATION TO CONTROL THE COLLECTION, THE TRANSPORTATION AND THE DISPOSAL OF CHEMICAL WASTE, THE GOVERNOR, THE RT HON CHRISTOPHER PATTEN, SAID.

"AND I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT IT WILL BE," HE SAID.

SPEAKING AT THE OPENING OF THE CHEMICAL WASTE TREATMENT CENTRE ON TSING YI TODAY (WEDNESDAY), MR PATTEN SAID THAT THE CENTRE HAD BEEN BUILT TO HELP THOSE WHO PRODUCED WASTE TO DISPOSE OF IT CLEANLY AND PROPERLY.

THIS MEANS THAT THE MYRIAD OF SMALL FACTORY OWNERS, WHO PLAY A VITAL PART IN OUR ECONOMY, WILL NOT HAVE TO SPEND A FORTUNE IN INSTALLING THEIR OWN WASTE TREATMENT FACILITIES.

"WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT BY INVESTING IN CLEAN TECHNOLOGY AND STREAMLINING THEIR PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES, COMPANIES CAN SAVE MONEY ON RAW MATERIALS AND SAVE MOENY ON WASTE DISPOSAL.

"THIS WILL HELP THEM BECOME EVEN MORE COMPETITIVE," HE SAID.

MR PATTEN BELIEVED THAT THIS CENTRE COULD HELP DEMONSTRATE THAT TECHNOLOGY COULD PROVIDE THE ANSWERS TO SOME OF THE PROBLEMS WHICH THE PREVIOUS GENERATION OF TECHNOLOGY HELPED TO PRODUCE.

NOTING THAT THIS PROJECT WAS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO IMPROVE THE ENVIRONMENT, HE SAID: "THAT'S WHAT WE ARE DOING, BRINGING THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND GOVERNMENT TOGETHER, SHOWING THAT TECHNOLOGY PROPERLY APPLIED CAN HELP TO MAKE OUR WORLD CLEANER, OUR WATERS CLEANER, OUR WORLD SAFER, AS WELL AS GREENER FOR US AND OUR CHILDREN TO LIVE IN."

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EUROPEAN COMMUNITY HOLDS GREAT POTENTIAL FOR HK EXPORT

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THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY CONSTITUTES A MARKET OF GREAT POTENTIAL WHICH HONG KONG EXPORTERS SHOULD DEVOTE MORE EFFORTS IN DEVELOPING, PARTICULARLY WITH THE ADVENT OF THE SINGLE EUROPEAN MARKET, THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR T H CHAU, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE WAS OFFICIATING AT A SEMINAR ON "EXPORTING TO THE SINGLE EUROPEAN MARKET" ORGANISED JOINTLY BY THE HONG KONG TRADE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, THE TRADE DEPARTMENT AND THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT.

HE NOTED THAT THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY WAS HONG KONG'S THIRD LARGEST TRADING PARTNER AND AS AN EXPORT MARKET, IT RANKED THIRD AFTER CHINA AND THE U.S..

"FOR EXPORTERS, THE SINGLE MARKET PROGRAMME HAS BROUGHT ABOUT THE ABOLITION OF THE CONTROLS ON GOODS CROSSING THE BORDERS BETWEEN MEMBER STATES AND THE HARMONISATION OF CERTAIN PRODUCT STANDARDS.

"THESE PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PAN-EUROPEAN MANUFACTURING AND DISTRIBUTION," MR CHAU SAID.

"AT THE SAME TIME, OF COURSE, THEY MAY FACE INCREASING COMPETITION WITHIN THE COMMUNITY AS SUCH BENEFITS ARE EQUALLY AVAILABLE TO COMMUNITY PRODUCERS AND OTHER THIRD COUNTRY SUPPLIERS," HE ADDED.

APART FROM THE SINGLE MARKET PROGRAMME, OF GREATEST INTEREST TO HONG KONG WAS THE INTRODUCTION OF COMMUNITY QUOTAS FOR TEXTILES WHICH HELPED IMPROVE FLEXIBILITY IN ACCESS.

"HONG KONG TRADERS' ABILITY TO DEVELOP NEW MARKETS AMONG SMALLER MEMBER STATES OF THE COMMUNITY IS ENHANCED," MR CHAU SAID.

OTHER TRADE-FACILITATING MEASURES ADOPTED INCLUDED BINDING TARIFF RULINGS FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY, AND INCREASED FLEXIBILITY IN PREFERENTIAL ACCESS UNDER THE COMMUNITY'S GENERALISED SCHEME OF PREFERENCES.

MR CHAU BELIEVED THAT THE RETENTION BY THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY OF THE CAPACITY TO INTRODUCE REGIONAL MEASURES AND THE PROPOSALS TO COMMUNITARISE CERTAIN NATIONAL QUOTAS FOR CHINA AND OTHER STATE-TRADING COUNTRIES SHOULD NOT PREVENT TRADERS FROM FINDING NICHES OF OPPORTUNITIES TO THEIR BENEFIT.

HE FURTHER NOTED THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA COULD FURTHER INCREASE THE SCOPE OF ECONOMIES OF SCALE IN PRODUCTION.

THE EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION (EFTA) COUNTRIES CONCERNED WERE COMMITTED TO APPLYING ALMOST ALL EUROPEAN COMMUNITY LEGISLATION WITH REGARD TO TECHNICAL REGULATION, PRODUCT STANDARDS, TESTING AND CERTIFICATION.

IN THE MEDIUM TERM, MR CHAU SAID, THE ACCESSION OF AUSTRIA, SWEDEN, FINLAND AND NORWAY TO THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY WAS CURRENTLY BEING NEGOTIATED.

"WITH THE ACCESSION OF THESE COUNTRIES, A SINGLE MARKET OF OVER 370 MILLION PEOPLE WILL BE CREATED," HE SAID.

THE REALIGNMENT OF THE DIFFERENT TRADE REGIMES MIGHT HOWEVER BRING ABOUT PLUSES AND MINUSES IN DIFFERENT AREAS AS THE EFTA COUNTRIES CONCERNED GENERALLY HAD HIGHER IMPORT TARIFFS BUT THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY HAD A MUCH MORE RESTRICTIVE TEXTILES REGIME, HE ADDED.

"IN THE LONGER TERM, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES EAGERLY WAITING TO JOIN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY.

"ALTHOUGH THEIR ACCESSION IS AS YET UNCERTAIN AND LIKELY TO BE SOME WAY OFF, THE CONSIDERABLE POTENTIAL FOR EVEN FURTHER ENLARGEMENT OF THE SINGLE EUROPEAN MARKET SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND," HE SAID.

EXCO MEMBERS VISIT PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

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A GROUP OF EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) VISITED THE LAM TIN POLYCLINIC IN KWUN TONG TO SEE FOR THEMSELVES VARIOUS PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES RUN BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

THEY WERE MET ON ARRIVAL BY THE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH, DR S H LEE, AND OTHER SENIOR MEDICAL STAFF.

THE PARTY, COMPRISING BARONESS DUNN, MS ROSANNA WONG AND MR ANDREW LI, FIRST VISITED THE GENERAL OUT-PATIENT CLINIC WHERE THEY WERE BRIEFED ON PRIMARY MEDICAL CARE SERVICES AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC.

THEY WERE SHOWN IMPROVEMENT MEASURES UNDER THE 'PERFORMANCE PLEDGE' PROGRAMME. THESE INCLUDED STANDARDISED INDIVIDUAL MEDICAL RECORD, LABELLING OF ALL DISPENSED MEDICINE BY COMPUTER, PATIENT ASSISTANCE COUNTER AND HEALTH EDUCATION MATERIALS.

THEN THEY PROCEEDED TO THE MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH CENTRE WHERE THEY LEARNT ABOUT THE VARIOUS FAMILY HEALTH SERVICES DELIVERED TO MOTHERS AND CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF FIVE.

THE COUNCILLORS WERE THEN TAKEN ON A TOUR OF THE SCHOOL DENTAL CLINIC WHERE THEY WERE TOLD ABOUT THE SCHOOL DENTAL CARE SERVICES GIVEN TO STUDENTS OF PRIMARY ONE TO SIX.

THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY A VISIT TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING SCHOOL - THE ONLY SCHOOL IN HONG KONG WHICH PROVIDED PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING TRAINING.

NINE-MONTH FULL-TIME DIPLOMA STUDIES ON PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING AND OTHER PART-TIME COURSES ARE ORGANISED FOR REGISTERED NURSES.

THE MEMBERS WERE ALSO BRIEFED ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DISTRICT HEALTH SYSTEM WHICH EMPHASISED COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND INTERSECTORAL COLLABORATION.

THEY WERE TOLD THAT A WELL WOMAN CLINIC, SITUATED ON THE FOURTH FLOOR OF THE POLYCLINIC, WAS EXPECTED TO START FULL OPERATION EARLY NEXT YEAR.

THE NEW SERVICE AIMS AT PROVIDING A PACKAGED SERVICE COMPRISING PHYSICAL CHECK-UP INCLUDING GYNAECOLOGICAL EXAMINATION, HEALTH SCREENING AIMED AT DETECTING DISEASES PREVALENT IN WOMEN, AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND COUNSELLING.

THIS IS THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF SIMILAR VISITS BEING ORGANISED FOR MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS SECRETARY (MEMBERS).

THE PURPOSE IS FOR MEMBERS TO GAIN FIRST-HAND INFORMATION ABOUT NEW PROJECTS AND TO SEE FOR THEMSELVES LATEST DEVELOPMENT IN VARIOUS TYPES OF SERVICE.

"MEMBERS BELIEVE THAT SUCH VISITS WILL HELP THEM IN THEIR WORK OF ADVISING THE GOVERNOR ON POLICY MATTERS," SHE SAID.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1993

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THREE SITES TO LET

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THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT IS INVITING TENDERS FOR THE SHORT-TERM TENANCY OF THREE PIECES OF GOVERNMENT LAND.

THE FIRST LOT, IN AREA 14, SAI TSO WAN ROAD, TSING YI, HAS AN AREA OF ABOUT 27,500 SQUARE METRES FOR USE AS A PUBLIC FEE-PAYING CAR PARK FOR CONTAINER TRACTORS AND TRAILERS. THE TENANCY IS FOR ONE YEAR, RENEWABLE QUARTERLY AFTERWARDS.

THE SECOND LOT, OCCUPYING AREA 16 AND PARTLY AREA 13 IN TSEUNG KWAN O, SAI KUNG, HAS AN AREA OF ABOUT 22,700 SQUARE METRES FOR PARKING OF CONTAINER VEHICLES. THE TENANCY IS FOR ONE YEAR, RENEWABLE QUARTERLY AFTERWARDS.

THE THIRD LOT IN AREA 2, TSING LUK STREET, TSING YI, HAS AN AREA OF ABOUT 610 SQUARE METRES FOR LANDSCAPE GARDENING, PLANT NURSERY AND/OR COMMERCIAL GARDENING, INCLUDING GROWING GARDEN PRODUCTS, STORAGE AND SALE OF POTTED PLANTS AND OTHER ANCILLARY GARDEN PRODUCTS.

THE TENANCY IS FOR THREE YEARS, RENEWABLE QUARTERLY AFTERWARDS.

CLOSING DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF TENDERS IS NOON ON JUNE 18.

TENDER FORMS, TENDER NOTICE AND CONDITIONS MAY BE OBTAINED FROM KWAI TSING DISTRICT LANDS OFFICE; SAI KUNG DISTRICT LANDS OFFICE; THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT, 14TH FLOOR, MURRAY BUILDING, GARDEN ROAD; AND THE DISTRICT LANDS OFFICES KOWLOON, 10TH FLOOR, YAU MA TEI CARPARK BUILDING, 250 SHANGHAI STREET, KOWLOON.

TENDER PLANS CAN BE INSPECTED AT THESE OFFICES.

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CLOSURE OF UNAUTHORISED STRUCTURE SOUGHT

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THE BUILDING AUTHORITY IS SEEKING TO CLOSE AN UNAUTHORISED STRUCTURE AT A BUILDING IN KWAI CHUNG SO THAT IT CAN BE DEMOLISHED WITHOUT CAUSING DANGER TO THE OCCUPIERS AND THE PUBLIC.

THE UNAUTHORISED SINGLE-STOREY STRUCTURE USED FOR RESIDENTIAL PURPOSES HAS BEEN ERECTED ON THE FLAT ROOF ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF KWAI SING CENTRE AT 3 WO YIP HOP ROAD AND 412-416 CASTLE PEAK ROAD.

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPLY FOR A CLOSURE ORDER FROM THE HONG KONG DISTRICT COURT UNDER THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE ON JULY 2 WAS POSTED ON THE PREMISES TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IT IS EXPECTED THAT DEMOLITION WILL START AS SOON AS THE CLOSURE ORDER IS ISSUED.

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HOLIDAY CLOSURE OF POST OFFICES
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THE ACTING POSTMASTER GENERAL, MRS DORIS HO, ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT DURING THE FORTHCOMING PUBLIC HOLIDAYS TO CELEBRATE THE BIRTHDAY OF THE QUEEN AND THE TUEN NG FESTIVAL, ALL POST OFFICES WOULD BE CLOSED.

A SPECIAL MAIL DELIVERY WOULD HOWEVER BE PROVIDED ON JUNE 12 (THE BIRTHDAY OF THE QUEEN). NO DELIVERY WOULD BE MADE ON JUNE 14 AND 24.

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HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND
MONEY MARKET OPERATIONS
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	\$ MILLION -----
OPENING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT	2,376
REVERSAL OF LAF	+424
BALANCE AFTER REVERSAL OF LAF	2,800
NET INJECTION/WITHDRAWAL TODAY	NIL
EFFECT OF LAF TODAY	-1,006
CLOSING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT	1,794
LAF RATE 2.00 BID/4.00 OFFER	TWI 111.6 *+0.0* 2.6.93

HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND

EF BILLS		EF NOTES/HONG KONG GOVERNMENT BONDS				
TERMS	YIELD	TERM	ISSUE	COUPON	PRICE	YIELD
1 WEEK	2.83 PCT	15 MONTHS	2408	4.375	100.78	3.74
1 MONTH	2.84 PCT	18 MONTHS	2411	4.625	101.08	3.89
3 MONTHS	3.06 PCT	21 MONTHS	2502	4.75	101.16	4.08
6 MONTHS	3.29 PCT	24 MONTHS	2505	3.75	99.15	4.25
12 MONTHS	3.59 PCT					

TOTAL TURNOVER OF BILLS AND BONDS - 13,313 MN

CLOSED JUNE 2, 1993

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THIRD UNIVERSITY HELPS SUSTAIN ECONOMIC GROWTH

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INVESTING IN THE FUTURE CAN BE AN EXPENSIVE BUSINESS BUT HONG KONG NEEDS INSTITUTIONS LIKE THE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IF IT IS TO REMAIN A PROSPEROUS AND DYNAMIC COMMUNITY.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD AS HE TABLED BEFORE THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THE GOVERNMENT MINUTE IN RESPONSE TO A PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE'S REPORT ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE UNIVERSITY.

"HONG KONG'S ECONOMY IS UNDERGOING MAJOR STRUCTURAL CHANGES, WITH A CONTINUING SHIFT FROM ASSEMBLY MANUFACTURING TO THE KNOWLEDGE-INTENSIVE INDUSTRIES AND HIGH VALUE-ADDED PRODUCTION.

"BECAUSE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, HONG KONG IS NOW BETTER EQUIPPED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE CHANGES, AND TO SUSTAIN ITS ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE 1990'S AND BEYOND," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID SAID THE ADMINISTRATION HAD LEARNT SOME LESSONS FROM THE PROJECT AND IT WAS GRATEFUL TO THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE.

BUT, HE SAID NOTHING SHOULD DETRACT FROM WHAT HAD BEEN ACHIEVED: A MODERN, HIGH-TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH-ORIENTATED UNIVERSITY, COMPLETED THREE YEARS EARLIER THAN ORIGINALLY PLANNED, AND WITHIN A BUDGET APPROVED BY THE FINANCE COMMITTEE.

THE UNIVERSITY IS ALSO STAFFED BY SOME OF THE BEST MINDS IN ASIA, AND WHICH WILL BENEFIT HONG KONG FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.

ACCEPTING THE COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS, SIR DAVID SAID: "IN PARTICULAR, WE AGREE THAT THERE IS A NEED TO ENSURE TIGHTER CONTROL OF JOINT PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT AND OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS."

BUT, IN THE CASE OF THE NEW UNIVERSITY, IT WAS ACCEPTED THAT SOME FLEXIBILITIES IN THE NORMAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT CONTROL WAS NECESSARY IF IT WAS TO BE COMPLETED IN TIME TO ADMIT ITS FIRST STUDENTS IN 1991.

"IT WAS THE CONSCIOUS DECISION OF ALL CONCERNED, INCLUDING THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, THAT THE PROJECT SHOULD BE ENTRUSTED TO THE JOCKEY CLUB TO ENSURE ITS SPEEDY COMPLETION.

"A MUCH GREATER DEGREE OF CONTROL WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE IF THE PROJECT HAD BEEN CONSTRUCTED IN THE NORMAL WAY THROUGH THE PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME."

BUT IN THAT CASE IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE PROJECT COULD HAVE BEEN COMPLETED ON TIME, HE SAID.

"THAT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN IN HONG KONG'S INTERESTS," SIR DAVID SAID.

ON THE CONCERN OVER THE INCREASE IN THE ESTIMATE FOR THE PROJECT, HE SAID THIS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN AN ISSUE IF THE ORIGINAL ESTIMATE APPROVED BY THE FINANCE COMMITTEE IN MAY 1988 HAD BEEN PREPARED ON THE BASIS OF A DETAILED DESIGN.

/ "BUT IT

"BUT IT WAS NOT. RATHER, IT WAS BASED ON A VERY PRELIMINARY DESIGN, WHICH DID NOT TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE PARTICULAR REQUIREMENTS OF A SPECIALIST UNIVERSITY, AND WHICH WAS DRAWN UP WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF ACADEMIC INPUT."

IT WAS ALWAYS LIKELY THEREFORE THAT IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO INCREASE THAT ESTIMATE ONCE THE DETAILED DESIGN HAD BEEN COMPLETED, THE CHIEF SECRETARY SAID.

POINTING OUT THAT INFLATION WAS ALSO TO BLAME FOR THE ESTIMATE INCREASE, HE SAID: "IF THE COST OF A PROJECT IS APPROVED AT THE PRICES PREVAILING AT A PARTICULAR DATE, IT WILL NORMALLY HAVE TO BE INCREASED AS A RESULT OF PRICE INCREASES DURING THE CONSTRUCTION PERIOD.

"THERE IS NOTHING UNUSUAL IN THIS; WHAT IS UNUSUAL IS THE HIGH RATE AT WHICH BUILDING COSTS INCREASED DURING THE PLANNING AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROJECT.

THE BUILDING SERVICES INDEX ROSE BY 120 PER CENT BETWEEN THE FOURTH QUARTER OF 1987 AND THE SECOND QUARTER OF 1990.

ON JUNE 1, 1990, THE FINANCE COMMITTEE WAS INFORMED THAT THE ESTIMATE OF THE BUILDING COST HAD RISEN BY \$1,928 MILLION COMPARED WITH THE ESTIMATE SUBMITTED IN MAY 1988.

OF THIS, \$1,208 MILLION WAS DUE TO INCREASES IN BUILDING COSTS. THE REMAINING \$720 MILLION WAS DUE TO THE INADEQUACIES OF THE ORIGINAL ESTIMATE.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WAS AWARE FROM THE START OF THE NEED TO SET A COST CEILING FOR THE PROJECT.

BUT ARRIVING AT A FIGURE THAT WAS A FIRM AND RELIABLE ESTIMATE WAS MADE DIFFICULT BY THE FACT THAT THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION HAD TO PROCEED IN PARALLEL IN ORDER TO KEEP THE PROJECT ON SCHEDULE, HE SAID.

COST ESTIMATES WERE CONTINUOUSLY CHANGING, AND IT WAS NOT UNTIL SHORTLY BEFORE JUNE 1990 THAT ALL THE PARTIES CONCERNED WERE ABLE TO REACH AGREEMENT ON A MORE REALISTIC PROJECT ESTIMATE, HE SAID.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY SAID A MORE IMPORTANT QUESTION WAS WHETHER THE PUBLIC RECEIVED VALUE FOR MONEY.

THE UNIVERSITY WAS GENERALLY BUILT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE NORMS AND STANDARDS RECOMMENDED BY THE UNIVERSITY AND POLYTECHNICS GRANTS COMMITTEE.

THESE STANDARDS TOOK ACCOUNT OF THE SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS OF A UNIVERSITY DEVOTED EXCLUSIVELY TO SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.

THERE WERE ALSO A NUMBER OF NON-STANDARD FACILITIES.

"I AM PLEASED THAT THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE HAS ACCEPTED THAT THERE WERE GOOD REASONS FOR THESE FACILITIES," HE SAID.

"ANY ASSESSMENT OF COST-EFFECTIVENESS MUST INCLUDE THE BENEFITS AS WELL AS THE COSTS," HE SAID.

HA CONTINUES TO IMPROVE ESTATE MANAGEMENT SERVICE

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THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WILL TAKE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS INTO ACCOUNT WHERE THESE ARE CONSTRUCTIVE IN ITS CONTINUING IMPROVEMENT TO ESTATE MANAGEMENT SERVICES.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, IN A MOTION DEBATE ON THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S ESTATE MANAGEMENT SERVICE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR EASON SAID THE AUTHORITY'S ESTATE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVE WAS TO PROVIDE GREATER CUSTOMER SATISFACTION BY ANTICIPATING PROBLEMS BEFORE THEY OCCUR, INTRODUCING IMPROVEMENTS WHEREVER POSSIBLE, AND ATTENDING TO COMPLAINTS PROMPTLY.

OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS, THE AUTHORITY'S RENTAL STOCK HAS INCREASED BY 3% TO 640,000 FLATS AND ITS FLATS UNDER THE HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME AND PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION SCHEME BY 39% TO 159,000 FLATS.

"CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES HAVE BEEN DEVOTED TO PROVIDING AN ESTATE MANAGEMENT SERVICE TO MATCH THIS GROWTH," MR EASON SAID.

SUCH SERVICE SOUGHT TO BE BOTH PRO-ACTIVE AND RESPONSIVE AND WAS BORNE OUT BY THE IMPROVEMENTS THE AUTHORITY HAD INTRODUCED OVER THE YEARS, HE SAID.

ON MAINTENANCE, MR EASON SAID THE AUTHORITY'S COMPREHENSIVE REPAIR PROGRAMME COVERING 400 BLOCKS IN 53 OLDER ESTATES WAS MAKING GOOD PROGRESS.

OTHER BUILDING SERVICES IMPROVEMENT INCLUDE A LIFT MODERNISATION PROGRAMME, UPGRADING ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS IN OLDER BLOCKS AND A REWIRING PROGRAMME TO COPE WITH GREATER USE OF ELECTRICITY.

MR EASON SAID THERE WAS NO INDICATION THAT THE GENERAL LAW AND ORDER SITUATION IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES WAS DETERIORATING ALTHOUGH THERE WERE INCIDENTS OF CRIME WHICH WERE RIGHTLY OF CONCERN TO THE LOCAL RESIDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE.

THE HOUSING AUTHORITY IS PREPARED TO ENDORSE THE PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL SECURITY INSTALLATIONS ON A "USER PAYS" PRINCIPLE.

A PILOT SCHEME AND AN INDEPENDENT SURVEY WILL BE CONDUCTED BY THE AUTHORITY TO GAUGE TENANTS' VIEWS ON POSSIBLE MEASURES AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR THEM.

"WE EXPECT TO HAVE THE SURVEY RESULTS READY IN ABOUT THREE TO FOUR MONTHS," HE SAID.

MR EASON SAID SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENTS IN THE CONTROL OF INDISCRIMINATE PARKING IN ESTATES WERE EXPECTED WHEN A NEW SET OF BY-LAWS WAS TO BE INTRODUCED LATER THIS YEAR.

ON HAWKERS AND MARKETS WHICH IS NOT AN AREA EASY TO MANAGE IN EITHER PRIVATE OR PUBLIC PLACES IN HONG KONG, MR EASON SAID THE AUTHORITY HAD ADOPTED A NEW SET OF DESIGN GUIDELINES TO MINIMISE PROBLEMS OF ENCROACHMENT AND TO CREATE A BETTER SHOPPING ENVIRONMENT.

THE AUTHORITY'S RECENT EXPERIMENT TO PRIVATISE THE MANAGEMENT OF A WHOLE MARKET BY A SINGLE OPERATOR HAD PROVED SUCCESSFUL AND SUITABLE PREMISES WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR THIS ARRANGEMENT, HE SAID.

MR EASON SAID ALTHOUGH SOME OLDER BUILDINGS RIPE FOR REDEVELOPMENT MIGHT LOOK A LITTLE WORN, THE GENERAL STANDARD OF CLEANLINESS INSIDE THE ESTATE HAD REMAINED BASICALLY SATISFACTORY.

"THIS IS DUE IN NO SMALL MEASURE TO IMPROVED MONITORING OF CONTRACTORS' PERFORMANCE THROUGH A NEW POINTS SYSTEM, LESS BLATANT LITTERING THROUGH CIVIC EDUCATION AND GENERALLY A GREATER CONCERN FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AMONG RESIDENTS," HE SAID.

MR EASON SAID THE MAINTENANCE OF GOOD CONDITIONS AND SUCCESSFUL MANAGEMENT IN HOUSING ESTATES, WHETHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, REQUIRED A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT BY RESIDENTS AND STAFF.

"THIS MEANS PERMANENT VIGILANCE, PARTNERSHIP AND ONGOING VIEWS.

"I AM SURE THAT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WILL TAKE MEMBERS' VIEWS INTO ACCOUNT WHERE THESE ARE CONSTRUCTIVE IN ITS CONTINUING EFFORTS TO IMPROVE ITS ESTATE MANAGEMENT SERVICES AND TO UNDERTAKE SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS OF INDIVIDUAL ASPECTS OF ITS RESPONSIBILITIES ON A REGULAR BASIS AS NECESSARY AS IT HAS UP TO NOW."

SIMILARLY, THE NEED FOR CONSULTATION WILL ALSO NO DOUBT BE CONSIDERED, DEPENDING ON THE SUBJECT.

"GIVEN ITS TRACK RECORD OF BEING OPEN AND RECEPTIVE, HOWEVER, I AM SURE IT WILL NOT LIGHTLY DENY THE PUBLIC OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON MATTERS OF CONCERN," HE SAID.

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FS IN MOTION DEBATE

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THE FOLLOWING IS THE SPEECH BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, IN THE MOTION DEBATE ON "DISPARITY BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR IN HONG KONG" IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TONIGHT (WEDNESDAY):

MR PRESIDENT,

IT WOULD BE ALL TOO EASY TO GO ALONG WITH MR K K FUNG'S MOTION. MANY WILL INTERPRET IT LOOSELY, AS SAYING WE SHOULD HELP THE POOR BECOME BETTER-OFF; AND WHO WOULD LIKE TO DISAGREE WITH THAT?

/IF THAT

IF THAT WERE ALL THE MOTION MEANT, I WOULD BE HAPPY TO AGREE WITH IT. WE IN THE ADMINISTRATION YIELD TO NOBODY IN OUR CONCERN FOR THE VULNERABLE, FOR THOSE AT RISK. THE WHOLE HISTORY OF THIS ADMINISTRATION BEARS WITNESS TO OUR CONCERN FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THE ORDINARY CITIZEN OF HONG KONG. AND OUR CONVICTION THAT A CARING GOVERNMENT MUST PROVIDE A SAFETY NET FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT. WE ALL KNOW THAT ESSENTIAL SERVICES SUCH AS EDUCATION, MEDICAL AND HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL WELFARE ARE AVAILABLE TO ALL, EVEN IF THEY CANNOT AFFORD TO PAY FEES. I BELIEVE THAT THE MEASURES OUTLINED IN THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH LAST OCTOBER, AND IN MY RECENT BUDGET, PROVIDE AMPLE EVIDENCE THAT WE CONTINUE TO BE COMMITTED TO HELP THE VULNERABLE.

MR FUNG ALSO MENTIONED TAX POLICIES. WE IN THIS ADMINISTRATION ALSO YIELD TO NOBODY IN OUR DETERMINATION TO KEEP TAXES AT A REASONABLE LEVEL, AND TO RELIEVE THEIR PRESSURE ON THE LESS WELL-OFF. THIS IS AGAIN EVIDENT FROM THE MAJOR TAX CONCESSIONS IN THE LAST BUDGET. AND FROM THE FACT THAT ABOUT HALF THE POPULATION PAYS NO SALARIES TAX WHATSOEVER.

BUT MR FUNG GOES FURTHER THAN THIS, AND WHILE I ADMIRE HIS ELOQUENCE AND SINCERITY, THIS IS WHERE WE MUST PART COMPANY. THE THRUST OF HIS ARGUMENT IS THAT IT IS WRONG FOR THERE TO BE A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN PEOPLE'S INCOMES - THAT'S WHAT THE WORDS "DISPARITY BETWEEN RICH AND POOR" MEAN - AND THAT WE SHOULD USE TAX AND SOCIAL POLICIES TO REDUCE THIS DIFFERENCE. I HAVE TO SAY THAT TO FOLLOW MR FUNG DOWN THIS PATH WOULD BE A MAJOR BREAK WITH THE PHILOSOPHY THAT HAS HITHERTO SERVED HONG KONG SO WELL. AND I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE A WRONG PATH TO FOLLOW. LET ME EXPLAIN WHY.

ONE OF THE GREAT STRENGTHS OF HONG KONG HAS BEEN - AND IS - THAT WE ARE GENERALLY MOTIVATED NOT BY ENVY BUT BY A DESIRE FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT - WHEN WE SEE A SUCCESSFUL MAN, WE SEEK TO EMULATE HIM, NOT TO DRAG HIM DOWN. AND CONTRARY TO WHAT MR FUNG SAYS I BELIEVE YOU ALL KNOW THAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED GREAT SOCIAL MOBILITY IN HONG KONG - THERE ARE GOOD EXAMPLES OF IT INDEED IN THIS CHAMBER.

THAT HEALTHY ATTITUDE THAT I HAVE JUST DESCRIBED HAS BEEN FOSTERED BY CLEAR AND CONSISTENT GOVERNMENT POLICIES, WHICH HAVE THE GENERAL SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC, RICH AND POOR -

- POLICIES TO ENSURE MERIT CAN FIND ITS WAY TO THE TOP, THAT TALENTS CAN BE FULLY DEVELOPED THROUGH SUBSIDIZED EDUCATION;
- POLICIES TO PROVIDE INCENTIVE FOR HARD WORK BY A LOW TAX SYSTEM;
- POLICIES TO PROVIDE A SAFETY NET FOR THOSE WHO NEED HELP, THROUGH OUR SOCIAL SPENDING ON HOUSING, ON WELFARE, ON HEALTH AND ON HOSPITALS - AND IT IS WORTH RECALLING THAT WE ARE CONTINUALLY UPGRADING OUR EFFORTS HERE. I REFER FOR EXAMPLE TO THE SANDWICH CLASS HOUSING SCHEME, AND TO THE MAJOR IMPROVEMENT IN SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS WITH EFFECT FROM 1ST JULY THIS YEAR.

BUT MR FUNG BELIEVES WE SHOULD GO MUCH FURTHER. LET ME DEAL FIRST WITH TAX POLICY. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD INCREASE TAXES UNLESS THIS IS NECESSARY FOR REVENUE PURPOSES - AND GENERALLY SPEAKING WE HAVE IN RECENT TIMES BEEN IN THE FORTUNATE POSITION THAT MAJOR INCREASES IN REVENUE THROUGH TAX INCREASES HAVE NOT BEEN NEEDED.

BUT THE LOGIC OF MR FUNG'S POSITION IS THAT REGARDLESS OF OUR REVENUE NEEDS, WE SHOULD RAISE TAXES ON THE BETTER-OFF, SO AS TO REDUCE THEIR NET INCOME. REDUCING TAXES FOR THE LESS WELL-OFF DOESN'T REALLY ARISE, BECAUSE AS I HAVE ALREADY POINTED OUT, ABOUT HALF THE EMPLOYED POPULATION ALREADY PAYS ZERO SALARIES TAX.

BUT WHAT WOULD BE ACHIEVED BY SUCH A POLICY, OTHER THAN MAKING RATIOS OF INCOME DIFFERENTIALS LOOK BETTER? HIGHER TAXES ON THE RICH, OR ON COMPANIES, WOULD ACT AS A DISINCENTIVE TO INVESTMENT, TO EFFORT AND AMBITION, AND TO GROWTH. THE LESS WELL-OFF WOULD NOT BENEFIT - QUITE THE REVERSE; WITH LOWER GROWTH COMES NOT ONLY LOWER REVENUE BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY LOWER EMPLOYMENT AND A SLOWER INCREASE IN OUR STANDARD OF LIVING. SIMILARLY, MR Y. F HUI'S SUGGESTION OF A MINIMUM WAGE WOULD HARM, NOT HELP, THE LOW-PAID WORKERS WHO COULD RISK UNEMPLOYMENT AS A RESULT.

SO LET ME MAKE IT VERY CLEAR. IT HAS NOT BEEN - AND IS NOT - ONE OF THIS ADMINISTRATION'S AIMS TO SEEK TO LEVEL OFF INCOME DIFFERENTIALS. NOR I BELIEVE IS IT AN AIM THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE SUPPORTS.

BUT I WOULD GO FURTHER - I BELIEVE THAT FOCUSING ON INCOMES, ON MEASURES OF INCOME DIFFERENTIALS LIKE THE GINI COEFFICIENT IS UNHELPFUL AND HAS LED SOME DOWN THE WRONG PATH.

LET ME FOCUS ON THE GINI COEFFICIENT. THERE HAS BEEN MUCH LOOSE TALK IN HONG KONG ABOUT THE GINI COEFFICIENT. I DO NOT THINK THIS CONCEPT IS VERY HELPFUL WHEN IT COMES TO ASSESSING HONG KONG'S EXPERIENCE OF SUBSTANTIAL REAL GROWTH IN INCOMES FOR ALL, BUT EVEN BIGGER REWARDS FOR THE MOST ENTERPRISING AND TALENTED MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY.

THE GINI COEFFICIENT HAS SEVERAL DRAWBACKS. A NUMBER OF MEMBERS HAVE POINTED THEM OUT. FIRST, IT IS AN ACADEMIC ABSTRACTION. SECONDLY, AS GENERALLY USED BY OUR CRITICS, IT IGNORES THE SUBSTANTIAL "TRANSFER INCOMES" CURRENTLY PROVIDED FOR A VERY SIGNIFICANT PART OF OUR COMMUNITY. THIRDLY, IT PRESENTS, THEREFORE, A DISTORTED PICTURE OF THE REAL LIVING STANDARDS OF THE FAMILIES CONCERNED.

LET ME BE MORE SPECIFIC. AS EMPLOYED BY OUR CRITICS; THE GINI COEFFICIENT IGNORES THE VERY REAL CONTRIBUTION OF BOTH SUBSIDIZED PUBLIC HOUSING AND OF SOCIAL SECURITY TO RAISING LIVING STANDARDS. IF THESE WERE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT, THE EXTENT OF INCOME INEQUALITY WOULD BE LESS THAN HAS BEEN ALLEGED.

OTHER FACTORS MAKE SUCH INDICES CRUDE AT BEST. LET ME GIVE A FURTHER EXAMPLE. IN LINE WITH THE STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE HONG KONG ECONOMY, THERE HAS BEEN A DISTINCT UPGRADING OF THE OCCUPATION MIX, WITH FASTER PAY INCREASE FOR JOBS IN THE PROFESSIONAL, MANAGERIAL, SUPERVISORY AND TECHNICAL LEVELS, AS AGAINST JOBS REQUIRING LITTLE SKILLS. THIS IS A BENEFICIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE INCREASED INCOME DIVERSITY IS PARTLY A CONSEQUENCE OF IT. HENCE, MR FUNG SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF WAGES GO UP AT DIFFERENT RATES IN DIFFERENT SECTORS - IT WOULD BE WORRYING IF THAT IS NOT THE CASE - IT WOULD BE THAT WE WOULD HAVE AN INFLEXIBLE LABOUR MARKET AND ECONOMY.

IN ANY CASE, HONG KONG HAS LITTLE TO BE ASHAMED OF WHEN IT COMES TO INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS OF INCOME DISTRIBUTION. ANOTHER MEMBER HAS MENTIONED THE FIGURE FOR HONG KONG IS, FOR EXAMPLE, COMPARABLE WITH SINGAPORE AND THE UNITED KINGDOM. AND OF COURSE, IN THE PAST DECADE, HOUSEHOLD INCOMES IN HONG KONG HAVE REGISTERED MARKED INCREASES EVEN FOR THE LOWER INCOME BRACKETS. THE STANDARD OF LIVING HAS INCREASED ACROSS THE BOARD.

LET ME REPEAT IN THIS CONTEXT THE QUESTION I POSED EARLIER. SUPPOSE I ACCEPTED THE MESSAGE OF THIS MOTION AND LEVIED HIGHER TAXES ON THE MOST ENTERPRISING AND TALENTED MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY, WHAT WOULD BE THE RESULT? WE WOULD DEPRESS THE REWARDS OF GROWTH AND SO TAKE A STEP TOWARDS THE EQUALIZATIONS OF INCOMES AT LOWER LEVELS OF PROSPERITY FOR ALL SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY. AND EVEN THEN OUR CRITICS WOULD SEE NO IMPROVEMENT BECAUSE THEY REFUSE TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE REDISTRIBUTIVE EFFECTS OF TAXES AND PUBLIC EXPENDITURE - OF THE VERY SOCIAL POLICIES MENTIONED IN THE MOTION. SO THEY WOULD STILL COMPLAIN - AND PERHAPS WOULD CONTINUE TO DO SO UNTIL AN EQUALITY OF MISERY WAS ACHIEVED.

I'D LIKE TO MAKE ONE OTHER, RATHER SENSITIVE POINT. WE HAVE MANY SOCIAL POLICIES DESIGNED PRECISELY TO HELP THE LESS WELL-OFF, THE VULNERABLE. I BELIEVE IT IS IMPORTANT TO ENSURE THAT THOSE POLICIES ARE NOT WEAKENED SO AS TO MAKE THEM LESS SELECTIVE, HENCE PROVIDING LESS ASSISTANCE THAN WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE.

LEST THAT IS TOO THEORETICAL, LET ME CITE AS AN EXAMPLE HOUSING POLICY. I BELIEVE MR FUNG WAS ON THE SIDE OF THOSE RESISTING THE DOUBLE RENT POLICY. YET THE RESULT OF SUCH WELL-INTENTIONED CAMPAIGNS IS PRECISELY TO WEAKEN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR HUGE SUBSIDIZED HOUSING PROGRAMME IN HELPING THOSE MOST IN NEED. WE HAVE IN OUR PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES A SITUATION IN WHICH RELATIVELY WELL-OFF FAMILIES CAN CONTINUE TO PAY A HEAVILY SUBSIDIZED RENT. AND CAN EVEN GET PRIORITY OVER POORER PEOPLE IN PRIVATE HOUSING WHEN IT COMES TO APPLYING FOR HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME FLATS - EVEN IF THOSE RELATIVELY WELL-OFF FAMILIES ALREADY OWN A FLAT (OR FLATS) ELSEWHERE IN HONG KONG. AT THE SAME TIME THAT THE BETTER-OFF ENJOY SUCH PRIVILEGES, ORDINARY FAMILIES HAVE TO WAIT THEIR TURN PATIENTLY OR IMPATIENTLY FOR PUBLIC HOUSING WHILE PAYING HIGH RENT FOR PRIVATE ACCOMMODATION - SOMETIMES TO LANDLORDS IN PUBLIC HOUSING. I WOULD SUGGEST THAT WE NEED TO LOOK AGAIN AT SOME OF OUR SOCIAL POLICIES - NOT AS MR FUNG SUGGESTS TO ALTER INCOME DISTRIBUTION - BUT TO TRY TO ENSURE THOSE WHO BENEFIT ARE THOSE MOST IN NEED, WHICH IS A DIFFERENT POINT.

TO CONCLUDE, MR PRESIDENT, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD CONTINUE DOWN THE PATH OF GENUINE CONCERN FOR THOSE IN NEED, AND ACTION TO ASSIST THEM; COUPLED WITH A DETERMINATION TO PROVIDE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES SO THAT THOSE WITH MERIT CAN MAKE THEIR WAY TO THE TOP WHATEVER THEIR FAMILY INCOME. MEMBERS WILL HAVE GATHERED FROM MY REMARKS THAT THE OFFICIAL MEMBERS WILL OPPOSE THE ORIGINAL MOTION, BUT WILL SUPPORT THE AMENDMENT.

BILLS INTRODUCED TO MAKE BOC A NOTE-ISSUER

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TWO BILLS PROPOSING TO ENABLE THE BANK OF CHINA TO BECOME THE THIRD NOTE-ISSUING BANK IN HONG KONG WERE INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THEY ARE BANK NOTES ISSUE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993 AND EXCHANGE FUND (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993.

MOVING THE SECOND READINGS OF THE BILLS, THE SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES, MR MICHAEL CARTLAND, SAID THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL HAD APPROVED IN PRINCIPLE ON JANUARY 12 FOR THE BANK TO START ISSUING BANK NOTES FROM MAY NEXT YEAR.

UNDER PRESENT LEGISLATION, HONGKONG AND SHANGHAI BANKING CORPORATION LIMITED AND THE STANDARD CHARTERED BANK ARE THE TWO NOTE-ISSUING BANKS IN HONG KONG.

IN 1991, THE BANK OF CHINA APPROACHED THE ADMINISTRATION EXPRESSING AN INTEREST IN BECOMING A NOTE-ISSUER.

"AFTER A SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS WITH THE BANK, THE ADMINISTRATION WAS SATISFIED THAT THE BANK OF CHINA WAS PREPARED AND ABLE TO MEET THE TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS OF BECOMING A NOTE-ISSUING BANK," HE SAID.

"MOREOVER THE ADMINISTRATION CONSIDERED THAT HONG KONG COULD ACCOMMODATE AN ADDITIONAL NOTE-ISSUING BANK WITHOUT CAUSING CONFUSION IN THE CURRENCY," MR CARTLAND ADDED.

DEBATES ON THE BILLS WERE ADJOURNED.

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LICENSING SCHEME FOR BEDSPACE APARTMENTS

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THE BEDSPACE APARTMENTS BILL WILL PROVIDE FOR A LICENSING SCHEME TO REGULATE THE FIRE AND BUILDING SAFETY OF BEDSPACE APARTMENTS, THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SUEN, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, HE SAID THE LICENSING SCHEME FOLLOWED A RECOMMENDATION BY THE CORONER'S COURT IN 1991 AFTER ITS INQUIRY INTO THE DEATHS OF SEVEN PEOPLE IN A SHAM SHUI PO BEDSPACE APARTMENT FIRE IN DECEMBER 1990.

MR SUEN FIRST DEFINED A BEDSPACE APARTMENT AS A FLAT WHICH CONTAINS 12 OR MORE BEDSPACES FOR RENTAL PURPOSES.

HE SAID ONCE THE LICENSING SCHEME WAS IMPLEMENTED, ANY APPLICATION FOR EXEMPTION FOR ANY PERIOD NOT EXCEEDING TWO YEARS WOULD BE GRANTED BY THE RELEVANT AUTHORITY.

HOWEVER, MR SUEN ASSURED COUNCILLORS THAT DURING THOSE FIRST TWO YEARS, ALL EXISTING BEDSPACE APARTMENTS, WHICH SHOULD THEN BE OPERATING UNDER CERTIFICATES OF EXEMPTION, WOULD BE INSPECTED.

"AFTER THESE INSPECTIONS THE AUTHORITY WILL ADVISE THE OPERATORS ON THE IMPROVEMENT WORKS REQUIRED FOR LICENSING PURPOSES.

"APPLICANTS FOR LICENCES WILL HAVE TO SATISFY THE AUTHORITY THAT THEIR BEDSPACE APARTMENTS HAVE COMPILED WITH THE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS SPECIFIED IN THE LEGISLATION," HE SAID.

IN THIS CONNECTION, PRACTICAL GUIDANCE FOR COMPLIANCE WITH SUCH REQUIREMENTS WILL BE PROVIDED IN A CODE OF PRACTICE DEvised BY THE AUTHORITY AND PUBLISHED IN THE GAZETTE.

MR SUEN STRESSED THAT A BEDSPACE APARTMENT WOULD BE RE-INSPECTED TO ENSURE THAT THE SAFETY STANDARDS HAD BEEN MAINTAINED BEFORE A LICENCE WAS RENEWED.

MEANWHILE, THE BILL WILL EMPOWER THE AUTHORITY TO DIRECT THAT REMEDIAL WORKS BE CARRIED OUT IN ANY BEDSPACE APARTMENT.

FURTHERMORE, THE DISTRICT COURT WILL ALSO BE EMPOWERED TO ORDER ANY SUCH PREMISES TO BE CLOSED OR TO CEASE TO BE USED AS BEDSPACE APARTMENT, IF THERE IS ANY DANGER OR RISK OF DANGER TO OCCUPIERS.

MR SUEN SAID ANY APPEALS ARISING FROM THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE LEGISLATION WOULD BE DETERMINED BY AN APPEAL BOARD APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR.

THE APPEAL BOARD WILL BE CHAIRED BY A PERSON WHO IS QUALIFIED FOR APPOINTMENT AS A DISTRICT JUDGE, HE ADDED.

ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE LICENSING REQUIREMENTS, MR SUEN SAID SOME BEDSPACE APARTMENTS WOULD HAVE TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF BEDSPACES AND IT WAS ESTIMATED THAT ABOUT 400 BEDSPACES WOULD GO.

HOWEVER, HE GAVE HIS ASSURANCE THAT STEPS HAD ALREADY BEEN TAKEN TO MAKE AVAILABLE ALTERNATIVE HOUSING TO THOSE WHO WOULD BE DISPLACED.

"SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT WILL ASSIST THOSE AFFECTED LODGERS AGED 60 AND ABOVE AS WELL AS THE DISABLED THROUGH COMPASSIONATE REHOUSING, RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES FOR THE ELDERLY OR HOSTELS FOR SINGLE PERSONS.

"THOSE AFFECTED LODGERS WHO DO NOT FALL WITHIN THE ABOVE CATEGORIES WILL BE ELIGIBLE FOR APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION INTO THE SINGLETON HOSTELS ESTABLISHED BY THE CITY AND NEW TERRITORIES ADMINISTRATION," HE SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

PROPOSALS TO STREAMLINE EMPLOYMENT LAW

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS PROPOSED TO SIMPLIFY THE MEDICAL CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES FOR EMPLOYEES WHO INTEND TO RESIGN AND CLAIM LONG SERVICE PAYMENT ON GROUNDS OF ILL HEALTH.

AT PRESENT, AN EMPLOYEE MUST BE CERTIFIED BY A MEDICAL PRACTITIONER PRACTISING IN A GOVERNMENT, GOVERNMENT SUBVENTED OR PUBLIC HOSPITAL AS "PERMANENTLY UNFIT" FOR THE TYPE OF WORK HE IS PERFORMING.

EXPERIENCE SHOWS THAT SOME EMPLOYEES HAVE MET WITH DELAY AND DIFFICULTIES IN OBTAINING SUCH MEDICAL CERTIFICATES.

"TO SIMPLIFY THE PRESENT CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES, WE PROPOSE TO ALLOW ANY MEDICAL PRACTITIONER REGISTERED UNDER THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION ORDINANCE TO ISSUE THE CERTIFICATE," SAID MR MICHAEL LEUNG, SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, WHEN MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE EMPLOYMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993 IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"WE ALSO PROPOSE THAT IF THE EMPLOYER IS NOT SATISFIED WITH THE MEDICAL ASSESSMENT MADE BY THE EMPLOYEE, HE MAY, AT HIS OWN EXPENSE, APPOINT ANOTHER MEDICAL PRACTITIONER TO REASSESS THE EMPLOYEE'S MEDICAL CONDITIONS.

"SHOULD THE MEDICAL OPINIONS OF THE TWO ASSESSMENTS BE IN CONFLICT, THE CASE MAY BE REFERRED TO THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR FOR DETERMINATION," HE ADDED.

ANOTHER PROPOSAL IN THE AMENDMENT BILL RELATES TO THE LAY-OFF PROVISIONS.

CURRENTLY, AN EMPLOYEE IS DEEMED TO BE LAID OFF IF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF DAYS ON WHICH WORK IS NOT PROVIDED FOR HIM EXCEEDS EITHER HALF OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF NORMAL WORKING DAYS IN ANY PERIOD OF FOUR CONSECUTIVE WEEKS, OR ONE-THIRD OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF NORMAL WORKING DAYS IN ANY PERIOD OF 26 CONSECUTIVE WEEKS.

"HOWEVER, THERE IS AN AMBIGUITY IN THE EXISTING PROVISION ON WHETHER OR NOT THE DAYS OF LOCK OUT, REST DAYS, STATUTORY HOLIDAYS AND ANNUAL LEAVE DAYS SHOULD COUNT AS WORKING DAYS," THE SECRETARY SAID.

"TO REMOVE THIS AMBIGUITY, WE PROPOSE TO SPECIFY THAT THESE DAYS SHOULD NOT BE RECKONED AS NORMAL WORKING DAYS DURING THE REFERENCE PERIOD," HE ADDED.

A FURTHER PROPOSAL IS TO INTRODUCE AN OPTION FOR AN EMPLOYER TO SPECIFY ANY PERIOD OF 12 CONSECUTIVE MONTHS AS THE COMMON LEAVE YEAR FOR HIS EMPLOYEES.

THE MOVE AIMS TO REDUCE THE GREAT DEAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE WORK IMPOSED ON AN EMPLOYER IN KEEPING TRACK OF ALL HIS EMPLOYEES' ANNUAL LEAVE SINCE DIFFERENT EMPLOYEES HAVE DIFFERENT STARTING DAYS OF THEIR LEAVE YEAR.

TO PROVIDE BETTER PROTECTION TO AN EMPLOYEE WHO HAS GIVEN EVIDENCE OR INFORMATION AGAINST HIS EMPLOYER TO THE AUTHORITIES CONCERNED IN CONNECTION WITH THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE OR BREACHES OF WORK SAFETY REGULATIONS, THE BILL ALSO PROPOSES THAT THE COURT OR MAGISTRATE BE EMPOWERED TO ORDER THE EMPLOYER TO PAY COMPENSATION TO HIS EMPLOYEE SHOULD HE BE CONVICTED.

THE COMPENSATION SHOULD BE IN ADDITION TO ANY FINE IMPOSED BY THE COURT OR THE MAGISTRATE.

THE LAST AMENDMENT PROPOSED IN THE BILL IS TO EXPAND THE DEFINITION OF "COMMISSIONER" TO INCLUDE THE DEPUTY AND ASSISTANT COMMISSIONERS FOR LABOUR SO AS TO ENABLE THEM TO EXERCISE THE POWERS OF THE COMMISSIONER UNDER THE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) (NO. 4) BILL 93

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A BILL PROPOSING AMENDMENTS TO THE INLAND REVENUE ORDINANCE TO TIE IN WITH THE PRUDENTIAL REGULATION OF PRIVATE SECTOR RETIREMENT SCHEMES IN HONG KONG WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) (NO. 4) BILL 1993, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY, MR KWONG KI-CHI, EXPLAINED THAT THE COMMISSIONER OF INLAND REVENUE'S ROLE AS THE APPROVING AUTHORITY FOR RETIREMENT SCHEMES WOULD, IN FUTURE, BE TAKEN OVER BY THE COMMISSIONER OF INSURANCE.

THE AMENDMENTS ALSO ENSURE THAT RECOGNISED OCCUPATIONAL RETIREMENT SCHEMES WILL CONTINUE TO ENJOY THE TAX BENEFITS AND EXEMPTIONS TO WHICH THEY ARE CURRENTLY ENTITLED, HE SAID.

THE BILL ALSO PROVIDES FOR APPROPRIATE TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS.

MR KWONG SAID THE OPPORTUNITY HAD BEEN TAKEN TO INTRODUCE CERTAIN MINOR ANTI-AVOIDANCE PROVISIONS IN RELATION TO RETIREMENT SCHEMES AND TO EMPOWER THE COMMISSIONER OF INLAND REVENUE TO ISSUE NOTICES OF ASSESSMENT BY ORDINARY (AS OPPOSED TO REGISTERED) POST.

IN DECEMBER 1992, THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ENACTED THE OCCUPATIONAL RETIREMENT SCHEMES ORDINANCE.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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BANK CHARGES ARE COMMERCIAL DECISIONS

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THE SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES, MR MICHAEL CARTLAND, SAID BANKS IN HONG KONG WERE FREE TO SET THEIR OWN SCALE OF CHARGES TO MEET THEIR OWN REQUIREMENTS.

"THE ADMINISTRATION CONSIDERS IT SHOULD, WHEREVER POSSIBLE, AVOID INTERFERENCE WITH COMMERCIAL DECISIONS WHICH GENERALLY ARE BEST LEFT TO THE MARKET," HE SAID.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MAN SAI-CHEONG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), MR CARTLAND SAID CHARGES FOR SERVICES RENDERED WERE COMMERCIAL DECISIONS.

"CONSUMERS ARE EQUALLY FREE TO CHOOSE THEIR OWN BANKS," HE SAID.

"CONSUMER RIGHTS ARE A MATTER BEST LEFT TO THE CONSUMER COUNCIL TO PURSUE," HE ADDED.

MR CARTLAND SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WAS AWARE OF CONSUMER CONCERNS ABOUT THE PRACTICE OF SOME BANKS IMPOSING HANDLING CHARGES IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES ON CASH DEPOSITS EXCEEDING SPECIFIED AMOUNTS.

IT IS ALSO AWARE THAT THE SUBJECT HAS BEEN DISCUSSED BETWEEN THE CONSUMER COUNCIL AND THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION OF BANKS, HE SAID.

THE REASON FOR THE CHARGES IS TO RECOVER THE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS INVOLVED IN HANDLING LARGE AMOUNTS OF BANK NOTES, WHICH MAY INVOLVE NO CORRESPONDING GENERATION OF INCOME.

IN PRACTICE, HOWEVER, IT APPEARS THAT TYPICALLY ONLY A VERY SMALL PROPORTION OF TOTAL CASH DEPOSITS ATTRACT ANY CHARGES.

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THAILAND FACTORY FIRE TRAGEDY UNLIKELY TO HAPPEN IN HK

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IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT A SIMILAR SITUATION LIKE THE RECENT TOY FACTORY FIRE IN BANGKOK COULD ARISE IN HONG KONG, GIVEN THE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS, AND ENFORCEMENT OF SAFETY STANDARDS THROUGH REGULAR INSPECTIONS HERE.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHEUNG MAN-KWONG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR ASPREY SAID THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT HAD ALREADY TAKEN ACTION TO INSPECT FACTORIES, CONCENTRATING ON FIRE EXITS, PASSAGEWAYS AND FIRE SAFETY INSTALLATIONS.

THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT IS CONTINUING ITS INSPECTIONS IN INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS TO ENSURE THAT COMMON CORRIDORS AND EXITS ARE NOT BLOCKED, AND TO REMIND FACTORY OWNERS TO OBSERVE THE NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS IN THE USE OF INFLAMMABLE SUBSTANCES.

/HE SAID

HE SAID THE THAI AUTHORITIES WERE STILL CONDUCTING THEIR INVESTIGATION INTO THIS INCIDENT.

"THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT HAS REQUESTED A COPY OF THEIR INVESTIGATION FINDINGS ONCE COMPLETED," MR ASPREY SAID.

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POLICY ON PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATE CLINICS UNDER REGULAR REVIEW
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THE HOUSING AUTHORITY KEEPS THE POLICY ON THE PROVISION, LETTING, CONTROL AND REPROVISIONING OF MEDICAL CLINICS IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES UNDER REGULAR REVIEW, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON CONRAD LAM IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR EASON SAID THE MOST RECENT REVIEW WAS CONDUCTED IN LATE 1992.

"AS A RESULT, ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE ICAC, THE AUTHORITY DECIDED TO CONTINUE TO ALLOCATE NEW AND VACANT PREMISES BY BALLOTING THROUGH THE ESTATE DOCTORS ASSOCIATION, SUBJECT TO IMPROVEMENTS TO THE BALLOTING SYSTEM AND STRICTER TENANCY CONTROL OVER THE OPERATION OF THE CLINICS," MR EASON SAID.

THE INSTITUTION OF THESE IMPROVEMENTS SEEMED TO HAVE ATTRACTED VERY LITTLE FEEDBACK SO FAR, MR EASON ADDED.

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HA TO HAVE RESOURCES TO RUN AMBULANCE SERVICE
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SUFFICIENT RESOURCES WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY (HA) TO ENABLE IT TO TAKE UP THE NON-EMERGENCY AMBULANCE SERVICE IN STAGES FROM THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT (FSD).

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON LEONG CHE-HUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR ASPREY SAID THE NEW ARRANGEMENT WOULD EVENTUALLY RESULT IN SOME COST SAVINGS AS THIS SERVICE DID NOT REQUIRE THE HIGHLY TRAINED STAFF, THE SPECIALISED VEHICLES AND THE SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT CURRENTLY PROVIDED BY THE FSD.

"IT IS PROPOSED TO USE PART OF THESE SAVINGS TO EXPAND THE PARAMEDICAL SERVICES OF THE FSD TO UPGRADE THE STANDARD OF ON-THE-SPOT CARE PROVIDED FOR PATIENTS IN EMERGENCIES.

THE SECRETARY SAID THE HA WOULD MAKE ITS OWN ARRANGEMENT TO RECEIVE, AND TO RESPOND TO, NON-EMERGENCY CALLS FROM ITS PATIENTS.

THE FSD'S COMMUNICATION AND CONTROL CENTRE WILL MAINTAIN ITS COMMAND AND CONTROL OF AMBULANCES FOR EMERGENCY CALLS AND THE REMAINING 10 PER CENT OF NON-EMERGENCY CALLS.

HA'S PATIENTS ARE THE MAIN USERS OF NON-EMERGENCY AMBULANCE SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE FSD. THEY CONSTITUTE ABOUT 90 PER CENT OF SUCH CALLS.

THE GOVERNMENT HAS EARLIER DECIDED THAT THE FSD WOULD GRADUALLY WITHDRAW FROM THE PROVISION OF SUCH SERVICE TO ENABLE THE DEPARTMENT TO MAKE BETTER USE OF ITS RESOURCES AND TO FOCUS ON ITS PRIMARY ROLE AS THE PROVIDER OF EMERGENCY SERVICES.

UNDER THE PROPOSED ARRANGEMENT, THE HA HAS AGREED TO CONTRACT OUT THIS SERVICE FOR ITS PATIENTS IN STAGES, STARTING WITH HONG KONG ISLAND ON OCTOBER 1 THIS YEAR, KOWLOON ON JANUARY 1 NEXT YEAR AND FINALLY THE NEW TERRITORIES ON APRIL 1, 1995.

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MEASURES TAKEN TO REDUCE AIRPORT PROJECT INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS
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THE GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN A SERIES OF MEASURES TO REDUCE THE HAZARDS OF INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS IN CONNECTION WITH THE AIRPORT CORE PROGRAMME (ACP) PROJECTS, THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON TANG SIU-TONG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR BLAKE SAID THE WORKS BRANCH WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT ISSUED AN ACP CONSTRUCTION SAFETY MANUAL IN 1992.

THE MANUAL, STATING IN DETAIL REQUIREMENTS WHICH WOULD ENSURE THE BEST SAFETY PRACTICES FOR ACP, WAS DISTRIBUTED TO ALL PARTIES INVOLVED IN ACP PROJECTS INCLUDING WORKS DEPARTMENTS, CONSULTING ENGINEERS, CONTRACTORS AND WORKER UNIONS.

AN ACP CONSTRUCTION SAFETY STEERING COMMITTEE CHAIRED BY THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS WAS ESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE POLICY GUIDANCE AND TO ADDRESS ACP-WIDE CONSTRUCTION SAFETY ISSUES.

WHILE A SITE SAFETY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND A SITE SAFETY COMMITTEE ARE FORMED FOR EACH ACP SITE, A SAFETY MANAGEMENT UNIT HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED IN THE WORKS BRANCH TO VISIT AND REGULARLY AUDIT ACP SITES AND THEIR SAFETY STANDARDS.

MR BLAKE SAID OTHER MEASURES INCLUDED CONSIDERING CONTRACTORS' PAST PERFORMANCE AND COMMITMENT TO CONSTRUCTION SAFETY AT PREQUALIFICATION AND TENDERING STAGES, INCLUDING SAFETY REQUIREMENTS INTO ACP CONTRACTS, ORGANISING SAFETY TRAINING COURSES, BUILDING UP A CONSTRUCTION ACCIDENT DATABASE AND CREATING A SPECIAL SAFETY TEAM UNDER THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT.

MR BLAKE SAID UP TO APRIL 30, 1993, THERE WERE 501 INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS ON ACP PROJECTS IN WHICH THREE WORKERS WERE KILLED AND 499 WERE INJURED.

/THE OVERALL

THE OVERALL INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENT RATE AND FATAL ACCIDENT RATE FOR ACP PROJECTS ARE 90 PER 1,000 WORKERS PER YEAR AND 0.54 PER 1,000 WORKERS PER YEAR RESPECTIVELY.

THE CORRESPONDING RATES FOR OTHER CURRENT PUBLIC WORKS CONTRACTS UP TO THE END OF 1992 ARE ROUGHLY 99 AND 0.71.

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CHINESE CHILDREN TO BE SETTLED BY STAGES

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN CONSIDERING A NUMBER OF OPTIONS TO ALLOW CHILDREN BORN TO HONG KONG RESIDENTS AND LIVING IN CHINA TO SETTLE IN HONG KONG BY STAGES BEFORE 1997, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID.

THE AIM IS TO AVOID A SUDDEN INFLUX IN 1997, HE TOLD LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLORS WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LAU CHIN-SHEK.

"IN SO DOING, WE HAVE ALSO BEEN TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE IMPACT OF ANY ADDITIONAL IMMIGRATION INTO HONG KONG FROM CHINA ON PUBLIC SERVICES, PARTICULARLY EDUCATION, HEALTH AND OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES," MR ASPREY SAID.

THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF ENTRY FROM CHINA ON ONE-WAY PERMITS IS OPERATED BY THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT.

"I EXPECT THAT WE WILL BE DISCUSSING WITH THEM SHORTLY THE POSSIBILITY OF INCREASING THE ONE-WAY PERMIT QUOTA TO HELP TO SPREAD THE ARRIVAL OF THESE CHILDREN WHO WILL ACQUIRE THE RIGHT OF ABODE IN 1997," HE SAID.

THE GOVERNMENT ESTIMATES THAT ABOUT 75,000 CHILDREN IN CHINA WILL BECOME HONG KONG PERMANENT RESIDENTS IN 1997.

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MORE FUNDS FOR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

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THE LEVEL OF FUNDING FOR EARMARKED RESEARCH GRANTS TO THE SEVEN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS FUNDED BY THE UNIVERSITY AND POLYTECHNIC GRANTS COMMITTEE, AS APPROVED BY THE FINANCE COMMITTEE, RANGES FROM \$122 MILLION FOR THE 1992/93 ACADEMIC YEAR TO \$156 MILLION FOR 1993/94 AND \$144 MILLION FOR 1994/95.

HOWEVER, AS ANNOUNCED BY THE GOVERNOR IN HIS POLICY ADDRESS LAST OCTOBER, FUNDS PROVIDED FOR 1993/94 AND 1994/95 WOULD BE INCREASED BY OVER 20 PER CENT IN REAL TERMS, WITH A SUM OF \$180 MILLION TO BE PROVIDED IN 1994/95.

"APPROVAL FOR THE PROPOSED INCREASE TO THE LEVEL OF FUNDING FOR 1994/95 WILL BE SOUGHT IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DRAFT ESTIMATES FOR THAT YEAR," SAID THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR MICHAEL LEUNG, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHEUNG MAN-KWONG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR LEUNG NOTED THAT OF THE \$122 MILLION GRANTED TO THE INSTITUTIONS IN 1992/93, \$33.1 MILLION WERE GIVEN TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG, \$30.6 MILLION TO THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY, \$17.9 MILLION TO THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, \$15.2 MILLION TO THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC, \$14.4 MILLION TO THE CITY POLYTECHNIC, \$8.9 MILLION TO THE BAPTIST COLLEGE, AND \$1.9 MILLION TO THE LINGNAN COLLEGE.

THE ALLOCATION OF THE EARMARKED RESEARCH GRANTS FOR 1993/94 WILL BE DECIDED BY THE RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL (RGC) THIS MONTH AND THAT FOR 1994/95 IN JUNE 1994.

MR LEUNG ALSO TOLD THE COUNCIL THAT THE INSTITUTIONS WERE ENCOURAGED TO SPEND AT LEAST TWO PER CENT OF THEIR BLOCK GRANTS FOR THE PROVISION OF THE NECESSARY RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE.

THE AMOUNTS EARMARKED BY THE SEVEN INSTITUTIONS IN THIS RESPECT TOTAL \$105 MILLION FOR 1992/93 AND \$108.7 MILLION FOR 1993/94 AND 1994/95 RESPECTIVELY.

FUNDS FOR THE EARMARKED RESEARCH GRANTS ARE DISBURSED BY THE RGC, WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED IN JANUARY 1991.

IT INVITES AND RECEIVES APPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH GRANTS, APPROVES AWARDS AND OTHER DISBURSEMENTS AND SUBSEQUENTLY MONITORS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GRANTS.

"THE GRANTS ARE MAINLY AWARDED ON THE BASIS OF COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH A PROCESS OF PEER REVIEW," MR LEUNG SAID.

"APPLICATIONS ARE ASSESSED BY THE RGC THROUGH ITS THREE SUBJECT PANELS WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF AN INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF ACADEMIC EXPERT REFEREES," HE ADDED.

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NO COMPLAINTS RECEIVED ON PUBLISHING LIBEL
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THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S CHAMBERS HAD RECEIVED NO COMPLAINTS IN RESPECT OF, NOR HAD INSTITUTED ANY PROSECUTIONS FOR, AN OFFENCE OR OFFENCES AGAINST SECTIONS 5 OR 6 OF THE DEFAMATION ORDINANCE (CAP 21) IN THE PAST THREE YEARS.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO QUESTION BY THE HON CHIM PUI-CHUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON JEREMY MATHEWS, EXPLAINED THAT IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO INSTITUTE CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS IN ORDER TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS UNLESS A CRIMINAL OFFENCE KNOWN TO THE LAW HAD BEEN COMMITTED.

"SHOULD A COMPLAINT BE MADE IN RESPECT OF SUCH AN OFFENCE IT WILL BE CONSIDERED ON THE BASIS OF THE NORMAL CRITERIA, THAT IS, WHETHER THE EVIDENCE IS SUFFICIENT TO SUPPORT THE CRIMINAL OFFENCE AND WHETHER THE MERITS OF THE CASE ARE SUCH AS TO JUSTIFY A PROSECUTION," HE ADDED.

SECTIONS 5 AND 6 OF THE DEFAMATION ORDINANCE STATE THE PENALTY RELATING TO PUBLISHING LIBEL KNOWN TO BE FALSE AND PUBLISHING DEFAMATORY LIBEL.

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1993

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ABSENCE LIMIT FOR NATURALISATION WAIVABLE

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THE 450 DAYS ABSENCE LIMIT FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO BECOME A BRITISH DEPENDENT TERRITORIES CITIZEN BY NATURALISATION IS WAIVABLE IF THERE ARE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON EMILY LAU WAI-HING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"THE DIRECTOR OF IMMIGRATION IS AUTHORISED TO EXERCISE THIS FUNCTION," HE SAID.

IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, 628 REQUESTS TO WAIVE THE RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT WERE RECEIVED. OVER 99 PER CENT OF THEM WERE GRANTED.

AN APPLICANT WHO HAS BEEN AWAY FROM HONG KONG FOR MORE THAN 450 DAYS IN THE PREVIOUS FIVE YEARS, OR FOR MORE THAN 90 DAYS IN THE 12 MONTHS PRECEDING THE APPLICATION, MIGHT MAKE A WRITTEN REQUEST TO THE DIRECTOR OF IMMIGRATION FOR THE REQUIREMENT TO BE WAIVED, STATING THE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS CASE, THE SECRETARY EXPLAINED.

INFORMATION ON THE WAY TO MAKE THIS REQUEST IS PROVIDED IN THE NATURALISATION APPLICATION GUIDE BOOK, WHICH IS DISTRIBUTED TOGETHER WITH THE APPLICATION FORM TO APPLICANTS, HE ADDED.

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SUSPENDED PARTICLES IN WATER SUPPLY TO LAGUNA CITY EXPLAINED

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INVESTIGATIONS BY THE WATER SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT HAVE CONFIRMED THAT SUSPENDED PARTICLES FOUND IN FRESH WATER SUPPLY AT LAGUNA CITY IS DUE TO SOME IRREGULARITIES IN THE COMMUNAL WATER SUPPLY SERVICES WITHIN THE ESTATE.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON FRED LI IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR BLAKE SAID THE CHEMICAL COMPOSITION OF THESE TINY PARTICLES COULD NOT BE IDENTIFIED CLEARLY BECAUSE OF THE MINUTE QUANTITY.

"HOWEVER, IT IS CONSIDERED THAT THEIR PRESENCE IN SUCH MINUTE QUANTITY SHOULD NOT AFFECT THE OVERALL ACCEPTABILITY OF THE SUPPLIED WATER FOR POTABLE PURPOSES," HE SAID.

THE INVESTIGATION ALSO REVEALED THAT THE INLET AND OVERFLOW PIPES INSIDE THE ROOF TANKS HAD CORRODED SERIOUSLY, WHICH MIGHT BE THE SOURCE FOR THE TINY PARTICLES AS DISCOVERED IN THE WATER SAMPLES.

THE LAGUNA CITY MANAGEMENT OFFICE AND THE REGISTERED AGENT RESPONSIBLE FOR MAINTAINING THE COMMUNAL SERVICES HAD BEEN INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS.

/THEY HAD

THEY HAD BEEN ADVISED TO CARRY OUT A MORE DETAILED INVESTIGATION TO REPLACE THE CORRODED PIPES. REPLACEMENT WORK FOR THE CORRODED PIPES IS NEARING COMPLETION.

UNDER THE WATERWORKS ORDINANCE, THE REGISTERED AGENT UNDERTAKES TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CUSTODY AND MAINTENANCE OF THE COMMUNAL SERVICES.

THE WATER AUTHORITY CAN SERVE NOTICE TO THE REGISTERED AGENT REQUIRING REPAIRS OR OTHER WORKS TO BE CARRIED OUT IN VIEW OF THE POOR CONDITIONS OF THESE COMMUNAL SERVICES.

IF THE REGISTERED AGENT FAILS TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIRED WORK, THE WATER AUTHORITY MAY DISCONNECT THE SUPPLY TO THE PREMISES CONCERNED.

THIS WAS INADVISABLE SINCE IT WOULD CAUSE MAJOR DISTURBANCE TO THE LIVELIHOOD OF A LARGE POPULATION, MR BLAKE SAID.

TO ENSURE THAT THE REGISTERED AGENT WOULD PERFORM HIS DUTIES AND RESOLVE THIS TYPE OF PROBLEMS, THE OWNERS AND TENANTS CONCERNED SHOULD TAKE AN ACTIVE PART IN DIRECTING AND MONITORING ITS WORK, MR BLAKE SAID, ADDING THAT NO ADDITIONAL LEGISLATIVE CONTROL WAS CONSIDERED NECESSARY AT THIS STAGE.

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USE OF PFA CONCRETE ENCOURAGED FOR GOVT WORKS

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THE WORKS BRANCH TOGETHER WITH THE CIVIL ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT HAVE BEEN ACTIVELY ENCOURAGING THE USE OF PULVERISED FUEL ASH (PFA) CONCRETE FOR GOVERNMENT WORKS AND SEEKING WAYS TO PROMOTE SUITABLE USAGE BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON SAMUEL WONG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR BLAKE NOTED THAT THE USE OF PFA IN CONSTRUCTION WORKS WAS INCREASING AND RECENT EXAMPLES INCLUDED THE EASTERN HARBOUR CROSSING, THE ROUTE 5 TUNNEL AND THE HONG KONG CULTURAL CENTRE IN TSIM SHA TSUI.

MR BLAKE SAID THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT HAD INCLUDED PFA CONCRETE IN THEIR SPECIFICATION FOR SUB-STRUCTURAL WORKS.

TESTING THE PERFORMANCE OF HONG KONG PFA CONCRETE IS YIELDING RESULTS WHICH SHOW THAT THE IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS ARE THE SAME AS HAVE BEEN FOUND TESTING PFA CONCRETE OVERSEAS.

MR BLAKE SAID SOME 37 PER CENT OF THE PFA GENERATED BY CHINA LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY IN 1992 WAS PUMPED INTO THE TSANG TSUI LAGOON.

ANOTHER 18 PER CENT WAS TRANSPORTED TO PRC FOR USE AS FILL WHILE THE REMAINING 45 PER CENT WAS USED IN CONCRETE WORKS OR RECYCLING APPLICATIONS.

AS REGARDS HONG KONG ELECTRIC COMPANY, MR BLAKE SAID FIVE PER CENT OF THE PFA GENERATED IN 1992 WAS USED IN CONCRETE WORKS. THE REMAINING 95 PER CENT WAS TRANSPORTED TO PRC FOR USE AS FILL.

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POLICE TO MINIMISE CRIME REPORTING TIME

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THE POLICE REGULARLY REVIEW THE PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING CRIME AND FOR TAKING STATEMENTS TO SAVE TIME.

BUT IN VIEW OF THE WIDELY DIFFERING NATURE AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF CRIME CASES, IT WOULD BE UNREALISTIC TO SET A PERFORMANCE PLEDGE IN RESPECT OF THE TIME REQUIRED FOR THESE TWO AREAS OF WORK.

THESE REMARKS WERE MADE BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LEE WING-TAT, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR ASPREY SAID THE POLICE DID NOT KEEP RECORDS OF HOW LONG A PERSON HAD TO WAIT BEFORE BEING ABLE TO REPORT A CRIME OR HOW LONG IT TOOK FOR HIM TO GIVE A STATEMENT.

IN THE FORMER CASE, IT DEPENDS ON THE NUMBER OF PERSONS MAKING REPORTS AT THE TIME.

IN THE LATTER, IT DEPENDS ON THE NATURE OF THE CRIME, THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CASE AND HOW MUCH INFORMATION THE PERSON REPORTING THE CRIME IS SUPPLYING TO THE POLICE.

SINCE AUGUST LAST YEAR, A SIMPLE PROFORMA HAS BEEN INTRODUCED FOR REPORTING NON-SERIOUS CASES OF ROBBERY, BURGLARY, THEFT, ASSAULT AND CRIMINAL DAMAGE; BURGLARY CASES, INVOLVING PROPERTY BELOW THE VALUE OF HK\$20,000, ARE HANDLED BY THIS PROFORMA.

THE POLICE HAVE ALSO INTRODUCED SPECIAL PROFORMA DESIGNED FOR REPORTING CASES OF TAKING A VEHICLE WITHOUT AUTHORITY AND SHOPLIFTING, HE SAID.

HOWEVER, MR ASPREY SAID THE POLICE DID HAVE A PERFORMANCE PLEDGE IN RELATION TO THE RESPONSE TIME FOR CASES REPORTED VIA "999".

HE ASSURED THE LEGCO THAT IT WAS NINE MINUTES OR LESS IN THE URBAN AREA AND 14 MINUTES OR LESS IN THE NEW TERRITORIES.

"REPORTS OF BURGLARY ARE NORMALLY MADE FROM THE SCENE BY TELEPHONE.

"IN THE MAJORITY OF CASES, THE POLICE WILL ARRIVE AT THE SCENE TO COMMENCE ENQUIRIES WITHIN 15 MINUTES," HE SAID.

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 1993

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GOVT EXAMINES STUDY ON LNG TERMINAL

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THE ADMINISTRATION IS EXAMINING FINDINGS OF A STUDY OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF A TERMINAL FOR THE IMPORTATION OF LIQUEFIED NATURAL GAS (LNG).

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MR GORDON SIU, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON STEVEN POON KWOK-LIM IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE STUDY, COMMISSIONED RECENTLY BY A GROUP OF COMPANIES IN THE ENERGY FIELD, HAS INDICATED THAT THE CONSTRUCTION OF SUCH A TERMINAL IS TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE. A NUMBER OF POSSIBLE SITES FOR THE TERMINAL HAVE ALSO BEEN IDENTIFIED.

MR SIU SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO OVERALL STUDY CONDUCTED INTO THE USE OF LNG IN HONG KONG.

BUT THE GOVERNMENT COMMISSIONED CONSULTANTS IN 1990 TO ADVISE ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF USING LNG INSTEAD OF COAL TO FUEL THE PLANNED BLACK POINT POWER STATION.

THIS STUDY INDICATED THAT THE USE OF LNG WOULD BRING CERTAIN ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS IN TERMS OF LOWER EMISSIONS OF AIR POLLUTANTS AND PRODUCTION OF OTHER WASTE PRODUCTS, BUT THAT CONSUMERS WOULD FACE HIGHER TARIFFS IN THE LONG TERM THAN IF COAL WERE USED.

"IN THE EVENT, THE OPTION OF USING LNG WAS NOT PURSUED BECAUSE THE DEVELOPERS OF THE STATION: THE CHINA LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY AND EXXON ENERGY WERE ABLE TO PURCHASE A SUPPLY OF PIPED NATURAL GAS FROM A FIELD IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA OFF HAINAN ISLAND," THE SECRETARY SAID.

BEFORE ENTERING INTO THE PURCHASE AGREEMENT, THE COMPANIES WERE REQUIRED TO SATISFY THE GOVERNMENT THAT THERE WOULD BE ADEQUATE SECURITY OF SUPPLY AND THAT CONSUMERS WOULD NOT BE FACED WITH HIGHER TARIFFS THAN WOULD BE THE CASE UNDER ALTERNATIVE FUEL OPTIONS.

NO OTHER SPECIFIC PROPOSALS FOR THE IMPORTATION OF NATURAL GAS, EITHER IN PIPED OR LIQUEFIED FORM, HAVE BEEN RECEIVED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

MR SIU SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONSIDER ALL PROPOSALS POSITIVELY, ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS, IN THE LIGHT OF THE RELEVANT ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SECURITY OF SUPPLY IMPLICATIONS.

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LANDFILLS INVESTIGATED FOR RESTORATION PLANNING

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THE NINE COMPLETED AND FOUR OPERATING LANDFILLS IN THE TERRITORY HAVE ALL BEEN INVESTIGATED TO PROVIDE THE DATA NEEDED FOR PLANNING THEIR PROPER RESTORATION, WHICH WILL ALLOW THE LAND TO BE PUT TO USE AGAIN.

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

AMONG THE LANDFILLS, THE ONE AT SAI TSO WAN HAS FACILITIES TO EXTRACT LANDFILL GAS AND SAFELY BURN IT. THE THREE NEW STRATEGIC LANDFILLS WHICH WILL BE COMMISSIONED WITHIN THE NEXT FEW YEARS WILL BE PROVIDED WITH GAS CONTROL AND COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL SYSTEMS TO THE LATEST INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS.

MR EASON SAID DURING THESE INVESTIGATIONS IT HAD BECOME CLEAR THAT, WHILE NONE OF THE SITUATIONS WAS HAZARDOUS, GAS CONTROL SYSTEMS COULD USEFULLY BE INSTALLED AT SOME SITES BEFORE FULL-SCALE RESTORATION WORKS WERE UNDERTAKEN.

DURING THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, GAS CONTROL WORKS WOULD START AT THE JORDAN VALLEY, SHUEN WAN AND GIN DRINKERS BAY (KWAI CHUNG PARK) LANDFILLS AT A COST OF AROUND \$20 MILLION.

"THIS WILL ENSURE THAT THE AREAS AROUND THESE LANDFILLS ARE SAFE FROM GAS HAZARDS.

"THE PROGRAMME OF THE FULL-SCALE RESTORATION WORKS DEPENDS UPON THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS AND THE TIME TAKEN FOR EACH LANDFILL TO BE COMPLETED.

"NEVERTHELESS, ALL THE EXISTING LANDFILLS SHOULD BE COMPLETED AND RESTORED WITHIN THE NEXT FOUR YEARS," MR EASON SAID.

MR EASON NOTED THAT A MIXTURE OF LANDFILL GAS AND OXYGEN COULD IGNITE UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES.

"HOWEVER, ENGINEERING MEASURES, SUCH AS VENTING AND FLARING, EITHER ALREADY TAKEN OR UNDER CONSIDERATION, SHOULD PREVENT THESE CIRCUMSTANCES FROM ARISING," HE SAID.

REGULAR GAS MONITORING WAS UNDERTAKEN TO ENSURE PUBLIC SAFETY AT ALL SITES, HE SAID, ADDING THAT THERE WAS NO CAUSE FOR CONCERN TO DATE.

PLOT RATIO RESTRICTION FOR RESIDENTIAL ZONE IN MID-LEVELS
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THE PLOT RATIO RESTRICTION FOR RESIDENTIAL (GROUP B) ZONE IN MID-LEVELS, WHICH WAS INTRODUCED IN 1990, WAS FIRST CONSIDERED BY THE TOWN PLANNING BOARD ON MAY 26, 1989.

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

MR EASON SAID ALL OF THE 12 BUILDING PLAN SUBMISSIONS RELATED TO "R(B)" SITES RECEIVED IN THE INTERIM BY THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OFFICE WERE SUBSEQUENTLY APPROVED.

THEY INVOLVED A TOTAL OF 1,731 DOMESTIC UNITS AND 159,332 SQUARE METRES OF GROSS FLOOR AREA.

BETWEEN JUNE 1986 AND MAY 1989, 27 BUILDING PLAN SUBMISSIONS RELATED TO THE "R(B)" ZONE WERE APPROVED, HE SAID.

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NO PLAN TO LIFT BORDER CURFEW RESTRICTION
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ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION FROM CHINA HAS REMAINED HIGH THIS YEAR, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR ASPREY SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD NO PLANS TO LIFT THE CURFEW RESTRICTION IMPOSED IN THE FRONTIER CLOSED AREA, ADDING THAT THIS WOULD BE KEPT UNDER REVIEW.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TIK CHI-YUEN, THE SECRETARY SAID THE NUMBER OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (II'S) ARRESTED IN THE FRONTIER CLOSED AREA DURING THE CURFEW HOURS SINCE MARCH 1991 ARE AS FOLLOWS:

	II'S ARRESTED DURING CURFEW HOURS -----
1991 (MARCH - DECEMBER)	837
1992	615
1993 (JANUARY - APRIL)	271

NO STATISTICS ON THIS WERE KEPT BEFORE MARCH 1991.

HE SAID 23 RESIDENTS WERE CONVICTED FOR ENTERING OR LEAVING THE FRONTIER CLOSED AREA WITHOUT A CURFEW PERMIT IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS. THE NORMAL PRACTICE IS TO GIVE A WARNING RATHER THAN PROSECUTE.

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LEGCO DEBATES TWO MOTIONS FOR FOUR HOURS

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A MOTION MOVED BY REV THE HON FUNG CHI-WOOD ON A REVIEW OF MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC RENTAL HOUSING AND HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME ESTATES WAS PASSED AFTER A TWO-HOUR DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TONIGHT (WEDNESDAY).

A TOTAL OF 16 MEMBERS SPOKE. THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, REPLIED FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

ANOTHER MOTION ON THE DISPARITY BETWEEN THE RICH AND THE POOR PROPOSED BY THE HON K K FUNG WAS DEFEATED AFTER TWO HOURS OF DEBATE, THE AMENDMENT MOTION PROPOSED BY THE HON HENRY TANG WAS PASSED.

A TOTAL OF 17 MEMBERS SPOKE IN THE DEBATE, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, SPOKE FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

THE THREE MOTIONS MOVED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, UNDER THE BIRTHS AND DEATHS REGISTRATION ORDINANCE, THE FOREIGN MARRIAGE ORDINANCE AND THE LEGITIMACY ORDINANCE WERE ALSO PASSED.

TWO BILLS, THE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS (ADJOURNMENT DURING GALE WARNINGS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993 AND THE EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993, WERE ALSO PASSED.

FIVE BILLS WERE INTRODUCED FOR FIRST AND SECOND READINGS. DEBATES ON THEM WERE ADJOURNED.

THESE BILLS WERE: THE EMPLOYMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993, BEDSPACE APARTMENTS BILL, INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) (NO.4) BILL 1993, BANK NOTES ISSUE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993 AND EXCHANGE FUND (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993.

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RULES ON POST-RETIREMENT EMPLOYMENT EXPLAINED

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SINCE 1987, THREE ASSISTANT DIRECTORS OF MARINE, ONE FROM THE SURVEYOR OF SHIP GRADE AND TWO FROM THE MARINE OFFICER GRADE, HAVE BEEN GIVEN PERMISSION TO TAKE UP EMPLOYMENT IN THE MARITIME BUSINESS AFTER THEIR RETIREMENT.

AND OF THE THREE OFFICERS, TWO WERE SELF-EMPLOYED.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON FREDERICK FUNG KIN-KEE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE, MRS ANSON CHAN, EXPLAINED THAT WHEN PROCESSING APPLICATIONS FOR POST-RETIREMENT EMPLOYMENT, THE GOVERNMENT TOOK INTO ACCOUNT THE ADVICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON POST-RETIREMENT EMPLOYMENT APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR.

"THE APPLICANT'S PREVIOUS INVOLVEMENT IN POLICY FORMULATION IS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN CONSIDERING WHETHER THIS WOULD BENEFIT THE PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYER IN AN IMPROPER MANNER OR ENABLE THE APPLICANT TO GAIN AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE OVER HIS COMPETITORS," SHE SAID.

"VIEWS ARE SOUGHT FROM THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT ON THE QUESTION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST.

"CONSIDERATION IS ALSO GIVEN TO WHETHER THE PROPOSED EMPLOYMENT WILL RESULT IN THE OFFICER HAVING AN UNDESIRABLE PUBLIC PROFILE," SHE ADDED.

CONDITIONS, SUCH AS A SANITISATION PERIOD OR SANCTIONS AGAINST DEALING WITH SPECIFIC COMPANIES MAY BE IMPOSED AS NECESSARY.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACTS CONTINUE TO APPLY TO AN OFFICER AFTER HIS RETIREMENT, MRS CHAN ADDED.

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TRANSPORT CONCESSIONS FOR DISABLED AND ELDERLY
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THE TRANSPORT CONCESSIONS FOR DISABLED DRIVERS ANNOUNCED IN THE 1993 BUDGET WERE IMPLEMENTED ON APRIL 1 THIS YEAR, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR JOHN TELFORD, SAID.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ERIC LI IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), MR TELFORD SAID THIS INVOLVED EXTENDING CONCESSIONS ALREADY GRANTED TO DISABLED OWNERS OF PRIVATE CARS TO SUCH OWNERS OF MOTORCYCLES AND MOTOR TRICYCLES.

THEY ARE EXEMPTED FROM FIRST REGISTRATION TAX, FEES ON LEARNER DRIVING LICENCE, DRIVING TEST FORMS, ANNUAL VEHICLE LICENCE, TRANSFER OF VEHICLE OWNERSHIP, CROSS-HARBOUR TUNNEL PASSAGE TAX, PARKING METER FEES AND, SUBJECT TO A PRE-DETERMINED LIMIT, DUTY ON HYDROCARBON OIL.

"FROM THE SAME DATE, DISABLED DRIVERS OF PRIVATE CARS, MOTORCYCLES AND MOTOR TRICYCLES WERE EXEMPTED FROM THE NEED TO PAY TOLLS WHEN USING GOVERNMENT TUNNELS," HE SAID.

MR TELFORD SAID THE EXEMPTIONS FROM GOVERNMENT LICENCE FEES AND RENTAL PAYMENTS ANNOUNCED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY IN HIS BUDGET SPEECH WERE TO ENABLE FRANCHISED PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATORS TO INTRODUCE CONCESSIONARY FARE SCHEMES FOR THE ELDERLY OR, WHERE SUCH SCHEMES ALREADY EXISTED, TO IMPROVE ON THEM.

THE KOWLOON MOTOR BUS COMPANY HAS INTRODUCED A FULL-DAY HALF-FARE SCHEME ON ALL ITS ROUTES EXCEPT THOSE TO AND FROM THE AIRPORT FOR PERSONS AGED 65 AND OVER SINCE APRIL 5, 1993.

THE CHINA MOTOR BUS COMPANY WOULD INTRODUCE AN OFF-PEAK HALF FARE SCHEME FOR THE ELDERLY STARTING JUNE 6, 1993.

IT WOULD COVER ALL ROUTES EXCEPT THOSE USING THE CROSS HARBOUR TUNNELS AND ISLAND EASTERN CORRIDOR, AND AIR-CONDITIONED SERVICES.

DISCUSSIONS WERE BEING HELD WITH OTHER FRANCHISED PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATORS, INCLUDING THE STAR FERRY COMPANY, THE HONG KONG AND YAUMATI FERRY COMPANY, THE NEW LANTAO BUS COMPANY AND THE CITYBUS COMPANY, ON THE MANNER IN WHICH THEIR EXISTING CONCESSIONARY FARE SCHEMES AND SERVICES TO THE ELDERLY CAN BE UPGRADED WITH GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE.

"DETAILS OF THESE IMPROVEMENTS WILL BE ANNOUNCED AS SOON AS AGREEMENT IS REACHED," MR TELFORD SAID.

GUIDELINES HAD BEEN MADE AVAILABLE TO ALL ELIGIBLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATORS ON HOW TO SEEK EXEMPTION FROM GOVERNMENT LICENCE FEES AND RENTAL PAYMENTS, IN ORDER TO HELP FINANCE CONCESSIONARY FARE SCHEMES FOR THE ELDERLY, HE ADDED.

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COMMITTEE SUPPORTS BEIJING'S OLYMPIC GAMES BID

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HONG KONG'S SUPPORT FOR BEIJING'S BID TO HOST THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN THE YEAR 2000 SHOULD MORE APPROPRIATELY COME FROM THE HONG KONG AMATEUR SPORTS FEDERATION AND OLYMPIC COMMITTEE, THE SECRETARY FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE, MR JAMES SO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE SAID THE COMMITTEE HAD ALREADY MADE KNOWN ITS STAND IN SUPPORT OF BEIJING IN FEBRUARY THIS YEAR.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MARTIN BARROW, MR SO SAID THE SELECTION OF THE HOST CITY WAS BASICALLY A MATTER FOR THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE, WHICH IS MADE UP OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE OLYMPIC COMMITTEES OF THE PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES.

THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE IS EXPECTED TO MAKE A DECISION ON THE HOST CITY IN SEPTEMBER THIS YEAR.

MR SO ALSO TOLD THE COUNCIL THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS AWARE THAT IF BEIJING WERE TO BE SELECTED AS THE HOST CITY, HONG KONG WOULD BENEFIT IN TOURISM AND OTHER AREAS.

"HOWEVER, IT WOULD BE PREMATURE, AT THIS STAGE, TO GAUGE THE EXTENT OF THESE BENEFITS," HE ADDED.

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MARKET BEHAVIOUR PROPERLY MONITORED

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THE SECURITIES AND FUTURES COMMISSION (SFC) HAS NOT DETECTED ANY IMPROPER BEHAVIOUR IN CONNECTION WITH RECENT MARKET MOVEMENTS ON WHICH IT COULD TAKE ACTION UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE SECURITIES (INSIDER DEALING) ORDINANCE 1990.

NEVERTHELESS, THE SFC WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR AND TAKE ACTION AS AND WHEN NECESSARY, THE SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES, MR MICHAEL CARTLAND, SAID IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HUANG CHEN-YA IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

/HE POINTED

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HE POINTED OUT THAT UNDER THE ORDINANCE, THE PROHIBITIONS RELATING TO INSIDER DEALING APPLY TO SECURITIES ONLY AND COVER ONLY RELEVANT NON-PUBLIC INFORMATION WHICH IS PRICE SENSITIVE TO A PARTICULAR ISSUING COMPANY, BUT NOT INFORMATION WHICH IS PRICE SENSITIVE ACROSS THE ENTIRE MARKET.

"THEREFORE THE SITUATION ALLUDED TO IN THE QUESTION, THAT IS THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION RELATING TO EXTERNAL POLITICAL MATTERS SUCH AS THE SINO-BRITISH TALKS, DOES NOT COME WITHIN THE SCOPE OF INSIDER DEALING AS CONTEMPLATED UNDER THE ORDINANCE," HE SAID.

CHARACTERISTICALLY, THE VOLATILITY OF THE HONG KONG MARKET IS OFTEN AFFECTED BY THE EXTERNAL FORCES AND A 100-PLUS POINT MOVE IS NOT AN UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE, THE SECRETARY SAID.

THE COMMISSION ROUTINELY MONITORS MARKET ACTIVITY, AND WHERE ANOMALIES OR OTHER UNUSUAL MARKET PHENOMENA OCCUR, MORE DETAILED EXAMINATION WILL BE CONDUCTED, HE ADDED.

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