



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1988

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THREE MAIN FACTORS TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION: FS
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HAVING REGARD TO THE AMOUNT OF PUBLIC DISCUSSION THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE IN RELATION TO THE PROPOSAL OF HOSTING AN EXPO IN HONG KONG IN 1997, IT IS ENTIRELY RIGHT THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD GIVE THE MATTER FULL AND SERIOUS CONSIDERATION, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

WINDING UP THE MOTION DEBATE ON THE EXPO PROPOSAL, MR JACOBS SAID THAT IN EXAMINING THE PROPOSAL THREE MAIN FACTORS HAD BEEN UPPERMOST IN THE MIND OF THE ADMINISTRATION.

THE FIRST FACTOR WAS WHETHER HOSTING AN EXPO WAS ESSENTIAL, NOT JUST DESIRABLE, IN THE OVERALL INTERESTS OF HONG KONG.

THE OTHER FACTORS WERE BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS AND THE EFFECT ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS.

"IN THE RUN-UP TO 1997, IT IS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT HOW THE ECONOMY WILL PERFORM, VULNERABLE AS WE ARE TO EXTERNAL INFLUENCES. A DEGREE OF CAUTION IS THEREFORE ALWAYS NECESSARY," MR JACOBS SAID.

"HONG KONG WILL BE HEAVILY COMMITTED TO A NUMBER OF MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS OVER THE YEARS AHEAD, IN ADDITION TO THE CURRENT COMMITMENTS TO OUR PROGRAMMES IN HOUSING, SOCIAL SERVICES, EDUCATION AND SO ON.

"IF WE WERE TO ALTER THE TIMING OF VARIOUS PROJECTS TO ACCOMMODATE EXPO, IT IS ALMOST INEVITABLE THAT SOME WITH A HIGH PRIORITY WOULD HAVE TO BE DEFERRED."

MR JACOBS ESTIMATED THAT THE PROJECT WOULD COST ABOUT \$7 BILLION, WHICH, HE SAID, WAS NOT A SMALL AMOUNT OF MONEY WHICH COULD BE EASILY FITTED INTO HONG KONG'S CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME AS HAD BEEN SUGGESTED.

"IT IS THE EQUIVALENT COST OF THE TUEN MUN HOSPITAL, THE EASTERN HOSPITAL AND THE SECOND HARBOUR TUNNEL ALL ADDED TOGETHER," HE SAID.

"IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT WHAT WE ARE AT PRESENT PLANNING WILL BE OF LONG-TERM BENEFIT TO HONG KONG.

"TO INTERRUPT OUR PLANS WITH A PROJECT THAT IN ITSELF IS OF SHORT-TERM DURATION AND IN RELATION TO WHICH THE BENEFITS ARE UNCERTAIN IS OF DOUBTFUL WISDOM, HOWEVER PRAISEWORTHY THE MOTIVATION."

MR JACOBS SAID AN OVERLOADED ECONOMY COULD WELL RESULT IN A HIGHER INFLATION RATE WITH ALL THE PAIN THAT COULD ENTAIL.

/ "I DO

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"I DO QUESTION WHETHER THE FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THE NEW SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION WILL COME INTO BEING IN 1997 IS LIKELY TO BE ENHANCED BY A BURDEN OF DEBT AND BY AN ECONOMY WHICH HAS BEEN SUBJECTED TO UNDUE STRAIN," HE SAID.

COMMENTING ON A MEMBER'S SUGGESTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS HALF-HEARTED IN ITS ATTEMPT TO STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF THE CONCEPT, MR JACOBS SAID "THERE WAS NOTHING HALF-HEARTED ABOUT OUR CONSIDERATION AT ALL."

"WHEN THE SUGGESTION WAS FIRST MADE IT GENERATED A GREAT DEAL OF EXCITEMENT AND ENTHUSIASM AND THE STUDY THAT WAS CONDUCTED WAS INDEED WHOLE-HEARTED."

HE ASSURED MEMBERS THAT VERY SERIOUS AND VERY DETAILED CONSIDERATION WAS GIVEN TO THE PROPOSAL.

"WE HAVE TO BEAR IN MIND THAT MANY OF THE ASSUMPTIONS UPON WHICH THE STUDIES CARRIED OUT SO FAR HAVE BEEN BASED ARE NOT AT THIS STAGE CAPABLE OF PRECISE TEST," HE SAID.

"IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HONG KONG, FACING AS IT DOES A TRANSITION IN 1997, IT DOES SEEM TO THE ADMINISTRATION THAT A GAMBLE IS NOT WHAT WE WANT.

"I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE STEADY PROGRESS AND COMPLETION OF LONG-TERM PROJECTS AND THE TIMELY DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES WITHIN OUR MEANS ARE FAR BETTER DESIGNED TO ENGENDER THAT LONG LASTING CONFIDENCE IN HONG KONG WHICH WILL ENSURE ITS STABILITY AND PROSPERITY IN THE YEARS AHEAD."

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EXPO PROPOSAL WILL BE GIVEN FULL, CAREFUL CONSIDERATION
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THE PROPOSAL TO REGISTER HONG KONG'S INTERESTS IN STAGING THE WORLD EXPOSITION IN 1997 WITH THE BUREAU INTERNATIONALE DES EXPOSITIONS (BIE) BEFORE THE DEADLINE OF NOVEMBER 20, WOULD BE GIVEN THE MOST CAREFUL AND FULLEST CONSIDERATION BY THE ADMINISTRATION, THE SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND INFORMATION, THE HON PETER TSAO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

NOTING THAT THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG'S MOTION CALLED ON THE ADMINISTRATION TO DO JUST THAT, MR TSAO SAID HE WOULD SUPPORT IT.

/MR TSAO

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MR TSAO SAID THE QUESTION WHICH MANY PEOPLE HAD RAISED BOTH IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND OUTSIDE WAS WHY NOT REGISTER AN INTEREST NOW WITHOUT COMMITMENT.

"THIS MAY ON THE SURFACE APPEAR TO BE AN ATTRACTIVE COMPROMISE," MR TSAO SAID.

"BUT, THE REAL POINT AT ISSUE IS WHETHER WE CAN AFFORD TO DIVERT RESOURCES, FINANCIAL, HUMAN AND ENGINEERING, AWAY FROM PROJECTS WHICH FORM THE MAJOR PART OF THE PACKAGE DEVISED TO ENSURE HONG KONG'S STABILITY AND PROSPERITY IN THE YEARS TO COME, TO A ONE-OFF GIGANTIC PUBLICITY EXERCISE," HE ADDED.

"NO AMOUNT OF STUDY BY CONSULTANTS WILL GIVE US THE ANSWER. ONLY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE END, CAN PROVIDE IT," HE SAID.

MR TSAO SAID ALTHOUGH THERE WAS NO POINT IN DELAYING A DECISION, THERE WAS EQUALLY NO POINT IN MAKING A CONTINGENCY REGISTRATION WHICH IN ITSELF WAS UNDESIRABLE.

HE POINTED OUT THAT A NUMBER OF PROPOSED EXPOS REGISTERED WITH THE BIE THAT HAD FALLEN BY THE WAYSIDE HAD BEEN DESCRIBED BY EXPERTS IN THIS FIELD AS " FAILURES".

"I DOUBT IF HONG KONG WOULD WISH TO HAVE ITS NAME MENTIONED IN YEARS TO COME, IN THE CONTEXT OF A FAILURE.

"FURTHER, IF WE WERE TO REGISTER, THEN WITHDRAW, THERE WOULD BE ALL SORTS OF THEORIES: THE MOST READY AND POPULAR ONE IS BOUND TO BE THAT WE DID SO UNDER UNSPECIFIED POLITICAL PRESSURE.

"IF THE INTENTION OF HOSTING AN EXPO IS, AS MR CHEONG ASSERTS, TO INJECT CONFIDENCE, THEN TO WITHDRAW OUR BID WITH THE BIE IS BOUND TO HAVE THE OPPOSITE EFFECT," MR TSAO SAID.

"BUT IF WE ARE CONVINCED THAT THERE ARE SOUND PRACTICAL REASONS FOR NOT GOING AHEAD WE SHOULD SAY SO NOW RATHER THAN ALLOW THE ISSUE TO DRAG ON AND ENCOURAGE FURTHER EXPECTATION TO BE BUILT UP," HE ADDED.

MR TSAO NOTED THAT THE IDEA OF AN EXPO, WHEN IT WAS FIRST MOOTED, WAS WELCOMED AS A MOST STIMULATING ONE, BUT THE ADMINISTRATION HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT IT HAD RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE PROPOSAL WHICH WERE SPELT OUT TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AD HOC GROUP AND TO THE PUBLIC THROUGH THE PRESS.

"IT WOULD BE IRRESPONSIBLE FOR US NOT TO LOOK MOST CAREFULLY INTO THE PRACTICABILITY AND FEASIBILITY OF THE PROJECT FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE ADMINISTRATION.

/ "IN PARTICULAR,

"IN PARTICULAR, WE HAVE TO EXAMINE THE OVERALL SCHEME OF THINGS. A VIEW ON EXPO CANNOT BE TAKEN ALONE AND IN ISOLATION. THIS WIDER VIEW HAS NOW BEEN TAKEN," MR TSAO SAID.

HE SAID THAT THE SUGGESTION OF STAGING AN EXPO WOULD REFLECT THE CONFIDENCE IN HONG KONG'S FUTURE.

"I AM SURE THAT NO ONE WILL TRY TO SUGGEST THAT ANY DECISION ON EXPO SHOULD BE REGARDED AS A BAROMETER OF THE LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG," HE SAID.

MR TSAO ALSO POINTED OUT THAT AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME, THE BIE REGULATIONS WERE MORE DEMANDING THAN PREVIOUSLY.

"UP UNTIL NOW THE REGULATIONS PROVIDED THAT NO BID WAS REQUIRED UNTIL SIX YEARS BEFORE A PROPOSED EVENT. THESE RULES HAVE NOW CHANGED, PUTTING HONG KONG AND ANY POTENTIAL BIDDER INTO A SITUATION WHERE THEY MUST LOOK UP TO 12 YEARS IN ADVANCE TO DECIDE THE FEASIBILITY AND ADVISABILITY OF HOSTING SUCH AN EVENT.

"FOR HONG KONG THESE YEARS COVER A PERIOD OF INTENSE ACTIVITY IN BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR AS WE WORK TOGETHER IN ENSURING HONG KONG'S STABILITY AND PROSPERITY.

"IT IS AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF ALL THAT WILL BE HAPPENING IN THE YEARS UP TO AND BEYOND 1997, THAT THIS DECISION MUST BE TAKEN," MR TSAO SAID.

HE SAID WHEN MR CHEONG'S PROPOSAL WAS MADE IN APRIL THIS YEAR, A WORKING GROUP UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE CHIEF SECRETARY WAS FORMED AND INCLUDED ALL RELEVANT POLICY SECRETARIES.

"THIS GROUP HAS CARRIED OUT ITS DELIBERATIONS THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE PERIOD, THERE IS THUS NO QUESTION THAT THE ISSUE HAS NOT BEEN TAKEN SERIOUSLY," HE ADDED.

HE SAID THE WORKING GROUP'S INITIAL FINDINGS IDENTIFIED JUNK BAY AS A POSSIBLE SITE IF THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY COULD BE EXTENDED TO IT, BUT ONCE THE GROUP BEGAN TO LOOK AT THE CONSTRAINTS POSED BY THE AIRPORT, SERIOUS RESERVATIONS ON THE PROPOSAL EMERGED.

MR TSAO OUTLINED THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE AFTER MR CHEONG'S PROPOSAL INCLUDING INITIAL STUDIES BY THE WORKING GROUP, MR CHEONG'S APPOINTMENT OF CONSULTANTS TO STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF STAGING AN EXPO IN 1997, AND THE DISCUSSIONS HELD AFTER THE CONSULTANTS ISSUED THEIR REPORT.

HE NOTED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION'S RESERVATIONS WERE EXPRESSED TO THE CONSULTANTS AND IT HAD OFFERED TO DISCUSS THEM BEFORE THE FINAL REPORT WAS PREPARED.

/WE ALSO

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"WE ALSO INVITED THEM TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH INDIVIDUAL SECRETARIES, AND I BELIEVE THE QUESTION OF A POSSIBLE SITE WAS DISCUSSED WITH THE STAFF OF LANDS AND WORKS BRANCH."

"BUT NO OTHER SECRETARY WAS APPROACHED OR ASKED FOR INFORMATION AND NO FURTHER MEETING TOOK PLACE BETWEEN THE GROUP AND THE CONSULTANTS UNTIL THE FINAL REPORT WAS PUBLISHED ON OCTOBER 3," SAID MR TSAO.

"IN THE EVENT, THE FINAL REPORT DID NOT DIFFER, IN SUBSTANCE, FROM THE INTERIM REPORT. THE CONSULTANTS MADE THE STATEMENT THAT ALL PROBLEMS COULD BE SURMOUNTED.

"THEY DID NOT SAY WHAT THE PROBLEMS WERE NOR HOW THEY WERE TO BE DEALT WITH," MR TSAO NOTED.

HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT DURING THE CONSULTANCY PERIOD ADVICE WAS SOUGHT FROM THREE EXPERTS IN THE FIELD OF EXPOS TO ASCERTAIN THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR HOSTING AN EXPO.

"THEY WERE IN NO SENSE FEASIBILITY STUDIES," MR TSAO SAID.

"THE PURPOSE OF SEEKING THIS ADVICE WAS TO SEE WHETHER HONG KONG COULD MEET THESE REQUIREMENTS," HE ADDED.

HE SAID TWO OF THE EXPERTS CONFIRMED THE NECESSITY OF RELIANCE ON A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF VISITS TO THE EXPO TO MAKE SUCH AN EVENT A SUCCESS.

"INDEED THEY POINTED OUT THAT THE LEVEL OF ATTENDANCE WAS THE STARTING POINT. IT WOULD MAKE, OR BREAK, AN EXPO," MR TSAO SAID.

"IN HONG KONG'S SPECIAL CASE WE SEE A NEED TO MAKE AN EVENT SUCH AS THIS NOT ONLY VIABLE BUT ALSO INTERNATIONAL.

"WE SEE AN EXPO AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW THE WORLD THAT HONG KONG WILL CONTINUE TO BE A VIBRANT, ECONOMICALLY BUOYANT FORCE IN THE WORLD IN 1997 AND BEYOND.

"HOWEVER, DUE TO THE LIMITATIONS IMPOSED BY THE AIRPORT, WE DO NOT SEE THIS INTERNATIONAL OBJECTIVE BEING MET BECAUSE WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO BRING IN FROM OVERSEAS THE NUMBER OF VISITORS THAT WE WOULD WANT.

"THE LIMITATIONS ON THE AIRPORT HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE CONSULTANTS, AS THEY ALSO ACCEPT THAT THERE CANNOT BE A NEW AIRPORT READY FOR SERVICE IN TIME FOR EXPO," MR TSAO EXPLAINED.

HE POINTED OUT THAT WHILE PROJECTING VISITS RUNNING UP TO 28 MILLION, THE CONSULTANTS HAD COME UP WITH AN ODD FIGURE OF 200,000 ADDITIONAL OVERSEAS VISITORS.

/ "SINCE WE

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"SINCE WE ARE UNLIKELY TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN NUMBER OF OVERSEAS VISITORS WHO WOULD COME SPECIFICALLY FOR THE EXPO, IT SEEMS THAT THE CONSULTANTS HAVE RELIED ON LOCAL VISITORS AND THOSE FROM CHINA," MR TSAO SAID.

HE NOTED THAT IN HONG KONG, PEOPLE HAD RELATIVELY LESS LEISURE TIME AND WORK LONGER DAYS THAN PEOPLE WHO LIVED IN COUNTRIES WHERE EXPOS HAD BEEN HELD.

"THE CONSULTANTS HAVE ASSUMED ON THE BASIS OF PREVIOUS EXPOS AN AVERAGE OF 2.5 VISITS PER VISITOR.

"A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR OF GEOGRAPHY THOUGHT THAT THE NUMBER OF VISITS THAT CAN BE EXPECTED FROM LOCAL SOURCES SHOULD BE HALVED. I HAVE SOME SYMPATHY WITH THIS VIEW.

"THE CONSULTANTS FURTHER PROJECTED THAT DURING THE SIX-MONTH PERIOD OF EXPO, THREE MILLION PEOPLE WILL COME FROM THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND 2.7 MILLION OF THEM WOULD EACH VISIT THE EXPO TWO-AND-A-HALF TIMES.

"THEY WOULD THEN PROVIDE MORE THAN SIX MILLION VISITORS," HE SAID.

MR TSAO SAID WHETHER THREE MILLION PEOPLE FROM CHINA WOULD COME TO HONG KONG DURING THE SIX-MONTH EXPO PERIOD WAS DEBATABLE, AND EVEN ASSUMING THAT THEY WOULD COME, IT WOULD MEAN HAVING TO HANDLE 15,000 SUCH VISITORS A DAY.

"RIGHT NOW, THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT HANDLES AROUND 200 A DAY AND WHEN THE NUMBER REACHES 250, THEIR RESOURCES ARE VERY MUCH STRETCHED.

"I HAVE SOME DIFFICULTY IN MAKING THE QUANTUM LEAP FROM 250 TO 15,000. THE DIRECTOR OF IMMIGRATION HAS THE SAME PROBLEM," MR TSAO SAID.

HE SAID WHILE TOURISTS COMING TO HONG KONG WOULD PROBABLY VISIT THE EXPO, IT WOULD BE HARD TO ASSUME THAT BUSINESSMEN TRAVELLING TO THE TERRITORY WOULD DO SO.

"CERTAINLY WE ARE GUESSING AT NUMBERS, BOTH THE CONSULTANTS AND THE ADMINISTRATION.

"ONE MIGHT SAY THAT YOUR GUESS IS AS BAD AS MINE," MR TSAO SAID.

"HOWEVER, AS POLICY SECRETARIES, WE HAVE A CLEAR RESPONSIBILITY NOT TO GAMBLE IN OUR PLANS FOR HONG KONG'S FUTURE," HE SAID.

/"AN EXPO,

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"AN EXPO, THE CONSULTANTS SAID, MUST HAVE A MINIMUM OF AROUND 28 MILLION VISITS TO MAKE IT VIABLE.

"MEETING THIS TARGET IS CRUCIAL BECAUSE IT IS NOT JUST A QUESTION OF FINANCIAL VIABILITY; IT IS ALSO A QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITORS WOULD FIND THE EXPO ATTRACTIVE ENOUGH TO COME AND MOUNT AN EXHIBITION," MR TSAO SAID.

HE SAID WHILE HE AGREED THAT THE DESIRED ATTENDANCE LEVEL MUST BE ATTAINED, HE WAS YET TO BE CONVINCED THAT THE CONSULTANTS OPTIMISM WAS NOT MISPLACED.

"THE MOST IMPORTANT CONCLUSION TO BE DRAWN FROM THE CONSULTANTS' REPORT IS THAT FAILURE TO ATTRACT THE LARGE NUMBER OF VISITS FORECAST BY THEM WILL MEAN FAILURE OF THE EXPO," HE ADDED.

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COSTS AND SACRIFICES TO DEVELOPMENT OUTLINED

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THE ACHIEVEMENT OF EXPO 1997 IN ANY OF THE THREE SITES SUGGESTED WOULD INVOLVE COSTS AND SACRIFICES WELL BEYOND THOSE PROPOSED IN THE CONSULTANTS' REPORT, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

IN SUPPORTING THE MOTION ON CONSIDERING AN EXPO IN 1997, MR BARNES SAID ALL THE SUGGESTED SITES WERE PART OF THE GOVERNMENT'S RECLAMATION PLANS IN THE 1990'S WHICH FORMED PART OF ITS PLANNED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME.

"BUT IN EACH CASE, THE USE OF THE LAND FOR AN EXPO WOULD ENTAIL A MAJOR RESTRUCTURING OF THE PRESENTLY ENVISAGED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AT CONSIDERABLE COST TO THE COMMUNITY, AS THE PRESENT SCHEDULE WOULD CERTAINLY NOT PROVIDE THE SERVICED LAND NEEDED IN ANY OF THE RECLAMATIONS IN TIME," HE SAID.

THE THREE SITES SUGGESTED WERE THE CENTRAL AND WAN CHAI RECLAMATION; THE WEST KOWLOON RECLAMATION; AND THE JUNK BAY PHASE TWO RECLAMATION.

"IN CENTRAL, THE MAIN STRATEGIC NEEDS FOR THE RECLAMATION ARE THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW EAST-WEST TRUNK ROAD LINK OVER, UNDER OR THROUGH THE RECLAMATION, AND THE PROVISION OF SITES IN CENTRAL FOR OFFICES.

/"MOST OF

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"MOST OF THESE OFFICE SITES ARE PRESENTLY PLANNED ON THE PART OF THE RECLAMATION SUGGESTED FOR USE FOR THE EXPO AND WE PLAN TO BE SELLING SOME OF THEM WITHIN THE NEXT EIGHT TO 10 YEARS," MR BARNES SAID.

"EXPO WOULD DELAY THE AVAILABILITY OF SITES FOR AT LEAST TWO YEARS AND DURING THIS PERIOD, WE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE AREA FOR THIS KIND OF DEVELOPMENT," HE ADDED.

MR BARNES SAID IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT LAND BE PROVIDED FOR THE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF HONG KONG AS AN INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL AND BUSINESS CENTRE.

THE WEST KOWLOON RECLAMATION WOULD PROVIDE LAND FOR TWO MAJOR ROAD LINKS -- THE WEST KOWLOON EXPRESSWAY AND ITS CONNECTIONS INTO THE EXISTING ROAD NETWORK; AND THE WESTERN HARBOUR CROSSING AND ITS LINK TO KOWLOON AND THE EXPRESSWAY, MR BARNES SAID.

THE PROJECT WOULD ALSO PROVIDE LAND TO MAKE UP THE GLARING DEFICIENCIES IN FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACE IN WEST AND NORTH-WEST KOWLOON AS WELL AS FOR THE PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME, HE ADDED.

"A CONTINUOUS PROGRAMME WILL BE IN PROGRESS BY THE MID-90'S WHICH WOULD BE, I THINK, INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE HOLDING OF THE EXPOSITION IN THIS AREA," MR BARNES SAID.

THE PROPOSED AREA FOR THE EXPO AT JUNK BAY WOULD BE ON PART OF THE FUTURE PHASE TWO RECLAMATION, PART OF WHICH HAD BEEN DESIGNATED FOR THE TOWN CENTRE, HE SAID.

MR BARNES SAID THAT IN PROVIDING A SERVICED SITE FOR THE EXPO, THE WHOLE FORMATION AND SERVICING OF THE RECLAMATION WOULD HAVE TO BE BROUGHT FORWARD BY TWO AND A HALF YEARS.

IT WOULD ALSO INVOLVE BRINGING FORWARD THE CONSTRUCTION AND OCCUPATION PROGRAMME FOR TWO PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES PLANNED ON THE RECLAMATION AND PRESENTLY SCHEDULED FOR CONSTRUCTION BETWEEN 1991 AND 1998, HE SAID.

THIS MEANT THE ESTATES WOULD HAVE TO BE COMPLETED FOR OCCUPATION IN EARLY 1996, HE ADDED.

"THE NEED FOR THE EARLY CONSTRUCTION AND OCCUPATION IS THAT THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY, WITHOUT WHICH EXPO WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE, NEEDS A BASE RESIDENTIAL POPULATION OF 200,000 BEFORE OPENING, AND THESE ESTATES ARE ESSENTIAL TO ACHIEVE THIS," MR BARNES SAID.

"THE MTR CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME, WHICH ON THE BASIS OF A 200,000 POPULATION THRESHOLD IS NOW BEING PLANNED FOR COMPLETION BY ABOUT THE YEAR 2000, WOULD HAVE TO BE BROUGHT FORWARD," HE ADDED.

/ANOTHER INVOLVEMENT

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ANOTHER INVOLVEMENT WOULD BE THE DELAY IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TOWN CENTRE AND OTHER COMMUNITY FACILITIES, HE NOTED.

MR BARNES SAID THE THEORETICAL COST OF THE EXERCISE, EXCLUDING MTRC AND EXPO CONSTRUCTION COSTS, COULD BE TAKEN AS THE COST OF COMPRESSING A NINE-YEAR LAND-FORMATION AND SERVICING PROGRAMME, NOW ESTIMATED AT \$1.5 BILLION INTO SEVEN YEARS.

IT WOULD ALSO INVOLVE COMPRESSING THE PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME, ESTIMATED FOR ABOUT \$1.4 BILLION TO BE SPENT BETWEEN 1991 AND 1998, WHICH NOW AVERAGED AT ABOUT \$200 MILLION PER ANNUM.

"TO COMPLETE IT IN FIVE YEARS WOULD RAISE THE THEORETICAL ANNUAL AVERAGE EXPENDITURE TO \$280 MILLION," MR BARNES SAID.

"BUT THIS IS JUST FOR BASICS AND THIS IS THEORY; AND I WILL EMPHASISE THAT HASTE TOO WOULD HAVE ITS OWN PRICE," HE ADDED.

MR BARNES SAID THE COMPRESSED DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOUSING PROGRAMME AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE EXPO TO FOLLOW WOULD RESULT IN A CRASH PROGRAMME, IMPOSED AT A TIME WHEN IT SEEMED INEVITABLE THAT MOST OF THE MAIN INFRASTRUCTURAL PROGRAMMES WOULD ALSO BE SEEN AS "CRASH" PROGRAMMES.

THESE WOULD INCLUDE THE NEW AIRPORT; MAJOR NEW PORT FACILITIES; TRUNK ROADS, BRIDGES AND TUNNELS NECESSARY TO SERVE AIRPORT AND THE NEW PORT FACILITIES; THE CONTINUED EXPANSION OF NEW TOWNS; MAJOR RECLAMATION AROUND THE HARBOUR; A MAJOR ROAD FROM THE BORDER TO WEST KOWLOON; AND SUBSTANTIAL WORKS FOR SEWAGE AND FLOOD PROTECTION AS PART OF THE MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME.

MR BARNES SAID THESE MAJOR PROJECTS, WHICH WOULD BE UNDERWAY IN THE 90'S, WOULD NOT BE THE ONLY ONES AFFECTED.

HE SAID THESE "CRASH" PROGRAMMES COULD RESULT IN COMPETITION FOR LIMITED FINANCIAL AND CONSTRUCTION RESOURCES, WHICH COULD BECOME SCARCE AND MORE EXPENSIVE.

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INTANGIBLE BENEFITS MUST NOT BE OVERLOOKED

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THE "INTANGIBLE" AND "UNQUANTIFIABLE" BENEFITS THAT AN EXPO COULD BRING TO HONG KONG SHOULD NOT BE OVERLOOKED WHEN THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT HONG KONG SHOULD REGISTER ITS INTEREST IS BEING CONSIDERED.

THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG EMPHASISED THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY) IN HIS CLOSING SPEECH IN THE DEBATE ON HIS MOTION THAT HONG KONG REGISTER WITH THE BUREAU INTERNATIONALE DES EXPOSITIONS ITS INTEREST IN HOLDING AN EXPOSITION IN 1997.

MR CHEONG'S MOTION WAS: "THAT THIS COUNCIL URGES THE GOVERNMENT TO GIVE FULL AND SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO THE PROPOSAL TO REGISTER HONG KONG'S INTEREST IN STAGING THE WORLD EXPOSITION IN 1997 WITH THE BIE BEFORE THE DEADLINE OF NOVEMBER 20, 1988".

MR CHEONG STRESSED THAT MORE ESSENTIAL TO HONG KONG THAN SUCH PROJECTS AS A NEW AIRPORT, NEW PORT FACILITIES, NEW ROADS, NEW BRIDGES AND NEW RECLAMATIONS, WERE A "HIGH-SPIRITED PEOPLE".

THEY WOULD BE A DEDICATED PEOPLE WHO WERE FULLY COMMITTED TO THE FUTURE OF THE TERRITORY, A COMMITMENT THAT GREW OUT OF UNREMITTING CONFIDENCE IN THEIR FUTURE HERE, A COMMITMENT THAT GREW OUT OF THEIR PRIDE IN BEING A MEMBER OF "THIS LAND OF MAGIC".

HE ASKED: "WHAT BETTER WAY CAN WE FOSTER THIS CONFIDENCE THAN HOLDING AN EXPO IN 1997 WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS RIGHTLY POINTED OUT WOULD FOCUS WORLD ATTENTION ON HONG KONG AT A SIGNIFICANT MOMENT IN ITS HISTORY; LET HONG KONG PEOPLE DEMONSTRATE THEIR HIGH DEGREE OF AUTONOMY THROUGH ITS ABILITY TO STAGE A WORLD EVENT ON ITS OWN; TO PROJECT HONG KONG AS A DYNAMIC AND PROSPEROUS AND EFFICIENT CITY, AND TO FOSTER TRADE AND CULTURAL LINKS?"

THESE WERE THE VERY QUALITIES THAT MADE HONG KONG WHAT IT WAS TODAY, AND THEY WERE WHAT HONG KONG NEEDED AS IT MARCHED TOWARDS THE FUTURE.

THESE QUALITIES DID NOT JUST COME AND GO, NOR SHOULD THEY BE DISMISSED LIGHTLY AS "MOMENTARY PLEASURES," HE ADDED.

MR CHEONG WAS CONFIDENT THAT NO PROBLEM WAS INSURMOUNTABLE IN HONG KONG BECAUSE ITS PEOPLE HAD THE SPIRIT TO MAKE THINGS WORK, A KEEN EYE FOR OPPORTUNITIES, AND THE GOOD SENSE AND INITIATIVE TO TAKE THEM AS THEY CAME ALONG.

"SHYING AWAY FROM THE PROSPECT OF HARD WORK AND POSSIBLE PROBLEMS IS NOT IN HONG KONG'S TRADITION," HE SAID.

/MR CHEONG

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MR CHEONG SAID THAT IF A FULL FEASIBILITY STUDY PROVED THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR HONG KONG TO HOLD AN EXPO, AS IT HAD BEEN SHOWN IN THE PRE-FEASIBILITY STUDY, THE QUESTION WOULD THEN BE WHY SHOULD HONG KONG GIVE UP THE GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY BY NOT REGISTERING ITS INTENTION.

"WHAT HAVE WE GOT TO LOSE BY REGISTERING OUR INTENTION NOW? ON THE CONTRARY, WHAT WILL WE LOSE IF WE LET THE OPPORTUNITY COME AND GO WITHOUT EVEN MOVING A FINGER?" HE ASKED.

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EXPO PROPOSAL WARRANTS MORE THOROUGH STUDY

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THE EXPO 1997 PROPOSAL WARRANTS MUCH MORE THOUGHT AND A MORE THOROUGH FEASIBILITY STUDY BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT BRUSHES IT OFF IN THE NAME OF "PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS", PROF THE HON POON CHUNG-KWONG SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE EXPO MOTION DEBATE, PROF POON SAID THAT STAGING AN EXPO HERE IN 1997 WOULD NO DOUBT STIMULATE INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG, AND ATTRACT FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND FACILITATE TRADE.

IN SUPPORTING THE MOTION THAT HONG KONG REGISTER ITS INTEREST IN STAGING AN EXPO IN 1997, PROF POON ELABORATED ON THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS AN EXPO COULD OFFER THE COMMUNITY IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.

HE SAID THE LONG HISTORY OF EXPOS ALL OVER THE WORLD HAD SHOWN THAT THESE EVENTS PROVIDED USEFUL OCCASIONS AT WHICH HIGH TECHNOLOGY COULD MANIFEST ITSELF FOR THE PURPOSE OF "THE EDUCATION OF THE PUBLIC".

"THE 1876 EXPO IN PHILADELPHIA INTRODUCED TO THE INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE BELL'S TELEPHONE, EDISON'S TELEGRAPH, THE SEWING MACHINE AND THE TYPEWRITER," HE SAID.

"THE 1931 CHICAGO EXPO TOLD PEOPLE ALL ABOUT AIR-CONDITIONING AND THE 1939 EXPO IN SAN FRANCISCO/NEW YORK EXHIBITED EVERYTHING FROM ATOMIC ENERGY TO NYLON STOCKINGS."

HE SAID THAT THROUGH CO-OPERATION AND EXCHANGE, EXPOS COULD ALSO STIMULATE DEVELOPMENTS IN HIGH TECHNOLOGY CONCEPTS AND TRANSLATE THEM INTO USEFUL FACILITIES FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY.

/ "FOR EXAMPLE,

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"FOR EXAMPLE, THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE BULLET TRAIN SYSTEM FOR THE 1970 OSAKA EXPO, REGARDED AS ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY AT THE TIME, HAS BEEN DEVELOPED INTO ONE OF THE MAJOR AND MOST POPULAR COMMUTING SYSTEMS IN JAPAN," HE SAID.

PROF POON SAID HE WAS CONVINCED THAT HONG KONG SHOULD SOON BE IN A POSITION TO HOST ANNUAL TECHNOLOGY EXCHANGE FAIRS AND CONFERENCES FOR THE EXCHANGE OF INTERNATIONAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGICAL IDEAS.

IF THE EXPO 1997 PROPOSAL WAS ACCEPTED, IT COULD FORM A FOCAL POINT IN NINE YEARS' TIME OF ALL THE USEFUL IDEAS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY THAT THE WORLD HAD BEEN ABLE TO DEVELOP.

HE ADDED THAT THE PROSPECT OF AN EXPO IN 1997 COULD EVEN PROVIDE IMPETUS FOR HONG KONG'S YOUNG SCIENTISTS TO WORK HARDER AND DEVELOP IDEAS FOR A COMMON GOAL.

PROF POON DISAGREED WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S ASSUMPTION THAT THE EXPO 1997 PROPOSAL COULD NOT BE FINANCIALLY FEASIBLE ON THE PREMISE THAT THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT WOULD SHOULDER ALL FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES.

HE SAID THAT EXPERIENCE HAD SHOWN THAT WHERE A WORTHWHILE PUBLIC PROJECT EXISTED, THE ENERGETIC AND FAR-SIGHTED PRIVATE SECTOR IN HONG KONG HAD NEVER FAILED TO ANSWER THE CALL.

"I THEREFORE URGE THE GOVERNMENT TO CONSIDER INVITING PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION IN THE EXPO 1997 PROPOSAL IN THE FORM OF JOINT VENTURE OR CONSORTIUM SO AS TO LIGHTEN ITS FINANCIAL BURDEN," HE ADDED.

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COURAGEOUS IDEAS KEEP HK STABLE AND PROSPEROUS
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THE IDEA OF HOSTING AN EXPOSITION IN 1997, TO PLAY A ROLE IN MARKING THE PEACEFUL TRANSITION OF SOVEREIGNTY, WAS THE KIND OF CREATIVITY WHICH HONG KONG NEEDED TO STIMULATE ITSELF IN DEVELOPING PLANS FOR THE YEARS SURROUNDING 1997, THE HON MARTIN BARROW SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

MR BARROW SAID THE IDEA HAD CAUGHT THE IMAGINATION OF MOST SECTORS, INCLUDING THE TOURISM INDUSTRY AND IF SUCCESSFUL, WOULD BRING INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE TO HONG KONG, AND TO CHINA.

/ "IT WOULD

"IT WOULD STIMULATE AN INTEREST IN HONG KONG BOTH IN 1997 ITSELF AND THEREAFTER," HE SAID.

MR BARROW EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD RAISED A NUMBER OF PRACTICAL ISSUES, IN PARTICULAR THE QUESTIONS OF FINANCIAL VIABILITY, RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND THE AVAILABILITY OF A SUITABLE SITE.

BUT HE ADDED THAT HE DID ACCEPT THAT MANY OF THE POINTS MADE BY GOVERNMENT WERE REASONABLE.

"NOW THAT THE PRE-FEASIBILITY STUDY HAS BEEN ANALYSED, THE FINANCIAL VIABILITY AND PARTICULARLY THE AMBITIOUS PLANS FOR SEVEN MILLION VISITS FROM MAINLAND VISITORS MUST BE QUESTIONED.

"IT MUST ALSO BE SAID THAT THE TOURISM INDUSTRY'S DIRECT BENEFIT FROM EXPO WOULD BE QUITE LIMITED ALTHOUGH OBVIOUSLY IT WOULD PROVIDE AN OVERALL STIMULUS," HE SAID.

THE KEY CONSTRAINT, MR BARROW CONTINUED, WAS KAI TAK AIRPORT WHICH WOULD BE AT MAXIMUM CAPACITY WELL BEFORE 1997.

"INDEED, IT IS THAT THERE COULD BE A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON OUR TOURISM INDUSTRY IF OUR ALL IMPORTANT BUSINESS VISITORS ARE AFFECTED BY CROWDS OF EXPO VISITORS WHO WOULD BE CLOGGING UP NOT ONLY OUR AIRPORT BUT OUR TRANSPORTATION AND OTHER FACILITIES.

"WHILST THE EXPO CONCEPT IS AN INSPIRATION TO THE COMMUNITY, WE MUST LOOK AT THE FACTS AND WE MUST BE PRACTICAL.

"I BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD USE THE PROPOSAL AS A CATALYST TO STIMULATE US ALL INTO GENERATING IDEAS FOR EVENTS WHICH COULD TAKE PLACE BOTH DURING AND AFTER 1997," MR BARROW SAID.

HE ADDED THAT IT WAS NOT TOO EARLY TO START FOCUSSEING ON EVENTS TO TAKE PLACE AFTER 1997 AS THIS WOULD GIVE HONG KONG A GOAL AND AN AIM.

"I SEE NO REASON WHY WE SHOULD NOT CARRY ON WITH THE IDEA OF HOSTING AN EXPO WITH THE TIMING TO BE IN THE YEAR 2000 OR 2001 WHEN THE NEW AIRPORT WILL HAVE BEEN OPENED.

"ITS SUCCESS WOULD PLAY A MAJOR SUPPORTING ROLE IN FIRMLY ESTABLISHING LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONFIDENCE IN HONG KONG AS A SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION," HE SAID.

MR BARROW RECOMMENDED THAT THIS SHOULD BE RAISED WITH THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES IN THE NEAR FUTURE - A COMMITMENT IN THE EARLY 1990'S TO HOLD AN EVENT IN, SAY, 2001 (WHEN KAI TAK WOULD BE AN OBVIOUS POSSIBLE LOCATION) COULD STIMULATE LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONFIDENCE THROUGH THE TRANSITION PERIOD, ENSURE ONGOING DEVELOPMENT AND GOT THE SAR OFF TO A GOOD START IN THE INTERNATIONAL AREA.

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"IF THE IDEAS OF BUILDING A MAJOR STADIUM IN HONG KONG COME TO FRUITION, AN ALTERNATIVE EVENT WHICH MIGHT BE CONSIDERED FOR THE YEAR 2002 WOULD BE TO HOST THE ASIAN GAMES," HE ADDED.

"HONG KONG MUST REMAIN AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH ALWAYS ENCOURAGES VISION, CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION. IT IS THROUGH COURAGEOUS IDEAS THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP THIS GREAT CITY STABLE AND PROSPEROUS AND THE CATALYST OF THIS IDEA MUST BE A STIMULUS TO US ALL.

"HOWEVER, AS FAR AS EXPO IN 1997 IS CONCERNED I FEEL THAT WE MUST BOW TO REALISM AND IT IS WITH CONSIDERABLE RELUCTANCE THAT I WILL BE VOTING AGAINST THE MOTION," MR BARROW SAID.

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WIDE-RANGING BENEFITS WOULD RESULT

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EXPO 97 WILL NOT ONLY BE A CHALLENGE TO THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT BUT WILL ALSO BE AN EVENT OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE, THE HON CHEUNG YAN-LUNG SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

MR CHEUNG URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO REGISTER ITS INTENT OF HOSTING AN EXPO IN 1997, WITH THE BIE, BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH AN IN-DEPTH FEASIBILITY STUDY ON THE PROPOSAL.

HE SAID THAT IN STAGING AN EXPO IN 1997, HONG KONG COULD RANK ITSELF AMONG OTHER LEADING CITIES OF THE WORLD AND COULD FURTHER CONSOLIDATE ITS INTERNATIONAL STATUS.

"A WORLD EXPO IS AN EVENT IN WHICH DIFFERENT FORMS OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY, MODERN COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS, AND NEW DISCOVERIES IN TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE ARE DISPLAYED," HE SAID.

"THE EVENT WILL NOT ONLY BENEFIT THE PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES BUT ALSO THE HOST THROUGH EXCHANGE OF KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE," HE SAID.

MR CHEUNG SAID THAT HONG KONG WAS IN A FAVOURABLE POSITION TO HOST AN EXPO.

ALSO, THE EVENT WOULD ADD IMPETUS TO THE TOURIST, HOTEL AND CATERING INDUSTRIES AS WELL AS RESULT IN A BOOM IN THE SERVICES, BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION SECTORS.

THE HOSTING OF AN EXPO WOULD BE SYMBOLIC OF THE MODERNISATION, PROSPERITY AND PEACE THAT WAS PREVALENT IN HONG KONG, HE ADDED.

/IT WOULD

IT WOULD ALSO TELL THE WORLD THAT HONG KONG WAS HEADING FOR A NEW BEGINNING UNDER THE CONCEPT OF "ONE COUNTRY, TWO SYSTEMS".

MR CHEUNG SAID THAT WHILE THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONCERNED THAT HOSTING AN EXPO MIGHT THRUST AN UNNECESSARY FINANCIAL BURDEN ON THE FUTURE SAR GOVERNMENT, IT SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT WITH DETERMINATION, IT WOULD BE ABLE TO CO-ORDINATE THE PREPARATORY WORK WITH OTHER PROJECTS.

AN EXPO WOULD NOT NECESSARILY HAMPER LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.

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HONG KONG NEEDS AN EXPO
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HONG KONG NEEDS AN EXPO AND NEEDS IT IN 1997 MORE THAN ANY OTHER POINT IN OUR HISTORY, THE HON SELINA CHOW TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

MRS CHOW SAID HONG KONG NEEDED AN EXPO FOR THE SIX MONTHS OF ACTIVITIES, AND NEEDED IT MORE FOR WHAT THE NINE YEARS OF LEAD-UP WOULD DO FOR ITS PEOPLE.

EXPO 97 WOULD LEAVE AN INDELIBLE MARK OF ACHIEVEMENT AND STANDARD ON THE WORLD, FOR YEARS TO COME.

IT WOULD ALSO BE A GOOD WAY TO REPLACE THE MOOD OF "DOOM AND GLOOM" WITH THE POSITIVE ENTERPRISE OF CREATING, BUILDING AND MORE IMPORTANT, AN ACT OF COMMITMENT THROUGH A PROJECT THAT HAD THE ESTABLISHED RECOGNITION BY THE WORLD, SHE SAID.

"AT THIS TIME IN THE HISTORY OF HONG KONG, WE NEED A CLEAR SENSE OF PURPOSE, A VISION TO COMMIT OURSELVES TO SOMETHING POSITIVE IN THE FUTURE, A CONCRETE FOCUS TO WHICH ALL OF HONG KONG CAN RELATE, A GOAL FROM WHICH WE CAN EMERGE PROUD AND SAY WE ACHIEVED IT TOGETHER FOR THE WORLD TO SEE."

MRS CHOW SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD DONE NOTHING TO STUDY THE PROS AND CONS OF THE EXPO CONCEPT.

"IT DID EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH ITS CASE AGAINST IT AND EVEN THAT IT DID NOT DO VERY WELL," SHE SAID.

/NOTING THAT

NOTING THAT A LIST OF LIKELY PROJECTS HAD BEEN PUT FORWARD BY THE GOVERNMENT TO BACK ITS RESERVATIONS, MRS CHOW SAID NO FIRM DECISION HAD BEEN MADE ON A NUMBER OF THESE PROJECTS, ALTHOUGH SOME OF THEM WERE LONG OVERDUE.

SHE SAID THAT THE ESTIMATE FOR DIRECT WORKS FOR EXPO, WHICH AMOUNTED TO \$2 BILLION, WAS MINIMAL WHEN COMPARED TO THE \$37 BILLION PUBLIC SPENDING OF 1988.

THE ESTIMATE WAS NEGLIGIBLE COMPARED TO THE LIST OF LIKELY PROJECTS WHICH WERE ESTIMATED TO BE OVER \$200 BILLION, SHE ADDED.

SHE POINTED OUT THAT, IN THE ABSENCE OF RESEARCH DATA AND FIGURES, IT WAS DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT THE GOVERNMENT'S ASSESSMENT THAT THE PROJECT COULD NOT BE FINANCIALLY VIABLE.

SHE SAID THAT, GIVEN A MORE INGENIOUS AND ENTHUSIASTIC ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE ADMINISTRATION TO WORK IT OUT, NONE OF THE ESSENTIALS NEED TO BE DISPLACED OR SACRIFICED.

"WE HAVE NINE YEARS TO PLAN, RESCHEDULE AND PROCEED. WE HAVE TREMENDOUS FLEXIBILITY AND PRAGMATISM. TO SAY WE CANNOT DO IS, AND MUST BE TAKEN AS, AN EXCUSE," MRS CHOW SAID.

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INTENTION SHOULD BE REGISTERED
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THE HON MARTIN LEE TODAY (THURSDAY) STRONGLY URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO REQUEST THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO REGISTER ITS INTENTION OF HOSTING AN EXPOSITION IN HONG KONG IN 1997.

SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DURING THE EXPO MOTION DEBATE, MR LEE SAID THAT TO SAY NO TO THE EXPO IDEA WAS IRRESPONSIBLE, BECAUSE THE REASONS SO FAR GIVEN WERE INCONCLUSIVE.

"IF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WERE TO DECIDE NOT TO REGISTER THE INTENTION TO HOST EXPO IN 1997 IN HONG KONG, IT WOULD MOST CERTAINLY LEAVE A LURKING DOUBT IN THE MINDS OF ALL OF US YEARS FROM NOW AS TO WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF THE DECISION HAD GONE THE OTHER WAY?"

HE ADDED THAT IF, FOR WHATEVER REASON, OR LACK OF IT, THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT WERE TO REFUSE TO REGISTER AN INTENTION TO HOST AN EXPO IN 1997, IT WAS STILL NOT THE END OF THE MATTER.

/HE SUGGESTED

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HE SUGGESTED THAT HOSTING AN EXPO IN THE YEAR 2000 AND EVEN 2001 IN SOME WAYS COULD BE MORE DESIRABLE THAN HOSTING IT IN 1997.

THE ADVANTAGES INCLUDED THAT THE EYES OF THE WORLD WOULD BE ON HONG KONG FOR A FEW MORE YEARS AFTER 1997 SO THAT THERE WOULD BE EVEN MORE INCENTIVE FOR CHINA TO MAKE SURE THAT THE POLICY OF ONE COUNTRY, TWO SYSTEMS WOULD BE SEEN BY THE WORLD TO BE WORKING EFFECTIVELY IN HONG KONG DURING THE EARLY YEARS AFTER 1997.

THE NEW AIRPORT OUGHT TO BE IN FULL OPERATION BY THEN, AND WOULD THUS BE ABLE TO BRING TO HONG KONG MANY MORE OVERSEAS VISITORS.

THIS WOULD MEAN LESS DISRUPTION TO OVERSEAS BUSINESSMEN IN COMING TO HONG KONG TO DO BUSINESS.

WITH MORE OVERSEAS VISITORS, IT WOULD MAKE THE PROJECT FINANCIALLY MUCH MORE VIABLE SO THAT HONG KONG WOULD NOT HAVE TO RELY ON THE FIGURE OF THREE MILLION VISITORS FROM CHINA AS ESTIMATED BY THE CONSULTANCY STUDY COMMISSIONED BY THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG.

FURTHERMORE, HOLDING AN EXPO IN THE YEAR 2000 OR 2001 WOULD GIVE HONG KONG MORE TIME TO PREPARE FOR IT, WOULD ENABLE MORE HOTELS TO BE BUILT, AND WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR THE PROJECT TO FIT INTO HONG KONG'S NUMEROUS OTHER PROGRAMMES, MR LEE SAID.

"FOR THESE REASONS, I URGE THE ADMINISTRATION NOT TO DISMISS THE IDEA OF HOSTING AN EXPO IN 1997 OUT OF HAND WITHOUT ALSO LOOKING AT THE POSSIBILITY OF HOSTING IT IN THE YEAR 2000 OR 2001," HE CONCLUDED.

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EXPO A SHOW OF CONFIDENCE

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THE PROPOSAL TO STAGE AN EXPO IN HONG KONG IN 1997 WAS AN IMAGINATIVE, AMBITIOUS AND MAGNIFICENT IDEA.

AN EXPO WOULD BE A SHOW OF CONFIDENCE AND RESOURCEFULNESS TO THE WORLD AT A TIME OF HISTORICAL CHANGE IN HONG KONG AND WOULD GO A LONG WAY TOWARDS STRENGTHENING THE TERRITORY'S STATUS AS AN INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND FINANCIAL CENTRE.

THE HON HO SAI-CHU SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY) WHEN SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE EXPO 1997 PROPOSAL.

/MR HO

MR HO SAID THAT AS THE PROJECT WOULD BE GIANT-SIZED INVOLVING MANY ASPECTS, ANY STUDY ON THE GEOGRAPHICAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE SITE WOULD HAVE TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE VARIOUS INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS THERE AS WELL AS THE IMPACT THE FAIR WOULD HAVE ON THE SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION OF HONG KONG.

HE SAID THE PRE-FEASIBILITY STUDY HAD MERELY PROVIDED PRELIMINARY INFORMATION, AND THAT THE FINDINGS REQUIRED FURTHER EXAMINATION AND DISCUSSION.

MR HO CALLED ON THE GOVERNMENT TO REGISTER AN INTEREST IN STAGING AN EXPO IN HONG KONG IN 1997, BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH A FULL FEASIBILITY STUDY TO ARRIVE AT AN OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSAL.

HE SAID THAT THE FINAL DECISION, BE IT FOR OR AGAINST THE PROPOSAL, WAS NOT AS IMPORTANT AS THE LESSON THAT MIGHT BE LEARNT FROM PROMOTING THE SPIRIT OF CONSULTATION IN THE PROCESS.

"IT WILL HAVE POSITIVE EFFECTS IN BRINGING ABOUT GREATER CONCERN FOR THE PROSPERITY AND STABILITY OF HONG KONG, WHICH WILL BE OF SIGNIFICANCE TO THE TERRITORY," HE SAID.

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GREAT EVENT REQUIRES COMMUNITY EFFORT

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A WORLD EXPOSITION SIGNIFIES A STRONG COMMITMENT OF A COMMUNITY WORKING TOGETHER, FOR IT IS AN EVENT THAT WOULD REQUIRE DEDICATED EFFORTS BY THE WHOLE COMMUNITY, THE HON EDWARD HO SAID TODAY (THURSDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR HO SUPPORTED THE IDEA OF HOLDING AN EXPO IN HONG KONG IN 1997.

HE SUGGESTED THAT CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO HAVING AN EXPO WHICH WAS ORGANISED BY A CORPORATION FUNDED AND MANAGED BY MAINLY PRIVATE BUSINESS RESOURCES.

HE SAID A WORLD EXPO WAS A GREAT EVENT. IT WAS A GATHERING OF NATIONS, PEOPLES AND CULTURES. GREAT MONUMENTS OF ARCHITECTURE AND ENGINEERING, GREAT INVENTIONS AND IDEAS WERE UNVEILED TO THE PUBLIC IN WORLD EXPOSITIONS.

"IT IS NOT, AS ONE SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL WAS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID, A CARNIVAL TYPE OF EXHIBITION," MR HO SAID.

/HE ADDED

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HE ADDED THAT ALL THE ORGANISATIONAL WORK FOR THE EXPO WOULD HAPPEN IN THE YEARS LEADING UP TO 1997. DURING THAT PERIOD, HONG KONG PEOPLE WOULD CAST ASIDE THEIR DIFFERENCES, DOUBTS AND UNCERTAINTIES AND WORK TOGETHER FOR A COMMON GOAL.

"PSYCHOLOGICALLY, JUST THE ANTICIPATION FOR SUCH A GREAT EVENT IS SURE TO STIMULATE OUR CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE AND MORALLY SUSTAIN US THROUGH THESE TROUBLING YEARS," HE SAID.

HE ALSO SAID THAT THE PRE-FEASIBILITY STUDY COMMISSIONED BY THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG HAD OFFERED SOME VERY THOUGHT PROVOKING IDEAS AND INFORMATIVE DATA SO THAT A PERSON COULD NOW HAVE A MUCH BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE GENERAL NATURE AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF HOSTING AN EXPO.

ITS CONCLUSIONS, HOWEVER BASIC, INDICATED THAT THERE WERE NO INSURMOUNTABLE OBSTACLES THAT WOULD PREVENT HONG KONG FROM ORGANISING AN EXPO IN 1997.

MR HO NOTED THAT IN THE PAST WEEK, SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAD PRONOUNCED SOME VERY NEGATIVE OPINIONS ABOUT THE EXPO IDEA.

A STRONG MESSAGE HAD BEEN PROJECTED TO THE PUBLIC THAT IF AN EXPO WERE TO BE ORGANISED IN HONG KONG, SOME, IF NOT ALL, OF THE FUTURE MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS WOULD EITHER BE DELAYED OR LOST.

HE QUESTIONED HOW CERTAIN THE GOVERNMENT WAS THAT AN EXPO WOULD HAVE AN IMPACT ON OTHER INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENTS AND WHAT EXPERT ADVICE THE GOVERNMENT HAD OBTAINED IN ARRIVING AT ITS OPINION.

MR HO ALSO QUESTIONED WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WAS AWARE AND CONVINCED OF THE TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE BENEFITS OF HOSTING AN EXPO IN HONG KONG IN 1997, ESPECIALLY IN RELATION TO THE GENERATION OF CONFIDENCE IN THE YEARS LEADING UP TO THE TRANSFER OF SOVEREIGNTY IN 1997.

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HONG KONG CANNOT AFFORD EXPO

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HONG KONG CANNOT AFFORD TO HOST A WORLD EXPO IN 1997 AND THE ISSUE SHOULD NOT TAKE UP ANY FURTHER TIME OF THE ADMINISTRATION, THE HON RONALD ARCULLI SAID TODAY (THURSDAY).

MR ARCULLI WAS SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DURING THE MOTION DEBATE ON THE EXPO 1997 PROPOSAL.

HE SAID A PERSON HAD TO BALANCE THE PRIORITIES AND NEEDS OF HONG KONG WHEN CONSIDERING THE ISSUE.

"WHEN ASKED INITIALLY, I VOICED QUALIFIED SUPPORT FOR THE HOLDING OF A WORLD EXPO IN HONG KONG IN 1997.

"I BELIEVE THAT TODAY I AM BETTER INFORMED ABOUT THE PROS AND CONS OF HONG KONG HOSTING SUCH AN EVENT," HE SAID.

HE SAID HE REALISED THAT IT WAS PROBABLY PREMATURE TO PRONOUNCE ON THE FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF A WORLD EXPO 1997 IN HONG KONG BUT FELT THAT THE ISSUE WAS NOT SIMPLY WHETHER THE PROJECT WAS FINANCIALLY VIABLE OR NOT.

"THE ISSUE IS WHETHER HONG KONG CAN AFFORD TO HOST SUCH AN EVENT AND WHEN I SAY AFFORD I DO NOT MEAN PURELY IN DOLLAR TERMS."

HE SAID THAT ON THE FACTS AND REASONS GIVEN BY VARIOUS SIDES INCLUDING THE ADMINISTRATION, HE HAD COME TO THE VIEW THAT HONG KONG COULD NOT AFFORD TO HOST SUCH AN EVENT IN VIEW OF HONG KONG'S NEEDS.

"HOWEVER, I DO NOT WISH TO LEAVE THIS MATTER WITHOUT VOICING SOME DISAPPOINTMENT. TO PUT IT AT ITS LOWEST THERE SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN A LACK OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATION AND THOSE WHO PUT FORWARD THE IDEA," HE SAID.

THE ADMINISTRATION OUGHT TO HAVE MADE IT PLAIN THAT THE HOSTING OF A WORLD EXPO 1997 WOULD HAVE NECESSARILY MEANT THE CANCELLATION OR DEFERRAL OF MAJOR PROJECTS WHICH WERE ENTITLED TO HONG KONG AND ITS PEOPLE.

"I SINCERELY HOPE THAT IN FUTURE THE ADMINISTRATION TRIES ITS UTMOST TO AVOID A REPETITION OF THIS TYPE OF TIME-CONSUMING EXERCISE," HE SAID.

MR ARCULLI SAID HE WOULD VOTE AGAINST THE MOTION TO URGE THE GOVERNMENT TO GIVE FULL AND SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO THE PROPOSAL TO REGISTER HONG KONG'S INTEREST IN STAGING AN EXPO IN 1997.

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CALL TO REGISTER HK INTEREST WITH B.I.E.
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HONG KONG SHOULD REGISTER ITS INTEREST IN STAGING AN EXPO IN 1997 WITH THE B.I.E. BEFORE THE NOVEMBER 20 DEADLINE, THE HON PAUL CHENG SAID TODAY (THURSDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR CHENG SAID THAT AFTER REGISTRATION, A FULL FEASIBILITY STUDY SHOULD BE CONDUCTED AND CHINA'S SUPPORT SHOULD BE SOUGHT.

"AND IF THE OVERALL VIABILITY CAN BE CONFIRMED, A FULL COMMITMENT CAN ONLY BENEFIT HONG KONG AS IT MOVES INTO THE NEXT CENTURY," HE SAID.

MR CHENG SAID HIS VIEWS WERE SHARED BY MANY OF HIS FRIENDS IN THE INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY IN HONG KONG.

THE PRELIMINARY STUDY SUPPORTED ITS VIABILITY, AND THE EVENT WOULD PROVIDE THE ESSENTIAL SYMBOLIC LINK TO HONG KONG'S FUTURE, HE ADDED.

"AS SUCH WE SHOULD NOT SO READILY DISMISS IT OUT OF HAND," SAID MR CHENG.

HE SAID EXPO 1997 WOULD PROVIDE THE PERFECT PLATFORM TO LAUNCH HONG KONG INTO THE NEXT CENTURY AS THE UNDISPUTED INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS CENTRE IN THE PACIFIC BASIN.

IT WOULD ALSO BRING THE WORLD'S FOCUS ON HONG KONG'S STATUS AS A SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION, HE ADDED.

"I DO NOT FORESEE ANY DIFFICULTY IN ATTRACTING THE NECESSARY FUNDING FROM BOTH THE LOCAL AND THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL COMMUNITIES, AND THERE WILL BE NO NEED TO DIVERT FUNDS FROM OTHER EQUALLY IMPORTANT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS," MR CHENG SAID.

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GOVT SHOULD REGISTER INTENTION
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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REGISTER ITS INTENTION OF HOLDING AN EXPO IN 1997 WITH THE BUREAU INTERNATIONALE DES EXPOSITIONS, THE HON DAVID CHEUNG SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

HE SAID THAT TO REGISTER THE INTENTION DID NOT MEAN THAT HONG KONG MUST GO AHEAD.

IT WOULD MEAN GIVING THE HONG KONG PEOPLE AND THE GOVERNMENT THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE SERIOUSLY THE FEASIBILITY AND PRACTICABILITY OF THE PROJECT.

"NOT TO REGISTER WILL MEAN NOT EVEN GIVING THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG THIS OPPORTUNITY," HE SAID.

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EXPO WOULD PUT STRAINS ON RESOURCES

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THE HON NELLIE FONG SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY) THAT SHE WAS AGAINST THE IDEA OF HOSTING AN EXPO IN HONG KONG IN 1997.

THE MAIN REASONS FOR OPPOSING THE IDEA WERE THE STRAINS SHE BELIEVED IT WOULD PUT ON HONG KONG'S LIMITED RESOURCES, POSSIBLY SETTING BACK OTHER PRIORITY PROJECTS, AND THE SERIOUS BOTTLENECK IT WOULD CREATE AT THE AIRPORT, SHE SAID.

SHE SAID THAT ON A STRICT DOLLAR FOR DOLLAR BASIS, EXPOS DID NOT NORMALLY GET CLOSE TO BREAKING EVEN.

MRS FONG SAID: "IN MY VIEW, COUNTRIES WHICH CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN PROFITABLE IN HOSTING EXPOS HAVE GIVEN VALUES TO CERTAIN OF THE FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE THAT WERE LEFT BEHIND.

"IN HONG KONG'S CASE, THERE IS UNLIKELY TO BE A SIGNIFICANT SIMILAR RESIDUAL VALUE AS WE ARE SO SHORT OF LAND AND WILL NEED TO CONVERT THE SITE TO AN ALTERNATIVE USE SHORTLY AFTER THE EVENT."

SHE ADDED THAT SHE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT MORE THAN JUST THE COST.

SHE NOTED THAT THE PRE-FEASIBILITY STUDY COMMISSIONED BY THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG DID NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE RESOURCES NECESSARY TO BUILD THE INFRASTRUCTURE TO ADEQUATELY SUPPORT AN EXPO.

THIS WOULD IN ALL LIKELIHOOD INCLUDE ADDITIONAL ROADS AND FLYOVERS, EXTENSIONS TO THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY, CONNECTIONS FOR UTILITIES AND SO ON.

"WE ALSO NEED LABOUR AND MATERIALS, AND THERE WILL BE INCONVENIENCE TO THE GENERAL POPULATION AS THE WORK PROGRESSES," SHE NOTED.

SHE WAS WORRIED THAT TO COMMIT HUGE AMOUNTS OF RESOURCES TO AN EXPO WOULD AFFECT OTHER MAJOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS INCLUDING A NEW AIRPORT, NEW PORT FACILITIES, TRUNK ROADS, TUNNELS AND HOUSING.

MRS FONG SAID ANOTHER OF HER CONCERNS WAS THAT EXPO VISITORS WOULD ADD AN ADDITIONAL BURDEN TO HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, WHICH WOULD REACH A SATURATION POINT SOME YEARS BEFORE 1997.

SHE SAID THE ADDITIONAL VISITORS WHO CAME TO EXPO WOULD BE AT THE EXPENSE OF THOSE WHO WOULD OTHERWISE BE TRAVELLING FOR BUSINESS OR OTHER PURPOSES.

BUSINESSMEN COULD NOT NORMALLY PLAN THEIR FLIGHTS SIX MONTHS AHEAD. ACCORDINGLY, THEY WOULD BE THE FIRST TO SUFFER WHEN THE FLIGHTS WERE FULL.

"THE IMPACT OF THIS ON HONG KONG'S ECONOMY COULD BE SERIOUS IF OUR EXPORTERS HAVE TROUBLE GETTING ON PLANES TO LEAVE OR TO RETURN TO HONG KONG DURING THE PERIOD OF THE EXPO," SHE SAID.

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OPPORTUNITY TO HIGHLIGHT HK

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AN EXPO IN 1997 WOULD DEMONSTRATE TO THE WORLD THAT HONG KONG PEOPLE ARE NOT WORRIED BY THE TRANSFER OF HONG KONG'S SOVEREIGNTY TO CHINA, THE HON PEGGY LAM SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE IDEA OF STAGING AN EXPO IN 1997, MRS LAM SAID: "HONG KONG THOUGH SMALL GEOGRAPHICALLY HAS HIGH STANDING INTERNATIONALLY FOR ITS SUCCESS IN COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL FIELDS.

"IT IS THE HONG KONG PEOPLE WHOSE VISION, HARD WORK AND DEDICATION WHICH HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THIS SUCCESS.

"THE TOURIST TRADE HAS BEEN BOOMING BECAUSE HONG KONG HAS SO MUCH TO OFFER TO THE VISITORS AND IT HAS BROUGHT REVENUE AS WELL AS PRESTIGE TO HONG KONG.

"SO FAR HONG KONG HAS NOT HELD ANY INTERNATIONAL EVENTS SUCH AS THE OLYMPICS OR THE EXPO.

"THE WORLD EXPO, IF HELD, WOULD BRING HONG KONG INTO THE EYES OF THE WORLD."

MRS LAM SAID MANY VISITORS WOULD COME IN 1997 TO SEE WHAT HONG KONG WOULD BE LIKE WHEN SOVEREIGNTY WAS TRANSFERRED TO CHINA.

IN HER VIEW, AN EVENT SUCH AS A WORLD EXPO WOULD BRING PROSPERITY TO HONG KONG; TRADE AND INDUSTRY WOULD BENEFIT; AND THE IMAGE OF HONG KONG WOULD BE ENHANCED.

CHINA'S TOURIST TRADE WOULD ALSO BENEFIT.

"I HAVE BEEN GATHERING OPINION ON THIS PROPOSAL AND SO FAR PEOPLE HAVE RESPONDED FAVOURABLY TO THE IDEA," SHE SAID.

SHE ADMITTED THAT STAGING AN INTERNATIONAL EVENT OF SUCH A GRAND SCALE WOULD INEVITABLY BRING PROBLEMS IN TRANSPORTATION AND HOTEL ACCOMMODATION AND SO ON; AND WAS AWARE THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALSO HIGHLIGHTED THE DIFFICULTIES AND PROBLEMS SUCH AS LAND AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS THAT WOULD BE CREATED BY EXPO 97.

HOWEVER, SHE BELIEVED THAT MANY OF THESE PROBLEMS COULD BE SOLVED.

"WHAT WE ARE URGING NOW IS TO REGISTER THE INTENTION FIRST AND IF REAL PROBLEMS DO ARISE, WE CAN ALWAYS WITHDRAW THE INTENTION.

"I DO NOT WANT HONG KONG TO MISS THE CHANCE OF REGISTRATION OF INTENTION," SHE SAID.

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MAJOR EVENT WOULD ENHANCE CONFIDENCE IN FUTURE
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THE MOST IMPORTANT EFFECT OF STAGING AN EXPOSITION IN 1997 IS THAT IT WILL INSTILL AND ENHANCE THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG IN THE FUTURE OF THE TERRITORY, THE HON MIRIAM LAU SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE EXPO MOTION DEBATE, MRS LAU SAID THE STAGING OF SUCH A CHALLENGING EVENT WAS PERHAPS THE BEST INDICATION THAT STABILITY AND PROSPERITY WOULD CONTINUE DURING THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD AND BEYOND.

IN SUPPORTING THE MOTION, SHE SAID SHE COULD NOT AGREE THAT THE EXPOSITION WOULD ONLY BE A "GLITTERING AND FANCIFUL" EVENT OF MOMENTARY GRANDEUR.

"I BELIEVE THAT THE IMPACT OF AN EXPOSITION IN HONG KONG, PARTICULARLY IN 1997, WILL BE PROFOUND AND LONG LASTING. INSTEAD OF BEING APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THE COMING OF 1997, THE COMMUNITY WOULD LOOK FORWARD TO IT WITH PRIDE AND ENTHUSIASM," MRS LAU SAID.

NOTING THAT SHE WAS PLEASED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS PLACING GREAT EMPHASIS ON THE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT OF HONG KONG, MRS LAU SAID THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ALSO BE CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO MAINTAIN THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG DURING THE YEARS LEADING UP TO 1997.

SHE ADDED: "I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT A COMMITMENT TO STAGE THE EXPOSITION IN 1997 WILL INDUCE THOSE WHO ARE HERE TO STAY AND PARTICIPATE, AND THOSE WHO HAVE GONE TO RETURN AND SHARE."

MRS LAU SAID SHE HERSELF WAS NOT WITHOUT RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE PROJECT. SOME OF THESE RESERVATIONS HAD BEEN SOUNDED IN THE ADMINISTRATION'S VIEWS ON THE EXPO PROPOSAL, SHE ADDED.

"INDEED, IF THE EXPOSITION CAN ONLY BE CARRIED OUT AT THE EXPENSE OF SACRIFICING OR DELAYING INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT WHICH IS SO IMPORTANT TO HONG KONG, NO ONE CAN VALIDLY SUSTAIN AN ARGUMENT THAT IT SHOULD BE DONE. THE EXPOSITION WILL HAVE TO GIVE WAY TO THE WIDER INTERESTS OF HONG KONG.

"HOWEVER, I REGRET TO SAY THAT I DO NOT FIND THE REASONS ADVANCED AND THE CONTENTIONS PUT FORTH BY THE ADMINISTRATION TO BE SUFFICIENTLY CONVINCING OR ADEQUATELY SUBSTANTIATED.

"IF HONG KONG IS EVER TO GO AHEAD WITH THE IDEA OF STAGING THE EXPOSITION IN 1997, A FULL FEASIBILITY STUDY WILL HAVE TO BE CONDUCTED," MRS LAU SAID.

"IDEALLY WE SHOULD HAVE THE FULL FEASIBILITY STUDY BEFORE A DECISION IS TAKEN AS TO WHETHER OR NOT TO REGISTER A BID, BUT TIME DOES NOT PERMIT THIS TO BE DONE.

"BEARING IN MIND THAT THE CHANCE, IF NOT SECURED NOW, WOULD BE LOST FOREVER, IT WOULD SEEM DESIRABLE THAT WE SHOULD PROCEED TO REGISTER FIRST AND ONLY TO MAKE A FIRM COMMITMENT WHEN THE DETAILED FEASIBILITY STUDY CONCLUDES THE WHOLE SCHEME TO BE PRACTICABLE."

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TIMING IS NOT APPROPRIATE

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AN EXPO '97 IS AN EXCITING PROPOSITION FOR HONG KONG AND THE IDEA SHOULD NOT BE DISMISSED FOR ALL TIME, THE HON ELSIE TU SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE EXPO MOTION DEBATE, MRS TU SAID THAT THE TIMING WAS, HOWEVER, CONSIDERED INAPPROPRIATE, MAINLY BECAUSE IT WOULD COINCIDE WITH A MAJOR POLITICAL CHANGE INVOLVING THE GOVERNMENTS OF CHINA, BRITAIN, HONG KONG AND THE FUTURE SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION.

"I HAVE TO CONCLUDE THAT A LATER DATE WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE WHEN HONG KONG COULD SHOW THE WORLD WHAT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE BY THE SAR," SHE SAID.

MRS TU ADDED THAT OTHER REASONS GIVEN BY HER (URBAN COUNCIL) CONSTITUENCY FOR NOT HOLDING AN EXPOSITION AT THAT TIME INCLUDED THE CONCERN THAT THE LARGE AMOUNT OF FINANCE INVOLVED COULD DEFER OTHER ESSENTIAL PROJECTS, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE PRESENT LABOUR SHORTAGE CLAIMED BY CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES.

"IT IS SUGGESTED THAT THE PROJECT WILL CAUSE INCONVENIENCE TO LOCAL RESIDENTS UNLESS WE CAN ACHIEVE IMPROVEMENTS IN ALL KINDS OF TRANSPORT, AND THESE ARE NOT LIKELY TO HAPPEN BEFORE 1997," SHE SAID.

"SOME FEAR THAT A BIG FUNFAIR COULD BE FOLLOWED BY AN ANTI-CLIMAX IN OUR USUALLY THRIVING TRADE AND TOURISM INDUSTRIES.

"HOWEVER, I MUST EMPHASISE THAT THE MAIN OBJECTION OF MY CONSTITUENTS IS THE TIMING.

"SINCE THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE TIME TO PLAN HOW THE MANY PROBLEMS MAY BE RESOLVED, IT WOULD SEEM FUTILE TO REGISTER AN INTEREST IN HOLDING AN EXPOSITION IN HONG KONG, UNLESS A MORE FLEXIBLE DATE CAN BE PROPOSED."

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DOUBTS ARISE ON PROJECT'S VIABILITY

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THE APPROVAL OR REJECTION OF THE EXPO '97 PROPOSAL MUST BE DETERMINED ON THE BASIS OF WHAT IS BEST FOR THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG BEARING IN MIND THE VERY LARGE DEMAND ON RESOURCES BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE, THE HON JAMES MCGREGOR SAID TODAY (THURSDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR MCGREGOR SAID CONSIDERATION SHOULD ALSO BE GIVEN TO THE INEVITABLE DELAY IN WHAT MANY WOULD REGARD AS ESSENTIAL INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENTS AND THE POTENTIALLY SERIOUS DISRUPTION CAUSED TO THE TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR THOUSANDS OF FOREIGN BUSINESSMEN ATTEMPTING TO VISIT HONG KONG FOR BUSINESS PURPOSES DURING THE SIX MONTHS PERIOD OF EXPO.

"I WAS ALSO GREATLY CONCERNED AT THE CAPACITY OF THE HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT TO ACCEPT AN ADDITIONAL 200,000 VISITORS WITHIN THE SIX MONTHS PERIOD ON TOP OF THREE MILLION TOURISTS AND BUSINESS TRAVELLERS," HE SAID.

MR MCGREGOR EXPLAINED THAT THE AIRPORT WOULD BE SUBJECT TO A PHYSICAL LIMITATION ON FLIGHTS, AND THEREFORE TRAVELLERS, WELL BEFORE 1997.

"A NEW AIRPORT WILL NOT BE READY BY THEN," HE ADDED. "WE FACE AN INCREASINGLY SERIOUS PROBLEM WITHOUT AN EXPO. IT WOULD BE THAT MUCH LARGER WITH AN EXPO."

NOTING THAT THE THREE LAND SITES SUGGESTED AS SUITABLE FOR EXPO WERE EACH NEEDED FOR ESSENTIAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT, MR MCGREGOR SAID THAT THE USE OF ONE OF THEM WOULD REQUIRE A REARRANGEMENT OF PRIORITIES AND A LOSS OF TIME IN COMPLETING PUBLIC WORKS AND OTHER PROJECTS NEEDED BY THE COMMUNITY.

SHARING THE GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN, MR MCGREGOR SAID HE DECLINED TO SUPPORT THE EXPO PROPOSAL BECAUSE HE DID NOT FEEL HONG KONG SHOULD EMBARK UPON A PROJECT OF THIS SCALE AND IMPORTANCE IF THERE WERE SERIOUS DOUBTS ABOUT ITS VIABILITY.

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HK ALREADY WELL KNOWN WORLD-WIDE
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STAGING A WORLD EXPOSITION IN HONG KONG IN 1997 IS A HIGH RISK UNDERTAKING INVOLVING HIGH STAKES, AND THE QUESTION IS WHETHER HONG KONG CAN AND SHOULD TAKE THE RISK AGAINST THE POTENTIAL GAINS WHICH ARE INTANGIBLE, THE HON KINGSLEY SIT SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE EXPO MOTION DEBATE, MR SIT FELT THAT IT WAS UNNECESSARY FOR HONG KONG TO TAKE SUCH A RISK.

"THE SINGLE POTENTIAL GAIN OF HOLDING AN EXPO IN 1997 IS TO PUT HONG KONG TO THE WORLD," HE SAID.

"IN THIS CONNECTION, WE ARE ALREADY THE LARGEST TOYS AND WATCHES EXPORTER, WE HAVE THE LARGEST AND MOST EFFICIENT CONTAINER PORT IN TERMS OF THROUGHPUT AND WE ARE ONE OF THE THREE BIG FINANCIAL CENTRES.

"IN OTHER WORDS, WE ARE ALREADY WELL KNOWN WORLDWIDE, UNLIKE OTHER SECOND AND THIRD LINE CITIES WHICH HAVE TO STRUGGLE TO BE BETTER BY HOLDING A WORLD EXPOSITION.

TURNING TO THE POLITICAL DIMENSION, MR SIT WAS WORRIED ABOUT A LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN HONG KONG SHOULD THE BUREAU INTERNATIONALE DES EXPOSITIONS DECIDE NOT TO CHOOSE THE TERRITORY FOR HOSTING AN EXPO IN 1997, ESPECIALLY WHEN NO REASON NEEDED TO ACCOMPANY SUCH A DECISION.

"I SUGGEST THAT A SMOOTH TRANSACTION WOULD REQUIRE MUCH MORE THAN BUILDING IMPRESSIVE EXHIBITION HALLS, COLLECTING WORTHY EXHIBITS AND FINDING SUFFICIENT VISITORS," HE SAID.

THERE ARE MANY MORE IMPORTANT TASKS AHEAD OF US AND HONG KONG MUST CONSERVE AND CONCENTRATE HER ENERGY TOWARDS THE MAINTENANCE OF STEADY ECONOMIC PROGRESS BETWEEN NOW AND 1997.

"THIS CAN BEST BE ACHIEVED THROUGH STRENGTHENING OF THE URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE ON THE ONE HAND, AND THROUGH RESTRUCTURING LOCAL INDUSTRIES TO MEET OVERSEAS DEMANDS ON THE OTHER."

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HK SHOULD KEEP ITS OPTIONS OPEN
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HONG KONG SHOULD PROCEED TO REGISTER ITS INTEREST IN STAGING AN EXPO IN 1997 BEFORE THE NOVEMBER 20 DEADLINE SO THAT ITS OPTIONS WILL REMAIN OPEN, THE HON JAMES TIEN SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

IT WOULD BE A GRAVE MISTAKE IF HONG KONG SIMPLY GAVE UP NOW WITHOUT FULLY STUDYING THE FACTS TO PROVE ONE WAY OR THE OTHER THAT AN EXPO IN 1997 WAS VIABLE, MR TIEN SAID.

HE NOTED THAT WHILE THE GOVERNMENT HAD ANNOUNCED ITS GRAVE RESERVATION ABOUT EXPO 97, IT WAS FULLY AWARE OF THE POSITIVE FEATURES OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT.

THESE WERE THAT HONG KONG WOULD BE IN THE WORLD'S SPOTLIGHT, WOULD SHOW ITSELF ABLE TO STAGE AN INTERNATIONAL EVENT AND WOULD CONVINCING EVERYBODY THAT HONG KONG WAS A DYNAMIC, PROSPEROUS AND EFFICIENT CITY.

MR TIEN ALSO NOTED THAT THE PROPOSERS OF THE PROJECT ESTIMATED THAT ABOUT 85 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION WOULD EACH MAKE AN AVERAGE OF TWO AND A HALF VISITS TO EXPO.

"ON THE OTHER HAND THE GOVERNMENT IS UNIMPRESSED AND SEES THE FIGURES AS UNREALISTIC. BUT AT PRESENT THE GOVERNMENT HAS REFRAINED FROM ENLIGHTENING US ON ITS FIGURES," HE SAID.

REFERRING TO THE ARGUMENT THAT HONG KONG'S IMMIGRATION FACILITIES WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO COPE WITH 15,000 DAILY VISITORS FROM CHINA, MR TIEN SAID THAT 1997 WAS NINE YEARS AWAY AND BY THEN HONG KONG MIGHT BE BEYOND THE "FIFTH GENERATION" OF COMPUTERS FOR THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT.

"ALSO, BY THEN WE WILL BE IMPLEMENTING ONE COUNTRY, TWO SYSTEMS IN THE SAR GOVERNMENT AND OUR RELATIONSHIP, INCLUDING THE ISSUANCE OF VISITOR VISAS, WITH CHINA WILL BE MUCH DIFFERENT THAN TODAY," HE SAID.

MR TIEN AGREED THAT IN THE PERIOD UP TO AND BEYOND 1997, SEVEN MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECTS WOULD LIKELY BE UNDERTAKEN.

IN CONSEQUENCE, GIVEN THE MATERIAL, EQUIPMENT AND LABOUR RESOURCES HONG KONG HAD IN HAND, THE TERRITORY MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO COPE WITH AN EXPO.

"BUT SHOULD WE NOT EVEN TRY?" HE QUESTIONED.

SAR SHOULD STAGE WORLD EXPO
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HONG KONG SHOULD STAGE A WORLD EXPO THREE OR FIVE YEARS AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION (SAR), THE HON PETER WONG TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE EXPO MOTION DEBATE, MR WONG SAID THE EVENT SHOULD NOT BE SEEN TO BE A CELEBRATION OF THE DEPARTURE OF THE BRITISH OR THE COMING OF THE CHINESE.

"INSTEAD, IT SHOULD SHOW THE WORLD HOW WE IN HONG KONG ARE ADAPTING TO THE CIRCUMSTANCE OF 'ONE COUNTRY, TWO SYSTEMS'," HE SAID.

"IF THE EXPO IS HELD, SAY, THREE TO FIVE YEARS AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SAR, IT CAN DEMONSTRATE THAT THE SYSTEM IS FLOURISHING.

"I AM SURE THAT CHINA WILL ALSO WISH TO AFFIRM THAT IT IS KEEPING ITS SIDE OF THE JOINT DECLARATION, IN THE SPIRIT AS WELL AS THE LETTER," HE CONTINUED.

MR WONG POINTED OUT THAT LOOKING BEYOND 1997, FURTHER POTENTIAL SITES WHICH WOULD FIT IN WITH THE REQUIRED INFRASTRUCTURE AND BE LESS DISRUPTIVE TO PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS, MIGHT BE FOUND OR THAT EXISTING SITES WHICH WERE REJECTED COULD BECOME VIABLE BECAUSE OF NEW INFRASTRUCTURE COMING INTO PLACE.

HOWEVER, HE NOTED THAT MAY TO OCTOBER WAS NOT ONLY HOT AND HUMID BUT ALSO THE TYPHOON SEASON IN HONG KONG.

HE BELIEVED AN EXPO HELD DURING THE DRY AND COOL AUTUMN AND WINTER MONTHS WOULD BE MORE DESIRABLE.

FOR THESE REASONS, MR WONG ABSTAINED FROM VOTING ON THE MOTION MOVED BY THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG.

HOWEVER, HE WELCOMED THE SUGGESTION TO REGISTER WITH THE BUREAU INTERNATIONALE DES EXPOSITIONS FIRST AS THIS WOULD NOT COMMIT HONG KONG TO HOLDING THE EXPO.

IT WOULD ALLOW TIME TO STUDY WHETHER THERE WERE SUFFICIENT RESOURCES AND ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE TO COPE WITH THE PROJECT AND WHETHER THE PLAN WAS FINANCIALLY VIABLE, GIVEN THE CONSTRAINTS ALREADY MADE KNOWN.

"IF THESE ASPECTS ARE NOT STUDIED COMPREHENSIVELY, WE RISK LOSS OF CREDIBILITY. IF, HOWEVER, UPON FURTHER INVESTIGATION THE VENTURE APPEARS IMPRUDENT, WE WILL LOSE NOTHING IN WITHDRAWING.

"I AM CONFIDENT THAT WITH GOODWILL AND CO-OPERATION OF ALL PARTIES, A PRACTICAL SOLUTION IS POSSIBLE. THIS MAY INVOLVE A DIFFERENT VENUE, DIFFERENT PROJECTIONS AND EVEN A DIFFERENT DATE FROM THOSE ALREADY SUGGESTED," MR WONG SAID.

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EASIER RESUMPTION OF NEGLECTED PRIVATE STREETS PROPOSED
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THE RESUMPTION OF CERTAIN PRIVATE STREETS FOR ESSENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT WOULD BE MADE EASIER UNDER THE ROADS (WORKS, USE AND COMPENSATION) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988 INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

THE LEGAL PROCEDURES FOR RESUMING SUCH STREETS WOULD BE SIMPLIFIED.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON MICHAEL LEUNG, SAID THAT MULTIPLE OWNERSHIP AND NEGLECT BY OWNERS HAD RESULTED IN PRIVATE STREETS BEING POORLY MAINTAINED AND HAD GIVEN RISE TO SERIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL AND TRAFFIC PROBLEMS.

THE GOVERNMENT PLANNED TO RESUME ABOUT 300 SUCH PRIVATE STREETS IN THE NEXT 10 TO 12 YEARS SO THAT THEY COULD BE PROPERLY MAINTAINED AND MANAGED, HE SAID.

UNDER THE PRESENT ORDINANCE, THE GOVERNMENT WAS REQUIRED TO SERVE NOTICE FOR LAND RESUMPTION ON EVERY PERSON HAVING ANY ESTATE, RIGHT, SHARE OR INTEREST IN THE PRIVATE STREET.

MR LEUNG SAID THAT IF THIS REQUIREMENT WAS NOT MODIFIED, IT WOULD SEVERELY IMPEDE THE RESUMPTION PROGRAMME AS THOUSANDS OF OWNERS WERE INVOLVED AND THE WORKLOAD IN ESTABLISHING OWNERSHIP AND IN SERVING NOTICES WOULD BE SUBSTANTIAL.

THE ENTIRE PROGRAMME MIGHT TAKE UP TO 30 YEARS TO COMPLETE.

TO SPEED UP THE PROGRAMME, THE BILL REMOVED THE REQUIREMENT OF SERVING INDIVIDUAL NOTICE WHERE THE LAND IN QUESTION WAS A ROAD.

HE SAID THE OTHER REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE ORDINANCE WOULD REMAIN.

THESE INCLUDED PUBLISHING THE NOTICE IN ONE ISSUE OF THE GAZETTE AND IN ONE ISSUE EACH OF A CHINESE AND ENGLISH NEWSPAPER, AFFIXING A COPY ON OR NEAR THE LAND AFFECTED, AND MAKING IT AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION AT GOVERNMENT OFFICES.

ANY PERSON HAVING A COMPENSATABLE INTEREST WOULD STILL BE ABLE TO CLAIM COMPENSATION.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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BILL TO ENFORCE BUS PASSENGER CONDUCT

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A BILL TO PROVIDE FOR BETTER CONTROL FOR PASSENGER CONDUCT ON BUSES WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

THE PUBLIC BUS SERVICES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988 IS ALSO AIMED AT CORRECTING A MINOR ANOMALY IN THE FRANCHISED BUS PROFIT CONTROL SCHEME.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON MICHAEL LEUNG, SAID THAT ENFORCEMENT PROBLEMS HAD EMERGED WHICH CONVINCED THE GOVERNMENT AND THE BUS COMPANIES THAT BETTER CONTROL OF PASSENGER CONDUCT WAS NECESSARY.

THE PUBLIC BUS SERVICES ORDINANCE PROVIDED FOR REGULATIONS AND BY-LAWS TO BE MADE TO REGULATE THE CONDUCT OF BUS PASSENGERS.

IT INCLUDED POWER TO MAKE REGULATIONS TO AUTHORISE BUS COMPANY STAFF TO ENFORCE THE REGULATIONS BUT NOT THE BY-LAWS.

THE BILL PROPOSED TO GIVE AUTHORISED STAFF THE POWER TO ENFORCE THE BY-LAWS AS WELL, MR LEUNG SAID.

THIS POWER INCLUDED THE REMOVAL FROM BUSES, DEMANDING OF PROOF OF IDENTITY OR DETAINING OF OFFENDERS CONTRAVENING BOTH REGULATIONS AND BY-LAWS.

IT WAS SIMILAR TO THAT POWER IN OTHER TRANSPORT-RELATED LEGISLATION CONTROLLING PASSENGER CONDUCT.

THE BILL ALSO INTRODUCED A NEW PROVISION REQUIRING PASSENGERS TO COMPLY WITH REASONABLE DIRECTIONS GIVEN IN THE INTEREST OF PUBLIC SAFETY BY AUTHORISED BUS STAFF.

"FOR EXAMPLE, A DRIVER MIGHT DIRECT PASSENGERS TO OPEN THE WINDOWS OF A BUS IN TYPHOON CONDITIONS TO REDUCE WIND RESISTANCE AND THEREBY LESSEN THE RISK OF A BUS BEING BLOWN OVER IN HIGH WINDS," HE SAID.

"THE ESSENCE OF THIS PROVISION IS THAT A DIRECTIVE MUST BE BOTH REASONABLE AND IN THE INTEREST OF PUBLIC SAFETY, AND THE COURTS WOULD DETERMINE IN CASES OF DOUBT."

ON THE MINOR ANOMALY IN THE PROFIT CONTROL SCHEME TO BE CORRECTED BY THE BILL, MR LEUNG SAID THAT AT PRESENT BOTH THE CHINA MOTOR BUS COMPANY AND THE KOWLOON MOTOR BUS COMPANY WERE PERMITTED EACH TO DEPOSIT \$2 MILLION WITH THE TREASURY, IN LIEU OF A MOTOR INSURANCE POLICY AGAINST THIRD PARTY RISKS.

SUCH DEPOSITS WERE TREATED AS FIXED ASSETS IN THE PROFIT CONTROL SCHEME UNDER SECTION 26 OF THE PUBLIC BUS SERVICES ORDINANCE.

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HOWEVER, THE DEFINITION OF "OPERATING RECEIPTS" IN THE SCHEME EXCLUDED ANY FORM OF INTEREST, INCLUDING THAT ON DEPOSITS.

SHAREHOLDERS THEREFORE ENJOYED BOTH THE PERMITTED RETURN ON THE DEPOSIT AND THE ACCRUED INTEREST.

THE BILL PROPOSED TO AMEND SECTION 26 SO THAT THE INTEREST EARNED ON DEPOSITS FOR SELF-INSURANCE WOULD BE REGARDED AS OPERATING RECEIPTS, AND SO REMOVE THE ANOMALY OF A DOUBLE BENEFIT TO SHAREHOLDERS.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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EXTENSION OF SAFETY PROVISIONS TO PRIVATE ROADS PROPOSED

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THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON MICHAEL LEUNG, TODAY (THURSDAY) INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL A BILL WHICH WOULD EXTEND THE SAFETY PROVISIONS OF THE LAW TO PRIVATE ROADS.

IT WOULD ALSO PROVIDE A LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR OWNERS OF PRIVATE ROADS TO CONTROL PARKING ON THEIR ROADS.

THE SAFETY PROVISIONS IN THE ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) BILL 1988 INCLUDED THOSE GOVERNING THE DRIVING CONDUCT AND LICENSING OF MOTORISTS, AND THE INSURANCE, LICENSING, CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS OF VEHICLES, MR LEUNG SAID.

OTHER RELEVANT ORDINANCES, INCLUDING THE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS (ASSISTANCE FUND) ORDINANCE AND THE MOTOR VEHICLES INSURANCE (THIRD PARTY RISKS) ORDINANCE, WOULD ALSO APPLY TO PRIVATE ROADS, HE ADDED.

MR LEUNG SAID THE ENFORCEMENT OF TRAFFIC REGULATIONS ON PRIVATE ROADS REQUIRED PROPER TRAFFIC SIGNS AND ROAD MARKINGS.

THE BILL EMPOWERED THE COMMISSIONER FOR TRANSPORT TO PRESCRIBE A CODE OF PRACTICE TO GIVE GUIDANCE TO PRIVATE ROAD OWNERS AND TO DECLARE BY NOTICE IN THE GAZETTE CERTAIN SIGNS AND MARKINGS WHICH THEY COULD PLACE ON THEIR ROADS.

FOR OTHER SIGNS AND MARKINGS, THE COMMISSIONER'S PRIOR APPROVAL WAS NECESSARY.

THE COMMISSIONER MIGHT ALSO REQUIRE SUCH OWNERS TO PLACE OR REMOVE CERTAIN SIGNS OR MARKINGS. IF THEY FAILED TO COMPLY, HE MIGHT CARRY OUT THE WORK AND RECOVER THE COSTS FROM THE OWNERS.

/GOLF CARTS

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GOLF CARTS WERE BEING USED AS A MODE OF TRANSPORT ON ROADS WITHIN CERTAIN PRIVATE ESTATES WITHOUT SAFETY AND INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW, MR LEUNG SAID.

"THE BILL AMENDS THE DEFINITION OF 'VILLAGE VEHICLE' TO INCLUDE GOLF CARTS WHICH WILL REQUIRE THE OWNER TO OBTAIN A VILLAGE VEHICLE PERMIT AND TO COMPLY WITH THE INSURANCE AND SAFETY PROVISION BEFORE IT CAN BE USED ON A ROAD," HE SAID.

"THE BILL ALSO PERMITS REGULATIONS TO BE MADE TO EMPOWER PRIVATE ROAD OWNERS TO DESIGNATE RESTRICTED PARKING AREAS, TO IMPOUND VEHICLES PARKED IN SUCH AREAS AND TO CHARGE FEES FOR SUCH ACTIVITIES.

"TO EXERCISE SUCH POWERS, THE OWNERS ARE REQUIRED TO DISPLAY WARNING SIGNS AT THE ENTRANCES TO THE PRIVATE ROAD, TO USE PROPER TRAFFIC SIGNS AND ROAD MARKINGS TO DESIGNATE RESTRICTED PARKING AREAS, TO USE IMMOBILISATION DEVICES APPROVED BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR TRANSPORT AND TO DELIVER UNCLAIMED VEHICLES TO THE POLICE FOR DISPOSAL."

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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INCREASE IN PERMITTED RENT PROPOSED

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THE LANDLORD AND TENANT (CONSOLIDATION) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988, SEEKING TO PERMIT LANDLORDS OF CONTROLLED PRE-WAR DOMESTIC PREMISES TO INCREASE RENTS, WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, POINTED OUT THAT THE BILL ALSO SOUGHT TO CLARIFY SOME EXISTING SECTIONS IN THE ORDINANCE BY INTRODUCING MINOR AMENDMENTS.

"AT THE END OF 1987 THERE WERE ONLY ABOUT 1,700 PRE-WAR DOMESTIC PREMISES UNDER PART I CONTROL, THAT IS EXCLUDING VILLAGE HOUSES," HE SAID.

"RENTS OF THESE PREMISES ARE CONTROLLED BY REFERENCE TO THE RENTS PAYABLE AS AT DECEMBER 25, 1941, TERMED THE 'STANDARD RENT'.

"THIS, WHEN MULTIPLIED BY A FACTOR, GIVES THE PERMITTED RENT, PROVIDED IT DOES NOT EXCEED THE PREVAILING MARKET RENT."

MR BARNES SAID THAT SINCE 1981 THE COUNCIL HAD, EACH YEAR, PASSED AMENDING LEGISLATION TO RAISE CONTROLLED RENTS STEP BY STEP WITH THE OBJECT OF BRINGING THEM CLOSER TO MARKET LEVELS.

/ "WE PROPOSE

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"WE PROPOSE AT THIS TIME TO INCREASE THE PERMITTED RENT FROM THE PRESENT 65 PER CENT TO 76 PER CENT OF PREVAILING MARKET RENT BY INCREASING THE FACTOR FROM 35 TO 39," HE SAID.

"THIS IS AN INCREASE OF ABOUT 17 PER CENT OR \$229 PER MONTH COMPARED WITH 17 PER CENT OR \$190 PER MONTH APPROVED IN THE 1987 REVIEW. CLAUSE 2 OF THE BILL IMPLEMENTS THIS CHANGE."

MR BARNES SAID THE REMAINING AMENDMENTS WERE MINOR AND TECHNICAL IN NATURE.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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MEASURES TO CURB TAXI MALPRACTICE
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THE MOST EFFECTIVE MEASURE IN DEALING WITH TAXI DRIVERS REFUSING HIRE WAS FOR THE AGGRIEVED PARTY TO REPORT TO THE POLICE, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON MICHAEL LEUNG, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON PEGGY LAM, MR LEUNG SAID THAT TO HELP THE PUBLIC TO LODGE COMPLAINTS AGAINST TAXI MALPRACTICE, A NEW PROCEDURE WAS INTRODUCED EARLIER THIS YEAR WHEREBY STATEMENTS WERE TAKEN AT A PLACE CONVENIENT TO COMPLAINANTS.

THIS RESULTED IN 538 COMPLAINTS BEING RECEIVED BY THE POLICE IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF THIS YEAR COMPARED WITH 292 AND 209 CASES IN 1986 AND 1987 RESPECTIVELY.

HE SAID THAT OTHER DETERRENT MEASURES BEING EXAMINED BY THE GOVERNMENT INCLUDED REQUIRING THE WEARING OR DISPLAY OF IDENTIFICATION BADGES, MANDATORY SUSPENSION OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE VEHICLE LICENCE OF PERSISTENT OFFENDERS AND RETESTING.

HE POINTED OUT THAT GOVERNMENT ACTION THROUGH LEGISLATION AND OTHER DETERRENT MEASURES MUST BE SUPPORTED BY FULL CO-OPERATION FROM THE TRADE IN THE FORM OF BETTER SELF-DISCIPLINE.

"ON THIS ASPECT, THE TRADE HAS RESPONDED POSITIVELY TO GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC CONCERN AND IS NOW CONSIDERING VARIOUS MEASURES TO REDUCE MALPRACTICES WITHIN THE TRADE," HE ADDED.

THE TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE WOULD ALSO MEET REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TRADE SHORTLY TO DISCUSS THIS PROBLEM AND TO EXCHANGE VIEWS, HE SAID.

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FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS TO RESOLVE REFUGEE PROBLEM

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CONDITIONS ARE MORE FAVOURABLE NOW FOR THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR), BRITAIN AND HONG KONG TO APPROACH RESETTLEMENT COUNTRIES AND SEEK A RENEWED COMMITMENT TO HELP RESOLVE THE REFUGEE PROBLEM, SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON GEOFFREY BARNES, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

"THIS WILL BE OUR INTENTION DURING THE COMING MONTHS," HE SAID, ADDING THAT THE GOVERNOR WAS TAKING THE OPPORTUNITY OF HIS CURRENT VISIT TO EUROPE TO PRESS COUNTRIES THERE TO INCREASE THEIR RESETTLEMENT QUOTAS.

MR BARNES WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON RITA FAN ON THE RESETTLEMENT PROSPECTS OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES STRANDED IN HONG KONG.

NOTING THAT THE UNHCR HAD THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RESETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES IN HONG KONG, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WORKED CLOSELY WITH THE LOCAL UNHCR AND CONSULATES AND COMMISSIONS OF THE MAIN RESETTLEMENT COUNTRIES TO PROMOTE RESETTLEMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

"THIS EFFORT IS MATCHED BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S OWN EFFORTS ON OUR BEHALF IN LONDON AND IN FOREIGN CAPITALS," MR BARNES SAID.

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ITSELF HAD A CONTINUING RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME OPERATING ON HONG KONG'S BEHALF, HE ADDED.

IN MAY, 1987, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT DECIDED TO ACCEPT A FURTHER 468 REFUGEES FROM HONG KONG FOR RESETTLEMENT IN UNITED KINGDOM, UNDER RELAXED FAMILY REUNION CRITERIA, AT A RATE OF 20 PER MONTH, SPREAD OVER TWO YEARS, MR BARNES NOTED.

HE SAID THE OFFTAKE STARTED IN JULY LAST YEAR AND 320 HAD BEEN RESETTLED SO FAR.

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WAS CONTINUING TO KEEP UNDER REVIEW ALL ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEMS, INCLUDING RESETTLEMENT, MR BARNES SAID.

/HE THEN

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HE THEN OUTLINED THE SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS DURING THE SUMMER WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HOPED WOULD IMPROVE PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESETTLEMENT. THESE WERE:

- * FIRST, THE OUTFLOW OF VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE TO HONG KONG HAD BEEN REDUCED FOLLOWING THE INTRODUCTION OF THE POLICY OF SCREENING AND REPATRIATION ON JUNE 16;
- * SECOND, THE NEED FOR COMPREHENSIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR BOAT PEOPLE ARRIVING IN HONG KONG AFTER JUNE 15 AND WHO DID NOT QUALIFY FOR RESETTLEMENT IN OTHER COUNTRIES WAS ACCEPTED BY VIETNAMESE REPRESENTATIVES IN THE SECOND ROUND OF TALKS HELD IN LONDON LAST WEEK;
- * THIRD, AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED WITH THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE AN IMMEDIATE START ON THE REPATRIATION TO VIETNAM OF THOSE WHO HAD ASKED TO BE RETURNED.

"WE BELIEVE THAT THESE DEVELOPMENTS HAVE REDUCED TO MORE FINITE PROPORTIONS THE REFUGEE POPULATION STRANDED IN THE TERRITORY, AND WILL ASSIST IN COUNTERING THE 'PULL FACTOR' WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN BY AT LEAST ONE RESETTLEMENT COUNTRY AS A REASON FOR NOT RESETTLING MORE," MR BARNES SAID.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT THIS SUMMER HAD BEEN THE CONCLUSION OF A STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING IN WHICH THE UNHCR REAFFIRMED ITS INTENTION TO ENDEAVOUR TO SECURE SPEEDY RESETTLEMENT OR OTHER DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG, HE ADDED.

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PROVISION MADE TO COPE WITH KAI TAK WORKLOAD

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OPERATIONAL DEPARTMENTS HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE NECESSARY FINANCIAL PROVISION AND MANPOWER RESOURCES TO COPE WITH THE ADDITIONAL WORKLOAD ARISING FROM THE STAGE 5 EXTENSION OF THE PASSENGER TERMINAL BUILDING AT THE AIRPORT.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY) WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON MARTIN BARROW.

/MR JACOBS

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MR JACOBS SAID THE AIRPORT MANAGEMENT DIVISION OF THE CIVIL AVIATION DEPARTMENT HAD PROVISION FOR 17 NEW POSTS COMPRISING AIRPORT MANAGERS AND OTHER STAFF TO DEAL WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW FACILITIES AND SYSTEMS IN THE STAGE 5 EXTENSION.

THIS WOULD BE AUGMENTED BY A FURTHER 13 POSTS IN THE 1989-90 FINANCIAL YEAR.

THE CURRENT ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AIRPORT IMMIGRATION DIVISION WAS 599.

THIS WOULD BE INCREASED BY 59 POSTS TO A TOTAL OF 658, WHEN THE STAGE 5 EXTENSION CAME INTO OPERATION.

CURRENTLY, THE ANNUAL PASSENGER THROUGHPUT AT KAI TAK WAS ABOUT 14.4 MILLION.

THE STAGE 5 EXTENSION WOULD INCREASE THE HANDLING CAPACITY TO 20 MILLION PASSENGERS.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO MAINTAIN THE STANDARD OF SERVICE AS THE VOLUME OF TRAFFIC INCREASED.

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EFFORTS TO REDUCE ROAD WORKS NOISE

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CONTINUED EFFORTS WERE BEING MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT TO REDUCE NOISE LEVELS GENERATED BY ROAD WORKS NEAR SCHOOLS AND HOSPITALS, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON MICHAEL LEUNG, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON DAVID CHEUNG, MR LEUNG SAID THAT CONTRACTORS EMPLOYED TO CARRY OUT ROAD WORKS WERE REQUIRED TO USE SOUND MUFFLERS ON NOISY ROAD CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT.

HE SAID THAT FOR ROUTINE ROAD MAINTENANCE, WHICH WAS OFTEN INTERMITTENT AND MIGHT LAST FOR SEVERAL DAYS, OPERATIONS WERE PLANNED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO AVOID PEAK TRAFFIC AND NOISY OPERATIONS OUTSIDE SCHOOLS.

WHENEVER POSSIBLE, MAJOR MAINTENANCE PROJECTS WERE PROGRAMMED TO TAKE PLACE DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS IN ORDER TO MINIMISE THE EFFECT OF NOISE ON SCHOOL CLASSES.

BUT FOR CAPITAL WORKS PROJECTS, IT WAS NOT ALWAYS POSSIBLE TO PROGRAMME THE WORKS TO SUPPRESS PLANT NOISE WITHOUT SERIOUSLY DISRUPTING THE PROGRESS OF THE WORKS, WHICH WERE COMMONLY SUBJECT TO EXTREMELY TIGHT CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULES, MR LEUNG SAID.

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FOUR WORKING GROUPS FORMED ON LRT SAFETY

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FOUR GOVERNMENT WORKING COMMITTEES AND GROUPS HAD BEEN FORMED TO ENSURE THE SAFE OPERATION OF THE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT SYSTEM AND PROMOTE ROAD SAFETY IN YUEN LONG AND TUEN MUN TRANSIT SERVICE AREA, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON MICHAEL LEUNG, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON T AI CHIN-WAH, MR LEUNG SAID ONE OF THESE WERE SET UP EARLIER THIS MONTH UNDER HIS CHAIRMANSHIP TO CONDUCT FURTHER REVIEW OF THE INTERFACE BETWEEN THE LRT AND OTHER ROAD TRAFFIC IN THE LIGHT OF OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCE.

MR LEUNG SAID THAT HE SAW THE NEED TO FORM HIS WORKING GROUP TO ASCERTAIN CERTAIN POSSIBLE REFINEMENTS TO THE LRT SYSTEM WHICH WAS CERTIFIED SAFE BY THE UK INSPECTOR OF RAILWAYS BEFORE ITS OPENING ON SEPTEMBER 18.

IMPROVEMENTS IDENTIFIED SO FAR BY HIS WORKING GROUP INCLUDED THE INSTALLATION OF ADDITIONAL PHYSICAL BARRIERS, AUDIBLE WARNING SIGNALS AND LONGER TERM MODIFICATIONS TO JUNCTION LAYOUT.

ON-GOING PUBLIC EDUCATION PROGRAMMES WOULD BE FURTHER STRENGTHENED, HE SAID.

MR LEUNG SAID A GOVERNMENT - KCRC LRT LIAISON COMMITTEE WAS SET UP IN 1984 TO CO-ORDINATE AND IMPLEMENT TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SCHEME FOR THE SAFE OPERATION OF THE LRT SYSTEM.

"THIS COMMITTEE TAKES ACCOUNT OF THE COMMENTS AND VIEWS OF THE JOINT MONITORING GROUP OF THE TUEN MUN AND YUEN LONG DISTRICT BOARDS," HE SAID.

"PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC EDUCATION ON ROAD SAFETY ARE OVERSEEN BY ITS SUB-COMMITTEE, WITH INPUT FROM THE TWO DISTRICT BOARDS," HE ADDED.

A WORKING GROUP ON JUNCTIONS CHAIRED BY THE LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UK RAILWAY INSPECTORATE WAS SET UP IN LATE 1987 TO ENSURE THE SAFE OPERATION OF EACH PEDESTRIAN CROSSING ALONG THE LRT TRACK.

"IT MEETS FORTNIGHTLY TO EXAMINE SUCH MATTERS AS SPEED LIMITS OF THE LIGHT RAIL VEHICLES, ADJUSTMENT TO SIGNAL PHASING AND THE NEED TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SEGREGATED CROSSINGS," MR LEUNG SAID.

"THERE IS A REGIONAL LIAISON GROUP INVOLVING THE POLICE, FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND KCRC TO REVIEW EMERGENCY ARRANGEMENTS AND OPERATIONAL MATTERS," HE SAID.

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ON THE DEPLOYMENT OF POLICE OFFICERS FOR ROAD SAFETY AND ENFORCEMENT DUTIES IN THE TRANSIT SERVICE AREA, MR LEUNG SAID THAT IN ADDITION TO THE UNIFORMED POLICE, 27 TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS WERE ASSIGNED IN TUEN MUN AND YUEN LONG.

ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC POLICE OFFICERS WERE DEPLOYED TO BOTH DISTRICTS AS REQUIRED.

TO ENSURE SUSTAINED POLICE PRESENCE ON THE ROADS, 68 NEW POSTS FOR THE TRAFFIC POLICE OF THE NEW TERRITORIES REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS HAD BEEN INCLUDED IN THE 1989-90 DRAFT ESTIMATES.

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HOSTEL FOR HOMELESS TO OPEN IN YAU MA TEI
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THE SALVATION ARMY, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT, WILL SHORTLY BE OPENING AN URBAN HOSTEL IN YAU MA TEI TO PROVIDE THE HOMELESS WITH PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON BRIAN CHAU, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHAN YING-LUN, MR CHAU SAID THIS PILOT SCHEME FOLLOWED ON FROM RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN A REPORT SUBMITTED BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE OF THE SHAM SHUI PO DISTRICT BOARD.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS WERE EXAMINED BY A CENTRAL CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE ON STREET SLEEPERS WHICH HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED UNDER THE HEALTH AND WELFARE BRANCH.

"OVER THE YEARS, MOST DISTRICT BOARDS, PARTICULARLY THOSE IN THE URBAN REGION, HAVE DISCUSSED THE PROBLEM OF STREET SLEEPING," MR CHAU SAID.

MR CHAU SAID THAT FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY HE DID NOT PROPOSE TO DISCUSS ALL THE PROPOSALS MADE BY DISTRICT BOARDS, AND WOULD HIGHLIGHT CERTAIN MORE RECENT PROPOSALS MADE BY THE SHAM SHUI PO AND WAN CHAI DISTRICT BOARDS.

"THE REPORT PRODUCED IN 1987 BY THE SHAM SHUI PO DISTRICT BOARD MADE A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM OF STREET SLEEPING IN THAT DISTRICT.

/"IT CONTAINED

"IT CONTAINED A NUMBER OF RECOMMENDATIONS, THE MOST PROMINENT OF WHICH WERE THE NEED, FIRSTLY, TO ESTABLISH A COMMITTEE WHICH WOULD REVIEW POLICY ON, AND CO-ORDINATE THE PROVISION OF SERVICES TO, STREET SLEEPERS; SECONDLY, TO PROVIDE STREET SLEEPERS WITH ADEQUATE REHOUSING ARRANGEMENTS; AND THIRDLY, TO SUGGEST THAT LEGISLATION PROHIBITING STREET SLEEPING SHOULD BE CONSIDERED."

MOST OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE SHAM SHUI PO REPORT WERE FOUND TO BE IN KEEPING WITH EXISTING GOVERNMENT POLICY.

HOWEVER, THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE SUPPORTED THE VIEW THAT GREATER EMPHASIS SHOULD BE PLACED ON PROVIDING ACCOMMODATION IN THE URBAN AREA FOR HOMELESS PERSONS, INCLUDING STREET SLEEPERS.

THE PILOT SCHEME TO OPEN AN URBAN HOSTEL IN YAU MA TEI WOULD TEST THE FEASIBILITY OF THIS NEW APPROACH, MR CHAU SAID.

"WE ARE NOW ACTIVELY PURSUING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SECOND SUCH HOSTEL UNDER THIS PILOT SCHEME," HE ADDED.

MR CHAU NOTED THAT THE WAN CHAI DISTRICT BOARD ALSO DISCUSSED THE PROBLEM OF STREET SLEEPING AT ITS MEETING IN AUGUST, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE PROBLEM OF STREET SLEEPERS WHO SUFFERED FROM MENTAL DISORDERS AND WHO MIGHT OR MIGHT NOT POSE A DANGER TO THE PUBLIC.

"AMONG THE VIEWS EXPRESSED WERE SUGGESTIONS WHICH RANGED FROM EXTENDING MORE TIME AND EFFORT TO HELP THE HOMELESS, TO REQUIRING THE MENTALLY DISTURBED TO UNDERGO COUNSELLING IN AN INSTITUTION," HE SAID.

"IN REGARD TO THE LATTER, THE MENTAL HEALTH (AMENDMENT) ORDINANCE, WHICH WAS PASSED BY THIS COUNCIL IN THE LAST SESSION, CONTAINS A PROVISION FOR A POLICE OFFICER TO TAKE ANY PERSON WHO IS BELIEVED TO BE SUFFERING FROM A MENTAL DISORDER, AND WHO IS A DANGER EITHER TO HIMSELF OR TO THE PUBLIC, TO A HOSPITAL FOR MEDICAL EXAMINATION," HE SAID.

MR CHAU STRESSED THAT THIS POWER WAS STRICTLY LIMITED TO THE TRANSFER OF A PATIENT TO AN ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT OF A HOSPITAL WHERE HE WOULD RECEIVE PROPER MEDICAL TREATMENT AND BE SUBJECT TO A PROFESSIONAL ASSESSMENT OF HIS MENTAL CONDITION.

"THE PATIENT CAN BE DETAINED FOR THIS PURPOSE FOR NOT MORE THAN 24 HOURS, UNLESS FURTHER ACTION IS TAKEN UNDER OTHER PROVISIONS IN THE ORDINANCE," HE SAID.

MR CHAU POINTED OUT THAT THIS PROVISION, WHICH WOULD COME INTO FORCE EARLY NEXT YEAR, WAS NOT TARGETTED SPECIFICALLY AT STREET SLEEPERS AND WOULD BE USED WITH THE NECESSARY DISCRETION.

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POLICE AWARE OF ILLEGAL GAMBLING RUSE

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ALL DISTRICT POLICE SQUADS ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE USE OF SOLUBLE PAPER BY ILLEGAL GAMBLING OPERATORS AND THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE IS NOT AWARE OF ANY PROSECUTION HAVING FAILED BECAUSE EVIDENCE ON SOLUBLE PAPER WAS DESTROYED.

THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON GEOFFREY BARNES, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY) WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM PROF THE HON POON CHUNG-KWONG.

MR BARNES SAID THAT CLEARLY IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT FOR POLICE OFFICERS CONDUCTING RAIDS AGAINST ILLEGAL GAMBLING TO GATHER EVIDENCE.

"THIS CAN OFTEN BE DIFFICULT: FOR EXAMPLE MANY EXHIBITS CAN BE FLUSHED AWAY OR THROWN OUT OF WINDOWS," HE SAID.

MR BARNES SAID HE WAS AWARE OF RECENT PRESS COVERAGE OF A CASE IN WHICH AN ILLEGAL GAMBLING ESTABLISHMENT WAS REPORTED TO HAVE USED SOLUBLE PAPER IN ITS GAMBLING OPERATIONS.

THE POLICE HAD INVESTIGATED SEVERAL CASES IN THE LAST FEW YEARS WHERE ILLEGAL BETS WERE WRITTEN ON SUCH PAPER, WHICH DISSOLVED WITHOUT TRACE IN WATER.

"IN ITSELF THIS IS NOT PERHAPS A VERY GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE USE OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY BY TRIADS," HE SAID.

"SOLUBLE PAPER HAS BEEN MANUFACTURED COMMERCIALY FOR MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS, HAS MANY PERFECTLY LEGITIMATE APPLICATIONS, AND IS READILY AVAILABLE IN HONG KONG.

"GIVEN ITS COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL USE THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO PLANS TO PLACE RESTRICTIONS ON THIS PRODUCT."

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DIFFICULTIES IN DRAFTING HIRE-PURCHASE LEGISLATION

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THE ADMINISTRATION RECOGNISES THAT THERE COULD BE A PROBLEM IN RELATION TO HIRE-PURCHASE CONTRACTS AND THEREFORE KEEPS THIS SUBJECT UNDER CLOSE REVIEW, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON MARTIN LEE, MR JACOBS SAID THAT THE QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT THERE WAS A NECESSITY TO CONTROL HIRE-PURCHASE BUSINESS IN HONG KONG HAD BEEN EXAMINED FROM TIME TO TIME IN SOME DEPTH.

/ "THE SUBJECT

"THE SUBJECT HAS A LONG AND TANGLED HISTORY," HE SAID.

"IN 1977 THE CONSUMER COUNCIL SUBMITTED TO THE ADMINISTRATION A 'REPORT ON HIRE-PURCHASE IN HONG KONG'.

"A WORKING GROUP WAS ESTABLISHED, AND IT WAS DECIDED THAT THE REPORT SHOULD BE ACCEPTED IN GENERAL TERMS AND THAT LEGISLATION SHOULD, INDEED, BE INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

"UNFORTUNATELY, AS DRAFTING PROGRESSED, IT BECAME APPARENT THAT THERE WERE A NUMBER OF DIFFICULT ISSUES UPON WHICH THERE WAS LITTLE CONSENSUS AND IT WAS NOT UNTIL 1985 THAT THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES WAS ABLE TO CIRCULATE A REVISED DRAFT TO INTERESTED PARTIES.

"REGRETTABLY, THE DRAFT BILL FOUND LITTLE SUPPORT AND IT WAS SUBJECTED TO MANY CRITICAL BUT OFTEN CONTRADICTORY ADVERSE COMMENTS. THERE SEEMED NO CLEAR WAY FORWARD."

MR JACOBS SAID THAT DURING THE PROGRESS OF THE DRAFT BILL, THE NECESSITY FOR HIRE-PURCHASE LEGISLATION IN HONG KONG WAS RE-EXAMINED, AND IT WAS NOTED THAT THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS TO THE CONSUMER COUNCIL IN RELATION TO HIRE-PURCHASE TRANSACTIONS WAS COMPARATIVELY SMALL.

"SO IT COULD BE ARGUED THAT THE DEMAND FOR HIRE-PURCHASE LEGISLATION APPEARS TO HAVE DECREASED," HE SAID.

"POSSIBLY THIS IS DUE LARGELY TO INCREASING AFFLUENCE IN THE COMMUNITY AND THE WIDER AVAILABILITY OF OTHER FORMS OF CONSUMER CREDIT, SUCH AS CREDIT CARDS AND BANK LOANS.

"THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE CONSUMER COUNCIL FELL FROM ONE HUNDRED AND FIVE IN 1980-81 TO A MERE SIXTEEN IN 1987-88.

"WHILST I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT THIS SHOULD BE THE SOLE DETERMINANT AS TO WHETHER OR NOT HIRE-PURCHASE LEGISLATION SHOULD BE INTRODUCED IN HONG KONG, IT IS OBVIOUSLY A FACTOR."

TURNING TO ANOTHER ASPECT TO THE DELAY, MR JACOBS SAID THE LAW REFORM COMMISSION REPORTED ON THE SUBJECT OF THE CONTROL OF EXEMPTION CLAUSES IN DECEMBER 1986.

"THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION, WHICH PICKS UP A NUMBER OF THE IMPORTANT PROVISIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF POSSIBLE HIRE-PURCHASE LEGISLATION, HAS BEEN ACCEPTED IN PRINCIPLE, AND IT IS THE INTENTION THAT A BILL DEALING WITH THE CONTROL OF EXEMPTION CLAUSES SHOULD BE INTRODUCED INTO THIS COUNCIL LATER THIS SESSION," HE SAID.

"WE PROPOSE TO STUDY THE POSSIBLE NEED FOR FURTHER LEGISLATION IN THE LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONTROL OF EXEMPTION CLAUSES BILL."

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EXTENSION OF TAVA SCHEME BEING CONSIDERED

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THE GOVERNMENT IS CONSIDERING EXTENDING THE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS ASSISTANCE (TAVA) SCHEME SO THAT ALL VICTIMS OF ACCIDENTS INVOLVING LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT VEHICLES ARE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR ASSISTANCE, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON BRIAN CHAU, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALREADY HELD PRELIMINARY DISCUSSIONS WITH THE KOWLOON-CANTON RAILWAY CORPORATION, WHICH OPERATES THE LRT, DURING WHICH THE CORPORATION INDICATED ITS INTEREST IN BRINGING THE LRT WITHIN THE AMBIT OF THE TAVA SCHEME, MR CHAU SAID.

"I HAVE NOW WRITTEN TO THE CORPORATION, FORMALLY SEEKING THEIR ADVICE ON JUST SUCH A PROPOSAL," HE SAID IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TAI CHIN-WAH.

"UPON RECEIPT OF THE CORPORATION'S REPLY TO MY LETTER, THE ADVICE OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL WILL BE SOUGHT AS TO WHETHER A BILL TO GIVE EFFECT TO THIS PROPOSAL SHOULD BE INTRODUCED INTO THIS COUNCIL, WITHIN THE CURRENT SESSION," MR CHAU SAID.

HE CONFIRMED THAT VICTIMS OF ACCIDENTS INVOLVING LRT VEHICLES ON THE INTEGRATED SECTIONS OF THE LRT TRACK WERE ALREADY ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE UNDER THE TAVA SCHEME, SINCE THOSE SECTIONS OF THE TRACK WERE, LIKE THE TRACKS OF HONG KONG TRAMWAYS LTD, WITHIN THE DEFINITION OF "ROAD" IN THE ORDINANCE GOVERNING THE SCHEME.

THE SEGREGATED SECTIONS OF THE LRT TRACK WERE NOT WITHIN THAT DEFINITION, BUT THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE MIGHT UTILISE CHARITABLE FUNDS TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE, SIMILAR TO THAT AVAILABLE UNDER THE TAVA SCHEME, TO VICTIMS OF ACCIDENTS ON THAT PART OF THE TRACK.

MR CHAU SAID THE EFFECT OF THE BILL HE MENTIONED EARLIER WOULD BE TO INCLUDE THE WHOLE OF THE LRT TRACK WITHIN THE AMBIT OF THE ORDINANCE, AS WELL AS TO INCLUDE THE LRT VEHICLES WITHIN THE ORDINANCE FOR THE PURPOSE OF RAISING AN APPROPRIATE LEVY ON THE VEHICLES SIMILAR TO THAT CURRENTLY CHARGED IN RESPECT OF OTHER VEHICLES WHICH WERE USED ON THE ROAD.

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SAME TREATMENT FOR ALL CLEAREES

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ALL CLEAREES AFFECTED IN THE TATE'S CAIRN TUNNEL CONSTRUCTION PROJECT ARE OFFERED THE SAME TREATMENT WITH REGARD TO EITHER PERMANENT OR TEMPORARY REHOUSING ACCORDING TO THEIR ELIGIBILITY.

THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY) IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON ELSIE TU.

MRS TU HAD ASKED WHETHER INDIGENOUS VILLAGERS OF YUEN LONG VILLAGE IN NEW KOWLOON SITUATED AT THE SOUTHERN END OF THE TATE'S CAIRN TUNNEL WERE BEING GIVEN LESS FAVOURABLE REHOUSING TREATMENT THAN THOSE BEING CLEARED AT THE NORTHERN END OF THE SAME PROJECT.

MR BARNES SAID ALL CLEAREES HOLDING PRIVATE LAND WERE ENTITLED TO STATUTORY COMPENSATION.

HOWEVER, EX-GRATIA COMPENSATION WAS ALSO OFFERED TO OWNERS OF OLD SCHEDULED AGRICULTURAL LOTS AND BUILDING LOTS.

"DIFFERENT RATES APPROVED BY THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL APPLY IN THE NEW TERRITORIES AND IN THE URBAN AREA BECAUSE OF THE DIFFERENCES IN LAND VALUES IN THESE AREAS," HE SAID.

"INDIGENOUS VILLAGERS HOLDING OLD SCHEDULED BUILDING LOTS ARE ALSO COMPENSATED FOR THE LOSS OF ACCOMMODATION ON TOP OF THEIR LAND.

"IN THE NEW TERRITORIES, UNDER THE VILLAGE REMOVAL POLICY, INDIGENOUS VILLAGERS HOLDING OLD SCHEDULED BUILDING LOTS WILL NORMALLY BE ELIGIBLE FOR ONE RESITE HOUSE (OF 700 SQUARE FEET AND THREE STOREYS) FOR EACH 0.01 ACRE OF THEIR LAND.

"THOSE WHO WISH TO CONSTRUCT THEIR OWN HOUSES ARE GRANTED A PLOT OF LAND OF 700 SQUARE FEET AND PAID AN ALLOWANCE FOR BUILDING THEIR HOUSES.

"ALTERNATIVELY, THOSE WHO DO NOT WANT A RESITE HOUSE CAN OBTAIN PUBLIC HOUSING ACCORDING TO THEIR ELIGIBILITY."

MR BARNES SAID THAT IN NEW KOWLOON, INDIGENOUS VILLAGERS HOLDING OLD SCHEDULED BUILDING LOTS WOULD GET A NEW EX-GRATIA ALLOWANCE AT THE CURRENT RATE OF \$929 PER SQUARE FOOT.

THIS WAS PAYABLE PER SQUARE FOOT UP TO 0.01 ACRE AND THEREAFTER ONLY FOR THE COVERED AREA BEING RESUMED.

"THIS ALLOWANCE IS A NEW ALLOWANCE APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND THE FINANCE COMMITTEE IN JUNE 1988 AS AN ENHANCEMENT TO THE EXISTING EX-GRATIA ALLOWANCE OF \$2,000 PER SQUARE FOOT FOR AN OLD SCHEDULED BUILDING LOT," HE SAID.

/"IT IS

"IT IS CONSIDERED THAT THE ENHANCED ALLOWANCE OF \$2,929 PER SQUARE FOOT SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO ENABLE THE VILLAGER TO OBTAIN ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION.

"IN ADDITION, INDIGENOUS VILLAGERS, WHO ARE ALSO OWNER-OCCUPIERS, ARE ENTITLED TO THE SAME PUBLIC HOUSING ASSISTANCE OFFERED TO OTHER CLEAREES, I.E. THEY CAN GET PUBLIC HOUSING ACCORDING TO ELIGIBILITY PLUS CASH COMPENSATION.

"THIS TREATMENT COMPARES FAVOURABLY WITH THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN THE NEW TERRITORIES.

"BECAUSE OF THE SHORTAGE OF LAND IN THE URBAN AREA AND IN THE NEW TOWNS, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO GIVE RESITE HOUSE TO NEW KOWLOON INDIGENOUS VILLAGERS.

"THE ENHANCED EX-GRATIA COMPENSATION PACKAGE FOR THESE PEOPLE IS IN FACT DESIGNED TO GIVE THEM TERMS THAT ARE BROADLY COMPARABLE TO THEIR N.T. COUNTERPARTS."

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LEGCO PASSES MOTION ON EXPO PROPOSAL

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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY) PASSED A MOTION URGING THE GOVERNMENT TO GIVE FULL CONSIDERATION TO A PROPOSAL THAT HONG KONG REGISTER WITH THE BUREAU INTERNATIONALE DES EXPOSITIONS AN INTEREST IN HOLDING AN EXPOSITION IN 1997.

THE MOTION WAS PASSED BY VOICE VOTE AFTER A FOUR-HOUR DEBATE IN WHICH 28 MEMBERS AND THREE OFFICIAL MEMBERS SPOKE.

THE MOTION, MOVED BY THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG, WAS: "THAT THIS COUNCIL URGES THE GOVERNMENT TO GIVE FULL AND SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO THE PROPOSAL TO REGISTER HONG KONG'S INTEREST IN STAGING THE WORLD EXPOSITION IN 1997 WITH THE BIE BEFORE THE DEADLINE OF NOVEMBER 20, 1988."

IN EARLIER BUSINESS IN THE MEETING, THE COUNCIL DEALT WITH 10 QUESTIONS AND FOUR BILLS WERE INTRODUCED FOR FIRST AND SECOND READINGS.

THESE BILLS WERE THE LANDLORD AND TENANT (CONSOLIDATION) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988, PUBLIC BUS SERVICES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988, ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1988, AND ROADS (WORKS, USE AND COMPENSATION) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988.

DEBATES ON THESE BILLS WERE ADJOURNED.

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GOVERNOR VISITS PARIS

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THE GOVERNOR, SIR DAVID WILSON, TODAY (THURSDAY) MADE A STRONG PLEA FOR A FREE TRADING APPROACH TO THE URUGUAY ROUND OF GATT AND TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY'S INTERNAL MARKET.

THIS WAS PUT ACROSS DURING THE MEETINGS SIR DAVID HAD AND IN A TALK HE GAVE IN PARIS WHEN HE BEGAN THE LAST LEG OF HIS VISIT TO THREE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES THIS WEEK.

SIR DAVID AVOIDED THE TROUBLE CAUSED BY A GENERAL STRIKE CALLED BY FRENCH RAILWAY WORKERS BY SWITCHING FROM A TRAIN TO A PLANE FOR HIS JOURNEY FROM BRUSSELS.

THE MAJOR FUNCTION IN THE GOVERNOR'S PROGRAMME WAS HIS ATTENDANCE AT A SEMINAR ORGANISED JOINTLY BY THE HONG KONG TRADE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OFFICE IN PARIS AND ONE OF FRANCE'S LEADING BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS, THE FRENCH EMPLOYERS FEDERATION, KNOWN AS CNPF.

THE FEDERATION HAS ORGANISED TWO MAJOR CONFERENCES ON HONG KONG IN THE PAST, IN FEBRUARY LAST YEAR AND MARCH THIS YEAR.

THE LATTER CONCENTRATED ON INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT PROSPECTS AND WAS ADDRESSED BY THE DEPUTY FINANCIAL SECRETARY, MR JOHN YAXLEY; THE DIRECTOR OF INDUSTRY, MR K.Y. YEUNG; INDUSTRIALIST AND LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLOR MR ALLEN LEE AND A BANKER, MR RICHARD MARGOLIS.

THE CNPF IS ALSO INVOLVED IN A STUDY ON JOINT VENTURE OPPORTUNITIES WITH FRENCH BUSINESS COMMISSIONED BY THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT.

THE GOVERNOR GAVE THE KEYNOTE SPEECH AT THE CNPF SEMINAR, ENTITLED "HONG KONG AT THE GATES OF THE YEAR 2000". IT WAS CHAIRED BY THE CHAIRMAN OF CNPF'S SOUTH EAST ASIA COMMITTEE, MR JEANCOURT GALIGNANI, WHO IS ALSO CHAIRMAN OF BANQUE INDO-SUEZ.

SPEECHES ON RELATIONS BETWEEN HONG KONG AND FRANCE, BUSINESS PROSPECTS IN HONG KONG BOTH AT PRESENT AND IN THE FUTURE AND ON ACCESS TO CHINA WERE ALSO GIVEN BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE HONG KONG TRADE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, MISS LYDIA DUNN; THE CONSUL GENERAL OF FRANCE IN HONG KONG, MR FRANCOIS SOULE-SUSBIELLES; THE PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH BUSINESS ASSOCIATION IN HONG KONG, MR DANIEL BOURGERY; THE CHAIRMAN OF PRUDENTIAL ASIA, DR VICTOR FUNG; AND THE CHAIRMAN OF LYONNAISE DES EAUX, MR JEROME MONOD.

THE SEMINAR WAS ATTENDED BY AROUND 200 INFLUENTIAL BUSINESSMEN FROM ALL OVER FRANCE.

/A FILM

A FILM ON HONG KONG WAS SHOWN TO THE AUDIENCE AND THERE WAS A LIVELY DEBATE DURING WHICH MANY QUESTIONS WERE PUT TO THE VARIOUS SPEAKERS.

ALSO PRESENT AT THE MEETING WERE THE PRESIDENT OF CNPF, MR FRANCOIS PERIGOT; THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ORGANISATION FOR THE CO-OPERATION AND INVESTMENT IN INDUSTRY, TRADE AND SERVICES BETWEEN FRANCE AND THE ASIA PACIFIC COUNTRIES, THE CO-ORGANISER OF THE SEMINAR, MR PIERRE AIGRAIN; AND MR FRANCOIS MISSOTTE OF SOFINASIA, WHICH ORGANISES FINANCE FOR FRENCH INVESTMENTS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA.

FRENCH COMPANIES ARE WELL ESTABLISHED IN SERVICES AND IN CONSTRUCTION IN HONG KONG AND FRANCE BENEFITS FROM AIR FRANCE'S SERVICES TO HONG KONG.

THE FRENCH TRADE COMMISSIONER IN HONG KONG LISTED 270 FRENCH BUSINESSES IN ITS LATEST DIRECTORY AND COMMENTS THAT 18 WERE PRESENT IN 1960 AND THAT MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS WERE ESTABLISHED AFTER 1980. HONG KONG ALSO HAS AN ACTIVE FRENCH BUSINESS ASSOCIATION.

THE GOVERNOR TODAY ALSO CALLED ON THE FORMER PRESIDENT OF FRANCE, MR VALERY GISCARD D'ESTAING, WHO IS CURRENTLY PRESIDENT OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMISSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE MINISTRY FOR INDUSTRY, MR JEAN-FRANCOIS SAGLIO.

SIR DAVID NOTED THAT BILATERAL TRADE WITH HONG KONG HAD BEEN GROWING STRONGLY.

HONG KONG EXPORTS TO FRANCE GREW BY 45 PER CENT IN 1986 AND 44 PER CENT IN 1987 WHILE IMPORTS FROM FRANCE GREW BY 20 PER CENT AND 30 PER CENT RESPECTIVELY IN HONG KONG DOLLAR TERMS.

EVEN WITH RE-EXPORTS TO FRANCE GROWING BY 44 PER CENT AND 108 PER CENT IN THE SAME YEARS, THE BALANCE OF TRADE REMAINED IN FRANCE'S FAVOUR.

THE GOVERNOR POINTED OUT THAT IN SPITE OF THIS GROWTH, THERE WAS STILL MUCH ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT.

FRENCH EXPORTS TO HONG KONG STILL AMOUNTED TO ONLY HALF OF BRITAIN'S OR GERMANY'S AND HONG KONG DOMESTIC EXPORTS TO FRANCE WERE ONLY ONE THIRD OF OUR EXPORTS TO BRITAIN AND ONE QUARTER OF OUR EXPORTS TO GERMANY.

REFLECTING FRANCE'S INTEREST IN CHINA, THE GOVERNOR ALSO EXPLAINED THE BENEFITS TO BE GAINED BY TAKING ADVANTAGE OF HONG KONG AND CHINA ECONOMIC RELATIONS.

SIR DAVID ALSO MET THE LEADERS OF THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATIONS OF FOUR OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WHO TRAVELLED TO PARIS SPECIALLY FOR THE OCCASION.

/THEY WERE

THEY WERE THE PRESIDENT OF THE ITALY-HONG KONG ASSOCIATION, MR MARIO TSCHANG; THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SPAIN-HONG KONG ASSOCIATION, CARLOS FITZ JAMES STUART MARTINEZ DE IRUJO, THE DUKE OF HUESCAR; THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NETHERLANDS-HONG KONG SOCIETY, MR CEES BLANKESTIJN; AND THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE AUSTRIA-HONG KONG ASSOCIATION, MR HANNES ROTTER.

THE GOVERNOR GAVE A SERIES OF PRESS INTERVIEWS TO THE FRENCH MEDIA BEFORE ATTENDING A PRIVATE DINNER HOSTED BY THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE, SIR EWAN FERGUSON. HE WILL SPEND A FURTHER DAY IN PARIS TOMORROW.

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GOVERNOR CALLS FOR MORE INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT FROM FRANCE

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THE GOVERNOR, SIR DAVID WILSON, TODAY (THURSDAY) CALLED FOR GREATER INVESTMENT IN HONG KONG'S MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY BY FRENCH COMPANIES.

SPEAKING TO FRANCE'S LEADING BUSINESS ASSOCIATION, THE CONSEIL NATIONAL DU PATRONAT FRANCAIS, IN PARIS, SIR DAVID POINTED OUT THAT OUT OF THE 141 EUROPEAN MANUFACTURING OPERATIONS IN HONG KONG AT PRESENT, ONLY EIGHT WERE FRENCH.

HE EMPHASISED THAT HONG KONG WAS NOT JUST A PLACE FOR MULTI-NATIONALS.

"MANY OF OUR FOREIGN INVESTORS ARE MEDIUM-SIZED MANUFACTURING FIRMS. THERE IS ROOM FOR MORE FRENCH FIRMS AMONG THEM," HE SAID.

FRENCH INVESTMENT IN MANUFACTURING WAS ONLY ABOUT FIVE PER CENT OF THE EUROPEAN TOTAL, WHICH ITSELF WAS DWARFED BY THE AMERICAN AND JAPANESE PRESENCE.

THE GOVERNOR POINTED OUT THAT HONG KONG WOULD NOT PROVIDE ANY SPECIAL INCENTIVES TO ENCOURAGE FOREIGN INVESTMENT.

"WE BELIEVE THAT THE ONLY GOOD INVESTMENT IS ONE THAT IS MADE FOR SOLID BUSINESS REASONS ALONE.

"IT WOULD INDEED BE DIFFICULT FOR US TO OFFER TAX INCENTIVES - OUR TAXES, BOTH CORPORATE AND PERSONAL, ARE SO LOW WE HAVE LITTLE SCOPE FOR MAKING SPECIAL REDUCTIONS," HE SAID.

/HOWEVER, SIR

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1988

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HOWEVER, SIR DAVID NOTED THAT THERE WERE NOW 270 FRENCH BUSINESSES IN HONG KONG, WHICH WAS ALMOST DOUBLE THE NUMBER IN 1984.

THESE INCLUDED 12 BANKS, FIVE INSURANCE COMPANIES AND 12 OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS. A NUMBER OF OTHER PROJECTS WERE IN THE PIPELINE.

"THERE IS A SUBSTANTIAL FRENCH PRESENCE IN HONG KONG. WE HAVE A COMMUNITY OF SOME 1,400 FRENCH NATIONALS AND A THRIVING FRENCH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL," THE GOVERNOR SAID.

HE WAS PLEASED TO NOTE THAT THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED FRENCH HONG KONG BUSINESS ASSOCIATION ALREADY HAD A MEMBERSHIP OF OVER 400 COMPANIES.

SIR DAVID POINTED OUT THAT FRENCH COMPANIES HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN MAJOR PROJECTS IN HONG KONG SINCE THE EARLIEST POST-WAR YEARS.

"RECENT YEARS HAVE SEEN A REMARKABLE INCREASE IN TRADE BETWEEN US: BY ABOUT 30 PER CENT IN 1986 AND A FURTHER 50 PER CENT LAST YEAR," HE SAID.

"IN 1987 FRENCH EXPORTS TO HONG KONG INCREASED BY 48 PER CENT. THESE ARE REMARKABLE FIGURES BY ANY STANDARDS.

"THAT, I HOPE, IS JUST THE BEGINNING. THERE IS NO REASON AT ALL WHY THIS TREND SHOULD NOT CONTINUE."

SIR DAVID SAID HONG KONG BELIEVED IN, AND PRACTISED FREE TRADE AND HOPED THAT EUROPE WOULD TAKE A SIMILAR VIEW.

"AS 1992 APPROACHES, WE LOOK TO A GREATER EUROPE TO TAKE A LEAD IN MAINTAINING AND ADVANCING THE PRINCIPLES OF FREE TRADE, NOT ONLY BETWEEN ITS MEMBERS BUT ALSO WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD.

"IT IS CLEAR TO US AS DISTANT OBSERVERS THAT YOUR BUSINESS COMMUNITY IS HEAVILY PREOCCUPIED WITH PLANNING FOR 1992. I AM SURE THAT THIS WILL BEAR FRUIT. BUT I URGE YOU NOT TO LOSE SIGHT OF OTHER OPPORTUNITIES."

SIR DAVID POINTED OUT TO THE FRENCH BUSINESSMEN THAT THEIR RAILWAY CROSSINGS CARRY A MOST APPROPRIATE WARNING: "DANGER, UN TRAIN PEUT EN CACHER UN AUTRE".

"I HOPE YOU WILL NOT LET THE 1992 TRAIN HIDE THE ASIA-PACIFIC EXPRESS. HONG KONG IS AT THE HUB OF THE FASTEST GROWING REGION OF THE ECONOMIC WORLD. AND WE PROVIDE THE MOST LIBERAL ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT IN THAT REGION," HE SAID.

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UNHCR INVITES HK TO ATTEND MAJOR MEETING

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THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT HAS ACCEPTED AN INVITATION FROM THE UNHCR TO TAKE PART IN A MEETING ON INDOCHINESE ASYLUM SEEKERS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA TO BE HELD IN BANGKOK ON OCTOBER 27 AND 28.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE MEETING WILL INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES FROM ASEAN AND MAJOR RESETTLEMENT COUNTRIES AND THE UNHCR.

THE MEETING WILL FORM PART OF THE PROCESS LEADING TO AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INDOCHINESE ASYLUM SEEKERS NEXT YEAR.

THE HONG KONG DELEGATION WILL COMPRISE MR MIKE HANSON, REFUGEE CO-ORDINATOR, AND MR ALAN FUNG, PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR SECURITY.

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21 HILL FIRES IN COUNTRY PARKS

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THERE WERE 21 HILL FIRES IN THE COUNTRY PARKS YESTERDAY, THE DAY OF THE CHUNG YEUNG FESTIVAL.

THE COUNTRY PARKS PROTECTION OFFICER OF THE AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES DEPARTMENT, MR C.W. LAI, SAID THIS (THURSDAY) MORNING THAT THESE FIRES HAD DAMAGED A TOTAL OF 97 HECTARES OF PARK AREAS AND 1,000 TREES.

"WE HAVE MOBILISED 250 FIRE CREW MEMBERS, WITH THE SUPPORT OF ADDITIONAL 120 CIVIL AID SERVICES MEMBERS, IN FIGHTING THE FIRES.

"ALL FIRES WERE PUT OUT BEFORE MIDNIGHT," HE SAID.

A TOTAL OF 52 HILL FIRES HAVE OCCURRED IN THE COUNTRY PARKS SINCE LAST MONTH, DAMAGING A TOTAL OF 214 HECTARES OF PLANTATIONS AND 8,100 TREES.

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SCHOOL SURVEY ON PSYCHOTROPIC DRUGS ABUSE IN 1989

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THE NARCOTICS DIVISION OF THE GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT WILL CONDUCT THE NEXT TERRITORY-WIDE SURVEY ON PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES ABUSE AMONG STUDENTS OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND TECHNICAL INSTITUTES IN LATE 1989.

THIS WAS DISCLOSED TODAY (THURSDAY) BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ACTION COMMITTEE AGAINST NARCOTICS (ACAN), DR GERALD CHOA, WHEN HE ADDRESSED AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE "SEMINAR ON PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES ABUSE" HELD AT THE HONG KONG ACADEMY FOR PERFORMING ARTS DRAMA THEATRE, WAN CHAI.

DR CHOA SAID FOLLOWING A DISCUSSION OF THE 1987 SCHOOL SURVEY FINDINGS AND THE ENDORSEMENT OF THE SURVEY REPORT, ACAN RECENTLY DIRECTED THAT SIMILAR SCHOOL SURVEYS SHOULD BE CONDUCTED ONCE EVERY TWO YEARS IN A BID TO CLOSELY MONITOR THE SITUATION OF PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES ABUSE.

"ABOUT 110,000 STUDENTS WILL BE ENUMERATED IN THE 1989 SCHOOL SURVEY.

"THEY INCLUDE DAY-TIME SCHOOL SECONDARY STUDENTS AND STUDENTS ENROLLED IN THE FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME DAY-RELEASE COURSES IN THE EIGHT TECHNICAL INSTITUTES.

"AND, THE COVERAGE OF THE SURVEY POPULATION ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS CAN BE MORE COMPLETE WITH THE INCLUSION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS," HE ADDED.

ALL STUDENTS TO BE SURVEYED WILL BE ASKED TO COMPLETE, CONFIDENTIALLY AND ANONYMOUSLY, A QUESTIONNAIRE WITH 26 QUESTIONS IN SCHOOL HALLS OR CLASSROOMS UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF STAFF FROM THE NARCOTICS DIVISION.

"THE STRUCTURE OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE WILL BE ADOPTED FROM THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION.

"SUBSEQUENT IMPROVEMENTS WILL ALSO BE MADE FROM THE 1987 SCHOOL SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE," HE SAID.

COMMENTING ON THE 1987 SURVEY FINDINGS RELEASED IN JUNE THIS YEAR, DR CHOA NOTED THAT THE FINDINGS OF 1.1 PER CENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AND 2.8 PER CENT OF TECHNICAL INSTITUTE STUDENTS IN HONG KONG BEING FOUND TO HAVE ABUSED PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES HAD REPRESENTED A LESSER PROPORTION COMPARED WITH THOSE IN THE COUNTRIES IN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES.

/DR CHOA

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DR CHOA ALSO NOTED THAT THE SURVEY FINDINGS HAD ALSO PROVIDED VALUABLE STATISTICAL INFORMATION SUCH AS AGE GROUPS, TYPES OF DRUGS ABUSED AND SOURCES OF DRUGS IN RELATION TO THE STUDENTS DRUGS ABUSE SITUATION.

HE CONTINUED THAT THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE SEMINAR WAS TO, THROUGH OPEN FORUM DISCUSSIONS, OBTAIN VIEWS ON THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES ABUSE PROBLEM AMONG YOUNGSTERS AND THE FUTURE STRATEGIES IN LOCAL PREVENTIVE EDUCATION.

THE SEMINAR ALSO SERVED TO GATHER VIEWS AND CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS FROM PROFESSIONALS IN THE FIELD AND TO USE THEM AS REFERENCE AND DIRECTIVES IN DEVISING FUTURE ANTI-DRUGS STRATEGIES.

DURING THE FORUM, FINDINGS OF THE 1987 SCHOOL SURVEY ON THE ABUSE OF PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL AND TECHNICAL INSTITUTE STUDENTS WERE ALSO DISCUSSED AMONG ABOUT 400 SCHOOL PRINCIPALS, TEACHERS, STUDENT COUNSELLORS AND SOCIAL WORKERS.

IN ADDITION, A REVISED SET OF EDUCATIONAL COLOUR SLIDES AND COMMENTARY ON PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES ABUSE, TOGETHER WITH AN UP-TO-DATE AUDIO-VISUAL CATALOGUE, PRODUCED BY THE NARCOTICS DIVISION, WERE INTRODUCED AND DISTRIBUTED TO THE PARTICIPANTS.

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NORTH DB TO BE BRIEFED ON EXPO QUESTION

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MEMBERS OF THE NORTH DISTRICT BOARD WILL BE BRIEFED, AT A MEETING TOMORROW (FRIDAY), BY LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLOR MR STEPHEN CHEONG ON THE RESULTS OF A PRE-FEASIBILITY STUDY WHICH DEALS WITH THE PRACTICALITIES OF HONG KONG HOSTING A WORLD EXPOSITION IN 1997.

ALSO AT THE MEETING, TWO MEMBERS WILL ASK THE GOVERNMENT TO PROVIDE THE DISTRICT BOARD WITH INFORMATION ON THE EXISTING USE OF ASBESTOS MATERIALS IN THE NORTH DISTRICT.

ANOTHER MEMBER WILL ENQUIRE ABOUT THE DISCREPANCY IN THE USE OF LAND BETWEEN THE FANLING/SHEUNG SHUI OUTLINE ZONING PLAN AND DRAWINGS OF THE PROPOSED ROAD WORKS UNDER THE ROADS (WORKS, USE AND COMPENSATION) ORDINANCE.

/OTHER ITEMS

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OTHER ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION INCLUDE REPORTS FROM THE NORTH DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE, FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE AND THE NORTH DISTRICT COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE NORTH DISTRICT BOARD MEETING TOMORROW (FRIDAY) AT 9.30 AM IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE NORTH DISTRICT OFFICE, JOCKEY CLUB ROAD, FANLING.

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EPD OFFICERS TO EXPLAIN LANDFILL PROJECT

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REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT WILL ATTEND A MEETING OF THE TUEN MUN DISTRICT BOARD'S ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT AND DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE TOMORROW (FRIDAY) TO EXPLAIN TO MEMBERS DETAILS OF THE WEST NEW TERRITORIES LANDFILL PROJECT.

OTHER ITEMS ON THE AGENDA INCLUDE SILTING OF THE DRAINAGE AT SIU ON COURT, IMPROVEMENT OF LIGHTING IN AREA 37B AND LIVING ENVIRONMENT OF SAN SHEK WAN, ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION CAUSED BY FACTORIES AT SAN HING TSUEN, AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF PROPOSED DUMPING OF ASBESTOS WASTE IN PILLAR POINT.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE MEETING OF THE TUEN MUN DISTRICT BOARD'S ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT AND DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE TOMORROW (FRIDAY) AT 10 AM IN THE DISTRICT BOARD CONFERENCE ROOM ON THE THIRD FLOOR, GOVERNMENT OFFICES BUILDING, NO. 1, TUEN HI ROAD, TUEN MUN.

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PASSENGER BAN ON LEARNER MOTOR CYCLISTS

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THE GOVERNMENT WILL TIGHTEN UP THE ROAD TRAFFIC (DRIVING LICENCES) REGULATIONS TO ENSURE THAT LEARNER MOTOR-CYCLISTS CANNOT CARRY PASSENGERS.

AT PRESENT, THE REGULATIONS PROHIBIT A LEARNER DRIVER FROM CARRYING PASSENGERS IN HIS VEHICLE OTHER THAN A DRIVING INSTRUCTOR, ONE OTHER LEARNER DRIVER FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECEIVING DRIVING INSTRUCTION AND ONE OR MORE AUTHORISED EXAMINERS.

LEARNER MOTOR-CYCLISTS, HOWEVER, ARE NOT SUBJECT TO SIMILAR REQUIREMENTS.

TO PROMOTE ROAD SAFETY, THE REGULATIONS WILL BE AMENDED TO PROHIBIT A LEARNER DRIVER, WHEN DRIVING A MOTOR-CYCLE, FROM CARRYING A PASSENGER.

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INDUSTRIAL WORKERS PROTECTION SHOW IN SHA TIN

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A THREE-DAY EXHIBITION ON INDUSTRIAL SAFETY, THE 'INDUSTRIAL WORKERS PROTECTION SHOW', WILL BE OPENED TOMORROW (FRIDAY) AT THE NEW TOWN PLAZA, SHA TIN.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH COUNCIL, MR HO SAI-CHU, AND THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR, MR TONY HAMMOND, WILL OFFICIATE AT THE OPENING CEREMONY TO BE HELD AT 3 PM.

OTHER OFFICIATING GUESTS INCLUDE THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS, MR CHENG YIU-TONG; THE CHAIRMAN OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY MEDICINE, CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG, PROFESSOR STUART DONNAN; AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE INDUSTRIAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PUBLICITY PROGRAMME SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD, MR K.Y. TONGSON.

AS WELL AS FEATURING A WIDE RANGE OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT USED IN INDUSTRY AND AUDIO-VISUAL PRESENTATIONS ON INDUSTRIAL SAFETY, THE EXHIBITION WILL ALSO FEATURE VISION, LUNG FUNCTION AND HEARING TESTS FOR VISITORS.

A LIVE BROADCAST VARIETY SHOW FEATURING POP SINGERS AND RADIO DISC JOCKEYS WILL BE STAGED BY COMMERCIAL RADIO CHANNEL II AT THE EXHIBITION SITE ON SUNDAY BETWEEN 3 PM AND 4 PM.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE OPENING CEREMONY WHICH WILL BE HELD AT THE ENTRANCE ARENA, LEVEL 1, NEW TOWN PLAZA, SHA TIN, AT 3 PM TOMORROW (FRIDAY).

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CHEST CHARITY STAMP ISSUE ON NOVEMBER 30

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A SET OF FOUR SPECIAL STAMPS -- THE COMMUNITY CHEST OF HONG KONG CHARITY STAMPS -- WILL BE ISSUED ON NOVEMBER 30, THE POST OFFICE ANNOUNCED TODAY (THURSDAY).

THEY WILL BE THE FIRST SET OF CHARITY STAMPS EVER ISSUED IN HONG KONG .

THE COMMUNITY CHEST OF HONG KONG, SET UP IN 1968, IS AN UMBRELLA ORGANISATION DEVOTED TO RAISING FUNDS COLLECTIVELY FOR ITS MEMBER AGENCIES.

THE CHEST NOW HAS OVER 100 MEMBER AGENCIES, INCLUDING MANY OF THE OLDEST AND LARGEST VOLUNTARY AGENCIES IN THE TERRITORY, WHICH PROVIDE A WIDE VARIETY OF WELFARE SERVICES.

ITS KEY OBJECTIVE IS TO RAISE FUNDS BY SOLICITING DONATIONS THROUGH COMMUNITY-WIDE APPEALS AND TO DISTRIBUTE THE MONEY TO THE MEMBER AGENCIES SO THAT THEY CAN CONCENTRATE FULLY ON THEIR WELFARE WORK.

ALL DONATIONS RECEIVED ARE DISTRIBUTED TO AGENCIES, WITH NONE BEING RETAINED FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.

THE FOUR CHARITY STAMPS WILL FEATURE THE MAIN BENEFICIARIES OF THE DONATIONS MADE TO THE COMMUNITY CHEST.

DETAILS OF THE STAMPS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

POSTAGE -----	DONATION -----	CHARITY STAMPS SOLD AT -----
60 CENTS	10 CENTS	70 CENTS
\$1.40	20 CENTS	\$1.60
\$1.80	30 CENTS	\$2.10
\$5	\$1	\$6

THE CARE AND REHABILITATION SERVICES ARE REPRESENTED IN THE 60 CENTS STAMP (PLUS 10 CENTS DONATION) BY A YOUNG GIRL WITH A HEARING IMPAIRMENT AND IN THE \$1.80 STAMP (PLUS 30 CENTS DONATION) BY A BLIND BOY OPERATING A BRAILLE TYPEWRITER.

THE SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY ARE REPRESENTED IN THE \$1.40 STAMP (PLUS 20 CENTS DONATION) BY AN OLD LADY.

/THE SERVICES

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THE SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ARE REPRESENTED IN THE \$5 STAMP (PLUS \$1 DONATION) BY A MOTHER AND BABY.

THE STAMPS WERE DESIGNED BY MR MICHAEL TUCKER AND PRINTED BY HARRISON AND SONS LTD IN THE UK.

OFFICIAL FIRST DAY COVERS, AT \$1 EACH, WHICH INCLUDES A 50 CENTS DONATION, WILL BE PLACED ON SALE AT ALL POST OFFICES FROM NOVEMBER 16.

DEFINITIVE STAMPS AT NORMAL PRICES WILL BE AVAILABLE AT DESIGNATED COUNTERS FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT WANT TO MAKE A DONATION ON THE DAY OF THE SPECIAL ISSUE.

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ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION SHOW ON PENG CHAU
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PENG CHAU RESIDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO ENJOY AN EXHIBITION AND A VARIETY SHOW TO PROMOTE THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION MESSAGE THIS SATURDAY (OCTOBER 22) AFTERNOON AT THE OPEN SPACE ADJACENT TO THE FERRY PIER.

THE EXHIBITION WILL START AT 4 PM AND WINNING ENTRIES OF A PHOTO CONTEST HELD LAST MONTH FEATURIG PROBLEMATIC SPOTS IN THE ISLANDS DISTRICT WHICH REQUIRE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT WOULD BE DISPLAYED, A SPOKESMAN FOR THE ISLANDS DISTRICT OFFICE SAID.

A VARIETY SHOW WITH POP SINGING WILL BEGIN AT 7.30 PM TO PROVIDE ENTERTAINMENT AND TO PUT ACROSS THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION MESSAGE TO THE ISLANDERS.

"ALL RESIDENTS ON PENG CHAU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND AND ADMISSION IS FREE," THE SPOKESMAN ADDED.

THE EVENT IS ORGANISED BY THE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE ISLANDS DISTRICT BOARD AS PART OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION CAMPAIGN.

SIMILAR ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN HELD AT PUI O ON LANTAU AND CHEUNG CHAU OVER THE PAST TWO SATURDAYS, ATTRACTING LARGE CROWDS OF AUDIENCES.

"THE LAST ONE IN THE SERIES OF EXHIBITIONS AND VARIETY SHOWS WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE SOK KWU WAN BASKETBALL COURT ON LAMMA NEXT SATURDAY (OCTOBER 29) AFTERNOON," THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

"THE AIM OF HOLDING THIS SERIES OF EVENTS IS TO PROMOTE ISLANDERS AWARENESS OF THE ISSUE AND WILLINGNESS TO JOIN HANDS WITH THE GOVERNMENT TO CONSERVE THE ENVIRONMENT," HE SAID.

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SPECIAL TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS FOR YAN CHAI CHARITY WALK

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THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED THAT SPECIAL TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN YUEN LONG BETWEEN 8 AM AND 1 PM ON SUNDAY (OCTOBER 23) DURING THE YAN CHAI CHARITY WALK.

THE FOLLOWING ROADS WILL BE CLOSED TO TRAFFIC:

- * TSING TSUEN BRIDGE BETWEEN TAM KON SHAN INTERCHANGE AND TEXACO INTERCHANGE;
- * THE WESTBOUND CARRIAGEWAY OF MA TAU PA ROAD BETWEEN WANG LUNG STREET AND TEXACO ROAD;
- * THE WESTBOUND CARRIAGEWAY OF THE ACCESS ROAD FROM RIVIERA GARDENS LEADING TO MA TAU PA ROAD;
- * THE OUTER LANE OF TEXACO INTERCHANGE BETWEEN THE WESTBOUND AND THE EASTBOUND CARRIAGEWAYS OF TSING TSUEN BRIDGE; AND
- * THE OUTER LANE OF TAM KON SHAN INTERCHANGE BETWEEN THE WESTBOUND AND THE EASTBOUND CARRIAGEWAYS OF TSING TSUEN BRIDGE.

TEXACO ROAD NORTHBOUND BETWEEN MA TAU PA ROAD AND THE ACCESS ROAD TO WAH KEI INDUSTRIAL CENTRE WILL BE RE-ROUTED FROM ONE-WAY TO TWO-WAY TRAFFIC.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE PARKING SPACES AT THE GOODS VEHICLE DRIVING TEST CENTRE IN MA TAU PA ROAD WILL BE SUSPENDED.

MOREOVER, THE FOLLOWING BUS ROUTES WILL BE RE-ROUTED:

- * ROUTE 38M WILL BE DIVERTED VIA TEXACO ROAD ON ITS JOURNEYS TO TSUEN WAN MTR STATION.
- * ON JOURNEYS FROM TSING YI, ROUTES 41A, 41M AND 43B WILL BE DIVERTED VIA TSING YI SOUTH BRIDGE, KWAI TSING ROAD AND TSUEN WAN ROAD BEFORE RESUMING THEIR NORMAL ROUTINGS AT TEXACO INTERCHANGE.

FOR TSING YI-BOUND JOURNEYS, THESE ROUTES WILL BE DIVERTED VIA TSUEN WAN ROAD, KWAI TSING ROAD AND TSING YI SOUTH BRIDGE AFTER TEXACO INTERCHANGE.

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FINAL ANNOUNCEMENT ON GRADING OF BEACH WATER QUALITY

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THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT (EPD) TODAY (THURSDAY) ANNOUNCED THE LATEST GRADES ON THE BACTERIAL WATER QUALITY OF ALL BATHING BEACHES IN HONG KONG.

THE PURPOSE OF THE GRADING SYSTEM IS TO INFORM SWIMMERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC ABOUT THE STATE OF BACTERIAL POLLUTION AT VARIOUS BEACHES.

THIS IS THE LAST ANNOUNCEMENT MADE ON BEACH WATER QUALITY GRADINGS THIS YEAR AS THE BATHING SEASON COMES TO AN END BY LATE OCTOBER.

THE GRADING IS BASED ON THE E. COLI DATA OBTAINED BY THE EPD IN ITS ROUTINE BEACH WATER QUALITY MONITORING PROGRAMME.

THE E. COLI DATA USED FOR GRADING ARE BASED ON THE MEDIAN VALUES OF THE MOST RECENT FIVE RESULTS, OBTAINED OVER A TWO AND A HALF MONTH PERIOD ACCORDING TO THE USUAL SAMPLING FREQUENCY.

THE GRADES FOR SOME BEACHES MAY FLUCTUATE. THIS REPRESENTS A NATURAL FLUCTUATION IN THE BACTERIAL QUALITY OF THE BEACHES IN MOST CASES, AS RAIN AND TIDES BRING MORE OR LESS POLLUTION TO THE SWIMMING AREAS.

NEVERTHELESS, THE GRADES GIVE A GOOD GENERAL PICTURE OF THE BACTERIAL WATER QUALITY OF BEACHES, AND FORM THE BEST AVAILABLE FORECAST OF BEACH WATER QUALITY IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

THE SYSTEM FOR GRADING BEACH WATER QUALITY IS AS FOLLOWS:

'A' GRADE INDICATES THE MEDIAN E. COLI COUNT IS BETWEEN 0-99 PER 100 MILLILITRES, AND THE WATER QUALITY IS GOOD.

'B' GRADE INDICATES THE MEDIAN E. COLI COUNT IS BETWEEN 100-999 PER 100 MILLILITRES, AND THE WATER QUALITY IS ACCEPTABLE.

'C' GRADE INDICATES THE MEDIAN E. COLI COUNT IS 1,000 OR MORE PER 100 MILLILITRES, AND THE WATER QUALITY IS POOR.

THE DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO CLOSE A BEACH TO SWIMMERS IS BASED ON A JUDGEMENT OF WHAT DEGREE OF POLLUTION IS ACCEPTABLE.

/NORMALLY, A

NORMALLY, A RECOMMENDATION ON CLOSURE WOULD ONLY BE CONSIDERED BY THE URBAN OR THE REGIONAL COUNCIL IF A 'C' GRADING OCCURRED REPEATEDLY. SIMILARLY, A RECOMMENDATION TO REOPEN A CLOSED BEACH WOULD ONLY BE CONSIDERED IF A 'B' GRADE OR BETTER WERE CONSISTENTLY OBTAINED.

AT PRESENT, FIVE BATHING BEACHES HAVE BEEN DECLARED UNSUITABLE FOR SWIMMING PURPOSES, BASED ON THE WATER QUALITY DURING PAST SEASONS.

THESE BEACHES ARE ANGLERS', CASTLE PEAK, SILVERMINE BAY, OLD CAFETERIA AND ROCKY BAY. THEY ARE POLLUTED BY FAECAL WASTES AND FAILED TO ACHIEVE CONSISTENTLY THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION AND HONG KONG STANDARDS. THE PUBLIC ARE ADVISED NOT TO SWIM IN THESE FIVE BEACHES. THEY ARE IDENTIFIED BY AN 'X' IN THE FOLLOWING TABLE.

THE GRADES ON THE BACTERIAL WATER QUALITY OF VARIOUS BEACHES IN HONG KONG AS AT TODAY AND TWO WEEKS AGO ARE LISTED BELOW :

BEACH -----	LAST GRADING ----- (AS AT 6.10.88)	PRESENT GRADING ----- (AS AT 20.10.88)
HONG KONG SOUTH -----		
BIG WAVE BAY	A	A
CHUNG HOM KOK	A	A
DEEP WATER BAY	B	A
HAIRPIN	A	A
MIDDLE BAY	B	B
REPULSE BAY	C	B
SHEK O	B	A
SOUTH BAY	B	A
ST. STEPHEN'S	A	A
TURTLE COVE	A	A
STANLEY MAIN	A	A
ROCKY BAY	X	X
TO TEI WAN*	A	A

ISLANDS DISTRICT

CHEUNG SHA UPPER	A	A
CHEUNG SHA LOWER	B	B
DISCOVERY BAY*	B	A
HUNG SHING YEH	A	A
KWUN YAM WAN	A	A
TONG FUK	A	A
LO SO SHING	A	A
PUI O	A	A
SILVERMINE BAY	X	X
TUNG WAN, CHEUNG CHAU	B	A
TUNG O*	A	A

SAI KUNG DISTRICT

CAMPERS	A	A
CLEAR WATER BAY 1ST BEACH	B	B
CLEAR WATER BAY 2ND BEACH	A	A
HAP MUN BAY	A	A
KIU TSUI	A	A
PAK SHA CHAU	A	A
SILVERSTRAND	C	C
TRIO (HEBE HAVEN)	A	A

/TSUEN WAN DISTRICT

TSUEN WAN DISTRICT

ANGLERS'	X	X
APPROACH	B	B
CASAM	B	B
GEMINI	B	B
HOI MEI WAN	B	B
LIDO	B	B
TING KAU	C	B
TUNG WAN, MA WAN	A	A

TUEN MUN DISTRICT

OLD CAFETERIA	X	X
NEW CAFETERIA	B	B
CASTLE PEAK	X	X
KADOORIE	C	B
BUTTERFLY	C	C

NOTE: 'X' THE BEACH HAS BEEN DECLARED UNSUITABLE FOR SWIMMING.
* NON-GAZETTED BEACHES.

THE FOLLOWING BEACHES HAVE CHANGED GRADING ON THIS OCCASION:

DEEP WATER BAY, SHEK O, SOUTH BAY, DISCOVERY BAY ON LANTAU AND TUNG WAN ON CHEUNG CHAU, FROM 'B' TO 'A'; REPULSE BAY, TING KAU AND KADOORIE, FROM 'C' TO 'B'.

THE CHANGES ARE WITHIN THE NORMAL RANGE OF FLUCTUATION OF THE BACTERIAL WATER QUALITY OF THESE BEACHES.

AN EPD SPOKESMAN SAID AN ANNUAL REVIEW ON THE WATER QUALITY OF VARIOUS BATHING BEACHES IN THE BATHING SEASON OF 1988 WILL BE PREPARED BY EPD BY THE END OF THIS YEAR.

THE REPORT WILL ALSO GIVE RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE ACCEPTABILITY OF VARIOUS BEACHES FOR SWIMMING PURPOSES IN THE BATHING SEASON OF 1989.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

FOR FURTHER ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT MR PAUL HOLMES, PRINCIPAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OFFICER (WATER POLICY) OF EPD, ON 3-7211044.

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TEMPORARY URBAN CLEARWAYS IN WESTERN DISTRICT
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THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED THAT THE FOLLOWING ROAD SECTIONS IN WESTERN DISTRICT WILL BE DESIGNATED 7 AM TO 7 PM DAILY URBAN CLEARWAYS FROM 10 AM ON MONDAY (OCTOBER 24) TO FACILITATE WATERMAIN DIVERSION WORKS.

- * THE SOUTHERN KERBSIDE LANE OF CONNAUGHT ROAD WEST FROM ITS JUNCTION WITH WILMER STREET TO A POINT ABOUT 70 METRES WEST OF ITS JUNCTION WITH EASTERN STREET. THIS MEASURE WILL LAST FOR ABOUT FOUR WEEKS.
- * THE EASTERN KERBSIDE LANE OF EASTERN STREET FROM ITS JUNCTION WITH CONNAUGHT ROAD WEST TO A POINT ABOUT 30 METRES SOUTH OF THE SAME JUNCTION. THIS URBAN CLEARWAY WILL BE EFFECTIVE FOR ABOUT TWO MONTHS.

NO VEHICLES EXCEPT FRANCHISED BUSES WILL BE ALLOWED TO STOP FOR PASSENGERS OR GOODS WITHIN THE RESTRICTED AREAS.

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CLOSURE OF ILLEGAL STRUCTURE SOUGHT
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THE BUILDING AUTHORITY IS TO SEEK THE CLOSURE OF AN ILLEGAL STRUCTURE AT A BUILDING IN KOWLOON CITY SO THAT IT CAN BE DEMOLISHED WITHOUT DANGER TO THE OCCUPIERS AND THE PUBLIC.

THE ILLEGAL STRUCTURE IS LOCATED AT FLAT B, FIRST FLOOR, 66 NGA TSIN WAI ROAD.

THE CLOSURE IS PART OF AN EXERCISE TO ENFORCE AN ORDER ISSUED UNDER THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE ON APRIL 7 LAST YEAR REQUIRING THE DEMOLITION OF THE ILLEGAL STRUCTURE.

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPLY FOR A CLOSURE ORDER FROM THE SHA TIN DISTRICT COURT ON DECEMBER 21 THIS YEAR WAS POSTED ON A CONSPICUOUS PART OF THE STRUCTURE TODAY (THURSDAY).

IT IS EXPECTED THAT DEMOLITION WILL START IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE CLOSURE ORDER IS MADE.