



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1985

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PEOPLE'S SUPPORT URGED IN GOVERNING OF HONG KONG
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THE GOVERNMENT WAS COMMITTED TO GOVERNING HONG KONG EFFECTIVELY WITH THE LONG-TERM INTERESTS OF HONG KONG IN MIND, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

IN DOING SO, IT WOULD REQUIRE THE UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT OF THE PEOPLE, HE ADDED, IN MAKING THE OPENING SPEECH IN THE RESUMED DEBATE ON A MOTION OF THANKS FOR THE GOVERNOR'S ANNUAL POLICY ADDRESS.

AND SPEAKING OF THE WORK OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, HE SAID THE COUNCIL HAD TO DEVELOP ITS OWN NEW STYLE OF WORK TO REFLECT NEW RESPONSIBILITIES CREATED BY AN INCREASED NUMBER OF MEMBERS AND BY THE DIFFERENT REPRESENTATIVE CHARACTER BUILT INTO THE NEW COUNCIL.

+WE NEED TIME TO EVOLVE AND ADJUST BEFORE WE CAN EVALUATE THE SYSTEM AND COME TO HARD AND FAST CONCLUSIONS ABOUT IT. THIS IS THE METHOD WE HAVE USED DURING THE PAST 17 YEARS, FIRST, MAKING GOVERNMENT MORE ACCESSIBLE IN THE DISTRICTS, THEN CREATING MUTUAL AID COMMITTEES FOLLOWED BY AREA COMMITTEES, DISTRICT BOARDS, ELECTIONS TO DISTRICT BOARDS, AND LASTLY, ELECTIONS TO THIS COUNCIL.

+IT HAS BEEN A PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT AND AT EACH STEP WE HAVE LEFT AN INTERVAL TO LET THE CHANGES CONSOLIDATE AND TO ALLOW TIME FOR EVALUATION BEFORE TAKING THE NEXT STEP,+ HE SAID.

+THUS, WHILE NOTING THE VARIOUS PROPOSALS THAT MEMBERS HAVE MADE, IN THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW, WE SHOULD NOT PRONOUNCE ON THESE IDEAS UNTIL THE 1987 REVIEW, BUT SHOULD CONTINUE PROGRESSIVELY TO EVALUATE THE WORKING OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM AT ALL LEVELS.

+AND IN DOING SO, IF I CAN ECHO YOUR WORDS, SIR, WE SHOULD BE CONFIDENT THAT ON THESE FOUNDATIONS A FRAMEWORK OF ENDURING INSTITUTIONS CAN BE CONSTRUCTED, WHICH WILL ENJOY THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE AND MAINTAIN OUR STABILITY AND PROSPERITY.+

THE MOTION OF THANKS, SIR DAVID POINTED OUT, WAS FOR THE GOVERNOR'S EVALUATION OF THE POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND PERFORMANCE OF THE GOVERNMENT OVER THE PAST YEAR, AND FOR HIS ENUNCIATION OF THE MEASURES IN HAND TO ENSURE, SO FAR AS WAS HUMANLY POSSIBLE, +THAT WE CONTINUE TO GET OUR PRIORITIES RIGHT, CONTINUE TO MAKE PROGRESS ON THOSE PRIORITIES, AND IN SO DOING MAKE CERTAIN THE GOOD GOVERNMENT AND STABILITY OF HONG KONG; AND, NOT ONLY MAINTAIN, BUT INCREASE AND EXTEND ITS PROSPERITY.+

SIR DAVID ALSO THANKED MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL, ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT, FOR THE TIME AND EFFORT THEY HAD DEVOTED TO STUDYING THOSE PLANS AND PROPOSALS, AND FOR THEIR +PERCEPTIVE AND USEFUL COMMENTS AND ADVICE.+

/SPEAKING OF

SPEAKING OF THE JOINT DECLARATION, HE SAID IT WAS AN EVENT WHICH OPENED A NEW CHAPTER IN THE LIFE OF HONG KONG AND LIFTED THE VEIL OF UNCERTAINTY, WHICH WAS ALREADY BEGINNING TO CLOUD LONG-TERM PRIVATE PLANNING AND INVESTMENT.

+HAD THAT AGREEMENT NOT BEEN CONCLUDED HONG KONG WOULD BE A VERY DIFFERENT PLACE TODAY.

+IN RESPONSE, THEREFORE, TO THE MANY VIEWS EXPRESSED BY MEMBERS ON THE NEXT STEPS WE SHOULD TAKE IN REFORMING THE STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT I WOULD, LET US, AT A DISTRICT LEVEL, SEE HOW THE NEW DISTRICT BOARDS PERFORM AND DEVELOP THEIR FUNCTIONS, AND HOW THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TWO REGIONAL COUNCILS EVOLVES.

+WE SHOULD DO THIS IF ONLY BECAUSE THE FACE OF HONG KONG IS CHANGING AT AN ASTONISHING PACE,+ SIR DAVID SAID.

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HOUSING PLANS IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WOULD PROVIDE NEW HOMES FOR WELL OVER A MILLION PEOPLE. THE DISTRICT BOARDS AND THE REGIONAL COUNCIL AND THE URBAN COUNCIL WOULD NEED TO ADJUST TO THESE MAJOR SHIFTS IN POPULATION AND THE CHANGING URBAN ENVIRONMENT AND TO ADAPT THEIR ORGANISATIONS TO RESPOND WITH SENSITIVITY, NOT ONLY TO THE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE BUT TO THEIR CHANGING NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS AND TO SHIFTING SOCIAL PRESSURES, SIR DAVID SAID.

+HOW THEY SET ABOUT AND ACCOMPLISH THIS TASK WILL HAVE A DIRECT BEARING ON HOW THE BOARDS AND THE COUNCILS EVOLVE AND CONTRIBUTE TO BUILDING THE STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT.

+BUT WE CANNOT PRONOUNCE ON THIS NOW BEFORE THE PROCESS HAS HARDLY BEGUN,+ SIR DAVID SAID.

ON THE SUGGESTION THAT SELECT OR STANDING COMMITTEES SHOULD BE APPOINTED FOR SPECIFIC AREAS OF WORK, HE SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WAS READY AND WILLING TO CONSIDER ANY PROPOSALS. A GOOD START HAD, MEANWHILE, BEEN MADE BY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TWO SELECT COMMITTEES IN THIS SESSION.

AS FOR PROPOSALS FOR A REVIEW OF THE STANDING ORDERS, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALREADY COMMITTED ITSELF TO SUCH A REVIEW IN THE COUNCIL IN JULY THIS YEAR, AND HE FELT IT WOULD BE A SUITABLE TASK FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF ANOTHER SELECT COMMITTEE.

WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT, HE SAID, THE POLICY OF LOCALISATION WHICH HAD BEGUN MANY YEARS AGO, WOULD CONTINUE, HAVING NOW, AS ONE OF ITS AIMS, THE NEED GRADUALLY TO ALIGN THE SERVICE WITH THE TERMS OF THE JOINT DECLARATION. HE ALSO NOTED A REMINDER THAT IN THE PROCESS THE EFFICIENCY AND THE MORALE OF THE CIVIL SERVICE MUST NOT BE JEOPARDISED.

HAND IN HAND WITH THE LOCALISATION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE, INCREASING USE OF THE CHINESE LANGUAGE FOR OFFICIAL BUSINESS WOULD BE A NATURAL PROGRESSION, HE SAID.

THE GOVERNMENT, HE SAID, WAS DRAWING UP A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR DEVELOPING A BILINGUAL AND BILITERATE CIVIL SERVICE BEFORE 1997.

WITH REGARD TO THE PROPOSAL FOR CONSULTATION WITH THE PUBLIC ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INSTITUTION TO ENQUIRE, ON AN INDEPENDENT BASIS, INTO COMPLAINTS ALLEGING MALADMINISTRATION BY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, HE SAID A WORKING PARTY CHAIRED BY THE DEPUTY CHIEF SECRETARY, WAS CHARGED WITH REVIEWING ALL AVENUES OF ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL.

SIR DAVID SAID ALSO THAT THE ADMINISTRATION'S WORKING PARTY ON LEGAL AID WAS NEARING THE END OF ITS TASK, AND HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE PRINCIPLE THAT LEGAL AID SHOULD BE INDEPENDENTLY ADMINISTERED, AS MENTIONED BY UNOFFICIALS, WAS ENDORSED BY THE WORKING PARTY.

+WHETHER IT IS APPROPRIATE IN HONG KONG FOR THE LEGAL PROFESSION OR AN INDEPENDENT STATUTORY AUTHORITY TO ADMINISTER LEGAL AID, REMAINS OPEN FOR DISCUSSION. WE CAN LOOK FORWARD TO LIVELY DISCUSSION ON THIS ASPECT OF THIS IMPORTANT SUBJECT,+ HE SAID.

TURNING TO THE NEW TERRITORIES, HE SAID THAT THE CHANGES AND DEVELOPMENTS THAT HAD TAKEN PLACE COULD NOT HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED WITHOUT THE COOPERATION OF THE NEW TERRITORIES RESIDENTS AND THE INVALUABLE SUPPORT AND ADVICE OF THE HEUNG YEE KUK.

SIR DAVID REITERATED THAT THERE WAS NO INTENTION TO FORGET THE ROLE OF THE HEUNG YEE KUK NOR TO IGNORE THE VALUABLE PART IT HAD PLAYED OVER THE YEARS.

SPEAKING OF THE CALL FOR A POLICY TO ENCOURAGE THE CULTIVATION OF FALLOW ARABLE LAND, HE SAID IT COULD NOT BE DONE UNLESS THE LANDOWNERS, WHO FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER WERE NOT FARMING THEIR LAND, WERE PREPARED TO LEASE OR SELL IT TO SOMEONE WHO WOULD.

THE GOVERNMENT, HE SAID, DID WHAT IT COULD THROUGH SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES DEPARTMENT.

AS FOR THE CALL FOR MORE ATTENTION TO BE PAID TO WELFARE NEEDS, SIR DAVID SAID MUCH PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE, AND HONG KONG HAD BECOME A MUCH MORE CARING SOCIETY.

MORE NEEDED TO BE DONE AND WOULD BE DONE. HOWEVER, MUCH OF THE SUCCESS OF HONG KONG DEPENDED ON VOLUNTARY EFFORT AND PRIVATE ORGANISATIONS AND HE WOULD BE AVERSE TO ANY WEAKENING OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND ADVERSE TO INCREASED DIRECT INTERVENTION BY THE GOVERNMENT, HE SAID.

POINTING OUT THAT THERE WERE MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIALOGUE AND EXCHANGE OF VIEWS, SIR DAVID SAID HE LOOKED FORWARD TO CONTINUING DISCUSSION AND DEBATE BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CHAMBER.

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SIR JOHN SEES BALANCE IN PUBLIC FINANCES
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NEX YEAR, GIVEN NO UNEXPECTED SHOCK, HONG KONG WILL RETURN TO EQUILIBRIUM IN ITS PUBLIC FINANCES, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR JOHN BREMRIDGE, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

AND PROVIDED THEREAFTER THAT OVER A PERIOD INCREASES IN PERCENTAGE TERMS IN REAL EXPENDITURE DID NOT EXCEED THE GROWTH RATE OF GDP, HE COULD SEE NO REASON FOR FURTHER INCREASES IN TAXATION AS OPPOSED TO MERELY KEEPING UP WITH INFLATION, HE ADDED.

+CONSEQUENTLY, IN SIMPLE WORDS DIFFERENT ITEMS OF EXPENDITURE CAN BE VARIED LIKE DIFFERENT SIZED SLICES OF THE TOTAL PREDETERMINED EXPENDITURE CAKE. SO CAN INDIVIDUAL ITEMS OF REVENUE (INCLUDING TAXES) PROVIDED AGAIN THAT THE DIFFERENT SIZED SLICES DO NOT EXCEED THE SIZE OF THAT CAKE.

+OF COURSE NONE OF THIS CAN BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT DEFICITS OR NEW TAXES IF A MAJORITY SEEK MAJOR AND EXPENSIVE NEW SOCIAL AND OTHER RECURRENT PROGRAMMES,+ SIR JOHN SAID.

HE REMAINED CONVINCED, SIR JOHN SAID, THAT IN VIEW PARTICULARLY OF HONG KONG'S EXPOSED POSITION, CONTINUING CONTROL OF PUBLIC SECTOR EXPENDITURE MERITED TOP PRIORITY.

+IT IS NOW DOWN FROM 19 PER CENT TO UNDER 16 PER CENT OF GDP. SIMULTANEOUSLY, OUR ENTREPRENEURS MUST CONTINUE TO BE ENCOURAGED BY MINIMUM GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION, BY MAXIMUM RELIANCE ON MARKET FORCES AND BY THE LOWEST POSSIBLE DIRECT TAXATION,+ SIR JOHN SAID.

SIR JOHN SAID ALSO THAT NEXT YEAR'S BUDGET PROPOSALS WOULD BE SUPPORTED BY A COMPREHENSIVE FIVE-YEAR MEDIUM RANGE FORECAST. IT WOULD BE ONLY A PLANNING TOOL, BUT WOULD SHOW ALL ANTICIPATED REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES PLUS MOVEMENTS IN FUNDS.

DEALING WITH THE EMPHASIS PLACED ON THE IMPORTANCE OF HONG KONG'S INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION IN FINANCIAL AFFAIRS, AND THE NEED TO THIS END FOR PROGRESS AND IMPROVEMENT IN VARIOUS ORDINANCES AND OTHER AREAS, SIR JOHN SAID HE WAS +WHOLLY IN SYMPATHY+ WITH ALL THE POINTS RAISED AND WELCOMED THE SPUR THEY WOULD ADD TO THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS.

SIR JOHN SAID THAT WHILE THE +RAPIDLY CHANGING+ ECONOMIC SCENE IN HONG KONG EMPHASISED THE CONTINUING GROWTH OF THE IMPORTANT SERVICES SECTOR, IT STILL REMAINED TRUE THAT MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY WAS VITAL TO HONG KONG.

ON THE QUESTION OF THE FORMATION OF A TRUE HONG KONG SHIPPING REGISTER, HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT, WITH THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY IN HONG KONG, WAS MOVING AS FAST AS IT COULD.

/EXPRESSING HIS

EXPRESSING HIS SYMPATHY FOR THE CALL FOR SIMPLER TAXATION LEGISLATION, SIR JOHN SAID THAT THERE WAS ALSO A PRESSING NEED TO SUPPORT THE REVENUE.

+WE RAISE TAXES OF NECESSITY, NOT OUT OF JOIE DE VIVRE. THERE MUST NOT ARISE A FEELING THAT THE RICH AND ADVANTAGED HAVE AN UNFAIR INNER EDGE IN ASSESSMENT OF PROFITS TAX. MOREOVER COMPLICATION IN TAX LEGISLATION IS IN THE MAJORITY OF CASES OCCASIONED BY THE NEED TO PROTECT WHAT IS PROJECTED AS THE SIMPLE TAX PAYER FROM THE TIGERISH INLAND REVENUE DEPARTMENT. IN FACT THESE ROLES ARE FREQUENTLY REVERSED,+ SIR JOHN SAID.

THERE WAS A NEED TO FIND A MIDDLE GROUND IN THIS AREA THAT WAS SO BASED ON SUBJECTIVE JUDGEMENT, SIR JOHN SAID.

+FEW ISSUES ARE BLACK OR WHITE — SHADES OF DULL GREY PREVAIL. I SHALL HAVE MORE TO SAY WHEN I INTRODUCE A MODIFIED TAX AVOIDANCE BILL. BUT LET ME NOW EXPRESS PUBLICLY MY APPRECIATION FOR THE ADVICE AND SUPPORT OF THE UMELO AD HOC GROUP, WHO HAVE SPENT SO MUCH TIME ON THE DRAFT LEGISLATION,+ HE SAID.

ON THE CONCERN EXPRESSED ABOUT THE HIGH COST OF INVESTIGATING COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES AND CRIMES, HE SAID THAT CONTROL WAS CLEARLY NEEDED. THE DIRECTOR OF ACCOUNTING SERVICES AND THE COMMISSIONER FOR SECURITIES WERE NOW WORKING ON A STUDY ABOUT THE POSSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT WITHIN THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR SECURITIES OF A UNIT TO CARRY OUT INVESTIGATIONS EITHER ALONE OR IN SUPPORT OF INSPECTORS APPOINTED UNDER LEGISLATION.

WITH REGARD TO THE POSSIBILITY OF A VENTURE CAPITAL MARKET, HE SAID HE WOULD BE ASKING THE ECONOMIC SERVICES BRANCH TO TAKE THIS UP WITH THE HON KIM CHAM AND THE SECURITIES COMMISSION.

ON THE CONCERN EXPRESSED ABOUT RISING PROPERTY VALUES ATTENDED BY GROWING SPECULATION, HE SAID IT WOULD BE +FOOLISH, INDEED, TO HAVE LEARNED NOTHING FROM THE SHAMING, INDEED DANGEROUS, EVENTS OF 1981-82, WHEN OF COURSE THERE WERE MANY FACTORS INVOLVED OTHER THAN JUST SPECULATION.+

THE GOVERNMENT HAD JUST RECENTLY COMPLETED A STUDY OF THE CURRENT RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY MARKET, AND WAS WATCHING THE SITUATION CLOSELY, HE SAID.

AT THE MOMENT THERE APPEARED TO BE LITTLE REAL PROBLEM NOR WERE THERE SIGNS OF IMMINENT DANGER, HE SAID. AND THE GOVERNMENT WAS ANXIOUS NOT TO DISCOURAGE SOUND PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT.

EXPRESSING HIS INTEREST IN THE +CONSTRUCTIVE PROPOSALS FOR A NEW APPROACH TO THE PROVISION OF MEDICAL SERVICES, PARTICULARLY FOR THE MIDDLE CLASS,+ SIR JOHN SAID THE MAJOR ELEMENTS OF THE PROPOSALS WOULD BE DEALT WITH BY THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE.

AS FINANCIAL SECRETARY, HE SAID, HE COULD NOT COMMENT ON THE TAX IMPLICATIONS UNTIL THEY COULD BE QUANTIFIED IN CASH TERMS. EXTREME CAUTION WAS NECESSARY BECAUSE THE WORLD WAS LITTERED WITH DECENT PUBLIC MEDICAL INSURANCE SCHEMES, THE MATHEMATICS OF WHICH HAD PROVED UNSOUND.

+THERE IS, I SUGGEST, LITTLE FISCAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A COSTLY NEW SCHEME AND ONE WHICH REQUIRES MAJOR TAX ABATEMENT FOR A PRIVILEGED NUMBER. WE NEED TO SEE THE TOTAL PLUSES AND MINUSES. AS A GENERAL OBSERVATION, IN A LOW TAX ADMINISTRATION LIKE HONG KONG THERE IS NOT MUCH SCOPE FOR MORE THAN A FEW SPECIAL TAX PRIVILEGES OR CONCESSIONS,+ HE SAID.

AS FOR POSSIBLE BANKING REFORMS, SIR JOHN SAID HE SHARED THE OVERALL OBJECTIVE -- THE ENHANCEMENT OF HONG KONG'S REPUTATION AND STANDING AS ONE OF THE MAJOR FINANCIAL CENTRES OF THE WORLD.

EXPRESSING PLEASURE AT THE UNOFFICIALS' AGREEMENT THAT IT WAS, AND REMAINED, THE RIGHT DECISION TO LINK THE HONG KONG DOLLAR WITH THE U.S. DOLLAR, HE SAID : +NOTHING IS PERFECT- BUT THE LINK IS WORKING WELL AND I HAVE NO INTENTION OF CHANGING IT.+

ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THERE WAS NEED TO ENSURE THAT THE COMMISSIONER OF BANKING HAD ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO IMPLEMENT ANY REFORMS TO PRUDENTIAL SUPERVISION THAT MIGHT BE PUT TO, AND APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL, HE SAID IT HAD TO BE RECOGNISED THAT IT WOULD TAKE TIME TO BUILD UP THE NECESSARY EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE -- A FACTOR WHICH PLAYED A PART IN THE INTENTION TO PHASE IN ANY NEW ARRANGEMENTS OVER A SIGNIFICANT PERIOD OF TIME.

ON THE QUESTION OF THE PROVISION OF LIQUIDITY TO THE BANKING SYSTEM, HE SAID ARRANGEMENTS EXISTED WHEREBY THE LARGER BANKS WOULD IN CASE OF NEED ASSIST SOUNDLY MANAGED SMALLER BANKS WHICH HAD TEMPORARY LIQUIDITY PROBLEMS.

IF FOR SOME REASON THE LARGER BANKS WERE UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO ASSIST IN A PARTICULAR INSTANCE, IT WAS ALWAYS OPEN TO AN INDIVIDUAL INSTITUTION TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION WITH THE SECRETARY FOR MONETARY AFFAIRS.

IF THE MATTER STILL COULD NOT BE SATISFACTORILY RESOLVED, HE WOULD BE PREPARED TO CONSIDER ASSISTANCE BY THE EXCHANGE FUND, PROVIDED THAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES WERE SUCH AS TO PERMIT USE OF THE FUND'S RESOURCES. BUT IT MUST NOT BE ASSUMED THAT THE AUTHORITIES WOULD RESCUE A BANK OR ITS SHAREHOLDERS FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF STUPIDITY, MISMANAGEMENT OR FRAUD, HE SAID.

+OUR INTEREST IS IN THE PROTECTION OF DEPOSITORS AND THE INTEGRITY OF THE SYSTEM. IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS THAT PUBLIC MONEY CANNOT BE ENTRUSTED TO INCOMPETENT OR FRAUDULENT MANAGERS. THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EXCHANGE FUND, A RESPONSIBILITY WHICH I TAKE VERY SERIOUSLY INDEED,+ SIR JOHN SAID.

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AS FOR THE SUGGESTION TO ALLOW LIMITED SERVICE BANKS TO OPERATE IN HONG KONG SUBJECT TO MINIMAL SUPERVISION AND REGULATION, HE SAID THERE WAS HEAVY OPPOSITION TO THIS PROPOSAL, BUT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE RE-EXAMINING IT.

+BUT I FEEL IT IMPORTANT TO ENSURE THAT THE BANKING SYSTEM IS FIRST ALLOWED PROPER TIME TO DIGEST THE MAJOR NEW LEGISLATION, WHICH WILL SHORTLY BE ANNOUNCED, BEFORE WE SEEK TO INTRODUCE ANY FURTHER CHANGES.

+NOR WILL WE DO SO WITHOUT A GENERAL IF NOT TOTAL CONSENSUS,+ SIR JOHN SAID.

EXPRESSING +UNDERSTANDING+ OF THE FINANCIAL PROBLEMS THAT THE NEW REGIONAL COUNCIL WOULD BE FACING, SIR JOHN SAID HE DID NOT INTEND TO SAY MORE NOW, AS HE WOULD LATER BE ADDRESSING THE RATES QUESTION SEPARATELY IN THE COUNCIL.

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'GLOOM OVER DECLINING EXPORTS NOT JUSTIFIED'

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EXCESSIVE GLOOM OVER THE RECENT DECLINE IN HONG KONG'S DOMESTIC EXPORTS WAS NOT JUSTIFIED, THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, THE HON ERIC HO, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S OPENING ADDRESS, MR HO POINTED OUT THAT SUCH DECLINE HAD BEEN MEASURED AGAINST THE EXCEPTIONALLY GOOD YEAR OF 1984.

+INDEED, WHEN COMPARED WITH 1983, WHICH IN ITSELF WAS ALSO A GOOD YEAR WITH SIGNIFICANT GROWTH IN TRADE, THE VALUE OF OUR DOMESTIC EXPORTS FOR THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF 1985 HAS REGISTERED GROWTH OF OVER 30 PER CENT.+

MR HO SAID THE GOVERNMENT DID HAVE A CONSCIOUS POLICY TO ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF HONG KONG'S TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND THAT IT HAD TAKEN NECESSARY MEASURES TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE OUR ACCESS TO MARKETS.

+FOR THIS ACCESS WE RELY ON OUR RIGHTS UNDER THE GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE (GATT).+

HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO TAKE SUCH ACTION AS WAS OPEN TO US TO PROTECT OUR RIGHTS IN THE GATT NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.

/IN RESPONSE

IN RESPONSE TO CONCERN EXPRESSED OVER THE SURGE IN PROTECTIONISM BY HONG KONG'S MAJOR MARKETS, MR HO SAID +THE GOVERNMENT IS ALERT TO THE SERIOUSNESS OF THIS THREAT. WE USE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO PRESS HONG KONG'S CASE, THROUGH OUR OVERSEAS OFFICE, COORDINATION WITH OTHER LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AT FORA ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE, HIGH-LEVEL VISITS BY BOTH UNOFFICIALS AND OFFICIALS, TO THE U.S. AND EUROPE, INTERVENTION BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT THROUGH MINISTERS AND, IN PARTICULAR, THE AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON.+

+WHILE THERE ARE NO ACCURATE MEASURES OF SUCCESS IT IS CLEAR THAT ALL THESE EFFORTS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF HONG KONG ESPECIALLY ITS OPEN MARKET, ITS GENUINE FREE TRADE POLICY AND ITS RECORD ON PROTECTION OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY.+

HE ADDED THAT ANOTHER DEVELOPMENT WHICH MIGHT ASSIST IN OUR EFFORTS IN MAINTAINING AN OPEN MULTILATERAL TRADING ENVIRONMENT IS THE IMMINENT LAUNCHING OF A NEW ROUND OF MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS IN GATT WITH THE AIM TO RE-VITALISING THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM.

ON THE CALL BY SEVERAL UNOFFICIALS FOR GOVERNMENT TO REVIEW ITS POLICY OF POSITIVE NON-INTERVENTIONISM TOWARDS INDUSTRY, MR HO SAID THE GOVERNMENT SAW ITS OBLIGATIONS AS FOLLOWS:

- * PROVIDING AN EFFICIENT AND ADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE;
- * PROVIDING A STABLE ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT;
- * ENSURING AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF TRAINED MANPOWER;
- * ASSISTING IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW TECHNOLOGY TO HELP INDUSTRIES TO UPGRADE THEMSELVES AND IN WHICH THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT'S OVERSEAS INDUSTRIAL PROMOTION OFFICES AND ITS BACK-UP SERVICE IN HONG KONG AS WELL AS THE HONG KONG INDUSTRIAL ESTATES CORPORATION, THE HONG KONG PRODUCTIVITY COUNCIL AND THE HONG KONG DESIGN INNOVATION COMPANY ALL HAVE A VITAL ROLE; AND
- * PROVIDING TECHNICAL BACK-UP SERVICES INCLUDING THE STANDARDS AND CALIBRATION LABORATORY AND THE LABORATORY ACCREDITATION SCHEME.

+WE MUST STOP SHORT OF TELLING INDUSTRY WHAT TO DO, AS IT IS OUR CONVICTION THAT BUSINESS DECISIONS ARE BEST TAKEN BY BUSINESSMEN AND NOT BY BUREAUCRATS.+

HE ALSO SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT ADOPT THE POLICY OF SUBSIDISING INDUSTRY.

+NOT ONLY DO WE NOT BELIEVE IN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SUCH AN APPROACH, WE ARE ALSO VERY CONSCIOUS OF OUR INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATION AS HONG KONG ACCEPTS THE GATT CODE ON SUBSIDIES AND COUNTERVAILING DUTIES.

+LET US NOT FORGET THAT ASSISTANCE TO AN INDUSTRY MEANS THE TRANSFER OF RESOURCES FROM THE TAXPAYERS' POCKETS -- THAT IS INCLUDING THE POCKETS OF OTHER INDUSTRIALISTS. FURTHERMORE, THESE SUBSIDISES WILL COME TO NOUGHT WHEN THE GOODS THEY PRODUCED ATTRACT COUNTERVAILING DUTIES IN OVERSEAS MARKETS.+

ON INFORMATION AND HIGHER TECHNOLOGY, MR HO POINTED OUT THAT AN ON-GOING TASK OF THE ELECTRONICS AND COMPUTER-AIDED-DESIGN/ COMPUTER-AIDED MANUFACTURING (CAD/CAM) SUB-COMMITTEES OF THE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD WAS TO IDENTIFY STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS IN RESPECT OF ELECTRONICS, CAD/CAM OR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.

+DISCUSSIONS WITHIN THE SUB-COMMITTEES INVOLVING INDUSTRIALISTS, ACADEMICS AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES ARE BEING HELD REGULARLY WITH A VIEW TO MAPPING OUT A STRATEGY FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT.+

AS REGARDS CONSUMER PROTECTION, MR HO SAID 1985 HAD BEEN A GOOD YEAR FOR CONSUMER PROTECTION IN HONG KONG AND HE WOULD LIKE TO REGISTER THE GOVERNMENT'S THANKS TO THE CONSUMER COUNCIL FOR THE INVALUABLE WORK THEY HAVE DONE TO PROMOTE AWARENESS OF CONSUMER ISSUES.

+DRAFTING INSTRUCTIONS HAVE BEEN ISSUED TO PROPOSE AMENDMENTS TO THE TRADE DESCRIPTIONS ORDINANCE TO STRENGTHEN ITS ENFORCEMENT PROVISIONS,+ HE ADDED.

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DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION TAKES BIG STEP FORWARD * * * *

THE SYSTEM OF DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION HAD TAKEN A BIG STEP FORWARD THIS YEAR, SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DONALD LIAO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S OPENING ADDRESS TO THE COUNCIL, MR LIAO SAID: +WITH THE INCREASE OF ELECTED MEMBERS AND THE ELECTION OF THEIR OWN CHAIRMEN, THE BAORDS HAVE BECOME MORE REPRESENTATIVE AND HAVE BEEN ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE MORE TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF INDIVIDUAL DISTRICT.+

THEY HAVE ALSO CONTINUED TO TAKE INITIATIVES IN REFLECTING THE VIEWS AND ASPIRATIONS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS NOT ONLY ON DISTRICT MATTERS BUT ON IMPORTANT ISSUES OF TERRITORY-WIDE SIGNIFICANCE, HE SAID.

+DISTRICT BOARDS HAVE BECOME A WELL ACCEPTED AND INTEGRAL PART OF OUR CONSULTATIVE MACHINERY AND ARE EFFECTIVE IN FULFILLING THEIR FUNCTIONS,+ HE ADDED.

THE SYSTEM HAS BEEN FURTHER STRENGTHENED WITH THE ELECTION OF 10 DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THIS YEAR, MR LIAO NOTED.

+I AGREE ENTIRELY WITH AN OBSERVATION THAT THE NEW ARRANGEMENT IS AN INTEGRATED SYSTEM WHEREBY CENTRAL POLICIES WILL BE MORE FIRMLY BASED ON THE WISHES OF THE PUBLIC,+ HE SAID.

MR LIAO ALSO AGREED THAT IF THERE WERE ANY CHANGES TO THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT, IT SHOULD BE INTRODUCED IN A GRADUAL MANNER, AND THE ROLE OF DISTRICT BOARDS SHOULD BE EXAMINED IN THE LIGHT OF THE SAME PRINCIPLE.

+WHILE SOME HAVE CONTENDED THAT THE EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY OF THE BOARDS SHOULD BE EXPANDED, OTHERS BELIEVE THAT THE PRIME FUNCTION OF THE BOARDS SHOULD REMAIN ADVISORY, THUS ENABLING THEM TO EXERT INFLUENCE OVER A WIDER AREA OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS RATHER THAN BEING INVOLVED IN A NARROW RANGE OF DAY-TO-DAY EXECUTIVE DUTIES,+ HE SAID.

MR LIAO NOTED THAT DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS IN THE NON-URBAN AREAS WERE INVOLVED IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES IN THEIR DISTRICTS THROUGH THE DISTRICT COMMITTEES SET UP BY THE PROVISIONAL REGIONAL COUNCIL.

+THIS ARRANGEMENT WILL BE EXPANDED WHEN THE REGIONAL COUNCIL TAKES UP ITS FUNCTIONS IN APRIL NEXT YEAR AND MAY NEED TO BE REVIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE,+ HE SAID.

ON THE QUESTIONS OF PROVIDING MORE SECRETARIAT SUPPORT TO THE BOARDS AND SUBSIDISED OFFICE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR MEMBERS, MR LIAO POINTED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH RESOURCES WERE NOT UNLIMITED, ADDITIONAL STAFF MIGHT BE SOUGHT WHERE JUSTIFIED, AND THAT ACCOMMODATION WAS AVAILABLE IN ALL COMMUNITY CENTRES FOR MEMBERS TO HOLD THEIR 'MEET THE PUBLIC' SESSIONS.

MR LIAO ALSO NOTED THAT THE HONORARIUM FOR BOARD MEMBERS WAS INCREASED FROM \$2 000 TO \$3 500 A MONTH TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF INFLATION AND THE INCREASE IN THE AMOUNT OF BOARD BUSINESS.

+THE GOVERNMENT IS, HOWEVER, FULLY AWARE OF THE INCREASING WORKLOAD OF BOARD MEMBERS AND WILL REVIEW THE HONORARIUM FROM TIME TO TIME,+ HE SAID.

+AT THE SAME TIME, GOVERNMENT IS ALSO LOOKING INTO WAYS IN WHICH THE AMBIT OF DB FUNDS COULD BE BROADENED AND MADE MORE FLEXIBLE TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF DIFFERENT BOARDS,+ HE ADDED.

TURNING TO YOUTH POLICY, MR LIAO SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS EXAMINING THE POSSIBILITY OF SETTING UP A NEW CO-ORDINATING BODY TO PROVIDE A FOCAL POINT FOR ORGANISING YOUTH ACTIVITIES.

ANOTHER SOLUTION WAS TO REVIVE THE INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON SERVICES FOR YOUTH WITH MODIFICATION IN ITS MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE IN LINE WITH CURRENT THINKING, HE SAID.

MR LIAO SAID PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE TO BECOME ASSETS TO THE COMMUNITY WAS AN IMPORTANT TASK.

+GOVERNMENT OBVIOUSLY HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN PROVIDING A GOOD ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO PROMOTE CIVIC AWARENESS AND RESPONSIBILITY,+ HE SAID.

+GIVEN THE WIDE SPECTRUM OF POLICIES RELATED TO YOUTH, THIS MUST BE ACHIEVED THROUGH THE JOINT EFFORTS BY ESTABLISHED BODIES INCLUDING GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND BRANCHES AS WELL AS ADVISORY COMMITTEES,+ HE ADDED.

+YOUTH CRIME, FOR INSTANCE, IS TACKLED BY THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE TOGETHER WITH THE 19 DISTRICT FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEES, AND TO STRIKE A PROPER BALANCE BETWEEN PREVENTIVE, REMEDIAL AND DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES, LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES ARE BEING DRAWN UP IN THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN FOR SOCIAL WELFARE DEVELOPMENT,+ MR LIAO ADDED.

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PLANS FOR NEW VALIDATING BODY BEING FINALISED

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THE GOVERNMENT WAS FINALISING ITS RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE SETTING UP OF A HONG KONG COUNCIL FOR ACADEMIC AWARDS AS A LOCAL VALIDATING BODY, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON NEIL HENDERSON, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

+IT IS INTENDED THAT THE PROPOSED NEW BODY SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED AS A PREPARATORY BODY TO BEGIN WITH, TO CONSIDER IN DETAIL HOW LOCAL VALIDATION MIGHT BEST BE ARRANGED AND MANAGED,+ HE SAID.

MR HENDERSON SAID THE GOVERNOR'S PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A THIRD UNIVERSITY TO INCREASE THE PROVISION OF FIRST-YEAR DEGREE PLACES TO OVER 7 500 HAD THE FIRM AND ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS.

+THE ADMINISTRATION WILL SOON BE SEEKING THE ADVICE OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ON THE SETTING UP OF A PLANNING MECHANISM IN THE COMING YEAR TO PLAN AND OVERSEE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PROJECT,+ HE SAID.

/HE SAID

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HE SAID THE EXPANSION OF THE EXISTING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AT THEIR CURRENT RATE WOULD ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO ACHIEVE ITS PRESENT TARGET OF PROVIDING FIRST-YEAR FIRST DEGREE PLACES FOR SIX PER CENT OF THE MEAN OF THE RELEVANT AGE GROUP IN 1989-90.

+THE PROPOSED PROVISION OF 7 500 WOULD PROVIDE FOR 9.5 PER CENT OF THE MEAN OF THE RELEVANT AGE GROUP BY THE MID-1990'S. THIS PROVISION ALMOST TREBLES THE PRESENT LEVEL OF ABOUT 3.5 PER CENT. SUCH AN INCREASE WITHIN THE TIME SCALE ENVISAGED COULD NOT BE DESCRIBED AS A SMALL BY ANY STANDARD,+ HE SAID.

AS REGARDS FURTHER EXPANSION OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS, MR HENDERSON SAID THERE WAS ALWAYS A LIMIT TO WHAT COULD BE ACHIEVED.

+BESIDES PHYSICAL LIMITATION, EACH INSTITUTION HAS ITS OWN OPTIMUM RATE OF GROWTH MAXIMUM LIMIT OF EXPANSION, WHICH IS RELATED TO THE INSTITUTION'S PARTICULAR NATURE AND ACADEMIC PROFILE.

+IN MAKING ITS RECOMMENDATIONS, THE UPGC HAS ALREADY TAKEN ACCOUNT OF THE EXPANSION POTENTIAL OF THE EXISTING INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING,+ HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT THE EDUCATION COMMISSION WAS CURRENTLY STUDYING THE SUBJECT OF OPEN EDUCATION, INCLUDING PROVISION AT THE TERTIARY LEVELS BY THE TWO UNIVERSITIES AND THE OTHER INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED.

+WE CAN FURTHER CONSIDER THE SUBJECT WHEN WE HAVE THE BENEFIT OF THE COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH WILL FORM PART OF ITS REPORT NO. 2,+ HE SAID.

ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES IN EDUCATION, MR HENDERSON SAID THE NINE YEARS' COMPULSORY EDUCATION WAS TIED IN WITH THE AGE OF LEGAL EMPLOYMENT, AND ANY CONTRACTION OF THIS PERIOD WOULD RESULT IN CHILDREN BEING NEITHER IN SCHOOL NOR IN EMPLOYMENT, AND THAT SUCH A SITUATION HAD OBVIOUS DANGERS.

+I MUST COUNSEL FURTHER AGAINST ANY THOUGHT OF REDUCING THE LEGAL AGE FOR EMPLOYMENT -- TO DO SO WOULD BE A MOST RETROGRADE STEP IN SOCIAL POLICY,+ HE SAID.

+I DO NEVERTHELESS TAKE THE POINT THAT EDUCATION ACCOUNTS FOR A MAJOR PORTION OF TOTAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE -- AROUND 17 PER CENT IN THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR -- AND THAT WE NEED TO ENSURE THAT THE COMMUNITY ACHIEVES THE MOST POSSIBLE RETURN ON THIS INVESTMENT.

+IT IS PRECISELY FOR THIS REASON THAT, IN ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE, THE EDUCATION COMMISSION IS REQUIRED TO HAVE SPECIFIC REGARD TO THE RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY,+ HE SAID.

/MR HENDERSON

MR HENDERSON SAID THE EDUCATION COMMISSION HAD A CONTINUING TASK TO PERFORM AND WOULD CONTINUE TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF ALL DEVELOPMENTS, POLITICAL AND OTHERWISE, AS IT FORMULATED ITS PROPOSALS.

HE ADDED THAT THE COMMISSION WAS ALREADY ADDRESSING A NUMBER OF MAJOR QUESTIONS ABOUT WHICH UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS HAD SPOKEN IN THE DEBATE, SUCH AS THE FUTURE OF SIXTH-FORM EDUCATION AND THE ATTENDANT PROBLEMS OF SYLLABUS CONTENT AND THE BURDEN OF EXAMINATIONS, POLICY TOWARDS KINDERGARTENS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF OPEN EDUCATION.

ON CIVIC EDUCATION, MR HENDERSON SAID THE GUIDELINES ON CIVIC EDUCATION, WHICH WERE CIRCULATED TO SCHOOLS IN AUGUST, ADOPTED THE CURRICULUM-WIDE APPROACH WHICH SOUGHT TO RELATE THE CONCEPTS OF CIVIC EDUCATION MORE GENERALLY TO THE TEACHING PROGRAMME AND TO SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AS A WHOLE.

+MY OWN FEELING IS THAT THE GUIDELINES PROVIDE A GOOD STARTING POINT AND THAT, SINCE PROGRESS HAS SO FAR BEEN ENCOURAGING, THE APPROACH THEY OUTLINE SHOULD BE GIVEN A FAIR CHANCE,+ HE SAID.

REGARDING THE CONCERN THAT THE EDUCATION REGULATIONS INHIBITED THE TEACHING OF CIVIC EDUCATION, MR HENDERSON SAID REGULATION 98 FORBIDS ANY EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY WHICH IS +IN ANY WAY OF A POLITICAL OR PARTLY POLITICAL NATURE AND PREJUDICIAL TO THE PUBLIC INTEREST OR THE WELFARE OF THE PUPILS OR OF EDUCATION GENERALLY OR CONTRARY TO THE APPROVED SYLLABUS.+

+THE 'AND' HERE IS IMPORTANT AS IT IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE PROTECTION AGAINST INDOCTRINATION. I SEE NOTHING IN IT WHICH NEED HAMPER CIVIC INSTRUCTION OR EDUCATION AS VERY BROADLY DEFINED IN THE GUIDELINES,+ HE SAID.

ON THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ON PRIVATE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS, MR HENDERSON SAID THE STATED POLICY WAS TO REDUCE INDEPENDENCE UPON THE BUYING OF PLACES IN LESS SATISFACTORY SCHOOLS.

+THIS, I SHOULD LIKE TO STRESS, DOES NOT IMPLY A COMMITMENT TO THE PHASING OUT OF ALL BOUGHT PLACES NOR DOES IT IMPLY THAT THERE IS A FIXED LIST OF UNSATISFACTORY SCHOOLS,+ HE SAID.

+A WORKING PARTY, ESTABLISHED BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE PRIVATE SCHOOLS ASSOCIATIONS ADVISORY BOARD, HAS BEEN LOOKING INTO WAYS AND MEANS OF ASSISTING IN THIS PURPOSE. THE RESULTS OF ITS WORK WILL BE AVAILABLE SHORTLY AND WILL, I HOPE, POINT A WAY FORWARD,+ HE ADDED.

WITH RESPECT TO LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION, MR HENDERSON SAID THE EDUCATION COMMISSION DEALT AT SOME LENGTH IN ITS REPORT NO. 1 WITH THE TEACHING OF LANGUAGE AND THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION.

HE SAID THREE RECOMMENDATIONS WERE MADE AND ALL HAD BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS WERE TO ENCOURAGE ADOPTION BY INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL AUTHORITIES OF CHINESE AS THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION, TO PROVIDE FOR A GOOD SUPPLY OF TEXTBOOKS OF GOOD STANDARD IN CHINESE AND THAT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO IMPROVE AND REINFORCE THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN ORDER TO AVOID ANY LESSENING OF PROFICIENCY IN THAT LANGUAGE AS A RESULT OF THE MOVE TOWARDS INSTRUCTION IN THE MOTHER-TONGUE.

ON SUGGESTIONS TO MODIFY THE ACADEMIC APTITUDE TEST UNDER THE SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES ALLOCATION ARRANGEMENT, MR HENDERSON SAID THIS SYSTEM WAS BEING REVIEWED AND THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION WAS SEEKING THE VIEWS OF SCHOOLS COUNCILS AND OTHER BODIES.

REFERRING TO TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, MR HENDERSON SAID THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING COUNCIL HAD CONSIDERED VERY CAREFULLY THE POSSIBILITY OF A TWO-YEAR RATHER THAN A ONE-YEAR FULL TIME CRAFT COURSE.

+IT HAS CONCLUDED THAT THE PRESENT COURSE LENGTH IS CORRECT, BUT ONE-YEAR BRIDGING COURSES WILL BE DEVELOPED TO MEET TO THE NEEDS OF CRAFT COURSE STUDENTS WHO MAY WISH TO GO ON TO TECHNICIAN LEVEL COURSES. SOME OF THESE NEW COURSES SHOULD BE AVAILABLE FROM 1986,+ HE SAID.

SPEAKING ON ACAMEDIC EXCHANGES WITH CHINA, MR HENDERSON SAID THE LOCAL TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS ALREADY CONDUCTED FREQUENT ACADEMIC EXCHANGES WITH THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN CHINA.

+IN 1984-85, FOR EXAMPLE, NO LESS THAN 98 VISITS WERE MADE TO CHINA BY MEMBERS OF OUR LOCAL TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS AND 96 VISITS MADE TO LOCAL INSTITUTIONS FROM CHINA,+ HE SAID.

TURNING TO LABOUR MATTERS, MR HENDERSON SAID THREE ADDITIONAL SETS OF REGULATIONS UNDER THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS ORDINANCE WOULD BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN 1986.

+ONE OF THESE WOULD REQUIRE THE EMPLOYMENT OF SAFETY SUPERVISORS ON CONSTRUCTION SITES, ANOTHER WOULD LAY DOWN SPECIFIC PROCEDURES GOVERNING THE HANDLING AND USE OF ASBESTOS AND THE THIRD WOULD PROHIBIT OR CONTROL THE USE OF CERTAIN OTHER CARCINOGENIC SUBSTANCES,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID PROPOSALS WOULD BE PUT FOWARD TO AMEND THE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE TO PROTECT THE ASSETS OF PROVIDENT FUND IN CASES OF INSOLVENCY, BY PROHIBITING DEDUCTION OF WAGES FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO A FUND THAT WAS NOT SET UP IN ACCORDANCE WITH CRITERIA TO BE DETERMINED.

+IT IS ALSO PROPOSED TO INCLUDE A DEATH GRANT UNDER THE ORDINANCE IN ORDER TO HELP FAMILIES MEET THE IMMEDIATE FUNERAL EXPENSES CONSEQUENT UPON THE DEATH OF THEIR BREAD-WINNER.

+THE TRADE UNIONS ORDINANCE IS MEANWHILE BEING REVIEWED WITH A VIEW TO UPDATING CERTAIN OF ITS PROVISIONS AND RELAXING CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS,+ HE SAID.

ON A CALL TO EXPAND THE SCOPE OF THE PROTECTION OF WAGES ON INSOLVENCY FUND, IN PARTICULAR TO COVER WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE AND SEVERANCE PAY, MR HENDERSON SAID THE ORIGINAL DECISION TO RESTRICT COVERAGE TO WAGES OWED WAS THE RIGHT ONE.

HOWEVER, HE SAID, THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF OPERATION HAD BEEN ENCOURAGING AND THE PROCEDURES HAD OPERATED QUITE SMOOTHLY AND THE ANNUAL LEVY OF \$100 ON BUSINESS REGISTRATION CERTIFICATES HAD PROVED QUITE ADEQUATE.

+AS A NEXT STEP, WE MIGHT THEREFORE CONSIDER EXTENDING THE SCOPE OF THE FUND TO COVER WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE UP TO THE PREFERENTIAL LIMIT,+ HE SAID.

MR HENDERSON SAID WE ALSO NEEDED EXPERIENCE WITH OPERATION OF THE ARRANGEMENTS IN THE EXISTING LEGISLATION FOR RECOVERY BY THE FUND OF PAYMENTS MADE FROM THE ASSETS OF COMPANIES ON LIQUIDATION.

+WHILE I WOULD NOT, THEREFORE, RULE OUT FURTHER EXTENSION OF THE FUND'S COVERAGE TO SEVERANCE PAYMENTS, I DO THINK WE NEED AT LEAST TWO YEARS' EXPERIENCE BEFORE REASSESSING THIS PROPOSAL,+ HE SAID.

MR HENDERSON SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD AN OPEN MIND ON THE QUESTION OF A CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND AND WOULD BE WILLING TO CONSIDER ANY SCHEME PUT FORWARD WHICH APPEARED WORKABLE AND LIKELY TO GAIN WIDESPREAD SUPPORT.

AS FOR REHABILITATION SERVICES, MR HENDERSON SAID THERE WAS INDEED A LONG-TERM PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THESE SERVICES.

+THE LAST MAJOR REVIEW WAS CARRIED OUT IN 1984, WITH SUBSTANTIAL AND VALUABLE INPUT FROM THE HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE, AND WE SHALL CONTINUE TO REVIEW PROGRESS ON AN ANNUAL BASIS PENDING THE NEXT MAJOR RE-EXAMINATION OF POLICY IN 1987,+ HE ADDED.

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VIEWS TO BE SOUGHT ON MEDICAL SERVICES REVIEW
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THE GOVERNMENT EXPECTS TO RECEIVE THIS WEEK A CONSULTANTS' REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE DELIVERY OF MEDICAL SERVICES, AND SUBJECT TO EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AGREEMENT, THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO PUBLISH IT AS A CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR CHAMBERS SAID HE FULLY AGREED WITH THE VIEW EXPRESSED THAT THE TOPICS INCLUDED IN THE REPORT WERE OF CONCERN TO VIRTUALLY EVERYONE IN HONG KONG.

+THERE WILL NEED TO BE EXTENSIVE CONSULTATIONS BEFORE ANY DECISIONS ARE TAKEN ON MAJOR CHANGES TO THE HOSPITAL SYSTEM,+ HE SAID.

ON UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS' CONCERN THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONSIDERING THE PRIVATISATION OF PUBLIC HOSPITALS, MR CHAMBERS GAVE ASSURANCE THAT THIS WAS NO PART OF THE CONSULTANTS' BRIEF,+ AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NO INTENTION OF REDUCING ITS COMMITMENTS TO THE PROVISION OF SUBSIDISED HOSPITAL SERVICES.

+THE CONSULTANTS WERE ASKED TO REVIEW THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF OUR PUBLIC HOSPITALS AND TO ADVISE WHETHER BETTER INTEGRATION WOULD BE ACHIEVED THROUGH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AUTONOMOUS HOSPITAL AUTHORITIES,+ HE SAID.

MR CHAMBERS SAID HE HOPED THE CONSULTANTS' RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD ALSO HELP THE GOVERNMENT TO IDENTIFY WAYS OF ACHIEVING COMMON STANDARDS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND SUBVENTED HOSPITALS.

+BUT,+ HE SAID, +WHATEVER CHANGES ARE BROUGHT ABOUT, IT IS THE INTENTION THAT THESE HOSPITALS SHOULD REMAIN WITHIN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, AND THAT THEIR SERVICES SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE AVAILABLE TO ALL THOSE WHO NEED THEM, REGARDLESS OF THEIR ABILITY TO PAY.+

MR CHAMBERS SAID THE RANGE OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES HAD GREATLY EXPANDED SINCE THE 1960'S AND THERE HAD BEEN CHANGES ALSO IN THE CATEGORISATION OF SERVICES.

+WHAT WE CAN ASSERT IS THAT MORE THAN \$4 BILLION WILL BE SPENT ON MEDICAL SERVICES IN THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR, WHICH IS OVER SEVEN TIMES GREATER THAN WHAT IT WAS A DECADE AGO, AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS WHICH ARE PLANNED, I WOULD EXPECT MEDICAL EXPENDITURE TO CONTINUE TO INCREASE SUBSTANTIALLY IN REAL TERMS,+ HE SAID.

MR CHAMBERS SAID ONE ASPECT OF THESE MAJOR DEVELOPMENT WOULD BE THE EXPANSION AND IMPROVEMENT OF HOSPITAL SERVICES IN THE NEW TERRITORIES.

/HE GAVE

HE GAVE ASSURANCE THAT EVERY EFFORT WOULD BE MADE TO ENSURE THAT THE TUEN MUN HOSPITAL WAS READY BY THE SCHEDULED COMPLETION DATE OF 1988.

AS REGARDS SUBVENTED HOSPITALS IN THE NEW TERRITORIES, MR CHAMBERS SAID THEY WERE BUILT MANY YEARS AGO TO SERVE AS DISTRICT HOSPITALS FOR A LARGELY RURAL COMMUNITY.

+THE GOVERNMENT HAS RECOGNISED THE NEED TO EXPAND THE SCOPE OF THESE HOSPITALS AND MORE THAN \$350 MILLION ARE TO BE SPENT TO EXPAND AND UPGRADE THE POK OI AND YAN CHAI HOSPITALS.

ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICAL INSURANCE SCHEMES AS A MEANS OF IMPROVING MEDICAL SERVICES FOR MIDDLE-INCOME FAMILIES, MR CHAMBERS SAID PROPOSALS FOR A SCHEME LINKED TO TAX CONCESSIONS WOULD BE CONSIDERED FURTHER IN THE LIGHT OF THE CONSULTANTS' OWN RECOMMENDATIONS ON MEDICAL INSURANCE AND THE PUBLIC'S RESPONSE TO THESE IDEAS.

AS FOR THE NEED FOR AN ACADEMY OF MEDICINE, HE SAID THE RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S INQUIRIES FOR A SUITABLE OVERSEAS CHAIRMAN FOR A WORKING PARTY ON POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING WAS NOW MORE ENCOURAGING.

+I NOW HOPE IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO SET UP THE WORKING PARTY IN THE EARLY MONTHS OF 1986; I INTEND IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO WRITE TO THE VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS WHICH ARE TO BE REPRESENTED ON THE WORKING PARTY, INVITING THEM TO FORWARD NOMINATIONS TO ME, SO THAT THERE WOULD BE NO DELAY ON THIS ACCOUNT WHEN A SUITABLE CHAIRMAN IS FOUND,+ HE SAID.

TURNING TO SOCIAL WELFARE MATTERS, MR CHAMBERS SAID WHILE HE WOULD ADMIT THAT THERE WERE NO VERY RADICALLY NEW PROPOSALS IN THIS YEAR'S PROGRAMME, IN HIS VIEW THIS WAS BECAUSE THERE ALREADY WAS A COMPREHENSIVE LONG-TERM PLAN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF WELFARE SERVICES IN THE 1979 WHITE PAPER: SOCIAL WELFARE INTO THE 1980'S.

+THIS DOCUMENT WHICH WAS PRODUCED AFTER EXTENSIVE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE BASIS OF THREE GREEN PAPERS, CONTAINS A BLUEPRINT FOR DEVELOPMENT IN ALL THE MAIN AREAS OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND SOCIAL SECURITY.

+THE POLICIES SET OUT IN THE WHITE PAPER ARE IMPLEMENTED THROUGH THE FIVE YEAR PLAN FOR SOCIAL WELFARE DEVELOPMENT, WHICH IS REGULARLY UPDATED IN CONSULTATION WITH THE VOLUNTARY WELFARE SECTORS.+

ON A SUGGESTION THAT THE SOCIAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE SHOULD INCLUDE NOMINATED MEMBERS FROM THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR, MR CHAMBERS SAID HE AGREED THAT THE TIME WAS NOW RIPE TO TAKE A NEW LOOK AT THE WAY IN WHICH THIS IMPORTANT COMMITTEE WAS CONSTITUTED.

MR CHAMBERS SAID SPENDING ON SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES HAD GROWN FROM \$365 MILLION IN 1976-77 TO \$2 535 MILLION IN 1985-86, AND HAD ACCOUNTED FOR ABOUT FOUR OR FIVE PER CENT OF TOTAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE IN EACH OF THE LAST 10 YEARS.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THAT DURING THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR, THE GOVERNMENT WAS PAYING SUBVENTIONS TALLING \$421 MILLION TO 133 VOLUNTARY AGENCIES.

+BECAUSE OF THE LARGE SUMS OF MONEY INVOLVED, A FAIRLY TIGHT SYSTEM OF CONTROL OF THE USE OF SUBVENTIONS BY THE AGENCIES IS INEVITABLE - I FEAR THAT THE AUDITORS, LIKE THE POOR, WILL ALWAYS BE WITH US - AND THIS IS ONLY RIGHT AND PROPER.

+THE NEW STANDARD COST SUBVENTION SYSTEM WAS INTENDED TO ENSURE THAT AGENCIES WOULD BE ASSURED OF RECEIVING SUFFICIENT FUNDS TO PROVIDE ESSENTIAL SERVICES UP TO AN ACCEPTABLE STANDARD, WHILE ALLOWING THEM A DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY IN THE USE OF THE MONEY PROVIDED.

+THERE HAVE BEEN SOME PROBLEMS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW SYSTEM, BUT I HOPE THAT THESE WILL SOON BE IRONED OUT TO ALLOW ITS EXTENSION TO MORE SERVICES,+ HE SAID.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THAT DESPITE FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS IN RECENT YEARS, STEADY PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE ON THE PROGRAMMES IN THE FIVE YEAR PLAN.

+DURING 1984-85, 577 ADDITIONAL PLACES WERE PROVIDED IN HOSTELS, HOMES AND CARE-AND-ATTENTION HOMES FOR THE ELDERLY, AND 983 PLACES IN AIDED DAY NURSERIES. SEVEN SOCIAL CENTRES FOR THE ELDERLY, SEVEN CHILDREN'S CENTRES AND 10 YOUTH CENTRES WERE OPENED.

+WE HAVE NOT ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO REACH THE TARGETS SET IN THE FIVE YEAR PLAN, BUT WE HAVE REGARD TO THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE,+ HE SAID.

MR CHAMBERS ALSO EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE INVALUABLE WORK BEING DONE BY VOLUNTARY AGENCIES AND REITERATED THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW THAT THERE WOULD CONTINUE TO BE AN IMPORTANT ROLE FOR A VIGOROUS, PROGRESSIVE AND RESPONSIBLE VOLUNTARY SECTOR, WHICH WAS WELL PLACED TO PIONEER NEW AND EXPERIMENTAL PROJECTS, AND TO INVOLVE VOLUNTEERS IN WELFARE WORK.

REGARDING WELFARE FOR THE ELDERLY, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE GOVERNMENT'S BASIC POLICY WAS TO PROMOTE THE WELL-BEING OF THE ELDERLY BY PROVIDING SERVICES THAT WOULD ENABLE THEM TO RETAIN THEIR SELF-RESPECT AND REMAIN IN THE COMMUNITY FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.

HE ADDED THAT THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT WOULD SHORTLY BE SUBMITTING A STRATEGIC PLAN ON THE PROVISION OF HOUSING FOR THE ELDERLY TO THE SOCIAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR CONSIDERATION.

/MR CHAMBERS

MR CHAMBERS AGREED THAT WE NEEDED MORE SOCIAL CENTRES FOR THE ELDERLY. AT PRESENT THERE ARE 98 SUCH CENTRES, AND 13 MORE WERE PLANNED DURING THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR.

HE SAID THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT USED VARIOUS TYPES OF PUBLICITY TO ENCOURAGE THOSE IN NEED TO APPLY FOR WELFARE BENEFITS.

+THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS PUBLICITY EFFORT CAN BE GAUGED BY THE FACT THAT OVER 85 PER CENT OF ALL THOSE ELIGIBLE ARE RECEIVING THE OLD AGE ALLOWANCE, AND THE NUMBER OF DISABLED PEOPLE RECEIVING DISABILITY ALLOWANCE INCREASED BY ABOUT 4 500 CASES THIS YEAR.

REGARDING THE PROBLEM OF NOISE POLLUTION, MR CHAMBERS SAID IT WAS INTENDED THAT THE REINFORCED ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING A NOISE CONTROL BILL WHICH WOULD BE INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BEFORE THE END OF THE PRESENT SESSION.

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FREE LAND, LONG-TERM LOANS FOR HOUSING AUTHORITY
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THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN PROVIDING THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WITH FREE LAND AND LOANS REPAYABLE OVER 40 YEARS ON VERY FAVOURABLE TERMS FOR PUBLIC RENTAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.

THIS WAS STATED TODAY BY THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HOUSING, THE HON PANG YUK-LING, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

MR PANG SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD MADE AVAILABLE SOME \$22 BILLION FOR THE PROGRAMME.

+THAT APART, RENT LEVELS FOR DOMESTIC FLATS, WHICH ARE NOT RELATED TO BUILDING COSTS, ARE AS LOW AS 20 TO 30 PER CENT OF THOSE FOR COMPARABLE FLATS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR,+ HE SAID.

THIS INFORMATION COULD BE FOUND IN THE AUTHORITY'S ANNUAL REPORTS AND AUDITED ACCOUNTS TABLED EVERY YEAR.

+IN ADDITION, THE ACCOUNTS, WITH EXPLANATIONS IN LAYMAN'S TERMS, ARE PUBLISHED IN THE NEWSPAPERS,+ HE SAID.

MR PANG WAS REPLYING TO A VIEW EXPRESSED THAT IT WAS INACCURATE FOR THE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO SAY THAT PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS WERE ENJOYING HEAVY GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES.

+THE REALITY IS THAT GOVERNMENT DOES SUBSIDISE THE HOUSING PROGRAMME,+ HE SAID.

ON THE GREEN PAPER ON HOUSING SUBSIDY TO PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS, HE SAID THAT THE THREE-MONTH PUBLIC CONSULTATION FROM AUGUST TO OCTOBER WAS A VALUABLE EXERCISE IN THAT A WIDE CROSS-SECTION OF VIEWS AND COMMENTS WERE RECEIVED, AND DISCUSSIONS WERE HELD IN ALL 19 DISTRICT BOARDS AND WITH MANY INTEREST GROUPS, MUTUAL AID COMMITTEES, ORGANISATIONS AND ACADEMICS.

HE SAID THAT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY HAD ON DECEMBER 5 CONSIDERED THE REPORT AND RE-AFFIRMED ITS SUPPORT TO THE PRINCIPLE.

+IT, HOWEVER, ASKED THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING SUBSIDY TO RE-CONSIDER IMPLEMENTING PROPOSALS IN THE LIGHT OF PUBLIC COMMENTS, AND TO EXAMINE OTHER PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES,+ HE SAID.

IN DUE COURSE, HE SAID, THE COMMITTEE'S REVISED PROPOSALS OR RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, AND COUNCIL MEMBERS MIGHT THEN WISH TO DEBATE THE ISSUE PRIOR TO SUBMISSION TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

ON SQUATTER AREA IMPROVEMENTS, HE SAID THAT THE PROBLEM OF ILLEGAL TAPPING OF WATER AND ELECTRICITY SUPPLY WAS BEING TACKLED ON THREE FRONTS.

- * PROVISION OF A LEGAL SUPPLY,
- * ENFORCEMENT ACTION AGAINST ILLEGAL TAPPING ACTIVITIES, AND
- * EDUCATION OF RESIDENTS.

MR PANG SAID THAT IT WAS THE PRACTICE TO IMMEDIATELY DEMOLISH SQUATTER STRUCTURES AFTER THEIR OCCUPANTS HAD OBTAINED PUBLIC HOUSING THROUGH THE WAITING LIST.

+BUT PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES ARE SOMETIMES ENCOUNTERED WHERE THE STRUCTURE IS SHARED BY OTHER FAMILIES, OR WHEN THE SAFETY OF ADJOINING HUTS MAY BE AFFECTED,+ HE SAID.

IN SUCH CASES, HE SAID, SUITABLE MEASURES WOULD BE TAKEN TO PREVENT A NEW SQUATTER FAMILY FROM MOVING IN.

+THE LONG-TERM SOLUTION TO PROBLEMS RELATED TO SQUATTER AREAS LIES IN THE CLEARANCE OF SUCH AREAS. THE 10-YEAR PROGRAMME TO CLEAR AND REHOUSE ALL SQUATTERS IN THE URBAN AREAS HAS STARTED,+ MR PANG SAID.

WITH NEW PUBLIC HOUSING BECOMING AVAILABLE ON HONG KONG ISLAND AND IN KOWLOON FOR REHOUSING USE, HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE WORST CONCENTRATIONS OF SQUATTERS IN THE URBAN AREA COULD BE CLEARED BY THE EARLY 1990'S.

ON THE EXTENDED REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, MR PANG ASSURED MEMBERS THAT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY HAD BEEN ACTING IN A QUICK AND RESPONSIBLE MANNER IN TACKLING THE INHERITED PROBLEM.

+THESE BLOCKS IN QUESTION ARE NOT UNSAFE. BUT, THE AUTHORITY HAS DECIDED TO REDEVELOP RATHER THAN REPAIR THEM, BECAUSE IT WOULD BE MORE COST EFFECTIVE TO DO SO AND MODERN FACILITIES CAN ALSO BE INCLUDED AT THE SAME TIME,+ HE SAID.

HE ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT THE REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND THE GREEN PAPER ON HOUSING SUBSIDY WERE UNRELATED MATTERS.

COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES, MR PANG SAID, WERE AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S OPERATIONS.

+THEY GENERATE MUCH-NEEDED SURPLUS TO OFFSET THE AUTHORITY'S DEFICITS IN RUNNING ITS DOMESTIC UNITS AND CONTRIBUTE PARTLY TO THE CAPITAL COSTS OF CONSTRUCTING NEW ESTATES,+ HE POINTED OUT.

TO ENSURE THAT ITS COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES WERE EFFICIENTLY HANDLED, HE SAID THE AUTHORITY HAD SET UP A NEW COMMERCIAL TENANCY DIVISION IN THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT AND THAT SUITABLE PEOPLE WERE BEING RECRUITED FOR THE NEW POSTS.

MR PANG ALSO SPOKE ON THE PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME.

+THE DEMAND FOR PUBLIC HOUSING IS STILL GREAT AND IS EXPECTED TO REMAIN SO FOR THE COMING YEARS - DR CONRAD LAM AND OTHER HON MEMBERS CAN BE ASSURED THAT PUBLIC HOUSING DEMAND, HOUSING POLICIES AND THE BALANCE BETWEEN THE RENTAL AND HOME OWNERSHIP PROGRAMMES WILL BE KEPT UNDER REGULAR REVIEW, HAVING REGARD TO RESOURCES AVAILABLE AND THE NEEDS OF OTHER SOCIAL PROGRAMMES,+ HE SAID.

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STEPS TO IMPROVE CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS CONSIDERED

AMENDMENTS TO THE BUILDING (CONSTRUCTION) REGULATIONS ARE BEING CONSIDERED WHICH WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON NICKY CHAN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S OPENING ADDRESS, MR CHAN SAID THAT +IMPROVING STANDARDS IN BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS IS OUR OBJECTIVE+.

+TO THIS END OUR EFFORTS HAVE BEEN DIRECTED TO FIVE AREAS -- IMPROVED TESTING FACILITIES, TECHNICAL STANDARDS, TRAINING, CONTROL OF CONTRACTORS AND LEGISLATION- AND A GREAT DEAL OF WORK HAS BEEN DONE IN THESE AREAS.

/+AMONG OTHER

+AMONG OTHER THINGS, AN IMPROVED CONCRETE SPECIFICATION NOW APPLIES TO ALL PUBLIC SECTOR CONTRACTORS, AND ALL FACETS OF CONCRETE QUALITY CONTROL ARE KEPT UNDER REGULAR REVIEW.+

MR CHAN SAID HE WELCOMED THE REMARKS OF SEVERAL MEMBERS, WHICH CLEARLY POINTED TO THE NEED TO CONSIDER DEVELOPMENT ON A TERRITORY-WIDE BASIS AND FOR INTEGRATED PLANNING AND AN INCREASINGLY SENSITIVE ASSESSMENT OF PRIORITIES.

RESPONDING TO OBSERVATIONS MADE BY UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW TOWNS, MR CHAN CONFIRMED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S AIM WAS TO BUILD WELL-BALANCED TOWNS.

+WHILE THE NEW TOWN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES PROVIDE THE PHYSICAL BASIS FOR ESTABLISHING A BALANCE BETWEEN POPULATION AND JOBS, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF REASONS WHY INTERNAL BALANCE BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL TOWNS OR SUB-REGIONS CANNOT BE ACHIEVED QUICKLY OR COMPLETELY.

+FIRST, THE PROVISION OF JOBS DEPENDS VERY MUCH ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR. THE GOVERNMENT PROVIDES LAND FOR INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT SO AS TO ENCOURAGE THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO ESTABLISH FACTORIES AND COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISES. THE PRIVATE SECTOR, HOWEVER, REACHES ITS DECISIONS ON INVESTMENT INDEPENDENTLY,+ MR CHAN SAID.

SOME BUSINESS ACTIVITIES, HE ADDED, BECAUSE OF THEIR NATURE, WERE UNLIKELY TO SHIFT FROM THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT. THERE WAS ALSO RESISTANCE TO CHANGE AMONG SOME INDIVIDUALS.

BECAUSE OF THESE FACTORS IT WAS UNLIKELY THAT A SATISFACTORY BALANCE BETWEEN HOMES AND JOBS IN THE NEW TOWNS WOULD BE ACHIEVED UNTIL THE SECOND OR THIRD GENERATION. IN THE MEANTIME, ADEQUATE TRANSPORT WAS ESSENTIAL TO LINK NEW TOWNS WITH OLD URBAN AREAS.

ON THE SUBJECT OF COMPENSATION FOR LAND RESUMPTION, MR CHAN REVEALED THAT THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL HAD APPROVED PROPOSALS FOR RATIONALISING THE ZONAL COMPENSATION RATES BY MERGING THE PRESENT SEVEN ZONES INTO FOUR AND BY INCREASING THE MINIMUM COMPENSATION RATE FROM 20 TO 30 PER CENT OF THE BASIC LAYOUT RATE.

ONCE THE PROPOSALS HAD BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S FINANCE COMMITTEE THEY WOULD BE INTRODUCED AND BACKDATED TO OCTOBER 1, 1985. THE ZONAL BOUNDARIES WOULD BE KEPT UNDER REGULAR REVIEW AND REVISED TO MEET CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES.

ON THE QUESTION OF URBAN AREA DEVELOPMENT, MR CHAN SAID A START HAD BEEN MADE ON STUDIES FOR THE RECLAMATION OF ALDRICH BAY, RECLAMATION BETWEEN KENNEDY TOWN AND GREEN ISLAND AND OFF WEST KOWLOON FROM YAU MA TEI TO LAI CHI KOK AND ALONG THE CENTRAL AND WAN CHAI WATERFRONTS.

TURNING TO THE PROPOSED LAND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, MR CHAN SAID ITS AIM WOULD BE TO INVITE EXISTING PROPERTY OWNERS TO PARTICIPATE IN REDEVELOPMENT SCHEMES. MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ON THE CORPORATION WOULD BE PUT TO DISTRICT BOARDS AND RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL BODIES FOR CONSIDERATION SHORTLY.

REFERRING TO THE YAU MA TEI SIX STREETS REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT, MR CHAN SAID HE COULD CONFIRM THAT THE HOUSING SOCIETY HAD INCLUDED IT INTO THEIR PROGRAMME AND THAT A START HAD ALREADY BEEN MADE.

+SYMPATHETIC TREATMENT WILL BE ACCORDED TO PEOPLE AFFECTED AND SUITABLE PUBLICITY WILL BE GIVEN TO THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PROJECT,+ HE ADDED.

ON PROPOSALS TO EXTEND THE AMBIT OF THE TOWN PLANNING ORDINANCE, MR CHAN SAID THESE HAD ALREADY BEEN PUT FORWARD BY THE GOVERNMENT AND DISCUSSIONS WITH THE HEUNG YEE KUK AND OTHERS WERE UNDERWAY. FURTHER PROGRESS WOULD DEPEND ON THE OUTCOME OF THE DISCUSSIONS.

ON THE NEED TO PROVIDE FACILITIES FOR AGRICULTURAL VILLAGES, MR CHAN SAID HE ACCEPTED THAT MORE NEEDED TO BE DONE. HOWEVER, MANY VILLAGES ALREADY HAD BETTER SERVICES AND MOST OF THOSE NEAR NEW TOWNS NOW HAD METERED WATER, ELECTRICITY AND TELEPHONES.

+THE NEED FOR COMMERCIAL, RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL FACILITIES IS OF COURSE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE PLANS FOR THE NEARBY NEW TOWNS THEMSELVES,+ HE SAID.

REFERRING TO THE SUPPLY OF WATER TO SQUATTER AREAS, MR CHAN SAID PRESENT PLANS WERE FOR METERED WATER SUPPLY TO BE EXTENDED TO ALL VILLAGES AND SQUATTER SETTLEMENTS, WHERE TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE, WITHIN THREE TO FOUR YEARS.

SETTLEMENTS WHICH COULD NOT BE REACHED BY MAINS SUPPLY OR WHICH WERE DUE FOR CLEARANCE WITHIN A SHORT PERIOD WOULD BE SERVED BY STANDPIPES.

ON THE CONTROL OF ADVERTISING SIGNS, MR CHAN SAID THIS WAS A FORMIDABLE TASK BUT THE PROBLEM WAS BEING EXAMINED.

HE ADDED THAT AS SOON AS SENSIBLE CONCLUSIONS WERE REACHED WHATEVER MEASURES WERE AGREED UPON WOULD BE INTRODUCED. IN THE MEANTIME THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OFFICE WOULD CONTINUE TO INSPECT SIGNS AND REMOVE THOSE CONSIDERED DANGEROUS.

BUS OPERATIONS UNDER CLOSE SCRUTINY
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THE PERFORMANCE OF THE FRANCHISED BUS OPERATORS AND THEIR ROUTE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES DESIGNED TO MEET CHANGING PASSENGER DEMANDS WERE KEPT UNDER VERY CLOSE SCRUTINY BY THE AUTHORITIES, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON IAN MACPHERSON, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE MOTION OF THANKS, MR MACPHERSON SAID +IT IS OUR CONSTANT CONCERN TO TRY AND ENSURE THAT IN OUR HIERARCHY OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT MODES, FROM FERRIES AND DOUBLE DECKER BUSES TO TAXIS, EACH PLAYS ITS NECESSARY ROLE IN A VIABLE AND EFFICIENT MANNER.+

IN REPLY TO POINTS RAISED BY UNOFFICIALS, MR MACPHERSON SAID IT WAS HELPFUL TO RESTATE THE THREE MAIN ELEMENTS OF OUR TRANSPORT POLICY, WHICH WERE +AS VALID TODAY AS THEY WERE WHEN PUBLISHED IN THE 1979 WHITE PAPER ON TRANSPORT POLICY.+

+THEY ARE: FIRST, THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE ROAD SYSTEM - BUILDING MORE ROADS; SECONDLY, THE EXPANSION AND IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT UPON WHICH 90 PER CENT OF HONG KONG PEOPLE DEPEND; AND THIRDLY, THE MORE ECONOMIC USE OF THE ROAD SYSTEM, BY TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND THROUGH RESTRAINT MEASURES.

+THESE THREE POLICY ELEMENTS MUST CONSISTENTLY AND VIGOROUSLY BE PURSUED IF WE ARE TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE OF KEEPING HONG KONG MOVING,+ HE SAID.

AS REGARDS ROAD BUILDING, MR MACPHERSON NOTED THAT THE ACHIEVEMENTS WERE ALREADY IMPRESSIVE.

RECENT MAJOR PROJECTS COMPLETED INCLUDED THE SECTION OF THE NEW TERRITORIES CIRCULAR ROAD FROM SHA TIN TO FAN LING, THE TSUEN WAN BYPASS AND THE ISLAND EASTERN CORRIDOR, HE SAID.

AS REGARDS THE FUTURE ROAD BUILDING PROGRAMME, MR MACPHERSON SAID IT WOULD INCLUDE NEW ROADS SUCH AS ROUTE 5 BETWEEN SHA TIN AND TSUEN WAN, A TUNNEL BETWEEN EAST KOWLOON AND SHA TIN UNDER TATE'S CAIRN AND A MAJOR IMPROVEMENT TO ROUTE 7 THROUGH CENTRAL DISTRICT.

+I CAN ALSO CONFIRM THAT PRIORITY IS BEING GIVEN TO A STUDY OF A NEW LINK BETWEEN THE NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES AND WEST KOWLOON VIA TSUEN WAN,+ HE ADDED.

MR MACPHERSON SAID THAT THIS PROGRAMME, EXCLUDING THE EASTERN HARBOUR CROSSING WHICH WOULD BE TOTALLY FINANCED BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR AT A COST OF ABOUT \$3 BILLION, WAS FORECAST TO COST IN THE REGION OF \$1.8 BILLION PER YEAR OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

+THESE ARE IN MY VIEW IMPRESSIVE COMMITMENTS; THEY WILL TAKE UP SOMETHING LIKE 30 PER CENT OF OUR TOTAL PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME IN THESE YEARS,+ HE NOTED.

/HOWEVER, HE

HOWEVER, HE POINTED OUT THAT THERE WERE NO MORE EASY ROADS, AND MAJOR NEW PROJECTS WERE BECOMING INCREASINGLY EXPENSIVE AS THE ENGINEERING BECAME MORE DIFFICULT.

MR MACPHERSON SAID THAT IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE HE AGREED WITH THE VIEW THAT IN DEVELOPING THE PROGRAMME THERE SHOULD BE A PROPER REGARD FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT, IN PARTICULAR NOISE POLLUTION.

HE ADDED THAT HE COULD ASSURE THAT NOT ONLY IN THE DESIGN OF ROADS BUT IN ALL ASPECTS OF TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE, + WE ARE NOW VERY SENSITIVE TO THE NEED TO LIMIT AS FAR AS POSSIBLE THE IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT OF THESE NEW DEVELOPMENTS+.

ON THE EXPANSION AND IMPROVEMENT OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT, HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNOR HAD DRAWN ATTENTION TO THE OPENING OF THE ISLAND LINE OF THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY AND TO ITS EXTENSION TO SHEUNG WAN IN THE MIDDLE OF NEXT YEAR.

+TO THIS CAN NOW BE ADDED THE MTR LINK FROM QUARRY BAY TO KOWLOON TONG THROUGH LAM TIN, WHICH WILL BE BUILT IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE EASTERN HARBOUR CROSSING ROAD TUNNEL, AND THE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT SYSTEM IN TUEN MUN AND YUEN LONG, WHICH IS BEING CONSTRUCTED BY THE KCRC,+ HE SAID.

IN THE OVERALL PLANNING OF THE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE, MR MACPHERSON SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT WE PROPERLY REFLECT STRATEGIC LAND-USE AND DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS.

+IN THIS CONTEXT I AM SEEKING THE APPROVAL OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THIS COUNCIL FOR FUNDS TO CONDUCT A MAJOR REVIEW, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF CONSULTANTS, OF THE COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORT STUDY FIRST PRODUCED IN 1976 MAKING USE OF RECENT IMPROVEMENTS IN SOPHISTICATED COMPUTER MODELLING TECHNIQUES.+

ON THE MORE ECONOMIC USE OF THE ROAD SYSTEM, MR MACPHERSON SAID THE RECENT PUBLIC ATTENTION ON ELECTRONIC ROAD PRICING HAD TENDED TO OBSCURE THE EXCELLENT AND PERHAPS MORE ORTHODOX WORK BEING CARRIED OUT IN THE FIELD OF TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT, SUCH AS CLEARWAYS, BUS-ONLY LANES, ONE-WAY SYSTEM AND IN SUCH AREAS AS COMPUTERISED TRAFFIC CONTROLS.

+I MYSELF SET GREAT STORE BY THESE ENDEAVOURS AND THEY MUST CONTINUE,+ HE SAID.

ON THE CONGESTION RESULTING FROM VEHICLES CIRCULATING IN BUSY AREAS BECAUSE OF A LACK OF OFF-STREET PARKING FACILITIES, MR MACPHERSON SAID IT WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TO ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF OFF-STREET PUBLIC CAR PARKS THROUGH PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION.

NOTING THAT 24 SITES HAD BEEN IDENTIFIED AND SOME WERE IN THE PROCESS OF BEING DEVELOPED, HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO DO ALL IT COULD TO EXPEDITE THE PROGRAMME.

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+NO EFFORT SPARED ON PASSPORT ISSUE+
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THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT WILL SPARE NO EFFORT IN URGING THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO DO ITS UTMOST TO ENSURE THAT HOLDERS OF THE NEW BN(O) PASSPORT WILL ENJOY THE SAME CONVENIENCE OF TRAVEL AS HOLDERS OF THE EXISTING BDTC PASSPORTS, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON MICHAEL THOMAS SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

MR THOMAS ASSURED HIS UNOFFICIAL COLLEAGUES THAT THEIR VIEWS ON THIS ISSUE HAD BEEN SENT TO LONDON.

WHILE IT MUST BE FOR INDIVIDUALS ELIGIBLE TO HOLD THE NEW BN(O) PASSPORT TO DECIDE WHETHER THEY WANTED TO APPLY FOR ONE BEFORE 1997, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD EXPLAIN TO THOSE ELIGIBLE AS CLEARLY AS POSSIBLE THE ADVANTAGES OF HOLDING THE NEW PASSPORT, THE OPTIONS OPEN TO THEM AND THE MECHANICS FOR PROCURING IT.

ON THE ISSUE OF A CHINESE VERSION OF THE STATUTE LAW OF HONG KONG, MR THOMAS NOTED THAT THE GOVERNOR HAD TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THAT IT WAS +THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION TO MAKE A START, IN DUE COURSE, ON PRODUCING AN AUTHENTIC CHINESE VERSION OF THE EXISTING STATUTE LAW+.

+IN THE COURSE OF MY VISIT TO PEKING IN SEPTEMBER, I WAS STRUCK BY THE INTEREST SHOWN IN THIS PROJECT AND THE ENCOURAGEMENT I WAS GIVEN TO BRING IT ABOUT,+ HE ADDED.

POINTING OUT THAT THIS WAS +AN ENORMOUS TASK WHICH REQUIRED CAREFUL PLANNING,+ MR THOMAS SAID OFFICERS OF THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT HAD ALREADY PUT IN A GREAT DEAL OF WORK TOWARDS MAKING A START.

HE SAID: +A REPORT ON OUR PLANS AND THE PROGRESS MADE WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL IN JANUARY NEXT YEAR.

+WORKING DRAFTS OF THE LEGISLATION TO AMEND THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ORDINANCE AND THE INTERPRETATION AND GENERAL CLAUSES ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY BASIS FOR A BILINGUAL SYSTEM HAVE BEEN PREPARED.+

HE SAID THAT BECAUSE THE CHINESE AND ENGLISH VERSIONS OF THE STATUTE WOULD BE EQUALLY AUTHENTIC, IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT THAT THEY SHOULD BE IDENTICAL IN MEANING.

ON CONCERN EXPRESSED ABOUT MEDICAL ADVERTISEMENT WHICH CONTRAVENED THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION ORDINANCE AND THE UNDESIRABLE MEDICAL ADVERTISEMENT ORDINANCE, MR THOMAS SAID THE GOVERNMENT'S PRIME CONCERN MUST BE THE PUBLIC INTEREST AND NOT THE PROTECTION OF THE MEMBERS OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

AND HE WAS NOT AWARE, HE SAID, OF ANY GREAT CONCERN BEING EXPRESSED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ABOUT THESE ADVERTISEMENTS.

/REFERRING TO

REFERRING TO THOSE WHO WERE NOT REGISTERED MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS BUT WHO HELD THEMSELVES OUT AS SUCH IN ADVERTISEMENTS PUBLISHED IN NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES, HE SAID THE MAIN IMPEDIMENT TO A SUCCESSFUL PROSECUTION IN SUCH CASES WAS ESTABLISHING THE IDENTITY OF THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING THE MIS-REPRESENTATION.

+THIS IS NOT ANY EASY MATTER WITHOUT THE CO-OPERATION OF THE OFFENDER HIMSELF,+ HE NOTED.

HE SAID HOWEVER, THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD CONTINUE TO DEAL WITH COMPLAINTS AS THEY AROSE.

AS FOR CLAIMS ABOUT THE ABILITY TO CURE CERTAIN DISEASES, HE SAID MOST OF THESE ADVERTISEMENTS USED VEILED LANGUAGE WHICH MADE IT DIFFICULT TO BRING THEM WITHIN THE AMBIT OF THE LEGISLATION.

MR THOMAS SAID THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES HAD PROPOSED IN JULY THIS YEAR THAT THE UNDESIRABLE MEDICAL ADVERTISEMENT ORDINANCE SHOULD BE REVISED TO MAKE IT MORE SYSTEMATIC, COMPREHENSIVE AND UP-TO-DATE.

ON FIRE PREVENTION, MR THOMAS SAID THE ADMINISTRATION HOPED TO BRING A BILL TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL EARLY NEXT YEAR, MAKING IT A DIRECT OFFENCE TO PLACE MOVABLE OBJECTS IN CORRIDORS OR ON STAIRCASES.

LOCKING GATES ACROSS ESCAPE ROUTES WOULD ALSO BE MADE A SPECIFIC OFFENCE, HE ADDED.

HE SAID THAT STAFF OF THE PUBLICITY SECTION OF THE FIRE PROTECTION BUREAU HEADQUARTERS WERE KEPT VERY BUSY GIVING SEMINARS AND TALKS BOTH IN RESPONSE TO REQUESTS AND ON THEIR OWN INITIATIVES.

REFERRING TO THE AMOUNT OF LEGAL COSTS RECOVERABLE ON TAXATION IN THE DISTRICT COURT, MR THOMAS SAID THE MATTER WAS BEING ACTIVELY CONSIDERED BY THE DISTRICT COURT RULES COMMITTEE, AND IT WAS HOPED THAT AMENDMENTS TO INCREASE THE AMOUNTS RECOVERABLE WOULD BE MADE TO THE DISTRICT COURT CIVIL PROCEDURE (COSTS) RULES EARLY NEXT YEAR.

COMMENTING ON A SUGGESTION THAT A SECTION OF THE MAGISTRATES ORDINANCE SHOULD BE MORE WIDELY USED SO THAT PENALTIES COULD BE IMPOSED WITHOUT THE NEED FOR THE OFFENDER TO ATTEND AT COURT, HE SAID A TRIAL SCHEME WAS BEING CONDUCTED IN CENTRAL AND CHEUNG SHA WAN POLICE DIVISIONS FROM OCTOBER THIS YEAR.

HE SAID: +NATURALLY IT IS TOO EARLY TO DRAW CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROCEDURE.

+AFTER THREE MONTHS THE JUDICIARY PLAN TO CONDUCT AN INTERNAL REVIEW OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE EFFECT ON THE PROCEDURE.

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+AS I INDICATED LAST YEAR, IF THE PROCEDURE IS FOUND TO BE WORKING SATISFACTORILY, IT CAN THEN BE GIVEN TO EXTENDING ITS USE,+ MR THOMAS SAID.

HE ADDED THAT THE FEASIBILITY OF ISSUING FIXED PENALTY NOTICES TO PASSENGERS IN THE FRONT SEATS OF TAXIS AND PUBLIC LIGHT BUSES FOR NOT WEARING A SAFETY BELT WAS BEING CONSIDERED.

+THE PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF OFFENCES DEALT WITH IN THAT WAY, COULD BE CONSIDERED FURTHER WHEN THE RESULT OF THE TRIAL IS KNOWN,+ HE SAID.

SPEAKING ON COMMENTS ON THE NEED TO MAINTAIN THE EFFICIENCY AND MORALE OF THE POLICE FORCE, MR THOMAS AGREED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE NEED TO SAFEGUARD THE MORALE OF THE FORCE AND THAT ANY CHANGES THAT MIGHT BE INTRODUCED WOULD BE CONSIDERED WITH THAT VERY MUCH IN MIND.

HE SAID THAT THE POLICE HAD TO BE SUFFICIENTLY WELL EQUIPPED IN ORDER BETTER TO PERFORM THEIR DUTIES, AND THAT THE FINANCE COMMITTEE LAST WEEK APPROVED THE COMMITMENT OF \$500 MILLION FOR AN ENHANCED COMMUNICATION AND COMMAND SYSTEM TO BE INTRODUCED IN 1990.

+IT WILL PUT EVERY POLICEMAN WALKING THE BEAT IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE COMMAND AND CONTROL CENTRES,+ HE SAID.

ON THE GOVERNMENT'S BATTLE AGAINST DRUGS, MR THOMAS SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD PRESENT TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL EARLY NEXT YEAR A PAPER WHICH WOULD CONTAIN PROPOSALS DESIGNED TO ATTACK THE LAUNDERING OF DRUG MONEY.

MR THOMAS ADDED THAT +THE GOVERNMENT IS NEGLECTING NO MEASURE THAT HAS A REASONABLE CHANCE OF CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUPPRESSION OF DRUG TRAFFICKING AND ABUSE+.

ON THE ISSUE OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCHEME, MR THOMAS SAID IT WAS ANOTHER GOOD EXAMPLE OF HOW THE POLICE AND THE PEOPLE COULD FIGHT CRIME TOGETHER, AND THAT IT WOULD HELP TO COUNTER THE RISE IN THE NUMBER OF BURGLARIES.

+A RELATED SUBJECT IS THE NEED TO IMPROVE THE STANDARD OF WATCHMEN, A BILL HAS BEEN DRAFTED AND WILL BE INTRODUCED INTO THIS COUNCIL WITHIN THIS SESSION,+ HE SAID.

REFERRING TO THE RECENT CHANGES IN THE NEIGHBOUR POLICE UNITS SCHEME, MR THOMAS SAID THERE HAD BEEN NO REDUCTION IN MANPOWER AVAILABLE IN ANY PARTICULAR DISTRICT BUT MORE POLICEMEN WERE NOW DEPLOYED ON THE BEAT.

TURNING TO THE COMMUNITY SERVICE ORDERS SCHEME, MR THOMAS SAID HE SHARED THE VIEW THAT IT SHOULD BE BROUGHT FORWARD AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.

/AN OFFICER

AN OFFICER FROM THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT WAS AT PRESENT ON AN ATTACHMENT PROGRAMME IN THE UNITED KINGDOM STUDYING THE OPERATION OF THE UK'S COMMUNITY SERVICE ORDER SCHEME AT FIRST HAND, AND SUBJECT TO THE NECESSARY FINANCIAL RESOURCES BEING MADE AVAILABLE, THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE ANTICIPATED THAT THE PILOT SCHEME COULD BE LAUNCHED IN 1987, HE SAID.

ON THE PROPOSED SPENT CONVICTION SCHEME, HE SAID THE PUBLIC RESPONSE TO THE DISCUSSION PAPER PUBLISHED BY THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT IN DECEMBER LAST YEAR HAD BEEN ENCOURAGING, WITH THE MAJORITY FAVOURING THE INTRODUCTION OF A SCHEME.

HE SAID: +I BELIEVE THAT THE INTRODUCTION OF A SPENT CONVICTION SCHEME IS VERY DESIRABLE. BUT IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ANY SCHEME ADOPTED SHOULD HAVE THE SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC AT LARGE TO ENSURE THAT REHABILITATION IS REAL RATHER THAN MERELY APPARENT.

+IT IS MY INTENTION TO PRESENT A FIRM PROPOSAL TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL EARLY NEXT YEAR WHICH WILL REFLECT SO FAR AS IS PRACTICABLE THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY THOSE RESPONDING TO THE DISCUSSION PAPER,+ HE SAID.

ON SOME MEMBERS' CONCERN ABOUT TRIAD ACTIVITIES AND ORGANISED CRIMES, MR THOMAS GAVE ASSURANCE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALREADY TAKING ACTION IN THESE AREAS.

HE SAID THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE HAD ESTABLISHED A WORKING GROUP ON GANGS WHICH HAD BEEN SEEKING TO IDENTIFY AREAS OF ACTIVITY BY TRIADS AND GANGS AND TO DETERMINE ON OVERAL STRATEGY.

+THE WORKING GROUP IS ALSO CONSIDERING CHANGES IN THE LAW. EARLY NEXT YEAR THIS COUNCIL WILL RECEIVE A DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE LEGISLATIVE OPTIONS IDENTIFIED BY THE WORKING GROUP TO PROVIDE GREATER POWERS TO INVESTIGATE AND PROSECUTE ORGANISED CRIME.

+THE URBAN COUNCIL IS MEANWHILE CONDUCTING A MAJOR REVIEW OF THE PROBLEM OF TRIAD INTIMIDATION OF HAWKERS,+ MR THOMAS SAID.

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'CORRECT BALANCE' SOUGHT IN DEBATES

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THE BREADTH AND RANGE OF TOPICS COVERED IN ALL THE SPEECHES WAS +A GOOD INDICATION OF THE SIZE AND COMPLEXITY OF THIS REMARKABLE PLACE AND THE EFFORT NEEDED IN ALL SECTORS TO SUSTAIN OUR ECONOMIC GROWTH, TO MAINTAIN THE RISING STANDARD OF LIVING AND THE RISING EXPECTATIONS OF HONG KONG PEOPLE+, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, SAID TODAY.

WINDING UP THE DEBATE, AND MOVING THE MOTION OF THANKS, SIR DAVID SAID ALSO: +OUR DEBATES ARE DEVOID OF AGGRESSIVE, ADVERSARIAL CONTROVERSY, THEIR OBJECTIVE IS TO CONTINUE TO MOVE HONG KONG FORWARD, TO FIND THE CORRECT BALANCE AND EMPHASIS BETWEEN COMPETING DEMANDS, AND, TO ARRIVE AT A SENSIBLE ANTICIPATION OF FUTURE NEEDS.

+THE MEASURE OF OUR SUCCESS IS NOT THE AMOUNT OF HEAT GENERATED IN THIS CHAMBER, BUT THE CONTINUING DYNAMISM OF OUR ECONOMY, THE CONTINUING VITALITY OF OUR SOCIETY, AND IN ALL THE SPEECHES IN THIS DEBATE THERE IS TO BE FOUND THE FIRM RESOLVE TO CONTINUE THE BUILDING OF THIS GREAT CITY BY COOPERATION AND IN CONSENSUS,+ SIR DAVID SAID.

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BILL SEEKS TO CLARIFY IRISH QUALIFICATION

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A BILL SEEKING TO ALLOW HONG KONG BELONGERS WHO HAVE OBTAINED MEDICAL QUALIFICATIONS IN THE IRISH REPUBLIC ON OR AFTER APRIL 30, 1985 TO CONTINUE TO REGISTER IN HONG KONG WAS INTRODUCED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1985, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION ORDINANCE THE HOLDER OF AN IRISH MEDICAL QUALIFICATION WAS ENTITLED TO BE REGISTERED AS A MEDICAL PRACTITIONER IN HONG KONG IF HE WAS ELIGIBLE FOR REGISTRATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.

HOWEVER, HE SAID THAT THE GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED KINGDOM RECENTLY DECIDED THAT PERSONS WHO WERE NOT NATIONALS OF THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY, AND WHO HAD OBTAINED A MEDICAL QUALIFICATION IN THE IRISH REPUBLIC AFTER APRIL 30, 1985, WOULD NO LONGER BE ELIGIBLE FOR REGISTRATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.

+THE EFFECT OF THIS DECISION IS THAT NON-EEC NATIONALS HOLDING IRISH MEDICAL QUALIFICATIONS CEASED TO BE ENTITLED TO BE REGISTERED IN HONG KONG WITH EFFECT FROM THE SAME DATE,+ MR CHAMBERS SAID, ADDING THAT THIS HAD AFFECTED A NUMBER OF PEOPLE FROM HONG KONG WHO HAD RECENTLY OBTAINED QUALIFICATIONS IN IRELAND.

HE NOTED THAT THE PURPOSE OF THIS BILL WAS TO PLACE ALL HOLDERS OF UNITED KINGDOM OR IRISH MEDICAL QUALIFICATIONS ON AN EQUAL FOOTING REGARDLESS OF THEIR NATIONALITY AND THUS ENABLE NON-EEC NATIONALS WITH IRISH QUALIFICATIONS TO CONTINUE TO REGISTER IN HONG KONG AS THEY HAD DONE IN THE PAST.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1985

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SIR EDWARD HOSTS DINNER FOR JI PENGFEI
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CHINA'S STATE COUNCILLOR AND DIRECTOR OF THE HONG KONG AND MACAU AFFAIRS OFFICE OF THE STATE COUNCIL, MR JI PENGFEI, WAS THE GUEST OF THE GOVERNOR, SIR EDWARD YOUDE, AT A DINNER AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE THIS (WEDNESDAY) EVENING.

IN HIS DINNER SPEECH, SIR EDWARD SAID:

+YOUR EXCELLENCY, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES.

+IT IS A VERY GREAT PLEASURE TO HAVE YOU STATE COUNCILLOR JI HERE WITH US THIS EVENING. YOU ARE NO STRANGER. MANY OF US HAVE HAD THE PLEASURE OF MEETING YOU IN PEKING. ON BEHALF OF ALL MY COLLEAGUES IN HONG KONG I EXTEND A WARM WELCOME TO YOU AND ALL YOUR COLLEAGUES.

+WHILE YOU ARE HERE WE HOPE TO GIVE YOU A THREE DIMENSIONAL PROGRAMME AND TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING OF HONG KONG FROM THE AIR, ON THE LAND AND ON THE SEA. THIS WILL, I HOPE, GIVE YOU AN OVERALL PICTURE OF THE SCALE AND SPEED OF HONG KONG'S DEVELOPMENT.

+BUT MORE THAN THAT WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO MEET A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE DURING YOUR STAY.

+YOU HAVE COME TO HONG KONG JUST ONE YEAR AFTER THE COMPLETION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS ON HONG KONG'S FUTURE, WHICH PRODUCED THE JOINT DECLARATION SIGNED BY THE PRIME MINISTERS OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA AND OF THE UNITED KINGDOM ON DECEMBER 19 LAST YEAR. WE ALL RECALL THE IMPORTANT PART WHICH YOU YOURSELF PLAYED IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS, AND IN SECURING A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME TO THOSE LONG AND COMPLICATED TALKS. THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE U.K. AND THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA HAVE REPEATEDLY COMMITTED THEMSELVES IN PUBLIC TO THE FULL AND FAITHFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT DECLARATION.

+HONG KONG IS GENERALLY REGARDED AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST DYNAMIC CITIES. ITS ABILITY TO SUSTAIN ITS POSITION AS A MAJOR MANUFACTURING, FINANCIAL AND TRADING CENTRE HAS ALWAYS DEPENDED ON OVERSEAS TRADE. THROUGH INGENUITY AND HARD WORK, HONG KONG'S FIVE MILLION PEOPLE PRODUCE A WIDE RANGE OF GOODS AND SERVICES OF HIGH QUALITY, IN ORDER TO SATISFY OUR OVERSEAS CUSTOMERS.

+HONG KONG'S TRADITIONAL MARKETS IN THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE REMAIN VERY IMPORTANT. THE RAPID GROWTH OF HONG KONG'S DIRECT AND ENTREPOT TRADE WITH THE MAINLAND IN RECENT YEARS HAS BEEN A WELCOME AND SIGNIFICANT NEW ELEMENT IN HONG KONG'S ECONOMIC LIFE.

+A CITY SUCH AS HONG KONG HAS HAD CONTINUOUSLY TO ADAPT ITS SOCIETY AND ITS ECONOMY TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF A COMPETITIVE WORLD AND THE ASPIRATIONS OF ITS RESIDENTS FOR A BETTER AND FULLER LIFE.

+TO MAINTAIN ITS POSITION IT REQUIRES CONTINUING INVESTMENT IN THE CITY'S INFRASTRUCTURE, ITS COMMUNICATIONS, BY LAND, SEA AND AIR, EDUCATION AND MEDICAL FACILITIES AND ALL THE OTHER SERVICES ESSENTIAL TO A SUCCESSFUL MODERN ECONOMY AND STABLE SOCIETY.

+I TRUST THAT WHAT YOU WILL SEE AND HEAR IN HONG KONG DURING YOUR VISIT WILL PROVIDE CONVINCING EVIDENCE OF OUR DETERMINATION TO MAKE THAT INVESTMENT AND TO PRESERVE ALL THOSE FEATURES OF LIFE WHICH HAS BEEN AT THE HEART OF HONG KONG'S SUCCESS.

+STATE COUNCILLOR, I KNOW THAT YOU WILL FIND A WELCOME WHEREVER YOU GO. THOSE WHO HAVE PLAYED A PART IN PRODUCING THE ACHIEVEMENTS TO WHICH I HAVE REFERRED ARE PROUD OF THEM, AND KEEN TO SHOW THEM TO YOU.

+AS YOU TALK TO THE MANY PEOPLE YOU WILL MEET YOU WILL HEAR, IN TYPICAL HONG KONG FASHION, A RICH VARIETY OF VIEWS ON MANY SUBJECTS. BUT YOU WILL ALSO FIND IN THE COMMUNITY HERE A UNITY IN OUR DETERMINATION TO PRESERVE THE STABILITY AND PROSPERITY OF HONG KONG AND TO MAKE A SUCCESS OF THE JOINT DECLARATION.

+FINALLY, MAY I TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO WISH YOUR WIFE, MADAM XU HANBING, A SPEEDY RECOVERY AND TO SAY HOW SORRY WE ARE THAT ILLNESS PREVENTED HER FROM COMING TO HONG KONG WITH YOU.

+NOW I SHOULD LIKE TO PROPOSE A TOAST:

- * TO THE HEALTH OF HIS EXCELLENCY MR JI PENGFEI;
- * TO THE HEALTH OF ALL FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES HERE PRESENT;
- * TO THE SUCCESS OF THE JOINT DECLARATION, AND THE CONTINUED PROSPERITY AND STABILITY OF HONG KONG+

IN HIS ADDRESS, MR JI SAID:

+YOUR EXCELLENCY, SIR EDWARD AND LADY YOUDE,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

+IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE FOR ME TO HAVE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT HONG KONG AND MEET ALL THE FRIENDS AT THE BANQUET HOSTED BY SIR EDWARD THIS EVENING. SIR EDWARD IS OUR OLD FRIEND WHO SERVED AS BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO CHINA AND TOOK PART IN THE TALKS BETWEEN THE CHINESE AND BRITISH GOVERNMENTS ON THE QUESTION OF HONG KONG. THERE EXIST GOOD RELATIONSHIP AND FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN US.

+PLEASE ALLOW ME TO EXPRESS, ON BEHALF OF MY CHINESE COLLEAGUES PRESENT AND IN MY OWN NAME, OUR THANKS TO SIR EDWARD FOR HIS WARM HOSPITALITY.

+THE CHINESE AND BRITISH GOVERNMENTS FORMALLY SIGNED THE JOINT DECLARATION ON THE QUESTION OF HONG KONG IN DECEMBER LAST YEAR. WE ARE PLEASED TO NOTE THAT OVER THE YEAR SINCE THEN THE HONG KONG PEOPLE HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY CONFIDENT OF THE FUTURE, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SITUATION HAS BEEN FAIRLY GOOD, AND THE SINO-BRITISH JOINT LIAISON GROUP AND THE SINO-BRITISH LAND COMMISSION HAVE BEEN OPERATING SMOOTHLY.

+WE HOPE THAT THIS GOOD SITUATION WILL CONTINUE AND DEVELOP FURTHER.

+THE SATISFACTORY SETTLEMENT OF THE HONG KONG QUESTION USHERED IN A NEW PERIOD IN SINO-BRITISH RELATIONS. THE EXCHANGES AND COOPERATION BETWEEN CHINA'S MAINLAND AND HONG KONG IN THE ECONOMIC, TRADE, CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC-TECHNOLOGICAL FIELDS HAVE BECOME CLOSER AND DEVELOPED FURTHER.

+I HOPE AND BELIEVE THAT IN THE DAYS TO COME WE AND OUR BRITISH FRIENDS WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE EFFORTS RESPECTIVELY IN THE SPIRIT OF FRIENDSHIP AND COOPERATION FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF THE STABILITY AND PROSPERITY OF HONG KONG, THE SMOOTH TRANSFER OF GOVERNMENT IN 1997 AND THE FULL AND ACCURATE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SINO-BRITISH JOINT DECLARATION.

+AND I FEEL VERY SORRY THAT MY WIFE COULD NOT COME ON THIS TRIP. I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CONVEY MY WIFE'S REGARDS TO SIR EDWARD YOUDE AND LADY YOUDE.

+NOW, MAY I PROPOSE A TOAST

TO THE FRIENDLY RELATIONS AND COOPERATION BETWEEN CHINA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM,

TO THE STABILITY AND PROSPERITY OF HONG KONG,

TO THE HEALTH OF SIR EDWARD AND LADY YOUDE, AND

TO THE HEALTH OF ALL PRESENT HERE!+

AFTER THE SPEECHES, SIR EDWARD AND MR JI EXCHANGED SOUVENIRS. MR JI GAVE SIR EDWARD A CHINESE PAINTING WHILE SIR EDWARD GAVE IN RETURN A PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION OF MODERN THINGS IN HONG KONG.

ACCOMPANYING MR JI AT TONIGHT'S DINNER WERE MR XU JIATUN AND MADAM GU YIPING, MR LI HOU, MR RONG KANG, MR ZONG GUANGYAO, MR LU YUCUN, MR LI CHUWEN, MR ZHENG HUA, MR QIAO ZONGHUAI, MR JI SHAOXIANG, MR LI RUOHE, AND MR SUN YANGHEN.

OTHER GUESTS INCLUDED SIR DENYS ROBERTS, SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, MR JOR-GENERAL T.A. BOAM, SIR JOHN BREMIDGE, MR MICHAEL THOMAS, SIR S.Y. CHUNG, MR OSWALD CHEUNG, MR MICHAEL SANDBERG, MISS LYDIA DUNN, MR LEE QUO-WEI, MR ERIC HO, MR DONALD LIAO, MR CHEUNG YAN-LUNG, MR HILTON CHEONG-LEEN, MR DAVID LI, DOCTOR MA LIN, MR JUSTICE LI, LORD KADOORIE, SIR Y.K. PAO, MR JOHN BOYD, MR JOHN TODD, MR LI KA-SHING, MR MICHAEL MILES, MR ROBIN HUTCHEON, MR FEI YIMIN, DOCTOR T.K. ANN, MR RONALD LI AND MR Y.P. CHENG.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1985

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DISCUSSION AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE
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STATE COUNCILLOR, JI PENGFEI, AND THE GOVERNOR, SIR EDWARD YOUDE, MET AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE THIS MORNING FOR NEARLY TWO HOURS. THEY HAD A FRIENDLY DISCUSSION, IN THE COURSE OF WHICH THE GOVERNOR EXPLAINED THE PRESENT STATE OF DEVELOPMENT IN HONG KONG TO MR JI PENGFEI.

MR JI GAVE AN ACCOUNT OF THE TIMETABLE AND PROCEDURES ENVISAGED FOR THE DRAFTING OF THE BASIC LAW.

THEY TOOK NOTE WITH SATISFACTION OF THE PROGRESS MADE, AND OF THE SPIRIT OF CO-OPERATION SHOWN, DURING THE INITIAL PERIOD OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SINO-BRITISH JOINT DECLARATION DURING THE YEAR SINCE SIGNATURE.

THEY EXCHANGED VIEWS ON THE PRESENT SITUATION IN HONG KONG AND FUTURE PROSPECTS, AND AGREED THAT SUCH EXCHANGES WERE USEFUL, AND SHOULD CONTINUE.

THEY EXPRESSED THEIR CONFIDENCE IN AND DETERMINATION TO PROMOTE THE STABILITY AND PROSPERITY OF HONG KONG THROUGH THE FULL AND FAITHFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT DECLARATION.

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GOVERNMENT HOUSE MEETING FOR JI PENGFEI
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CHINA'S STATE COUNCILLOR AND DIRECTOR OF THE HONG KONG AND MACAU AFFAIRS OFFICE, MR JI PENGFEI, STARTED HIS PROGRAMME IN HONG KONG THIS MORNING (WEDNESDAY) WITH A MEETING AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE.

HE WAS MET ON ARRIVAL BY THE GOVERNOR, SIR EDWARD YOUDE, AND THE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES.

OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS PRESENT AT TODAY'S MEETING WERE: THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, MR MICHAEL THOMAS; SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, MR DONALD LIAO; SECRETARY (GENERAL DUTIES), MR PETER WILLIAMS; POLITICAL ADVISER, MR JOHN BOYD; DEPUTY POLITICAL ADVISER, MR RICHARD MARGOLIS; AND PRIVATE SECRETARY, GOVERNMENT HOUSE, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY.

MR JI WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE XINHUA NEWS AGENCY (HONG KONG BRANCH), MR XU JIATUN; DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE HONG KONG AND MACAU AFFAIRS OFFICE, MR LI HOU; DIRECTOR OF THE SECOND DEPARTMENT OF THE HONG KONG AND MACAU AFFAIRS OFFICE, MR RONG KANG; ACTING HEAD OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT OF XINHUA NEWS AGENCY (HONG KONG BRANCH) MR JI SHAOXIANG; SECRETARY TO MR JI, MR ZONG GUANGYAO; RESEARCHER OF THE FIRST DEPARTMENT OF THE HONG KONG AND MACAU AFFAIRS OFFICE, MR LU YUCUN; AND MR LI RUOHE OF THE XINHUA NEWS AGENCY (HONG KONG BRANCH).

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1935

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JI PENGFEI ATTENDS VICTORIA HOUSE LUNCH
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CHINA'S STATE COUNCILLOR AND DIRECTOR OF THE HONG KONG AND MACAU AFFAIRS OFFICE, MR JI PENGFEI, THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON ATTENDED A LUNCH HOSTED BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, AT HIS HOME IN VICTORIA HOUSE, BARKER ROAD.

ACCOMPANYING MR JI WERE THE DIRECTOR OF THE XINHUA NEWS AGENCY (HONG KONG BRANCH), MR XU JIATUN AND MADAM GU YIPING; THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE HONG KONG AND MACAU AFFAIRS OFFICE, MR LI HOU; DIRECTOR OF THE SECOND DEPARTMENT OF THE HONG KONG AND MACAU AFFAIRS OFFICE, MR RONG KANG; ACTING HEAD OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT OF THE XINHUA NEWS AGENCY (HONG KONG BRANCH), MR JI SHAOXIANG; SECRETARY TO MR JI PENGFEI, MR ZONG GUANGYAO; RESEARCHER OF THE FIRST DEPARTMENT OF THE HONG KONG AND MACAU AFFAIRS OFFICE, MR LU YUCHUN; INTERPRETER MR WU HONGBO; AND MR LI RUOHE OF THE XINHUA NEWS AGENCY (HONG KONG BRANCH).

OTHER GUESTS AT TODAY'S LUNCH INCLUDED LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLORS MRS RITA FAN, MRS ROSANNA TAM, AND MR LEE YU-TAI; URBAN COUNCILLORS MR LO KING-MAN AND MRS MARGARET LI; PROVISIONAL REGIONAL COUNCIL MEMBER MRS MIRIAM LAU; MR JOSEPH CHENG AND LAU SIU-KAI OF THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY; MR LEE MING-KWAN OF THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC; MR STEPHEN NG OF THE UNIVERSITY GRADUATES ASSOCIATION; MR CHRISTOPHER LEONG OF THE HONG KONG OBSERVERS; MR MAN SAI-CHEONG OF THE HONG KONG AFFAIRS SOCIETY; MR LAU NAI-KEUNG OF MEETING POINT; DEPUTY SECRETARY (GENERAL DUTIES) MR JOHN CHAN; AND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT, MISS ALICE TAI.

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DECISION ON ELECTRONIC ROAD PRICING POSTPONED
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THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR IAN MACPHERSON ANNOUNCED IN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY THAT THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL HAD DECIDED THAT A DECISION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ELECTRONIC ROAD PRICING SHOULD BE POSTPONED.

HE SAID THAT THE ERP PILOT STUDY HAD ESTABLISHED THAT ROAD PRICING WAS TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE AS AN OPTION IN TACKLING TRAFFIC CONGESTION, BUT THERE WAS CONCERN AT THE MIXED PUBLIC REACTION TO THE PROPOSALS. HE NOTED THAT A MAJORITY OF THE DISTRICT BOARDS HAD BEEN IN FAVOUR OF A POSTPONEMENT. THE USE OF ERP MIGHT BE RECONSIDERED AFTER A PERIOD OF SUSTAINED GROWTH IN VEHICLE OWNERSHIP AND/OR IF TRAFFIC CONGESTION INCREASED, HE SAID.

/HOWEVER, THE

HOWEVER, THE USE OF THE ELECTRONIC ROAD PRICING TECHNOLOGY FOR THE VOLUNTARY COLLECTION OF TOLLS AT TUNNELS SHOULD BE PURSUED. MR MACPHERSON SAID THIS SYSTEM WAS TO BE CALLED 'AUTOTOLL'.

A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THE AUTOTOLL SYSTEM IN THE FIRST INSTANCE WOULD BE INTRODUCED AT THE LION ROCK TUNNEL FOR BUSES AND FLEET USERS. IT WAS HOPED TO HAVE THIS IN OPERATION BY THE MIDDLE OF 1986 AND TO EXTEND THIS TO OTHER USERS AND OTHER TUNNELS, SUBJECT TO FURTHER STUDY, BY THE MIDDLE OF 1987.

MR MACPHERSON ALSO SAID THAT CONSIDERATION WOULD BE GIVEN, IN DUE COURSE, TO THE POSSIBILITY OF A VOLUNTARY SCHEME OF ROAD PRICING. THIS WOULD BE LOOKED AT IN THE LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE WITH AUTOTOLL.

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PRUDENT BUDGETARY POLICY TO CONTINUE

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THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO FOLLOW A PRUDENT BUDGETARY POLICY AND REMAIN COMMITTED TO A FREE-ENTERPRISE APPROACH TO ECONOMIC POLICY, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MR PIERS JACOBS, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A SPEECH ENTITLED +AN ECONOMIC ROUND-UP FOR 1985+ GIVEN TO THE FINANCIAL EXECUTIVES INSTITUTE, MR JACOBS PLEDGED TO CONTINUE TO INVEST VIGOROUSLY IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE WHICH THE COMMUNITY REQUIRED FOR A BETTER FUTURE.

HE SAID HONG KONG'S ECONOMY WAS BASICALLY HEALTHY +ALTHOUGH THE GDP GROWTH RATE IN 1985 IS LIKELY TO BE MODERATE, BOTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE RATE OF INFLATION ARE RELATIVELY LOW. THE BUDGET DEFICIT IS LOW AND A BALANCED BUDGET IS IN SIGHT. +

HE POINTED OUT THAT OUR ECONOMY REMAINED, AS ALWAYS, CRUCIALLY DEPENDENT ON TRADE AND THUS VULNERABLE TO EXTERNAL FORCES OUTSIDE HONG KONG'S CONTROL.

THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT PROTECTIONIST MOOD IN THE UNITED STATES, HE ADDED, AND THIS MUST POSE A THREAT TO OUR TRADING POSITION.

MR JACOBS STRESSED THAT HONG KONG IMPOSED NO TARIFFS OR QUANTITATIVE RESTRICTIONS ON THE IMPORTATION OF FOREIGN GOODS AND THE GOVERNMENT NEITHER SUBSIDISED EXPORTS OF MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS, NOR PROTECTED THE DOMESTIC MARKET FROM FOREIGN COMPETITION.

+WE ARE CONVINCED AND COMMITTED FREE TRADERS. OUR FREE-ENTERPRISE SYSTEM AND OUR FREE-PORT STATUS HAVE MADE HONG KONG AN ATTRACTIVE PLACE TO DO BUSINESS,+ HE SAID, ADDING THAT WE NATURALLY FELT DISAPPOINTED WHEN A TRADING PARTNER DISCRIMINATED AGAINST OUR EXPORTS.

MR JACOBS WARNED THAT ALTHOUGH DECISION ON THE JENKINS BILL STILL AWAITED THE UNITED STATES PRESIDENT'S POSITION, THERE WERE OTHER PROTECTIONIST MEASURES THAT HAD BEEN PROPOSED. MOREOVER, NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE MULTI-FIBRE ARRANGEMENT TO BE RENEGOTIATED WERE LIKELY TO PROVE TOUGH.

+OF COURSE, THE GOVERNMENT WATCHES THE POSITION VERY CAREFULLY AND HAS, INDEED, BEEN VERY ACTIVE IN MAKING REPRESENTATION. YOU MAY REST ASSURED THAT MY COLLEAGUES ON THE TRADE AND INDUSTRY SIDE WILL REMAIN VIGILANT,+ HE SAID.

HOWEVER, HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT HONG KONG SHOULD DEVIATE FROM THE CHOSEN AND SUCCESSFUL PATH DESPITE THE THREAT OF PROTECTIONISM.

+WE MUST CONTINUE TO DEVELOP THE INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER OF HONG KONG BECAUSE IT IS THIS, PERHAPS MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, THAT WILL CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE HIGH DEGREE OF AUTONOMY THAT IS PROVIDED FOR BY THE JOINT DECLARATION ON THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG AND WILL ENSURE THE FUTURE PROSPERITY AND STABILITY OF HONG KONG.+

ON THE BRIGHTER SIDE, MR JACOBS NOTED THAT IN RECENT YEARS CHINA HAD PROVIDED THE HONG KONG ECONOMY WITH A NEW SOURCE OF GROWTH WITH THE ADOPTION OF MORE LIBERAL ECONOMIC POLICIES BY CHINA.

HE SAID THAT CHINA WAS NOW HONG KONG'S SECOND LARGEST MARKET FOR DOMESTIC EXPORTS, ALTHOUGH STILL WELL BEHIND THE UNITED STATES, AND HONG KONG'S ROLE AS A MAJOR ENTREPOT FOR CHINA HAD RE-EMERGED.

+AS WELL AS ABSORBING MORE IMPORTS OF GOODS, CHINA'S MODERNISATION PROGRAMME IS BEING HELPED BY THE IMPORTATION OF AN INCREASING RANGE OF SERVICES FROM HONG KONG.

+IN ADDITION, HONG KONG, AS THE MAJOR FINANCIAL CENTRE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION, IS IN A POSITION TO CONTRIBUTE INCREASINGLY TO THE FINANCIAL AND RELATED SERVICES THAT LINK CHINA WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD,+ SAID MR JACOBS.

MOVING ON TO THE DOMESTIC SCENE, MR JACOBS NOTED THAT PRIVATE SECTOR CONSUMPTION AND PRIVATE SECTOR EXPENDITURE ON BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION AS WELL AS ON PLANT AND MACHINERY WERE ALL FORECAST TO SHOW MODERATE GROWTH THIS YEAR.

+THERE HAS BEEN A CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT IN THE TAKE-UP RATE FOR FINISHED PROPERTY, WITH PRICES AND RENTALS SHOWING SOME INCREASE. BOTH THESE INDICATORS SUGGEST SOME RETURN OF CONFIDENCE IN THE ECONOMY,+ HE POINTED OUT.

/MR JACOBS

MR JACOBS ATTRIBUTED THE ENCOURAGINGLY LOW RATE OF INFLATION TO THE LINK BETWEEN THE HONG KONG DOLLAR AND THE U.S. DOLLAR.

+WITH THE RELATIVE STRENGTH OF THE U.S. DOLLAR UP TO THE FIRST PART OF THIS YEAR, THE LINK HAD A BENEFICIAL EFFECT ON IMPORT PRICES,+ HE SAID, POINTING OUT THAT THE SYSTEM HAD BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN RESTORING CONFIDENCE IN THE HONG KONG DOLLAR AND IN STABILISING ITS EXCHANGE RATE.

MR JACOBS REITERATED SIR JOHN BREMRIDGE'S POINT THAT THERE WERE NO PLANS TO ALTER EITHER THE SYSTEM OR THE LINKED RATE ALTHOUGH THERE HAD BEEN OCCASIONS WHEN THE LINK HAD COME UNDER PRESSURE.

TURNING TO OUR WORK FORCE, HE SAID THAT DESPITE A FALL IN MANUFACTURING EMPLOYMENT OVER THE PAST YEAR, UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDER-EMPLOYMENT HAD REMAINED STABLE AT RELATIVELY LOW LEVELS. THIS WAS LARGELY DUE TO THE CONTINUED EXPANSION OF THE ENTREPOT TRADE AND OF THE FINANCIAL AND RELATED SERVICES SECTORS.

EARLIER, MR JACOBS HIGHLIGHTED THE RESULTS OF A RECENT SURVEY BY THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT WHICH INDICATED THAT FIRMS IN THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR EXPERIENCED AN IMPROVEMENT IN BUSINESS IN THE THIRD QUARTER.

+AND THERE IS AN EXPECTATION THAT THE GENERAL BUSINESS SITUATION IN THE FOURTH QUARTER WILL REMAIN SIMILAR,+ HE ADDED.

+AS FAR AS TRADE AND THE ECONOMY IS CONCERNED, I BELIEVE THAT THE FIRM COMMITMENT TO OUR PRESENT ECONOMIC SYSTEM IS PROVING A SOURCE OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO TRADERS AND INVESTORS.

+THE STEADY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TERMS OF THE JOINT DECLARATION INSOFAR AS THE ECONOMY IS CONCERNED WILL CONTINUE TO DEVELOP CONFIDENCE,+ MR JACOBS SAID.

OTHER POINTS MENTIONED BY MR JACOBS INCLUDED THE FALL IN DOMESTIC EXPORTS, A SUBSTANTIAL AND CONTINUING GROWTH IN RE-EXPORTS AND THE REVISED FORECAST GROWTH RATE OF THE GDP.

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PENALTIES FOR TV STATIONS

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AFTER OBTAINING ADVICE FROM THE TELEVISION ADVISORY BOARD, THE TELEVISION AUTHORITY WILL BE IMPOSING A FINANCIAL PENALTY OF \$10 000 ON TVB FOR INDIRECT ADVERTISING WITHIN THEIR EYT PROGRAMME ON NOVEMBER 11, 1985.

THE TELEVISION AUTHORITY, FOLLOWING THE ADVICE OF THE TELEVISION ADVISORY BOARD, WILL ALSO BE IMPOSING A FINANCIAL PENALTY OF \$7 500 ON ATV FOR FAILING TO FORWARD A PROGRAMME SERIES FOR EXAMINATION BEFORE BROADCAST.

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SAFETY CAMPAIGN CLOSES WITH TRIBUTE TO LIFEGUARDS

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IT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE URBAN COUNCIL TO ENCOURAGE MORE PEOPLE TO ENJOY SWIMMING BUT AT THE SAME TIME TO AROUSE PUBLIC ATTENTION TO THE IMPORTANT RULES OF WATER SAFETY, THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF URBAN SERVICES, MR JOHN HEYWOOD, SAID TODAY.

MR HEYWOOD WAS SPEAKING AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE 1985 WATER SAFETY CAMPAIGN ORGANISED BY THE HONG KONG LIFE GUARD CLUB AND SPONSORED BY THE URBAN COUNCIL AT THE WAN CHAI SPORTS GROUND.

HE SAID BOTH THE CLUB AND THE COUNCIL HAD A COMMON AIM WHICH WAS TO TRAIN AND PROVIDE QUALIFIED LIFEGUARDS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE PUBLIC.

+THIS YEAR, 424 RESCUES HAD BEEN CARRIED OUT BY THE COUNCIL'S LIFEGUARDS AND 132 BY HONORARY LIFEGUARDS OF THE CLUB,+ HE SAID.

+TRAGICALLY, THERE WERE FIVE FATAL DROWNING ACCIDENTS AT THE URBAN BEACHES THIS YEAR. EVEN ONE SUCH TRAGEDY IS TOO MANY AND SO WE MUST BE ALWAYS ON THE ALERT TO PREVENT SUCH ACCIDENTS.+

MR HEYWOOD PRESENTED CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION TO OFFICERS OF WATER SAFETY CAMPAIGN FOR THEIR VALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DRIVE.

HE ALSO PRESENTED AW SIAN SHIELDS FOR HONORARY LIFE GUARD SERVICES, AND HONG KONG RESCUE STARS AND CERTIFICATES TO RESCUERS FOR THE YEAR.

PRIZES WERE ALSO AWARDED TO 14 WINNERS OF THE 1985 WATER SAFETY POSTER DESIGN COMPETITION JOINTLY ORGANISED BY THE URBAN COUNCIL, HONG KONG LIFE GUARD CLUB AND THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

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MONG KOK BOARD TO DISCUSS HAWKER SURVEY

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THE MONG KOK DISTRICT BOARD WILL MEET TOMORROW (THURSDAY) TO DISCUSS THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF A SURVEY ON THE EFFECTS OF HAWKING ACTIVITIES IN THE TUNG CHOI STREET HAWKER PERMITTED PLACE.

THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED BY THE DISTRICT'S SOUTH AREA COMMITTEE IN AUGUST FOLLOWING NUMEROUS COMPLAINTS RECEIVED ABOUT NUISANCES GENERATED BY HAWKERS.

QUESTIONNAIRES ON THE EFFECTS OF HAWKING ACTIVITIES WERE DISTRIBUTED TO RESIDENTS AND SHOP OWNERS IN THE VICINITY AND 584 OF THEM WERE COMPLETED AND RETURNED.

HAWKER REPRESENTATIVES WERE ALSO INTERVIEWED ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS OPERATION TO PRESENT A BALANCE PICTURE OF THE SITUATION.

THE BOARD WILL ALSO STUDY A PROPOSAL ON AN ELECTRICITY SUPPLY SCHEME WHICH IS AIMED AT SOLVING THE LONG-STANDING PROBLEM OF ILLEGAL ELECTRICITY TAPPING BY HAWKERS IN THE SECTION OF TUNG CHOI STREET BOUNDED BY NELSON STREET AND DUNDAS STREET.

UNDER THE SCHEME EACH HAWKER WOULD RECORD HIS OWN ELECTRICITY CONSUMPTION WITH A SEPARATE METER INSTEAD OF RECORDING THE SUPPLY COLLECTIVELY THROUGH A MUTUAL AID COMMITTEE.

OTHER ITEMS ON THE AGENDA INCLUDE A REVIEW ON THE SHORTAGE OF LORRY PARKING SPACE IN THE DISTRICT, THE POSITION OF DISTRICT BOARD FUNDS, AND THE PROGRESS REPORTS OF VARIOUS COMMITTEES.

BEFORE THE MEETING, A BRIEF CEREMONY WILL BE HELD AT WHICH A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE HONG KONG AND SHANGHAI BANKING CORPORATION WILL PRESENT A \$50 000 CHEQUE TO THE BOARD FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A DISTRICT BOARD LANDMARK.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

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

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RECREATION FACILITIES, CULTURAL ACTIVITIES FOR SHA TIN
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A TOTAL OF 35 RECREATION AND SPORTS PROGRAMMES WOULD BE ORGANISED BY THE REGIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT FOR 5 424 PARTICIPANTS IN SHA TIN DURING THE NEXT TWO MONTHS.

SPEAKING AT THE MEETING OF THE SHA TIN DISTRICT COMMITTEE OF THE PROVISIONAL REGIONAL COUNCIL, THE RSD'S DISTRICT LEISURE MANAGER (SHA TIN), MR LAU TAK-SHIU, SAID FUNDS UP TO \$117 385 HAD BEEN EARMARKED FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE PROGRAMMES.

MR LAU ALSO DISCLOSED THAT A CHINESE NEW YEAR ROAD RACE, COVERING SEVEN KILOMETRES ALONG THE SHING MUN RIVER PROMENADE, WOULD BE HELD FOR THE FIRST TIME. IT WOULD BE A JOINT VENTURE BETWEEN THE RSD AND THE SHA TIN SPORTS ASSOCIATION.

REFERRING TO RECREATION AND AMENITIES FACILITIES BEING BUILT ALONG THE PROMENADE, MR LAU SAID THESE WOULD INCLUDE FOUR CHILDREN'S PLAY AREAS, GARDENS, SITTING-OUT AND LANDSCAPED AREAS, A WATER FEATURE, A SKATING RINK, THREE REFRESHMENT KIOSKS, A BOAT HIRE KIOSK, PROMENADE WALKS AND CYCLE TRACKS, AND SPECTATOR STANDS AND A JUDGING STAND FOR BOAT RACING EVENTS.

+THE PROJECT WILL COST AN ESTIMATED \$28 MILLION AND COVER A TOTAL AREA OF 6.88 HECTARES WHICH WILL BE EXTENSIVELY LANDSCAPED WITH SOME 1 500 TREES AND 110 000 VARIOUS OTHER PLANTS,+ HE SAID.

+ON COMPLETION NEXT MONTH, THE PROJECT WILL GREATLY ENHANCE THE OUTLOOK OF THE SHA TIN NEW TOWN.+

ON THE CULTURAL ACTIVITIES PLANNED BY THE RSD FOR SHA TIN RESIDENTS IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY NEXT YEAR, THE CULTURAL SERVICES OFFICER, MR LO YIU-CHUNG, SAID THEY WILL INCLUDE A WIDE RANGE OF LIBRARY EXTENSION ACTIVITIES SUCH AS BOOK EXHIBITIONS AND DISPLAYS, INTELLECTUAL GAMES, EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION PROGRAMMES, FILM SHOWS, HI-FI CONCERTS, INTEREST GROUPS AND VIDEO SCREENING.

MR LO ADDED THAT LIBRARY SERVICES IN SHA TIN WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY EXPANDED WITH THE ADDITION OF A NEW CENTRAL LIBRARY AT THE SHA TIN CULTURAL COMPLEX NEXT OCTOBER, WHEN FITTING OUT WORK IS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED.

AT THE MEETING, THE COMMITTEE DECIDED TO NAME IT AS +SHA TIN CENTRAL LIBRARY+.

IN ADDITION TO ITS FUNCTION AS A DISTRICT LIBRARY, MR LO SAID, THE NEW LIBRARY, OCCUPYING AN AREA OF 3 250 SQUARE METRES, WOULD PROVIDE SUPPORTING REFERENCE AND INFORMATION AND AUDIO-VISUAL SERVICES FOR DISTRICT LIBRARIES AT SHEUNG SHUI, FANLING AND TAI PO.

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FOUR SITES TO BE SOLD AT AUCTION

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FOUR SITES WILL BE OFFERED FOR SALE BY THE LANDS DEPARTMENT AT AN AUCTION TOMORROW (THURSDAY) AT 2.30 PM.

TWO OF THE SITES ARE PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL LOTS AT ALBANY ROAD AND KENNEDY ROAD, AND THE OTHERS ARE INDUSTRIAL OR GODOWN LOTS AT KUT SHING STREET IN CHAI WAN, AND CHEUNG TAT ROAD ON TSING YI.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE AUCTION AT THE CITY HALL THEATRE.

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SITES OFFERED FOR SHORT-TERM LEASE
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THE LANDS DEPARTMENT IS INVITING TENDERS FOR THE SHORT-TERM TENANCIES OF TWO SITES AT THE KOWLOON BAY RECLAMATION.

THE FIRST SITE OF 3 700 SQUARE METRES, AT THE JUNCTION OF CHEUNG YIP STREET AND HOI BUN ROAD, WILL BE FOR THE REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE OF MOTOR VEHICLES OR STORAGE.

THE SECOND SITE OF ABOUT 1 950 SQUARE METRES IS NEXT TO THE KOWLOON BAY CARGO HANDLING AREA. IT IS FOR CONCRETE OR ASPHALT BATCHING AND CEMENT OR SAND HANDLING ONLY.

TENANCIES FOR BOTH SITES WILL BE FOR TWO YEARS, RENEWABLE QUARTERLY THEREAFTER.

CLOSING DATE FOR ACCEPTANCE OF TENDERS IS NOON ON DECEMBER 27.

TENDER FORMS, TENDER NOTICES AND CONDITIONS MAY BE OBTAINED FROM, AND TENDER PLANS INSPECTED AT THE DISTRICT LANDS OFFICE, KOWLOON EAST, YAU MA TEI CAR PARK BUILDING, 10TH FLOOR, 250 SHANGHAI STREET, KOWLOON, AND THE LANDS DEPARTMENT, SURVEY DIVISION, MURRAY BUILDING, FIFTH FLOOR, GARDEN ROAD, HONG KONG.

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DETAILS ON TAI PO FESTIVAL
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A PRESS CONFERENCE TO ANNOUNCE DETAILS OF THE FIRST TAI PO FESTIVAL WILL BE HELD AT 11 AM ON FRIDAY (DECEMBER 13) AT THE TAI PO RURAL COMMITTEE, HEUNG SZE WUI STREET, TAI PO.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CENTRAL CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE OF THE TAI PO FESTIVAL, MR HO YUNG-SANG, AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PUBLICITY COMMITTEE, MR KWONG KAI-TO, WILL CHAIR THE CONFERENCE.

THE FIRST TAI PO FESTIVAL WILL START ON DECEMBER 15 AND LAST UNTIL FEBRUARY 23.

A WIDE RANGE OF SPORTS, CULTURAL AND LUNAR NEW YEAR CELEBRATION ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN PLANNED.

THE FESTIVAL IS ORGANISED BY THE TAI PO FESTIVAL CENTRAL CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE, CO-ORGANISED BY THE REGIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND SPONSORED BY THE DISTRICT BOARD.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THE CONFERENCE.

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BOARD MEMBERS BRIEF INDUSTRIALISTS
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TSUEN WAN DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS WILL BRIEF INDUSTRIALISTS AND ENTREPRENEURS IN THE DISTRICT ON THE WORK OF THE BOARD'S INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE DURING A CONSULTATION FORUM TOMORROW (THURSDAY).

THE FORUM, TO BE HELD AT THE HILLTOP COUNTRY CLUB IN TSUEN WAN IS EXPECTED TO BE ATTENDED BY SOME 50 INDUSTRIALISTS AND ENTREPRENEURS. THEY WILL BE BRIEFED ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF A SURVEY TO BE CARRIED OUT ON THE FEMALE WORKFORCE IN TSUEN WAN PRESENTED BY DR NG SEK-HONG, LECTURER IN THE DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES OF THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY.

THE SURVEY IS PART OF THE ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE WORKING GROUP ON INDUSTRIAL AND COMMERCIAL PROBLEMS OF THE INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE.

THE FORUM WILL TAKE PLACE FROM 12.30 PM TO 5 PM.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THE FORUM. A VAN (AM 4738) FOR PRESS REPRESENTATIVES WILL LEAVE THE CARPARK AT FOU WAH CENTRE, 210 CASTLE PEAK ROAD IN TSUEN WAN AT NOON FOR THE HILLTOP COUNTRY CLUB.

DETAILS ON CIVIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN
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A MONTH-LONG CIVIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN WILL BE LAUNCHED IN MONG KOK ON SATURDAY (DECEMBER 14) TO PROMOTE RESIDENTS' AWARENESS OF CIVIC RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS WELL AS THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION.

A SERIES OF ACTIVITIES WILL BE ORGANISED BY THE DISTRICT BOARD'S ORGANISING COMMITTEE IN CONJUNCTION WITH LOCAL ORGANISATIONS TO PUBLICISE THE CAMPAIGN, INCLUDING A PUBLIC FORUM, TRAINING COURSES, COMPETITIONS AND FUN DAYS.

A PRESS CONFERENCE WILL BE HELD TO ANNOUNCE DETAILS OF THE CAMPAIGN AT 1 PM TOMORROW (THURSDAY) IN THE MONG KOK DISTRICT OFFICE'S CONFERENCE ROOM ON THE FIRST FLOOR, 157 PRINCE EDWARD ROAD.

/PRESENT AT

PRESENT AT THE CONFERENCE WILL BE THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MONG KOK DISTRICT CIVIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN ORGANISING COMMITTEE, MR LAU TAK-KI; DISTRICT OFFICER, MRS BRENDA FUNG AND RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG PRODUCER, MR CHAN YUK-CHEUNG.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE EVENT.

PROPER STAIRWAY FOR HO MAN TIN RESIDENTS

RESIDENTS IN HO MAN TIN WILL SOON HAVE A PROPER FLIGHT OF STAIRS ON A SLOPE LINKING HO MAN TIN HILL ROAD AND HO MAN TIN STREET UNDER A PROPOSED PROJECT BY THE KOWLOON CITY DISTRICT BOARD.

THE SLOPE, WHICH IS STEEP AND COVERED WITH SCRUBS AND MOSS, IS EXTENSIVELY USED BY RESIDENTS AS A SHORT CUT.

IN ORDER TO ELIMINATE THE POTENTIAL RISKS TO RESIDENTS, THE BOARD'S ENVIRONMENT IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE HAS APPROVED PLANS TO BUILD A PROPER STAIRS WITH STREET LIGHTS AND HANDRAILS ON BOTH SIDES.

THE PROPOSED PROJECT IS ESTIMATED TO COST \$180 000.

SWITCHING-ON CEREMONY

THE WIFE OF THE CHIEF SECRETARY, LADY AKERS-JONES, WILL PERFORM THE SWITCHING-ON CEREMONY OF TSIM SHA TSUI EAST CHRISTMAS LIGHTINGS AT THE URBAN COUNCIL CENTENARY PARK AT 5.45 PM TOMORROW (THURSDAY).

THE LIGHTINGS AND CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS, COSTING \$1 MILLION, ARE ORGANISED BY THE EAST TSIM SHA TSUI DEVELOPERS ASSOCIATION.

/THE CHAIRMAN

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THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ASSOCIATION, MR LUI CHI-WO, WILL BE PRESENT.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE EVENT TO BE HELD AT 5.45 PM IN THE URBAN COUNCIL CENTENARY PARK OUTSIDE THE SEVEN SEAS PLAZA TOMORROW (THURSDAY).

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POK FU LAM, SHEUNG WAN TRAFFIC CHANGES

THE EXISTING BUS-ONLY LANE ON THE NORTHBOUND KERBSIDE SECTION OF POK FU LAM ROAD BETWEEN ABOUT 40 METRES AND 260 METRES NORTH OF BISNEY ROAD WILL BE LIFTED FROM FRIDAY (DECEMBER 13).

OTHER VEHICLES WILL BE ALLOWED TO ENTER THE ROAD SECTION BETWEEN 7 AM AND 9 AM FROM MONDAY TO SATURDAY. THE MEASURE WILL LAST FOR ABOUT THREE MONTHS.

MEANWHILE, FROM 10 AM ON THE SAME DAY, ALL VEHICLES OTHER THAN BUSES AND COACHES WILL BE PROHIBITED FROM ENTERING THE LAYBY SOUTH OF THE MACAU FERRY BUS TERMINUS 24 HOURS DAILY.

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