



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES
BEACONSFIELD HOUSE, HONG KONG. TEL.: 842 8777

WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 1993

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 1993

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LADY THATCHER VISITS HONG KONG

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THE BARONESS THATCHER OF KESTEVEN, OM, FRs, THE FORMER BRITISH PRIME MINISTER, WILL VISIT HONG KONG AS A GUEST OF THE GOVERNOR FROM TODAY (WEDNESDAY) TO FRIDAY (MAY 14). SHE WILL STAY AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE.

LADY THATCHER WILL HAVE A FULL PROGRAMME ARRANGED BY GOVERNMENT HOUSE. SHE WILL ALSO UNDERTAKE A NUMBER OF PRIVATE ENGAGEMENTS DURING HER VISIT.

AS THE PRIME MINISTER WHO NEGOTIATED AND SIGNED THE JOINT DECLARATION, LADY THATCHER NATURALLY TAKES A CLOSE AND CONTINUING INTEREST IN HONG KONG.

THIS VISIT WILL ENABLE HER TO SEE THE TERRITORY ONCE AGAIN AND SEE SOME OF THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS HERE AT FIRST HAND.

AFTER HER ARRIVAL THIS EVENING, LADY THATCHER WILL JOIN THE GOVERNOR AND HIS FAMILY AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE FOR A CELEBRATORY DRINK ON HIS BIRTHDAY.

ON THURSDAY MORNING, LADY THATCHER WILL HAVE A MEETING WITH MR. ZHOU NAN, DIRECTOR OF THE HONG KONG BRANCH OF THE NEW CHINA NEWS AGENCY.

IN THE AFTERNOON, LADY THATCHER WILL VISIT THE ST JAMES' SETTLEMENT SHELTERED WORKSHOP AND THE DAY CARE CENTRE FOR THE ELDERLY IN WAN CHAI.

SHE WILL THEN GO TO NEW AIRPORT PROJECTS CO-ORDINATION OFFICE (NAPCO) FOR A BRIEFING ON THE AIRPORT CORE PROGRAMME BY NAPCO AND THE PROVISIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY, BEFORE FLYING TO CHEK LAP KOK, WEATHER PERMITTING, TO VISIT THE NEW AIRPORT SITE.

LADY THATCHER WILL FLY FROM CHEK LAP KOK TO STONECUTTERS' ISLAND TO VISIT THE NEW ROYAL NAVY BASE THERE.

SHE WILL RETURN FROM STONECUTTERS' ISLAND TO HMS TAMAR ABOARD A ROYAL NAVY PATROL CRAFT. AT HMS TAMAR, SHE WILL ATTEND A ROYAL NAVY COCKTAIL PARTY.

LADY THATCHER'S FINAL ENGAGEMENT ON THURSDAY WILL BE A DINNER AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE WHICH THE GOVERNOR WILL HOST IN HER HONOUR.

ON FRIDAY MORNING, LADY THATCHER WILL VISIT THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE IN KOWLOON BAY AND GIVE A NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE.

ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON, SHE WILL ACCOMPANY THE GOVERNOR ON A VISIT TO EASTERN DISTRICT.

LADY THATCHER WILL JOIN THE GOVERNOR IN ANSWERING A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS FROM THE PRESS AT THE END OF HER VISIT TO EASTERN DISTRICT ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON.

/SHE WILL

SHE WILL LEAVE HONG KONG ON FRIDAY NIGHT.

ATTENTION NEWS EDITORS:

FACILITIES HAVE BEEN ARRANGED FOR THE NEWS MEDIA TO COVER SOME OF LADY THATCHER'S OFFICIAL PROGRAMMES. DETAILS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

THURSDAY (MAY 13)

2.30 PM - 3 PM VISIT TO ST JAMES' SETTLEMENT SHELTERED WORKSHOP AND DAY CARE CENTRE FOR THE ELDERLY, 85 STONE NULLAH LANE, WAN CHAI. MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES ARE REQUESTED TO ARRIVE NO LATER THAN 2 PM. THEY SHOULD NOTE THAT THERE WILL BE NO PARKING FACILITIES IN STONE NULLAH LANE.

FRIDAY (MAY 14)

9.15 AM - 10.45 AM VISIT TO KOWLOON BAY TRAINING CENTRE COMPLEX OF THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING COUNCIL AT 46 TAI YIP STREET, KOWLOON. REPRESENTATIVES ARE REQUESTED TO ARRIVE NO LATER THAN 8.45 AM.

2.30 PM - 5.40 PM VISIT TO EASTERN DISTRICT WITH THE GOVERNOR. MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES ARE REQUESTED TO ARRIVE AT THE VICTORIA KINDERGARTEN, HING FAT STREET, CAUSEWAY BAY NO LATER THAN 1.45 PM.

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AMENDMENT BILLS TO ENABLE BANK OF CHINA TO ISSUE BANK NOTES

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PROPOSAL WILL BE PUT TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TO AMEND LEGISLATION TO ENABLE THE BANK OF CHINA (BOC) TO BECOME A BANK NOTE-ISSUER, A SPOKESMAN FOR THE HONG KONG MONETARY AUTHORITY SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

AN ANNOUNCEMENT WAS MADE IN JANUARY THAT THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL HAD DECIDED THAT APPROVAL SHOULD BE GIVEN FOR BOC TO COMMENCE ISSUING BANK NOTES FROM MAY 1994, SUBJECT TO THE ENACTMENT OF NECESSARY LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS.

THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL HAS NOW DECIDED THAT THE BANK NOTES ISSUE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993 AND THE EXCHANGE FUND (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993 SHOULD BE INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

/AT PRESENT,

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

THE SPOKESMAN SAID: "AMENDMENTS TO THE BANK NOTES ISSUE ORDINANCE AND THE EXCHANGE FUND ORDINANCE ARE REQUIRED SO THAT THE BOC WOULD BECOME A NOTE-ISSUING BANK AND ISSUE BANK NOTES AS LEGAL TENDER IN HONG KONG."

"THE OPPORTUNITY IS ALSO TAKEN TO AMEND THE EXCHANGE FUND ORDINANCE TO MAKE CLEAR THAT THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY HAS THE POWER TO USE THE RESERVES, DEPOSITED WITH THE EXCHANGE FUND BY A NOTE-ISSUING BANK AS BACKING FOR THE BANK NOTES ISSUED, FOR REDEMPTION OF SUCH NOTES IN THE EVENT THAT THE NOTE-ISSUING BANK CONCERNED IS WOUND UP," HE ADDED.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID THIS AMENDMENT CLARIFIED THE EXISTING PROVISION AND DID NOT ADD TO OR DETRACT FROM THE EXISTING POWERS OF THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY.

THE AMENDMENT BILLS WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE GAZETTE ON MAY 21, 1993, AND WILL BE INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ON JUNE 2, 1993.

THE BOC HAS ESTIMATED THAT IT COULD COMPLETE THE PREPARATORY WORK TO BEGIN NOTE-ISSUE IN MAY 1994.

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GOVERNOR SENDS CONDOLENCES FOR BANGKOK FIRE VICTIMS

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A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE GOVERNOR, THE RT HON CHRISTOPHER PATTEN, HAS SENT THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF THAILAND TODAY:

"I WAS APPALLED TO LEARN OF THE TRAGIC FIRE AT A HONG KONG-OWNED FACTORY IN BANGKOK. I KNOW MY DISTRESS IS WIDELY SHARED THROUGHOUT HONG KONG WHERE NEWS OF THE DISASTER HAS BEEN RECEIVED WITH SHOCK AND CONCERN. THERE IS ENORMOUS SYMPATHY FOR THE VICTIMS AND THEIR FAMILIES. PLEASE ACCEPT MY DEEPEST CONDOLENCES AT THE TRAGIC LOSS OF LIFE."

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NEW POLITICAL ADVISER APPOINTED

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MR ROBERT PEIRCE HAS BEEN APPOINTED TO TAKE OVER THE POST OF POLITICAL ADVISER IN THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT THIS SUMMER FROM MR WILLIAM EHRMAN, WHO WILL BE RETURNING TO THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE (FCO) TO TAKE UP ANOTHER POST.

MR EHRMAN WILL LEAVE HONG KONG IN JULY AND MR PEIRCE WILL ARRIVE IN MID-AUGUST.

MR PEIRCE, AGED 38, IS AT PRESENT FIRST SECRETARY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS IN NEW YORK.

HE STUDIED CHINESE (PUTONGHUA) IN HONG KONG IN THE LATE 1970S, SERVED AS SECOND AND LATER FIRST SECRETARY IN PEKING FROM 1980 TO 1983, AS DEPUTY POLITICAL ADVISER IN THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT FROM 1986 TO 1988, AND AS ASSISTANT PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE FOREIGN SECRETARY FROM 1988 UNTIL HE TOOK UP HIS PRESENT POST IN 1990.

HE IS MARRIED WITH TWO CHILDREN.

FOLLOWING IS HIS CURRICULUM VITAE:

BORN MARCH 18, 1955 - MARRIED 1978 (CHRISTINA)

ONE SON (ALEXANDER, 1986). ONE DAUGHTER (KATHERINE, 1988)

OXFORD UNIVERSITY (MODERN HISTORY), MA

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY (CHINESE LANGUAGE)

SECOND, LATER FIRST SECRETARY, BRITISH EMBASSY, PEKING
1980-83

NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA DEPARTMENT, FCO 1983-85

HONG KONG DEPARTMENT, FCO 1985

CABINET OFFICE 1985-86

DEPUTY POLITICAL ADVISER 1986-88

ASSISTANT PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE FOREIGN SECRETARY
(SIR GEOFFREY HOWE, THEN MR JOHN MAJOR, THEN MR DOUGLAS HURD)
1988-90

UK MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS 1990-93

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 1993

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APPEAL FOR FIRE SAFETY IN INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS

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LABOUR DEPARTMENT'S CHIEF FACTORY INSPECTOR CHAN TAT-KING TODAY (WEDNESDAY) CALLED ON OWNERS OF NOTIFIABLE WORKPLACES TO MAINTAIN IN GOOD WORKING CONDITION AND FREE FROM OBSTRUCTION EVERY DOORWAY, STAIRWAY AND PASSAGEWAY WHICH AFFORDS A MEANS OF ESCAPE IN CASE OF FIRE.

HE MADE THE APPEAL FOLLOWING A RECENT FACTORY FIRE IN BANGKOK IN WHICH MORE THAN 200 WORKERS WERE REPORTEDLY KILLED.

MR CHAN SAID OWNERS OF NOTIFIABLE WORKPLACES WOULD COMMIT AN OFFENCE UNDER REGULATION 5 OF THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (FIRE PRECAUTIONS IN NOTIFIABLE WORKPLACES) REGULATIONS IF THEY FAILED IN THE MAINTENANCE OF FIRE ESCAPES WITHOUT REASONABLE EXCUSE.

"UPON CONVICTION, PROPRIETORS CONTRAVENING THIS REGULATION ARE LIABLE TO A FINE OF \$30,000 AND TO IMPRISONMENT FOR SIX MONTHS," HE ADDED.

MR CHAN ALSO REMINDED OWNERS OF NOTIFIABLE WORKPLACES NOT TO CARRY OUT ANY UNAUTHORISED ALTERATION OR ADDITION TO THE PREMISES OF THE WORKPLACE WHICH MIGHT CREATE A SERIOUS RISK OF THE SPREAD OF FIRE OR SMOKE, OR AN OBSTRUCTION OF FREE PASSAGEWAY TO A MEANS OF ESCAPE FROM THE WORKPLACE.

"TO PREVENT A DOMINO EFFECT RESULTING FROM A STAMPEDE OF WORKERS ESCAPING FROM A FIRE IN A MULTI-STOREY INDUSTRIAL BUILDING, PROPRIETORS SHOULD TAKE ALL NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS RELATING TO GENERAL FIRE SAFETY FOR THEIR EMPLOYEES AND CARRY OUT REGULAR INSPECTIONS ON STAIRWAYS OF WORKPLACES TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARE FREE FROM OBSTRUCTION.

"GENERALLY, PEOPLE ESCAPING FROM A FIRE TEND TO USE THE WAY THEY ENTER THE WORKPLACE.

"IT IS NOT UNUSUAL TO FIND MANY ESCAPEES FROM A FIRE GOT THEMSELVES TRAPPED AND ENTANGLED UP IN A STAIRWAY BECAUSE THEY ALL HEADED FOR THE SAME ROUTE THEY WERE FAMILIAR WITH ONLY TO FIND THAT IT WAS NOT WIDE ENOUGH FOR EVACUATING A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE COMING OUT AT THE SAME TIME," HE ADDED.

HE ADVISED THAT ALL WORKERS IN THE WORKPLACE SHOULD BE REMINDED FROM TIME TO TIME TO MAKE FULL USE OF ALL AVAILABLE STAIRWAYS INSTEAD OF USING ONE IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY.

"TO AROUSE GREATER AWARENESS OF FIRE SAFETY AMONG WORKERS, FIRST-AID FIRE-FIGHTING TEAMS SHOULD BE SET UP WITHIN THE BUILDING AND FIRE DRILLS SHOULD BE ARRANGED FROM TIME TO TIME PARTICULARLY DURING DRY SEASON. WHERE NECESSARY ADVICE FROM THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE SOUGHT," HE SAID.

/HE SAID

HE SAID THAT IF A FIRE BREAKS OUT ON THE UPPER FLOOR OF AN INDUSTRIAL BUILDING, WORKERS ON THE LOWER FLOORS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO GO DOWN THE BUILDING BY MAKING AS MUCH USE OF THE ALTERNATIVE STAIRWAYS AS POSSIBLE.

"IF THE FIRE OCCURS AT A LOW LEVEL, UPPER FLOOR OCCUPANTS SHOULD BE RETREATED TO A PLACE OF SAFETY UPWARD BY USING ALL AVAILABLE STAIRWAYS."

"THEREFORE, IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT PROPRIETORS SHOULD MAKE SURE ALL FIRE ESCAPES OF WORKPLACES ARE FREE FROM OBSTRUCTION AND THAT ALL EXITS, STAIRWAYS AND ROOFTOPS, ARE MAINTAINED SERVICEABLE AT ALL TIMES," HE ADDED.

MR CHAN SAID THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT WAS LAUNCHING A SPECIAL INSPECTION CAMPAIGN ON FACTORIES AS PART OF ITS CONTINUED EFFORTS TO PROMOTE SAFETY AWARENESS AMONG EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES AND TO FURTHER IMPROVE SAFETY IN FACTORIES.

DURING THE CAMPAIGN, EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES WILL BE ADVISED OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES IN COMPLYING WITH THE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE LAW.

IN ADDITION, FACTORY INSPECTORS WILL CONCENTRATE THEIR ATTENTION ON HIGH-RISK PLANTS AND PROCESSES IN FACTORIES, AND ALSO SAFETY PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE IN HOUSEKEEPING, MEANS OF ESCAPE, USE OF CHEMICALS AND FIRE HAZARDS.

"RIGOROUS ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN AGAINST FACTORIES WITH UNSAFE WORKING CONDITIONS WHICH ARE LIKELY TO CAUSE ACCIDENTS," HE SAID.

HE STRESSED THAT PROSECUTIONS WOULD BE TAKEN OUT BY FACTORY INSPECTORS, WITHOUT HESITATION, AGAINST BLATANT OFFENDERS WHO REPEATEDLY TURNED A BLIND EYE TO THE REQUIRED SAFETY MEASURES.

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NEED TO MONITOR LEGAL AID ASSIGNMENTS

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A DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE HAS BEEN SET UP TO MONITOR THE ASSIGNMENT OF LEGAL AID WORK TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR, A LEGAL AID DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"THE OBJECT OF THE COMMITTEE IS TO SAFEGUARD AGAINST ANY ACCUSATIONS OF FAVOURITISM AND TO DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A FAIR, EQUITABLE AND CORRUPTION-FREE SYSTEM WHICH WILL ASSIST IN ENSURING THE CLIENTS AND THE TAXPAYERS THE BEST VALUE-FOR-MONEY," THE SPOKESMAN ADDED.

CLIENTS' INTERESTS WILL ALWAYS COME FIRST, HE ADDED.

/"THE COMMITTEE

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"THE COMMITTEE WILL ENSURE THAT LEGAL AID CLIENTS ARE GIVEN THE MOST SUITABLE COUNSEL, SOLICITORS AND EXPERTS."

HOWEVER, AS PUBLIC FUNDS ARE INVOLVED, THE ALLOCATION OF WORK MUST ALSO BE SEEN TO BE FREE FROM ANY FAVOURITISM.

"MOREOVER, WHERE THERE IS A POOL OF COMPETENT EXPERTISE AVAILABLE FOR HANDLING A CASE, CONSIDERATION SHOULD ALSO BE GIVEN TO WHETHER THE WORK COULD BE SPREAD OUT MORE EVENLY," HE SAID.

IN VIEW OF THE NUMBER OF AVAILABLE PRACTITIONERS ON THE LEGAL AID PANEL, THE SPOKESMAN SAID IT WOULD OF COURSE NOT BE POSSIBLE TO ENSURE THAT EVERY AVAILABLE PRACTITIONER OBTAINS A SHARE.

BUT WITHOUT COMPROMISING CLIENTS' INTERESTS, CONSIDERATION COULD BE GIVEN TO TAPPING THE AVAILABLE POOL OF EXPERTISE MORE FULLY," HE ADDED.

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SA PO ROAD SITE TO LET

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THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT IS INVITING TENDERS FOR THE SHORT-TERM TENANCY OF A PIECE OF GOVERNMENT LAND ON SA PO ROAD, KOWLOON.

WITH AN AREA OF ABOUT 2,340 SQUARE METERS, THE LAND IS INTENDED FOR USE AS A PUBLIC FEE-PAYING PARKING AREA FOR VEHICLES, EXCLUDING CONTAINER VEHICLES.

THE TENANCY IS FOR THREE YEARS, RENEWABLE QUARTERLY AFTERWARDS.

CLOSING DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF TENDERS IS NOON ON MAY 28.

TENDER FORMS, TENDER NOTICE AND CONDITIONS CAN BE OBTAINED FROM THE DISTRICT LANDS OFFICE, KOWLOON EAST, 10TH FLOOR, YAU MA TEI CARPARK BUILDING, 250 SHANGHAI STREET, KOWLOON OR THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT, 14TH FLOOR, MURRAY BUILDING, GARDEN ROAD.

THE RELATED PLAN FOR THE TENDER IS ALSO AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION AT THE OFFICES.

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APRIL AIR QUALITY REPORT RELEASED

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THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT TODAY (WEDNESDAY) RELEASED AIR QUALITY INFORMATION FOR APRIL.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE DEPARTMENT SAID THE PURPOSE OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS TO KEEP THE PUBLIC INFORMED OF THE AIR QUALITY LEVELS IN THE TERRITORY AND TO EXPLAIN THE MEASUREMENTS.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT NORMALLY CONTAINS MONITORING RESULTS OBTAINED AT ITS MONG KOK, CENTRAL/WESTERN AND KWAI CHUNG MONITORING STATIONS.

THESE LOCATIONS ARE TYPICAL OF THREE OF THE IMPORTANT LAND USE TYPES FOUND IN THE TERRITORY, NAMELY:

- * LOCATIONS CLOSE TO ROAD TRAFFIC IN BUILT-UP URBAN DISTRICTS;
- * COMBINED COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS; AND
- * DISTRICTS CLOSE TO INDUSTRIAL AREAS.

THE REPORTED AIR POLLUTANTS INCLUDE SULPHUR DIOXIDE (SO₂), NITROGEN DIOXIDE (NO₂), RESPIRABLE SUSPENDED PARTICULATES (RSP) AND TOTAL SUSPENDED PARTICULATES (TSP). THE GASEOUS POLLUTANTS ARE MONITORED CONTINUOUSLY WHILE PARTICLE SAMPLES ARE COLLECTED FOR 24 HOURS, ONCE EVERY SIX DAYS.

IN APRIL THERE WERE NO EXCEEDANCES OF THE 24-HOUR AIR QUALITY OBJECTIVES FOR ANY OF THE POLLUTANTS REPORTED, EVEN THOUGH THERE WERE DAYS WITH LOW WIND SPEEDS, NORMALLY THE CONDITIONS THAT ALLOW POLLUTANT CONCENTRATIONS TO INCREASE.

DUST LEVELS WERE MUCH LOWER THAN LAST YEAR.

THIS IS THOUGHT TO BE BECAUSE LAST YEAR THERE WAS A DUST EPISODE OF SEVERAL DAYS THAT BROUGHT IN LARGE AMOUNTS OF DUST, AND ALSO BECAUSE THIS YEAR THE RELATIVE HUMIDITY WAS HIGHER.

EVEN SO, CONCENTRATIONS OF TSP AT MONG KOK WERE A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF THE 24-HOUR AIR QUALITY OBJECTIVE.

CONCENTRATIONS OF THE SMALLER RESPIRABLE SUSPENDED PARTICULATES WERE SIMILAR AT ALL THREE SITES.

CONCENTRATIONS OF THE GASEOUS SPECIES AT CENTRAL/WESTERN AND KWAI CHUNG FOLLOWED SIMILAR TRENDS TO EACH OTHER INDICATING THAT METEOROLOGY WAS THE DRIVING FORCE FOR THE OBSERVED LEVELS.

THE PEAK ON THE 21ST AND 22ND OF THE MONTH WAS ASSOCIATED WITH LIGHT WINDS THAT WERE DRIER THAN AVERAGE.

THE FOUR POLLUTANTS DISCUSSED HAVE DIFFERENT ORIGINS. SO₂ MOSTLY ORIGINATES FROM THE COMBUSTION OF SULPHUR CONTAINING FOSSIL FUELS. NO₂ IS FORMED EITHER DIRECTLY DURING COMBUSTION OR, BY THE ATMOSPHERIC OXIDATION OF NITRIC OXIDE (NO) WHICH IS ALSO PRODUCED DURING COMBUSTION.

/VEHICLE EXHAUST

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VEHICLE EXHAUST IS A MAJOR SOURCE OF NO AND NO2. IT IS ALSO A MAJOR SOURCE OF AIRBORNE PARTICLES; OTHER SOURCES INCLUDE INDUSTRY, FURNACES AND BOILERS, CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES, THE SEA AND SOIL DUST.

THE DEPARTMENT CURRENTLY MONITORS AIR QUALITY CONTINUOUSLY AT 11 STATIONS, INCLUDING THE THREE MENTIONED ABOVE. SHORT-TERM MEASUREMENT CAMPAIGNS ARE ALSO UNDERTAKEN AS AND WHERE THE NEED ARISES.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

FURTHER ENQUIRY CAN BE DIRECTED TO PRINCIPAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION OFFICER, MR RAYMOND LEUNG ON TEL 594 6401.

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256 VIETNAMESE BACK HOME TODAY

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A GROUP OF 256 VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) RETURNED TO VIETNAM UNDER THE UNHCR'S VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION PROGRAMME.

COMPRISING 86 MEN, 71 WOMEN, 50 BOYS AND 49 GIRLS, THEY WERE THE 152ND BATCH TO GO BACK UNDER THE PROGRAMME.

THE GROUP BROUGHT TO 2,783 THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS WHO HAVE RETURNED VOLUNTARILY THIS YEAR, AND TO 29,095 THE TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNEES SINCE THE PROGRAMME STARTED IN MARCH 1989.

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NORTH POINT UNAUTHORISED STRUCTURE TO BE CLOSED

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

THE UNAUTHORISED STRUCTURE IS AN EXTENSION OF FLAT A2 ON THE SIXTH FLOOR OF KING'S TOWERS AT 480 KING'S ROAD AND 15-23A TSAT TSZ MUI ROAD.

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPLY FOR A CLOSURE ORDER FROM THE HONG KONG DISTRICT COURT UNDER THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE ON JUNE 3 WAS POSTED ON THE PREMISES TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

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

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 1993

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FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETS ON FRIDAY

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THE FINANCE COMMITTEE WILL HOLD A MEETING AT 2.30 PM ON FRIDAY (MAY 14) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE WELCOME TO OBSERVE THE PROCEEDINGS FROM THE CHAMBER'S PUBLIC GALLERY. THEY MAY RESERVE SEATS BY CALLING 869 9492.

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SALT WATER CUT IN TAI PO

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SALT WATER SUPPLY TO SOME PREMISES IN TAI PO WILL GO OFF FROM 10 PM ON FRIDAY (MAY 14) TO 6 AM THE FOLLOWING DAY TO FACILITATE WASTE DETECTION WORK ON WATER MAINS.

THE SUSPENSION WILL AFFECT ALL THE PREMISES AT ON PO ROAD, ON PO LANE, FU SHIN ESTATE, MING NGA COURT, SUN HING GARDEN, TAI PO POLICE STATION AND NEW TERRITORIES REGIONAL POLICE HEADQUARTERS.

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HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND
MONEY MARKET OPERATIONS

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\$ MILLION

OPENING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT	1,695
REVERSAL OF LAF	+455
BALANCE AFTER REVERSAL OF LAF	2,150
NET INJECTION/WITHDRAWAL TODAY	NIL
EFFECT OF LAF TODAY	-600
CLOSING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT	1,550
LAF RATE 2.00 BID/4.00 OFFER TWI 112.3 *+0.1* 12.5.93	

/HONG KONG

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HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND

EF BILLS			HONG KONG GOVERNMENT BONDS			
TERMS	YIELD	TERM	ISSUE	COUPON	PRICE	YIELD
1 WEEK	2.48 PCT	12 MONTHS	2405	5.50	102.46	3.05
1 MONTH	2.72 PCT	15 MONTHS	2408	4.375	101.46	3.21
3 MONTHS	2.79 PCT	18 MONTHS	2411	4.625	101.79	3.43
6 MONTHS	2.91 PCT	21 MONTHS	2502	4.75	101.93	3.64
12 MONTHS	3.06 PCT					

TOTAL TURNOVER OF BILLS AND BONDS - 9,328MN

CLOSED 12 MAY 1993

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ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES
BEACONSFIELD HOUSE, HONG KONG. TEL.: 842 8777

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STI IN MFN MOTION DEBATE

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FOLLOWING IS THE SPEECH BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR T H CHAU, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MOTION DEBATE ON THE RENEWAL OF THE MOST-FAVOURED-NATION STATUS FOR CHINA:

MR PRESIDENT,

I WOULD LIKE TO START BY ASSURING MS EMILY LAU THAT I AM SPEAKING IN THIS DEBATE NOT BECAUSE I DO NOT AGREE WITH LORD TENNYSON'S PREFERRED SUBJECT FOR SPRING BUT BECAUSE IT HAPPILY FALLS UPON ME THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY TO RESPOND ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT. HONOURABLE MEMBERS WHO HAVE SPOKEN IN THIS DEBATE HAVE ALL RECOGNISED THE IMPORTANCE TO OUR ECONOMY OF CHINA'S MOST-FAVOURED-NATION TARIFF STATUS IN THE UNITED STATES. MANY REFERENCES HAVE BEEN MADE TO THE DAMAGE THAT COULD BE CAUSED TO HONG KONG'S ECONOMY IF MFN WERE TO BE TERMINATED. I DO NOT INTEND TO REPEAT ANY OF THIS.

FOR THE PURPOSE OF A RATIONAL DEBATE AND IN ORDER TO APPRECIATE THE PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT SITUATION IN WHICH WE FIND OURSELVES THIS YEAR, I FEEL IT IS NECESSARY TO LOOK BACK BRIEFLY AT WHAT HAPPENED IN THE LAST TWO YEARS. WITH THE BENEFIT OF HINDSIGHT, I CAN SAY THAT WE HAD A RELATIVELY EASY TASK IN THE PAST. PRESIDENT BUSH WAS CLEAR AND FIRM IN HIS POLICY OF RENEWING CHINA'S MFN STATUS WITHOUT CONDITIONS. THE DEMOCRAT-CONTROLLED CONGRESS WAS EQUALLY DETERMINED TO IMPOSE CONDITIONS THROUGH LEGISLATION. THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION'S STRATEGY WAS VERY SIMPLE - THE PRESIDENT WOULD VETO ANY CONDITIONALITY BILL PASSED BY CONGRESS AND SUSTAIN THAT VETO BY SECURING NOT LESS THAN 34 VOTES IN THE SENATE. ALL THAT HONG KONG HAD TO DO WAS TO SUPPORT THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION BY LOBBYING SELECTED SENATORS IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT NO LESS THAN 34 OF THEM SUPPORTED THE PRESIDENT'S VETO. AND PRESIDENT BUSH'S STRATEGY WAS SUCCESSFUL IN BOTH 1991 AND 1992. BUT DID WE IN THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT CLAIM ANY OF THE CREDIT FOR THOSE SUCCESSES? OF COURSE NOT! WE WERE NOT SO NAIVE. WE FULLY RECOGNISED THAT THE HONG KONG FACTOR, ALTHOUGH SIGNIFICANT, WAS NOT A DECISIVE ARGUMENT IN THE MFN DEBATE AND THAT THE OUTCOME WOULD BE DICTATED BY THE UNITED STATES' OWN INTERESTS. AND THAT WAS WHY ONE OF THE MAIN PLANKS OF OUR LOBBYING STRATEGY WAS TO ALLY OURSELVES WITH A COALITION OF U.S. BUSINESSES WHICH HAD HUGE FINANCIAL INTERESTS LINKED TO THE MFN ISSUE AND HAD INFINITELY GREATER INFLUENCE THAN HONG KONG IN WASHINGTON.

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ALL THAT CHANGED WITH THE ELECTION OF PRESIDENT CLINTON, WHO HAD MADE HIS POSITION ON CHINA VERY CLEAR DURING HIS ELECTION CAMPAIGN. IT WAS NECESSARY TO REVIEW OUR POLICY AND STRATEGY. WE CAME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT UNCONDITIONAL MFN RENEWAL FOR SEVERAL REASONS. THE FIRST IS THAT MFN IS THE NORMAL CONDITION FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND IS NOT A PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT. SECONDLY, WE BELIEVE THAT TRADE ISSUES SHOULD NOT BE POLITICISED AND THAT MFN IS NOT THE RIGHT TOOL TO ACHIEVE OTHER POLICY OBJECTIVES, REGARDLESS OF THE MERITS OR OTHERWISE OF THOSE OBJECTIVES. OF COURSE THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT CARES ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS. WE BELIEVE HOWEVER THAT MFN SHOULD NOT BE USED AS A LEVERAGE ON THAT ISSUE. THIRDLY, BECAUSE CHINA HAS CONSISTENTLY REJECTED THE ATTACHING OF CONDITIONS TO HER MFN STATUS, A CONDITIONAL RENEWAL COULD BE TAKEN BY BUSINESSMEN AND INVESTORS AS AN ADVANCE NOTICE TO PHASE OUT OPERATIONS AND INVESTMENTS IN CHINA, THEREBY DAMAGING HONG KONG'S ECONOMY EVEN BEFORE MFN HAS BEEN REVOKED. FOURTHLY, THE U.S. BUSINESS COMMUNITY IS AGAIN LOBBYING VIGOROUSLY FOR UNCONDITIONAL MFN THIS YEAR IN SPITE OF ALL THAT THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION HAS SAID IN FAVOUR OF ATTACHING CONDITIONS SINCE ASSUMING OFFICE. GIVEN HONG KONG'S VERY LIMITED INFLUENCE IN WASHINGTON, IT IS OBVIOUSLY NECESSARY FOR US TO RETAIN THE SUPPORT OF THE U.S. BUSINESS COALITION AND ACT IN CONCERT WITH IT. FIFTHLY, STRONG SUPPORT FOR UNCONDITIONAL RENEWAL IS REQUIRED TO COUNTERBALANCE THE EFFORTS OF THOSE WHO ARE ARGUING EITHER FOR REVOCATION OF MFN OR FOR STRINGENT CONDITIONS TO BE IMPOSED.

MR PRESIDENT I MAY NOT BE AS CLEVER AS I THINK I AM, BUT I AM CERTAINLY NOT AS NAIVE NOR AS UNREALISTIC AS SOME PEOPLE MAY THINK I AM. WE HAVE GONE INTO THIS YEAR'S LOBBYING EXERCISE WITH OUR EYES OPEN. WE ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE IMMENSE ODDS AGAINST UNCONDITIONAL RENEWAL. WE HAVE KNOWN ALL ALONG THAT PRESIDENT CLINTON IS EXTREMELY UNLIKELY TO FOLLOW THE POLICY OF HIS PREDECESSOR. BUT I ALSO KNOW THAT IF WE BELIEVE SOMETHING TO BE RIGHT, AND GOOD FOR HONG KONG, THEN WE SHOULD AIM FOR IT DESPITE THE ODDS AND STRIVE FOR IT CEASELESSLY UNTIL THE OUTCOME IS KNOWN.

MR PRESIDENT, IT IS AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND THAT HONG KONG'S LOBBYING EFFORTS THIS YEAR SHOULD BE SEEN AND JUDGED. A GREAT DEAL HAS BEEN DONE, BOTH BY THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT AND BY HONG KONG'S BUSINESS SECTOR. THOSE EFFORTS HAVE BEEN WELL PUBLICISED AND, WITH ONE EXCEPTION, I WILL NOT TAKE UP HONOURABLE MEMBERS' TIME BY REPEATING THEM HERE. THOSE EFFORTS CULMINATED IN THE GOVERNOR'S VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES LAST WEEK. BEFORE TOUCHING ON THE GOVERNOR'S VISIT, I WOULD LIKE ONE COMMENT TO BE PLACED ON RECORD, IN VIEW OF THE MISUNDERSTANDING THAT HAS APPARENTLY ARISEN IN CERTAIN QUARTERS. MY COMMENT IS THAT, AS FAR AS THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT IS CONCERNED, ALL OUR LOBBYING EFFORTS ARE MADE ON BEHALF OF HONG KONG'S INTERESTS ALONE. WE RECOGNISE THAT THE MFN ISSUE IS PRIMARILY A BILATERAL MATTER BETWEEN THE U.S. AND CHINA AND WE HAVE NO RIGHT AND NO WISH TO INTERFERE. BUT THE POSSIBLE DAMAGE TO HONG KONG'S ECONOMY, WHICH IS PROPORTIONALLY GREATER THAN THAT WHICH MFN REVOCATION MIGHT CAUSE TO CHINA'S OWN ECONOMY, IS FOR US A COMPELLING STORY WHICH NEEDS TO BE TOLD, AND TOLD IN THE MOST FORCEFUL TERMS.

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THIS BRINGS ME TO THE GOVERNOR'S VISIT. AS HONOURABLE MEMBERS ARE AWARE, THE GOVERNOR WILL BE HERE TOMORROW TO GIVE HIS OWN ACCOUNT OF HIS VISIT AND IT IS FOR HIM TO GIVE HIS OWN ASSESSMENT OF THE OUTCOME OF THAT VISIT. HOWEVER, SOME COMMENTS IN THE MEDIA IN RECENT DAYS HAVE PROMPTED ME TO MAKE A FEW POINTS ON THE GOVERNOR'S VISIT, IN ORDER TO HAVE THEM INCLUDED IN THE RECORD OF THIS DEBATE. AT THE RISK OF BEING LABELLED A SYCOPHANT, I WOULD LIKE TO SAY THAT THE GOVERNOR HAS ACHIEVED HIS OBJECTIVE. WHAT WAS THAT OBJECTIVE? IT WAS TO PUT HONG KONG'S ARGUMENTS FOR UNCONDITIONAL RENEWAL TO AMERICAN DECISION-MAKERS AND LEGISLATORS AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS, SO AS TO ENSURE THAT HONG KONG'S POSITION WOULD BE A FACTOR, HOWEVER SMALL, IN THE CONSIDERATION OF U.S. POLICY ON CHINA'S MFN STATUS.

GIVEN THIS OBJECTIVE, THE GOVERNOR'S VISIT WAS EXTREMELY WELL-TIMED. THE MFN DEBATE WITHIN THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION HAD GONE PAST THE LEVEL OF DEPUTY SECRETARIES AND WAS MAKING ITS WAY UPWARDS TOWARDS THE TOP, AGAINST A DEADLINE OF 3 JUNE BY WHICH PRESIDENT CLINTON MUST ANNOUNCE HIS DECISION. TWO BILLS SEEKING TO IMPOSE CONDITIONS HAD BEEN INTRODUCED IN CONGRESS. THE GOVERNOR WAS ABLE TO GAIN ACCESS TO THE HIGHEST LEVELS IN BOTH THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION AND THE U.S. CONGRESS SO AS TO ENSURE THAT HONG KONG'S POSITION WOULD BE TAKEN FULLY INTO ACCOUNT.

A SUBSIDIARY OBJECTIVE OF THE GOVERNOR WAS TO PUT ACROSS TO HIS INTERLOCUTORS HIS FIRM POSITION THAT HONG KONG'S CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD NOT BE LINKED WITH CHINA'S MFN STATUS. IN THE GOVERNOR'S OWN WORDS, "YOU CANNOT HELP HONG KONG BY DAMAGING ITS ECONOMY". THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION UNDERTOOK TO TAKE HONG KONG'S POSITION FULLY INTO ACCOUNT IN REACHING THEIR FINAL DECISION. WHERE CONGRESS IS CONCERNED, THE NEW YORK TIMES OF 9MAY QUOTED CONGRESSWOMAN NANCY PELOSI, AUTHOR OF ONE OF THE TWO CONDITIONALITY BILLS, AS SAYING THAT SHE HAD BEEN PERSUADED BY THE GOVERNOR TO ADJUST HER PROPOSAL BY ELIMINATING ITS REFERENCES TO HONG KONG. TWO FINAL POINTS ON THE GOVERNOR'S VISIT, MR PRESIDENT. I REJECT CATEGORICALLY AND IN THE STRONGEST TERMS POSSIBLE THE COMMENT THAT THE GOVERNOR HAD RIDICULED CHINA DURING HIS STAY IN THE UNITED STATES. THE GOVERNOR OF COURSE DID NOTHING TO RIDICULE CHINA IN ANY WAY. ON THE CONTRARY, IN STANDING UP FOR HONG KONG'S OWN ECONOMIC INTERESTS, HE SPENT MUCH OF HIS TIME IN THE U.S. ARGUING FORCEFULLY FOR THE RENEWAL OF CHINA'S MFN STATUS. ONE HONOURABLE MEMBER QUOTED SOME OF THE GOVERNOR'S COMMENTS WHEN HE WAS IN WASHINGTON AND CAME TO THE ERRONEOUS CONCLUSION THAT AFTER HIS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CLINTON, THE GOVERNOR HAD REFERRED ONLY TO THE PRESIDENT'S UNSOLICITED SUPPORT OF HIS CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSAL AND DID NOT REFER TO THE MFN ISSUE AT ALL. THIS IS NOT TRUE. THIS MISUNDERSTANDING MIGHT HAVE BEEN ARISEN BECAUSE THE MEDIA WAS SELECTIVE IN ITS REPORTING OF THE GOVERNOR'S REMARKS. THE GOVERNOR'S PUBLIC COMMENTS IN THE U.S. ARE ON THE PUBLIC RECORD. BUT THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT IS OF COURSE NOT IN A POSITION TO CONTROL WHICH OF HIS REMARKS ARE REPORTED BY THE MEDIA AND WHICH ARE NOT. THE GOVERNOR WENT TO WASHINGTON FOR THE STATED PURPOSE OF LOBBYING FOR THE UNCONDITIONAL RENEWAL OF MFN. THIS PURPOSE WAS FULLY AND ENTHUSIASTICALLY CARRIED OUT BY THE GOVERNOR. AND THAT TOO WAS ON THE PUBLIC RECORD. AS I HAVE EARLIER REMINDED HONOURABLE MEMBERS THE GOVERNOR WILL COME TO THIS CHAMBER TOMORROW TO SPEAK ABOUT HIS VISIT AND HONOURABLE MEMBERS WILL HAVE A CHANCE TO ASK QUESTIONS OF THE GOVERNOR PERSONALLY.

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SOME HONOURABLE MEMBERS HAVE COMMENTED ON THE LIKELY OUTCOME OF THIS YEAR'S MFN DEBATE IN THE U.S. THE SITUATION IS STILL A FLUID ONE. U.S. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE MR WINSTON LORD IS IN BEIJING RIGHT NOW FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES, THE OUTCOME OF WHICH WILL CLEARLY HAVE A BEARING ON THE MFN ISSUE. THE DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP IN CONGRESS WOULD LIKE TO WORK WITH A DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENT AND LET HIM TAKE THE LEAD ON THE ISSUE. THERE ARE MANY IN CONGRESS WHO ARE PRESSING FOR CONDITIONAL RENEWAL. HOWEVER, AND THIS MAY COME AS A SURPRISE TO SOME HONOURABLE MEMBERS, THERE ARE ALSO A NOT INSIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF DEMOCRATIC SENATORS AND CONGRESSMEN WHO ARE ARGUING THE OPPOSITE CASE. THEY INCLUDE THE 14 DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS OF THE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES WHO RECENTLY SIGNED A LETTER ON MFN TO THE WHITE HOUSE WHICH STATED : "IT IS OUR FIRM BELIEF THAT IT IS IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES TO RENEW CHINA'S MFN STATUS UNCONDITIONALLY." THERE IS ALSO INTENSE PRESSURE FOR UNCONDITIONAL RENEWAL FROM THE U.S. BUSINESS COMMUNITY. ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT CLINTON'S INCLINATIONS ARE CLEAR, HE HAS APPARENTLY NOT YET MADE UP HIS MIND. WITH THREE WEEKS TO GO BEFORE THE DEADLINE, IT STANDS TO REASON THAT HE WILL NOT MAKE A FINAL DECISION UNTIL HE HAS RECEIVED MR LORD'S REPORT ON THE OUTCOME OF HIS TALKS IN BEIJING. AND EVEN THEN, IT IS LIKELY FOR OBVIOUS REASONS, THE PRESIDENT WOULD NOT ANNOUNCE HIS DECISION UNTIL JUST BEFORE THE DEADLINE.

THE UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT IS FULLY AWARE OF THE IMPORTANCE TO HONG KONG OF THE UNCONDITIONAL RENEWAL OF CHINA'S MFN STATUS. WHILE HONG KONG POSSESSES FULL AUTONOMY IN THE CONDUCT OF ITS EXTERNAL COMMERCIAL RELATIONS, THE UK GOVERNMENT HAS ALL ALONG BEEN VERY SUPPORTIVE OF HONG KONG'S STANCE AND HAS IN RECENT MONTHS EXPRESSED ITS SUPPORT TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AT VARIOUS LEVELS, INCLUDING THE HIGHEST LEVEL. THAT IS AS ONE HONOURABLE MEMBER HAS POINTED OUT BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRESIDENT. OUR ECONOMIC AND TRADE OFFICE AND THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON HAVE ESTABLISHED A CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH EACH OTHER ON THIS VERY IMPORTANT ISSUE.

IN CONCLUDING MY COMMENTS ON THE MOTION, WHICH THE OFFICIAL MEMBERS SUPPORT, I WOULD LIKE TO STRESS THAT HONOURABLE MEMBERS MAY REST ASSURED THAT THERE WILL BE NO LET-UP IN THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO LOBBY FOR UNCONDITIONAL RENEWAL OF MFN. IF THE MOTION IS CARRIED, WE WILL OF COURSE CONVEY IT TO THE UK GOVERNMENT AND HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE UK GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO COMMUNICATE ITS SUPPORT OF HONG KONG'S POSITION TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AS NECESSARY.

THANK YOU.

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 1993

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SEM ON COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

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FOLLOWING IS THE SPEECH BY THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON COLLECTIVE BARGAINING:

MR PRESIDENT,

THIS DEBATE RAISES IMPORTANT ISSUES RELATED TO THE MECHANISM FOR CONDUCTING RELATIONS BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES. IN TERMS OF THE QUALITY OF THOSE RELATIONS, HONG KONG, I AM PLEASED TO SAY, HAS ONE OF THE BEST RECORDS IN THE WORLD. THIS IS A SITUATION WHICH I AM SURE WE WILL ALL WANT TO SEE CONTINUE AND, INDEED, IMPROVE FURTHER. THIS IS THE SPIRIT IN WHICH I SHOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS THE SUBJECT.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED IN MANY COUNTRIES AS A LEGITIMATE AND STABLE FRAMEWORK FOR JOINT LABOUR-MANAGEMENT NEGOTIATION ON CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT AND FOR RESOLVING CONFLICTING INTERESTS IN EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS. THE AVOWED MERITS OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ARE THAT IT PROVIDES A CHANNEL FOR WORKERS' PARTICIPATION IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AND AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ENHANCING THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PARTIES REGARDING EACH OTHER'S POSITION, OBJECTIVES AND PROBLEMS. ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT STRENGTH UNDERLYING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IS ITS ABILITY TO ELICIT THE WORKERS' CONSENT TO WORK UNDER THE TERMS OF AN AGREEMENT WHICH EMERGES FROM THE BARGAINING PROCESS, RESULTING IN STABLE EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS.

FORMAL AND INSTITUTIONALIZED COLLECTIVE BARGAINING EXISTS IN MANY COUNTRIES, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHERE EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ESTABLISH REPRESENTATIVE AND SELF-GOVERNING INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROTECTING AND ADVANCING THEIR RESPECTIVE RIGHTS. IT IS INDEED A PREREQUISITE FOR THE SUCCESSFUL OPERATION OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING THAT THOSE WHO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS DO REPRESENT THE MAJORITY OF THE EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES CONCERNED, AND THAT THE RESULTANT AGREEMENT IS BINDING ON ALL OF THEM. THUS, COLLECTIVE BARGAINING TENDS TO WORK EFFECTIVELY MAINLY IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE A SMALL NUMBER OF BUSINESSES EMPLOY LARGE NUMBERS OF PEOPLE, WHERE THE MAJORITY OF THE EMPLOYEES ARE REPRESENTED BY TRADE UNIONS AND WHERE BOTH SIDES CONSIDER IT MUTUALLY ADVANTAGEOUS TO AVOID THE TROUBLE AND EXPENSE OF NEGOTIATING AT THE LEVEL OF INDIVIDUAL ENTERPRISES.

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SUCH AN ENVIRONMENT CLEARLY DOES NOT EXIST IN HONG KONG, WHERE OVER 90% OF THE BUSINESS AND INDUSTRIAL ESTABLISHMENTS EMPLOY LESS THAN 20 EMPLOYEES. IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IS UNLIKELY TO BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE MEANS FOR THE WORKERS AND THEIR EMPLOYERS TO NEGOTIATE THEIR TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT. IT WOULD IN ANY CASE SEEM UNNECESSARY TO INTRODUCE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IN AN ENTERPRISE WHERE PRACTICALLY EVERY WORKER IS INDIVIDUALLY ABLE TO NEGOTIATE DIRECT WITH THE EMPLOYER IN RESPECT OF HIS OR HER TERMS AND CONDITIONS. IF THE BARGAINING PROCESS IS TO BE CONDUCTED BEYOND THE ENTERPRISE LEVEL, PROBLEMS REGARDING THE RECOGNITION OF WORKERS' ORGANIZATIONS OR TRADE UNIONS WOULD ARISE. THIS IS PARTICULARLY SO GIVEN THE RELATIVELY LOW RATE OF UNION PARTICIPATION IN HONG KONG. AS AT THE END OF 1992, ONLY 21 PER CENT OF THE WORKFORCE BELONGED TO TRADE UNIONS. ANY AGREEMENT REACHED THROUGH COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD BENEFIT ONLY A SMALL PROPORTION OF THE WORKFORCE IN THE PARTICULAR TRADE OR INDUSTRY IN QUESTION. ON THE OTHER HAND, SERIOUS PROBLEMS WOULD ARISE IF SUCH AGREEMENTS WERE TO BE EXTENDED, THROUGH LEGAL PROVISIONS, TO THOSE WHOSE VIEWS ARE NOT REPRESENTED BY TRADE UNIONS.

THUS, INSTEAD OF ADOPTING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ON A FORMAL AND INSTITUTIONALIZED BASIS, THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT HAS ADOPTED THE ALTERNATIVE APPROACH OF PROMOTING VOLUNTARY CONCILIATION OF DISPUTES AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF JOINT CONSULTATIVE MACHINERY AT THE ENTERPRISE LEVEL.

WE FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT THIS APPROACH HAS ACHIEVED THE DESIRED RESULTS. IN LARGE ENTERPRISES SUCH AS PUBLIC UTILITY COMPANIES, MACHINERIES FOR JOINT CONSULTATION OFTEN EXIST WHEREBY ELECTED EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVES MEET REGULARLY WITH THE MANAGEMENT TO DISCUSS VARIOUS MATTERS RELATING TO EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS, WELFARE AND WORK SAFETY.

THERE IS ALSO A WELL-ESTABLISHED AND ELABORATE STAFF CONSULTATIVE MACHINERY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE. OUR EXPERIENCE HAS GENERALLY PROVED THAT JOINT CONSULTATION IS AN EFFECTIVE MACHINERY FOR VOLUNTARY LABOUR-MANAGEMENT DIALOGUE AND NEGOTIATION AT THE PLANT LEVEL.

SEVERAL MEMBERS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT WE SHOULD INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO GIVE EFFECT TO THE CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING. I SUBMIT THAT LEGISLATION IS NEITHER A PREREQUISITE FOR THE SUCCESSFUL OPERATION OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING NOR A REQUIREMENT OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONVENTION NO. 98 CONCERNING THE APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THE RIGHT TO ORGANISE AND TO BARGAIN COLLECTIVELY.

ARTICLE 4 OF THE CONVENTION STATES THAT -

"MEASURES APPROPRIATE TO NATIONAL CONDITIONS SHALL BE TAKEN, WHERE NECESSARY, TO ENCOURAGE AND PROMOTE THE FULL DEVELOPMENT AND UTILIZATION OF MACHINERY FOR VOLUNTARY NEGOTIATION BETWEEN EMPLOYERS OR EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATIONS AND WORKERS' ORGANIZATIONS, WITH A VIEW TO THE REGULATION OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT BY MEANS OF COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS."

/THIS ARTICLE

THIS ARTICLE RECOGNISES THAT THERE CAN BE WIDE VARIATIONS IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF DIFFERENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES AND THAT THERE CAN BE DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO THE NEGOTIATION AND REGULATION OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT. WHILE LEGISLATION IS NO DOUBT ONE WAY OF PROMOTING COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, OTHER MEASURES APPROPRIATE TO LOCAL CONDITIONS CAN ALSO FULFIL THE SAME OBJECTIVE. AND THE APPROACH ADOPTED BY THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT IS ENTIRELY CONSISTENT WITH OUR OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE CONVENTION.

MR LAU CHIN-SHEK HAS ALSO TOUCHED ON THE QUESTION OF THE PROTECTION OF EMPLOYEES INVOLVED IN TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES. THIS QUESTION IS ALSO COVERED BY INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONVENTION NO. 98. PART IVA OF THE HONG KONG EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE PROVIDES PROTECTION AGAINST ANTI-UNION DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT, IN A MANNER WHICH IS CONSISTENT WITH THE PROVISIONS OF CONVENTION NO. 98. NONETHELESS, WE ARE TAKING A FURTHER LOOK AT THIS QUESTION, AND QUITE A FEW OTHERS, IN THE CONTEXT OF THE REVIEW WHICH I AM UNDERTAKING TO SEE WHAT LESSONS CAN BE LEARNT FROM THE CATHAY PACIFIC DISPUTE WHICH OCCURRED EARLIER THIS YEAR.

I CONCLUDE BY GOING BACK TO WHERE I STARTED. HONG KONG HAS ONE OF THE BEST RECORDS IN THE WORLD IN THE FIELD OF EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS. OUR APPROACH AND OUR PRACTICES ARE THEREFORE WELL TRIED AND WELL PROVEN. WHILE OUR MINDS SHOULD CERTAINLY NOT BE CLOSED TO ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES, I DO SUGGEST THAT WE SHOULD BE EXTREMELY CAREFUL IN CONSIDERING THEIR ADOPTION, SO AS TO ENSURE THAT ANY CHANGES WE MAKE WILL TRULY BE FOR THE BETTER.

THANK YOU, MR PRESIDENT.

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BILL ON NOISE CONTROL

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A BILL THAT SEEKS TO MAKE HONG KONG A LESS NOISY CITY IS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE NOISE CONTROL (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, SAID THE CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY IN OR NEAR BUILT-UP AREAS WAS OFTEN A CONSIDERABLE NUISANCE TO NEARBY RESIDENTS.

DURING THE PAST THREE YEARS, THERE HAVE BEEN AN AVERAGE OF 1,200 ACTIVE CONSTRUCTION SITES IN THE TERRITORY AT ANY ONE TIME.

THE BILL PROVIDES THE BANNING OF PARTICULARLY NOISY CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES DURING THE RESTRICTED HOURS IN DESIGNATED AREAS WHICH ARE ESSENTIALLY EITHER POPULATED OR PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE.

THESE ACTIVITIES INCLUDED THE ERECTION AND DISMANTLING OF FORMWORK OR SCAFFOLDING; LOADING, UNLOADING OR HANDLING OF RUBBLE, STEEL BARS, WOOD OR SCAFFOLDING MATERIAL; AND HAMMERING.

/THE ISSUE

THE ISSUE OF PERMITS FOR THE USE OF CERTAIN POWERED MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT IN DESIGNATED AREAS WILL BE MORE RESTRICTIVE.

ACTIVITIES WHICH WILL COME UNDER TIGHTER CONTROL INCLUDE THE OPERATION OF DUMP TRUCKS, VIBRATORY POKERS, CONCRETE MIXER LORRIES, BULLDOZERS AND HAND-HELD PERCUSSIVE BREAKERS.

UNDER THE NEW SYSTEM, A PERMIT WILL NOT BE ISSUED FOR WORK DURING THE RESTRICTED HOURS UNLESS IT IS FOR ESSENTIAL PURPOSES OR HAS IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COMMUNITY, SUCH AS EMERGENCY WORK ON UTILITY OR TRANSPORT SYSTEMS.

"THE GENERAL EFFECT OF THIS WILL BE TO BAN VIRTUALLY ALL NON-ESSENTIAL NOISY CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY IN THE BUILT-UP AREAS DURING THE NIGHT AND HOLIDAYS, THEREBY PROVIDING MUCH-NEEDED RELIEF TO MANY RESIDENTS WHO WOULD OTHERWISE CONTINUE TO SUFFER FROM NOISY CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES," MR EASON SAID.

THE BILL WILL EMPOWER THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS TO ESTABLISH THE DESIGNATED AREAS, TO PRESCRIBE THE EXACT TYPES OF CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY THAT REQUIRE A PERMIT, AND TO ISSUE TECHNICAL MEMORANDA FOR DESIGNATED AREAS.

MR EASON SAID THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION HAS THE SUPPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY HAS ALSO BEEN CONSULTED.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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PROPOSAL TO ADJOURN COURT CASES IN HEAVY RAINSTORMS

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A BILL THAT SEEKS TO PROVIDE FOR THE ADJOURNMENT OF JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS DURING A HEAVY RAINSTORM WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS (ADJOURNMENT DURING GALE WARNINGS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, SAID THE JUDICIARY WOULD FACE LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS IN TRANSFERRING PRISONERS OR PERSONS UNDER DETENTION FROM REMOTE LOCATIONS TO COURTS DURING A HEAVY RAINSTORM.

"IT IS THEREFORE CONSIDERED THAT JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS SHOULD BE ADJOURNED DURING A 'RED' OR A 'BLACK' SIGNAL, AS IN THE EVENT OF A TROPICAL CYCLONE SIGNAL NO. 8, 9 OR 10," HE EXPLAINED.

THE 'RED' AND 'BLACK' RAINSTORM WARNINGS ARE PUBLIC WARNING SIGNALS OPERATED BY THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY SINCE LAST SUMMER.

WHEN THE 'RED' WARNING IS ISSUED, THE PUBLIC ARE INFORMED THAT HEAVY RAIN HAS CAUSED OR COULD CAUSE SERIOUS FLOODING AND TRAFFIC CONGESTION.

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IN THE EVENT OF A 'BLACK' WARNING, THE PUBLIC ARE ADVISED TO STAY HOME OR TO TAKE SHELTER IN A SAFE PLACE, AS THE POOR WEATHER HAS CAUSED SERIOUS FLOODING.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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BUILDINGS (AMENDMENT) BILL

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A BILL THAT SEEKS TO BETTER DEFINE THE POWERS OF THE BUILDING AUTHORITY AND STREAMLINE EXISTING PROCEDURES IS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BUILDINGS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, SAID THE BILL PROPOSED TO TRANSFER THE REGULATION-MAKING POWER FOR TECHNICAL AND PROCEDURAL MATTERS FROM THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL TO THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS.

IN VIEW OF THE INCREASINGLY COMPLEX NATURE OF BUILDING PROJECTS AND THE INCREASED CASELOAD DUE TO STEPPED-UP PROSECUTION, MORE TIME IS GENERALLY REQUIRED FOR THE INVESTIGATION OF POSSIBLE OFFENCES UNDER THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE.

THE TIME LIMIT FOR COMMENCING PROSECUTION IS PROPOSED TO BE EXTENDED FROM SIX MONTHS TO 12 MONTHS.

THE BILL ALSO SEEKS TO DELETE PRESCRIBED FORMS IN THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OF WHICH MOST ARE ADMINISTRATIVE IN NATURE AND IMPOSE ADDITIONAL GEOTECHNICAL CONTROL ON BUILDING WORKS IN AN AREA IN MA ON SHAN.

THE BILL ALSO PROPOSES TO LOCALISE THE QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS FOR PROFESSIONALS TO MEET HONG KONG'S OBLIGATION IN THE CURRENT URUGUAY ROUND OF MULTILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN SERVICES OF THE GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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CONTRACTING OUT OF PARKING METER MANAGEMENT
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TWO BILLS THAT SEEK TO PROVIDE FOR THE CONTRACTING OUT OF THE PARKING METER MANAGEMENT WERE INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993 AND THE FIXED PENALTY (TRAFFIC CONTRAVENTIONS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR MICHAEL LEUNG, SAID CONTRACTING OUT THE MANAGEMENT OF PARKING METERS TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR WOULD IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND BRING ABOUT BETTER STANDARDS OF SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC.

HE SAID GOVERNMENT WOULD RETAIN CONTROL OVER THE APPROVAL OF METER TYPES, CHARGES, THE REMOVAL OF METERS, THEIR LOCATIONS AND FUTURE EXPANSION.

"THE POLICE WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE ENFORCEMENT ACTION AGAINST PARKING OFFENCES AS AT PRESENT," HE SAID.

THE ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993 EMPOWERS THE PRIVATE CONTRACTOR TO MANAGE AND MAINTAIN PARKING METERS.

THE FIXED PENALTY (TRAFFIC CONTRAVENTIONS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993 ALLOWS THE PRIVATE CONTRACTOR TO SUSPEND THE USE OF PARKING SPACES, FOR OPERATIONAL REASONS.

AT PRESENT, THE GOVERNMENT OWNS AND OPERATES ABOUT 13,000 PARKING METERS.

DEBATES ON THE BILLS WERE ADJOURNED.

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DEBT RECOVERING PROCEDURES EFFECTIVE
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THE GOVERNMENT IS SATISFIED THAT THE PROCEDURES FOR SEEKING LEGAL RECOVERY OF DEBTS, AND THE POWERS OF THE COURT IN SUCH CASES, ARE EFFECTIVE IN ENABLING PLAINTIFFS TO RECOVER DEBTS, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID.

"THE ADMINISTRATION HAS NOT, THEREFORE, GIVEN ANY CONSIDERATION TO SIMPLIFYING THESE LEGAL PROCEDURES," HE SAID.

MR ASPREY WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON JAMES TO IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

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"WE ARE HOWEVER CONCERNED ABOUT ALLEGATIONS OF DEBT COLLECTION COMPANIES RESORTING TO ILLEGAL MEANS TO RECOVER DEBTS, ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THE REASON MONEY LENDERS EMPLOY DEBT COLLECTING COMPANIES IS BECAUSE THEY ARE DISSATISFIED WITH THE LEGAL PROCEDURES INVOLVED IN THE RECOVERY OF DEBTS.

"WE ARE NOW EXAMINING THE NEED FOR SOME FORM OF REGULATION OF DEBT COLLECTING COMPANIES," HE SAID.

THE EXISTING LEGAL PROCEDURES FOR RECOVERY OF DEBTS ARE CONTAINED IN VARIOUS ORDINANCES: THE SMALL CLAIMS TRIBUNAL ORDINANCE FOR CLAIMS BELOW \$15,000, THE DISTRICT COURT ORDINANCE FOR OTHER CLAIMS BELOW \$120,000 AND THE SUPREME COURT ORDINANCE FOR ANY OTHER CLAIMS.

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LEGCO TOLD OF ELECTIONS TALKS

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THE AIM OF THE BRITISH SIDE IN THE PEKING TALKS IS TO ACHIEVE AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE CHINESE SIDE ON THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE 1994/95 ELECTIONS WHICH ARE OPEN, FAIR AND ACCEPTABLE TO THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SZE, WHILE REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY REV THE HON FUNG CHI-WOOD IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

"IF AN UNDERSTANDING IS REACHED WITH THE CHINESE SIDE, WE WILL RECOMMEND IT TO THIS COUNCIL.

"THERE IS NO QUESTION OF SACRIFICING THE INTEREST OF HONG KONG," HE SAID.

ON APRIL 13 THIS YEAR, THE CHINESE AND BRITISH SIDES AGREED THAT THE GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TWO COUNTRIES WOULD HOLD TALKS ON THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE 1994/95 ELECTIONS IN HONG KONG IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SINO-BRITISH JOINT DECLARATION, THE PRINCIPLE OF CONVERGENCE WITH THE BASIC LAW AND THE RELEVANT AGREEMENTS AND UNDERSTANDINGS REACHED BETWEEN CHINA AND BRITAIN.

TWO ROUNDS OF TALKS HAVE SINCE BEEN HELD IN PEKING; THE FIRST ON APRIL 22-24, AND THE SECOND ON APRIL 28-29.

MR SZE SAID THE TWO GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES HAD AGREED TO HOLD A THIRD ROUND OF TALKS IN PEKING ON MAY 21-23.

"AS AGREED WITH THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT, THE CONTENT OF THESE DISCUSSIONS ARE CONFIDENTIAL. THEIR SCOPE IS DEFINED IN THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF APRIL 13.

"THERE ARE NO PRE-SET DETAILED AGENDA FOR EACH ROUND OF MEETING," HE SAID.

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\$2M ON CANCER PREVENTION EDUCATION

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THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH EXPECTS TO SPEND ABOUT \$2 MILLION IN THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR ON CANCER PREVENTION EDUCATION WITH THE FOCUS ON LUNG AND LIVER CANCERS, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THIS FIGURE DOES NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE ADVICE AND COUNSELLING PROVIDED TO THE PUBLIC ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS BY HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS IN GOVERNMENT CLINICS AND THE LIKE.

NOR DOES IT INCLUDE EXPENDITURE INCURRED BY OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS OR AGENCIES.

SPEAKING IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HUANG CHEN-HA IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MRS WONG SAID ANTI-CANCER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES WERE CONDUCTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN COLLABORATION WITH OTHER DEPARTMENTS, PROFESSIONAL BODIES AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES.

THE DEPARTMENT'S CENTRAL HEALTH EDUCATION UNIT, IN PARTICULAR, PROMOTES AND FACILITATES COMMUNITY EFFORTS IN ANTI-CANCER EDUCATION THROUGH THE PROVISION OF A WHOLE RANGE OF ADVICE AND AUDIO-VISUAL RESOURCE MATERIALS TO SCHOOLS AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES.

IN ADDITION, THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH DIVISION OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT PROVIDES PROFESSIONAL ADVICE AND EDUCATION TO WORKERS EXPOSED TO OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS WHILE THE COUNCIL ON SMOKING AND HEALTH (COSH) RUNS HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAMMES HIGHLIGHTING THE DANGERS OF CIGARETTE SMOKING.

"THESE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES INCLUDE EXHIBITIONS, SEMINARS, PUBLICATIONS AND TRAINING FOR FACILITATORS AND ARE TARGETED AT THE GENERAL PUBLIC, AT YOUTH AND AT GROUPS KNOWN TO BE PARTICULAR AT RISK," MRS WONG SAID.

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GOVERNMENT CONCERNED ABOUT LANDSLIDES

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALL ALONG BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT LANDSLIDES AND IN PARTICULAR THE ACCIDENTS INVOLVING SQUATTERS ON HILLSIDES, THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON LEONG CHE-HUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR BLAKE SAID SINCE JULY 1992, THE GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEERING OFFICE HAD BEEN RE-INSPECTING ABOUT 70 SQUATTER VILLAGES IN THE NEW TERRITORIES. THE STUDY OF AREAS NOT PREVIOUSLY INSPECTED WOULD START IN JULY.

AT THE END OF MARCH, 35 VILLAGES HAD BEEN RE-INSPECTED AND AROUND 4,500 HUTS HAD BEEN RECOMMENDED FOR CLEARANCE, HE SAID, ADDING THAT THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT WAS DEVELOPING A PROGRAMME FOR CLEARANCE.

MR BLAKE SAID GOVERNMENT SLOPES AND RETAINING WALLS FOUND TO BE UNSATISFACTORY WERE UPGRADED UNDER THE LANDSLIP PREVENTIVE MEASURES (LPM) PROGRAMME. THOSE ON PRIVATE LAND MUST BE UPGRADED BY THE PRIVATE OWNERS.

DURING THE 1992/93 FINANCIAL YEAR, STATUTORY ORDERS WERE SERVED ON PRIVATE LOT OWNERS IN 31 CASES.

THE GOVERNMENT HAD COMPLETED UPGRADING WORKS ON 43 GOVERNMENT SLOPES AND RETAINING WALLS WHILE WORKS COMMENCED ON 61 OTHERS.

THE EXPENDITURE UNDER THE LPM PROGRAMMES DURING THE LAST FINANCIAL YEAR AMOUNTED TO ABOUT \$73 MILLION FOR SLOPE WORKS.

"IN THIS FINANCIAL YEAR, WORK WILL BE IN PROGRESS ON 67 SLOPES AND RETAINING WALLS UNDER THE LPM PROGRAMME.

"IN ADDITION, A GREAT DEAL OF SLOPE WORK, AT A COST OF SEVERAL HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS PER YEAR, IS CARRIED OUT IN BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS IN ASSOCIATION WITH NEW PROJECTS," MR BLAKE SAID.

THE GOVERNMENT IS CURRENTLY UNDERTAKING A PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN TO ENCOURAGE THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR SLOPE MAINTENANCE TO CARRY OUT THE NECESSARY ROUTINE INSPECTIONS AND MINOR REPAIR WORKS SO AS TO PREVENT LANDSLIPS, HE ADDED.

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SCHOOLS TO DECIDE ON INSTRUCTION MEDIUM BY 1994/95
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THE GOVERNMENT IS WORKING, ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE EDUCATION COMMISSION, TO PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK WHEREBY SCHOOLS WILL DECIDE WHETHER TO BECOME ENGLISH-MEDIUM, CHINESE-MEDIUM OR TO OPERATE BOTH CHINESE AND ENGLISH CLASSES, STARTING WITH SECONDARY ONE FROM THE 1994/95 SCHOOL YEAR.

THE RECENT DELAY IN INTRODUCING THE TARGET AND TARGET-RELATED ASSESSMENT (TTRA) SCHEME WILL NOT AFFECT THIS TIME-TABLE.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TIK CHI-YUEN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR CHAN EXPLAINED THAT ALTHOUGH THE INTRODUCTION OF TTRA WOULD HAVE PROVIDED USEFUL INFORMATION ON THE LANGUAGE ABILITIES OF THE INDIVIDUAL CHILD AND THE OVERALL STUDENT INTAKE SO THAT PARENTS AND SCHOOLS COULD CHOOSE AN APPROPRIATE MEDIUM RATIONALLY, IT REPRESENTED ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL SOURCES OF SUCH INFORMATION.

"INDEED, EDUCATION COMMISSION REPORT NO. 4 (ECR4) RECOGNISED FROM THE OUTSET THAT TTRA WOULD NOT BE READY FOR USE WHEN SCHOOLS WERE FIRST SCHEDULED TO MAKE THE CHOICE AND THAT, INITIALLY, THE RESULTS OF THE SECURE HONG KONG ATTAINMENT TEST (HKAT) WOULD PROVIDE SCHOOLS AND PARENTS WITH THE NECESSARY OBJECTIVE GUIDANCE," HE NOTED.

"ECR4 ALSO STRESSED THAT, EVEN AFTER THE INTRODUCTION OF THE SECURE HKAT AND TTRA, THE ALLOCATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES WOULD STILL BE BASED ON THE PRESENT SYSTEM WHICH, IN TURN, IS BASED ON INTERNAL ASSESSMENTS COVERING THE WHOLE PRIMARY CURRICULUM SCALED BY THE ACADEMIC APTITUDE TEST.

"IN THE LIGHT OF THIS BACKGROUND, THE GOVERNMENT SEES NO NEED TO REVISE THE TIME-TABLE FOR SCHOOLS TO DECIDE ON AN APPROPRIATE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION, EVEN IF WE HAVE DECIDED TO DEFER THE INTRODUCTION OF TTRA."

MR CHAN ALSO DISMISSED THE SUGGESTION THAT THE POLICY ON THE CHOICE OF LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS WOULD AGGRAVATE THE TREND IN PLACING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ABOVE THAT OF CHINESE.

HE SAID THE POLICY RECOGNISED THAT STUDENTS COULD LEARN BETTER IN THEIR MOTHER TONGUE AND THEREFORE SOUGHT TO ENCOURAGE AND BRING ABOUT MORE LEARNING IN CHINESE.

"AND IT CHALLENGES EDUCATORS AND PARENTS ALIKE TO ABANDON THE POPULAR BUT MISTAKEN BELIEF THAT OPERATING ENGLISH MEDIUM SCHOOLS OR SENDING THEIR CHILDREN TO SUCH SCHOOLS IS NECESSARILY THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

"BUT IT ALSO SEEKS TO GIVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO THOSE WHO HAVE THE PROVEN ABILITY TO LEARN EFFECTIVELY IN ENGLISH TO DO SO," MR CHAN ADDED.

TURNING TO THE RECOGNITION OF THE CHINESE LANGUAGE IN THE COMMUNITY, MR CHAN SAID PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS COULD NOW BE TAKEN IN EITHER CHINESE OR ENGLISH EXCEPT IN THE LANGUAGE SUBJECTS THEMSELVES.

PROFICIENCY IN CHINESE IS ALSO AN ENTRY REQUIREMENT FOR MOST CIVIL SERVICE POSTS WHILE A PASS IN CHINESE AND ENGLISH IS REQUIRED FOR ADMISSION TO ALL TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

IN ADDITION, MR CHAN SAID, SPECIAL COURSES AND MEASURES WOULD BE INTRODUCED THIS YEAR TO HELP CANDIDATES WHO HAD STUDIED THROUGH THE CHINESE MEDIUM TO SATISFY THE USE OF ENGLISH REQUIREMENT FOR ADMISSION TO TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

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OVER 2,000 ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS CAUGHT AT WORKPLACE
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THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) SAID 2,291 ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS FROM CHINA WERE ARRESTED AT PLACES OF WORK IN THE YEAR ENDING LAST MONTH.

THE FIGURE WAS GIVEN WHEN HE REPLIED TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ALLEN LEE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

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EMPLOYMENT VISAS FOR OVERSEAS WORKERS

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THE NUMBER OF PERSONS ALLOWED ENTRY INTO HONG KONG TO TAKE UP EMPLOYMENT IN THE PAST THREE YEARS TOTALLED 48,762 IN 1990, 44,351 IN 1991 AND 61,851 IN 1992, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LAU CHIN-SHEK, MR CHAN SAID THE NUMBERS WERE CLASSIFIED UNDER SEVERAL CATEGORIES.

UNDER THE GENERAL LABOUR IMPORTATION SCHEME, 12,843 PERSONS WERE GRANTED EMPLOYMENT VISAS IN 1990 AND 11,227 IN 1992. NO QUOTA WAS ANNOUNCED DURING 1991.

AS FOR THE SPECIAL IMPORTATION OF LABOUR SCHEME FOR THE NEW AIRPORT PROJECTS, 34 EMPLOYMENT VISAS WERE ACTUALLY ISSUED IN 1991 AND 352 IN 1992.

APART FROM THE ABOVE TWO CATEGORIES, 11,859 PERSONS WITH SPECIAL SKILL FROM OVERSEAS HAD BEEN ISSUED WORK PERMITS IN 1990. THE CORRESPONDING FIGURES FOR 1991 AND 1992 WERE 13,073 AND 12,941 RESPECTIVELY.

MR CHAN ALSO NOTED THAT 2,746 PERSONS WERE ALLOWED ENTRY FROM OVERSEAS TO UNDERTAKE TRAINING IN HONG KONG IN 1991 AND THAT FOR 1992 WAS 4,342.

OF THE REMAINING EMPLOYMENT VISAS ISSUED, THE MAJORITY WAS GRANTED TO DOMESTIC HELPERS - 24,060 IN 1990, 28,498 IN 1991 AND 32,989 IN 1992.

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LOCAL RECRUITMENT OF NURSES SATISFACTORY

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BOTH THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY AND THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH ARE SATISFIED WITH THE OUTCOME OF THEIR LOCAL RECRUITMENT DRIVES FOR NURSES, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG, MRS WONG SAID OTHER THAN THE 150 OVERSEAS NURSES APPROVED BY THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION IN OCTOBER 1990, NO OVERSEAS RECRUITMENT EXERCISE WAS BEING CONSIDERED FOR THE TIME BEING.

SHE RECALLED THAT THE APPROVAL WAS AN INTERIM MEASURE AT THAT TIME TO ALLEVIATE THE PREVAILING SHORTAGE OF NURSES.

"THE GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH TOWARDS THE RECRUITMENT OF OVERSEAS NURSES IS DEVELOPED IN LINE WITH ITS OVERALL RECRUITMENT POLICY," SHE SAID, ADDING THAT CONSIDERATION WOULD NORMALLY NOT BE GIVEN TO OVERSEAS RECRUITMENT UNLESS THERE WAS DIFFICULTY IN LOCAL RECRUITMENT.

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ASKED ABOUT THE CRITERIA IN ACCREDITING THE QUALIFICATIONS OF OVERSEAS NURSES, THE SECRETARY SAID ALL NURSES, IRRESPECTIVE OF THE COUNTRY IN WHICH THEY OBTAINED THEIR TRAINING, MUST APPLY FOR REGISTRATION WITH THE NURSING BOARD BEFORE THEY WERE ALLOWED TO PRACTISE IN HONG KONG.

"ALL APPLICATIONS ARE ASSESSED BY THE NURSING BOARD HAVING REGARD TO THE THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL TRAINING OF INDIVIDUAL APPLICANTS, AS WELL AS THE FACILITIES AVAILABLE AT THE INSTITUTION PROVIDING THEIR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION," SHE SAID.

"APPLICANTS MAY ALSO BE REQUIRED TO PROVE THEIR COMPETENCY IN NURSING BY UNDERGOING EXAMINATION CONDUCTED BY THE NURSING BOARD, AND TO MAKE UP THEIR CLINICAL DEFICIENCIES IN RECOGNISED HOSPITALS FOR SPECIFIED PERIODS," SHE ADDED.

THE SAME CRITERIA ARE APPLIED IN DETERMINING THE DUTIES AND SALARY SCALE OF LOCAL AND OVERSEAS NURSES.

"ALLOCATION OF DUTIES IS BASED ON RELEVANT EXPERIENCE IN THE PARTICULAR SPECIALTY WHILE THE SALARY SCALE IS DETERMINED WITH RECOGNITION TO PREVIOUS POST-QUALIFICATION EXPERIENCE," SHE SAID.

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YOUTH ADVISED TO STAY AWAY FROM DRUGS

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VARIOUS EDUCATION AND PUBLICITY PROGRAMMES ARE IN PLACE TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE STAY AWAY FROM HARMFUL DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON FREDERICK FUNG, HE SAID A NEW SERIES OF ANNOUNCEMENTS IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST, POSTERS AND LEAFLETS WOULD BE RELEASED IN THE SUMMER FOR TELEVISION AND RADIO BROADCAST.

DRUG EDUCATION TALKS, WHICH HAVE BEEN CONDUCTED AT SECONDARY SCHOOLS ON A REGULAR BASIS SINCE 1984, WILL BE EXTENDED TO PRIMARY 6 STUDENTS FROM SEPTEMBER.

"WE ALSO PLAN TO ORGANISE DRUG EDUCATION WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS, SOCIAL WORKERS, AND FINAL-YEAR STUDENTS IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION ON A REGULAR BASIS.

"THESE WORKSHOPS WILL BETTER EQUIP THESE FRONT-LINE WORKERS TO GUIDE AND HELP YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER THEIR CHARGE," MR ASPREY SAID.

AN AUTOMATED DRUG ABUSE TELEPHONE ENQUIRY SERVICE HAS BEEN INTRODUCED SINCE FEBRUARY TO PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF 12 COMMON DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES OF ABUSE.

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"WE HOPE THAT THIS TELEPHONE HOTLINE WILL ENCOURAGE CALLERS TO STAY AWAY FROM DRUGS BECAUSE IT WILL REFER THEM TO COUNSELLING AND TREATMENT SERVICE AS APPROPRIATE," HE SAID.

IN RESPONSE TO A CHANGE IN THE PATTERN OF DRUG ABUSE, AND ON THE ADVICE OF THE ACTION COMMITTEE AGAINST NARCOTICS (ACAN), A PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING CENTRE FOR PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCE ABUSERS, MORE COMMONLY KNOWN AS PS 33, WAS SET UP INITIALLY WITH GRANTS FROM THE LOTTERIES FUND IN 1988.

SUBVENTION HAS BEEN PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT SINCE 1993, MR ASPREY SAID.

ITS OPERATION IS CLOSELY MONITORED BY A WORKING GROUP ESTABLISHED BY THE ACAN SUB-COMMITTEE ON TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION; ON WHICH THE AGENCY IS REPRESENTED.

THE WORKING GROUP ADVISES ON THE DIRECTION OF THE PROVISION OF SERVICES AND RESOURCE NEEDS AS WELL AS HELPS IN ENSURING THE PROVISION OF ADEQUATE AND EFFECTIVE SERVICES.

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CONTROL ON LIFTING APPLIANCES TO BE STREAMLINED

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THE GOVERNMENT IS DRAWING UP LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS TO BRING THE CONTROL ON ALL LIFTING APPLIANCES UNDER ONE LAW, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

AT PRESENT, THE OPERATION AND USE OF LIFTING APPLIANCES ARE CONTROLLED UNDER THE FACTORIES AND INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS (LIFTING APPLIANCES AND LIFTING GEAR) REGULATIONS IN RESPECT OF INDUSTRIAL UNDERTAKINGS AND THE CONSTRUCTION SITES (SAFETY) REGULATIONS IN RESPECT OF CONSTRUCTION SITES.

"LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS ARE BEING DRAWN UP TO STREAMLINE THE SYSTEM BY BRINGING THE CONTROL OF ALL LIFTING APPLIANCES UNDER THE FORMER REGULATIONS," MR CHAN SAID IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON SAMUEL WONG PING-WAI.

"THE AMENDMENTS WILL ALSO PROVIDE A MORE PRECISE LEGAL DEFINITION OF 'COMPETENT' AS WELL AS CLEARLY SPECIFY THE QUALIFICATIONS OF A 'COMPETENT EXAMINER' AND HIS DUTY TO ISSUE CERTIFICATES OF EXAMINATION.

"IN ADDITION, THE REGULATIONS WILL BE AMENDED TO SPECIFY THAT A CRANE OPERATOR MUST HOLD A VALID CERTIFICATE ISSUED BY THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TRAINING AUTHORITY OR ANY OTHER CERTIFICATE RECOGNISED BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR."

MR CHAN EXPLAINED THAT A CRANE OPERATOR WITH A RECOGNISED CERTIFICATE AND THE RELEVANT TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE WOULD BE CONSIDERED A "COMPETENT PERSON" TO CONDUCT THE WEEKLY INSPECTIONS OF THE CRANES OR OTHER LIFTING APPLIANCES.

CONTRACTORS USUALLY ENGAGE ENGINEERING AND SURVEYING FIRMS FOR THE PURPOSE OF APPOINTING COMPETENT EXAMINERS TO CARRY OUT THE TESTING AND EXAMINATION OF LIFTING APPLIANCES.

IN ADDITION, THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT PLAYS AN ENFORCEMENT AND SUPERVISORY ROLE TO ENSURE THAT CONTRACTORS, COMPETENT EXAMINERS AND COMPETENT PERSONS CARRY OUT THEIR LEGAL OBLIGATIONS PROPERLY.

MR CHAN NOTED THAT UNDER THE LAW, A COMPETENT EXAMINER OR COMPETENT PERSON MUST DELIVER THE REPORT OF A TEST OR EXAMINATION TO THE CONTRACTOR AND SEND A COPY OF THE REPORT TO THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR SHOULD HE DISCOVER THAT THE APPLIANCE CANNOT BE USED SAFELY UNLESS REPAIRS ARE MADE.

"THE COMPETENT EXAMINER/PERSON WHO FAILS TO DELIVER THE RELEVANT REPORT WITHIN A REASONABLE TIME TO THE CONTRACTOR COMMITS AN OFFENCE AND IS LIABLE ON CONVICTION TO A MAXIMUM FINE OF \$10,000," MR CHAN SAID.

"SHOULD HE DELIVER A FALSE REPORT TO THE CONTRACTOR, A MAXIMUM FINE OF \$50,000 AND IMPRISONMENT FOR 12 MONTHS MAY BE IMPOSED UPON CONVICTION."

THE SECRETARY ALSO SPOKE OF THE STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS OF THE APPOINTING CONSTRUCTION COMPANY WHICH INCLUDE:

- * HAVING A CRANE INSPECTED WEEKLY BY A COMPETENT PERSON;
- * HAVING A CRANE TESTED BY A COMPETENT EXAMINER AFTER EACH ERECTION OR ADJUSTMENT INVOLVING THE ANCHORAGE OF THE CRANE;
- * HAVING A CRANE THOROUGHLY EXAMINED BY A COMPETENT EXAMINER IN EVERY 14 MONTHS OR WHEN IT HAS BEEN ALTERED OR REPAIRED SUBSTANTIALLY, WHICHEVER IS EARLIER;
- * HAVING A CRANE TESTED AND THOROUGHLY EXAMINED BY A COMPETENT EXAMINER IN EVERY FOUR YEARS OR WHEN IT HAS BEEN ALTERED OR REPAIRED SUBSTANTIALLY, WHICHEVER IS EARLIER; AND
- * OBTAINING THE RELEVANT SAFETY REPORTS COMPLETED BY A COMPETENT EXAMINER OR COMPETENT PERSON IN RESPECT OF THE ABOVE TESTS, EXAMINATIONS AND INSPECTIONS.

"THE CONTRACTOR WHO FAILS TO FULFIL THE ABOVE LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES WILL BE LIABLE ON CONVICTION TO A MAXIMUM PENALTY OF \$50,000," MR CHAN ADDED.

STUDY ON OPEN STORAGE USES

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THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT IS COMMISSIONING A PLANNING STUDY ON OVERALL DEMAND OF OPEN STORAGE USES AND THEIR SITE AND LOCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS.

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

ON THE GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGY TO CONTAIN AND REDUCE THE PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE USE OR ABUSE OF AGRICULTURAL LAND FOR THE STORAGE OF CONTAINERS AND SCRAPPED VEHICLES, MR EASON SAID THE DEVELOPMENT PERMISSION AREA (DPA) PLANS PROVIDED A BASIS FOR THE CONTROL OF LAND-USE IN THE NEW TERRITORIES.

SINCE THE ENACTMENT OF THE TOWN PLANNING (AMENDMENT) ORDINANCE IN 1991, 31 DPA'S HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED.

"PERMISSION FROM THE TOWN PLANNING BOARD IS NOW REQUIRED FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT INSIDE AREAS COVERED BY DPA'S BUT NOT ZONED FOR THE PURPOSES PLANNED, AND UNAUTHORISED DEVELOPMENT IS SUBJECT TO ENFORCEMENT ACTION," MR EASON SAID.

FURTHER PROGRESS CAN BE EXPECTED AS THE DPA PLANS ARE CONVERTED INTO OUTLINE ZONING PLANS IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

REGARDING THE NON-CONFORMING USES WHICH EXISTED BEFORE THE GAZETTING OF THE DPA PLANS, MR EASON SAID AMORTISATION AS PROPOSED IN THE CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT ON THE COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE TOWN PLANNING ORDINANCE AND OTHER PROPOSALS SUCH AS UPZONING MIGHT HELP PROVIDE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM IN THE LONGER TERM.

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"FAST TRACK" PROCEDURE USED BY LAW REFORM COMMISSION

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THE LAW REFORM COMMISSION HAD COMPLETED TWO REFERENCES BY THE "FAST TRACK" PROCEDURE, WHICH DID NOT INVOLVE THE ASSISTANCE OF A SUB-COMMITTEE, IN AN AVERAGE OF 29 MONTHS, THE ACTING ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON JOHN WOOD, SAID.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON EMILY LAU IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR WOOD SAID ONE REFERENCE WAS CURRENTLY BEING CONSIDERED UNDER THE "FAST TRACK" PROCEDURE, WHILE TERMS OF REFERENCE HAD BEEN SIGNED FOR A FURTHER REFERENCE WHICH WOULD BE DEALT WITH IN THE SAME WAY.

HE SAID SUBJECTS FOR REVIEW BY THE COMMISSION WERE CHOSEN BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OR THE CHIEF JUSTICE.

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"THERE ARE NO SET CRITERIA WHICH ARE TO BE FOLLOWED WHEN THE CHOICE OF TOPICS IS MADE.

"THE CHIEF JUSTICE AND THE ATTORNEY GENERAL USE THEIR JUDGMENT TO DECIDE WHICH SUBJECTS ARE MOST DESERVING OF REVIEW," HE SAID.

ONCE TOPICS HAD BEEN FORMALLY REFERRED TO THE COMMISSION, MR WOOD SAID, THEY WERE GENERALLY DEALT WITH IN THE ORDER IN WHICH THEY WERE REFERRED, AND AS STAFF RESOURCES BECAME AVAILABLE ON COMPLETION OF EARLIER REFERENCES.

"THERE ARE SEVEN TOPICS CURRENTLY BEFORE THE COMMISSION, EITHER UNDER DISCUSSION IN A SUB-COMMITTEE OR THE COMMISSION ITSELF, OR BEING WORKED ON BY THE SECRETARIAT.

"TERMS OF REFERENCE HAVE BEEN SIGNED IN RELATION TO TWO FURTHER TOPICS AND THE SECRETARIAT WILL BEGIN WORK ON THESE IN DUE COURSE," HE SAID.

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MOTOR VEHICLE INSURANCE FOR HANDICAPPED DRIVERS
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THERE SHOULD BE NO DIFFICULTY FOR HANDICAPPED DRIVERS IN OBTAINING MOTOR VEHICLE INSURANCE ON EITHER EQUAL OR MORE FAVOURABLE TERMS.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR MICHAEL LEUNG, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON CONRAD LAM, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR LEUNG SAID A RECENT SURVEY BY THE GENERAL INSURANCE COUNCIL HAD REVEALED THAT AT LEAST 21 OF THE 66 AUTHORISED INSURERS PROVIDING MOTOR VEHICLE INSURANCE IN HONG KONG PROVIDED INSURANCE COVER FOR HANDICAPPED DRIVERS.

THIS COVER IS OFFERED EITHER WITHOUT IMPOSING A DISABILITY LOADING, OR ON MORE ADVANTAGEOUS TERMS THAN WOULD BE OFFERED TO OTHER DRIVERS.

"FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE SHOULD NOT THEREFORE BE REQUIRED TO MEET THE COST OF THE INSURANCE.

"THE GENERAL INSURANCE COUNCIL OF HONG KONG IS ALSO WILLING TO PROVIDE HANDICAPPED DRIVERS WITH FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE RANGE OF MOTOR VEHICLE INSURANCE SERVICES AVAILABLE TO THEM," HE SAID.

MR LEUNG EXPLAINED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN THE SUPERVISION OF INSURANCE COMPANIES WAS TO ENSURE THAT THE COMPANIES WERE MANAGED BY FIT AND PROPER PERSONS AND WERE ABLE TO MEET THEIR OBLIGATIONS IN FULL.

"THE AUTHORITY IS SPECIFICALLY DEBARRED FROM INTERFERING WITH AN INSURER'S PRICING POLICY, ON THE PRINCIPLE THAT COMMERCIAL DECISIONS ARE BEST DETERMINED BY MARKET FORCES," HE SAID.

OF THE TOTAL 15,322 TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS RECORDED IN 1992, THERE WERE ONLY 13 CASES INVOLVING HANDICAPPED DRIVERS.

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DIVIDEND PAYMENT HAS NO IMPACT ON KCRC FARE

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THE SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY, MR DONALD TSANG, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) SAID THE DISTRIBUTION OF DIVIDENDS TO THE GOVERNMENT OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS HAD HAD NO IMPACT ON KOWLOON-CANTON RAILWAY CORPORATION'S (KCRC) DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AND FARE LEVELS.

DURING THE LAST THREE YEARS, AFTER THE PAYMENT OF DIVIDENDS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF \$415 MILLION, AND TRANSFERS OF \$813 MILLION TO ITS DEVELOPMENT RESERVE (WHICH NOW STANDS AT \$1,233 MILLION) THE CORPORATION'S RETAINED PROFITS HAVE INCREASED BY \$371 MILLION.

AND FARES HAVE NOT NEEDED TO BE INCREASED OVER THE LEVEL OF INFLATION, MR TSANG TOLD LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLORS IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LAU CHIN-SHEK.

THE PAYMENT OF ANY DIVIDENDS IS CONSIDERED ON A YEAR BY YEAR BASIS.

"THE INTERESTS OF THE PUBLIC AT LARGE AND THOSE OF TRAVELLING PUBLIC WHO MAKE REGULAR USE OF THE KCR IN PARTICULAR REIGN PARAMOUNT.

"DUE ACCOUNT IS TAKEN OF BOTH FARE LEVELS AND FUTURE INVESTMENT REQUIREMENTS AND THUS THE LEVELS AND QUALITY OF SERVICE TO THE CORPORATION'S EXISTING AND POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS," MR TSANG SAID.

THE \$415 MILLION IN DIVIDENDS PAID IN THE LAST THREE YEARS REPRESENTS THE ONLY RETURN TO THE PUBLIC ON THEIR SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENT IN THE CORPORATION SINCE 1983.

NO DIVIDEND WAS SOUGHT IN THE YEARS 1983/1989.

THE COST OF NET ASSETS VESTED IN THE KCRC BY THE GOVERNMENT REPRESENTS THE INITIAL CAPITAL OF THE CORPORATION - \$2,117 MILLION.

IN RECOGNITION OF THIS INVESTMENT, THE KCRC ORDINANCE PROVIDES THAT THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY MAY, AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE CORPORATION, GIVE THE CORPORATION DIRECTIONS REQUIRING IT TO PAY THE WHOLE OR PART OF THE EXCESS TO THE GOVERNMENT.

/THE DIVIDENDS

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THE DIVIDENDS PAID TO DATE ARE:

	1990	1991	1992
DIVIDENDS	\$125M	\$140M	\$150M
% ON TURNOVER	7.9%	7.6%	7.0%
% ON NET PROFIT	20.0%	31.0%	28.4%

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NO PLAN TO REVISE POLICY ON POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENTS
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NO POLITICAL GROUPS HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO USE RADIO ADVERTISEMENTS FOR PUBLICITY PURPOSES SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY IN 1987, THE SECRETARY FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE, MR JAMES SO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON CONRAD LAM KUI-SHING, MR SO SAID THERE WAS NO STATUTORY DEFINITION OF THE TERM "POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT".

HOWEVER, HE SAID IN CONSIDERING WHETHER AN ADVERTISEMENT WAS POLITICAL IN NATURE, THE AUTHORITY WOULD NORMALLY HAVE REGARD TO WHETHER THE PROPOSED ADVERTISEMENT CONTAINED MATERIAL:

- * INDUCING THE PUBLIC TO VOTE FOR A PARTICULAR POLITICAL GROUPING OR AN INDIVIDUAL IN AN ELECTION;
- * SEEKING TO PROMOTE THE INTERESTS OF ANY POLITICAL GROUPING WHETHER OR NOT IN CONNECTION WITH AN ELECTION; OR
- * COMMENTING ON OR ADVOCATING CHANGE IN THE ACTIONS OR POLICIES OF THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT OR ANY OTHER TERRITORY.

"THE NEED TO OBTAIN PRIOR APPROVAL FOR PARTICULAR KINDS OF ADVERTISEMENT IS NOT IN ITSELF INCONSISTENT WITH ARTICLE 16 OF THE BILLS OF RIGHT ORDINANCE, SO THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO PLAN TO REVISE THIS REQUIREMENT ON THESE GROUNDS," MR SO SAID.

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SCHOOLS ENCOURAGED TO TEACH PUTONGHUA

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IT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TO ENCOURAGE SCHOOLS TO TEACH PUTONGHUA AND TO TRAIN TEACHERS FOR THIS PURPOSE, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, SAID.

AT PRESENT, PUTONGHUA IS TAUGHT AS AN ELECTIVE SUBJECT IN 375 PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND 154 SECONDARY SCHOOLS WHILE ANOTHER 93 SCHOOLS PROMOTE THE LEARNING OF PUTONGHUA THROUGH EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.

TRAINING WAS ALSO PROVIDED FOR OVER 1,000 TEACHERS IN THE 1991/92 SCHOOL YEAR, MR CHAN SAID IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON GILBERT LEUNG KAM-HO IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE SECRETARY NOTED THAT THE SINO-BRITISH JOINT DECLARATION AND THE BASIC LAW PROVIDED THAT THE FUTURE HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION SHOULD MAINTAIN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM PREVIOUSLY PRACTISED IN HONG KONG.

"THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT THE PRESENT POLICY OF ENCOURAGING AND FACILITATING THE LEARNING OF PUTONGHUA IS APPROPRIATE FOR HONG KONG'S NEEDS.

"IT WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SITUATION TO ENSURE THAT, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, RESOURCES ARE PROVIDED TO MATCH CHANGES IN DEMAND," MR CHAN ADDED.

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MOBILE PHONE MARKET HAS DISCIPLINE

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THE HIGHLY COMPETITIVE NATURE OF HONG KONG'S MOBILE TELEPHONE MARKET HAS IMPOSED A MARKET DISCIPLINE ON OPERATORS, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MR GORDON SIU, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE OPERATORS HAVE, ON THEIR OWN INITIATIVE, IMPOSED LIMITS ON THE NUMBER OF SUBSCRIBERS IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN A GOOD QUALITY SERVICE.

MR SIU WAS GIVING A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LAU WONG-FAT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE LICENCES ISSUED TO OPERATORS OF PUBLIC MOBILE RADIOTELEPHONE SERVICES (PMRS) DID NOT CONTAIN SPECIFIC CONDITIONS RESTRICTING THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SUBSCRIBERS TO A PARTICULAR SERVICE OR THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF MOBILE TELEPHONES THAT MIGHT BE SOLD.

"THIS IS TO ALLOW LICENSEES FLEXIBILITY TO INTRODUCE NEW TECHNOLOGIES OR TO EXPAND THEIR NETWORK CAPACITIES AS AND WHEN THESE BECOME AVAILABLE," MR SIU EXPLAINED.

/"FOR EXAMPLE,

"FOR EXAMPLE, ADVANCES IN DIGITAL CELLULAR TECHNOLOGY ARE LIKELY TO YIELD LARGE INCREASES IN NETWORK CAPACITY OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS."

REGARDING THE COVERAGE AREA OF THE SERVICE, MR SIU SAID GIVEN THE COMPETITIVE NATURE OF THE BUSINESS, OPERATORS THEMSELVES HAD A SIGNIFICANT INCENTIVE TO IMPROVE COVERAGE IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN AND EXPAND THEIR SUBSCRIBER BASE.

UNDER THE PMRS LICENCE, OPERATORS HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO PROVIDE SERVICE COVERAGE COMMENSURATE WITH THAT SET OUT IN THE ORIGINAL APPLICATION FOR A LICENCE, WHICH WOULD GENERALLY COVER MOST PARTS OF THE TERRITORY.

HOWEVER, DUE TO THE RUGGED TOPOGRAPHY OF HONG KONG, IT WOULD NOT BE FOR THEM TO GUARANTEE 100 PER CENT COVERAGE OF THE TERRITORY, MR SIU SAID.

AT PRESENT THERE IS NO REQUIREMENT ON LICENSEES TO IDENTIFY TO CUSTOMERS THE SPECIFIC AREAS COVERED BY THEIR SERVICE.

ALL LICENSEES PROVIDE EXTENSIVE COVERAGE EXCLUDING ONLY A FEW "BLACK SPOTS", WHERE BUILDINGS OR HILLS BLOCK RADIO WAVES AND THE VERY REMOTE AREAS.

"THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY WILL NONETHELESS DISCUSS WITH THE PMRS LICENSEES THE NEED TO GIVE MORE INFORMATION TO CUSTOMERS ON LOCATIONS WHERE SERVICE COVERAGE IS NOT PROVIDED," HE SAID.

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METAL INDUSTRY WELL-EQUIPPED TO MEET DEMANDS

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THE LOCAL METAL INDUSTRY HAS THE TECHNOLOGY AND TRAINED MANPOWER TO RESPOND TO MARKET DEMANDS FOR PRECISION PRODUCTS, THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR T H CHAU, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HUANG CHEN-YA IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR CHAU SAID THE HONG KONG PRODUCTIVITY COUNCIL WAS DOING MUCH TO DEVELOP PRECISION MANUFACTURING TECHNOLOGY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE INDUSTRY.

HE EXPLAINED THAT ITS WORKSHOP AND VARIOUS LABORATORIES WERE EQUIPPED WITH COMPUTER-AIDED DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING SYSTEMS, HIGH PRECISION COMPUTER NUMERICALLY CONTROLLED MACHINE TOOLS AND ADVANCED SHEET METAL PROCESSING EQUIPMENT.

"THESE ENABLE IT TO PROVIDE CONSULTANCY AND TRAINING SERVICES IN DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING OF PRECISION METAL TOOLINGS AND PARTS.

"THESE SERVICES ARE WELL ADVERTISED TO LOCAL MANUFACTURERS SO THAT THEY CAN ACQUIRE UP-TO-DATE KNOW-HOW IN PRECISION METALS PROCESSING," MR CHAU SAID.

/HE ALSO

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HE ALSO SAID THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING COUNCIL HAD ENHANCED ITS TRAINING FACILITIES IN RESPECT OF PRECISION TOOLING AND MANUFACTURING OF PRECISION MECHANICAL PARTS.

"ITS PRECISION TOOLING TRAINING CENTRE, TOGETHER WITH ITS PRECISION SHEET METAL PROCESSING TRAINING UNIT, ARE EQUIPPED WITH SOPHISTICATED MACHINING AND METAL STAMPING EQUIPMENT TO PROVIDE PRACTICAL TRAINING."

THUS THE INDUSTRY HAS AN ADEQUATE SUPPLY OF COMPETENT AND SKILLED WORKERS IN PRECISION METAL FABRICATION, MR CHAU ADDED.

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POST OFFICE COMMITTED TO PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

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THE POST OFFICE IS COMMITTED TO A CONTINUING PROGRAMME OF PRODUCTIVITY IMPROVEMENT THROUGH MANAGEMENT EFFORTS, POSTAL MECHANISATION AND COUNTER AUTOMATION.

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

OVER THE PERIOD 1983/84 TO 1991/92, POST OFFICE PRODUCTIVITY IN TERMS OF EVALUATED TRAFFIC ITEMS PER STAFF HOUR HAS INCREASED BY 31.8 PER CENT FROM 84.5 TO 111.4 ITEMS.

DURING THE SAME PERIOD, THE VOLUME OF POSTAL TRAFFIC INCREASED BY 92.4 PER CENT FROM 496 MILLION TO 954.46 MILLION ITEMS.

MR SIU SAID THE EFFICIENCY STANDARDS AND PRODUCTIVITY INDICES FOR INDIVIDUAL OFFICES AND THE ENTIRE POSTAL SYSTEM HAD BEEN SET AND WERE MONITORED REGULARLY BY SENIOR MANAGEMENT.

TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY FURTHER, HE SAID THE POST OFFICE WOULD CONTINUE TO MECHANISE AND AUTOMATE ITS OPERATIONS, FOR EXAMPLE THROUGH:

- * INSTALLATION OF MECHANISED LETTER SORTING SYSTEMS IN SHA TIN AND TUEN MUN;
- * COMPUTERISATION OF SPEEDPOST OPERATIONS;
- * REPLACEMENT OF MECHANICAL STAMP VENDING MACHINES WITH ELECTRONICALLY OPERATED VERSIONS WHICH CAN ACCEPT ALL COINS, ISSUE A VARIETY OF STAMPS AND GIVE CHANGE;
- * THE USE OF ELECTRONIC LETTER SCALES AT POST OFFICES TO REDUCE COUNTER TRANSACTION TIME; AND
- * DEVELOPMENT OF A PROTOTYPE AUTOMAILER TO PROVIDE 'SELF SERVICE' FACILITIES AT POST OFFICE COUNTERS.

THE SECRETARY ALSO SAID THE TARGET RATE OF RETURN WAS CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW AS PART OF A WIDER EXERCISE OF REVIEWING PUBLIC UTILITY RATES OF RETURN.

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 1993

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MFN MOTION PASSED IN LEGCO

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A MOTION URGING THE UNCONDITIONAL RENEWAL OF THE MOST-FAVOURED-NATION STATUS FOR CHINA WAS PASSED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) AFTER A THREE-HOUR DEBATE.

THIRTY MEMBERS SPOKE IN THE DEBATE PROPOSED BY THE HON ALLEN LEE. THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR T H CHAU, SPOKE ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT.

MOREOVER, 12 MEMBERS SPOKE IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE RAISED BY THE HON LAU CHIN-SHEK ON COLLECTIVE BARGAINING. THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, WINDUP THE DEBATE.

THE EIGHT BILLS SEEKING TO IMPLEMENT THE REVENUE-RELATED PROPOSALS IN THE BUDGET WERE PASSED WITHOUT AMENDMENTS.

THEY WERE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993, ESTATE DUTY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993, ENTERTAINMENTS TAX (REPEAL) BILL 1993, STAMP DUTY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993, DUTIABLE COMMODITIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993, MOTOR VEHICLES (FIRST REGISTRATION TAX) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993, ROAD TRAFFIC (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) BILL 1993 AND CROSS-HARBOUR TUNNEL (PASSAGE TAX) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993.

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

THE BILLS WERE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS (ADJOURNMENT DURING GALE WARNINGS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993, ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993, FIXED PENALTY (TRAFFIC CONTRAVENTIONS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993, BUILDINGS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993 AND NOISE CONTROL (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993.

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