



# DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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PRESENT SYSTEM OF DIRECT ELECTION WELL-TRIED

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THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF DIRECT ELECTION IS A TYPICALLY HONG KONG SOLUTION BASED ON A WELL-TRIED, SUCCESSFUL APPLIED SYSTEM WITH WHICH THE PUBLIC IS FAMILIAR, THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, THE HON PETER TSAO, SAID AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE SECOND READING DEBATE OF THE ELECTORAL PROVISIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990, HE SAID IT WAS MODELLED ON THE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK WHICH HAD BEEN USED SINCE 1982 FOR THE DIRECT ELECTIONS TO THE DISTRICT BOARDS AND MUNICIPAL COUNCILS.

MR TSAO ADDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE ELECTORAL PROVISIONS AFTER 1991 IN THE LIGHT OF EXPERIENCES GAINED IN THE ELECTIONS.

ON THE SUGGESTION OF SETTING UP AN INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION, MR TSAO POINTED OUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NO PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEM WITH THE CONCEPT OF AN INDEPENDENT BODY ATTENDING TO SOME OF THE ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS.

"DURING THE COURSE OF OUR DISCUSSION WITH THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AD HOC GROUP ON ELECTORAL LEGISLATION, WE INDICATED THAT THE TERMS OF REFERENCE, COMPOSITION, STATUS AND MODUS OPERANDI OF AN ELECTION COMMISSION OR BOUNDARIES COMMISSION WOULD NEED CAREFUL CONSIDERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN HONG KONG; AND THAT TIME WOULD BE NEEDED FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE NECESSARY LEGISLATION WELL IN ADVANCE OF THE ELECTIONS IN SEPTEMBER NEXT YEAR," HE SAID.

"ON THE OTHER HAND, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE IRRESPONSIBLE OF US TO CAST AWAY THE WELL TRIED ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND INSTEAD TO EXPERIMENT WITH AN UNTRIED NEW SYSTEM HASTILY PUT TOGETHER AT THIS STAGE OF HONG KONG'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT.

"THE GOVERNMENT HAS, HOWEVER, UNDERTAKEN TO EXAMINE THE CONCEPT AND PRACTICABILITY OF THE PROPOSALS FOR AN INDEPENDENT BODY ON ELECTORAL MATTERS SO THAT THEY COULD, IF NECESSARY, BE IMPLEMENTED IN 1995."

MR TSAO REJECTED THE ACCUSATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN GERRYMANDERING OVER ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES.

IN REACHING DECISIONS ON BOUNDARIES, HE SAID, THE GOVERNMENT HAD TAKEN ACCOUNT OF THE NUMBER OF DIRECTLY ELECTED SEATS AVAILABLE IN 1991, PRESENT AND FUTURE POPULATION DISTRIBUTION, GEOGRAPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND THE EXISTING ELECTORAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARIES.

HE STRESSED THAT THE CONSTITUENCY ARRANGEMENTS ANNOUNCED EARLIER THIS YEAR BY THE GOVERNMENT REPRESENTED THE BEST AND INVOLVED NO PARTY POLITICS.

COMMENTING ON THE SUGGESTION THAT VOTER REGISTRATION SHOULD BE MADE AUTOMATIC, BASED ON THE RECORDS OF THE REGISTRATION OF PERSONS OFFICE, MR TSAO SAID THE PROPOSAL HAD ITS ATTRACTIONS AND FOR THIS REASON HAD BEEN CAREFULLY EXAMINED.

HOWEVER, HE POINTED OUT THAT THERE WERE MAJOR PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES AS THESE RECORDS WOULD NOT ESTABLISH WHETHER A PERSON WAS QUALIFIED TO REGISTER AS AN ELECTOR AND IT WAS ALSO UNLIKELY THAT ADDRESSES WOULD BE UP-TO-DATE, GIVEN THE MOBILITY OF THE POPULATION WITHIN HONG KONG.

MOREOVER, HE SAID, IN A FREE SOCIETY SUCH AS HONG KONG, IT WOULD BE AN UNDESIRABLE FEATURE FOR THE ELECTORAL LAW TO COMPEL PEOPLE TO VOTE.

"I THINK VOTING IS MUCH OF A FREE ACT AS ANY ACT IN HONG KONG. BUT IT IS A MATTER, OF COURSE, THE ADMINISTRATION WILL LOOK INTO WHEN IT UNDERTAKES THE REVIEW."

TURNING TO THE QUESTION OF OVERSEAS VOTING, MR TSAO STRESSED THAT HONG KONG'S ELECTORAL SYSTEM WAS BASED ON RESIDENCE RATHER THAN NATIONALITY CRITERIA.

"ANY PERSON OF ANY NATIONALITY WHO HAVE BEEN RESIDED IN HONG KONG IN THE DEFINITION OF AN ORDINARY RESIDENT WOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO VOTE," HE SAID.

"IF AN EX-HONG KONG RESIDENT WISHES TO VOTE, HE CAN COME BACK TO HONG KONG AND WOULD BE GIVEN THE RIGHT TO DO SO," HE ADDED.

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INCLUSION OF POLITICAL AFFILIATION IN BALLOT PAPER  
WILL CONFUSE VOTERS

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POLITICAL PARTIES IN HONG KONG ARE RELATIVELY NEW AND THE PUBLIC IS STILL UNFAMILIAR WITH EVEN THE NAMES OF EMERGING POLITICAL PARTIES LET ALONE THEIR POLITICAL PLATFORMS, THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, THE HON PETER TSAO, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE WAS RESPONDING TO A MOTION BY THE HON MARTIN LEE TO AMEND THE BALLOT FORM BY THE INCLUSION, AGAINST THE NAME OF THE CANDIDATE, HIS POLITICAL AFFILIATION DURING THE COMMITTEE STAGE OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTORAL PROVISIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990.

"PUTTING IT IN A MORE GRAPHIC TERM, WILL ALL THE VOTERS BE ABLE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN SAY, THE UNITED DEMOCRATS OF HONG KONG, THE HONG KONG DEMOCRATIC FOUNDATION, THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC FEDERATION OF HONG KONG, THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION FOR DEMOCRACY AND PEOPLE'S LIVELIHOOD AND I CAN GO ON," HE SAID.

/HE WAS .....

HE WAS THEREFORE OF THE VIEW THAT THE INCLUSION OF POLITICAL AFFILIATION IN THE BALLOT PAPER WOULD CONFUSE, RATHER THAN EDUCATE, THE VOTERS.

"THE ADMINISTRATION'S PREFERENCE IS FOR THE BALLOT PAPER TO BE SIMPLE, EASY TO UNDERSTAND AND THEREFORE EASY TO USE," MR TSAO SAID.

HE DOUBTED WHETHER IT WOULD BE FAIR TO THOSE CANDIDATES WHO WERE NOT AFFILIATED TO SUCH ORGANISATIONS BUT WHO WOULD WISH TO STAND ON THEIR OWN MERITS.

"SHOULD THEY NOT BE GIVEN ANY NOTICE THAT POLITICAL AFFILIATION WOULD BECOME PART OF THE BALLOT PAPER SO THAT THEY COULD THEN HAVE A CHOICE AS TO WHETHER OR NOT TO AVAIL THEMSELVES OF A POLITICAL AFFILIATION," HE SAID, ADDING THAT SUCH A DECISION ON THE PART OF THE CANDIDATE MUST BE A COMPLEX MATTER FOR HIM.

MR TSAO DID NOT THINK THAT IT WAS RIGHT OR PROPER TO MAKE THE CHANGE PROPOSED BY MR MARTIN LEE WITHOUT HAVING HAD THE MATTER AIRED AND DEBATED IN PUBLIC.

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VOTING AGE TO REMAIN AT 21 FOR THE PRESENT  
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THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSES TO MAINTAIN THE VOTING AGE AT 21 FOR THE PRESENT BUT WILL CONSIDER LOWERING IT TO 18 IN 1995, THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, THE HON PETER TSAO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE WAS RESPONDING TO A PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO LOWER THE VOTING AGE DURING THE COMMITTEE STAGE OF THE ELECTORAL PROVISIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990.

NOTING THAT YOUNG PEOPLE WERE NOW MATURING EARLIER, MR TSAO SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALREADY MOVING TO BRING THE AGE OF MAJORITY FOR SOME OTHER PRACTICAL MATTERS DOWN TO 18.

IT WOULD ALSO LIKE TO DEVELOP A GREATER SENSE OF INVOLVEMENT AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THEIR AFFAIRS, HE ADDED.

"AGAINST THESE WE WEIGHED THE VERY MAJOR CHANGES ALREADY PROPOSED FOR 1991 AND THE NEED TO MOVE FORWARD CAUTIOUSLY.

"IN ADDITION, EXPERIENCE OF VOTER REGISTRATION SO FAR SUGGESTS THAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE SOMEWHAT LESS PREPARED TO COME FORWARD AS VOTERS," MR TSAO ADDED.

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RESOLUTION ON ESTABLISHMENT OF EMSD SUSPENSE ACCOUNT PASSED

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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PASSED A RESOLUTION ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT SUSPENSE ACCOUNT.

MOVING THE MOTION, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR PIERS JACOBS, SAID THE PURPOSE OF THE MOTION WAS TO ESTABLISH A SPECIAL SUSPENSE ACCOUNT UNDER SECTION 30(1) OF THE PUBLIC FINANCE ORDINANCE FOR FINANCING A SINGLE STORE IN THE ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT (EMSD).

SIR PIERS POINTED OUT THAT THE DIRECTOR OF ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL SERVICES WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF AIR-CONDITIONING, ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL PLANT AND EQUIPMENT, ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT AND BUILDING SERVICES INSTALLATIONS, AND FOR THE UPKEEP OF A FLEET OF ABOUT 7,000 VEHICLES FOR ALL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, THE MUNICIPAL COUNCILS AND THE HOUSING AUTHORITY.

"AT PRESENT, THE MATERIALS AND SPARE PARTS REQUIRED FOR REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE WORK IN THE WORKSHOPS ARE MAINLY DRAWN FROM TWO DIFFERENT STORES, NAMELY THE UNALLOCATED STORES OF THE GOVERNMENT SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT AND THE EMSD ALLOCATED STORES," HE SAID.

SIR PIERS ALSO SAID A REVIEW OF THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS HAD CONCLUDED THAT BOTH THE UNALLOCATED AND ALLOCATED STORES SHOULD BE MERGED TO FORM ONE SINGLE STORE UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE DIRECTOR OF ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL SERVICES.

"THIS WILL PROVIDE A SINGLE SOURCE OF FUNDING AND A SINGLE AUTHORITY FOR DETERMINING THE APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF STOCK-HOLDING.

"IT WILL ENABLE EMSD TO PROVIDE A MORE EFFICIENT MAINTENANCE SERVICE AND IN PARTICULAR, MINIMISE THE DOWNTIME OF GOVERNMENT VEHICLES," HE SAID.

SIR PIERS SAID ESTABLISHING A SPECIAL SUSPENSE ACCOUNT UNDER SECTION 30(1) OF THE PUBLIC FINANCE ORDINANCE, WOULD SERVE THE PURPOSE OF FINANCING A SINGLE STORE, INSTEAD OF HAVING TWO SEPARATE STORES UNDER TWO DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS AS AT PRESENT.

"SECTION 30(1) OF THE PUBLIC FINANCE ORDINANCE PROVIDES THAT A SPECIAL SUSPENSE ACCOUNT MAY BE ESTABLISHED FOR THE PURPOSE OF ANY COMMERCIAL OR INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY CARRIED ON BY OR ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT.

"SPECIAL SUSPENSE ACCOUNTS FOR FINANCING STORES HAVE ALREADY BEEN ESTABLISHED IN THE GOVERNMENT SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT AND THE CORRECTIONAL SERVICES INDUSTRIES," HE ADDED.

REVISION OF LEVIES ON VEHICLE AND DRIVING LICENCES APPROVED  
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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) APPROVED AN INCREASE IN THE LEVIES ON VEHICLE AND DRIVING LICENCES SO THAT SUFFICIENT INCOME WILL ACCRUE TO THE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS ASSISTANCE FUND FOR DISBURSEMENT TO CLAIMANTS.

UNDER THE NEW RATES, WHICH WILL COME INTO EFFECT ON APRIL 1 NEXT YEAR, THE ANNUAL LEVY ON VEHICLE LICENCES WILL BE INCREASED FROM \$30 TO \$48, WHEREAS THE ANNUAL LEVY ON DRIVING LICENCES WILL BE RAISED FROM \$10 TO \$16.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON ELIZABETH WONG, WHEN MOVING A MOTION UNDER THE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS (ASSISTANCE FUND) ORDINANCE ON THE REVISION OF LEVIES ON VEHICLE AND DRIVING LICENCES.

NOTING THAT THE PRESENT LAW ALLOWED ADVANCE RENEWAL OF DRIVING AND VEHICLE LICENCES FOUR MONTHS BEFORE THEIR EXPIRY DATE, MRS WONG SAID TO PREVENT AVOIDANCE OF THE REVISED RATES, THEY WOULD ALSO BE APPLICABLE TO ADVANCE RENEWALS MADE BEFORE APRIL 1 NEXT YEAR FOR A VALIDITY PERIOD COMMENCING ON OR AFTER THAT DATE.

REFERRING TO THE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS ASSISTANCE (TAVA) SCHEME, MRS WONG SAID ITS OBJECTIVE WAS TO MITIGATE THE FINANCIAL HARDSHIP WHICH MIGHT RESULT FROM DEATH OR INJURY IN TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS.

"IT IS A WELFARE MEASURE DESIGNED TO PROVIDE IMMEDIATE CASH ASSISTANCE TO THE VICTIMS OF A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT, OR TO HIS DEPENDANTS IN THE CASE OF DEATH, WITHOUT REGARD EITHER TO THE MEANS OF THE FAMILY OR TO ANY ELEMENT OF FAULT IN RESPECT OF THE CAUSE OF THE ACCIDENT.

"THE SCHEME IS FINANCED BY CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THREE SOURCES: A LEVY ON VEHICLE LICENCES, A LEVY ON DRIVING LICENCES AND GENERAL REVENUE," SHE SAID.

MRS WONG POINTED OUT THAT UNTIL 1985-86, ANNUAL REVENUE OF THE TAVA FUND EXCEEDED ANNUAL EXPENDITURE AND THUS GENERATED A SURPLUS EACH YEAR.

THE POSITION WAS, HOWEVER, REVERSED FROM 1986-87 ONWARDS, RESULTING IN ANNUAL DEFICITS.

"THIS WAS MAINLY DUE TO THE INCREASE IN TAVA PAYMENT RATES ON THE ONE HAND, AND THE GENERAL DOWNTURN OF BANK INTEREST RATES ON THE OTHER.

"THE SURPLUS OF THE FUND WAS FURTHER REDUCED BY THE WITHDRAWAL OF \$83.2 MILLION IN 1986 TO FINANCE THE SUPPLEMENTARY TAVA SCHEME," SHE SAID.

EXPENDITURE OF THE FUND WOULD INCREASE FURTHER WHEN A PACKAGE OF IMPROVEMENT TO THE SCHEME IS INTRODUCED IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF NEXT YEAR, MRS WONG SAID.

"THE LATEST PROJECTION INDICATES THAT IF THE LEVIES ARE NOT INCREASED, THE FUND WILL BE COMPLETELY DEPLETED BY 1992-93," SHE ADDED.

PROVISIONS TO TACKLE VIET PROBLEM AND CURB II TRAFFIC EXTENDED

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THE GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO EXTEND PROVISIONS TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM OF VIETNAMESE ASYLUM SEEKERS AND TO PROVIDE MORE EFFECTIVE SANCTIONS AGAINST THE TRAFFIC IN ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS, AT LEAST FOR ONE MORE YEAR.

THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID THIS WHEN MOVING A MOTION WHICH SOUGHT TO EXTEND SECTION 18(3) AND PARTS VIIA AND VIIB OF THE IMMIGRATION ORDINANCE FOR A FURTHER YEAR UNTIL THE END OF 1991.

HE EXPLAINED THAT SECTION 18(3) OF THE ORDINANCE WAS ENACTED IN JANUARY 1979 TO ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM OF VIETNAMESE ASYLUM SEEKERS.

IT REMOVED THE LIMITED OF TWO MONTHS DURING WHICH AN IMMIGRATION OFFICER MIGHT REMOVE A PERSON REFUSED PERMISSION TO LAND IN HONG KONG, IF IT APPEARED TO THE DIRECTOR OF IMMIGRATION THAT THAT PERSON WAS PREVIOUSLY RESIDENT IN VIETNAM.

ON THE OTHER HAND, MR ASPREY SAID PARTS VIIA AND VIIB WERE ENACTED IN AUGUST 1979 TO PROVIDE MORE EFFECTIVE SANCTIONS AGAINST THE TRAFFIC IN ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS.

UNDER THE TWO PROVISIONS, ANY PERSON WHO AIDED ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS TO ENTER HONG KONG COMMITTED AN OFFENCE.

HE POINTED OUT THAT OFFENDERS WERE LIABLE ON CONVICTION TO A FINE UP TO \$5 MILLION AND IMPRISONMENT FOR LIFE, WHILE THE SHIPS AND OTHER PROPERTY INVOLVED WERE LIABLE TO FORFEITURE.

MR ASPREY ADDED THAT THE SUBSECTION AND THE PROVISIONS HAD BEEN RE-ENACTED ANNUALLY AND WOULD EXPIRE ON DECEMBER 31 THIS YEAR UNLESS EXTENDED BY RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL.

HE SAID HE BELIEVED THESE PROVISIONS WERE STILL NECESSARY.

ON THE VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE (VBP), MR ASPREY NOTED THAT SECTION 18(3) NEEDED TO BE RETAINED TO GIVE THE GOVERNMENT AND UNHCR TIME TO MAKE REPATRIATION WORK.

HE POINTED OUT THAT SO FAR THIS YEAR, SOME 6,000 VBP HAD ARRIVED.

"ALTHOUGH IT IS ENCOURAGING TO NOTE THAT THE NUMBER OF ARRIVALS HAS DECREASED CONSIDERABLY AS COMPARED WITH 1988 OR 1989, THE PROBLEM IS LIKELY TO BE WITH US FOR SOME TIME YET.

"IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE SHOULD HAVE ADEQUATE POWERS TO IMPLEMENT IN FULL THE PROCEDURE LAID DOWN IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS FROM VIETNAM: TO GIVE TEMPORARY ASYLUM, TO SCREEN NEW ARRIVALS TO DETERMINE THEIR CLAIM TO REFUGEE STATUS, TO RESETTLE GENUINE REFUGEES AND TO RETURN NON-REFUGEES SAFELY TO THEIR HOMES IN VIETNAM.

/"THIS IS .....

"THIS IS A COMPLEX AND DIFFICULT PROCESS," MR ASPREY SAID.

HE STRESSED THAT THERE WERE STILL SOME 30,000 VBP IN CAMPS AWAITING SCREENING, AND THE PROCESS OF STATUS DETERMINATION INEVITABLY TOOK TIME.

"WE ARE WORKING HARD TO SECURE THE RETURN OF ALL NON-REFUGEES TO VIETNAM, AND I AM PLEASED TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT THE REPATRIATION PROGRAMME IS NOW DEVELOPING MOMENTUM.

"BUT HOWEVER FAST THE PROGRAMME DEVELOPS - AND I HOPE IT WILL DEVELOP VERY QUICKLY - THE PROCESS OF REPATRIATING ALL THE NON-REFUGEES WILL TAKE TIME," HE SAID.

TURNING TO THE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS FROM CHINA, MR ASPREY EXPLAINED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALSO TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE CHINESE TO RETURN AS ILLEGAL IMMGRANTS ALL THOSE VIETNAMESE, OF WHOM THERE WERE NOW SOME 200 IN HONG KONG, WHO HAD COME HERE AFTER PREVIOUSLY BEING SETTLED IN CHINA.

"WE AIM TO SECURE THEIR REPATRIATION AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE, BUT THIS PROCESS TOO INEVITABLY TAKES TIME," HE ADDED.

MR ASPREY NOTED THAT OF EVEN MORE CONCERN, HOWEVER, WAS THE INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS FROM CHINA THIS YEAR.

IN THE FIRST 10 MONTHS OF THIS YEAR SOME 24,000 ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS HAD BEEN ARRESTED, AN INCREASE OF 91 PER CENT WHEN COMPARED WITH THE SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR.

HE POINTED OUT THAT MANY OF THESE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS WERE ARRESTED ON CONSTRUCTION SITES OR AT OTHER PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT.

"PART OF THE REASON FOR THIS RECENT SURGE IN ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION IS DELIBERATE MISREPRESENTATION AND THE SPREADING OF FALSE RUMOURS BY THE 'SNAKEHEADS' INVOLVED IN THE TRAFFICKING IN ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS.

"IT IS NECESSARY TO RETAIN STRONG SANCTIONS AGAINST THOSE WHO ENGAGE IN THIS TRADE," MR ASPREY STRESSED.

MR ASPREY EXPLAINED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD REVIEW THE POSITION AGAIN BEFORE THE END OF NEXT YEAR.

THE MOTION WAS APPROVED.

CHANGES TO APPROVED ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR FIRST QUARTER TABLED  
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A SUMMARY OF ALL CHANGES MADE TO THE APPROVED ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1990-91 WAS TABLED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR PIERS JACOBS.

SIR PIERS SAID SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISION OF \$55.5 MILLION WAS APPROVED.

"IT WAS FULLY OFFSET EITHER BY SAVINGS UNDER THE SAME OR OTHER HEADS OF EXPENDITURE OR BY THE DELETION OF FUNDS UNDER THE ADDITIONAL COMMITMENTS SUBHEADS," THE SECRETARY SAID.

APPROVED NON-RECURRENT COMMITMENTS WERE INCREASED BY \$314.1 MILLION DURING THE PERIOD, AND NEW NON-RECURRENT COMMITMENTS OF \$78.1 MILLION WERE ALSO APPROVED.

IN THE SAME PERIOD, A NET INCREASE OF 1,483 POSTS WAS APPROVED, INCLUDING OVER 500 FOR HOSPITALS.

SIR PIERS SAID ITEMS IN THE SUMMARY HAD BEEN APPROVED EITHER BY FINANCE COMMITTEE OR UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY. THE LATTER HAD BEEN REPORTED TO THE FINANCE COMMITTEE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 8(8)(A) OF THE PUBLIC FINANCE ORDINANCE.

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NO COMPLACENCY FOR MTR EMERGENCY MEASURES AND PROCEDURES  
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THE GOVERNMENT WAS GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY CORPORATION'S (MTRC) EMERGENCY MEASURES AND SAFETY PROCEDURES IN ENSURING PASSENGER SAFETY BUT THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY IN MATTERS OF PUBLIC SAFETY, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON MICHAEL LEUNG, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MIRIAM LAU IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR LEUNG STRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO ENSURE THAT THE EMERGENCY EQUIPMENTS AND SAFETY PROCEDURES OF THE CORPORATION WERE BEING MAINTAINED AT THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE STANDARD AND THAT MEASURES TO PROTECT PASSENGER SAFETY WERE REVIEWED REGULARLY, AND IMPROVEMENTS INTRODUCED WHEREVER NECESSARY.

HE SAID THE MEASURES AND PROCEDURES PRESENTLY ADOPTED BY THE MTRA WERE SUFFICIENT TO ENSURE THE SAFE AND SPEEDY EVACUATION OF PASSENGERS DURING EMERGENCIES.

THE CORPORATION HAD WELL ESTABLISHED EMERGENCY PROCEDURES ENDORSED BY THE FIRE SERVICES AND THE POLICE.

/THESE WERE .....

THESE WERE SET OUT IN A PROCEDURAL MANUAL WHICH WAS REGULARLY REVIEWED AND UPDATED. IN ADDITION, THERE WERE SEPARATE EVACUATION PLANS FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF EMERGENCY SITUATIONS.

ALL THESE PLANS AND PROCEDURES HAD ALSO BEEN REVIEWED AND ENDORSED INDEPENDENTLY BY THE UNITED KINGDOM CHIEF INSPECTING OFFICER OF RAILWAYS, WHO WAS THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT'S APPOINTED AGENT ON RAILWAY SAFETY AND REPORTED DIRECTLY TO THE GOVERNMENT.

MR LEUNG SAID ALL MTR STAFF ON STATIONS AND TRAINS WERE TRAINED IN EMERGENCY PROCEDURES. THEY ALSO RECEIVED REFRESHER TRAINING REGULARLY.

TWO MAJOR EMERGENCY DRILLS WERE CARRIED OUT ANNUALLY, INVOLVING BOTH THE FIRE SERVICES, POLICE AS WELL AS OTHER RELEVANT GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

HE ADDED THAT THE CORPORATION CARRIED OUT REGULAR CHECKS ON VENTILATION AND POWER CONTROL SYSTEMS AND EMERGENCY LIGHTS.

IT ALSO CONDUCTED SMOKE TESTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR TO CHECK THE ARRANGEMENTS AND PROCEDURES. IMPROVEMENTS WERE MADE TO THESE SYSTEMS AS AND WHEN NECESSARY, HE SAID.

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ROP 85 - NO GUARANTEE FOR PERMISSION OF STAY

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PERSONS ISSUED WITH INITIAL APPLICATION FORMS TO REGISTER FOR IDENTITY CARD (ROP 85) HAVE NOT BEEN GIVEN PERMISSION TO TAKE EMPLOYMENT IN HONG KONG. THEY ARE LIABLE TO PROSECUTION IF FOUND WORKING IN HONG KONG.

THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID THIS IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ELSIE TU IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR ASPREY EXPLAINED THAT ROP 85 WAS ONLY A FORM OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT WHICH INDICATED THAT THE HOLDER'S IMMIGRATION STATUS WAS BEING INVESTIGATED.

HE SAID THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT ISSUED 57 SUCH APPLICATION FORMS IN 1988, 162 IN 1989, AND 2,149 IN THE FIRST 10-AND-A-HALF MONTHS OF THIS YEAR.

THE SECRETARY SAID SO FAR 19 OF THOSE ISSUED WITH THE FORM ROP 85 HAD BEEN ALLOWED TO STAY IN HONG KONG, AND 396 HAD BEEN REPATRIATED.

"THE REMAINDER, INCLUDING MANY WHO SURFACED IN RECENT WEEKS, ARE STILL BEING INVESTIGATED.

"I EXPECT THAT MORE WILL BE REPATRIATED IN THE NEAR FUTURE ONCE INVESTIGATIONS INTO THEIR CASES ARE COMPLETED," HE ADDED.

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NO MARRIED COUPLE NEED TO PAY MORE TAX UNDER NEW SYSTEM

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NO MARRIED COUPLE WILL IN TOTAL BE REQUIRED TO PAY MORE TAX UNDER THE NEW SYSTEM THAN THEY WOULD HAVE PAID UNDER THE PREVIOUS AGGREGATION SYSTEM, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR PIERS JACOBS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON SELINA CHOW, SIR PIERS SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS AWARE OF THE CONCERN EXPRESSED BY SOME MARRIED WOMEN AT THEIR HIGHER THAN EXPECTED SALARIES TAX ASSESSMENTS FOR 1989-90 FOLLOWING THE INTRODUCTION OF SEPARATE TAXATION FOR MARRIED COUPLES.

"THE CONCERN IS MAINLY DUE TO THE FACT THAT SOME MARRIED WOMEN, WHO HAD NOT ELECTED IN 1988/89 TO RECEIVE SEPARATE NOTICES OF ASSESSMENT FOR THE TAX ATTRIBUTABLE TO THEIR OWN INCOME, HAD NO PROVISIONAL SALARIES TAX FOR SET-OFF IN THEIR ASSESSMENTS.

"A WIFE'S INCOME HAD BEEN GROUPED TOGETHER WITH THAT OF HER HUSBAND, AND THEREFORE, ANY PROVISIONAL TAX HAD ALREADY BEEN CHARGED AND PAID BY THE HUSBAND.

"SINCE THERE WAS NO LEGAL BASIS TO APPORTION THAT PROVISIONAL TAX, THE HUSBAND HAD BEEN CREDITED WITH THE FULL AMOUNT, AND WOULD PAY LESS IN THE CURRENT YEAR OF ASSESSMENT," SIR PIERS SAID.

HE SAID THE INLAND REVENUE DEPARTMENT HAD ISSUED A PRESS RELEASE ON NOVEMBER 13 TO EXPLAIN THE SITUATION.

ON THE ASSURANCE HE GAVE PREVIOUSLY THAT "THE COMMISSIONER OF INLAND REVENUE WILL IDENTIFY AND ISSUE THE APPROPRIATE NOTIFICATION IN EVERY CASE WHERE IT WILL BE TO THE ADVANTAGE OF THE MARRIED COUPLE TO ELECT TO BE JOINTLY ASSESSED SO THAT NO MARRIED COUPLE WILL BECOME WORSE OFF UNDER SEPARATE TAXATION", SIR PIERS SAID A COMPUTER PROGRAM WHICH IDENTIFIED COUPLES WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM JOINT ASSESSMENT WAS NOW FULLY OPERATIONAL.

"ALREADY, SOME 30,000 JOINT ASSESSMENT ELECTION ADVICES HAVE BEEN ISSUED TO THESE COUPLES.

"IN THIS TRANSITIONAL YEAR FROM AGGREGATED FAMILY ASSESSMENTS TO SEPARATE TAXATION, THE INLAND REVENUE DEPARTMENT IS TAKING EVERY POSSIBLE ACTION TO EXPEDITE THE PROCESS, AND THE COMMISSIONER IS CONFIDENT THAT ALL WHO SHOULD PAY LESS TAX UNDER JOINT ASSESSMENT WILL BE NOTIFIED BEFORE THE DUE DATE FOR PAYMENT OF THE FIRST TAX INSTALMENT," SIR PIERS ADDED.

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PROVISIONS ON RECOVERY OF DRUG TRAFFICKING PROCEEDS WIDELY USED

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THE PROVISIONS OF THE DRUG TRAFFICKING (RECOVERY OF PROCEEDS) ORDINANCE HAVE BEEN WIDELY USED SINCE THE ORDINANCE CAME INTO OPERATION LAST YEAR.

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON DAVID LI IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID: "UNDER SECTIONS 10 AND 11 OF THE ORDINANCE, 68 ORDERS HAVE BEEN MADE BY THE COURTS FOR THE RESTRAINT OR CHARGING OF PROPERTY WHICH MAY BE LIABLE TO CONFISCATION AS THE PROCEEDS OF DRUG TRAFFICKING.

"THE TOTAL VALUE OF PROPERTY RESTRAINED OR CHARGED HAS BEEN OVER \$240 MILLION.

"UNDER SECTION 3 OF THE ORDINANCE, 11 CONFISCATION ORDERS TO A TOTAL VALUE OF OVER \$933,000 HAVE BEEN MADE. OF THIS AMOUNT, OVER \$306,000 HAS SO FAR BEEN RECOVERED."

THE SECRETARY SAID UNDER SECTION 20 OF THE ORDINANCE, THE COURTS HAD MADE 253 ORDERS FOR MATERIAL TO BE MADE AVAILABLE TO AUTHORISED OFFICERS FOR THE PURPOSE OF INVESTIGATIONS INTO DRUG TRAFFICKING.

HE SAID THAT A TOTAL OF 196 SEARCH WARRANTS HAD BEEN ISSUED BY THE COURTS UNDER SECTION 21 OF THE ORDINANCE, AND A TOTAL OF 145 DISCLOSURES OF SUSPICIOUS TRANSACTIONS HAD BEEN MADE TO THE AUTHORITIES UNDER SECTION 25(3) OF THE ORDINANCE.

THREE PEOPLE HAD BEEN CHARGED WITH MONEY LAUNDERING OFFENCES UNDER SECTION 25 OF THE ORDINANCE, THE SECRETARY ADDED.

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MOTORBOAT RESTRICTION AT NON-GAZETTED BEACHES  
NOT PANACEA TO ENSURE SWIMMERS' SAFETY

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THE DESIGNATION OF SPECIFIC LANDING PLACES FOR MOTORBOATS AT NON-GAZETTED BEACHES WOULD NOT IN ITSELF ENSURE THE SAFETY OF SWIMMERS, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, THE HON ANSON CHAN, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HENRIETTA IP, MRS CHAN SAID THIS WAS BECAUSE THE WATERS ADJACENT TO NON-GAZETTED BEACHES WERE NOT MARKED OFF FOR SWIMMING AND MOTORBOATS WOULD STILL BE ABLE TO APPROACH A DESIGNATED LANDING PLACE FROM ANY DIRECTION.

SHE POINTED OUT THAT THE ONLY OTHER OPTION WOULD SEEM TO BE TO PROHIBIT MOTORISED VESSELS FROM ENTERING THE WATERS ADJACENT TO A NON-GAZETTED BEACH.

/"HOWEVER, THE .....

"HOWEVER, THE EFFECT WOULD BE TO DENY MANY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ACCESS TO THESE AREAS, MOST OF WHICH ARE REMOTE AND NOT EASILY ACCESSIBLE BY ANY OTHER MEANS.

"SUCH A MEASURE WOULD NOT SEEM TO BE JUSTIFIED IN VIEW OF THE VERY FEW ACCIDENTS INVOLVING SWIMMERS FROM VESSELS OPERATING IN THE WATERS OF HONG KONG," MRS CHAN SAID.

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#### TWO-WEEK RULE FOR FOREIGN DOMESTIC HELPER MAINTAINED

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IN ALL CASES WHERE SUFFICIENT AND SELF-EVIDENT REASONS HAVE BEEN ADVANCED IN SUPPORT OF AN EXTENSION OF STAY FOR A FOREIGN DOMESTIC HELPER, PERMISSION IS ALWAYS GIVEN, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON K.Y. YEUNG, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON PEGGY LAM, MR YEUNG SAID THE GOVERNMENT CONSIDERED THAT THE "TWO-WEEK RULE" HAD TO BE MAINTAINED.

HE EXPLAINED THAT THE RULE WAS NEVER INTENDED FOR THE PURPOSE OF ENABLING DOMESTIC HELPERS TO FIND ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYERS.

"IT WAS INTRODUCED IN 1987 AS A NECESSARY FORM OF CONTROL AGAINST JOB-HOPPING.

"IF A DOMESTIC HELPER HAS A VALID REASON TO SEEK AN ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYER, SHE SHOULD GO TO THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT FOR COUNSELLING, AND TO THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER SHE MAY BE PERMITTED TO FIND AN ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYER AND GRANTED AN EXTENSION OF STAY," MR YEUNG SAID.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD RECENTLY REVIEWED THE "TWO-WEEK RULE".

"WE ARE AWARE THAT FOREIGN DOMESTIC HELPERS HAVE ARGUED THAT THE EXISTENCE OF THIS RULE INHIBITS THEM FROM MAKING COMPLAINTS ABOUT BAD TREATMENT BY THEIR EMPLOYERS, AND THAT TWO WEEKS IS IN ANY CASE TOO SHORT A PERIOD OF TIME FOR THE PURPOSE OF FINDING AN ALTERNATIVE EMPLOYER.

"WE HAVE EXAMINED THESE CRITICISMS CAREFULLY, AND HAVE REACHED THE CONCLUSION THAT THERE ARE INSUFFICIENT GROUNDS FOR MODIFYING THE TWO-WEEK RULE," HE SAID.

EXPLAINING THE RULE, MR YEUNG SAID THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR ITS ENFORCEMENT.

HE NOTED THAT AT THE PRESENT TIME, A FOREIGN DOMESTIC HELPER WAS ALLOWED TO WORK IN HONG KONG FOR A SPECIFIC EMPLOYER UNDER AN APPROVED CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT.

THE DURATION OF THESE CONTRACTS WAS NORMALLY TWO YEARS.

ON ARRIVAL IN HONG KONG, MR YEUNG SAID THE DOMESTIC HELPER'S PASSPORT WAS ENDORSED WITH A CONDITION WHICH ALLOWED HER TO REMAIN IN HONG KONG FOR 12 MONTHS OR FOR TWO WEEKS AFTER THE TERMINATION OF HER CONTRACT, WHICHEVER WAS THE EARLIER.

AT THE END OF THE FIRST 12 MONTHS, SO LONG AS THE DOMESTIC HELPER CONTINUED TO WORK FOR THE SAME EMPLOYER, HER STAY WOULD BE EXTENDED FOR ANOTHER 12 MONTHS, HE ADDED.

MR YEUNG POINTED OUT THAT AT THE END OF THE TWO YEARS, THE DOMESTIC HELPER MIGHT CHOOSE TO ENTER INTO A NEW CONTRACT WITH THE SAME EMPLOYER OR WITH ANOTHER EMPLOYER, OR RETURN TO HER COUNTRY OF ORIGIN.

"PROBLEMS MAY ARISE IF THE CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT IS TERMINATED PREMATURELY.

"IF THE CONTRACT WAS TERMINATED BY THE DOMESTIC HELPER HERSELF, THE TWO-WEEK RULE WOULD APPLY UNLESS THE DIRECTOR OF IMMIGRATION IS SATISFIED THAT SHE HAS A GOOD REASON FOR STAYING LONGER.

"IN THAT EVENT, THE DIRECTOR WOULD NORMALLY GRANT HER AN EXTENSION OF STAY," HE SAID.

SIMILARLY, MR YEUNG SAID IF THE CONTRACT WAS TERMINATED BY THE EMPLOYER UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES, THE DOMESTIC HELPER MIGHT ALSO BE GRANTED AN EXTENSION OF STAY.

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#### CONTROLS ON SPECULATIVE PROPERTY ACTIVITIES UNDESIRABLE

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CONTROLS ON SPECULATIVE ACTIVITIES IN PROPERTY IS UNNECESSARY AND MAY NOT BE DESIRABLE, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR BARNES SAID SUCH CONTROLS WERE DISRUPTIVE TO DEVELOPMENT FINANCING AND HENCE PROPERTY SUPPLIES AND WOULD PROBABLY DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD TO THE ECONOMY.

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LEUNG WAI-TUNG, MR BARNES SAID: "THE GOVERNMENT HAS CONSIDERED CONTROLS ON SPECULATIVE ACTIVITIES IN PROPERTY BEFORE, AT PERIODS WHICH APPEARED TO WARRANT SUCH CONTROLS MUCH MORE THAN NOW."

HE SAID COMPLAINTS TO THE CONSUMER COUNCIL AGAINST PROPERTY AGENCIES FOR 88/89, 89/90 AND FOR THE PERIOD FROM APRIL 1990 UP TO NOW NUMBERED 99, 77 AND 76 RESPECTIVELY.

THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION RECEIVED 63 COMPLAINTS LAST YEAR AND 46 IN THE FIRST 10 MONTHS OF THIS YEAR, MR BARNES SAID.

"THESE ARE NOT REALLY HIGH FIGURES IN RELATION TO THE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF TRANSACTIONS DONE THROUGH SOME 2,500 COMPANIES BUT THE SUMS OF MONEY INVOLVED CAN BE VERY LARGE."

MR BARNES SAID THE CONSUMER COUNCIL WAS SERIOUSLY CONCERNED AND PROPOSED TO MAKE A STUDY OF PROPERTY AGENCIES EARLY NEXT YEAR.

"I COULD NOT NOW ANTICIPATE WHETHER THE COUNCIL WILL RECOMMEND CONTROLLING LEGISLATION," HE SAID.

BUT HE ASSURED THAT ITS REPORT WOULD BE TAKEN VERY SERIOUSLY.

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#### GOVT SATISFIES WITH AIRPORT EMERGENCY SERVICES

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THE GOVERNMENT IS SATISFIED WITH THE EMERGENCY SERVICES AT KAI TAK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON PETER WONG, MR ASPREY SAID KAI TAK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT COMPLIED FULLY WITH INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION ORGANISATION (ICAO) STANDARDS AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES REGARDING RESPONSE TIME TO EMERGENCIES AND LEVEL OF PROTECTION AFFORDED.

THE SECRETARY SAID COMPREHENSIVE PLANS EXISTED TO DEAL WITH ALL SORTS OF EMERGENCY SITUATIONS.

"THESE PLANS ARE REGULARLY UPDATED AND TESTED TO ENSURE THAT ALL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND OTHER AGENCIES ARE AWARE OF THEIR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, AND ARE ABLE TO RESPOND QUICKLY AND EFFICIENTLY," MR ASPREY SAID.

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UNOCCUPIED PREMISES SHOULD BE CHARGED

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THERE WERE TWO COMPELLING ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF CHARGING AT LEAST A PORTION OF THE RATES ON UNOCCUPIED PREMISES, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR PIERS JACOBS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SIR PIERS SAID UNOCCUPIED PREMISES ARE PROVIDED WITH SERVICES TO THE SAME EXTENT AS THOSE WHICH ARE OCCUPIED, AND CHARGING RATES ON UNOCCUPIED DOMESTIC PREMISES MAY DETER LANDLORDS FROM KEEPING PREMISES VACANT.

HE WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON RITA FAN.

IN ADDITION, SIR PIERS SAID, THE ADMINISTRATIVE COST OF ACTUALLY REFUNDING RATES PAID AND INSPECTING VACANT PREMISES WAS FAIRLY SUBSTANTIAL.

HE EXPLAINED THAT THE RATING ORDINANCE ORIGINALLY PROVIDED FOR A REFUND OF HALF THE RATE PAID TO BE GRANTED IN RESPECT OF ALL UNOCCUPIED PREMISES.

SUBSEQUENTLY, DURING THE 1973/74 BUDGET DEBATE, MEMBERS EXPRESSED CONCERN ON THE NUMBER OF FLATS THEN VACANT AND ARGUED THAT THERE WAS A TENDENCY TO "HOARD" BY DEVELOPERS SEEKING A CAPITAL APPRECIATION AND BY LANDLORDS SEEKING TO RAISE RENTS.

"IN RESPONSE, THE ADMINISTRATION ACKNOWLEDGED THAT A CASE EXISTED FOR AMENDING THE RATING ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE FOR FULL RATES TO BE APPLIED TO VACANT DOMESTIC PREMISES.

"THE RATING ORDINANCE WAS LATER AMENDED WITH EFFECT FROM JANUARY 1, 1974 TO CHARGE FULL, RATHER THAN HALF, RATES FOR VACANT DOMESTIC PREMISES," HE SAID.

SIR PIERS SAID THESE REFUND PROVISIONS HAD BEEN REVIEWED REGULARLY SINCE 1974.

"HOWEVER, BEARING IN MIND THE ARGUMENTS WHICH LED TO THE REFUND PROVISIONS BEING AMENDED IN THE FIRST PLACE, THE ADMINISTRATION CONSIDERS THAT THE PREVAILING CIRCUMSTANCES DO NOT WARRANT A DEPARTURE FROM THE EXISTING POLICY.

"THE DEMAND IS STILL STRONG IN MOST SEGMENTS OF THE DOMESTIC PROPERTY MARKET. ANY RELAXATION OF THE POLICY COULD LEAD TO ADDITIONAL UPWARD PRESSURE BEING EXERTED ON DOMESTIC RENTS. THIS IS CLEARLY NOT DESIRABLE," SIR PIERS ADDED.

HE ALSO SAID HALF REFUNDS FOR VACANT NON-DOMESTIC PREMISES HAD CONTINUED TO BE ALLOWED BECAUSE THERE HAD NEVER BEEN ANY INDICATION THAT SUCH PREMISES WERE BEING HELD VACANT WITH A VIEW TO INFLUENCING THE MARKET.

HOWEVER, THE ADMINISTRATION KEPT THE POLICY TO RATE UNOCCUPIED PREMISES UNDER CONSTANT REVIEW, AND THE ADVICE OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL WOULD BE SOUGHT IF PROPOSALS WERE DEVELOPED TO CHANGE THE PRESENT PRACTICES.

COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR TO APPROVE DOMESTIC HELPER'S  
CHANGE OF ADDRESS CONSIDERED

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THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT CONSIDERS THAT CHANGES TO THE DOMESTIC HELPER'S PLACE OF RESIDENCE CAN BE APPROVED IN WRITING BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR WITHOUT THE NEED FOR A FORMAL AMENDMENT OF A CLAUSE OF THE STANDARD CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON K.Y. YEUNG, INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ELSIE TU, MR YEUNG SAID CLAUSE 3 OF THE STANDARD CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT PROVIDED THAT A FOREIGN DOMESTIC HELPER SHOULD RESIDE AND WORK AT A PARTICULAR ADDRESS, THAT WAS, THE EMPLOYER'S ADDRESS.

"THIS CLAUSE CAN BE AMENDED BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT. HOWEVER, UNDER CLAUSE 13, ANY VARIATION OF THE TERMS OF THE CONTRACT WOULD REQUIRE THE CONSENT OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR," MR YEUNG SAID.

HE SAID THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT HAD RECENTLY COMPLETED A REVIEW OF THE STANDARD CONTRACT TO SEE IF IT COULD BE SIMPLIFIED.

MR YEUNG SAID A RECOMMENDATION WHICH SOUGHT TO APPROVE CHANGES TO THE HELPER'S PLACE OF RESIDENCE IN WRITING BY THE COMMISSIONER WAS BEING EXAMINED BY THE GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT.

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SEVEN BILLS PASSED

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SEVEN BILLS WERE PASSED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THEY WERE THE ELECTORAL PROVISIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990, THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (ELECTORAL PROVISIONS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990, THE URBAN COUNCIL (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1990, THE REGIONAL COUNCIL (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1990, THE DISTRICT BOARDS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990, THE CORRUPT AND ILLEGAL PRACTICES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990, AND THE CRIMINAL LAW (AMENDMENT) BILL 1990.

IN THE RESUMED DEBATE OF THE SIX ELECTION-RELATED BILLS, THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, THE HON PETER TSAO, SPOKE ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT.

THREE MOTIONS, ONE ON THE PUBLIC FINANCE ORDINANCE MOVED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR PIERS JACOBS, ANOTHER ON THE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS (ASSISTANCE FUND) ORDINANCE MOVED BY THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON ELIZABETH WONG, AND THE THIRD ON THE IMMIGRATION ORDINANCE MOVED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, WERE ALSO PASSED.

TWO REPORTS WERE TABLED. THEY WERE THE REPORT OF CHANGES TO THE APPROVED ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE APPROVED DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1990-91 AND THE OCEAN PARK CORPORATION ANNUAL REPORT 1989-90.

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HONG KONG/JAPAN ENJOY EXCELLENT ECONOMIC RELATIONS  
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THE EXCELLENT ECONOMIC RELATIONS BETWEEN HONG KONG AND JAPAN ARE ONE OF THE SUCCESS STORIES OF REGIONAL CO-OPERATION, THE GOVERNOR, SIR DAVID WILSON, SAID IN TOKYO TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SIR DAVID WAS ADDRESSING A LUNCHEON MEETING HOSTED BY HONG KONG/JAPAN BUSINESS CO-OPERATION COMMITTEE, JAPAN/HONG KONG SOCIETY AND HONG KONG TRADE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL IN TOKYO.

CITING A FEW FACTS TO ILLUSTRATE THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HONG KONG AND JAPAN ON TRADE, FINANCE, INVESTMENT AND TOURISM, SIR DAVID SAID LIKE ANY NEIGHBOURS, THE TWO PLACES WOULD OCCASIONALLY HAVE PROBLEMS TO SORT OUT SO THAT THE RELATIONSHIP COULD GROW.

"ONE CONCERN WE HAVE IS THE SUBSTANTIAL IMBALANCE IN OUR BILATERAL TRADE. WE NOW IMPORT FROM YOU MORE THAN FOUR TIMES AS MUCH AS WE EXPORT TO YOU," SIR DAVID SAID.

NOTING THAT JAPAN'S SECOND LARGEST TRADE SURPLUS WAS WITH HONG KONG, THE GOVERNOR SAID THE RECENT FALL IN THE YEN HAD TAKEN ITS TOLL ON HONG KONG'S EXPORTS TO JAPAN.

"THESE HAVE FALLEN 10 PER CENT IN VALUE SO FAR THIS YEAR, REVERSING THE UPWARD TREND OF MANY YEARS," HE SAID.

HOWEVER, SIR DAVID SAID HONG KONG DID NOT SEEK ARTIFICIAL AID TO HELP ITS EXPORTS TO JAPAN.

"WE GENUINELY BELIEVE IN FREE TRADE. WE LOOK ONLY FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO PRACTISE IT," HE SAID.

WELCOMING THE MOVES BEING MADE TO OPEN FURTHER JAPAN'S MARKET AND TO PROMOTE DOMESTIC DEMAND, SIR DAVID SAID HONG KONG HOPED THAT MORE COULD BE DONE.

"WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS A TWO-WAY PROCESS. WE ARE AWARE OF THE NEED FOR MORE PAINSTAKING EFFORTS BY HONG KONG SALESMEN TO PENETRATE THE JAPANESE MARKET," HE SAID.

POINTING OUT THAT HONG KONG WAS AWARE OF THE NEED TO BROADEN THE RANGE OF ITS EXPORTS TO JAPAN, SIR DAVID NOTED THAT MUCH HAD BEEN DONE ON BOTH SIDES TO FACILITATE HONG KONG EXPORTS TO JAPAN.

"MORE REMAINS TO BE DONE. I AM SURE THAT IT WILL BE.

"WE HAVE A COMMON INTEREST IN DEVELOPING OUR COMMERCIAL RELATIONS WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF ACHIEVING A BRIGHTER, MORE PROSPEROUS FUTURE FOR US BOTH," HE SAID.

OUTLINING THE ROLE OF HONG KONG IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF CHINA, SIR DAVID SAID IF HONG KONG WAS TO PLAY THAT PART TO THE FULL, THE TERRITORY MUST PLAN AND BUILD FOR THE FUTURE WITH FORESIGHT AND CONFIDENCE.

"THAT IS WHY WE ARE PLANNING THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW AIRPORT - AND THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF OUR PORT, ALREADY THE BUSIEST CONTAINER PORT IN THE WORLD," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID POINTED OUT THAT THOSE PROJECTS WOULD PROVIDE A CONSIDERABLE BOOST TO HONG KONG'S ECONOMY OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS AND THEY WOULD PRESENT OVERSEAS CONTRACTORS WITH SOME VERY CHALLENGING OPPORTUNITIES.

"AND THEY WILL PROVIDE HONG KONG WITH A QUITE OUTSTANDING TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE BEFORE THE TURN OF THIS CENTURY.

"WE ARE STARTING TO BUILD NOW FOR THE FUTURE PROSPERITY OF HONG KONG - AND THE ROLE A PROSPEROUS HONG KONG CAN PLAY IN THE FUTURE ECONOMIC EXPANSION OF SOUTHERN CHINA," SIR DAVID SAID.

IN THIS PROCESS, SIR DAVID SAID HE BELIEVED THAT THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EXPANDING TRADE, BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT LINKS BETWEEN HONG KONG AND JAPAN WOULD BE TREMENDOUS; WHETHER THIS WAS THE JAPANESE BUYER LOOKING FOR GOOD QUALITY PRODUCTS AT COMPETITIVE PRICES, OR THE JAPANESE CONSTRUCTION COMPANY WITH EXPERIENCE TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS BUILDING HONG KONG'S INFRASTRUCTURE.

TURNING TO MULTILATERAL CONTEXT OF TRADE, SIR DAVID SAID HE HAD NO DOUBT THAT COMMERCIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN JAPAN AND HONG KONG HAD A BRIGHT FUTURE.

HOWEVER, HE POINTED OUT THAT JUST HOW BRIGHT WOULD DEPEND ON MANY FACTORS, AND ONE IMPORTANT FACTOR WAS THE OUTCOME OF THE URUGUAY ROUND OF TRADE TALKS BEING HELD UNDER THE GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE (GATT).

"MINISTERS WILL BE MEETING IN BRUSSELS NEXT WEEK TO TRY TO REACH FINAL AGREEMENTS ON THE MANY HIGHLY COMPLEX TRADE ISSUES DEBATED OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS.

"THESE ARE NO DRY-AS-DUST TECHNICAL TALKS OF LITTLE SIGNIFICANCE TO THE ORDINARY WORLD.

"THEY ARE OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO ALL OF US. SUCCESS WILL BOOST TRADING AND TRADING POTENTIAL THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. FAILURE WOULD BE A SETBACK FOR THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM - A SYSTEM WHICH HAS DONE SO MUCH TO HELP THE GROWTH OF TRADE OVER THE LAST 40 YEARS," SIR DAVID SAID.

THE GOVERNOR SAID HONG KONG LIVED BY TRADE, SO IT WAS HARDLY SURPRISING THAT HONG KONG HAD TRIED ITS HARDEST TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE URUGUAY ROUND AND HARDLY SURPRISING THAT HONG KONG WAS SO KEEN TO SEE AN OUTCOME THAT WOULD BOLSTER THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM.

"WE LOOK WITH ANXIOUS INTEREST AT THE MINISTERIAL MEETINGS NEXT WEEK. WE WISH THEM A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME.

"SUCCESS WOULD MEAN MUCH FOR THE STABLE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE. IT WOULD ALSO SET THE STAGE FOR REGIONAL GROWTH," HE SAID.

ON ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL TRADE, SIR DAVID SAID GROWING ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE REQUIRED CLOSER ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION BOTH BILATERALLY AND REGIONALLY.

"HONG KONG IS BEING ADMITTED TO THE PACIFIC ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION CONFERENCE (PECC), TO JOIN JAPAN AND 14 OTHER ECONOMIES IN THAT WELL-ESTABLISHED REGIONAL FORUM.

"WE HOPE THAT WE CAN JOIN THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL ASIA PACIFIC ECONOMIC CONFERENCE (APEC) IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

"FOR IT IS BY EXCHANGING IDEAS, ESTABLISHING CONTACTS AND DEVELOPING MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING THAT WE CAN PROMOTE REGIONAL GROWTH AND THE HARMONIOUS DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE," HE SAID.

AS THE LARGEST AND MOST ADVANCED ECONOMY IN THE REGION, JAPAN WAS PARTICULARLY WELL-PLACED TO TAKE A LEADING ROLE IN THIS PROCESS, SIR DAVID SAID.

"HONG KONG, AS AN OPEN-MARKET ECONOMY THAT LIVES BY TRADE, WILL DO ITS BEST TO PLAY ITS PART TO THE FULL," HE ADDED.

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#### GOVERNOR MEETS JAPANESE PRIME MINISTER

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THE HONG KONG ECONOMIC TRADE MISSION TO JAPAN, HEADED BY THE GOVERNOR, SIR DAVID WILSON, CONCLUDED A HECTIC ROUND OF MEETINGS IN TOKYO TODAY (WEDNESDAY) ON AN ENTHUSIASTIC NOTE.

THE DAY BEGAN WITH THE GOVERNOR MEETING THE JAPANESE PRIME MINISTER, MR TOSHIKI KAIFU. SIR DAVID WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE HONG KONG TRADE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, BARONESS DUNN, THE BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN, SIR JOHN WHITEHEAD, AND THE SENIOR MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR ALLEN LEE.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GROWING TRADE BETWEEN HONG KONG AND JAPAN WAS HIGH ON THE AGENDA OF THE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER.

AFTER THE MEETING SIR DAVID TOLD REPORTERS THAT HE HAD MENTIONED THE IMPORTANT ROLE HONG KONG PLAYED IN TERMS OF JAPANESE TRADE WITH CHINA.

HE SAID A QUARTER OF TOTAL JAPANESE EXPORTS TO CHINA WENT THROUGH HONG KONG.

"I THINK MR KAIFU IS VERY INTERESTED IN THE ECONOMIC ROLE THAT HONG KONG CAN PLAY IN TERMS OF JAPANESE ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH CHINA."

SIR DAVID SAID HE WAS STRESSING TO JAPANESE BUSINESSMEN THE ENORMOUS OPPORTUNITIES THAT WERE AVAILABLE IN HONG KONG.

/"IF PEOPLE .....

"IF PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO SEIZE THOSE OPPORTUNITIES, THEY ARE THERE.

"WHAT I AM ALSO SAYING IS THAT HONG KONG IS A PLACE WHERE THE ECONOMY IS STILL DOING WELL. IT IS NOT GROWING AT QUITE THE RATE IT WAS IN THE PAST FEW YEARS - THAT'S WHAT WE EXPECTED. BUT IT IS A VERY RESILIENT ECONOMY.

"IT'S A MESSAGE OF OPPORTUNITY, THAT I'M GIVING, RATHER THAN REASSURANCE. HONG KONG IS A PLACE WHERE IF YOU ARE A GOOD BUSINESSMAN KEEN AND COMPETITIVE, YOU CAN BE VERY SUCCESSFUL. SO IT'S A QUESTION OF DO PEOPLE TAKE THE OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE THERE."

THE GOVERNOR ALSO DELIVERED A KEYNOTE ADDRESS TO A LUNCHEON ATTENDED BY 450 JAPANESE BUSINESS EXECUTIVES. THE FUNCTION WAS ORGANISED BY THE HONG KONG/JAPAN BUSINESS CO-OPERATION COMMITTEE, THE JAPAN/HONG KONG SOCIETY AND THE TRADE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL IN TOKYO.

THE GOOD RESPONSE FROM BUSINESS LEADERS MADE THE FUNCTION ONE OF THE BIGGEST RECENT GATHERINGS FOR A BUSINESS LUNCH IN TOKYO.

PRIOR TO THE LUNCH, THE GOVERNOR AND BARONESS DUNN JOINED OTHER MISSION MEMBERS FOR INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LUNCHEON VIP GUESTS.

THE MISSION ALSO MET WITH MR TARO NAKAYAMA, THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MR ICHIRO OZAWA, SECRETARY GENERAL OF JAPAN'S RULING LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (LDP), AND MR TAKAKAZU KURIYAMA, VICE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

THE GOVERNOR AND LADY WILSON ALSO VISITED THE TOKYO OFFICES OF THE HONG KONG ECONOMIC AND TRADE OFFICE, HONG KONG TRADE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, AND THE HONG KONG TOURIST ASSOCIATION WHERE HE WAS BRIEFED BY SENIOR STAFF AND CHATTED INFORMALLY WITH EMPLOYEES.

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#### GOVERNOR'S COMMENTS ON NEW BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

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THE GOVERNOR, SIR DAVID WILSON, SAID THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON HE DID NOT EXPECT THE CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY WOULD LEAD TO ANY CHANGE IN BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS HONG KONG.

ASKED TO COMMENT ON THE EMERGENCE OF MR JOHN MAJOR AS THE NEW BRITISH PRIME MINISTER, SIR DAVID SAID: "WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS WE NOW HAVE A CLEAR PICTURE OF WHO IS GOING TO BE PRIME MINISTER.

"MR MAJOR DOES KNOW A CERTAIN AMOUNT ABOUT THE BACKGROUND OF HONG KONG. ALTHOUGH HE WAS IN THE FOREIGN OFFICE ONLY FOR A SHORT TIME, HE DID BRIEF HIMSELF VERY THOROUGHLY ON HONG KONG DURING THAT TIME.

/"I REMEMBER .....

"I REMEMBER HAVING A LONG DISCUSSION WITH HIM WHILE HE WAS IN THE FOREIGN OFFICE.

"I WOULDN'T EXPECT THIS TO LEAD TO ANY CHANGE IN BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS HONG KONG. THAT IS SET AND IS VERY CLEAR BASED ON THE JOINT DECLARATION AND I WOULD EXPECT THAT UNDER MR MAJOR AS PRIME MINISTER WE WOULD CONTINUE TO GET THE SAME SUPPORT FOR THE OBJECTIVES OF BUILDING UP HONG KONG FOR THE FUTURE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE JOINT DECLARATION AS WE'VE HAD IN THE PAST."

ASKED IF THE GOVERNOR EXPECTED TO MEET MR MAJOR IN LONDON NEXT WEEK, AND WHETHER HE PLANNED TO EXTEND AN INVITATION TO HIM TO VISIT HONG KONG, SIR DAVID SAID: "ON THE FIRST QUESTION, MR MAJOR WON'T KNOW YET WHAT HIS PROGRAMME WILL BE. SO AS A RESULT I DON'T YET KNOW WHAT MY PROGRAMME WILL BE WHEN I GO TO LONDON. I CAN'T BE CLEAR ON THAT AT THE MOMENT.

"I WOULD HOPE, THAT AS SOON AS HE HAS AN OPPORTUNITY HE WILL TAKE THE CHANCE TO COME TO HONG KONG. HE IS GOING TO HAVE AN AWFUL LOT OF THINGS TO DEAL WITH ON HIS PLATE TO START WITH, SO WHEN THAT MIGHT BE IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO SAY AT THE MOMENT."

ON THE QUESTION OF THE GOVERNOR'S GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH MRS THATCHER AND WHETHER THIS WOULD CONTINUE UNDER MR MAJOR, SIR DAVID SAID: "I'VE MET MR MAJOR ALREADY AND HAD A VERY LONG CONVERSATION WITH HIM ABOUT HONG KONG AFFAIRS LAST SUMMER, JUST AFTER HE HAD TAKEN OVER AS FOREIGN MINISTER.

"SO I'VE HAD A CHANCE TO MEET HIM AND TO TALK TO HIM ABOUT HONG KONG ALREADY, AND I CERTAINLY HOPE THERE WILL BE A CHANCE TO BUILD ON THAT IN THE FUTURE."

ON HONG KONG'S PORT AND AIRPORT PROJECTS, THE GOVERNOR SAID THERE HAD BEEN A LOT OF INTEREST FROM JAPANESE COMPANIES.

HE SAID THERE WERE A LARGE NUMBER OF DIFFERENT PROJECTS INVOLVED IN THE AIRPORT AND PORT AND THE FIRST TENDERING PROCEDURES WERE JUST BEING STARTED.

"IT'S NOT POSSIBLE AT THIS STAGE TO SAY HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL ACTUALLY BE SUCCESSFUL IN WINNING CONTRACTS.

"HOWEVER, THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF INTEREST IN IT AND THERE ARE A LOT OF JAPANESE CONSTRUCTION FIRMS, FOR INSTANCE, WHO WILL CLEARLY BE IN A GOOD POSITION TO BID."

ASKED ABOUT PRIVATE SECTOR FINANCING FOR THE PROJECTS, THE GOVERNOR SAID THE PORT AND AIRPORT HAD TO BE LOOKED AT SEPARATELY.

"THE AIRPORT IS A CLEAR CUT DECISION - YOU DO IT OR YOU DON'T DO IT. THE PORT IS SOMETHING THAT IS DEVELOPED INCREMENTALLY AND THE PORT WILL HAVE A FAR GREATER PERCENTAGE OF PRIVATE SECTOR IN IT THAN THE AIRPORT WILL. BUT ROUGHLY YOU CAN SAY IT IS 40 TO 60 PER CENT."

SIR DAVID SAID IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO SAY HOW MUCH OF THAT INVESTMENT WOULD COME FROM JAPAN AS IT WOULD DEPEND ON THE SUCCESS OF THE VARIOUS BIDS.

HE SAID JAPANESE BANKS WERE INTERESTED IN THE PROJECTS. "BUT WE HAVEN'T YET GOT TO THE POINT WHERE THEY HAVE PUT IN TENDERS WHICH HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL, SO YOU CAN'T SAY WHAT THE END RESULT WILL BE, BUT THE INTEREST IS THERE - THAT'S CLEAR, VERY CLEAR."

THE GOVERNOR SAID THE INTEREST FROM THE JAPANESE IN THE AIRPORT WAS BASED ON THE VERY GREAT JAPANESE INTEREST IN INVESTMENT IN HONG KONG AS A WHOLE.

"THEY ARE ONE OF OUR BIGGEST EXTERNAL INVESTORS NOW," HE ADDED.

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DEPUTY TO THE GOVERNOR'S STATEMENT ON NEW LEADERSHIP

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ASKED TO COMMENT ON THE CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY, THE DEPUTY TO THE GOVERNOR, SIR DAVID FORD, SAID THIS (WEDNESDAY) MORNING :

"I DON'T THINK THAT THERE IS LIKELY TO BE ANY CHANGE OF POLICY AS A RESULT OF THE CHANGE OF LEADERSHIP OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY. INDEED, I AM SURE THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE WARM SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF MR MAJOR. IF, AS IT SEEMS LIKELY, MR HURD STAYS AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE, THAT WILL ALSO BE AN ADDED BONUS FOR HONG KONG IN THAT WE HAVE SOMEONE WHO IS VERY EXPERIENCED IN DEALING WITH CHINA AND IN DEALING WITH HONG KONG AFFAIRS. SO I THINK WE CAN PLACE THE FUTURE UNDER THE NEW LEADERSHIP WITH A GREAT DEAL OF CONFIDENCE."

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HK'S STATUS AS LEADING MARITIME CENTRE ENHANCED

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HONG KONG'S OWN SHIPPING REGISTER IS ESTABLISHED TO ENHANCE THE TERRITORY'S POSITION AS A LEADING SHIPPING CENTRE, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MRS ANSON CHAN, SAID THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON.

"IT IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE SHIPOWNERS WITH A REASONABLY-PRICED, FLEXIBLE AND MODERN REGISTRY BASED ON ESTABLISHED INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS OF SHIP OPERATION AND BACKED UP BY AN EFFICIENT MARITIME ADMINISTRATION BUILT UPON MORE THAN 100 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE," SHE SAID.

URGING PARTICIPANTS OF THE 1990 SEATRADE HONG KONG CONFERENCE TO VISIT THE MARINE DEPARTMENT'S STAND IN THE EXHIBITION HALL OF THE HONG KONG CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION CENTRE, MRS CHAN POINTED OUT THAT THE REGISTER WAS NOT ESTABLISHED TO RAISE REVENUE, EVEN THOUGH THE GOVERNMENT EXPECTED IT TO BE SELF-FINANCING.

"WE WILL ALSO SHORTLY BE INTRODUCING EXEMPTION FROM PROFITS TAX IN RESPECT OF GOODS UPLIFTED IN HONG KONG BY OCEAN-GOING SHIPS REGISTERED ON THE NEW REGISTER, AND FROM THE CHARTER HIRE OF OCEAN-GOING SHIPS, IRRESPECTIVE OF WHETHER THE SHIPS ARE REGISTERED IN HONG KONG.

"THIS EXEMPTION IS AN EXCEPTIONAL ARRANGEMENT WHICH WILL GIVE A FURTHER BOOST TO THE NEW REGISTER AND THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF HONG KONG GENERALLY AS A SHIPPING CENTRE," SHE SAID.

ON THE SUPPLY OF AND DEMAND FOR QUALIFIED SEAFARERS, MRS CHAN SAID: "AS RECENT FORECASTS INDICATE THAT WE SHOULD EXPECT A GROWING SHORTAGE OF SEAFARERS WORLDWIDE, HONG KONG WILL NOT BE IMMUNE.

"SO IN PARALLEL WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW SHIPPING REGISTER, WE ARE REMOVING THE NATIONALITY RESTRICTIONS ON THE MASTER AND SENIOR OFFICERS OF HONG KONG SHIPS TO ALLOW SHIPOWNERS GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN THEIR CHOICE OF QUALIFIED SEAFARERS," SHE ADDED.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE GOVERNMENT WAS DOING WHAT IT COULD TO IMPROVE THE EXISTING FACILITIES FOR THE TRAINING OF BOTH OFFICERS AND RATINGS, MRS CHAN SAID.

"THE INSTITUTIONS CONCERNED OFFER COURSES WHICH RANGE FROM BASIC TRAINING IN SHIPBOARD SAFETY AND SEA SURVIVAL TO THE HIGHEST PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN MARINE ENGINEERING, NAUTICAL SCIENCE AND RADIO-COMMUNICATIONS.

"THE CURRICULA FOR THE PROFESSIONAL COURSES HAVE BEEN REVIEWED, MODERNISED AND RE-ARRANGED TO ALIGN THEM WITH THE LATEST INTERNATIONAL REQUIREMENTS, AND THE STRUCTURE OF THE NECESSARY EXAMINATIONS HAS BEEN IMPROVED," SHE SAID.

ON THE LOCALISATION OF MERCHANT SHIPPING LEGISLATION, MRS CHAN SAID HONG KONG WAS MAKING STEADY PROGRESS.

"AT THE MOMENT HONG KONG RELIES HEAVILY ON BRITISH SHIPPING LEGISLATION. THIS HAS STOOD US IN GOOD STEAD FOR OVER A CENTURY BUT, AS WITH THE SHIPPING REGISTER, WE MUST MAKE ADJUSTMENTS SO THAT OUR ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEMS CAN MAKE THE TRANSITION IN 1997.

"HONG KONG NEEDS ITS OWN FRAMEWORK OF MERCHANT SHIPPING LEGISLATION. WE THEREFORE BEGAN SOME YEARS AGO THE JOB OF LOCALISING THE VAST AMOUNT OF BRITISH LEGISLATION COVERING SAFETY STANDARDS, CREW WELFARE, LIMITATION OF LIABILITY, POLLUTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL, CARRIAGE OF GOODS AND NUMEROUS OTHER TECHNICAL SUBJECTS.

"THIS EXERCISE IS BEING UNDERTAKEN IN CONSULTATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA. SOME LOCALISED LAWS HAVE ALREADY BEEN ENACTED AND MANY OTHERS WILL BE FORTHCOMING," SHE SAID.

COMPULSORY PILOTAGE FOR SHIPS OF 1,000-5,000 GRT'S DEFERRED  
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THE GOVERNMENT HAS ACCEPTED THE ADVICE OF THE PILOTAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO DEFER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPULSORY PILOTAGE FOR SHIPS BETWEEN 1,000 AND 5,000 GROSS REGISTERED TONS (GRT'S) PENDING FURTHER REVIEW OF THE NEED FOR THIS MEASURE.

A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN TODAY (WEDNESDAY) SAID THE NEED FOR COMPLUSORY PILOTAGE FOR THIS CATEGORY OF SHIPS WOULD BE REVIEWED BEFORE THE END OF NEXT YEAR.

"THE ADVICE OF THE PILOTAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE WAS BASED ON TWO MAIN FACTORS," THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

"FIRSTLY, UNPILOTED SHIPS BETWEEN 1,000 AND 5,000 GRT'S HAVE HAD A VERY GOOD SAFETY RECORD DURING THE LAST FIVE YEARS AND A VERY SAMLL PROPORTION OF VESSEL MOVEMENTS IN HONG KONG FALL INTO THIS TONNAGE RANGE (ONLY 3.6 PER CENT LAST YEAR).

"MOST OF THESE SHIPS ARE ENGAGED IN THE COASTAL AND RIVER TRADE AND THEIR CREWS ARE SUFFICIENTLY FAMILIAR WITH HONG KONG WATERS AND PORT REGULATIONS.

"SECONDLY, THE INTRODUCTION OF THE COMPUTER-AND-RADAR-BASED VESSEL TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM BY THE MARINE DEPARTMENT IN SEPTEMBER THIS YEAR WILL ENHANCE THE SAFETY AND OPERATION OF THE PORT.

"PARTICIPATION IN THE NEW VESSEL TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM BY VESSEL OWNERS, AGENTS AND MASTERS IS VOLUNTARY AT THIS EARLY STAGE AND MANDATORY PARTICIPATION IS EXPECTED BY THE SECOND QUARTER OF NEXT YEAR."

THE SPOKESMAN SAID BY THE END OF NEXT YEAR IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO ASSESS MORE CLEARLY WHETHER THE RESIDUAL RISKS JUSTIFIED COMPULSORY PILOTAGE FOR THIS CATEGORY OF SHIPS.

IN 1985 IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT COMPULSORY PILOTAGE WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED IN THREE PHASES TO COVER ALL SHIPS OVER 1,000 GRT'S.

THE FIRST PHASE OF COMPULSORY PILOTAGE FOR ALL SHIPS OVER 10,000 GRT'S WAS IMPLEMENTED ON AUGUST 1, 1985 AND ON AUGUST 1, 1987 THE SECOND PHASE OF COMPULSORY PILOTAGE FOR ALL SHIPS OVER 5,000 GRT'S WAS IMPLEMENTED.

IN THE LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE GAINED, THE PILOTAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE HAS ADVISED THAT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE THIRD PHASE OF COMPULSORY PILOTAGE FOR SHIPS BETWEEN 1,000 AND 5,000 GRT'S, ORGINALLY ENVISAGED TO TAKE PLACE LAST YEAR, SHOULD BE DEFERRED.

THE PILOTAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMPRISES MASTER MARINERS, LICENSED PILOTS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SHIPPING, DOCKYARD AND CONTAINER HANDLING INDUSTRIES.

DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF TRADE TO JOIN GATT MEETING

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THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF TRADE, MR CHAU TAK-HAY, LEFT TONIGHT (WEDNESDAY) FOR BRUSSELS TO JOIN THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR JOHN CHAN, FOR THE GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE MINISTERIAL MEETING TO CONCLUDE THE URUGUAY ROUND OF MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS.

"WE EXPECT TO WORK LONG DAYS AND NIGHTS IN BRUSSELS," MR CHAU SAID ON DEPARTURE.

"AFTER FOUR YEARS OF NEGOTIATIONS, SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES STILL PERSIST IN A NUMBER OF SUBJECTS, INCLUDING TEXTILES, SAFEGUARDS, ANTI-DUMPING AND TRADE IN SERVICES. THESE AREAS ARE OF MAJOR INTEREST TO HONG KONG.

"AS PROGRESS IN THE VARIOUS AREAS IS LINKED, POLITICAL WILL AND FLEXIBILITY BY THE MAJOR TRADING NATIONS ARE CRUCIAL TO A SATISFACTORY CONCLUSION OF THE ROUND AT BRUSSELS," HE SAID.

STARTING FROM DECEMBER 3, MINISTERS AND SENIOR OFFICIALS FROM 107 COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES WILL BE EXPECTED TO SPEND A GRUELLING WEEK HAMMERING OUT A PACKAGE WHICH WILL HELP TO BREAK DOWN TRADE BARRIERS AND STRENGTHEN THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM.

THE ROUND COVERS 15 NEGOTIATING AREAS, RANGING FROM AGRICULTURAL REFORMS TO LIBERALISATION OF TRADE IN SERVICES.

THE HONG KONG DELEGATION TO THE BRUSSELS MEETING IS LED BY MR CHAN, WHO WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY MR CHAU AND HONG KONG'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE GATT, MR KEITH BROADBRIDGE, AS WELL AS OTHER HONG KONG GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

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FC MEETING ON FRIDAY

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THE FINANCE COMMITTEE WILL HOLD A MEETING ON FRIDAY (NOVEMBER 30) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

THE MEETING WILL BEGIN AT 2.30 PM.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ARE WELCOME TO OBSERVE THE COMMITTEE'S PROCEEDINGS FROM THE CHAMBER'S PUBLIC GALLERIES AND THEY MAY MAKE RESERVATIONS BY TELEPHONING 844 0899.

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RESTRICTED BANKING LICENCE REVOKED  
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THE COMMISSIONER OF BANKING ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE RESTRICTED BANKING LICENCE OF SCANDINAVIAN FAR EAST LIMITED WAS REVOKED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY AT THE CLOSE OF BUSINESS ON NOVEMBER 20, 1990 AT ITS OWN REQUEST UNDER SECTION 32(2) OF THE BANKING ORDINANCE.

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HK STUDENTS JOIN INT'L COMPUTER CONTESTS  
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THREE HONG KONG STUDENTS WILL LEAVE FOR THE PHILIPPINES AND SINGAPORE NEXT WEEK TO TAKE PART IN TWO SEPARATE INTERNATIONAL COMPUTER COMPETITIONS ON DECEMBER 7 AND 12.

THEY WERE CHOSEN FROM 33 SECONDARY STUDENTS WHO TOOK PART IN A PROGRAMMING CONTEST.

THE JUDGES COMPRISED REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND THE HONG KONG COMPUTER SOCIETY.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE TWO INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS ARE REQUIRED TO BE FAMILIAR WITH GWB AND THE TECHNIQUES OF USING STRING AND NUMERIC MANIPULATION, ARRAYS AND TEXT GRAPHICS IN PROGRAMMING.

THE COMPETITIONS ARE DESIGNED TO ENABLE YOUNG COMPUTER ENTHUSIASTS TO EXPLOIT THEIR PROGRAMMING SKILLS AND TO PROMOTE THE USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY.

THE TRIPS ARE SPONSORED BY THE HONG KONG COMPUTER SOCIETY WITH THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT ASSISTING.

TO GIVE MORAL SUPPORT TO THE STUDENTS, THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, MR LI YUET-TING, WILL PRESENT THEM A FLAG AT A CEREMONY TO BE HELD TOMORROW (THURSDAY).

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ATTENTION NEWS EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO SEND A REPRESENTATIVE TO COVER THE FLAG PRESENTATION CEREMONY IN THE FORUM ROOM, SECOND FLOOR, LEE GARDENS HOTEL, TOMORROW (THURSDAY) AT 4.30 PM.

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GOVERNMENT LOT TO LET BY TENDER

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THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT IS INVITING TENDERS FOR THE SHORT-TERM TENANCY OF A LOT IN AREA 17, TSING YI ISLAND.

THE 17,000-SQUARE-METRE LOT IS TO BE USED FOR OPEN STORAGE OF EMPTY CONTAINERS.

THE TENANCY IS FOR TWO YEARS, RENEWABLE QUARTERLY AFTERWARDS. THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF TENDERS IS NOON ON DECEMBER 14.

FORMS OF TENDER, TENDER NOTICE AND CONDITIONS MAY BE OBTAINED FROM, AND TENDER PLANS INSPECTED AT, THE FOLLOWING OFFICES:

- \* KWAI TSING DISTRICT LANDS OFFICE, 174-208 CASTLE PEAK ROAD, NEW TERRITORIES;
- \* THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT, 14TH FLOOR, MURRAY BUILDING, GARDEN ROAD, HONG KONG; AND
- \* THE KOWLOON DISTRICT LANDS OFFICES, 10TH FLOOR, YAU MA TEI CARPARK BUILDING, 250 SHANGHAI STREET, KOWLOON.