



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES
BEACONSFIELD HOUSE, HONG KONG. TEL: 5-233191

THURSDAY, MARCH 27, 1986

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CALL FOR ASSISTANCE SCHEME TO IMPROVE KINDERGARTENS
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GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER INTRODUCING A FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME IN ORDER TO IMPROVE KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION, DR THE HON HO KAM-FAI SAID TODAY (THURSDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, DR HO SAID HE WAS HAPPY TO SEE THAT NOTICEABLE IMPROVEMENTS HAD TAKEN PLACE IN THE QUALITY OF KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION BUT NOTED THAT THESE STILL FELL SHORT OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WHITE PAPER ON PRIMARY EDUCATION AND PRE-PRIMARY SERVICES IN 1981 AND OF THE EXPECTATIONS OF EDUCATORS.

+AS I SEE IT, THE CARDINAL IMPEDIMENT TO THE KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION IS A DESPAIRING LACK OF TRAINED TEACHERS,+ HE SAID.

DR HO CITED THE FINDINGS OF A SURVEY IN 1983 ON THE TRAINING AND SALARIES OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS WHICH REVEALED THAT SOME 80 PER CENT DID NOT HAVE ANY FORM OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING WHILE 88 PER CENT HAD A MONTHLY SALARY LESS THAN HALF OF THOSE OF CERTIFIED TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

+IT IS LARGELY DUE TO THESE GLOOMY PROSPECTS OF THE KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION AS A PROFESSION THAT INTELLIGENT AND DEDICATED PERSONS ARE NOT ATTRACTED TO THIS SECTOR OF EDUCATION,+ HE SAID.

+FURTHERMORE, EVEN WHEN PRE-SERVICE OR IN-SERVICE TRAINING IS AVAILABLE, YOUNG PEOPLE OF POTENTIAL ARE RELUCTANT TO AVAIL THEMSELVES OF THESE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES,+ HE ADDED.

DR HO POINTED OUT THAT VARIOUS BODIES CONCERNED WITH PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION HAD BEEN VOCAL IN URGING THE GOVERNMENT TO SET UP A REASONABLE SALARY SCALE COMMENSURATE TO THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES FOR KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS.

NOTING THAT ANY INCREASE IN TEACHERS' SALARIES WOULD INFLATE THE OPERATIONAL COST AND THEREFORE WOULD BE PASSED ONTO THE PARENTS BY CORRESPONDING FEE INCREASE, DR HO SUGGESTED THAT GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER A FINANCIAL SCHEME TO TOP UP THE SALARIES OF QUALIFIED TEACHERS IN NON-PROFIT-MAKING KINDERGARTENS.
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+THE EFFECT IS TO UPLIFT THEIR SALARIES TO THE LEVEL ENJOYED BY THOSE CIVIL SERVANTS WITH COMPARABLE ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, WITHOUT INCREASING THE BURDEN OF PARENTS OF KINDERGARTEN PUPILS,+ HE EXPLAINED.

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AS A MATTER OF FACT, DR HO SAID, THIS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME HAD BEEN PROPOSED BY SOME ASSOCIATIONS OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS AS THE MOST PRACTICABLE AND IMMEDIATE MEANS TO BRING ABOUT A QUALITATIVE IMPROVEMENT TO KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION.

+FURTHERMORE, THIS SCHEME, IF IMPLEMENTED, WILL MAKE A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD IN BRINGING KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION WITHIN THE AIDED SECTOR, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE PANEL OF VISITORS,+ HE ADDED.

AS FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION, DR HO RECALLED THAT IN THE LAST BUDGET DEBATE, HE HAD PROPOSED A BACHELOR OF EDUCATION DEGREE COURSE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION TO TRAIN TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS FOR LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT ROLES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

HE ASKED THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER TO REVIEW THE POSITION OF THE PROPOSAL HAVING REGARD TO ITS EARLY IMPLEMENTATION, IF POSSIBLE, IN THE COMING ACADEMIC YEAR.

ON INDUSTRIAL SAFETY, HE SAID GOVERNMENT HAD APPARENTLY RECOGNISED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FACTORY INSPECTORATE, AND HAD PROMISED ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TO EXPAND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INSPECTORATE.

HOWEVER, THIS POLICY HAD NOT BEEN FOLLOWED THROUGH, HE OBSERVED.

DR HO NOTED THAT IN RECENT YEARS THE WORKLOAD OF THE INSPECTORATE HAD INCREASED MANIFOLD AS A RESULT OF MORE SAFETY LEGISLATION AND MAJOR AMENDMENTS TO EXISTING SAFETY REGULATIONS BEING ENACTED, BUT STAFFING IN THE INSPECTORATE HAD BEEN ON THE DECLINE DURING THE SAME PERIOD.

A PLAN IN 1978 TO GET THE STRENGTH OF THE INSPECTORATE UP TO 250 IN 1984 WAS SUSPENDED IN 1982, RESULTING IN THE ESTABLISHMENT STANDING AT AROUND 200, HE ADDED.

+WITH THESE TIGHT MANPOWER RESOURCES, IT IS NEXT TO IMPOSSIBLE TO EXPECT THE FACTORY INSPECTORATE TO UPHOLD THEIR STANDARD OF SERVICE AND TO PERFORM THEIR ENFORCEMENT DUTIES TO A LEVEL OF SATISFACTION,+ HE SAID.

+NOW WITH OUR BUDGETARY CONDITIONS IMPROVING AND THE CIVIL SERVICE RECRUITMENT RELAXED, I URGE THAT THE GOVERNMENT PLACE TOP PRIORITY ON REINSTATING THE EXPANSION PLAN OF THE FACTORY INSPECTORATE, AND MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ACHIEVE THE ORIGINAL TARGET OF 250 INSPECTORS IN THE NEAREST FUTURE,+ DR HO SAID.

+WE MUST BEAR IN MIND THAT EXPENDITURE INCURRED IN PROMOTING INDUSTRIAL SAFETY GENERATES IMMEDIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIVIDENDS NOT ONLY FOR THE WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES, BUT ALSO FOR THE EMPLOYERS AND THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE,+ HE ADDED.

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CLOSE COORDINATION OF CIVIC EDUCATION NEEDED
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THE HON RITA FAN TODAY (THURSDAY) EMPHASISED THE NEED FOR EFFICIENT COORDINATION AND A SYSTEMATIC STRATEGY FOR PROMOTING CIVIC EDUCATION.

+IT MUST BE APPRECIATED THAT CIVIC EDUCATION IS NOT JUST A TOPICAL SUBJECT, BUT RATHER A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT WHICH SHOULD BE PROPERLY COORDINATED, REVIEWED, IMPROVED AND PERSISTENTLY IMPLEMENTED,+ SHE SAID.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE, MRS FAN NOTED THAT MUCH HAD HAPPENED SINCE SHE CALLED FOR A REALISTIC AND PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO PROMOTE CIVIC EDUCATION IN OCTOBER 1984, AND THE TIME HAD COME TO TAKE STOCK OF THE SITUATION, CONSOLIDATE THE IDEAS AND WORK OUT A WELL-PLANNED STRATEGY FOR ITS FUTURE PROMOTION.

MRS FAN SAID SHE WELCOMED THE ALLOCATION OF SOME \$2.8 MILLION TO VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS FOR PROMOTING CIVIC EDUCATION, BUT STRESSED THE NEED FOR CLOSE COORDINATION TO MAXIMISE EFFECTIVENESS WITHOUT DUPLICATION OF EFFORT AND WASTAGE OF RESOURCES.

MRS FAN SUPPORTED CALLS BY THE HON PETER C. WONG AND THE HON YEUNG PO-KWAN YESTERDAY FOR CHARGING APPROPRIATE FEES AT BORDER POINTS, A SUGGESTION SHE HAD MADE AT LAST YEAR'S BUDGET DEBATE.

+I SEE NO REASON WHY PASSENGERS LEAVING HONG KONG THROUGH MAN KAM TO, SHA TAU KOK AND LO WU SHOULD ENJOY SPECIAL PRIVILEGES,+ SHE SAID, NOTING THAT PASSENGERS USING THE AIRPORT AND MACAU FERRY TERMINAL HAD TO PAY \$120 AND \$15 RESPECTIVELY.

SHE NOTED THAT 207 NEW POSTS WERE BEING ESTABLISHED FOR IMMIGRATION CONTROL ACTIVITIES COSTING \$33.7 MILLION AND SOME OF THESE POSTS WERE FOR MANNING THE NEW LO WU TERMINAL TO BE COMPLETED EARLY NEXT YEAR, THE SHA TAU KOK CONTROL POINT AND THE MAN KAM TO EXTENSION TERMINAL.

+THE GOVERNMENT'S ESTABLISHED POLICY HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO RECOVER PART OR ALL OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS OF PROVIDING SIMILAR SERVICES, SUCH AS ISSUING PASSPORTS,+ SHE SAID.

MRS FAN SAID SHE WELCOMED THE PROPOSED REVIEW OF IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT CHARGES DURING THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR, BUT STRESSED THAT IT SHOULD INCLUDE CHARGES AT THE BORDER CONTROL POINTS.

SHE ALSO URGED THAT THE CHARGES BE PUT AT A REALISTIC LEVEL TO REFLECT THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND RELATED EXPENSES INVOLVED.

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SEPARATE COLLEGE NEEDED FOR KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

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A SEPARATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION FOR TRAINING KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS IS REQUIRED IN HONG KONG, THE HON MRS PAULINE NG SAID TODAY (THURSDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE BUDGET DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MRS NG SUGGESTED THAT A ONE-YEAR FULL-TIME COURSE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE PRE-SERVICE TRAINING FOR PROSPECTIVE KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS.

AS FOR SERVING TEACHERS, SHE SAID THAT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES WERE FAR FROM ADEQUATE AND CALLED ON THE GOVERNMENT TO ORGANISE MORE PART-TIME COURSES.

MRS NG POINTED OUT THAT AT PRESENT KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS WERE NOT REQUIRED TO HAVE ANY FORMAL TRAINING AND THE PART-TIME IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROVIDED BY THE GRANTHAM COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND THE ADVISORY INSPECTORATE OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HAD AN ANNUAL INTAKE OF ONLY 600.

+THREE-TO-FIVE YEAR OLDS ARE AT A VERY IMPRESSIONABLE AGE AND THEY DO LEARN A LOT IN THEIR PRE-SCHOOL YEARS.

+IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE HAVE DEDICATED AND PROPERLY TRAINED TEACHERS IN KINDERGARTENS.

+I PROPOSE THAT TRAINING FOR KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS SHOULD BE FURTHER DEVELOPED. MORE FUNDS SHOULD BE PROVIDED FOR TRAINING PRE-PRIMARY TEACHERS,+ SHE SAID.

TURNING TO THE PROMOTION OF THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION SCHEME, MRS NG SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER GIVING A RENT ALLOWANCE TO DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS TO ENCOURAGE, AND ASSIST, THEM TO SET UP OFFICES IN THEIR OWN DISTRICTS.

SHE BELIEVED THAT A LIAISON OFFICE IN THE FIELD COULD GREATLY IMPROVE THE WORK OF A DISTRICT BOARD MEMBER.

+WITH THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MORE REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, PARTICULARLY AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL, DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS ARE PLAYING AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE IN ACTING AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PEOPLE AND IN SECURING REDRESS FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AGAINST DECISIONS TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

+DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS NEED AN OFFICE TO RECEIVE COMPLAINTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND TO GATHER PUBLIC VIEWS,+ SHE SAID.

HOWEVER, SOME DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO MAINTAIN AN OFFICE BECAUSE OF HIGH RENTS CHARGED FOR COMMERCIAL PREMISES IN SOME AREAS.

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REFERRING TO THE RULES GOVERNING THE USE OF DISTRICT BOARD FUNDS, MRS NG SAID THESE COULD BE MADE MORE FLEXIBLE AND PROJECTS WHICH WOULD INCUR ONLY LIMITED RECURRENT EXPENDITURE SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO BE UNDERTAKEN.

SHE POINTED OUT THE LIMIT ON MAXIMUM EXPENDITURE ON EACH ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROJECT WAS \$300 000, BUT FUNDS COULD NOT BE USED TO COVER RECURRENT EXPENSES, NO MATTER HOW SMALL THE PROJECTS MIGHT BE.

+AS A RESULT OF THIS RULE, A DISTRICT BOARD COULD NOT UNDERTAKE SOME WORTHWHILE PROJECTS, SUCH AS SQUATTER AREA PATH LIGHTING PROJECTS, BECAUSE THESE PROJECTS WOULD ENTAIL SOME RECURRENT EXPENDITURES,+ SHE SAID.

SINCE DISTRICT BOARDS HAD MATURED CONSIDERABLY, MRS NG BELIEVED THESE RESTRICTIONS SHOULD NOW BE LIFTED.

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GOVT URGED TO SET UP CURRICULUM COUNCIL
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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER SETTING UP AN INDEPENDENT AND WELL-ORGANISED BODY TO REFORM THE CURRICULUM TO KEEP IT IN LINE WITH IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION.

THIS SUGGESTION WAS MADE BY THE HON SZETO WAH WHEN SPEAKING AT THE BUDGET DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

HE SAID THE EXPANSION OF EDUCATION IN TERMS OF NUMBER OF SCHOOL PLACES HAD ALREADY ATTAINED A CERTAIN TARGET AND INVESTMENT IN EDUCATION TO IMPROVE QUALITY COULD ALSO BE GRADUALLY INCREASED, BUT AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, WHICH WAS CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT, HAD BEEN OVERLOOKED.

+JUDGING FROM THE PRESENT BUDGET AND THOSE IN THE PAST, WE CAN SEE THAT LITTLE IMPORTANCE HAS BEEN ATTACHED TO THE APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT,+ HE SAID.

MR SZETO OBSERVED THAT THE QUALITY OF TEACHERS AND THE CURRICULUM WERE THE TWO MOST CRUCIAL ELEMENTS IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION.

HE DESCRIBED THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS AND THE CURRICULUM AS ONE BETWEEN A COOK AND HIS COOKING MATERIALS, SAYING A COOK WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PRODUCE A GOOD MEAL DESPITE HIS SKILL IN COOKING IF THERE WERE NO RICE.

/+IN PARTICULAR,

+IN PARTICULAR, IF WE WANT TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF OUR NINE-YEAR FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION, WE MUST CONTINUALLY DEVELOP A CURRICULUM WHICH IS COMPREHENSIVE, CAPABLE OF SHAKING OFF THE HEREDITARY EFFECTS OF THE OLD 'ELITIST' EDUCATION POLICY, TOTALLY STUDENT-ORIENTED, CAPABLE OF SUITING STUDENTS OF DIFFERENT LEARNING ABILITY AND APTITUDE, ABLE TO KEEP IN LINE WITH HONG KONG'S SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND FLEXIBLE,+ HE SAID.

HE NOTED THAT AT PRESENT CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT WORK WAS BEING UNDERTAKEN BY THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND THE RESULTS OF THE PROGRAMME OF SECONDING SERVING TEACHERS SPECIFICALLY FOR THE TASK WERE NOT SATISFACTORY.

THERE WAS STILL A SHORTAGE OF MANPOWER, AND RECRUITMENT EFFORTS HAD NOT BEEN SUCCESSFUL, HE ADDED.

+IN ORDER TO IMPLEMENT FULL-SCALE AND EFFECTIVE REFORMS IN CURRICULUM, SO AS TO FIT IN WITH OTHER MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE PRESENT CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE UNDER THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT CAN NO LONGER SERVE ITS FUNCTION,+ HE SAID.

THEREFORE, HE HOPED THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONSIDER SETTING UP AN INDEPENDENT AND WELL-ORGANISED BODY - THE CURRICULUM COUNCIL.

MR SZETO WAH SAID THE MAJOR TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE COUNCIL SHOULD INCLUDE DESIGNING THE CURRICULA OF VARIOUS ACADEMIC AND ARTS SUBJECTS OF ALL LEVELS; EXAMINING AND APPROVING TEXTBOOKS; EVALUATING PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS; STUDYING WAYS TO IMPROVE THE CURRICULUM; GIVING ADVICE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CURRICULUM; COORDINATING THE PROVISION OF VARIOUS SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES; ACTIVELY PROVIDING EFFECTIVE METHODS FOR CIVIC EDUCATION; MORAL EDUCATION AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND PROVIDING TRAINING FOR TEACHERS.

AS TO THE STRUCTURE OF THE CURRICULUM COUNCIL, IT SHOULD BE INDEPENDENT IN ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE, BUT SHOULD BE RESPONSIBLE TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION IN POLICY MATTERS, HE SAID.

IN HIS VIEW, THE COUNCIL SHOULD ALSO HAVE AT LEAST THREE SUBSIDIARY ORGANISATIONS, NAMELY A RESEARCH CENTRE, EXPERIMENTAL SCHOOLS AND A TEACHERS' CENTRE.

IN ADDITION, THE COUNCIL SHOULD ESTABLISH LINKS WITH THE EXISTING ARTS AND CRAFTS CENTRE, AUDIO-VISUAL AID CENTRE AND THE EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION, HE SAID.

IT SHOULD ALSO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH VARIOUS SCHOOLS TO HELP IMPLEMENTING THE TRIAL AND EVALUATION OF CURRICULUM, HE ADDED.

+IF SUCH A CURRICULUM COUNCIL WAS ESTABLISHED, IT WOULD BE OF GREAT HELP IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN HONG KONG+, MR SZETO SAID.

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INDEPENDENT COLLEGES OF EDUCATION ADVOCATED
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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN MAKING PLANS FOR COLLEGES OF EDUCATION, WHICH PROVIDE TRAINING COURSES FOR TEACHERS, TO BECOME INDEPENDENT ORGANISATIONS HAVING A HIGH ACADEMIC STATUS.

THIS WAS ADVOCATED BY DR THE HON DANIEL TSE DURING THE ANNUAL BUDGET DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

DR TSE SAID: +THIS VIEW MIGHT HOWEVER BE REGARDED AS TOO DRASTIC, BUT AS A COMPROMISE, I UNDERSTAND THAT THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT IS PREPARING FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW COLLEGE OF EDUCATION FOR TRAINING TECHNICAL SCHOOL TEACHERS.

+I SUGGEST, AS AN EXPERIMENT, THAT THE PROPOSED NEW COLLEGE OF EDUCATION SHOULD BE INTEGRATED INTO THE CITY POLYTECHNIC, TO SEE IF WE COULD DEVELOP SOME NEW TALENTS MORE SUITABLE TO THE PREVAILING DIVERSIFIED AND INDEPENDENT EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT.+

HE ADDED THAT THE IDEA HAD ALREADY RECEIVED THE PERSONAL APPROVAL OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE CITY POLYTECHNIC, FROM AN EDUCATIONAL POINT OF VIEW.

+SHOULD THE INTEGRATION BRING ABOUT SOME SAVINGS IN RESOURCES, THIS WOULD BE AN ADDITIONAL GAIN,+ HE SAID.

DR TSE SAID THAT THE QUALIFICATION OF TEACHERS WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR AFFECTING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION AS A WHOLE AND IT WAS AN AREA THAT REQUIRED SPECIAL ATTENTION.

THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT THAT TEACHERS WERE PROVIDED BY COLLEGES OF EDUCATION ADMINISTERED BY THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HAD POSSIBLY BEEN ACCEPTED IN THE PAST.

HOWEVER, HE NOTED THAT OWING TO GROWING NEEDS AND PROGRESS IN EDUCATION, BRITAIN HAD ABANDONED THE POLICY OF HAVING ALL TEACHERS TRAINED DIRECTLY BY THE GOVERNMENT AND HAD INTEGRATED PROGRESSIVELY THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION INTO POLYTECHNICS, UNIVERSITIES AND OTHER TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS SO THAT TEACHER TRAINING BECAME PART OF THE INDEPENDENT SYSTEM OF PUBLIC TERTIARY EDUCATION.

/THIS ARRANGEMENT

THIS ARRANGEMENT WOULD NOT ONLY ENABLE THE TEACHERS IN FUTURE TO OBTAIN PROFESSIONAL TEACHING TECHNIQUES AND TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS OF SOCIETY THROUGH EXPOSURE IN A WIDER PERSPECTIVE, IT WOULD ALSO BE A TIMELY CHANGE GIVEN THE SITUATION IN HONG KONG IN THE MID-1980S, HE SAID.

DR TSE SAID HE WAS HAPPY TO SEE THAT HONG KONG'S EDUCATION SYSTEM HAD TAKEN CARE OF NEEDS AT DIFFERENT LEVELS AND IN DIFFERENT AREAS, RANGING FROM KINDERGARTENS TO UNIVERSITIES, AND FROM SPECIAL EDUCATION TO ADULT EDUCATION.

HOWEVER, HE FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY A CLEAR ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE THAT COULD CONVINCHE HIM THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY AND OBJECTIVES HAD BEEN IMPLEMENTED IN A SYSTEMATIC AND EFFICIENT MANNER.

DR TSE SAID HE BELIEVED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NOT OVERLOOKED THAT ASPECT, AND THAT IN THE PAST FEW YEARS IT HAD MADE CONSIDERABLE EFFORT TO ATTAIN ITS GOAL, SUCH AS THE APPOINTMENT OF THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE EDUCATION COMMISSION.

+ALL THESE ARE GOOD INDICATIONS THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS MADE EVERY EFFORT IN IMPROVING AND CO-ORDINATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION.

+HOWEVER, JUDGING FROM OTHER OBSERVATIONS, SUCH ARRANGEMENTS DO NOT SEEM TO HAVE ACHIEVED THE INTENDED OBJECTIVES. TAKE TECHNICAL EDUCATION AS AN EXAMPLE, WE ARE STILL FACING A RATHER COMPLICATED SITUATION,+ HE SAID.

DR TSE SAID THAT WITH THE VARYING RESPONSIBLE PARTIES, INCLUDING GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS, STATUTORY BODIES AND NON-STATUTORY BODIES, A LACK OF CO-ORDINATION COULD BE FOUND IN THE ALLOCATION OF MANPOWER, STANDARD OF SUPPLIES, FORMULATION OF CURRICULA AND THE DOVETAILING OF DIFFERENT DEVELOPMENT STAGES OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND INDUSTRIAL TRAINING.

HOWEVER, HE WAS PLEASED THAT SINCE 1981 THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC HAD GRADUALLY TRANSFERRED THE MAJORITY OF ITS DIPLOMA AND CERTIFICATE COURSES IN THIS FIELD TO THE TECHNICAL INSTITUTES THROUGH A LIAISON COMMITTEE JOINTLY ORGANISED BY THE TECHNICAL INSTITUTES AND THE POLYTECHNIC.

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CALL TO REVAMP MEDICAL FINANCING POLICIES
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FUNDS PROVIDED FOR MEDICAL SERVICES IN THE COMING FINANCIAL YEAR UNLIKELY TO BE SUFFICIENT TO SUSTAIN THE PRESENT SCALE OF EXPANSION UNLESS FIRM AND QUICK DECISIONS ARE MADE ON REVAMPING POLICIES ON HOW TO FINANCE MEDICAL SERVICES, AND HOSPITAL SERVICES IN PARTICULAR, THE HON MISS MARIA TAM SAID IN THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

CONVENER OF THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH INTERNAL WORKING GROUP ON THE DRAFT ESTIMATES, MISS TAM SAID ALL FIVE MEMBERS IN HER GROUP SUPPORTED THE BASIC PHILOSOPHY THAT PEOPLE WHO COULD AFFORD IT SHOULD PAY MORE FOR MEDICAL SERVICES AND THOSE WHO COULD NOT SHOULD BE GIVEN RELIEF.

SUMMARISING THE GENERAL AREAS THAT CAUSED CONCERN TO THE WORKING GROUP, SHE STRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD MAKE THE MOST OF EXISTING RESOURCES.

SERVICES IN SUBVENTED HOSPITALS COULD BE UPGRADED, AND THE BED OCCUPANCY RATE INCREASED, AS HAD BEEN ACHIEVED AT POK OI HOSPITAL BY AN INTERDISCIPLINARY REDISTRIBUTION OF BEDS, INCREASING ADMISSION THROUGH ESTABLISHING SPECIALTY UNITS AND STREAMLINING REFERRAL SYSTEMS. A SIMILAR APPROACH HAD BEEN ADOPTED AT KWONG WAH HOSPITAL AND FURTHER POSSIBILITIES SHOULD BE EXPLORED IN OTHER SUBVENTED HOSPITALS.

MISS TAM ALSO CALLED ON GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS TO TAKE JOINT ACTION TO DEAL WITH PROBLEMS THAT HAD BEEN IDENTIFIED.

JOINT EFFORTS COULD BE MADE ON THE ISSUE OF OVERCROWDING IN HOSPITALS, THE NEED TO MAKE BETTER USE OF CONVALESCENT BEDS IN SUBVENTED HOSPITALS, AND IN THE CARE OF ELDERLY PATIENTS.

MISS TAM SAID THE SOONER HONG KONG COULD ADOPT AN AMBULATORY CARE POLICY THE BETTER IT COULD MAXIMISE ON THE USE OF HOSPITAL CARE.

SHE NOTED THAT IN SOME OVERSEAS COUNTRIES PATIENTS WERE ENCOURAGED TO LEAVE HOSPITALS AND CONVALESCENT HOMES ONCE THEY WERE FIT TO DO SO, AND WERE SUBSEQUENTLY VISITED BY COMMUNITY NURSES WHILE CONVALESCING AT HOME.

ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT PLANNED TO INCREASE LOCAL COMMUNITY NURSE CENTRES, A GOVERNMENT NURSE COULD AT PRESENT ONLY VISIT AN AVERAGE OF THREE PATIENTS PER DAY, WHILE HER COUNTERPART IN THE UNITED CHRISTIAN HOSPITAL WAS ABLE TO VISIT, STATISTICALLY, ABOUT 7.5 PATIENTS PER DAY.

/+WE MUST

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+WE MUST THEREFORE FINE-TUNE THE LOGISTICS AND SUPERVISION OF COMMUNITY NURSING TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARE EFFICIENT,+ SHE SAID.

ON IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE REPORT ON THE DELIVERY OF HOSPITAL SERVICES, MISS TAM SAID SHE BELIEVED THAT EACH OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS SHOULD BE ASSESSED ON ITS MERITS.

+THE QUESTION WHETHER WE CAN AFFORD AN INDEPENDENT HOSPITAL AUTHORITY SHOULD NOT BE A STUMBLING BLOCK TO BETTER HOSPITAL ADMINISTRATION OR MORE EQUITABLE COST RECOVERY,+ SHE SAID.

+I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT WE WANT OUR EXPANDED HOSPITAL SERVICES TO BE MADE AVAILABLE TO MORE PEOPLE WHO ARE LESS WELL OFF, BUT WE CAN ONLY DO SO IF OUR CHARGES ARE PUT ON A BROADER BASE AND OUR SLICE OF THE BUDGETARY CAKE IS SHARED WISELY AMONG THOSE WHO ARE IN NEED,+ SHE ADDED.

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DIVERT RESOURCES TO MEET NEW MEDICAL NEEDS

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THE GOVERNMENT WAS TODAY URGED TO REVIEW EXISTING SOCIAL SERVICES AND SPENDING ON THEM, CUTTING THOSE WHICH NO LONGER SERVE ACUTE NEEDS BECAUSE OF CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES, AND DIVERTING OUR SCARCE RESOURCES TO MEET NEWLY EMERGED NEEDS.

THE CALL CAME FROM DR THE HON HENRIETTA IP DURING THE BUDGET DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

+SOCIAL SERVICES IN HONG KONG SHOULD NOT EXPAND WITHOUT LIMIT TO ADMINISTER FREE SERVICES TO THE DEMANDING AND EVER GROWING NEEDS OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC, INCLUDING THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD TO CONTRIBUTE.

+THERE IS A LOT TO BE SAID ABOUT STREAMLINING OUR SERVICES WITH THE VIEW TO IMPROVING THEIR QUALITY, BUT THERE IS NO REASON WHY, WHEN DOING SO, OUR GOVERNMENT SHOULD FEEL HESITANT TO GENTLY INTRODUCE SOME CHARGES,+ SHE SAID.

DR IP SAID SHE FOUND THE DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT COMMENDABLE AS IT HAD RIGHTLY PLACED EMPHASIS ON THE HANDICAPPED AND ON THE AGED.

SHE SAID IT WAS ENCOURAGING THAT THIS YEAR'S PROVISION FOR THE HANDICAPPED HAD INCREASED BY 4.6 PER CENT COMPARED WITH 1985-86 AND THE LONG AWAITED INCREASE OF SHELTERED WORKSHOPS AND WORK ACTIVITY CENTRE PLACES WOULD NOW TAKE PLACE.

SHE HOPED THAT THE TAXI VOUCHER SCHEME FOR PEOPLE USING WHEELCHAIRS WOULD BE REALISED SOON.

/AS FOR

AS FOR THE AGED, SHE WELCOMED THE SURVEY TO BE CARRIED OUT JOINTLY BY THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENTS TO REAPPRAISE THE SITUATION CONCERNING CARE OF THE ELDERLY.

HOWEVER, SHE SAID IT WOULD BE APPRECIATED IF THE COUNCIL COULD BE GIVEN UPDATED INFORMATION REGARDING THE PROGRESS AND RESULT OF THE SURVEY AND BE INFORMED OF WHAT CO-ORDINATED ACTION THE TWO DEPARTMENTS WERE TAKING IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY.

REFERRING TO THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT, SHE SAID SHE HAD MISGIVINGS IN SIX AREAS.

ON WHAT SHE CONSIDERED +INEFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT+, DR IP CITED AS EXAMPLES HOSPITAL OVERCROWDING AND THE APPARENT NEED FOR MORE BEDS.

SHE SUGGESTED QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ASKED AS TO WHETHER PATIENTS BEING ADMITTED REALLY REQUIRED THIS IN THE FIRST PLACE, WERE THEY BEING ADMITTED TO THE RIGHT WARDS, AND HOW LONG SHOULD THEY STAY IN HOSPITAL.

+THE DEPARTMENT MUST LOOK INTO THIS PROBLEM POSITIVLY AND OBJECTIVELY AS A POSITIVE STEP TOWARDS BETTER MANAGEMENT,+ SHE SAID.

DR IP SAID THE IMPROVED PROVISION OF COMMUNITY NURSING SERVICE, CARE AND ATTENTION HOMES, AND MEDICAL INFIRMARIES FOR THE AGED WOULD RELEASE 2 500 ACUTE BEDS NOW OCCUPIED BY ELDERLY PATIENTS WITH NO FURTHER MEDICAL PROBLEMS WHICH REQUIRED HOSPITAL ATTENTION.

SHE PROPOSED THAT HONG KONG SHOULD FOLLOW THE MORE ADVANCED COUNTRIES IN INTRODUCING AMBULATORY CARE.

RATHER THAN REPEATING THE MISTAKE OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN BUILDING MORE HOSPITALS, SHE BELIEVED HONG KONG SHOULD TIGHTEN ITS CRITERIA FOR HOSPITAL ADMISSION/STAY AND AIM AT EARLY DISCHARGE FROM HOSPITAL.

+THIS TREND IS NOT ONLY FINANCIALLY ADVANTAGEOUS, BUT HEALTHIER PHYSICALLY, AS IT REDUCES THE CHANCE OF HOSPITAL CROSS-INFECTION, AND ALSO HEALTHIER PSYCHOLOGICALLY, WHEN THE ILL, PARTICULARLY THE CHRONICALLY ILL, RECOVER AMONG THEIR LOVED ONES AT HOME IN A PERSONAL ENVIRONMENT,+ SHE SAID.

ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS, DR IP COMMENTED THAT SOME EXISTING SERVICES MIGHT BE REDUNDANT OR HAVE ONLY A MARGINAL VALUE WHEREAS IN OTHER AREAS DEFICIENCIES WERE NOT BEING MET. SHE CITED THE SCHOOL MEDICAL SERVICE AS AN EXAMPLE OF A SCHEME THE NEED FOR WHICH HAD DECLINED.

/SHE SAID

SHE SAID THERE WAS A DIMINISHING NEED FOR THE SCHOOL MEDICAL SERVICE SCHEME AS ALMOST EVERY DISTRICT HAD OUT-PATIENT CLINICS AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH HAD IMPROVED.

FURTHERMORE, THE PARTICIPATION RATE WAS LOW, WITH ONLY 40 PER CENT OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN TAKING PART, AND EVEN THE GOVERNMENT CONFIRMED THAT 'DOUBLE SUBVENTION' EXISTED.

DR IP FELT THAT TAXPAYERS' MONEY WOULD BE BETTER SPENT ON SAY, A DENTAL SERVICE FOR THE AGED.

SHE SAID DENTAL PROBLEMS CREATED HEALTH PROBLEMS FOR THE AGED WHEN THEY WERE NOT FIT TO EARN ENOUGH MONEY TO PAY FOR PRIVATE SERVICES AND SERVICES WOULD NOT BE OFFERED TO THEM BY GOVERNMENT DENTAL CLINICS UNLESS THEY WERE OR HAD BEEN CIVIL SERVANTS.

SHE ENVISAGED SUCH A SERVICE AS A PREVENTIVE SCHEME UNDER THE BUDGET'S MEDICAL PROVISION BUT EMPHASISED THAT UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD IT BE SEEN AS THE BEGINNING OF A FREE DENTAL SERVICE FOR ALL.

DEALING WITH COST-EFFECTIVENESS, DR IP SAID THE CRUX OF THE MATTER WAS THAT ALTHOUGH THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT AGREED TO THE EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPORTANCE OF A STANDARDISED COST SYSTEM, THE SUPPORTING DATA COULD NOT BE PRODUCED UNTIL THE LEDGER ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION SYSTEM (LAFIS) PHASE II WAS AVAILABLE AND THERE WAS NO TIME-TABLE IN THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE FURTHER EXTENSION OF LAFIS.

+IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE PRESENT NON-SYSTEMATIC APPROACH OF COST COMPARISON WOULD LEAD TO UNEVEN DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS AND CONCEALMENT OF COST-INEFFECTIVENESS OF VARIOUS OPERATIONS.

+TO SAFEGUARD THE INTERESTS OF TAXPAYERS, THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD ACCORD TOP PRIORITY TO WORK OUT A STANDARDISED COST SYSTEM AND TO CONDUCT VALUE-FOR-MONEY STUDIES ON VARIOUS PROGRAMMES AND OPERATIONS,+ SHE SAID.

SHE SUGGESTED THAT THE DEPARTMENT SPEED UP THE INTRODUCTION OF LAFIS PHASE II.

ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THERE SHOULD BE FREE MEDICAL SERVICES FOR ALL, DR IP REITERATED THAT FREE SOCIAL SERVICES SHOULD BE PROVIDED TO THE DISABLED, THE AGED, CHILDREN AND THE VERY POOR, BUT NOT TO THE PUBLIC AT LARGE, AND MEDICAL SERVICES LIKEWISE SHOULD NOT BE WHOLLY FREE FOR THOSE WHO COULD AFFORD THEM.

THOUGH SHE HAD RESERVATIONS ON THE COMPUTATION OF THE +AVERAGE COST+, SHE FULLY SUPPORTED THE MOVE TO INCREASE CHARGES FOR FIRST AND SECOND CLASS BEDS TO RECOVER PART OF OPERATIONAL COSTS, AND SUGGESTED THAT THE INCREASE SHOULD ALSO APPLY TO THIRD CLASS BEDS.

/SHE BELIEVED

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SHE BELIEVED IT WAS NOT UNREASONABLE TO RECOVER AROUND 10 PER CENT OF THE OPERATIONAL COST FROM BED CHARGES AS THOSE WHO COULD NOT AFFORD THE CHARGE COULD ALWAYS SEEK EXEMPTION FROM THE MEDICAL SOCIAL WORKER AND THOSE ON PUBLIC ASSISTANCE WOULD BE EXEMPTED AUTOMATICALLY.

SHE ALSO NOTED THAT SPECIAL SERVICES COULD BE OFFERED TO THE PUBLIC AT COST WITH THE AIM OF PROVIDING A MORE DYNAMIC SERVICE WITHOUT INCURRING EXTRA COSTS FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

APART FROM LEVYING CHARGES, SHE SAID SAVINGS COULD BE MADE BY BETTER UTILISATION OF EXISTING SERVICES, SUCH AS BY DEPLOYING CLINIC DOCTORS TO MAN EVENING CLINICS THROUGH RESCHEDULING OF THEIR WORKING HOURS RATHER THAN PAYING OTHER DOCTORS TO WORK OVERTIME.

DR IP ALSO SAID THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROVIDE SOME INCENTIVES SUCH AS TAX DEDUCTION BENEFITS, TO ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO TAKE OUT MEDICAL INSURANCE.

SHE SAID A FRUSTRATING SITUATION HAD APPEARED IN THAT PATIENTS TENDED TO ECONOMISE ON THE TREATMENT THEY SOUGHT, TO THEIR DETRIMENT, BECAUSE OF THE RISING COST OF TREATMENT IN PRIVATE HOSPITALS AND OF MEDICATION.

+WHEN THE AVERAGE MAN IN THE STREET HAS TO CHOOSE BETWEEN A COMPLETELY FREE MEDICAL SERVICE OF A LOWER STANDARD, AND A PARTIALLY PAID ONE OF HIGHER STANDARD, HE WOULD OPT FOR BETTER QUALITY,+ SHE SAID.

+RESOURCES FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF OUR MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES MUST COME PARTLY FROM THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD TO PAY, EITHER DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY THROUGH MEDICAL INSURANCE.

+THIS IS THE ONLY WAY THROUGH WHICH THE MEDICAL PROFESSION CAN, WITHIN AN IMPROVED MEDICAL FRAMEWORK AND INFRASTRUCTURE, OFFER THE BEST TO ALL THOSE WHO ARE ILL, IRRESPECTIVE OF WHETHER THEY ARE RICH OR POOR,+ SHE SAID.

ON THE CONSULTANCY REPORT ON THE DELIVERY OF MEDICAL SERVICES IN HOSPITALS, DR IP URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO GIVE PRIORITY TO RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH COVERED AREAS WHERE CHANGES WERE LONG OVERDUE. THESE ENCOMPASSED MANY OF THE MATTERS SHE HAD MENTIONED.

+IN THE MEANTIME, THE ADMINISTRATION SHOULD LOOK POSITIVELY INTO THE PROPOSALS RELATING TO THE INDEPENDENT HOSPITAL AUTHORITY, ITS IMPLICATIONS, ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES, WITH THE VIEW TO IMPLEMENTING THEM,+ SHE SAID.

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INSUFFICIENT INCREASE IN MEDICAL FUNDING
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THOUGH THE BUDGET HAS ALLOCATED \$4.3 BILLION FOR MEDICAL SERVICES, THIS IS ONLY AN INCREASE OF 0.2 PER CENT ON THE 1985-86 FUNDING AND CAN HARDLY COVER THE NORMAL INFLATION RATE, DR THE HON CHIU HIN-KWONG TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

SPEAKING ON THE SECOND DAY OF THE BUDGET DEBATE, DR CHIU SAID THIS SMALL INCREASE MEANT THAT DIFFICULTIES WERE ENVISAGED EVEN IN MAINTAINING EXISTING SERVICES, NOT TO MENTION THE PROVISION FOR IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY OF CARE, EXPANSION OF SERVICE OR UPGRADING OF MEDICAL FACILITIES.

HOWEVER, HE COMMENTED THAT THE JUST RELEASED AUSTRALIAN CONSULTANTS' REPORT ON THE DELIVERY OF MEDICAL SERVICES IN HOSPITALS WAS EXPECTED TO HAVE AN ENORMOUS IMPACT ON THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR MEDICAL SERVICES.

DR CHIU SAID THE BACKBONE OF THE REPORT WAS APPARENTLY THE PROPOSAL FOR SETTING UP AN INDEPENDENT STATUTORY HOSPITAL AUTHORITY WHICH WOULD AIM AT ENSURING EFFECTIVE HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT, EFFICIENT DELIVERY OF SERVICE AND BETTER ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE USE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES.

REFERRING TO THE RECOMMENDATION THAT THERE BE SEVEN REGIONS, WITH COMMUNITY INPUT IN THE INITIAL STAGE, AND NINE LATER, HE SAID THE MERIT OF THIS PROPOSAL LAY IN BETTER HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT AT REGIONAL LEVEL.

BUT HE SAID THE REPORT'S FAILURE TO IDENTIFY THE ROLE OF EXISTING BOARDS OF DIRECTORS IN SUBVENTED HOSPITALS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE RECOMMENDED REGIONAL BOARDS WOULD INVITE FUTURE DISPUTES.

ON THE RECOMMENDED PILOT SCHEME TO INTRODUCE B CLASS BEDS TO CATER FOR THE NEEDS OF MIDDLE-INCOME PEOPLE, DR CHIU FEARED THAT ANY ATTEMPT TO PLACE B CLASS BEDS IN THE EXISTING PUBLIC HOSPITALS MIGHT CREATE ADMINISTRATIVE DIFFICULTIES, REDUCE THE PROVISION OF C CLASS BEDS AND EXACERBATE OVERCROWDING IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS.

+I CONSIDER IT MORE WORKABLE IF THE PILOT SCHEME BE BUILT IN WITH THE DEVELOPMENT PLANS FOR NEW HOSPITALS OR NEW EXTENSIONS,+ HE SAID.

DR CHIU NOTED THAT ONE MAJOR SUGGESTION CONCERNED INTEGRATION OF GOVERNMENT AND SUBVENTED HOSPITALS, WITH THE DETAILS TO BE WORKED OUT BY AN INDEPENDENT STAFF ADVISORY COMMISSION.

/TURNING TO

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TURNING TO THE VARIOUS METHODS OF DEVELOPING RESOURCES AS FORMULATED BY THE CONSULTANTS, DR CHIU CONSIDERED THAT THE SUGGESTED \$12 FEE FOR ATTENDING AN ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY UNIT WAS A USEFUL MEASURE TO AVOID ABUSE OF THE SERVICE.

HOWEVER, HE STRESSED THE NEED TO UPHOLD THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST TAKE CARE OF THOSE WHO COULD NOT AFFORD TO PAY.

DR CHIU OBSERVED THAT THE REPORT HAD OMITTED A VERY IMPORTANT AREA THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF PRIMARY MEDICAL CARE.

+AS PRIMARY CARE IS THE BASIC MEDICAL SERVICE, THE SIGNIFICANT ROLE IT PLAYS SHOULD NEVER BE OVERLOOKED, PARTICULARLY WHEN THE GOVERNMENT IS EXPANDING HOSPITAL SERVICES,+ HE SAID.

HE FELT THAT THE REPORT'S RECOMMENDATIONS WERE ACCEPTABLE ONLY ON CONDITION THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD RETAIN THE ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PROVISION OF EXTRA FUNDS CAUSED BY CHANGES AND THAT THE ANNUAL MEDICAL EXPENDITURE WOULD NOT BE LESS THAN THE PRESENT LEVEL.

DR CHIU SUGGESTED A NUMBER OF INTERIM MEASURES TO IMPROVE MEDICAL SERVICES AS IT WOULD TAKE SOME TIME TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN THE REPORT. HIS SUGGESTIONS WERE:

- * TO MAKE BETTER USE OF VACANT BEDS IN SUBVENTED HOSPITALS FOR CONVALESCENT CASES REFERRED FROM THE GOVERNMENT SECTOR;
- * TO DISTRIBUTE MORE BEDS TO THE OVERSUBSCRIBED ORTHOPAEDIC, MEDICAL, SURGICAL AND PSYCHIATRIC WARDS IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS;
- * TO EXPEDITE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF INFIRMARY BEDS SO AS TO RELIEVE THE BURDEN ON GENERAL WARDS= AND
- * TO FURTHER EXPAND THE COMMUNITY NURSING SERVICE, ESPECIALLY THE COMMUNITY PSYCHIATRIC NURSING SERVICE, TO MEET THE DEMAND FOR AFTER-CARE SERVICE FOR THE MENTALLY-ILL.

FINALLY, DR CHIU QUESTIONED THE FUNDING OF THE BRITISH MILITARY HOSPITAL, NOTING THAT THIS HAD BECOME A TOPICAL ISSUE EVER SINCE THE MATTER OF A SUPPLEMENTARY ALLOCATION FOR THE HOSPITAL WAS RAISED AT A FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING.

HE HAD DISCOVERED THAT THE TOTAL EXPENDITURE OF THE HOSPITAL WAS NOT SEPARATELY IDENTIFIABLE IN THE DRAFT ESTIMATES BECAUSE IT WAS SUBSUMED WITHIN THE DEFENCE COSTS AGREEMENT.

/HE WONDERED

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HE WONDERED HOW MUCH OF THE \$1.5 BILLION IN DEFENCE COSTS WOULD BE SET ASIDE FOR THE HOSPITAL AND SAID THE FIGURE WAS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN ASSESSING COST EFFECTIVENESS.

+IF SUCH NEEDED INFORMATION IS NOT MADE AVAILABLE TO US, MAY WE BE ADVISED HOW WE ARE GOING TO MAKE SOUND DECISIONS IN VETTING THE BUDGET PROPOSALS WHEN THE TIME COMES?+ DR CHIU ASKED.

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BROADEN SOURCES OF INCOME TO IMPROVE SERVICES
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LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLOR DR THE HON CONRAD LAM TODAY (THURSDAY) SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER WAYS TO IMPROVE MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES BY MEANS OF BROADENING SOURCES OF REVENUE AND CURTAILING EXPENDITURE.

SPEAKING DURING THE BUDGET DEBATE IN THE COUNCIL, DR LAM QUOTED FIGURES SHOWING THAT PUBLIC DEMANDS FOR MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES WERE EVER INCREASING, BOTH IN TERMS OF QUALITY AND QUANTITY.

THEREFORE, HE SAID, GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE IN THIS AREA WOULD LIKEWISE BE RISING EACH YEAR.

DR LAM WARNED THAT A PROBLEM OF UNEVEN DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES MIGHT ARISE IF THERE WAS ANY MISHANDLING OF THE SITUATION.

EMPHASISING THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST CONTINUE TO PROVIDE SUBSIDISED MEDICAL SERVICES FOR THE NEEDY, DR LAM MADE THREE SUGGESTIONS TO BROADEN SOURCES OF REVENUES.

FIRSTLY, HE SAID, A FEE SHOULD BE CHARGED FOR SERVICES PROVIDED BY HOSPITAL ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS.

+PATIENTS WHO GO TO CASUALTY WARDS ARE THOSE REQUIRING EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT. THEY DO NOT GO THERE FOR FREE SERVICE BECAUSE OF FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES. THUS THERE IS NO NEED FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO BE GENEROUS AT THE TAXPAYERS' EXPENSE,+ HE SAID.

SECONDLY, HE SAID THE COST OF PROVIDING A BED IN A GOVERNMENT HOSPITAL RANGED FROM A FEW HUNDRED TO OVER A THOUSAND DOLLARS PER DAY, BUT PATIENTS HAD ONLY TO PAY \$15 PER DAY. THEREFORE, HE BELIEVED THAT AN UPWARD ADJUSTMENT OF FEES TO AN APPROPRIATE LEVEL WAS ACCEPTABLE.

/THIRDLY, HE

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THIRDLY, HE SAID IN THE COMMUNITY NURSING SERVICE THE ACTUAL COST PER VISIT WAS \$190 BUT THE PATIENT WAS CHARGED ONLY \$15. THIS WAS VERY CHEAP.

ON WAYS TO CURTAIL EXPENDITURE, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD REVIEW THE COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SERVICE PROVIDED BY GENERAL OUT-PATIENT CLINICS AND ALSO POLICIES REGARDING THEIR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT.

HE CALLED ON THE GOVERNMENT TO CONSIDER WHETHER IT WOULD BE MORE COST-EFFECTIVE TO PRIVATISE THE GENERAL OUT-PATIENT SERVICE.

DR LAM ALSO PROPOSED THAT THE COMMUNITY NURSING SERVICE BE PRIVATISED AND THAT A MEDICAL INSURANCE SCHEME BE PROMOTED IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE PUBLIC'S RELIANCE ON SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

LASTLY, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD STUDY THE DEFECTS IN THE ORGANISATION, MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF HOSPITALS AND CLINICS WITH A VIEW TO RECTIFYING THEM AND THUS IMPROVE OVERALL EFFICIENCY.

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+MORE SERVICES NEEDED IN NORTHWEST N.T.+
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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER A CHANGE OF EMPHASIS ON BUDGETARY POLICY WITH REGARD TO NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES, WHICH IS RELATIVELY ISOLATED FROM THE REST OF THE TERRITORY.

THIS WAS SUGGESTED BY THE HON TAI CHIN-WAH TODAY (THURSDAY) WHEN HE SPOKE AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1986.

MR TAI POINTED OUT THAT THE LARGE SHIFT OF POPULATION TO TUEN MUN AND YUEN LONG REQUIRED CAREFUL AND FAR-SIGHTED TOWN PLANNING, SUPPORTED BY PROPER MEDICAL, SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES.

ON MEDICAL SERVICES, MR TAI NOTED THAT THROUGHOUT THE YEARS THE STANDARD OF SUBVENTED HOSPITALS HAD BEEN LAGGING BEHIND GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS.

HE SAID THE SITUATION WAS PARTICULARLY SERIOUS IN WEST NEW TERRITORIES WHERE THERE WAS AN INCREASING NEED FOR MEDICAL FACILITIES.

+IF THE SCOPE AND STANDARD OF MEDICAL SERVICES IN THE SUBVENTED SECTOR IS IMPROVED, THESE HOSPITALS CAN RELIEVE THE PRESSURE BEING FACED BY GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS,+ HE SAID.

/MR TAI

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MR TAI SAID THAT A LOT OF BEDS IN SUBVENTED HOSPITALS WERE BEING OCCUPIED BY ELDERLY PEOPLE WHO SHOULD REALLY BE ACCOMMODATED IN INFIRMARIES OR CONVALESCENT HOMES.

HE THEREFORE SUGGESTED THAT HOSPITALS WITH A LOW OCCUPANCY RATE, OR THOSE FREQUENTLY USED BY ELDERLY PEOPLE WHO REQUIRED MINIMUM MEDICAL CARE, BE CONVERTED INTO INFIRMARIES OR CONVALESCENT HOMES TO ENSURE THAT BETTER VALUE FOR MONEY WAS BEING SPENT ON MEDICAL SERVICES.

TURNING TO EDUCATION, MR TAI FOCUSSED ON THE SERIOUS SHORTFALL OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES IN NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES.

HE SAID THIS WAS THE BACKLASH RESULTING FROM INADEQUATE CONSIDERATION IN TOWN PLANNING AND AN OVER-CAUTIOUS BUDGETARY CONTROL AT THE INITIAL PLANNING STAGE.

NOTING THAT THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HAD PROPOSED HALF-HEARTED MEASURES TO ALLEVIATE THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION, HE SAID THIS CREATED ADMINISTRATIVE DIFFICULTIES AND LOWERED THE STANDARD OF EDUCATION OF SCHOOLS IN NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES.

+I WOULD THEREFORE CALL FOR ADDITIONAL PROVISION TO BE MADE AVAILABLE TO EXPAND THOSE SCHOOLS SITUATED IN NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES WHICH HAVE THE CAPABILITY OF EXPANSION AND IN PARTICULAR, MORE SCHOOL PLACES BE BOUGHT FROM PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN THE AREA,+ HE SAID.

MR TAI FINALLY URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO HAVE A LONG-TERM POLICY IN RESPECT OF BETTER USE OF AVAILABLE LAND SO AS TO EXPAND THE INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL POTENTIAL IN THE TERRITORY.

HE SAID HE FELT THERE WAS A GENUINE NEED FOR MORE FUNDS TO INITIATE A MORE DRASTIC RURAL LAND POLICY.

WITH REGARD TO THE QUESTION CONCERNING THE KA WAH BANK, MR TAI ECHOED HIS SUPPORT TO THE POINTS RAISED BY THE HON MARTIN LEE AND SAID THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD GIVE SOME INDICATIONS OF THE EXTENT OF ITS COMMITMENT IN RESPECT OF THE RECENT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE PARTIES CONCERNED.

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RECYCLE HOUSING FUNDS INTO OTHER AREAS

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THE HOUSING AUTHORITY CAN FURTHER ENHANCE ITS CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS CAPITAL EXPENDITURE ON THE PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME WITH THE ULTIMATE AIM OF BECOMING SELF-SUPPORTING, THE HON F.K. HU SUGGESTED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE ANNUAL BUDGET DEBATE, MR HU NOTED THAT THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY IN 1986-87 MIGHT REACH 43 PER CENT OF TOTAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE ON RENTAL HOUSING ESTATES, AND THE TREND INDICATED THAT IT COULD CONTRIBUTE EVEN MORE IN FUTURE.

HE ADDED THAT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY SHOULD AIM TO BE COMPLETELY SELF-SUPPORTING IN, SAY, FIVE YEARS' TIME WITHOUT SLOWING DOWN ITS LONG-TERM BUILDING PROGRAMMES, INCLUDING ITS REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME.

+THE PUBLIC FUNDS HITHERTO SPENT ON HOUSING CAN THEN BE USED TO FINANCE OTHER URGENTLY NEEDED ADDITIONAL PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES,+ HE SAID.

AS CONVENER OF THE COUNCIL'S INTERNAL WORKING GROUP EXAMINING THE DRAFT ESTIMATES ON SOCIAL WELFARE, MR HU SAID HIS VIEW WAS SHARED BY OTHER GROUP MEMBERS.

TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL, HE SUGGESTED THAT FIRSTLY THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER TRANSFERRING THE HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME TO THE HOUSING AUTHORITY.

AS THE HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME INVOLVED A LESSER SUBSIDY THAN RENTAL HOUSING, THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WOULD BENEFIT FINANCIALLY THROUGH THIS TRANSFER, HE SAID.

FURTHERMORE, HE BELIEVED THE HOUSING AUTHORITY COULD BE PROVIDED WITH THE FLEXIBILITY OF CONVERTING SOME RENTAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS TO THE HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME.

MR HU'S SECOND SUGGESTION WAS FOR ARRANGEMENTS TO BE MADE WITH PRIVATE DEVELOPERS TO DEVELOP SITES AT THEIR EXPENSE, WITH THE DEVELOPERS RETAINING THE COMMERCIAL PREMISES AND SOME RESIDENTIAL BLOCKS FOR THEIR DISPOSAL AND THE HOUSING AUTHORITY BEING HANDED BACK AN AGREED NUMBER OF RESIDENTIAL BLOCKS TO BE USED EITHER AS RENTAL HOUSING OR HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME BLOCKS.

THIS SO-CALLED +MODIFIED PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION SCHEME+ COULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF SPEED AND EFFICIENCY OF PRIVATE DEVELOPERS, AND EXPEDITE THE PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME, HE SAID.

/MR HU

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MR HU SAID RENT INCREASES FOR DOMESTIC PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS MUST BE CARRIED OUT GRADUALLY, REASONABLY AND WITHIN THE MEANS OF TENANTS.

HE ALSO ADVOCATED A REDUCTION IN THE SUBSIDY FOR THOSE WHO COULD AFFORD TO PAY, AND FOR UNITS TO BE SOLD TO EXISTING TENANTS.

MR HU NOTED THAT, FOR TENANTS BUYING THEIR OWN UNITS, THERE COULD BE MANY PROBLEMS RELATING TO THIS PROPOSAL AND HE SUGGESTED THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN TO SELLING THOSE BLOCKS WHICH HAD BEEN DEVELOPED OR PERHAPS REDEVELOPED WITH ACCEPTABLE ENVIRONMENTAL AND LIVING CONDITIONS PROVIDED THAT MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS COULD BE RESOLVED.

+THERE CAN BE MANY OTHER ALTERNATIVES WORTH CONSIDERING AND A COMBINATION OF VARIOUS OPTIONS WHICH I HAVE JUST MENTIONED, CAN ACHIEVE THE GOAL,+ HE SAID, ADDING THAT HE FULLY ENDORSED THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY'S REMARKS THAT HE KNEW OF NO COMPARABLE HOUSING PROGRAMME ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD.

TURNING TO SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES, MR HU COMMENTED THAT ALTHOUGH SOCIAL WELFARE SUBVENTIONS HAD BEEN BUDGETTED TO INCREASE BY 13.6 PER CENT, FROM \$421 MILLION TO \$478 MILLION, IT SEEMED THAT THE AMOUNT STILL FELL SHORT OF WHAT WOULD BE REQUIRED TO MEET THE PLANNED PROVISIONS IN THE FIVE YEAR PLAN.

HE ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO ADOPT A MORE POSITIVE SUBVENTION POLICY AND TO INITIATE ACTION WHENEVER NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THE PLANNED PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR VARIOUS SERVICES.

MR HU NOTED THAT IN THE SUBVENTED WELFARE SECTOR, SOME AGENCIES IN CATEGORY II WERE PROVIDING IMPORTANT AND NECESSARY SERVICES BUT MIGHT BE ONLY RECEIVING LUMP SUM GRANTS WHICH APPEARED TO BE DETERMINED ARBITRARILY OR TOTALLY AT THE GOVERNMENT'S DISCRETION.

+IT IS SUGGESTED THAT THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE SOCIAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, SHOULD THOROUGHLY REVIEW THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF SUBVENTION TO SEE IF IT IS ADEQUATELY MEETING THE FINANCIAL NEED OF THE AGENCIES, PARTICULARLY THOSE PROVIDING CATEGORY II SERVICES,+ HE SAID.

ON STAFFING OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT, MR HU SAID HE HOPED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD IMMEDIATELY DISCONTINUE THE UNDESIRABLE PRACTICE OF RECRUITING UNIVERSITY GRADUATES WITHOUT FORMAL SOCIAL WORK TRAINING INTO THE RANK OF ASSISTANT SOCIAL WORK OFFICER AS THERE WAS A SHORTAGE OF SOCIAL WORK POSTS TO ACCOMMODATE SOCIAL WORK GRADUATES FROM UNIVERSITIES LOCALLY AND OVERSEAS.

/IN DOING

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IN DOING SO, HE SAID, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD SAVE MONEY ON THE SUBSEQUENT TRAINING OF RECRUITS.

+SECONDLY, TRAINED SOCIAL WORKERS BY VIRTUE OF THEIR TRAINING AND FIELD WORK PRACTICE WILL BE ABLE TO PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AS SOON AS THEY ARE ENGAGED, SO THAT THEY ARE IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE TO RENDER TIMELY ASSISTANCE AND SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY,+ HE SAID.

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MAJOR REVIEW OF HOUSING POLICIES NEEDED
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THE HON S.L. CHEN TODAY (THURSDAY) CALLED FOR A MAJOR REVIEW OF EXISTING HOUSING POLICIES TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER THE FINANCIAL CAKE IS CORRECTLY AND FAIRLY DIVIDED TO SATISFY HONG KONG'S MANY PRESSING NEEDS.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE, MR CHEN RAISED DOUBTS OVER THE COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF THE HOUSING PROGRAMME AND WHETHER IT WAS FULFILLING ITS ORIGINAL AIM OF HELPING THOSE IN GENUINE NEED.

SO FAR, HE SAID, THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT SEEM ABLE OR WILLING TO GRASP THE NETTLE AND COME UP WITH A POSITIVE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF WELL-OFF TENANTS OCCUPYING HEAVILY SUBSIDISED HOUSING ACCOMMODATION.

UNTIL THIS PROBLEM HAD BEEN SATISFACTORILY RESOLVED, HE SAID, QUESTIONS WOULD CONTINUE TO BE ASKED WHETHER THE HOUSING SCHEME WAS FULFILLING ITS OBJECTIVE OF HELPING THE GENUINELY NEEDY.

+ON A BROADER FRONT, PEOPLE MIGHT EVEN DOUBT THE NEED TO MAINTAIN A PUBLIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME ON A SCALE WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIABLE IN THE PAST, BUT NOT NECESSARILY APPLICABLE NOWADAYS, ESPECIALLY IN THE LIGHT OF THE CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVING PER CAPITA INCOME WHICH HONG KONG HAS BEEN ABLE TO ACHIEVE OVER THE YEARS,+ HE SAID.

MR CHEN QUERIED WHY LAND VALUES WERE NOT INCLUDED IN THE COST OF THE HOUSING PROGRAMME, SAYING THAT THIS DID NOT MAKE COMMERCIAL SENSE.

IN HIS VIEW, THE TRUE COST OF THE HOUSING PROGRAMME MUST COVER THREE PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS - CAPITAL EXPENDITURE ON BUILDING CONSTRUCTION, THE VALUE OF THE LAND, AND ADMINISTRATION OVERHEADS.

/WITHOUT THESE,

WITHOUT THESE, HE SAID, IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO ASSESS THE SIZE OF THE SUBSIDY WHICH HONG KONG TAXPAYERS HAVE BEEN FINANCING OVER THE YEARS, OR WHETHER THE PROJECTS HAVE BEEN OR ARE BEING CARRIED OUT COST-EFFECTIVELY AND COMPETITIVELY SO AS TO ENSURE BEST VALUE FOR MONEY.

MR CHEN WARNED THAT HONG KONG'S HEALTHIER FINANCIAL POSITION TODAY SHOULD BE NO CAUSE FOR OVER OPTIMISM OR COMPLACENCY.

+OUR VIABILITY DEPENDS ON OUR BEING ABLE TO PAY FOR WHAT WE WANT WITHOUT RESORTING TO DEBT. IN SHORT, WE MUST EARN BEFORE WE SPEND, AND SPEND WISELY,+ HE SAID.

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MORE GOVERNMENT-PRIVATE SECTOR CO-OPERATION URGED
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THE HON SELINA CHOW TODAY (THURSDAY) CALLED ON GOVERNMENT TO DEVELOP A MORE OPEN ATTITUDE TOWARDS CO-OPERATION WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE, MRS CHOW CITED HER EXPERIENCE WITH THE ORGANISATION AND CO-ORDINATION OF LAST YEAR'S INTERNATIONAL YOUTH YEAR ACTIVITIES TO DEMONSTRATE THE EXTRA VALUE THAT COULD BE DERIVED FROM POOLING OF PRIVATE AND PUBLIC RESOURCES.

+WHEN WE REFER TO OPEN GOVERNMENT IN FUTURE, I HOPE IT WILL BE MORE THAN A REFERENCE TO THE PUBLIC RELATIONS ASPECT OF OUR ADMINISTRATION.

+I HOPE IT WILL ALSO SIGNIFY THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MORE OPEN ATTITUDE TOWARDS CO-OPERATION WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR,+ SHE SAID.

SHE NOTED THAT SUCH AN ATTITUDE MIGHT EXIST IN A SMALL NUMBER OF DEPARTMENTS BUT WAS BY NO MEANS WIDESPREAD AND SHE BELIEVED IT WOULD BE TO HONG KONG'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ADVANTAGE THAT IT WAS ACTIVELY DEVELOPED AND PROMOTED BY SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

ASSOCIATING HERSELF WITH DR THE HON KIM CHAM'S VIEWS ON PRIVATISATION, SHE SAID AFTER A NUMBER OF SUCCESSFUL TRIALS, THE TIME WAS RIPE FOR AN ACROSS-THE-BOARD EXERCISE TO IDENTIFY POSSIBLE INCLUSIONS.

HOWEVER, SHE CAUTIONED AGAINST THE HON POON CHI-FAI'S PROPOSAL TO GOVERNMENTISE MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS, NOTING THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE A HIGH TENDENCY OF SLIPPAGE WITH JOBS UNDERTAKEN BY GOVERNMENT ENGINEERS.

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EARLIER, MRS CHOW COMMENTED THAT WE MIGHT BE IN DANGER OF HAVING +TOO MUCH GOVERNMENT+ IN THE PROVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES.

WE MUST NOW TAKE STOCK AND PONDER AS TO HOW WE SHOULD CONTINUE, SHE SAID.

IN THE AREA OF PUBLIC HOUSING, SHE SAID QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ASKED WHETHER WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO BUILD SO MANY RENTAL UNITS AND SO LITTLE HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME UNITS= WHETHER THE RATIO SHOULD BE ADJUSTED AND WHETHER THERE SHOULD BE FURTHER PROMOTION OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION SCHEME.

+PERHAPS THE TIME HAS ALSO COME TO EXAMINE AFRESH, WHETHER PUBLIC HOUSING GENERALLY SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE SOCIAL WELFARE, OR WHETHER IN THE HONG KONG OF TODAY, THIS IS A PAGE OF HISTORY BEST LEFT IN THE PAST,+ SHE SAID.

ON EDUCATION, MRS CHOW SAID THERE SHOULD BE A LOOK AT THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE AIDED SECTOR AND FOR SOCIAL WELFARE, THE ROLE OF SUBVENTED AGENCIES.

APART FROM THE PRIVATISATION OF SERVICES, MRS CHOW SAID SHE BELIEVED GOVERNMENT SHOULD RE-THINK ITS PRESENT POLICY REGARDING THE ORGANISATION AND CONTRIBUTION OF IDEAS FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

AT PRESENT, SHE SAID, WHEN AN INNOVATIVE IDEA WAS PROPOSED TO GOVERNMENT AND WAS FOUND TO BE FEASIBLE, THERE WAS NO GUARANTEE THAT THE ORIGINATOR OF THE IDEA WAS PROTECTED. THE NORMAL PROCEDURE WAS THAT THE IDEA WAS RELEASED FOR PUBLIC TENDER.

+THIS MOVE AIMS NO DOUBT TO OBTAIN THE ACCUSATION OF FAVOURITISM.

+BUT IN PROTECTING ITSELF THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT ONLY DOING AN INJUSTICE TO THE INVENTOR OF THE IDEA, BUT ALSO DETERS OTHERS FROM PUTTING THEIR IDEAS FORWARD, THEREBY DEPRIVING THE COMMUNITY OF THE BENEFITS OF BRILLIANT IDEA,+ SHE SAID.

MRS CHOW THEN VOICED HER SUPPORT FOR THE LIFTING OF DUTIES ON COSMETICS AND NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS ONCE WE COULD AFFORD TO DO SO.

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SOCIAL WELFARE SHOULD HAVE HIGHER PRIORITY
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THE GOVERNMENT WAS TODAY (THURSDAY) QUESTIONED AS TO WHAT PRIORITY IT ATTACHES TO SOCIAL WELFARE IN RELATION TO OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES INCLUDING MEDICAL AND HEALTH, EDUCATION AND HOUSING.

THE HON CHAN YING-LUN RAISED THIS ISSUE DURING THE ANNUAL BUDGET DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

HE SAID THAT ON THE GROUNDS OF HUMAN INVESTMENT AND COMPASSION, THERE WAS A STRONG CASE FOR GIVING SOCIAL WELFARE THE SAME DEGREE OF PRIORITY AS OTHER SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMMES.

THOUGH THE GOVERNMENT WAS RIGHTLY ON COURSE IN TACKLING SHORTFALLS IN MEDICAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC HOUSING, HE SAID HE COULD NOT SEE FULLY ANY GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT IN SOCIAL WELFARE. +THIS IS UNFAIR TO SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES,+ HE STRESSED.

MR CHAN SAID HE HAD HEARD OF ABUSES IN THE USE OF OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES BUT NOT THE SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMME.

+WHO WOULD WANT A HANDOUT FROM GOVERNMENT, WHO WOULD NEED OLD PEOPLE'S HOMES, WHO WOULD NEED SHELTERED WORKSHOPS, WHEN THEY COULD HELP THEMSELVES?+ HE ASKED.

+THIS IS WHERE I DO NOT SEE THE LOGIC.

+WHEREAS SOCIAL WELFARE CANNOT EVEN TAKE CARE OF ALL THOSE WHO ARE LEAST ABLE TO HELP THEMSELVES, MEDICAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC HOUSING ARE ON THE OTHER HAND NOT ONLY HELPING PEOPLE WHO HAVE THE NEED BUT ALSO HELPING THOSE WHO WOULD NOT REALLY NEED GOVERNMENT'S HELP.

+ARE WE TRYING TO MAKE MEDICAL AND PUBLIC HOUSING A WELFARE AT THE EXPENSE OF SOCIAL WELFARE?+ MR CHAN ASKED.

MR CHAN WAS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE SHORTFALL IN SERVICES PROVIDED FOR OFFENDERS, THE ELDERLY, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE DISABLED.

CITING STATISTICS ON THE NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE PROSECUTED FOR SHOPLIFTING, MEMBERSHIP OF AN UNLAWFUL SOCIETY, AND BURGLARY, HE SAID THEY INDICATED THAT THE PROBLEM RELATING TO YOUNG PEOPLE WAS GROWING THOUGH THEY DID NOT SHOW HOW LARGE AND HOW WORRYING THE PROBLEM WAS.

/HE SAID

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HE SAID GANG ACTIVITY AND DELINQUENT AND UNRULY BEHAVIOUR AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN WERE A CAUSE FOR GROWING GOVERNMENT CONCERN. TO ILLUSTRATE THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE PROBLEM, HE SAID, AT RECENT MEETINGS OF THE SHAU KEI WAN HILLSIDE AREA COMMITTEE A MAJOR ISSUE WAS THE INCREASING PRESENCE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF GANGS AND YOUNG DRUG ADDICTS.

AREA COMMITTEE MEMBERS WERE AWARE THAT IT WAS A COMPLEX SOCIAL AND HUMAN ISSUE AND POLICE ACTION WAS NOT REALLY A CONSTRUCTIVE REMEDY. BUT MR CHAN SAID THEY HAD TO PRESS THE POLICE REPRESENTATIVE TO DO SOMETHING AS THEY DID NOT HAVE AN OUTREACHING SOCIAL WORK TEAM IN THE AREA AND THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVE HAD BEEN WITHDRAWN FROM THE COMMITTEE SINCE APRIL LAST YEAR.

HE EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THERE WAS NO REAL GROWTH IN THE PROVISION OF PERSONAL SOCIAL SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

THE NUMBER OF OUTREACHING SOCIAL WORK TEAMS STOOD STILL AT ONLY 18 AND THE RATIO OF STUDENTS TO SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS REMAINED AT 4 000 TO ONE.

+IF THE PLANNED PROVISION AS SET OUT IN THE FIVE YEAR REVIEW OF SOCIAL SERVICE MEANS ANYTHING AT ALL, THE CURRENT PROVISION MEANS A SHORTFALL OF 50 PER CENT.

+TO ME AS A LAYMAN, I WOULD INTERPRET IT THAT GOVERNMENT IS ONLY DEALING WITH HALF OF THE PROBLEM WHILE LEAVING THE OTHER HALF ASIDE,+ HE SAID.

+THIS AND OTHER SHORTFALLS ARE VERY UNSATISFACTORY,+ HE COMMENTED, POINTING OUT THAT THERE WAS A SHORTFALL OF ABOUT 83 SOCIAL CENTRES AND 14 MULTI-SERVICE CENTRES FOR THE ELDERLY, AS WELL AS A SHORTFALL IN SHELTERED WORKSHOP PLACES.

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AMBIGUITY SEEN IN SOCIAL WELFARE

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AS FAR AS SOCIAL WELFARE IS CONCERNED, THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN AMBIGUITY REGARDING PUBLIC POLICY AND FUNDING PRIORITIES AS WELL AS CAUTION IN SETTING OUT THE GOVERNMENT'S FINANCIAL COMMITMENT, THE HON HUI YIN-FAT TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE BUDGET DEBATE, MR HUI CONCEDED THAT THE ALLOCATION FOR SOCIAL WELFARE HAD RISEN FROM 4.2 PER CENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S TOTAL EXPENDITURE IN 1981-82 TO 5.8 PER CENT IN 1986-87. HOWEVER 59.4 PER CENT OF THE ALLOCATION WOULD BE ABSORBED BY THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND SPECIAL NEEDS ALLOWANCES SCHEMES WHILE ONLY 17.1 PER CENT WENT TOWARDS SOCIAL WELFARE SUBVENTIONS FOR VOLUNTARY AGENCIES.

/THE PERCENTAGE

THE PERCENTAGE OF THE INCREASE IN SUBVENTIONS FOR SOCIAL WELFARE WAS ALSO SMALLER WHEN COMPARED WITH THOSE FOR EDUCATION AND MEDICAL AND HEALTH.

+IT IS SIGNIFICANT TO NOTE THAT IN THE ON-GOING FIVE YEAR PLAN FOR SOCIAL WELFARE DEVELOPMENT, THERE IS NO GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT - THE SAME KIND OF COMMITMENT MADE TO THE PROVISION OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PLACES, AND THE BUILDING OF PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS,+ MR HUI OBSERVED.

HE SAID THAT DESPITE THE TIME AND EFFORT DEVOTED BY VOLUNTARY AGENCIES AND THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT TO THE FIVE YEAR PLAN ANNUAL REVIEW EXERCISE, ALMOST ALL CATEGORIES OF SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES WERE SHOWING SHORTFALLS.

+INADEQUATE RESOURCES TOGETHER WITH THE LACK OF PROVISIONS IN THIS YEAR'S BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF SERVICES HAVE GIVEN RISE TO GROWING FRUSTRATION AMONG VOLUNTARY AGENCIES,+ HE SAID.

MR HUI COMMENTED THAT MANY OF THE PROBLEMS CONFRONTING VOLUNTARY AGENCIES AROSE FROM THE SYSTEM OF SOCIAL WELFARE SUBVENTION.

WHILE THE STANDARD COST SYSTEM INTRODUCED IN 1983 WAS AN IMPROVEMENT OVER THE LUMP SUM DISCRETIONARY GRANTS, IT STILL HAD OVER-RIDING OPERATIONAL PROBLEMS, HE SAID.

+THE CRITERIA BY WHICH SERVICES ARE PLACED INTO CATEGORY I (100 PER CENT SUBVENTED) AND CATEGORY II (PARTIALLY SUBVENTED) SERVICES, AND THE BASIS AND METHODS BY WHICH STANDARD COSTS ARE CALCULATED HAVE CAUSED MUCH DISSATISFACTION AMONG VOLUNTARY AGENCIES,+ HE SAID.

OTHER PROBLEMS HAD STEMMED FROM THE STRINGENT CONTROL THAT THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT EXERCISED OVER THE ACCOUNTS OF AGENCIES.

+FURTHERMORE, THE 'NO TOPPING UP' POLICY UNDER THE NEW SUBVENTION SYSTEM MEANS THAT GOVERNMENT ONLY ACKNOWLEDGES SURPLUSES, LEAVING THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES TO HANDLE THEIR DEFICITS.

+ANY SAVINGS ACCRUED MUST BE KEPT IN A SEPARATE RESERVE ACCOUNT, BUT IN MOST CASES VOLUNTARY AGENCIES HAVE NOT BEEN GIVEN THE APPROVAL TO MAKE FULL USE OF AVAILABLE FUNDS FOR CARRYING OUT SERVICE PROGRAMMES,+ HE SAID.

MR HUI SAID THE CLAW-BACK OF INTEREST FROM UNUSED SUBVENTION NOT ONLY STRIPPED OFF THE CUSHIONING EFFECT, CREATED A POSSIBLE CASH FLOW PROBLEMS FOR VOLUNTARY AGENCIES, BUT ALSO VIOLATED THE PRINCIPLE OF THE NEW SUBVENTION SYSTEM FOR VOLUNTARY AGENCIES TO EXERCISE FLEXIBILITY AND TO USE THEIR INCOME MORE PRODUCTIVELY.

+LASTLY, SINCE PERSONAL EMOLUMENTS FOR CATEGORY II SERVICES ARE NOT FULLY SUBVENTED, AGENCIES PROVIDING SUCH SERVICES ARE SUBJECT TO PERIODIC HARASSMENT OF HAVING TO DESPERATELY COPE WITH SALARY ADJUSTMENTS FOR THEIR STAFF,+ HE SAID.

LOOKING AT SOME POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS, MR HUI SAID HE BELIEVED THAT A GOVERNMENT COMMITMENT WAS FUNDAMENTAL TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.

+I BELIEVE THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE A FIRM MOVE TO SPELL OUT IN DETAIL ITS FIVE YEAR FORECASTS FOR SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMMES SUPPORTED BY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES.

+IT IS ALSO HIGH TIME FOR GOVERNMENT'S EQUIVOCAL STAND ON SOCIAL WELFARE POLICIES TO BE REPLACED BY DEFINITE ENDORSEMENT OF MUCH-NEEDED SERVICE PROJECTS AWAITING PUBLIC FUNDINGS,+ HE SAID.

MR HUI SUGGESTED THAT THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT SHOULD WORK OUT BASIC COSTS FOR VARIOUS TYPES OF SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES, WITH THERE BEING CONSULTATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF THE LATTER IN SETTING PRIORITIES, FORMULATING POLICIES AND MOBILISING RESOURCES.

IN PARTICULAR, HE SAID, THE INTELLIGENT USE OF AN IDENTIFIED SURPLUS TOTALLING \$31.4 MILLION IN VOLUNTARY AGENCY RESERVE ACCOUNTS OUGHT TO BE ACTIVELY PURSUED SO THAT THE SERIOUS SHORTAGE OF FUNDS FOR CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION AND SALARY ADJUSTMENT WOULD BE EASED.

MR HUI ALSO SAID HE BELIEVED THAT SOCIAL WELFARE DISBURSEMENTS FROM THE LOTTERIES FUND HAD DROPPED FROM 5.75 PER CENT OF TOTAL PROCEEDS IN 1983 TO 1.5 PER CENT IN 1985, AND URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE STEPS TO SEE THAT THIS SITUATION WAS RECTIFIED.

HE ALSO ASKED WHETHER IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT 50 PER CENT OF THE FUND ALLOCATION FOR SOCIAL WELFARE BE USE FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF SERVICE IN GOVERNMENT APPROVED PROJECTS FOR WHICH NO PROVISION HAD BEEN MADE IN SOCIAL WELFARE SUBVENTIONS IN THE PAST FEW YEARS.

FURTHERMORE, HE SAID THE TIME REQUIRED FOR PROCESSING APPLICATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE FROM THE FUND SHOULD BE REDUCED, PROCEDURES SHOULD BE STREAMLINED AND MORE MANPOWER DEPLOYED TO HANDLE APPLICATIONS SO THAT SUBVENTION WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE MORE SPEEDILY.

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TURNING TO JOCKEY CLUB SUPPORT, HE NOTED THAT OF THE \$201 MILLION IN DONATIONS MADE BY THE CLUB LAST YEAR, ONLY 17 PER CENT WAS FOR SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMMES.

HE COMMENTED THAT THE JOCKEY CLUB CHARITIES COMPANY DID NOT HAVE SPECIFIC GUIDELINES ON DONATIONS BUT ONLY CONSIDERED REQUESTS IN RESPECT OF PROJECTS THAT HAD TO BE CLEARED WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

+IT WOULD SEEM TIMELY FOR A DIALOGUE TO BE ESTABLISHED BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND THE JOCKEY CLUB ON NON-SUBVENTED PROJECTS THAT URGENTLY REQUIRE COMMUNITY FUNDING.

+IT IS ALSO NECESSARY FOR VOLUNTARY AGENCIES TO MAKE KNOWN COMMUNITY AND SERVICES NEEDS TO THE JOCKEY CLUB IN THE HOPE THAT A CHANGE MAY BE EFFECTED IN OUR SOCIAL WELFARE FUNDING PATTERN,+ HE SAID.

IN CONCLUSION, MR HUI SAID SOCIAL WELFARE MUST BE LOOKED UPON AS SOCIAL INVESTMENT FOR THE WHOLE COMM

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IN CONCLUSION, MR HUI SAID SOCIAL WELFARE MUST BE LOOKED UPON AS SOCIAL INVESTMENT FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY.

THIS NECESSITATED A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE FROM ONE OF INCREASING CONTROL OF THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES TO ONE OF ENLIGHTENED PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE AGENCIES, HE SAID.

+ONLY WHEN THE TWO PARTIES JOIN HANDS TO EXPLORE NEW SOURCES OF FUNDING AND TO IMPROVE THE ALLOCATION MECHANISM WOULD WE BE SANGUINE ABOUT THE FUTURE FOR SOCIAL WELFARE DEVELOPMENT IN HONG KONG.+

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PRIORITY URGED FOR EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE

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WHEN DRAFTING THE BUDGET ESTIMATES, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD GIVE PRIORITY TO EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES, THE HON LIU LIT-FOR SAID TODAY (THURSDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE BUDGET DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR LIU SAID HE WARMLY WELCOMED THE FAIRLY SUBSTANTIAL SUM ALLOCATED TO EDUCATION ITEMS.

HE WAS PARTICULARLY PLEASED THAT THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY INDICATED IN THE MEDIUM-RANGE FORECAST THAT THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE EDUCATION COMMISSION'S SUGGESTIONS, WHICH HAD BEEN ACCEPTED, WOULD BE TAKEN CARE OF.

HE URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO PAY DUE ATTENTION TO THE FURTHER SUGGESTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS OF THE EDUCATION COMMISSION AND TO GIVE PROPER CONSIDERATION TO THE ALLOCATION OF MORE RESOURCES.

MR LIU NEXT COMMENTED ON A LONG PENDING QUESTION AS SUGGESTED IN THE NO 1 REPORT OF THE EDUCATION COMMISSION, THAT OF OFFERING A BACHELOR OF EDUCATION DEGREE COURSE TO HEADMASTERS OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

+EVERYONE KNOWS THAT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE QUALITY OF PRIMARY EDUCATION IS NO LESS THAN THAT OF SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION,+ MR LIU SAID.

+THEREFORE, IT IS MOST URGENT TO TRAIN ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND CAPABLE LEADERS TO LEAD PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS.

+I HOPE THAT THIS LONG-AWAITED AND MODEST SUGGESTION WILL BE APPROVED AND IMPLEMENTED THIS YEAR TO ANSWER THE DEMAND,+ HE SAID.

TURNING TO SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK, MR LIU NOTED THAT THE SERVICE HAD BEEN WELL RECEIVED BY THE EDUCATION SECTOR AND RESULTS SO FAR WERE QUITE GOOD.

HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO THE RESULT OF SURVEYS AND OTHER RESEARCH, THE PRESENT SERVICE WAS UNABLE TO MEET THE DEMAND.

MR LIU HOPED THAT THIS MEANINGFUL SERVICE WOULD BE REVIEWED AND STRENGTHENED AT AN OPPORTUNE TIME SO THAT THE QUALITY OF LOCAL EDUCATION WOULD BE FURTHER IMPROVED.

REGARDING SOCIAL WELFARE, HE DOUBTED IF THE SO-CALLED STANDARD COST COULD BE APPLIED TO ALL SERVICES BECAUSE BY CLASSIFYING SERVICES INTO CATEGORY I AND CATEGORY II THE AUTHORITIES HAD TO MAKE AN OBJECTIVE JUDGEMENT.

/+I UNDERSTAND

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+I UNDERSTAND THAT THE SO-CALLED CATEGORY I SERVICES ARE THOSE WHICH BELONG TO THE BASIC NEEDS TYPE WHILE OTHERS ARE GROUPED UNDER CATEGORY II.

+DESPITE THIS, THE SCOPE OF INDIVIDUAL SERVICES MAY BE VASTLY DIFFERENT ACCORDING TO THE NATURE OF THE SERVICE.

+CERTAIN SERVICES MAY HAVE THEIR OWN MERITS BUT SINCE THEIR USEFULNESS HAS NOT YET BEEN CONFIRMED, THEY MAY BE GIVEN A COMPARATIVELY LOW PRIORITY IN RESPECT OF FUNDING,+ HE SAID.

THEREFORE, HE CALLED ON THE GOVERNMENT TO ESTABLISH A BETTER OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE AND TO UTILISE SURPLUSES TO DEVELOP NEW SERVICES AS WELL AS TO ENHANCE CATEGORY II SERVICES.

REFERRING TO SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY, MR LIU SAID HE WAS PLEASED THAT 750 ADDITIONAL PLACES WOULD BE PROVIDED IN ELDERLY HOSTELS/HOMES.

HOWEVER, HE REGRETTED THAT THE NUMBER OF PLACES IN CARE AND ATTENTION HOMES WOULD REMAIN AT 1 376.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE NUMBER OF PLACES IN HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME FLATS FOR ELDERLY PERSONS HAD STAYED AT 539 SINCE 1984-85.

MR LIU HOPED THAT THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE WOULD, IN THE CURRENT REVIEW OF THE ACCOMMODATION POLICY RELATING TO SOCIAL WELFARE AND COVERING ACCOMMODATION FOR THE ELDERLY, CONSIDER THE ABOVE POINTS AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

HE ALSO HOPED THAT THE AUTHORITIES WOULD FURTHER REVIEW THE DEMAND FOR SOCIAL CENTRES FOR THE ELDERLY AND THAT CONSIDERATION BE GIVEN AS TO WHETHER THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT SHOULD SET UP MORE SOCIAL CENTRES OR MAKE BETTER ARRANGEMENTS FOR THESE CENTRES TO BE RUN BY SUBVENTED INSTITUTIONS.

MR LIU REITERATED HIS BELIEF THAT PRIORITY SHOULD BE GIVEN TO EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES IN THE BUDGET ESTIMATES AS THESE SERVICES WERE IMPORTANT TO COMMUNITY WELFARE AS A WHOLE.

HE SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD DELEGATE FULL FLEXIBILITY AND DECISION-MAKING POWER TO THE EXECUTIVE AUTHORITIES PROVIDED THAT THIS WAS IN LINE WITH CURRENT POLICIES, SO THAT MORE AND BETTER SERVICES COULD BE PROVIDED TO MEET SOCIAL NEEDS.

HE FURTHER SUGGESTED THAT ADMINISTRATION-RELATED UNITS SHOULD BE ENTRUSTED WITH THE RIGHT TO USE FUNDS SO THAT THEY MAY PROVIDE QUICK AND EFFICIENT SERVICES.

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WELFARE FUND ALLOCATION GUIDELINES NEEDED
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THE HON ROSANNA TAM TODAY (THURSDY) CRITICISED THE GOVERNMENT'S +SHORTSIGHTEDNESS+ FOR NOT CONDUCTING AN OVERALL AND INDEPTH REVIEW ON SOCIAL WELFARE POLICIES DURING THE PAST SEVEN YEARS.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE, SHE SAID THAT AS A RESULT OF THE ABSENCE OF GUIDELINES GOVERNING THE PRIORITY OF ALLOCATION OF FUNDS TO WELFARE SERVICES, EXISTING RESOURCES HAD NOT BEEN FULLY UTILISED.

THE GOVERNMENT'S ANNUAL PROVISION FOR WELFARE SERVICES WAS MAINLY SPENT ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW PROJECTS AND THE EXPANSION OF EXISTING SERVICES, WITH LITTLE IMPORTANCE ATTACHED TO IMPROVING EXISTING SERVICES, SHE SAID.

THUS THE RESULTS OBTAINED OFTEN RAN COUNTER TO THE AIMS OF PROVIDING SUCH SERVICES.

CITING THE CASE OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK AS AN EXAMPLE, SHE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD ACCEPTED IN PRINCIPLE TO CUT THE RATIO OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER TO STUDENTS FROM 1 : 4 000 TO 1 : 2 000. HOWEVER, NO ACTION HAD BEEN FORTHCOMING.

SHE URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO START AN OVERALL REVIEW ON VARIOUS POLICY OBJECTIVES SET OUT IN THE 1979 WHITE PAPER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, WITH A VIEW TO BRINGING THEM IN LINE WITH THE PRESENT NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.

+MORE IMPORTANT, A SET OF CRITERIA GOVERNING THE PRIORITY FOR THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDING FOR WELFARE SERVICES MUST BE SET UP TO ENSURE THAT THE QUALITY OF SERVICES RENDERED ARE MAINTAINED AT A CERTAIN LEVEL,+ SHE ADDED.

TURNING TO THE CONSULTATION STRUCTURE FOR SOCIAL SERVICE POLICIES, MRS TAM URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO ALLOW THE SOCIAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO RESUME ITS FORMER ROLE AND TO MAKE IT RESPONSIBLE FOR FORMULATING A SET OF CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING THE PRIORITIES IN ALLOCATING FUNDS FOR WELFARE SERVICES.

SHE DESCRIBED THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO REDUCE THE COMMITTEE'S POWERS FROM THE COMING FINANCIAL YEAR AS +UNREASONABLE+ AND HAD THE UNDESIRABLE EFFECT OF ADVERSELY AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF WELFARE SERVICES IN THE TERRITORY.

AT LEAST, SHE SAID, IT SHOULD DECIDE ON THE PRIORITIES OF CONSTRUCTION OF NEW PROJECTS, EXPANSION OF EXISTING SERVICES, IMPROVEMENT OF SERVICE QUALITY AND MAINTENANCE OF EXISTING SERVICE.

/MRS TAM

MRS TAM ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE PRESENT SOCIAL WELFARE SUBVENTION SYSTEM WHICH HAD GIVEN RISE TO MANY PROBLEMS IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS.

THE MOST SERIOUS ONE WAS THAT THE ACTUAL EXPENDITURE OF VOLUNTARY AGENCIES FELL BELOW GOVERNMENT'S ORIGINAL ESTIMATION.

+THIS SITUATION HAS ARISEN BECAUSE THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN TOO OPTIMISTIC IN FORECASTING THE PROGRESS OF NEW CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS.

+ONLY WHEN CONSTRUCTION HAS STARTED DOES IT REALISE THAT THE PROJECT FALLS FAR BEHIND SCHEDULE.

+OWING TO DELAYS, SURPLUSES IN EXPENDITURE RESULTED,+ SHE SAID.

+ON THE OTHER HAND, THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES LACK STAFF TO PLAN FOR NEW PROJECTS. THIS IS ANOTHER IMPORTANT FACTOR FOR SLOW PROGRESS IN CONSTRUCTION AND SURPLUSES IN EXPENDITURES,+ SHE SAID.

ANOTHER PROBLEM ARISING FROM THE APPLICATION OF THE NEW SUBVENTION SYSTEM WAS THAT LARGE AMOUNT OF SURPLUSES ALSO ACCRUED IN VOLUNTARY AGENCIES' ACCOUNTS.

SHE REVEALED THAT FROM 1982-83 TO THE PRESENT TIME, THE SURPLUSES ACCUMULATED TOTALLED \$31 MILLION.

SHE EXPLAINED THAT THIS SURPLUS WAS DUE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S EMPLOYMENT OF THE MID-POINT SALARY VALUE TO ESTIMATE PERSONAL EMOLUMENTS.

MRS TAM URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO SQUARELY FACE THESE PROBLEMS AND DEAL WITH THEM.

+FIRSTLY, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SUPERVISE CLOSELY THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW PROJECTS, INCLUDING THOSE JOINTLY BUILT BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT SO THAT CONSTRUCTION WORK WILL BE COMPLETED ACCORDING TO SCHEDULE.

+SECONDLY, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD PROMPTLY DEVISE A PROPER METHOD TO CLAW BACK THE ACCUMULATED SURPLUSES IN VOLUNTARY AGENCIES' ACCOUNT.

+THIRDLY, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ALSO THINK OF FEASIBLE MEASURES TO SYSTEMATICALLY CLAW BACK SURPLUSES THAT WILL LIKELY BE ACCRUED IN VOLUNTARY AGENCIES' ACCOUNTS AND USE THEM TO CARRY OUT THE MUCH NEEDED SOCIAL WELAFRE SERVICES,+ SHE SAID.

/MRS TAM

MRS TAM SAID SHE BELIEVED IF THE GOVERNMENT COULD ADOPT PROPER MEASURES TO SOLVE THESE TECHNICAL PROBLEMS, THE EXISTING STANDARD COST SUBVENTION SYSTEM SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE EMPLOYED.

IN THE MEANTIME, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD APPLY THE STANDARD COST CALCULATION METHOD TO MORE SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES.

+BECAUSE THE EXISTING SYSTEM NOT ONLY GIVES VOLUNTARY AGENCIES A CERTAIN DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY AND FREEDOM IN DEPLOYING THEIR RESOURCES, AT THE SAME TIME IT ALSO ENSURES THAT THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES PROVIDE SOCIAL SERVICES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE APPROVED STANDARD AND OBJECTIVES.

+THIS FUNDAMENTAL SPIRIT SHOULD BE AFFIRMED,+ SHE SAID.

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SPEND MORE TO BUILD A STRONGER INFRASTRUCTURE

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THE HON CHEUNG YAN-LUNG TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (THURSDAY) THAT THE TIME IS RIPE FOR HONG KONG TO COMMIT ITSELF TOWARDS MORE SPENDING, PARTICULARLY TOWARDS BUILDING A STRONGER INFRASTRUCTURE.

SPEAKING DURING THE TWO-DAY BUDGET DEBATE, MR CHEUNG SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT THERE WOULD BE A HEALTHY ECONOMIC SITUATION FOR THE FORSEEABLE FUTURE 'BEARING STEADY INCOME TO THE PUBLIC PURSE'. WITH A REASONABLY BRIGHT FUTURE, THE TERRITORY SHOULD NOW LOOK AT THE STAKE IT HAD IN HAND.

THERE WAS A BALANCE OF \$15.6 BILLION IN THE GENERAL REVENUE ACCOUNT TO COVER CONTINGENT LIABILITIES BUT WHAT WAS REALLY AT RISK SEEMED TO BE ONLY \$7.5 BILLION.

IN ADDITION, THERE WAS A TOTAL BALANCE OF \$10 BILLION, IN THE VARIOUS FUNDS - CAPITAL WORKS RESERVE, DEVELOPMENT LOAN, HOME OWNERSHIP, LOTTERIES, MASS TRANSIT AND STUDENT LOAN.

HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT WE WOULD BE REQUIRED TO INJECT LESS INTO THE FUNDS IN THE FUTURE TO MAINTAIN THE EXISTING LEVELS OF ACTIVITY AS SOME OF THEM WERE, OR WERE BEGINNING TO BE, SELF-REVOLVING.

IN BUILDING A STRONGER INFRASTRUCTURE, HE SAID THE LIST OF PROJECTS IN THE CAPITAL WORKS AND OTHER PROGRAMMES OF ACTIVITY SHOULD BE GIVEN CAREFUL SCRUTINY. AMONG VARIOUS ITEMS THERE WAS SCOPE FOR IMPROVEMENT IN COMMUNICATIONS, TRANSPORT, PUBLIC SAFETY, LAW AND ORDER, ENGINEERING, THE ENVIRONMENT AND RECREATION. BUT HE SAID THE BUILDING OF GOVERNMENT OFFICES PERHAPS DESERVED HIGHER PRIORITY AND MORE ATTENTION.

/MR CHEUNG

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MR CHEUNG FELT THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD VIGOROUSLY PURSUE THE POLICY OF PROVIDING ITS OWN OFFICE ACCOMMODATION AS THE CAPITAL OUTLAY WOULD BE RECOVERED IN A RELATIVELY SHORT TIME.

'I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE BRINGING FORWARD BY ONE OR TWO YEARS THE TARGET OF PROVIDING 70 PER CENT OF OUR OFFICE SPACE,+ HE SAID.

+PERHAPS WE SHOULD BE EVEN MORE AMBITIOUS, AS IN THE CASE OF GOVERNMENT QUARTERS, TO PURCHASE SOME OFFICES WE ARE NOW RENTING AS A FURTHER MEANS OF CUTTING DOWN RECURRENT EXPENDITURE,+ HE SAID.

MR CHEUNG ALSO SAID HE FELT UNEASY ABOUT THE LACK OF DEVELOPMENT AND PROVISION OF SOME BASIC FACILITIES IN THE OLDER PARTS OF HONG KONG, IN PARTICULAR WESTERN DISTRICT.

THERE WERE PLANS TO IMPROVE THE AREA AS A WHOLE BUT PROGRESS WAS FAR FROM SATISFACTORY, HE SAID.

+CERTAINLY WE NEED TO LOOK AT THE PLANS FOR THIS DISTRICT ONCE AGAIN AND, IN PARTICULAR, TO RESITE THE VEGETABLE WHOLESALE MARKET, THE POULTRY AND FRUIT LAANS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE BY UTILISING BALANCES IN THE CAPITAL WORKS RESERVE FUND.+

HE ALSO SAID THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE ABLE TO EMBARK ON A MORE AMBITIOUS HOUSING PROGRAMME NOW THAT THE INFLUX OF REFUGEES WAS UNDER CONTROL AND THERE WAS A DECLINE IN THE PROLIFERATION OF SQUATTERS ON HILLSIDES.

HE OBSERVED THAT THE HOUSING POLICY HAD BEEN QUANTITY-ORIENTED AND SAID WE MUST NOT BE COMPLACENT WITH WHAT HAD BEEN ACHIEVED.

MR CHEUNG SAID REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS MUST BE SPEEDED UP IN ORDER TO EASE QUICKLY OVER CROWDING IN SOME ESTATES.

+LET US NOT BE CONTENT WITH MAINTAINING STABILITY. LET US TAKE ONE MORE BRAVE BUT SURE STEP WHICH WILL BRING FURTHER PROSPERITY,+ HE CONCLUDED.

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TIME FOR ANOTHER TAXATION POLICY REVIEW
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THE TIME HAS COME FOR A FOURTH REVIEW OF THE TAXATION POLICY WITH THE AIM OF FORMULATING A LONG-TERM POLICY COVERING THE ENTIRE TRANSITION PERIOD UP TO 1997 AND BEYOND.

THIS SUGGESTION WAS MADE BY THE HON LEE YU-TAI TODAY (THURSDAY) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DURING THE BUDGET DEBATE.

HE SAID IT DID NOT WORRY HIM THAT INDIRECT TAX WAS CHARGED INDISCRIMINATELY ON THE WEALTHY AND THE LESS WELL-OFF, WITHOUT PERFORMING THE FUNCTION OF RE-DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH.

+IF IT IS LEGITIMATE WEALTH EARNED THROUGH SOUND DECISIONS AND DILIGENCE, THE EARNER SHOULD NOT BE PENALISED BY HEAVY TAXATION, THIS IS THE BASIC PHILOSOPHY OF A FREE ENTERPRISE SOCIETY, IN WHICH FORM HONG KONG SHALL REMAIN AFTER 1997,+ HE SAID.

IN CASES OF EASY MONEY BEING GAINED BY A LUCKY FEW, HE ARGUED THAT EARNERS WOULD VERY LIKELY INDULGE IN CARE-FREE SPENDING AND END UP CONTRIBUTING GREAT AMOUNTS TO THE GOVERNMENT REVENUE THROUGH INDIRECT TAX.

HE SAID HE AGREED THAT PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS BALANCING THE PROPORTION OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT TAXES DESERVED SUPPORT BUT FELT THAT THE CHOICE OF ITEMS SUBJECT TO INDIRECT TAXATION SEEMED TO BE DETERMINED BY REVENUE CONSIDERATIONS ONLY TO THE EXTENT THAT SOME SECTORS MIGHT FEEL VICTIMISED.

CITING SOFT DRINKS, MOTOR CARS AND TOBACCO PRODUCTS AS EXAMPLES, HE RECOMMENDED THAT THE POLICY OF INDIRECT TAX BE REVIEWED SO AS TO ACHIEVE A FAIR DISTRIBUTION ACROSS INDUSTRIES AND PRODUCT ITEMS.

MR LEE THEN PROPOSED THAT THE EXISTING ANOMALY OF DOUBLE TAXATION WHEREBY A BUSINESS TRANSACTION WAS TAXED BOTH IN CHINA AND IN HONG KONG, SHOULD BE RECTIFIED AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY AS AN ENCOURAGEMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHINA TRADE.

+THE AMOUNT OF TAX PAYABLE TO CHINA SHOULD, AT LEAST, BE REGARDED AS AN EXPENSE ITEM, WHICH WILL BE DEDUCTED FROM GROSS PROFIT FOR THE PURPOSE OF TAX ASSESSMENT IN HONG KONG.+

HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE INCOMING FINANCIAL SECRETARY SHOULD RESOLVE THE IMPORTANT ISSUE OF SEPARATE TAX ASSESSMENT OF MARRIED COUPLES IN VIEW OF CHANGED SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

/FURTHERMORE, MR

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FURTHERMORE, MR LEE SAID, HE FELT THAT AS A SURCHARGE WAS IMPOSED ON OVERDUE TAX, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD PAY INTEREST TO TAXPAYERS ON REFUNDS WHICH WERE NOT MADE WITHIN A REASONABLE PERIOD.

COMMENTING ON THE SERVICES OF THE INLAND REVENUE DEPARTMENT, MR LEE SAID THEY SHOULD KEEP PACE WITH GROWING SOPHISTICATION OF THE LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY.

+FOR INSTANCE, AN ADVANCE CLEARANCE SCHEME SHOULD BE PROVIDED, WHEREBY BUSINESS ENTERPRISES MAY PUT FORWARD PROPOSALS OF LARGESCALE TRANSACTIONS TO SEEK CLARIFICATION ON TAX CALCULATIONS AND THE GENERAL ANTI-AVOIDANCE SECTION (S. 61A),+ HE SAID.

THE ADVICE SO RECEIVED WOULD LEAD TO WELL-INFORMED BUSINESS DECISION, MAKING HONG KONG COMPETITIVE WITH OTHER COUNTRIES PROVIDING THIS SERVICE SUCH AS AUSTRALIA AND THE U.S., HE ADDED.

HE ALSO STRESSED THAT THE STAFF OF THE INLAND REVENUE DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED AND ADEQUATE TRAINING OFFERED.

TURNING TO REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, HE NOTED THAT A REVIEW WAS SCHEDULED FOR 1987 BUT THE COLLECTION OF PUBLIC OPINION AND PREPARATORY WORK NEEDED TO BE CARRIED OUT IN 1986.

IN THIS CONNECTION, HE SAID HE HOPED SOME NEW POSTS IN THE CIVIL SERVICE COULD BE USED TO IMPROVE SECRETARIAL SERVICE TO THE DISTRICT BOARDS AS DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS HAD A DISTINCTIVE ROLE TO PLAY AND DIRECT CONTACT WITH PEOPLE WAS NECESSARY.

+THEY SHOULD BE GIVEN ASSISTANCE IN THE OPERATION OF OFFICES FOR MEETING THE PUBLIC AND I HOPE A DECISION WILL SOON BE MADE ON THIS SUBJECT,+ HE SAID.

ON EDUCATION, MR LEE SAID HE WAS SATISFIED WITH THE AMOUNT OF ALLOCATION BUT EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES AND THE NEED FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT.

HE LISTED THE QUALITY OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION, EXAMINATION PRESSURE AND THE LACK OF SECOND CHANCE OPPORTUNITIES AS SOME OF THE PROBLEMS WHICH DESERVED ATTENTION.

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UNION BANK OF HONG KONG LIMITED
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EXERCISING HIS POWERS UNDER SECTION 13(1) (III) OF THE BANKING ORDINANCE AND AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE COMMISSIONER OF BANKING HAS DIRECTED JARDINE FLEMING AND COMPANY LIMITED TO ASSUME CONTROL AND CARRY ON THE BUSINESS OF UNION BANK OF HONG KONG LIMITED.

THIS ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN IN VIEW OF THE PROLONGED ABSENCE SINCE SEPTEMBER, 1985, FROM HONG KONG OF THE CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE, MR OEN YIN-CHOY. MR OEN'S ABSENCE HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE DECISION OF A NUMBER OF DIRECTORS TO RESIGN. SOME OTHER DIRECTORS WISHED TO RESIGN BUT WHEN REQUESTED BY THE COMMISSIONER TO REMAIN IN OFFICE IN THE INTEREST OF DEPOSITORS AGREED TO DO SO.

THE COMMISSIONER HAS ALSO HAD REGARD TO THE LIQUIDITY OF THE BANK WHICH HAS DETERIORATED FROM VERY HIGH LEVELS IN THE MIDDLE OF LAST YEAR. MORE VIGOROUS ACTION IS NEEDED TO RECOVER THE BANK'S LOANS THAN HAS BEEN POSSIBLE IN THE ABSENCE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE.

THE COMMISSIONER HAS REQUESTED JARDINE FLEMING IN ITS CONTROL OF THE BANK TO ATTACH PRIORITY TO THE RESTORATION OF LIQUIDITY BY THE RECOVERY OF LOANS. UNTIL THAT IS ACHIEVED THE EXCHANGE FUND OF THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT IS MAKING AVAILABLE A LINE OF CREDIT SUFFICIENT TO ENSURE THAT THE CLAIMS OF ALL DEPOSITORS AND OTHER CREDITORS CAN BE MET IN FULL ON TIME. THIS WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE TO UNION FINANCE LIMITED, THE BANK'S WHOLLY OWNED REGISTERED DEPOSIT-TAKING SUBSIDIARY. THIS LINE OF CREDIT IS BEING MADE AVAILABLE ON NORMAL COMMERCIAL TERMS. THE COMMISSIONER IS SATISFIED THAT THE BANK HAS SUFFICIENT ASSETS TO ENABLE THE FULL REPAYMENT IN DUE COURSE OF THIS LINE EVEN IF FULLY DRAWN.

THE BANK WILL CONTINUE TO BE OPEN AND TO OPERATE NORMALLY WHILE UNDER THE COMMISSIONER'S DIRECTION. THE DIRECTORS WILL CONTINUE TO HOLD OFFICE, BUT WILL HAVE NO EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY FOR THE OPERATIONS OF THE BANK. THIS WILL REST WITH JARDINE FLEMING AND COMPANY LIMITED WHO WILL HAVE BEEN DIRECTED BY THE COMMISSIONER TO MANAGE THE BANK FOR THE BENEFIT OF ITS DEPOSITORS AND OTHER CREDITORS, WHOSE INTERESTS ARE PARAMOUNT AND ARE FULLY PROTECTED BY THESE ARRANGEMENTS. THE COMMISSIONER HAS, HOWEVER, REQUESTED JARDINE FLEMING TO ADVISE THE BOARD OF SERIOUS PROPOSALS WHICH MAY BE MADE FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF A NEW INVESTOR.

THE COMMISSIONER HAS INFORMED THE SECURITIES COMMISSION OF HIS ACTION AND HAS RECOMMENDED THE SUSPENSION OF TRADING IN THE BANK'S SHARES UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THE CONTROL OF ITS BUSINESS IS RESTORED TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

ENQUIRIES ON THIS NOTICE SHOULD BE MADE TO THE COMMISSIONER, TEL. NO. 5-8622671. THE OFFICE WILL REMAIN OPEN FOR ENQUIRIES ON FRIDAY MORNING, MARCH 28.

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52 SITES EARMARKED FOR APRIL-SEPTEMBER SALE

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FOLLOWING THE RECENT LAND COMMISSION AGREEMENT TO THE DISPOSAL OF 55 HECTARES OF LAND IN THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR, THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED TODAY (THURSDAY) THAT IT WOULD BE OFFERING 52 SITES IN THE URBAN AREA AND NEW TERRITORIES FOR SALE BY PUBLIC AUCTION AND TENDER.

OF THESE SITES 47 WILL BE GRANTED FOR THE FULL LEASE TERM TO 2047 AND FIVE SITES FOR SPECIALISED USES WILL BE FOR SHORTER LEASES RANGING FROM SEVEN TO 10 YEARS.

ANNOUNCING THIS TODAY, GOVERNMENT LAND AGENT, MR BOB POPE, SAID THAT THE PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME OF LAND SALES BY AUCTION AND TENDER COMPRISED A TOTAL OF 27 HECTARES.

THE FIRST SALE WILL BE A PRIME SITE OF 1.6 HECTARES AT VICTORIA BARRACKS ADJOINING THE SITE SOLD LAST YEAR TO SWIRE PROPERTIES FOR \$703 MILLION.

ANOTHER VALUABLE SITE TO BE SOLD LATER IN THE YEAR WILL BE ONE AT TIN HAU TEMPLE ROAD COMPRISING 1.5 HECTARES WITH A RESIDENTIAL PLOT RATIO OF FIVE.

IN THE NEW TOWNS A NUMBER OF SITES WILL BE OFFERED INCLUDING A HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL SITE AT TSUEN WAN, A COMMERCIAL-RESIDENTIAL SITE AT FANLING ADJOINING THE KCRC STATION AND ONE IN THE CENTRAL AREA OF TAI PO WHICH WILL CONTAIN A REQUIREMENT FOR THE PURCHASER TO CONSTRUCT AT GOVERNMENT'S EXPENSE A PUBLIC MARKET AND LIBRARY.

A NUMBER OF SITES WILL ALSO BE OFFERED IN YUEN LONG, TUEN MUN, SHA TIN AND SAI KUNG.

IN ADDITION, THERE WILL BE FOUR PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION SCHEME SITES SITUATED AT CHUK YUEN, TUEN MUN, SHA TIN AND JUNK BAY TOTALLING ABOUT 8.68 HECTARES.

ON THE INDUSTRIAL SIDE, SIX LOTS WILL BE OFFERED INCLUDING TWO AT ON LOK TSUEN, FANLING, AND A SITE FOR MARINE WORKSHOP AT TUEN MUN.

MR POPE SAID THAT 4.3 HECTARES OF LAND FOR COMMERCIAL-RESIDENTIAL USE AND 8.7 HECTARES OF HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL HOUSING SITES WILL BE OFFERED FOR SALE DURING THE YEAR.

HE SAID THAT THE SITES IN THE NEW TERRITORIES WILL BE OFFERED FOR SALE BY THE LETTER B TENDER SYSTEM WHICH WILL HELP TO REMOVE THE OUTSTANDING LETTER B COMMITMENT WHICH CURRENTLY STANDS AT ABOUT 20 MILLION SQUARE FEET.

/MR POPE

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MR POPE STRESSED THAT THE SALES PROGRAMME WAS PROVISIONAL AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE AND THAT FURTHER DETAILS AND DATES WOULD BE PUBLISHED IN THE GOVERNMENT GAZETTE AND MAJOR NEWSPAPERS IN THE USUAL WAY.

COPIES OF THE TENTATIVE LAND SALES PROGRAMME FOR THE PERIOD APRIL 1 UNTIL SEPTEMBER ARE AVAILABLE FROM THE LANDS DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS, MURRAY BUILDING, THIRD FLOOR, GARDEN ROAD, HONG KONG, OR AT ANY DISTRICT LAND OFFICES.

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FS GETS REPORT ON INSIDER DEALINGS
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THE INSIDER DEALING TRIBUNAL INQUIRING INTO DEALINGS IN THE SHARES OF INTERNATIONAL CITY HOLDINGS LTD HAS SUBMITTED ITS REPORT TO THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, SIR JOHN BREMRIDGE, THIS (THURSDAY) AFTERNOON.

A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY THAT THE REPORT WILL BE PUBLISHED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, BUT THAT THERE WILL BE A DELAY FOR A FEW WEEKS. HE INDICATED THAT THE DELAY WILL ARISE AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE SECURITIES ORDINANCE WHICH REQUIRE THE TRIBUNAL TO GIVE ANY PERSONS SUSPECTED OF BEING CULPABLE INSIDER DEALERS, BUT WHO HAVE BEEN FOUND NOT TO BE CULPABLE, THE OPPORTUNITY TO ELECT WHETHER OR NOT THEY WISH TO BE NAMED IN THE REPORT.

+IT IS ENVISAGED THAT THE ENGLISH VERSION OF THE REPORT WILL BE PUBLISHED FIRST,+ HE SAID. +THE CHINESE VERSION WILL BE PUBLISHED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UPON COMPLETION OF TRANSLATION.+

THE GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID THAT BECAUSE THE TRIBUNAL'S PROCEEDINGS WERE JUDICIAL ITS MEMBERS HAD INDICATED THAT THEY WILL MAKE NO PUBLIC STATEMENT RELATING TO THE TRIBUNAL'S PROCEEDINGS OR THE REPORT.

THE TRIBUNAL COMMENCED IN NOVEMBER 1984 ITS INQUIRY INTO POSSIBLE CULPABLE INSIDER DEALING IN RELATION TO THE ORDINARY SHARES OF INTERNATIONAL CITY HOLDINGS LTD AND RELATED COMPANIES BETWEEN JANUARY 1, 1984 AND JUNE 30, 1984.

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PROVISIONAL TRADE FIGURES FOR FEBRUARY
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THE VALUE OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS IN FEBRUARY 1986, AT \$8 347 MILLION, WAS 11 PER CENT OR \$1 033 MILLION LOWER THAN IN THE SAME MONTH LAST YEAR, WHILE THE VALUE OF RE-EXPORTS, AT \$6 876 MILLION, WAS EIGHT PER CENT OR \$561 MILLION LOWER, ACCORDING TO THE PROVISIONAL TRADE FIGURES PUBLISHED TODAY BY THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT.

TAKING DOMESTIC EXPORTS AND RE-EXPORTS TOGETHER, THE VALUE OF TOTAL EXPORTS, AT \$15 223 MILLION, WAS NINE PER CENT OR \$1 594 MILLION LOWER THAN A YEAR EARLIER. MEANWHILE, THE VALUE OF IMPORTS GREW BY 13 PER CENT OR \$2 017 MILLION TO \$16 983 MILLION.

IN CONSEQUENCE, A VISIBLE TRADE GAP (THAT IS, THE PROPORTION OF THE VALUE OF IMPORTS NOT COVERED BY THE VALUE OF TOTAL EXPORTS) OF 10.4 PER CENT WAS RECORDED IN FEBRUARY 1986, COMPARED WITH A VISIBLE TRADE SURPLUS IN FEBRUARY 1985 WHICH WAS EQUIVALENT TO 12.4 PER CENT OF THE VALUE OF IMPORTS.

PUTTING THE MONTH'S TRADE FIGURES INTO CONTEXT, A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN POINTED OUT THAT THE VALUE OF TOTAL EXPORTS FOR THE 12 MONTHS ENDING FEBRUARY 1986 WAS \$232 527 MILLION, MADE UP OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS OF \$128 212 MILLION AND RE-EXPORTS OF \$104 315 MILLION.

COMPARED WITH THE 12 MONTHS ENDING FEBRUARY 1985, THE VALUES OF TOTAL EXPORTS AND OF RE-EXPORTS GREW BY ONE PER CENT AND 17 PER CENT RESPECTIVELY, WHILE THE VALUE OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS FELL BY NINE PER CENT.

OVER THIS PERIOD, THE VALUE OF IMPORTS GREW BY THREE PER CENT TO \$233 124 MILLION. THE VISIBLE TRADE ACCOUNT THUS RECORDED A DEFICIT OF \$597 MILLION, OR A TRADE GAP OF 0.3 PER CENT. THIS WAS IN CONTRAST TO THE PREVIOUS 12-MONTH PERIOD WHEN THERE WAS A VISIBLE TRADE SURPLUS OF \$2 892 MILLION, WHICH WAS EQUIVALENT TO 1.3 PER CENT OF THE VALUE OF IMPORTS.

COMMENTING ON THESE FIGURES, A GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT SPOKESMAN SAID THAT BECAUSE TRADE STATISTICS FOR THE BEGINNING MONTHS OF A YEAR ARE USUALLY DISTORTED BY SEASONAL FACTORS, IT IS MORE USEFUL TO CONSIDER FIGURES FOR DECEMBER, JANUARY AND FEBRUARY TOGETHER.

ON THIS BASIS, THE VALUES OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS AND OF RE-EXPORTS IN THE THREE MONTHS ENDING FEBRUARY 1986 WERE FOUR PER CENT AND TWO PER CENT RESPECTIVELY LOWER THAN IN THE SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR, WHILE THE VALUE OF IMPORTS GREW BY FIVE PER CENT.

THE SPOKESMAN ADDED THAT THE DECLINE (YEAR-ON-YEAR) IN THE VALUE OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS IN FEBRUARY 1986 WAS PROBABLY DUE TO THE DIFFERENT TIMING OF THE CHINESE NEW YEAR, RESULTING IN A SMALLER NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS IN FEBRUARY THIS YEAR COMPARED WITH A YEAR AGO.

THE FOLLOWING TABLE PRESENTS THE PROVISIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE FIGURES FOR FEBRUARY 1986:

<u>MERCHANDISE:</u>	DOMESTIC EXPORTS	: \$ 8 347 MILLION
	RE-EXPORTS	: \$ 6 876 MILLION
	TOTAL EXPORTS	: \$15 223 MILLION
	IMPORTS	: \$16 983 MILLION
	TRADE BALANCE	: \$ 1 760 MILLION (IN DEFICIT)

COMPARATIVE FIGURES

<u>LATEST 3 MONTHS</u>	DECEMBER 1985 TO FEBRUARY 1986	DECEMBER 1984 TO FEBRUARY 1985	INCREASE OR DECREASE	
	\$ MN.	\$ MN.	\$ MN.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS	31 202	32 419	-1 217	-3.8
RE-EXPORTS	24 904	25 415	- 511	-2.0
TOTAL EXPORTS	56 106	57 834	-1 728	-3.0
IMPORTS	57 969	55 014	+2 955	+5.4
TRADE BALANCE	- 1 863	+ 2 820	-4 683	

<u>SAME MONTH LAST YEAR</u>	FEBRUARY 1986	FEBRUARY 1985	INCREASE OR DECREASE	
	\$ MN. (%)	\$ MN. (%)	\$ MN.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS (% OF TOTAL EXPORTS)	8 347 (54.8%)	9 380 (55.8%)	-1 033	-11.0
RE-EXPORTS	6 876	7 437	- 561	- 7.5
TOTAL EXPORTS	15 223	16 817	-1 594	- 9.5
IMPORTS	16 983	14 966	+2 017	+13.5
TRADE BALANCE	- 1 760	+ 1 851	-3 611	

/LAST MONTH

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<u>LAST MONTH</u>	<u>FEBRUARY 1986</u>		<u>JANUARY 1986</u>		<u>INCREASE OR DECREASE</u>	
		\$ MN.		\$ MN.	\$ MN.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS (% OF TOTAL EXPORTS)		8 347 (54.8%)		10 530 (55.2%)	-2 183	-20.7
RE-EXPORTS		6 876		8 563	-1 687	-19.7
TOTAL EXPORTS		15 223		19 093	-3 870	-20.3
IMPORTS		16 983		18 806	-1 823	- 9.7
TRADE BALANCE		- 1 760		+ 287	-2 047	

<u>CALENDAR YEAR TO-DATE</u>	<u>JAN.-FEBRUARY 1986</u>		<u>JAN.-FEBRUARY 1985</u>		<u>INCREASE OR DECREASE</u>	
		\$ MN.		\$ MN.	\$ MN.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS (% OF TOTAL EXPORTS)		18 877 (55.0%)		20 546 (55.6%)	-1 669	-8.1
RE-EXPORTS		15 439		16 395	- 956	-5.3
TOTAL EXPORTS		34 316		36 941	-2 625	-7.1
IMPORTS		35 789		34 085	+1 704	+5.0
TRADE BALANCE		- 1 473		+ 2 856	-4 329	

<u>LAST 12 MONTHS</u>	<u>MARCH 1985 TO FEBRUARY 1986</u>		<u>MARCH 1984 TO FEBRUARY 1985</u>		<u>INCREASE OR DECREASE</u>	
		\$ MN.		\$ MN.	\$ MN.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS		128 212		140 869	-12 657	- 9.0
RE-EXPORTS		104 315		88 831	+15 484	+17.4
TOTAL EXPORTS		232 527		229 700	+ 2 827	+ 1.2
IMPORTS		233 124		226 808	+ 6 316	+ 2.8
TRADE BALANCE		- 597		+ 2 892	- 3 489	

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WORK TO START ON SHA TIN-TSUEN WAN LINK TUNNEL

A \$452 MILLION CONTRACT SIGNED TODAY (THURSDAY) WILL HELP CUT DRIVING TIME BETWEEN SHA TIN AND TSUEN WAN TO 10 MINUTES AND REDUCE CONGESTION IN THE LION ROCK TUNNEL.

THE CONTRACT, FOR DUAL TWO-LANE HIGHWAY TUNNELS UNDER SMUGGLERS RIDGE AND NEEDLE HILL, WAS SIGNED FOR THE GOVERNMENT BY PRINCIPAL GOVERNMENT HIGHWAYS ENGINEER, MR HAROLD BEATON, AND REPRESENTATIVES OF A JOINT VENTURE COMPANY COMPRISING GAMMON (HK) LTD, DRAGAGES ET TRAVAUX PUBLICS AND SKANSKA AB.

THE CONTRACT IS FOR THE CENTRAL, 3.5-KILOMETRE SHING MUN SECTION OF THE SEVEN-KILOMETRE ROUTE FIVE CORRIDOR WHICH WILL LINK THE TWO TOWNS. IT IS EXPECTED TO TAKE 43 MONTHS TO COMPLETE.

BESIDES THE TWIN TWO-LANE TUNNELS WHICH WILL BE 2.6 KILOMETRES LONG, IT INCLUDES A PAIR OF BRIDGES ACROSS THE HEADWATERS OF THE LOWER SHING MUN RESERVOIR AND A BRIDGE OVER THE DIVERSION OF SHING MUN ROAD.

A TOLL PLAZA WITH 13 TOLL LANES AND AN ADMINISTRATION AND CONTROL BUILDING WILL BE BUILT AT TSUEN WAN NEAR WO YI HOP VILLAGE.

IN KEEPING WITH COMMON ENGINEERING PRACTICE AND TO ACHIEVE MAXIMUM USE OF EXPENSIVE PLANT AND OTHER RESOURCES, TUNNELLING WORK IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE 24 HOURS A DAY, BUT THIS WILL NOT HAVE ANY EFFECT ON THE PUBLIC AS THE SITES ARE NOT NEAR ANY BUILT-UP AREAS.

LATER THIS YEAR FIVE OTHER CONTRACTS TOTALLING ABOUT \$110 MILLION WILL BE LET FOR THE SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT NECESSARY FOR THE OPERATION OF THE TUNNELS.

THE DESIGN FOR THE TWO ASSOCIATED ROAD CONNECTION PROJECTS IN SHA TIN AND TSUEN WAN IS UNDERWAY AND CONSTRUCTION ON THESE HAS BEEN PROGRAMMED TO START NEXT YEAR SO THAT THE WHOLE ROUTE FIVE WILL BE COMPLETED AT THE SAME TIME BEFORE THE END OF 1989.

THE SHING MUN SECTION OF ROUTE FIVE HAS BEEN DESIGNED BY MOTT, HAY AND ANDERSON FAR EAST CONSULTING ENGINEERS ON BEHALF OF THE HIGHWAYS OFFICE OF THE ENGINEERING DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT AND THE SAME FIRM WILL SUPERVISE THE CONSTRUCTION.

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KMB FRANCHISE FURTHER EXTENDED
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THE FRANCHISE OF THE KOWLOON MOTOR BUS COMPANY HAS BEEN FURTHER EXTENDED BY TWO YEARS TO AUGUST 31, 1995.

THIS FOLLOWS A TWO-YEAR EXTENSION TO AUGUST 31, 1993 APPROVED LAST MONTH BY THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL. A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN EXPLAINED THAT THIS LATEST EXTENSION VIRTUALLY RESTORES KMB'S FRANCHISE TO ITS ORIGINAL TEN-YEAR DURATION.

+WHEN THE PUBLIC BUS SERVICES ORDINANCE WAS ENACTED IN 1975, PROVISION WAS MADE FOR EXTENSIONS OF FRANCHISE OF UP TO TWO YEARS TO BE PERIODICALLY GRANTED SO AS TO ENABLE THE FRANCHISE PERIOD TO BE TOPPED UP FROM TIME TO TIME, PROVIDED THE COMPANY PERFORMED SATISFACTORILY,+ HE SAID.

+THE GOVERNMENT IS SATISFIED THAT KMB HAS SHOWN A STEADY IMPROVEMENT IN ITS PERFORMANCE SINCE THE BUS REVIEW IN AUGUST 1982.

+THIS TOPPING UP OF THE FRANCHISE PERIOD TO TEN YEARS WILL PROVIDE KMB WITH THE CONTINUITY TO UNDERTAKE THE NECESSARY LONG-TERM PLANNING AND INVESTMENT TO MEET FUTURE TRANSPORT NEEDS,+ HE ADDED.

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TERM OF OFFICE ENDS
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WITH THE REPLACEMENT OF THE PROVISIONAL REGIONAL COUNCIL BY THE FULL REGIONAL COUNCIL ON APRIL 1 THIS YEAR, THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE REPRESENTATIVE ELECTED TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BY THE PROVISIONAL REGIONAL COUNCIL CONSTITUENCY WILL ALSO END, A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY (THURSDAY).

AN ELECTION WILL BE HELD ON JUNE 5 FOR THE PURPOSE OF ELECTING THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

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FEEES REVISED FOR RSD RECREATION FACILITIES
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CHARGES FOR HIRING CERTAIN RECREATION FACILITIES UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF THE REGIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT WILL BE INCREASED WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT.

AFFECTED ARE CLUBS, ASSOCIATIONS, ORGANISATIONS AND OTHER USERS EXCEPT SCHOOLS FOR WHICH THE EFFECTIVE DATE IS APRIL 1, 1986.

THE PUBLIC SWIMMING POOLS (NEW TERRITORIES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1986 AND THE PLEASURE GROUNDS (NEW TERRITORIES) (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) REGULATIONS 1986, GIVING EFFECT TO THE REVISION OF CHARGES WERE PUBLISHED IN TODAY'S GAZETTE.

A DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THE INCREASES WERE AIMED AT MEETING RISING OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE COSTS AND MAINTAINING A SATISFACTORY SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC.

HE ADDED THAT THE INCREASES WOULD ONLY BRING CHARGES IN LINE WITH THOSE IN THE URBAN AREA.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THE REVISED CHARGES, WHICH WERE ENDORSED BY THE PROVISIONAL REGIONAL COUNCIL, WOULD STILL CONTAIN A SUBSTANTIAL ELEMENT OF SUBSIDY - 79.6 PER CENT FOR SWIMMING POOLS, 62 PER CENT FOR TENNIS COURTS, 51 PER CENT FOR SQUASH COURTS AND 81.9 PER CENT FOR INDOOR GAMES HALLS.

WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW FEES, HOURLY CHARGES ARE \$20 FOR A BASKETBALL-COURT-SIZE INDOOR GAMES HALL, \$14 FOR A BADMINTON COURT, \$4 FOR A TABLE TENNIS TABLE, \$25 FOR THE USE OF PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM, AND \$20 FOR AN ACTIVITY ROOM (100 SQUARE METRES AND ABOVE).

SHOULD AIR CONDITIONING BE USED, A \$6 SURCHARGE PER HOUR PER ROOM IS LEVIED.

EXCEPT FOR PUBLIC HOLIDAYS, SCHOOLS USING INDOOR GAMES HALLS ON WEEKDAYS FROM 9 AM TO 5 PM AND ON SATURDAYS FROM 9 AM TO 1 PM DURING THE MONTHS OF SEPTEMBER TO JULY WILL BE CHARGED AT A REDUCED RATE OF 50 PER CENT OF THE NORMAL FEE, THE SPOKESMAN ADDED.

REVISED FEES FOR A TENNIS COURT WITH AND WITHOUT FLOODLIGHTING ARE \$30 AND \$15 RESPECTIVELY.

FOR SQUASH COURTS, THE REVISED FEES ARE \$8 PER COURT WITHOUT AIR CONDITIONING FOR EACH HALF-HOUR AND \$12 PER COURT WITH AIR-CONDITIONING FOR EACH HALF-HOUR.

THE NEW ADMISSION FEES FOR SWIMMING POOLS ARE \$6 PER ADULT AND \$3 PER CHILD.

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HOVERFERRY SERVICE IN, PASSENGER FERRY ROUTE CUT
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THE PASSENGER FERRY SERVICE BETWEEN CHAI WAN AND KWUN TONG, OPERATED BY THE HONG KONG AND YAUMATI FERRY COMPANY (HYF), WILL BE WITHDRAWN FROM TUESDAY (APRIL 1) WHILE A NEW HOVERFERRY SERVICE BETWEEN TSIM SHA TSUI EAST AND CENTRAL WILL BE LAUNCHED THE SAME DAY.

THE CANCELLATION OF THE CHAI WAN TO KWUN TONG SERVICE WAS RECOMMENDED BY THE TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND ENDORSED BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL IN VIEW OF THE CONTINUOUS DECLINE IN PATRONAGE AND THE AVAILABILITY OF ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORT FOR COMMUTERS.

IT HAS ALSO BEEN DISCUSSED BY THE TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEES OF THE RELEVANT DISTRICT BOARDS.

MOREOVER, THE MARINE DEPARTMENT NOW REQUIRES THE CHAI WAN FERRY PIER SITE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PUBLIC CARGO HANDLING AREA.

PASSENGERS USING THE SERVICE MAY EITHER SWITCH TO THE SAI WAN HO TO KWUN TONG FERRY SERVICE OR TO THE MTR WHICH PROVIDES A DIRECT LINK BETWEEN THE TWO PLACES.

CHAI WAN AND SAI WAN HO IS CONNECTED BY CMB ROUTES 82A, WHICH RUNS BETWEEN ON YIP STREET IN CHAI WAN AND YAU MAN STREET IN QUARRY BAY, AND 83, WHICH LINKS CHAI WAN EAST WITH TAI KOO SHING, AS WELL AS THE MTR.

THE CHAI WAN TO KWUN TONG FERRY ROUTE, INTRODUCED IN LATE 1981 AS A TEMPORARY SERVICE, HAS SUFFERED A CONTINUOUS DROP IN PASSENGERS SINCE THE END OF 1982. THE SITUATION WAS AGGRAVATED BY THE OPENING OF THE MTR ISLAND LINE LAST MAY.

BY JANUARY THIS YEAR, THE AVERAGE DAILY PATRONAGE WAS 3 122, A DECREASE OF 53 PER CENT COMPARED WITH THE PEAK PATRONAGE FIGURES RECORDED IN OCTOBER 1982.

A SURVEY CONDUCTED LAST SEPTEMBER ALSO SHOWED THAT THE ROUTE'S AVERAGE OCCUPANCY RATE WAS ONLY ABOUT 20 PER CENT OF VESSEL CAPACITY.

MEANWHILE, THE TSIM SHA TSUI EAST TO CENTRAL HOVERFERRY SERVICE, TO OPERATE BETWEEN 7.35 AM AND 6.25 PM DAILY, WILL HAVE A FREQUENCY OF 20 MINUTES.

A FARE OF \$4 WILL BE CHARGED, WITH NO CONCESSION TO CHILDREN OR STUDENT TRAVEL CARD HOLDERS. HOWEVER, DURING OFF-PEAK HOURS ON MONDAYS TO SATURDAYS, THE FARE CHARGED WILL BE \$2, AND ON SUNDAYS AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS THE FARE FOR STUDENTS OR CHILDREN IS ALSO \$2.

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REGISTRATION REVOKED

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THE COMMISSIONER OF DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES ANNOUNCED THAT THE REGISTRATION OF TOKYO LEASING (HONGKONG) LIMITED AS A DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANY HAS BEEN REVOKED AT ITS OWN REQUEST UNDER SECTION 14(2) OF THE DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES ORDINANCE. THE COMPANY HAS NOT TAKEN ANY PUBLIC DEPOSIT DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS.

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SHAM SHUI PO CLEARANCE OPERATION ENDS

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MORE THAN 70 ILLEGAL STRUCTURES AT REAR LANES, PAVEMENTS AND ROADSIDES OF SHAM SHUI PO DISTRICT WERE CLEARED IN A FOUR-DAY OPERATION WHICH ENDED TODAY (THURSDAY).

THE CLEARANCE WAS THE FIRST MAJOR EXERCISE LAUNCHED IN THE DISTRICT THIS YEAR AND WAS JOINTLY CARRIED OUT BY THE DISTRICT OFFICE, HOUSING DEPARTMENT, LANDS DEPARTMENT, URBAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND THE POLICE.

TWENTY-FIVE FAMILIES COMPRISING 67 PERSONS AFFECTED BY THE CLEARANCE HAVE BEEN REHOUSED BY THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT ACCORDING TO THEIR ELIGIBILITIES WHILE 19 SHOPS HAVE RECEIVED EX-GRATIA ALLOWANCES.

THE ILLEGAL STRUCTURES, SCATTERED AROUND FOUR LOCATIONS IN WING LUNG STREET, KOM TSUN STREET, MEI LAI ROAD AND SAI YEUNG CHOI STREET, WERE USED EITHER FOR STORAGE, WORKSHOPS, KITCHENS OR TEMPORARY HOMES. THEY HAVE CAUSED NUMEROUS ENVIRONMENTAL NUISANCES AND OBSTRUCTED PUBLIC ACCESS.

ABOUT 10 MAKESHIFT STRUCTURES AT THE HILLSIDE OF MEI LAI ROAD WERE OCCUPIED AS FOOD PREPARATION CENTRES SUPPLYING DIFFERENT TYPES OF UNHYGIENIC COOKED FOOD TO ILLEGAL HAWKERS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

AFTER THE CLEARANCE, THE VACANT SITES WILL BE REPAVED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND RESTORED TO THOROUGHFARES OR DEVELOPED INTO AMENITIES AREAS.

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SIX COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN ELECTED

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SIX DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS WERE TODAY (THURSDAY) ELECTED CHAIRMEN OF VARIOUS COMMITTEES UNDER THE SHA TIN DISTRICT BOARD.

THE NEW CHAIRMEN WILL SERVE THE SIX COMMITTEES FOR TWO YEARS STARTING APRIL 1.

THE FOLLOWING ARE THE NEW CHAIRMEN AND THE COMMITTEES THEY SERVE:

- * MR KAN CHUNG-NIN, DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE;
- * DR FANNY CHEUNG, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE;
- * MR CHAN KAM-CHEUNG, HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE COMMITTEE;
- * MR WONG WANG-FAT, FINANCE COMMITTEE;
- * MR CHOY KAN-TUI, TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE; AND
- * MR WONG PO-MING, CULTURE AND SPORTS COMMITTEE.

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URBAN CLEARWAY RESTRICTIONS IN CENTRAL

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CERTAIN ROAD SECTIONS IN CENTRAL HAVE BEEN DESIGNATED 24-HOUR URBAN CLEARWAYS DAILY WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT. THESE ARE:

- * QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL FROM A POINT 60 METRES EAST OF ITS JUNCTION WITH ICE HOUSE STREET TO A POINT 40 METRES WEST OF THE SAME JUNCTION;
- * THE NORTHERN KERBSIDE LANE OF ICE HOUSE STREET FROM A POINT 165 METRES SOUTH OF ITS JUNCTION WITH QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL TO A POINT 40 METRES NORTH OF THE SAME JUNCTION;
- * THE SOUTHERN KERBSIDE LANE OF ICE HOUSE STREET FROM A POINT 85 METRES SOUTH OF ITS JUNCTION WITH QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL TO A POINT 40 METRES NORTH OF THE SAME JUNCTION; AND
- * DUDELL STREET FROM ITS JUNCTION WITH QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL TO A POINT 15 METRES SOUTH OF THE SAME JUNCTION.

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WITHIN THE RESTRICTED ZONES, NO VEHICLE OTHER THAN FRANCHISED BUSES IS ALLOWED TO STOP FOR PASSENGERS AND GOODS.

HOWEVER, APPLICATIONS MAY BE MADE TO THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT FOR URBAN CLEARWAY EXEMPTION PERMITS FROM DRIVERS WITH A DEMONSTRABLE NEED TO GAIN ACCESS TO PREMISES AFFECTED BY THESE RESTRICTIONS FOR LOADING AND UNLOADING PURPOSES, EXCEPT DURING THE PEAK PERIODS FROM 7 AM TO 10 AM AND FROM 4 PM TO 7 PM.

THESE APPLICATIONS SHOULD BE MADE TO THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT AT THE SIXTH FLOOR OF GUARDIAN HOUSE, 32 01 KWAN ROAD, WAN CHAI.

ENQUIRIES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO TRANSPORT OFFICER MR SIMON CHEUNG ON 5-756541, EXTENSION 228.

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ROAD CLOSURE IN NORTH POINT
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TO FACILITATE THE CONSTRUCTION OF A FOOTBRIDGE, THE EASTBOUND CARRIAGEWAY ON KING'S ROAD FROM ITS JUNCTION WITH NORTH POINT ROAD TO A POINT ABOUT 40 METRES EAST OF THE SAME JUNCTION AND THE SECTION OF NORTH VIEW STREET BETWEEN KING'S ROAD AND FORT STREET WILL BE CLOSED TO TRAFFIC FROM 1 AM TO 5 AM ON SUNDAY (MARCH 30).

DURING THE CLOSURE, EASTBOUND VEHICLES ON KING'S ROAD WILL BE DIVERTED TO NORTH POINT ROAD, JAVA ROAD, TONG SHUI ROAD AND KING'S ROAD, WHILE NORTHBOUND VEHICLES ON FORTRESS HILL ROAD WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO TURN RIGHT TO KING'S ROAD.

THE SECTION OF CHEUNG HONG STREET BETWEEN KING'S ROAD AND FORT STREET, AND THE SECTION OF FORT STREET BETWEEN CHEUNG HONG STREET AND NORTH VIEW STREET WILL BE RE-ROUTED TO TWO-WAY TRAFFIC.

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