



# DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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

WEDNESDAY, JULY 6, 1994

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GOVT NO INTENTION TO CENSOR TEXTBOOKS

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THE CHIEF SECRETARY, MRS ANSON CHAN, THIS (WEDNESDAY) MORNING SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD NEITHER POLITICAL MOTIVES NOR ANY WISH TO CENSOR TEXTBOOKS.

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS ABOUT HISTORY TEXTBOOKS AFTER ATTENDING THE HONG KONG OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS AWARD PRESENTATION CEREMONY, MRS CHAN SAID: "WHAT WE ARE CONCERNED WITH HERE IS WHETHER THE GUIDELINES THAT WE LAID DOWN FOR HISTORY TEXTBOOKS FOR SECONDARY 4 TO 7 SHOULD EQUALLY APPLY TO HISTORY TEXTBOOKS FOR SECONDARY 3, IN OTHER WORDS, WHETHER THERE SHOULD BE A CHRONOLOGICAL CUT-OFF POINT."

SHE NOTED THAT FOR SECONDARY 4 TO 7 HISTORY TEXTBOOKS, EVENTS UP TO 1976 COULD BE COVERED, BUT NOT BEYOND THAT.

MRS CHAN STRESSED THAT IRRESPECTIVE OF WHETHER THE PARTICULAR PUBLISHER CONCERNED DECIDED TO RETAIN THE REFERENCE TO THE TIANANMEN EVENT OR NOT, IT WAS ALREADY ON THE APPROVED LIST OF TEXTBOOKS FOR GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS.

"SO THERE IS NO QUESTION OF US SAYING IF YOU DON'T REMOVE IT, THEN WE WOULD NOT RECOMMEND IT FOR USE IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS," SHE SAID.

"AS THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION HAS POINTED OUT, WE HAVE NOW REFERRED THE MATTER TO THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AND WE WILL, OF COURSE, LISTEN TO THEIR ADVICE ON THIS."

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TEACHERS OFFERED BETTER PROSPECT AND TRAINING

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THERE WILL BE 180 GRADUATE TEACHER POSTS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS BY SEPTEMBER THIS YEAR IF FUNDING IS APPROVED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

OFFICIATING AT THE OUTSTANDING EDUCATORS AWARD PRESENTATION CEREMONY, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, MRS ANSON CHAN, SAID THE GOVERNMENT PLANNED TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF GRADUATE TEACHER POSTS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS TO 880 BY 1997.

BY 2007, IT IS EXPECTED TO GO UP TO 6,000, OR EQUIVALENT TO 35 PER CENT OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS.

"THIS NEW ESTABLISHMENT, TOGETHER WITH THE INCREASE OF GRADUATE TEACHER POSTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS, WILL STRENGTH THE TEACHING PROFESSION IN HONG KONG. TEACHERS WILL ALSO ENJOY A BETTER PROMOTION PROSPECT."

MRS CHAN POINTED OUT THAT THE MERGING OF THE FOUR COLLEGES OF EDUCATION AND THE INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION TO THE HONG KONG INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION WOULD UPGRADE THE QUALITY OF TEACHER EDUCATION AND ITS PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS.

THE NEW INSTITUTE WILL FOR THE FIRST TIME INTRODUCE INDEPENDENT AND IMPROVED TRAINING COURSES FOR BOTH PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS.

"THE NEW INSTITUTE WILL SOON DEVELOP DEGREE COURSES IN PRIMARY EDUCATION.

"THE OVERALL OBJECTIVE OF THE INSTITUTE IS TO BECOME A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION IN HONG KONG, AS WELL AS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION IN FUTURE," MRS. CHAN SAID.

SHE SAID THE CAMPUS OF THE NEW INSTITUTE, WHICH WOULD BE COMPLETED IN 1997, WOULD BE EQUIPPED WITH ADVANCED FACILITIES TO HELP FULFIL ITS OBJECTIVES.

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PUBLIC OFFICER TRANSFER TO LOCAL CONDITIONS

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THE ADMINISTRATION IS PLEASED TO SEE THAT THE PUBLIC OFFICERS (VARIATION OF CONDITIONS OF SERVICE) (TEMPORARY PROVISIONS) ORDINANCE EXPIRES TODAY (WEDNESDAY), A CIVIL SERVICE BRANCH SPOKESMAN SAID.

THE ORDINANCE, WHICH WAS PASSED LAST DECEMBER, HAS HAD THE EFFECT OF TEMPORARILY FREEZING ANY TRANSFER BY OVERSEAS OFFICERS TO LOCAL CONDITIONS OF SERVICE. THE ORDINANCE WAS DUE TO LAPSE ON APRIL 20 THIS YEAR BUT WAS EXTENDED TO JULY 6 TO GIVE INTERESTED PARTIES MORE TIME FOR DISCUSSION.

"AFTER HAVING EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS WITH STAFF ASSOCIATIONS, WE HAVE COME UP WITH A PACKAGE FOR IMPLEMENTING TRANSFERS TO LOCAL CONDITIONS WHICH ADDRESSES THE REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS OF DESERVING LOCAL STAFF UNDER THE LOCALISATION POLICY ON THE ONE HAND AND DOES NOT DEPRIVE OVERSEAS OFFICERS WHO ARE PERMANENT RESIDENTS OF THEIR RIGHTS ON THE OTHER," THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

"WITH THE LAPSING OF THE ORDINANCE, THE FREEZE ON TRANSFER TO LOCAL CONDITIONS WILL BE LIFTED, AND THE ADMINISTRATION'S PACKAGE CAN BE IMPLEMENTED."

HE SAID DETAILED GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION ARE BEING DISCUSSED WITH THE MANAGEMENT OF DEPARTMENTS CONCERNED. THESE WILL BE FINALISED AND ISSUED TO DEPARTMENTS SHORTLY.

"PRESS REPORTS OF DETAILS REGARDING IMPLEMENTATION ARE THEREFORE PREMATURE," THE SPOKESMAN ADDED.

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INTERNATIONAL TEXTILES AND CLOTHING BUREAU MEETING "VERY USEFUL"

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DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF TRADE MR THOMAS YIU TODAY (WEDNESDAY) DESCRIBED AS "VERY USEFUL" THE RECENT COUNCIL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL TEXTILES AND CLOTHING BUREAU (ITCB) HELD IN AREQUIPA, PERU.

"ITCB MEMBERS HAVE WELCOMED THE CONCLUSION OF THE URUGUAY ROUND OF TALKS WHICH WILL HAVE THE EFFECT OF REINFORCING AND STRENGTHENING THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM," SAID MR YIU WHO LED A HONG KONG DELEGATION TO THE FIVE-DAY MEETING.

"IN PARTICULAR, THEY HAVE WELCOMED THE DEFINITIVE PHASE-OUT OF ALL MULTIFIBRE ARRANGEMENT-BASED QUANTITATIVE RESTRICTIONS AND FULL INTEGRATION OF THE TEXTILES AND CLOTHING SECTOR INTO THE GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE (GATT) IN 10 YEARS.

"THEY HAVE CALLED UPON THE DEVELOPED IMPORTING COUNTRIES TO IMPLEMENT THE INTEGRATION PROGRAMME IN A CREDIBLE MANNER UNDER THE AGREEMENT ON TEXTILES AND CLOTHING (ATC), DULY RECOGNISING THE ASPIRATIONS AND INTERESTS OF ALL ITCB MEMBERS."

MR YIU SAID THE CURRENT TARGET DATE FOR THE COMING INTO EFFECT OF THE URUGUAY ROUND AGREEMENTS, INCLUDING THE ATC, WAS JANUARY 1, 1995 WHEN THE PROCESS OF LIBERALISATION OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN TEXTILES AND CLOTHING WOULD BEGIN.

HE SAID THE ITCB WAS A GENEVA-BASED ORGANISATION OF TEXTILES EXPORTING DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES, PROVIDING THE FORUM FOR ITS 22 MEMBERS, INCLUDING HONG KONG, TO EXCHANGE VIEWS AND CO-ORDINATE ACTIONS ON MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN TEXTILES AND CLOTHING.

QUOTING A COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE MEETING, MR YIU SAID THE ITCB UNDERLINED THE NEED FOR A STRONG AND EFFECTIVE TEXTILES MONITORING BODY TO ENSURE THAT ACTIONS TAKEN BY DEVELOPED IMPORTING COUNTRIES ARE IN FULL CONFORMITY WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE ATC.

HE SAID THE ITCB DEPLORED ANY ATTEMPT BY ANY MAJOR TRADING ENTITY TO UNILATERALLY INTERPRET SOME OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE ATC, AND IT CONSIDERED THAT SUCH ATTEMPTS RAN COUNTER TO THE CONCEPT OF MULTILATERALISM ENSHRINED IN THE URUGUAY ROUND RESULTS AND THEREFORE COULD NOT BE ACCEPTED.

ON THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU), HE SAID, THE ITCB COUNCIL HAD CONSIDERED THE POSSIBLE EFFECTS OF ITS ENLARGEMENT ON TEXTILES AND CLOTHING EXPORTS OF ITCB MEMBERS.

THE COUNCIL STRESSED THAT THE ENLARGEMENT MUST NOT HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON EXPORT OPPORTUNITIES OF ITCB MEMBERS AND URGED THE EU TO ENSURE INCREASED MARKET ACCESS AND IMPROVED POTENTIAL FOR TRADE EXPANSION SUBSEQUENT TO ITS ENLARGEMENT, HE SAID.

/SHOULD ITCB .....

SHOULD ITCB MEMBERS BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BECAUSE OF THE EU ENLARGEMENT, THE COUNCIL MAINTAINED THAT ADEQUATE COMPENSATION SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO THOSE AFFECTED, HE ADDED.

ALSO ATTENDING THE ITCB COUNCIL MEETING WERE REPRESENTATIVES FROM CHINA, KOREA, ARGENTINA, BANGLADESH, BRAZIL, COLUMBIA, EGYPT, INDIA, INDONESIA, JAMAICA, MACAU, MEXICO, PAKISTAN, PERU, SRI LANKA AND URUGUAY.

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VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICE TO BE GIVEN LEGAL STATUS

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THE SHIPPING AND PORT CONTROL (AMENDMENT) REGULATION 1994, WHICH GIVES THE VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE MARINE DEPARTMENT THE PROPER LEGAL FRAMEWORK, WILL BE GAZETTED THIS FRIDAY (JULY 8), A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICE IS IMPLEMENTED BY A COMPETENT AUTHORITY TO IMPROVE SAFETY AND EFFICIENCY OF VESSEL TRAFFIC AND TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT.

BEFORE 1989, A SERVICE TO VESSEL TRAFFIC IN HONG KONG WAS PROVIDED THROUGH RADIO COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN VESSELS AND THE MARINE DEPARTMENT'S PORT COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE.

"TO COPE WITH THE INCREASE IN MARINE TRAFFIC, AN ELECTRONIC MONITORING SYSTEM USING RADARS AND VERY HIGH FREQUENCY RADIO-TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT WAS COMMISSIONED IN OCTOBER 1989," THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

THIS VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICE, IMPLEMENTED BY THE MARINE DEPARTMENT THROUGH ADMINISTRATIVE MEANS, ENABLES THE PHYSICAL TRACKING OF VESSEL MOVEMENTS THROUGH RADARS AND THE REGULATION OF MARINE TRAFFIC THROUGH DIRECT VHF COMMUNICATIONS WITH PARTICIPATING VESSELS.

"AFTER FIVE YEARS' OPERATION, THE SERVICE HAS PROVEN TO BE VITAL TO IMPROVE THE SAFETY OF NAVIGATION AND THE EFFICIENCY OF MARINE TRAFFIC.

"IT HELPS TO MINIMISE MARINE RISKS AND MARINE POLLUTION CAUSED BY SHIPPING ACCIDENTS. IT FACILITATES ALSO THE COLLECTION OF PORT DUES AND OTHER CHARGES," THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

"IT IS NOW TIME TO PUT THE SERVICE UNDER PROPER LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO ENSURE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE PORT AND FACILITATE SEABORNE TRADE IN GENERAL," HE SAID.

THE REGULATIONS WILL TAKE EFFECT FROM JULY 15 THIS YEAR.

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OFF-STREET DRIVING TEST CENTRE TO OPEN NEXT WEEK

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THE FIRST OFF-STREET PRIVATE CAR DRIVING TEST CENTRE SET UP BY THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT WILL BE BROUGHT INTO FULL OPERATION ON JULY 15 THIS YEAR.

THE CENTRE IS AT HAWTHORN ROAD IN HAPPY VALLEY, HONG KONG.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE DEPARTMENT SAID FACILITIES PROVIDED IN THE NEWLY RENOVATED CENTRE INCLUDED A COMPOUND DESIGNED FOR THE TESTING OF BASIC MANOEUVRING SKILLS SUCH AS REVERSE PARKING, THREE-POINT-TURN ON A NARROW ROAD, STOP AND START ON A SLOPE.

"OFF-STREET DRIVING TEST CENTRE NOT ONLY PROVIDES A SAFER AND BETTER ENVIRONMENT FOR CANDIDATES BUT ALSO REDUCES TRAFFIC CONGESTION ON PUBLIC ROADS," THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

"THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT WILL CONTINUE TO LOOK FOR SUITABLE SITES FOR THE SETTING UP OF SUCH CENTRES," HE ADDED.

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18 VMS RETURN HOME

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A GROUP OF 18 VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) RETURNED TO VIETNAM ON A COMMERCIAL FLIGHT.

COMPRISING TWO MEN, NINE WOMEN, THREE BOYS AND FOUR GIRLS, THEY WERE THE 211ST BATCH TO GO BACK UNDER THE VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION PROGRAMME OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES.

THE GROUP BROUGHT TO 3,879 THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS WHO HAD RETURNED VOLUNTARILY THIS YEAR, AND TO 42,492 THE TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNEES SINCE THE PROGRAMME STARTED IN MARCH 1989.

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HONG KONG MONETARY AUTHORITY.  
MONEY MARKET OPERATIONS

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	\$ MILLION	TIME (HOURS)	CUMULATIVE CHANGE (\$ MILLION)
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OPENING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT	2,036	0930	-350
CLOSING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT	2,046	1000	-301
CHANGE ATTRIBUTABLE TO :		1100	-252
MONEY MARKET ACTIVITY	-150	1200	-147
LAF TODAY	+160	1500	-147
		1600	-150
LAF RATE 2.50 BID/4.50 OFFER	TWI 122.8	*-0.4*	6.7.94

HONG KONG MONETARY AUTHORITY

EF BILLS

EF NOTES/HONG KONG GOVERNMENT BONDS

TERMS	YIELD	TERM	ISSUE	COUPON	PRICE	YIELD
1 WEEK	4.19	17 MONTHS	2511	4.15	97.84	5.88
1 MONTH	4.11	23 MONTHS	2605	6.35	100.07	6.40
3 MONTHS	4.31	28 MONTHS	3610	4.20	94.78	6.79
6 MONTHS	4.69	31 MONTHS	3701	4.60	94.79	6.97
12 MONTHS	5.34	34 MONTHS	3704	6.15	97.89	7.11

TOTAL TURNOVER OF BILLS AND BONDS - 21,783 MN

CLOSED 6 JULY 1994

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## SUPPLEMENT

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GOVT MINUTE TO COMAC'S ANNUAL REPORT  
READY IN THREE MONTHS' TIME

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THE FIRST GOVERNMENT MINUTE IN RESPONSE TO THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINTS (COMAC) WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THREE MONTHS' TIME.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON MRS ANSON CHAN, SAID THIS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WHEN PRESENTING TO THE COUNCIL COMAC'S SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT.

"WE PROPOSE THAT THE MINUTE SHOULD COVER THE ACTION GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN OR PROPOSES TO TAKE IN RESPONSE TO COMAC'S RECOMMENDATIONS IN RELATION TO COMPLAINTS WHICH ARE FOUND SUBSTANTIATED OR PARTIALLY SUBSTANTIATED IN THE REPORT," MRS CHAN SAID.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY NOTED THAT THERE WAS GROWING PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE COMAC SCHEME AS REFLECTED IN THE GRADUAL INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF ENQUIRIES AND COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE OFFICE.

FOR THE TWELVE-MONTH PERIOD ENDING LAST MONTH, COMAC'S OFFICE HAVE RECEIVED 1,054 ENQUIRIES AND 173 COMPLAINTS, A SEVEN TO EIGHT PER CENT INCREASE OVER THE RESPECTIVE FIGURES FOR 1992/93.

"THE NUMBER OF ENQUIRIES RECEIVED IS RECORD HIGH. AND WE ARE LIKELY TO SEE A BIGGER INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF ENQUIRIES AND COMPLAINS RECEIVED BY COMAC'S OFFICE IN THE COMING YEAR SINCE COMAC'S REMIT HAS BEEN WIDENED AND THE PUBLIC CAN NOW HAVE DIRECT ACCESS TO COMAC," SHE SAID.

THE NUMBER OF SUBSTANTIATED AND PARTIALLY SUBSTANTIATED COMPLAINTS REMAINED FAIRLY STABLE, 37 IN 1993/94 AS COMPARED TO 36 IN 1992/93.

MRS CHAN SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WELCOMED THE COMAC'S COMMENT THAT "THE FACT THAT MORE THAN HALF OF THE COMPLAINTS INVESTIGATED SO FAR WERE UNSUBSTANTIATED IS GOOD EVIDENCE OF THE GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE STANDARD IN HONG KONG", ALTHOUGHT THE ADMINISTRATION WAS NOT COMPLACENT.

"WE MUST REMAIN EVER VIGILANT AGAINST MALADMINISTRATION.

"IN THIS REGARD, THE VERY GOOD PROGRESS WE HAVE MADE IN PUBLISHING AND IMPLEMENTING PERFORMANCE PLEDGES PROVIDE A VERY GOOD YARDSTICK AGAINST WHICH BOTH CLIENTS AND THE SERVICING DEPARTMENT CAN MEASURE THE STANDARD OF SERVICE.

"WE WILL CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS IN THIS REGARD," SHE ADDED.

REGULATION IN FINANCIAL MARKETS USEFUL

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STABILITY IN HONG KONG'S FINANCIAL MARKETS COULD NOT HAVE BEEN FOSTERED THROUGH A TOTAL LACK OF REGULATION, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR HAMISH MACLEOD, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SIR HAMISH SAID: "THE SAME HOLDS TRUE FOR THE PROPERTY MARKET. OF COURSE, THE MORE SATISFACTORILY A MARKET IS WORKING, THE LESS INCLINED WE ARE TO INTERVENE."

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON DAVID LI IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, SIR HAMISH SAID "POSITIVE NON-INTERVENTION" NEVER MEANT "A FREE-FOR ALL" OR "DO NOTHING".

HE SAID SOME OF THE MEASURES PUT FORWARD BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS FOR STABILISING THE PROPERTY MARKET WERE SIMPLY AN ADJUSTMENT OF A FORM OF REGULATION WHICH HAD BEEN IN PLACE FOR YEARS.

"THE CONSENT SCHEME, FOR EXAMPLE, WHICH ALLOWS FLATS TO BE PUT ON THE MARKET BEFORE THEY HAVE BEEN COMPLETED, HAS ALWAYS BEEN ADMINISTERED SO AS TO TRY TO BALANCE THE INTERESTS OF HOME-BUYERS AND PROPERTY DEVELOPERS.

"THE CHANGES TO IT AIM TO SHORTEN THE TIME BETWEEN PUTTING FLATS ON HE MARKET AND ACTUAL OCCUPATION, AND SO TO REDUCE THE TIME AVAILABLE FOR SPECULATIVE SALES AND RE-SALES TO PUSH THE COST OF FLATS," HE SAID.

SIR HAMISH NOTED THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THE STRATEGY TO STABILISE FLAT PRICES WAS TO FACILITATE A SIMPLE INCREASE IN SUPPLY.

"THAT IS A PIECE OF INTERVENTION IN THE MARKET WITH WHICH, I THINK OUR BUSINESS COMMUNITY WOULD BE QUITE AT EASE."

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY ADDED THAT WHAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NOT DONE WAS TO SEEK TO INTRODUCE ANY MEASURES TO REGULATE FLAT PRICES DIRECTLY AS THERE WAS TO BE NO PRICE CONTROL.

"THUS IF 'POSITIVE NON-INTERVENTIONISM' MEANS A POLICY OF NOT INTERFERING UNNECESSARILY IN THE FREE OPERATION OF THE MARKET, AND NOT PUTTING RED TAPE IN THE WAY OF COMMERCIAL ENTERPRISE, THIS IS STILL A PRIME POLICY.

"BUT STABILITY IN THE FINANCIAL AND PROPERTY MARKETS CANNOT BE ACHIEVED UNLESS INVESTORS SEE THAT COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES IN HONG KONG ARE REASONABLY AND PRUDENTLY MANAGED AND REGULATED," SIR HAMISH SAID.

GOVT DETERMINED TO FOLLOW UP TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

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THE ADMINISTRATION IS DETERMINED TO FOLLOW UP VIGOROUSLY THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TASK FORCE, TO CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE PROPERTY MARKET AND ENSURE FAIR COMPETITION AND STABILITY.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, DURING A LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MOTION DEBATE ON SPECULATION ON REAL ESTATE PROPERTY LAST NIGHT (WEDNESDAY).

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD KEEP AN OPEN MIND ON WHAT MORE MIGHT NEED TO BE DONE TO FURTHER THESE OBJECTIVES.

MR EASON SAID HE WAS PLEASED TO SAY THERE WAS GENERAL SUPPORT FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH OF THE TASK FORCE TOWARDS DAMPENING SPECULATION.

HE SAID SINCE THE PACKAGE OF MEASURES WAS ANNOUNCED ON JUNE 8, PRICES IN THE PRIMARY MARKET WERE REPORTED TO HAVE FALLEN BY BETWEEN 5-20 PER CENT.

MR EASON SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE WATCHING FOR ANY RESURGENCE OF EXCESSIVE SPECULATION OR UNSCRUPULOUS PRACTICES IN THE PROPERTY MARKET.

"AS THINGS NOW STAND, THE OUTLOOK FOR INCREASING SUPPLY IS GOOD, REINFORCED BY THE RECENTLY ANNOUNCED AVAILABILITY OF SITES TO BE RELEASED BY THE MILITARY."

COMMENTING ON CRITICISM THAT THE TASK FORCE HAD INTERFERED IN THE FREE MARKET AND THREATENED THE BASIC COMMERCIAL PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING HONG KONG'S ECONOMIC SUCCESS, MR EASON SAID SUCH CRITICISM REFLECTED A SUPERFICIAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRUE BASIS OF THE FREE MARKET AND A MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE APPROACH OF THE TASK FORCE.

"A FREE MARKET MUST BE UNDERPINNED BY OPEN AND FAIR COMPETITION; AND FREEDOM IS NOT THE SAME AS DISORDER."

HE SAID: "THE TASK FORCE HAS PUT HOME-BUYERS, SPECULATORS AND INVESTORS ON THE SAME LEVEL PLAYING FIELD BY REDUCING THE ADVANTAGE TO SOME BUYERS WHICH PRIVATE SALES OFFER.

"WHILE CONTINUING TO ALLOW A SMALL QUOTA FOR PRIVATE SALES, WE HAVE ALSO SOUGHT TO ENSURE THAT THE PROVISION IS NOT EXPLOITED BY THOSE WHOSE AIM IS TO SPECULATE, TO CIRCUMVENT THE RESALE RESTRICTION ON UNCOMPLETED FLATS, OR TO SEEK TAX BENEFITS THROUGH THE USE OF LANDHOLDING COMPANIES."

MR EASON ALSO DISMISSED CRITICISM THAT THE PROHIBITION AGAINST RESALE OF FLATS BEFORE ASSIGNMENT WAS INTERFERING WITH THE FREEDOM TO DISPOSE OF ONE'S OWN PROPERTY.

"WHERE THE EXERCISE OF INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM CAUSES THE MARKET TO BEHAVE IRRATIONALLY, INTERVENTION IS JUSTIFIED, PARTICULARLY WHEN THE COMMUNITY BECOMES ALARMED AT EVENTS."

MR EASON SAID SOME PEOPLE HAD CRITICISED THE PRODUCTION TARGET OF 45,000 TO 60,000 ADDITIONAL FLATS AS INADEQUATE, BUT HE HAD YET TO HEAR A COHERENT ARGUMENT AS TO WHAT WAS ADEQUATE.

"ARE WE TO AIM TO SATISFY A 100 PER CENT OF POTENTIAL DEMAND OR TAKE A REALISTIC VIEW OF THE LEVEL OF EFFECTIVE DEMAND?"

"WE SHOULD NOT LOSE SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT THE TOTAL HOUSING STOCK ALREADY EXCEEDS THE NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS AND WE ARE CURRENTLY PRODUCING OVER 70,000 FLATS A YEAR, OF WHICH THE MAJORITY ARE ASSISTED HOUSING.

HE SAID THE TASK FORCE HAD PROPOSED A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE SCALE AND COMPOSITION OF HOUSING DEMAND IN BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS, TO GUIDE THE GOVERNMENT IN THE ALLOCATION OF LAND FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF HOUSING.

"IF THE STUDY SHOWS A NEED FOR A HIGHER OUTPUT OF FLATS, WE WILL RESPOND BY SUPPLYING MORE LAND."

AS REGARDS SUGGESTIONS TO ASSIST PEOPLE TO BUY OLDER PROPERTIES BY REQUIRING BANKS TO RELAX THEIR LENDING POLICIES, SETTING UP A HOUSING LOAN SCHEME WITH PUBLIC FUNDS, OR POOLING RESOURCES THROUGH A CREDIT UNION TYPE OPERATION, MR EASON SAID THESE ARGUMENTS WERE BASED ON ASSUMPTIONS THAT DID NOT STAND UP WELL TO SCRUTINY.

"FIRST, PEOPLE ASSUME THAT THERE ARE FEW TRANSACTIONS IN OLDER PROPERTIES, BUT AN ANALYSIS OF THE SALES RECORD BETWEEN JULY 1993 AND MARCH 1994 SHOWS THAT ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THE TRANSACTIONS IN RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES INVOLVED FLATS THAT ARE OVER 15 YEARS OLD.

"SECOND, SOME PEOPLE ASSUME THAT RELAXING THE LENDING POLICY WOULD RELEASE A LARGE DEMAND FOR OLDER PROPERTIES, BUT WE MUST NOT FORGET THAT OLDER PROPERTIES ARE LESS ATTRACTIVE AND POPULAR THAN TO NEW PROPERTIES."

THIRD, THERE ARE NO HARD AND FAST RULES ON MORTGAGE LENDING AS THE POLICY VARIES FROM BANK TO BANK AND THE LENDING RATIO VARIES FROM CASE TO CASE, EVEN FOR PROPERTIES OF A SIMILAR AGE.

"FINALLY, IT IS WRONG TO ASSUME THAT IF MORE PEOPLE WERE ABLE TO BUY OLDER PROPERTIES, THERE WOULD BE LESS DEMAND FOR NEW PROPERTIES. ON THE CONTRARY, THE HOUSEHOLD SIZE IN OLDER PROPERTIES IS USUALLY HIGHER, OFTEN WITH SHARED OCCUPANCY, AND THEREFORE HELPING PEOPLE TO BUY OLDER PROPERTIES IS MORE LIKELY TO INCREASE OVERALL DEMAND."

HOWEVER, MR EASON SAID, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD KEEP THE SITUATION UNDER REVIEW AND CONSIDER THE POSSIBLE NEED TO ASSIST THOSE - PARTICULARLY THE FIRST-TIME BUYERS - IN BUYING OLDER PROPERTIES AT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE.

MOTION DEBATE ON GOVERNMENT BROADCASTING CHANNELS

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FOLLOWING IS THE SPEECH BY THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE, MRS RACHEL CARTLAND, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MOTION DEBATE ON GOVERNMENT BROADCASTING CHANNELS :

MR PRESIDENT,

I HAVE LISTENED WITH INTEREST TO THE SPEECHES OF HONOURABLE MEMBERS. I THANK THEM FOR THEIR COMPLIMENTS ON THE PERFORMANCE OF RTHK AND THEIR CONCERN FOR ITS FUTURE. THESE COMMENTS I AM SURE WILL BE APPRECIATED. I ALSO THANK MEMBERS FOR THEIR USEFUL AND WIDE RANGING COMMENTS ON THE SUBJECT OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING AND PUBLIC ACCESS CHANNELS. I AM PLEASED TO HAVE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE MEMBERS SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND TO CLEAR UP SOME POSSIBLE MISAPPREHENSIONS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS.

WHARF CABLE'S LICENCE

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FIRST OF ALL I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE CLEAR WHERE THE GOVERNMENT STANDS IN RELATION TO THE PROVISION OF CABLE CHANNELS FROM WHARF CABLE. THE RELEVANT CONDITION OF WHARF CABLE'S LICENCE READS AS FOLLOWS -

"UPON NOT LESS THAN 6 MONTHS NOTICE IN WRITING GIVEN BY THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY TO THE LICENSEE TO EXPIRE AT ANY TIME OR TIMES THROUGHOUT THE PERIOD OF VALIDITY OF THIS LICENCE AFTER 1 JANUARY 1995, THE LICENSEE SHALL, IN ADDITION TO THE OBLIGATIONS REFERRED TO IN OTHER CLAUSES, MAKE AVAILABLE TO GOVERNMENT FREE OF CHARGE AND EXPENSE SUCH USE OF NOT MORE THAN 3 CHANNELS IN THE BASIC PACKAGE OF PROGRAMMES AS MAY BE DIRECTED BY THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY, SUBJECT TO THE AVAILABILITY OF RADIO FREQUENCY SPECTRUM DURING THE PERIOD THAT THE LICENSEE IS UTILISING THAT SPECTRUM UNDER THIS LICENCE."

THUS IT IS CLEAR THAT -

- AFTER 1 JANUARY 1995 THE GOVERNMENT WILL MAKE A DECISION AS TO HOW MANY CHANNELS, TO A MAXIMUM OF THREE, IT WANTS WHARF CABLE TO HAND OVER AND THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY WILL FORMALLY MAKE THE REQUEST TO WHARF CABLE IN THIS REGARD;
- WHARF CABLE WILL HAVE TO HAND OVER USE OF THOSE CHANNELS AT A DATE SPECIFIED BY THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY BUT NOT EARLIER THAN SIX MONTHS FOLLOWING THE REQUEST;
- THE CHANNELS WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE FREE OF CHARGE AND WILL BE FOR GOVERNMENT USE;
- AND FINALLY THAT THEY SHOULD BE HANDED OVER SUBJECT TO THE AVAILABILITY OF RADIO FREQUENCY SPECTRUM OR IN OTHER WORDS WHEN THE WHARF CABLE SYSTEM HAS CAPACITY AVAILABLE.

/THESE REQUIREMENTS, .....

THESE REQUIREMENTS, OF COURSE, WERE DEvised AT THE TIME OF DRAFTING WHARF CABLE'S LICENCE, AND WERE PREDICATED UPON THE LIKELIHOOD OF SPARE CHANNELS BEING AVAILABLE OVER AND ABOVE THAT NEEDED BY WHARF CABLE FOR ITS OWN SERVICE. CARE WAS TAKEN TO ENSURE THAT THE IMPOSITION DID NOT COMPROMISE WHARF CABLE'S ABILITY TO PROVIDE A COMMERCIALLY ATTRACTIVE CHANNEL LINE-UP, VITAL TO SECURE SUFFICIENTLY HIGH PENETRATION RATES WHICH IN TURN ARE NECESSARY TO BRING THE LICENSEE TO ECONOMIC VIABILITY. SO WHILE ON THE ONE HAND THE LICENCE SPECIFIED AMBITIOUS ROLLOUT TARGETS ATTACHED TO A PERFORMANCE BOND TO HOLD THE LICENSEE TO ITS COMMITMENTS, WE HAD TO BEAR IN MIND ON THE OTHER, THE TECHNICAL LIMITATIONS ARISING FROM THE FACT, AS MEMBERS HAVE MENTIONED, THAT WHARF CABLE WOULD FIRST BE DISTRIBUTING ITS SERVICES THROUGH A MICROWAVE SYSTEM WHICH BY ITS NATURE HAS LIMITED CAPACITY AS COMPARED WITH THE FIBRE OPTIC NETWORK TO WHICH WHARF CABLE WOULD MOVE IN DUE COURSE. FOR THESE REASONS, IT WAS CLEAR FROM THE OUTSET THAT WHARF CABLE WOULD REALISTICALLY NOT BE ABLE TO RELEASE THE GOVERNMENT CHANNELS UNTIL IT SWITCHED OVER TO ITS OPTIC FIBRE NETWORK. THE TARGET DATE SET IN THE LICENCE FOR THIS SWITCH-OVER IS 1998, BUT I AM GLAD TO SAY THAT THE LATEST INDICATIONS ARE THAT WHARF CABLE IS WELL AHEAD OF THIS SCHEDULE AND THE TRANSFER TO OPTIC FIBRE WILL BE SUFFICIENTLY WELL ADVANCED BY ABOUT MID-1996 TO MAKE IT TECHNICALLY FEASIBLE TO INTRODUCE A SERVICE ON THE PUBLIC BROADCAST CHANNELS TO A GOOD PROPORTION OF HOMES IN THE SECOND HALF OF THAT YEAR.

IT WOULD BE AS WELL FOR ME TO EXPLAIN WHY THE GOVERNMENT PUT THE RELEVANT CONDITION INTO THE WHARF CABLE LICENCE IN THE FIRST PLACE. WHEN DEVISING THE LICENCE FRAMEWORK BACK IN 1992 WE HAD NO PRECEDENT IN HONG KONG TO WORK ON. WE HAD TO DRAW ON EXPERIENCE FROM ELSEWHERE, NOTABLY FROM THE USA. THE NORMAL PRACTICE THERE WHEN ISSUING CABLE FRANCHISES, IS FOR THE MUNICIPALITY TO REQUIRE THE FRANCHISEE TO OPEN UP ACCESS CHANNELS, OFTEN FREE TO THE SUBSCRIBER, IN RETURN FOR ALLOWING THE FRANCHISEE TO USE COMMERCIAL AND PUBLIC BROADCASTING OFF AIR CHANNELS FREE OF CHARGE. THESE CHANNELS ARE TO PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS, GOVERNMENT ACCESS AND PUBLIC ACCESS. WE CONSIDERED SIMILAR REQUIREMENTS FOR THE WHARF CABLE LICENCE, BUT BECAUSE OF UNCERTAINTIES AT THE TIME OF THE TENDERING EXERCISE AS TO THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF A CABLE FRANCHISE IN HONG KONG, THE REQUIREMENT WAS MODIFIED TO A LESS BURDENSOME IMPOSITION TO HAND BACK FREE OF CHARGE A NUMBER OF CHANNELS FOR GOVERNMENT USE. WE BELIEVED THAT THIS WAS A GOOD COMPROMISE BEARING IN MIND THE LARGE CHANNEL CAPACITY THAT THE FRANCHISEE WOULD HAVE UPON IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS OPTIC FIBRE NETWORK.

#### POSSIBLE USES FOR WHARF CABLE CHANNELS

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AT THE TIME THAT THE RELEVANT LICENCE CONDITION WAS FIRST SIGNALLED TO POTENTIAL TENDERERS FOR THE CABLE TV FRANCHISE AND THEN AGREED WITH THE SUCCESSFUL BIDDER, WE DID NOT HAVE VERY SPECIFIC IDEAS ABOUT HOW THE GOVERNMENT CHANNEL WOULD BE USED. THIS WAS NOT NECESSARY AT THAT STAGE GIVEN THE TIME IN HAND AND BEARING IN MIND THE MANY OTHER HIGHER PRIORITY TASKS WHICH HAD TO BE ACCOMPLISHED SIMPLY IN ORDER TO GET WHARF CABLE ON AIR WITHIN THE VERY TIGHT TIME-FRAME THAT WE HAD SET OURSELVES. NONETHELESS, WE HAVE FOR SOME TIME BEEN CONDUCTING INITIAL RESEARCH INTO WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN OTHER COUNTRIES WITH A VIEW TO DECIDING WHAT MIGHT BE SUITABLE FOR HONG KONG. WE HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THERE ARE TWO MAIN WAYS IN WHICH THESE CHANNELS COULD BE USED.

THE FIRST IS AS A PUBLIC BROADCAST SERVICE, KNOWN COMMONLY INTERNATIONALLY SIMPLY AS PBS. OF COURSE OUR OWN RTHK ALREADY PRODUCES 10 HOURS OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS TELEVISION EACH WEEK, SO YOU COULD SAY WE ARE ALREADY PROVIDED WITH A PBS FACILITY. RTHK MAKES PROGRAMMES ON CURRENT AFFAIRS, DRAMA, INFORMATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES, VARIETY AND QUIZ SHOWS, CHILDREN AND YOUTH, AND EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION. THEIR FOCUS IS LARGELY ON PROMOTING CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY AND SOCIAL AWARENESS. RTHK, HOWEVER, DOES NOT HAVE ITS OWN DEDICATED BROADCAST CHANNEL AND HAS TO RELY ON ITS PROGRAMMES BEING CARRIED BY OUR LOCAL BROADCAST LICENSEES SO IT COULD INDEED BE ARGUED THAT THERE IS ROOM FOR AN UPGRADING AND EXPANSION OF THE SERVICE.

PUBLIC BROADCASTING IS WELL ESTABLISHED OVERSEAS. MANY COUNTRIES HAVE THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT-FUNDED DEDICATED PUBLIC BROADCAST CORPORATIONS PRODUCING THEIR OWN CHANNELS. FAMOUS EXAMPLES ARE THE BBC IN THE UK AND THE ABC IN AUSTRALIA. SUCH STATIONS ARE RENOWNED FOR THE QUALITY AND DEPTH OF THEIR PROGRAMMING.

IN THE USA STRONG PUBLIC SENTIMENT HAS MADE IT OBLIGATORY FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO SET ASIDE FREQUENCIES FOR NON-COMMERCIAL BROADCASTING, BUT VERY FEW PBS CHANNELS ARE GOVERNMENT-RUN. MOST ARE PROVIDED BY CABLE STATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS ORGANISED WITHIN THE CABLE INDUSTRY. THEIR FUNDING IS FROM A MULTIPLICITY OF SOURCES INCLUDING PUBLIC DONATIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL SPONSORSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT FUNDS ONLY CONSTITUTING A SMALL PROPORTION. AS A RESULT PBS IN THE US IS SEEN AS LARGELY INDEPENDENT OF THE GOVERNMENT. ONE PARTICULAR CHANNEL, CABLE SATELLITE PUBLIC AFFAIRS NETWORK, KNOWN MORE COMMONLY AS C/SPAN, PROVIDES A VERY INTERESTING MODEL FOR WHAT CAN BE DONE ON A PBS SERVICE. ITS TWO TELEVISION CHANNELS PROVIDE FULL COVERAGE WITHOUT EDITORIAL COMMENT OF THE PROCEEDINGS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES AND THE U.S. SENATE, AS WELL AS AIRING OTHER PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROGRAMMES PRODUCED BY C/SPAN TEAMS. ANOTHER GOOD EXAMPLE OF PBS BROADCASTING FROM THE U.S. IS THE CHILDRENS TELEVISION WORKSHOP WHICH PRODUCES QUALITY CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMES LIKE SESAME STREET.

IT IS CLEAR FROM OVERSEAS EXPERIENCE THAT PUBLIC BROADCASTING GENERALLY IS ASSOCIATED WITH QUALITY PROGRAMMING, SERIOUS AND IN-DEPTH TREATMENT OF CURRENT AFFAIRS AND NEWS REPORTING, TOGETHER WITH A HEAVY EMPHASIS ON CULTURE AND THE ARTS, AREAS THAT ARE OFTEN UNDER-REPRESENTED FROM COMMERCIAL STATIONS. THIS THEREFORE IS SOMETHING THAT COULD BE CONSIDERED FOR HONG KONG ALTHOUGH WE WOULD NEED TO BEAR IN MIND THAT BOTH IN THE PROGRAMMES IT ALREADY PROVIDES AND IN CHANNELS THAT IT HAS PLANNED FOR THE FUTURE, WHARF CABLE HAS DONE A VERY COMMENDABLE JOB IN PROVIDING GOOD COVERAGE OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS AND REACHING OUT TO MINORITIES AND TO GROUPS WHICH ARE NOT SO WELL-SERVED BY TRADITIONAL TV PROGRAMMING. WE MUST BE CAREFUL TO RESPECT THE SPECIAL NATURE OF PBS AND NOT TO DUPLICATE WHAT IS ADEQUATELY PROVIDED BY THE COMMERCIAL LICENSEES.

THE SECOND MAIN WAY WAS THAT THE GOVERNMENT CHANNELS PROVIDED BY WHARF CABLE COULD BE USED, OF COURSE, IS FOR PUBLIC ACCESS CHANNELS (PACS). MANY MEMBERS HAVE SPOKEN OUT STRONGLY IN FAVOUR OF THE INTRODUCTION OF SUCH A CHANNEL IN HONG KONG. IT WOULD BE AS WELL THEREFORE TO NOTE, FIRST OF ALL, HOW PACS HAVE BEEN ORGANISED OVERSEAS.

THE CONCEPT APPEARS TO HAVE BEGUN IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, BASED ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF FREEDOM OF SPEECH BEHIND THE FIRST AMENDMENT, AND MADE POSSIBLE BY SURPLUS CHANNEL CAPACITY ON THE LARGE NUMBERS OF LOCALISED CABLE SYSTEMS WHICH WERE FIRST ESTABLISHED THERE BEFORE BEING ESTABLISHED IN ANY OTHER COUNTRY. THE IDEA WAS TO GIVE THE PUBLIC A VOICE ON BROADCAST TELEVISION, INDEPENDENT OF THAT CONTROLLED BY MEDIA-MONOPOLIES. IT WAS NOT ABOUT TELEVISION AS AN ENTERTAINMENT OR INFORMATION MEDIUM; IT WAS ABOUT COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION. WHEREAS COMMERCIAL TELEVISION WAS BROADCASTING, AIMED AT A LARGE AND DIVERSIFIED AUDIENCE, ACCESS WAS REGARDED AS NARROW CASTING AIMED AT A SMALL AUDIENCE WITH PERHAPS ONE COMMON BOND OF INTEREST. THUS BROADCASTING WAS ONE-WAY AND PASSIVE, ACCESS TWO-WAY AND VERY MUCH PARTICIPATORY.

IN 1972 THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION (FCC) RULED THAT THE LARGER CABLE SYSTEMS IN USA MUST OPEN UP PUBLIC ACCESS CHANNELS. THESE WERE TO BE FREE TO THE SUBSCRIBER AND WERE TO PROVIDE EDUCATION ACCESS, GOVERNMENT ACCESS AND PUBLIC ACCESS. THESE ACCESS REQUIREMENTS WERE IMPOSED UPON THE CABLE OPERATORS IN RETURN FOR ALLOWING THEM TO USE COMMERCIAL AND PUBLIC BROADCASTING OFF-AIR CHANNELS FREE OF CHARGE.

AT THE SAME TIME, A MARKEDLY DIFFERENT SITUATION WAS DEVELOPING IN THE UNITED KINGDOM WHERE CABLE TV SYSTEMS HAD NOT BEEN ESTABLISHED AS EARLY AS IN THE USA. INSTEAD, WHAT HAPPENED WAS THAT THE BRITISH BROADCASTING CORPORATION ESTABLISHED A COMMUNITY PROGRAMME UNIT WHICH RESEARCHED INTO STORIES OF LOCAL CONCERN AND OFTEN WITH INPUT FROM INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC PRODUCED PROGRAMMES MAINLY OF A DOCUMENTARY TYPE THAT WERE BROADCAST WEEKLY AT A PARTICULAR TIME SLOT. THIS PRACTICE DEVELOPED IN A RATHER AD HOC MANNER AND NOT IN THE SYSTEMATIC AND STRUCTURED MANNER OF THE AMERICAN SITUATION.

SINCE THEN, A NUMBER OF OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES HAVE INTRODUCED PAC-TYPE SERVICES IN CONJUNCTION WITH CABLE SYSTEMS BASED MAINLY ON THE U.S. MODEL. MOST HAVE MET WITH A DEGREE OF SUCCESS BUT THERE HAVE BEEN PROBLEMS THE SERIOUSNESS OF WHICH SHOULD NOT BE UNDER-ESTIMATED. IN THE U.S. WHILE ORGANISATION OF THE CHANNELS HAS WORKED WELL AND FUNDING HAS BEEN ADEQUATE, A TENDENCY HAS DEVELOPED IN A NUMBER OF CASES FOR PAC FACILITIES TO BE EXPLOITED BY EXTREMIST AND HATE GROUPS AND FOR OBSCENE OR PORNOGRAPHIC PROGRAMMING. IN CANADA CABLE OPERATORS ARE HELD LEGALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROGRAMME CONTENT, AND AS A RESULT THEY SOMETIMES REFUSE ACCESS TO SOME COMMUNITY PRODUCED PROGRAMMES TO PROTECT THEMSELVES, BUT THEREBY OF COURSE COMPROMISING THE FREE ACCESS PRINCIPLE.

IF WE ARE TO CONSIDER MAKING AVAILABLE A CHANNEL FOR PUBLIC ACCESS HERE IN HONG KONG, GREAT CARE WOULD NEED TO BE TAKEN TO DESIGN A SYSTEM THAT MEETS ALL THE NECESSARY REQUIREMENTS FOR FREE PUBLIC ACCESS AND FREE SPEECH BUT PROTECTS IT FROM ABUSE. IT IS NO EASY TASK TO BALANCE THE REQUIREMENT FOR FREE SPEECH AGAINST THE NEED FOR PROGRAMME CONTENT CONTROLS, AND TO DEVISE A CREDIBLE AND EFFECTIVE ENFORCEMENT MECHANISM SHOULD PROGRAMMES OVERSTEP THE MARK. AS MR CHEUNG MAN-KWONG HAS INDICATED JUST NOW, AN INTERNAL WORKING GROUP UNDER THE AEGIS OF MY BRANCH IS CURRENTLY LOOKING AT THIS MATTER IN SOME DEPTH.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES  
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THE WORKING GROUP IS STILL EXAMINING VARIOUS ISSUES RELATED TO THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING CHANNELS AND PUBLIC ACCESS CHANNELS IN HONG KONG, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF LIKELY FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS. AS REGARDS THE LATTER, I CAN SAY AT THIS STAGE THAT THE PROVISION OF A PUBLIC BROADCASTING CHANNEL WOULD REQUIRE SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES, PROBABLY IN THE ORDER OF \$50 TO \$60 MILLION ANNUALLY RECURRENT EXPENDITURE AND A SIMILAR AMOUNT IN ONE-OFF CAPITAL EXPENDITURE. THE COST OF MOUNTING A PUBLIC ACCESS CHANNEL IS MORE DIFFICULT TO ASSESS AS IT WOULD DEPEND ON WHAT KIND OF ORGANISATION IS TO RUN IT AND WHETHER OR NOT GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES WOULD BE GIVEN FOR PROGRAMME PRODUCTION. FUNDING FOR SUCH CHANNELS IN THE U.S. COMES FROM A MULTIPLICITY OF SOURCES, BUT WE ARE AS YET UNCERTAIN OF WHETHER SIMILAR DIVERSE SOURCES OF FUNDING WOULD BE AVAILABLE IN HONG KONG.

A DECISION ON WHETHER GOVERNMENT WILL INTRODUCE A GOVERNMENT CHANNEL ON WHARF CABLE WILL HAVE TO BE MADE IN THE LIGHT OF RESOURCE AVAILABILITY. AS HONOURABLE MEMBERS ARE WELL AWARE, THERE ARE ALWAYS COMPETING DEMANDS FOR PUBLIC FUNDS AND THE ADMINISTRATION HAS TO DETERMINE PRIORITIES CAREFULLY. PROPOSALS FOR MOUNTING A GOVERNMENT CHANNEL ON WHARF CABLE WILL HAVE TO BE ASSESSED AGAINST PROPOSALS IN OTHER POLICY AREAS, MANY OF WHICH MAY ALSO HAVE THE SUPPORT OF HONOURABLE MEMBERS.

CONCLUSION  
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OUR HOPE AND INTENTION IS THAT BY THE END OF THIS YEAR THE WAY FORWARD WILL BE REASONABLY CLEAR AS REGARDS WHETHER AND HOW THE GOVERNMENT WILL MAKE USE OF THE TELEVISION CHANNELS THAT WILL BECOME AVAILABLE TO IT ON WHARF CABLE. BY THAT TIME WE WILL HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SYNTHESIZE THE VIEWS FROM THE PUBLIC THAT WE HAVE RECEIVED AND WILL NO DOUBT CONTINUE TO RECEIVE AND WILL HAVE BEEN ABLE TO HAVE SOUGHT A DIRECTION FROM THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL. THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY MEMBERS DURING THIS MOTION DEBATE WILL BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED BY US AND WILL FORM A MOST VALUABLE COMPONENT OF THIS POLICY-MAKING PROCESS. WE HAVE THOUGHT CAREFULLY ABOUT THE WORDING OF THE MOTION THAT THE HON MAN SAI-CHEONG SEEKS TO MOVE TODAY. WE HAVE COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT WE ARE NOT YET READY TO COMMIT OURSELVES TO THE EXTENT THAT THE WORDING OF THE MOTION WOULD SUGGEST. THE OFFICIAL MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL WILL THEREFORE ABSTAIN FROM VOTING.

THANK YOU, MR PRESIDENT.

THREE BILLS TO OVERHAUL INHERITANCE LAW

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THREE BILLS WHICH REPRESENT THE FIRST COMPREHENSIVE OVERHAUL OF HONG KONG'S LAW OF INHERITANCE IN OVER 20 YEARS WERE INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BY THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, MISS CHRISTINE CHOW, TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THEY WERE THE WILLS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994, THE INTESTATES' ESTATES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994 AND THE INHERITANCE (PROVISION FOR FAMILY AND DEPENDANTS) BILL.

MOVING THEIR SECOND READINGS, MISS CHOW SAID THE PURPOSE WAS TO BRING THE LAW IN THIS AREA UP TO DATE AND TO REMOVE LEGAL ANOMALIES THAT HAVE EMERGED OVER THE YEARS.

THE THREE BILLS, SHE ADDED, WERE BASED ON RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE LAW REFORM COMMISSION IN ITS REPORT ON THE LAW OF WILLS, INTESTATE SUCCESSION AND PROVISION FOR DECEASED PERSONS' FAMILIES AND DEPENDANTS.

AND THESE RECOMMENDATIONS FOLLOWED A THOROUGH EXAMINATION OF THE PRINCIPAL ORDINANCES CONCERNED AND WIDE-RANGING CONSULTATION WITH INTERESTED PARTIES.

"THE MAIN AIM OF THE WILLS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994 IS TO RELAX THE FORMALITIES FOR MAKING WILLS AND TO GIVE THE COURT NEW POWERS TO VALIDATE, INTERPRET AND RECTIFY WILLS.

"IT ALSO PROVIDES FOR THE RELEVANT PART OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON WILLS TO BE INCORPORATED INTO THE WILLS ORDINANCE TO ENABLE WILLS MADE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONVENTION TO BE EXECUTED AND HAVE VALIDITY IN HONG KONG," MISS CHOW SAID.

AS TO THE INTESTATES' ESTATES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994, SHE EXPLAINED THAT THE INTESTATES' ESTATES ORDINANCE PROVIDED FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE ESTATE OF AN INTESTATE.

"THAT IS, SOMEONE WHO DIES WITHOUT A WILL OR WHOSE WILL DEALS WITH ONLY PART OF HIS OR HER ESTATE.

"THE ASSUMPTION BEHIND THE ORDINANCE IS THAT PEOPLE WHO DIE INTESTATE WOULD WISH THEIR ESTATE TO BE INHERITED BY THEIR CLOSE RELATIVES, WITH PREFERENCE GIVEN TO THEIR SURVIVING SPOUSE AND CHILDREN, IF ANY," SHE ADDED.

IN THIS CONNECTION, SHE SAID, THE MAIN EFFECT OF THE BILL WAS TO IMPROVE THE INHERITANCE POSITION OF A SURVIVING SPOUSE.

AS REGARDS THE INHERITANCE (PROVISION FOR FAMILY AND DEPENDANTS) BILL, MISS CHOW SAID IT WAS "A STAND ALONE BILL" TO REPLACE THE DECEASED'S FAMILY MAINTENANCE ORDINANCE.

"LIKE THE ORDINANCE IT SEEKS TO REPLACE, THE BILL PROVIDES FOR THE COURT TO ORDER REASONABLE FINANCIAL PROVISION FROM THE ESTATE OF A DECEASED FOR CERTAIN CLASSES OF PERSON ON APPLICATION.

/"IN EFFECT, .....

"IN EFFECT, IT PROVIDES A SAFETY NET FOR DESERVING PERSONS WHO MAY HAVE BEEN OVERLOOKED IN A WILL OR HAVE NOT BEEN PROPERLY CATERED FOR UNDER THE LAW OF INTESTACY."

THE MAIN EFFECTS OF THE BILL WERE, THEREFORE, TO WIDEN THE SCOPE OF PERSONS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR FINANCIAL PROVISION FROM A DECEASED'S ESTATE AND TO GIVE THE COURT GREATER POWERS TO FACILITATE THE MAKING OF SUCH FINANCIAL PROVISION, SHE SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILLS WAS ADJOURNED.

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BILL TO RECOVER OPERATING COSTS OF SEWAGE SERVICES

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A BILL SEEKING TO ENABLE THE INTRODUCTION OF A CHARGING SCHEME TO RECOVER THE OPERATING COSTS OF SEWAGE SERVICES WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE SEWAGE SERVICES BILL, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, SAID THE PROPOSED CHARGING SCHEME REFLECTED THE POLLUTER-PAYS PRINCIPLE.

THE BILL PROVIDES FOR THE IMPOSITION OF SEWAGE CHARGES ON CONSUMERS WHOSE PREMISES ARE CONNECTED TO PUBLIC SEWERS.

TWO CHARGING ELEMENTS, A FIXED CHARGE AND A VARIABLE CHARGE, ARE PROPOSED TO ENABLE AN EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF SERVICE COSTS AMONG USERS.

THE FIXED CHARGE IS TO RECOVER THE COST OF THE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE SEWERAGE SYSTEM. IT WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE CONSUMER'S CATEGORY AND WATER METER SIZE.

THE VARIABLE CHARGE, WHICH IS TO RECOVER THE SEWAGE TREATMENT COST, WILL BE BASED ON WATER CONSUMPTION.

THE BILL ALSO PROPOSES TO EXEMPT THOSE LOW-USER HOUSEHOLDS USING 13 CUBIC METRES OF WATER OR LESS IN A FOUR-MONTH BILLING PERIOD FROM SEWAGE CHARGES AS UNDER THE PRESENT WATER TARIFF.

ABOUT 17 PER CENT OF HOUSEHOLDS WILL BENEFIT FROM THIS EXEMPTION.

TO KEEP DOWN THE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS, SEWAGE CHARGES WILL BE INCORPORATED IN THE WATER BILLS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF WATER SUPPLIES.

THE EXISTING BILLING SYSTEM AND CONSUMER SERVICE UNIT FOR WATER SERVICES WILL BE EXPANDED FOR THIS PURPOSE.

THE BILL ALSO PROVIDES FOR THE IMPOSITION OF A TRADE EFFLUENT SURCHARGE WHICH WILL REFLECT THE ADDITIONAL COST OF PROVIDING TREATMENT FOR MORE POLLUTING TRADE EFFLUENTS.

IF A SEWAGE CHARGE IS NOT PAID WITHIN A PERIOD SPECIFIED IN THE PAYMENT NOTICE, THE DIRECTOR OF WATER SUPPLIES MAY, AT THE REQUEST OF THE DRAINAGE AUTHORITY, CUT OFF WATER SUPPLY.

A SEWAGE SERVICE USER IS REQUIRED TO NOTIFY THE DRAINAGE AUTHORITY OF ANY CHANGE IN THE USE OF THE PREMISES FOR THE PURPOSE OF CALCULATING THE SEWAGE CHARGE OR THE TRADE EFFLUENT SURCHARGE. FAILURE TO DO SO WILL BE AN OFFENCE AND SUBJECT TO A FINE OF \$100,000.

THE BILL ALSO PROPOSES THAT ANY UNPAID CHARGES AS A RESULT OF INFORMATION WITHHELD OR FALSE STATEMENTS SUBMITTED BY A USER MAY BE RECOVERED AS A DEBT DUE TO THE GOVERNMENT.

THE BILL EMPOWERS THE DRAINAGE AUTHORITY TO ADJUST A SEWAGE CHARGE OR TRADE EFFLUENT SURCHARGE.

A SERVICE USER MAY APPLY TO THE DRAINAGE AUTHORITY FOR A REVIEW OF ANY FACTOR WHICH MAY AFFECT THE CHARGING LEVEL, INCLUDING AN ERROR IN THE WATER CONSUMPTION OR METER SIZE RECORD OR A CHANGE IN THE USER CATEGORY, THE STRENGTH OF TRADE EFFLUENT OR THE VOLUME OF DISCHARGE USED IN DETERMINING THE CHARGE.

A SERVICE USER WHO IS DISSATISFIED WITH THE DECISION OF THE DRAINAGE AUTHORITY MAY APPEAL TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS BOARD.

TO VERIFY THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY A SERVICE USER AND TO MEASURE THE VOLUME OF DISCHARGE OR COLLECT SAMPLES OF TRADE EFFLUENT, THE DRAINAGE AUTHORITY MAY ENTER PREMISES AND INSTALL EQUIPMENT.

THE BILL PROVIDES THAT ANYONE WHO TAMPERS WITH EQUIPMENT INSTALLED BY THE DRAINAGE AUTHORITY WILL BE LIABLE TO A FINE OF \$10,000.

THE BILL ENABLES THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL TO MAKE REGULATIONS TO PRESCRIBE THE CHARGING RATES AND TO ESTABLISH THE DETAILED ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CHARGING SCHEME.

A TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM MAY BE ISSUED UNDER THE BILL TO SET OUT THE PROCEDURES AND METHODS FOR OBTAINING SAMPLES AND OTHER MATTERS RELATING TO THE TESTING AND ANALYSIS OF TRADE EFFLUENT.

MR EASON NOTED THAT IN THE COMING YEARS, MORE THAN \$12 BILLION WOULD BE SPENT ON SEWERAGE PROJECTS, INCLUDING \$8 BILLION ON THE PRINCIPAL SEWAGE COLLECTION AND TREATMENT SYSTEM WHICH WILL CURTAIL HARBOUR POLLUTION BY 70 PER CENT.

TO KEEP CHARGES AT A MODEST LEVEL, HE SAID, THE GOVERNMENT HAS MADE A COMMITMENT TO MEET THE CAPITAL COSTS IN FULL.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

COMPANIES REGISTRAR REVISES FEES

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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PASSED TWO MOTIONS TO RAISE CERTAIN FEES PAYABLE TO THE REGISTRAR OF COMPANIES IN RELATION TO THE INCORPORATION OF TRUSTEES AND THE INSPECTION AND PHOTOCOPYING OF LIQUIDATORS' STATEMENTS SENT TO THE REGISTRAR.

THE FEES WILL GO UP BY ABOUT 10 PER CENT IN LINE WITH THE INCREASE IN COSTS BASED ON THE MOVEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE CONSUMPTION DEFLATOR FOR THIS YEAR.

THE REVISED FEES WILL BE EFFECTIVE WHEN THE REGISTERED TRUSTEES INCORPORATION (AMENDMENT OF SECOND SCHEDULE) ORDER 1994 AND THE COMPANIES (FEES AND PERCENTAGES) (AMENDMENT) ORDER 1994 ARE GAZETTED ON JULY 8.

MOVING THE MOTIONS, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES, MR TAM WING-PONG, EXPLAINED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY WAS TO SET FEES AT LEVELS SUFFICIENT TO RECOVER THE FULL COST OF PROVIDING THE SERVICES.

AS THE COMPANIES REGISTRY IS NOW OPERATING AS A TRADING FUND, IT IS NECESSARY TO RECOVER COSTS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE ITS PERFORMANCE TARGETS, HE SAID.

THE FEES WERE LAST REVIEWED IN AUGUST 1993.

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SHORT SELLING SECURITIES MARKET TRANSPARENT AND OPEN

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THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES, MR TAM WING-PONG, SAID THERE WAS NO LACK OF TRANSPARENCY OR OPEN INFORMATION ON THE SHORT SELLING OF SECURITIES.

HONG KONG HAS IN PLACE MEASURES THAT ARE COMPARABLE TO OTHER DEVELOPED INTERNATIONAL MARKETS, HE TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO DR THE HON HUANG CHEN-YA'S QUESTION TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE LOCAL MARKET HAS MADE AVAILABLE REAL TIME REGULATORY DATA ABOUT SHORT SELLING. MEANINGFUL INFORMATION ON SUCH ACTIVITY IS ROUTINELY DISSEMINATED TO THE PUBLIC.

MR TAM SAID THE REGULATORY STRUCTURE ESTABLISHED BY THE STOCK EXCHANGE OF HONG KONG LTD AND APPROVED BY THE SECURITIES AND FUTURES COMMISSION WAS LARGELY BASED ON THE SYSTEMS IN OTHER DEVELOPED MARKETS SUCH AS USA, UK, JAPAN, CANADA AND AUSTRALIA.

"IT WAS DESIGNED TO ADDRESS VARIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE SECURITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT ISSUED IN 1988," HE SAID.

THE STRUCTURE ENSURES THAT SHORT SELLING IS PROPERLY MONITORED, APPROPRIATE INFORMATION IS ADEQUATELY DISSEMINATED TO THE MARKET, AND THE USE OF SHORT SELLING WILL NOT PRECIPITATE SEVERE MARKET DECLINES, HE ADDED.

"IT IS COMPARABLE TO THE FRAMEWORKS IN OTHER MARKETS AND, IN CERTAIN AREAS, OUR REQUIREMENTS ARE MORE STRINGENT THAN ELSEWHERE," HE SAID.

REGULATED SHORT SELLING ON THE STOCK EXCHANGE OF HONG KONG BEGAN ON JANUARY 3 THIS YEAR. UP TO JUNE 14, MORE THAN 2.8 MILLION SHARES SOLD SHORT WITH A TOTAL VALUE OF \$76,540,800 IN 23 TRANSACTIONS WERE REPORTED.

TWO BILLS SET FOR SECOND READING DEBATE TODAY IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SEEK TO RELAX THE STAMP DUTY CONCESSION ON STOCK BORROWING AND LENDING ACTIVITIES.

HE SAID THEY WOULD ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STOCK BORROWING AND LENDING MARKET IN HONG KONG AND IN TURN ENABLE SHORT SELLING TO TAKE PLACE MORE EFFECTIVELY.

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REVISED TAVA LEVIES APPROVED

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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) CARRIED A MOTION TO REVISE THE LEVIES ON VEHICLE AND DRIVING LICENCES TO ENSURE THAT THE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS ASSISTANCE (TAVA) SCHEME REMAINS SOLVENT.

THE ANNUAL LEVY ON VEHICLE LICENCES WILL GO UP FROM \$66 TO \$84 FROM JULY 15, 1994 AND TO \$114 WITH EFFECT FROM JANUARY 1, 1995.

THE LEVY ON DRIVING LICENCES WILL BE RAISED FROM \$22 TO \$28 AND THEN TO \$38 FROM THE SAME EFFECTIVE DATES.

THE TAVA SCHEME HAS BEEN IN OPERATION FOR 15 YEARS TO PROVIDE SPEEDY ASSISTANCE TO TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS OR TO THEIR DEPENDENT FAMILY MEMBERS.

MOVING THE MOTION, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS SHELLEY LAU, SAID EXPENDITURE OF THE TAVA FUND HAD OUTGROWN ITS INCOME OVER TIME AS THE RATES OF PAYMENT UNDER THE SCHEME WERE ADJUSTED IN LINE WITH INFLATION AND THE AVERAGE INCREASE IN WAGES WHILE THE INCOME WAS NOT INFLATION-PROOF.

THE INCOME OF THE FUND IS DRAWN FROM LEVIES ON VEHICLE AND DRIVING LICENCES, CONTRIBUTION FROM GENERAL REVENUE AND REFUND FROM THOSE APPLICANTS WHO RECEIVED COMPENSATION FROM OTHER PARTIES IN RESPECT OF THE ACCIDENT.

"CONTRIBUTION FROM GENERAL REVENUE IS INTENDED TO COVER THE PEDESTRIANS' PART IN CAUSING TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS," MRS LAU SAID.

IT WAS ORIGINALLY SET AT ONE-THIRD OF THE TOTAL COST OF THE SCHEME AS STATISTICS PROVIDED BY THE POLICE SHOWED THAT 30 TO 35 PER CENT OF TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS FROM 1973 TO 1977 HAD BEEN CAUSED BY PEDESTRIAN NEGLIGENCE.

THIS PERCENTAGE DROPPED TO JUST OVER 20 PER CENT BY 1990, AND ON THAT BASIS, THE LEVEL OF CONTRIBUTION FROM GENERAL REVENUE WAS REDUCED TO ONE-FIFTH OF THE COST OF THE SCHEME IN OCTOBER 1992.

MRS LAU RECALLED THAT ON JANUARY 12 THIS YEAR, THE COUNCIL APPROVED AN INCREASE IN THE LEVIES ON VEHICLE AND DRIVING LICENCES, WHICH WAS LOWER THAN WHAT WAS PROPOSED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

FOLLOWING THIS, THE GOVERNMENT HAS CONDUCTED AN OVERALL REVIEW OF THE SCHEME, INCLUDING WAYS TO REDUCE THE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS, TO IMPROVE THE REFUND RATE AND TO FORMULATE BASIS FOR FUTURE ADJUSTMENT OF LEVIES.

"WE HAVE IDENTIFIED IN OUR REVIEW MEASURES TO ACHIEVE SAVINGS OF ABOUT \$1 MILLION PER ANNUM, OR 12 PER CENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT'S STAFF COST INCURRED FOR THE SCHEME," MRS LAU SAID.

"THE MEASURES INVOLVE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPUTER SYSTEM FOR THE TAVA SCHEME AND A REDUCTION IN STAFFING IN THE DEPARTMENT'S TAVA SECTION," SHE ADDED.

AS A SAFEGUARD TO THE REFUND SYSTEM AND TO FACILITATE RECOVERY OF PAYMENTS, SHE SAID THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT HAD STANDING ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE LEGAL AID DEPARTMENT, THE JUDICIARY, THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT, SOLICITORS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR, EMPLOYERS AND INSURANCE COMPANIES TO OBTAIN INFORMATION ON CLAIMS PAID TO TAVA BENEFICIARIES AND TO EFFECT DIRECT REPAYMENT.

"WE WILL KEEP THE TAVA SCHEME UNDER REVIEW AND CONTINUE TO EXPLORE POSSIBLE WAYS TO IMPROVE THE FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE FUND," MRS LAU SAID.

SHE ADDED THAT TO MINIMISE OPERATIONAL DIFFICULTIES, THE REVISED RATES WOULD NOT APPLY TO ADVANCE LICENCE RENEWALS MADE BEFORE THE RESPECTIVE EFFECTIVE DATES.

TOUTING AND ILLEGAL COMMISSION-TAKING  
IN LEGAL FIELD TO BE TACKLED

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AN AMENDMENT TO THE PROPOSED LEGAL PRACTITIONERS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993 WHICH AIMS TO TARGET AT "TOUTS" AND "SUBMARINES", WHO ARE LEGALLY UNQUALIFIED PERSONS TRYING TO SOLICIT BUSINESS FOR THEIR OWN PERSONAL GAINS BY ACTING AS A GO-BETWEEN, WAS PASSED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TONIGHT (WEDNESDAY).

THE ACTING ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON JAMES FINDLAY, SAID AT THE RESUMED SECOND READING DEBATE ON THE BILL THAT THE AMENDMENT HAD BEEN ADDED AS A RESULT OF THE DETERMINED VIEWS OF THE ADMINISTRATION, THE LAW SOCIETY AND THE BAR ASSOCIATION THAT "TOUTS" AND "SUBMARINES" WHO, HITHERTO HAD NOT BEEN DEALT WITH BY THE LEGAL PRACTITIONERS ORDINANCE, OUGHT TO BE TARGETED.

HE SAID THE SECTION EMPOWERED A LAW SOCIETY INSPECTOR TO CARRY OUT RANDOM CHECKS TO UNCOVER "TOUTS" AND "SUBMARINES" WITH A VIEW TO DRIVING THEM OUT OF THEIR BUSINESS OF TOUTING AND COMMISSION-TAKING.

"THE BAR ASSOCIATION HAS GIVEN AN ASSURANCE THAT CO-OPERATION AND ASSISTANCE WILL BE GIVEN TO LAW SOCIETY INSPECTORS IF ENQUIRIES REVEAL THAT BARRISTERS OR THEIR EMPLOYEES ARE INVOLVED," MR FINDLAY SAID.

HE SAID UNDER THE AMENDMENT, AN INSPECTOR WAS EMPOWERED TO REQUIRE ANY SOLICITOR OR FOREIGN LAWYER, OR THE EMPLOYEE OF A SOLICITOR OR FOREIGN LAWYER, TO PRODUCE FOR HIS INSPECTION ANY DOCUMENT IN HIS POSSESSION AND TO COPY OR SEIZE ANY SUCH DOCUMENT.

SUCH INVESTIGATIVE POWER WAS PRO-ACTIVE AND WAS EXERCISABLE UPON A DIRECTION OF THE LAW SOCIETY COUNCIL, HE ADDED.

MR FINDLAY SAID THE PRINCIPAL ORDINANCE WAS ALSO AMENDED TO MAKE IT AN OFFENCE FOR ANY PERSON TO PRETEND TO BE AN EMPLOYEE OF A SOLICITOR, BARRISTER OR FOREIGN LAWYER.

THIS WOULD ADD TEETH TO THE INSPECTORS' POWERS UNDER THE PROPOSED SECTION AND WILL ACT AS A DETERRENT TO EXISTING AND POTENTIAL "TOUTS", HE SAID.

MR FINDLAY SAID THE AMENDMENTS WOULD GRANT INVESTIGATIVE POWERS TO LAW SOCIETY INSPECTORS IN ORDER TO ASSIST THE LAW SOCIETY COUNCIL IN THE INVESTIGATION OF MISCONDUCT AND MALPRACTICES BY ITS MEMBERS.

HE ADDED THAT IN THE DISCUSSIONS OF THE BILLS COMMITTEE, SOME MEMBERS EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THESE MEASURES IN COMBATING THE PROBLEM OF TOUTING AND COMMISSION-TAKING.

THE ADMINISTRATION HAS UNDERTAKEN TO KEEP THE INSPECTORATE SYSTEM CLOSELY MONITORED FOR ITS EFFECTIVENESS, AND IT WILL BE EVALUATED 12 MONTHS AFTER ITS IMPLEMENTATION.

/THIS EVALUATION .....

THIS EVALUATION WILL BE CARRIED OUT WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE TWO BRANCHES OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION AND THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION. IF THE MEASURES ARE NOT EFFECTIVE, THE ADMINISTRATION WILL CONSIDER INTRODUCING CRIMINAL SANCTIONS.

"WE ARE RESOLVED TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM OF TOUTS, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER," MR FINDLAY SAID.

THE BILL WAS PASSED.

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GOVT TO DISCUSS APPOINTMENT OF SOLICITORS AS TEMPORARY JUDGES

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THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONSIDER IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS THE LAW SOCIETY'S PROPOSAL TO APPOINT SOLICITORS AS TEMPORARY JUDGES OF THE HIGH COURT FOR SPECIFIC PERIODS.

THIS WAS REVEALED BY THE ACTING ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON JAMES FINDLAY, WHEN HE WAS SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED SECOND READING DEBATE OF THE SUPREME COURT (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994 IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE BILL PROVIDES FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF A FORMAL SYSTEM OF APPOINTING EXPERIENCED BARRISTERS AS RECORDERS OF THE HIGH COURT, WHO WILL SIT AS TEMPORARY JUDGES FOR SPECIFIC PERIODS.

UNDER THE BILL, A PERSON IS ELIGIBLE FOR APPOINTMENT IF HE IS A QUALIFIED BARRISTER AND HAS PRACTISED FOR AT LEAST 10 YEARS AS A BARRISTER OR SOLICITOR.

DURING THE BILLS COMMITTEE'S DELIBERATIONS, THE HON SIMON IP PROPOSED AN AMENDMENT THAT WOULD CHANGE THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT AS A RECORDER BY MAKING SOLICITORS ELIGIBLE FOR APPOINTMENT.

MR FINDLAY SAID THE ADMINISTRATION HAD UNDERTAKEN TO CONSIDER THE LAW SOCIETY'S PROPOSAL IN THE CONTEXT OF A WIDER REVIEW SERVICES.

OTHER ISSUES WOULD BE CONSIDERED IN THE COURSE OF THAT, AND THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT'S INTENTION WAS TO PUBLISH A CONSULTATION PAPER ON THIS AND OTHER ISSUES LATER IN THE YEAR, HE SAID.

MR. FINDLAY SAID MR IP, HOWEVER, EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN ABOUT THE DELAY THAT THIS MIGHT TAKE ON THIS BROAD REVIEW AND THE BILLS COMMITTEE REQUESTED THAT THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT SHOULD GIVE IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATION TO THAT MATTER OF THE PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF RECORDERS.

IN RESPONSE TO THAT REQUEST, HE SAID THE ADMINISTRATION HAD CONFIRMED THAT IT WOULD ACTIVELY DISCUSS THE QUALIFICATIONS WITH THE BAR ASSOCIATION AND THE LAW SOCIETY IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.

"THE ADMINISTRATION WILL REPORT ITS VIEWS ON THAT ISSUE TO THIS COUNCIL'S PANEL ON ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE AND LEGAL SERVICES IN OCTOBER," MR FINDLAY SADI.

THE BILL WAS PASSED.

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BILL TO ENSURE CONTINUITY OF SHIPPING PRACTICES

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THE CARRIAGE OF GOODS BY SEA BILL, WHICH ENSURES CONTINUITY OF EXISTING SHIPPING PRACTICES AND PROVIDES LEGAL CERTAINTY FOR THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY, WILL HELP ENHANCE HONG KONG'S POSITION AS A TRADING AND SHIPPING CENTRE.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MR GORDON SIU, EXPLAINED THAT THE AIM WAS TO IMPLEMENT IN HONG KONG THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR THE UNIFICATION OF CERTAIN RULES OF LAW RELATING TO THE BILLS OF LADING - THE BRUSSELS CONVENTION.

THE CONVENTION IS NOW IMPLEMENTED IN HONG KONG BY APPLYING THE RELEVANT UNITED KINGDOM LEGISLATION TO HONG KONG.

"IT IS, HOWEVER, NECESSARY TO ENACT LOCAL LEGISLATION TO REPLACE THE UK ENACTMENTS SO THAT THEIR LEGAL EFFECT WILL CONTINUE AFTER 1997," MR SIU SAID.

THIS SYSTEMATIC LOCALISATION OF MERCHANT SHIPPING LEGISLATION HAS BEEN UNDER WAY FOR SOME YEARS. IT HAS INVOLVED THE ENACTMENT OF PRIMARY AND SUBSIDIARY LEGISLATION ADDRESSING SUCH ISSUES AS MARINE POLLUTION, SHIPPING SAFETY AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HONG KONG SHIPPING REGISTER.

THE BILL REPLICATES THE PROVISIONS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM LEGISLATION, WITH MODIFICATIONS ONLY WHERE NECESSARY TO CONFORM TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HONG KONG.

"THE CONTINUED APPLICATION TO HONG KONG OF THE BRUSSELS CONVENTION WILL ENSURE THAT CONTRACTS RELATED TO THE CARRIAGE OF GOODS BY SEA ARE GOVERNED BY RULES DRAWN UP IN ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS," HE SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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LEGCO APPROVES BILL CURBING TAXI LICENCE SPECULATION

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A BILL SEEKING TO DAMPEN TAXI LICENCE SPECULATION BY RESTRICTING THE TRANSFER OF NEW LICENCES WAS PASSED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994 PROVIDES THE COMMISSIONER FOR TRANSPORT WITH A GENERAL POWER TO IMPOSE A CONDITION ON A TAXI LICENCE PREVENTING THE TRANSFER OF THE OWNERSHIP OF THE TAXI WITHIN A CERTAIN PERIOD AFTER ITS ISSUE.

THE COMMISSIONER WILL SPECIFY THE PERIOD, WHICH IS 12 MONTHS, IN THE TENDER DOCUMENTS FOR THE INFORMATION OF POTENTIAL BIDDERS.

/TO ENSURE .....

TO ENSURE THOSE CONCERNED ARE AWARE OF THIS RESTRICTION, THE COMMISSIONER WILL ALSO SPECIFY THIS CONDITION IN THE VEHICLE REGISTRATION DOCUMENT FOR VEHICLES LICENSED AS TAXIS UNDER THE NEW TENDER CONDITIONS.

AS A FURTHER MEASURE TO DISCOURAGE HIDDEN TRANSFER OF TAXI LICENCES AND TO ENABLE THE COMMISSIONER TO ENFORCE THE 12-MONTH RULE, THE ROAD TRAFFIC (REGISTRATION AND LICENSING OF VEHICLES) (AMENDMENT) (NO. 3) REGULATION 1994 ALSO COMES INTO EFFECT TODAY.

UNDER THE AMENDED REGULATION, BOTH THE BUYER AND SELLER OF A TAXI LICENCE HAVE TO REGISTER THE TRANSFER IN PERSON WITHIN 72 HOURS OF THE TRANSFER.

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PUBLIC BUS SERVICES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994

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THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT IS CLOSELY MONITORING BUS COMPANIES' PERFORMANCE AND WILL IMPOSE FINANCIAL PENALTIES IF NECESSARY, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR JOHN TELFORD, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE SECOND READING OF THE PUBLIC BUS SERVICES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994, MR TELFORD SAID THAT THE BILL SOUGHT TO STRENGTHEN THE FINANCIAL PENALTY PROVISIONS TO FINE BUS COMPANIES FOR UNSATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE.

"I CAN ASSURE MEMBERS THAT SUCH MONITORING WILL BE CARRIED OUT DILIGENTLY AND WE WILL NOT HESITATE TO ENFORCE THIS NEW LEGISLATION," MR TELFORD SAID.

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COURTS CAN INTERPRET ROYAL INSTRUCTIONS

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ONLY THE COURTS ARE CAPABLE OF DELIVERING AUTHORITATIVE INTERPRETATIONS ON THE ROYAL INSTRUCTIONS WHICH FORM PART OF THE LAW OF THE TERRITORY.

THE SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS, MR NICHOLAS NG, GAVE THIS EXPLANATION TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN HIS WRITTEN REPLY TO THE HON JAMES TIEN'S QUESTION.

"THIS PRINCIPLE APPLIES AS MUCH TO THE ROYAL INSTRUCTIONS, AND ACTS DONE UNDER THEM, AS TO ANY OTHER LAW IN FORCE IN HONG KONG," HE SAID.

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'PATIENTS FIRST' IS CARDINAL PRINCIPLE

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"PUTTING THE PATIENTS FIRST" HAS BEEN THE CARDINAL PRINCIPLE OF THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY'S (HA) MANAGEMENT REFORM IN THE PAST YEAR, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS SHELLEY LAU, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

DURING THE YEAR, 21 HOSPITAL CHIEF EXECUTIVES WERE APPOINTED TO SPEARHEAD THESE REFORMS WITH EMPHASIS ON PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT, MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAM APPROACH AND, MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, A PATIENT-CENTRED CULTURE.

TABLING THE HA'S ANNUAL REPORT COVERING THE PERIOD FROM APRIL 1, 1992 TO MARCH 31, 1993, MRS LAU SAID HOSPITAL STAFF'S RESPONSE TO THESE REFORMS HAD BEEN POSITIVE.

"THIS OWES MUCH TO THE EFFORTS OF THE HA TO ENHANCE COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF, TO HELP THEM REALISE THEIR POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE CORPORATE MISSION, AND TO PROVIDE THEM WITH SUPPORTING SERVICES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN DECISION-MAKING," SHE SAID.

SHE ADDED THAT WITH THE SUPPORT OF DEDICATED AND MOTIVATED STAFF, THE NEW APPROACH IN REACHING OUT TO SPECIFIC TARGET GROUPS WOULD HELP ENCOURAGE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION BY PATIENTS IN THEIR CURATIVE PROCESS.

TO DEVELOP A CLOSER PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COMMUNITY, THREE REGIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES HAVE BEEN FORMED TO PROVIDE PUBLIC FORUMS FOR DISCUSSION ON HOSPITAL SERVICES.

"AT DISTRICT LEVEL, 28 HOSPITAL GOVERNING COMMITTEES PROVIDE A DIRECT VENUE FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY TO TAKE PART IN SERVICE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT," MRS LAU SAID.

IN ORDER TO IMPROVE THE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE HA, THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO COVER ADDITIONAL DETAILS OF THE FINANCIAL POSITION, ACTUAL PERFORMANCE AND MANPOWER PROVISION IN NEXT YEAR'S DRAFT ESTIMATES.

THIS WILL PROVIDE A BETTER BASIS FOR PUBLIC MONITORING OF ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE HA.

"FURTHERMORE, CONSIDERABLE EFFORTS ARE BEING PUT INTO DEVELOPING A SET OF MANPOWER INDICATORS FOR ALL HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS TO ASSIST HOSPITAL MANAGERS IN THE PLANNING AND DEPLOYMENT OF FRONTLINE STAFF, AS WELL AS TO PROVIDE A DIRECT LINKAGE BETWEEN RESOURCE INPUT AND CLINICAL OUTPUT," MRS LAU SAID.

IN OTHER AREAS, THE ACTING SECRETARY SAID EFFORTS MADE BY THE HA TO RATIONALISE SERVICES HAD ALREADY RESULTED IN LESS OVERCROWDING IN WARDS, IMPROVED HOSPITAL ENVIRONMENT AND SHORTENED WAITING TIME FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT.

NO CHANGE IN SCOPE OF AMBULANCE SERVICES

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THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY HAS PROVIDED THE SAME SCOPE AND LEVEL OF NON-EMERGENCY AMBULANCE SERVICES OFFERED PREVIOUSLY BY THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS SHELLEY LAU, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN HER WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MICHAEL HO, MRS LAU SAID CURRENTLY ABOUT 475 ELDERLY PATIENTS WERE MAKING USE OF THE NON-EMERGENCY AMBULANCE SERVICE EACH WEEK TO ATTEND TREATMENT AT GERIATRIC DAY HOSPITALS.

THEY INCLUDE PATIENTS WITH MOBILITY PROBLEMS.

"THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY WILL MONITOR THE SITUATION CLOSELY AND CONSIDER FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS TO THE EXISTING SERVICE AS NECESSARY," SHE ADDED.

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NO REGISTRATION OF NURSING HOMES REJECTED

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THE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH HAS REFUSED NO APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION OF PRIVATE HOSPITALS, NURSING HOMES AND MATERNITY HOMES SINCE ASSUMING THE RESPONSIBILITY IN DECEMBER 1991.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS SHELLEY LAU, IN HER WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MICHAEL HO IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MRS LAU SAID IN DETERMINING THE APPROPRIATENESS OF NURSING LEVELS IN THESE INSTITUTIONS, THE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH WOULD TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED, THE DEPENDENCY LEVEL OF THE PATIENTS, THE CASE MIX AND THE NUMBER OF PATIENTS SERVED.

"PRIVATE HOSPITALS, NURSING HOMES AND MATERNITY HOMES APPLYING FOR REGISTRATION WILL BE ADVISED ON THE OPTIMAL LEVEL OF NURSING STAFF REQUIRED FOR PROVIDING SERVICES TO AN ACCEPTABLE PROFESSIONAL STANDARD AND MAY BE REQUIRED TO RECTIFY THEIR NURSING MANPOWER LEVELS," SHE SAID.

"ONLY WHEN THE INSTITUTION DOES NOT COMPLY WOULD THE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH CONSIDER REFUSING ITS APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION," SHE ADDED.

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SEAFOOD SAMPLED FOR TEST

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SEAFOOD AT WHOLESALE AND RETAIL MARKETS IS REGULARLY SAMPLED FOR EXAMINATION UNDER THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH'S FOOD SURVEILLANCE PROGRAMME, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS SHELLEY LAU, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MRS PEGGY LAM, MRS LAU SAID IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE YEAR, ABOUT 1.1 PER CENT AND 10 PER CENT OF SEAFOOD SAMPLES WERE FOUND TO BE UNSATISFACTORY WHEN SUBJECTED TO CHEMICAL AND BACTERIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS RESPECTIVELY.

"THE BACTERIOLOGICAL CONTAMINATION MAY BE AVOIDED BY PROPER CLEANING AND THOROUGH COOKING BEFORE CONSUMPTION," SHE SAID.

"GIVEN THE DIETARY INTAKE OF THE POPULATION, THE LEVEL OF HEAVY METAL CONTAMINATION IS NOT LIKELY TO POSE A HAZARD," SHE ADDED.

MRS LAU SAID THE PUBLIC WAS INFORMED OF THE RESULTS OF THE FOOD SURVEILLANCE PROGRAMME THROUGH QUARTERLY PRESS CONFERENCES, WHEN HEALTH MESSAGES WERE ALSO DISSEMINATED.

THE GENERAL PUBLIC IS ALSO REMINDED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR OF THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOD SANITATION AND HYGIENE.

ON THE EFFECT OF MUD DUMPING AT EAST SHA CHAU ON SEAFOOD, SHE SAID NO SIGNIFICANT CONTAMINATION TREND HAD BEEN DETECTED DURING THE FIRST THREE QUARTERS OF 1993 DESPITE ISOLATED INCIDENTS OF HIGH METAL CONCENTRATION IN MARINE ORGANISM.

SHE TOLD THE COUNCIL THAT DUMPING ACTIVITIES WERE CONTROLLED BY LICENCES UNDER THE DUMPING AT SEA ACT (OVERSEAS TERRITORIES) ORDER, FOR WHICH THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION WAS THE LICENSING AUTHORITY.

"STRICT DUMPING LICENCE CONDITIONS ARE ENFORCED, SUCH AS REQUIREMENTS FOR TAMPER-PROOF AUTOMATIC SELF-MONITORING DEVICES, TO ENSURE THAT DISPOSALS ARE SAFELY RESTRICTED TO WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THE PIT," SHE SAID.

A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMME OF WATER QUALITY, SEDIMENT QUALITY AND MARINE BIOTA MONITORING HAS BEEN ADOPTED, WHICH EMBRACES COMPLIANCE MONITORING OF INDIVIDUAL PITS TO ENFORCE CONTRACT CONDITIONS ON OPERATIONAL PRACTICE AS WELL AS WIDER SCALE ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT ON THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT.

MEASURES TO TACKLE DISCOLOURED TAP WATER

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THE WATER SERVICES DEPARTMENT (WSD) IS TAKING ACTION TO AMEND THE WATERWORKS REGULATIONS TO BAN THE USE OF UNLINED GALVANISED IRON PIPES WHICH ARE PRONE TO RUSTING AND CORROSION.

IN ADDITION, WSD HAS ALSO TAKEN MEASURES TO FURTHER REDUCE THE MANGANESE CONTENT IN THE FINAL TREATED WATER IN VIEW OF THE PUBLIC'S CONCERNS ALTHOUGH THE CONCENTRATION LEVEL HAS NO ADVERSE EFFECT TO HEALTH.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON EMILY LAU.

MR BLAKE SAID THE "YELLOWISH" TAP WATER WAS FOUND TO BE CAUSED BY SLIGHTLY HIGH IRON AND MANGANESE CONTENT.

CORRODED PIPES IN THE CONSUMERS' PREMISES COULD BE A SOURCE FOR THE IRON CONTENT.

NORMAL TREATED WATER ALSO CONTAIN SMALL QUANTITY OF IRON AND MANGANESE, AT ACCEPTABLE LEVELS AS LAID DOWN BY THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION.

SUCH IRON AND MANGANESE MAY, IN THE COURSE OF TIME, DEPOSIT IN THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AS WELL AS THE PIPES WITHIN CONSUMERS' PREMISES.

THE DISCOLOURATION COULD BE CAUSED BY DISLODGEEMENT OF SUCH DEPOSITS, WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN INDUCED BY CHANGES IN VELOCITY, PRESSURE OR DIRECTION OF FLOW OF WATER IN THE WATER MAINS.

AS LONG AS THE LEVELS OF IRON AND MANGANESE FALL WITHIN ACCEPTABLE LIMITS, ADVERSE EFFECTS TO HEALTH ARE UNLIKELY.

MR BLAKE NOTED THAT COMPLAINTS ABOUT DISCOLOURED TAP WATER WERE MOSTLY RECEIVED IN MAY THIS YEAR.

UPON RECEIPT OF THESE COMPLAINTS, WSD IMMEDIATELY TOOK WATER SAMPLES FROM THE COMPLAINANTS' PREMISES AND THE NEARBY SUPPLY SYSTEM FOR ANALYSIS.

THE RESULTS OF SUCH ANALYSIS INDICATED THAT IN MOST CASES, THE IRON AND MANGANESE CONTENT IN THE SAMPLES WERE WITHIN ACCEPTABLE LIMITS.

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GOVT SEEKS TO REDUCE AIRCRAFT NOISE DISTURBANCE

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THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MR GORDON SIU, ASSURED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO PURSUE EVERY OPPORTUNITY FOR REDUCING NOISE DISTURBANCE TO RESIDENTS LIVING NEAR THE AIRPORT.

A NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL MEASURES ARE BEING STUDIED TO REDUCE THE DISTURBANCE, HE REPLIED TO THE HON JAMES TO'S QUESTION TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

ONE SUCH MEASURE IS TO REQUIRE AIRCRAFT OPERATORS TO ADOPT LANDING AND TAKE-OFF PROCEDURES THAT REDUCE NOISE, TO THE EXTENT THAT SUCH PROCEDURES CAN BE IMPLEMENTED WITHOUT DETRIMENT TO AVIATION SAFETY.

MR SIU EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WOULD LATER TODAY PASS THE CIVIL AVIATION (AIRCRAFT NOISE) (AMENDMENT) BILL WHICH WOULD STRENGTHEN THE POWERS AVAILABLE TO THE DIRECTOR OF CIVIL AVIATION TO REDUCE AIRCRAFT NOISE.

ENACTMENT OF THE BILL WILL PAVE THE WAY FOR A REQUIREMENT THAT AIRCRAFT USING THE AIRPORT MUST MEET THE MORE STRINGENT NOISE CONTROLS ON AIRCRAFT NOISE LAID DOWN IN CHAPTER 3 OF ANNEX 16 TO THE CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL CIVIL AVIATION.

UNTIL OCTOBER LAST YEAR, AIRCRAFT WERE PROHIBITED FROM LANDING AND TAKING OFF OVER KOWLOON BETWEEN 6.30 AM AND 7 AM, AND BETWEEN 9 PM AND 11.30 PM UNLESS WIND, WEATHER OR OTHER OPERATING CONDITIONS MADE SUCH MOVEMENTS NECESSARY.

THIS MODE OF OPERATION HAD TO BE SUSPENDED IN OCTOBER 1993 IN THE INTERESTS OF AVIATION SAFETY, BUT THE PREVIOUS LIMITATION ON THE NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT MOVEMENTS PROGRAMMED BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 9 PM TO 11.30 PM HAS BEEN MAINTAINED.

IN ADDITION, MR SIU SAID, THE DIRECTOR HAS, WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF AIRLINES, BROUGHT FORWARD TO BEFORE 10.30 PM ALL BUT ONE OF THE LANDINGS OVER KOWLOON PREVIOUSLY PROGRAMMED TO ARRIVE AFTER THAT TIME.

"THE COMING WINTER SCHEDULE WILL SEE ALL LANDINGS PROGRAMMED FOR BEFORE 10.30 PM," HE SAID.

CO-OPERATION ON NO-SMOKING LAW

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MOST MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC OBSERVE THE NO-SMOKING LAW VOLUNTARILY AND ENFORCEMENT IS NOT A MAJOR PROBLEM, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS SHELLEY LAU, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON TANG SIU-TONG, MRS LAU SAID 549 PERSONS WERE PROSECUTED FROM AUGUST 1992 TO MARCH 1994 FOR SMOKING IN STATUTORY NO-SMOKING AREAS.

OF THE 549 CASES, 326 OFFENDERS WERE CONVICTED AND AN AVERAGE FINE OF \$500 WAS IMPOSED.

SHE SAID PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATORS AND MANAGERS OF DESIGNATED NO-SMOKING AREAS HAD SUFFICIENT POWER TO ENFORCE COMPLIANCE WITH THE LAW IN PLACES UNDER THEIR CONTROL.

MRS LAU STRESSED THAT THE PROMULGATION OF STATUTORY NO-SMOKING AREAS ALSO HAD AN EDUCATIVE PURPOSE TO TEACH SMOKERS TO HAVE CONSIDERATION FOR OTHERS AND RESPECT THE CHOICE OF THE MAJORITY OF THE PUBLIC IN CHOOSING WHERE AND WHEN TO SMOKE.

SHE POINTED OUT THAT THIS RELIED ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SMOKE-FREE CULTURE AMONG BOTH SMOKERS AND NON-SMOKERS, WHICH LEGISLATIVE MEASURES ALONE COULD NOT ACHIEVE.

"SUITABLE PUBLICITY MEASURES ARE ESSENTIAL TO COMPLEMENT ENFORCEMENT OF LEGISLATION, AND WE ARE ORGANISING A SERIES OF PUBLIC EDUCATION EVENTS TO CONVEY THE MESSAGE," SHE SAID.

SHE ADDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO REVIEW MEASURES TO PREVENT OR DISCOURAGE SMOKING IN PUBLIC PLACES AND SEEK ADVICE FROM THE HONG KONG COUNCIL ON SMOKING AND HEALTH ON ANTI-SMOKING PUBLICITY.

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PLAN FOR 3,500 DECKHANDS TO ENTER HK

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THE GOVERNMENT IS LIAISING WITH CHINESE AUTHORITIES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SPECIAL SCHEME TO ALLOW UP TO 3,500 DECKHANDS FROM CHINA TO ENTER HONG KONG TO MEET THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF THE FISHING INDUSTRY.

THE FISHERMAN DECKHANDS MUST HAVE VALID TRAVEL DOCUMENTS, WILL BE HERE FOR THE PURPOSE OF HELPING TO UNLOAD THE CATCH AT FISH MARKETS AND CANNOT STAY FOR MORE THAN SEVEN DAYS ON EACH ENTRY.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR W K LAM, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HENRY TANG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"OUR AIM IS TO FINALISE THE ARRANGEMENTS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE," HE SAID.

/MR LAM .....

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MR LAM SAID ELIGIBLE VESSEL OPERATORS COULD APPLY FOR QUOTA FROM THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT.

HE EXPLAINED THAT THE DECKHANDS WERE NOT CLASSIFIED AS "IMPORTED LABOUR" AS THE BULK OF THEIR DUTIES WERE TO HELP WITH FISHING OUTSIDE HONG KONG WATERS AND THEIR CONTRACTS OF EMPLOYMENT WERE ENTERED INTO OUTSIDE HONG KONG.

MINIMUM WAGE LEVEL AND THE SCHEME HAS NO EFFECT ON THE GENERAL SCHEME ON LABOUR IMPORTATION.

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HK RESIDENTS DETAINED IN CHINA

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TWELVE HONG KONG RESIDENTS WHO WERE REPORTEDLY DETAINED IN CHINA AS A RESULT OF COMMERCIAL DISPUTES SOUGHT HELP FROM THE GOVERNMENT IN THE PAST THREE YEARS.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, IN A REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HUANG CHEN-YA IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

OF THE 10 CASES, ONLY TWO CASES, INVOLVING THREE DETAINEES, ARE OUTSTANDING; ALL OTHER DETAINEES HAVE BEEN RELEASED.

"THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES HAVE RESPONDED TO OUR REPRESENTATIONS IN ONLY ONE CASE."

HE NOTED THAT MOST OF THE CASES WERE RELATED TO STATE OR COLLECTIVE ENTERPRISES.

"WE HAVE MADE REPEATED REQUESTS TO THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES FOR CLARIFICATION OF THE LEGAL BASIS FOR THE DETENTIONS AND FOR ACCESS FOR THE DETAINEES' FAMILIES, LEGAL REPRESENTATIVES AND COLLEAGUES."

THE REPRESENTATIONS HAD BEEN MADE THROUGH THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE IN LONDON OR THROUGH THE BRITISH EMBASSY IN BEIJING, MR ASPREY SAID.

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VISITS BY REFUGEE CO-ORDINATOR TO DETENTION CENTRES

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THE REFUGEE CO-ORDINATOR VISITED THE VIETNAMESE DETENTION CENTRES ON EIGHT OCCASIONS OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHRISTINE LOH, MR ASPREY SAID: "APART FROM SOME BRIEF EXCHANGES WITH INDIVIDUAL DETAINEES, HE DID NOT SPEAK DIRECTLY TO THE VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS."

THE REFUGEE CO-ORDINATOR HAS VISITED THE WHITEHEAD DETENTION CENTRE FOUR TIMES AND ONCE EACH TO TAI A CHAU DETENTION CENTRE, HIGH ISLAND DETENTION CENTRE, KAI TAK DETENTION CENTRE AND VICTORIA PRISON.

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FATE OF VIETNAMESE IN TRANSIT CENTRE UNDECIDED

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THE ADMINISTRATION IS NEGOTIATING WITH THE PHILIPPINES AUTHORITIES FOR AN EXTENSION OF THE USE OF A REGIONAL TRANSIT CENTRE (RTC) FACILITIES BEYOND THE END OF THIS SEPTEMBER.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON TANG SIU-TONG.

"AT THIS JUNCTURE, IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO ASSUME THAT THESE NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE UNSUCCESSFUL," MR ASPREY SAID.

SINCE 1990, VIETNAMESE ASYLUM-SEEKERS IN HONG KONG WHO ARE GRANTED REFUGEE STATUS HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED TO THE RTC IN THE PHILIPPINES TO AWAIT RESETTLEMENT.

A RECENT REPORT IN A CHINESE PAPER NOTED THAT ABOUT 1,000 VIETNAMESE REFUGEES WERE EXPECTED TO BE SENT BACK TO HONG KONG UPON THE CLOSING DOWN OF A VIETNAMESE RTC IN THE PHILIPPINES IN LATE SEPTEMBER.

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 6, 1994

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NO PLAN TO SEND VIET REFUGEES HOME

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO PLANS TO REPATRIATE THE REMAINING VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG TO VIETNAM. NEVERTHELESS, THIS MAY BE AN OPTION TO BE EXPLORED IN THE FUTURE IF RESETTLEMENT PROVES FRUITLESS.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, IN A REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MARTIN BARROW IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"OUR EFFORTS ARE NOW DIRECTED AT SECURING THE RESETTLEMENT OF THE REMAINING REFUGEES," HE SAID.

AT A RECENT TECHNICAL MEETING ON THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION IN BANGKOK, IT WAS AGREED THAT THE RESETTLEMENT COUNTRIES SHOULD RE-EXAMINE THE VIETNAMESE REFUGEE CASELOAD IN HONG KONG. EMPHASIS WAS PLACED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF BURDEN-SHARING BY ALL THE RESETTLEMENT COUNTRIES.

MR ASPREY SAID IN THE WAKE OF THE MEETING, THE GOVERNMENT ASKED THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO CONSIDER TAKING SOME OF THE REFUGEES IN HONG KONG WHO DID NOT HAVE FAMILY LINKS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM.

"IN REPLY, WE HAVE BEEN ADVISED THAT THE UK HAS RESETTLED MORE THAN 2,000 REFUGEES FROM HONG KONG SINCE JUNE 1989, AND IN DOING SO HAS EXCEEDED ITS QUOTA AGREED AT THE SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INDO-CHINESE REFUGEES."

THE UK WILL CONTINUE TO ACCEPT REFUGEES FOR RESETTLEMENT ON A FAMILY REUNION BASIS, BUT BECAUSE ITS VIETNAMESE REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME HAS FORMALLY ENDED, IT CANNOT ACCEPT REFUGEES WHO WOULD REQUIRE RECEPTION FACILITIES ON ARRIVAL, MR ASPREY SAID.

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAS PRESSED OTHER RESETTLEMENT COUNTRIES TO ACCEPT THOSE VIETNAMESE REFUGEES REMAINING IN HONG KONG, HE ADDED.

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WHC TO RELIEVE TRAFFIC CONGESTION

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THE CROSS HARBOUR TUNNEL (CHT) HAS BEEN OPERATING BEYOND ITS DESIGN CAPACITY FOR SOME TIME, RESULTING IN TRAFFIC QUEUES IN ITS APPROACH ROADS PARTICULARLY DURING PEAK HOURS.

RELIEF WILL BE PROVIDED WITH THE OPENING OF THE WESTERN HARBOUR CROSSING (WHC) IN 1997.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR JOHN TELFORD, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MRS PEGGY LAM.

/MR TELFORD .....

MR TELFORD SAID: "TRAFFIC IN QUEEN'S ROAD EAST EASTBOUND IS FREQUENTLY CONGESTED ON WEEKDAYS DURING EVENING PEAK HOURS DUE TO THE TAILBACK OF VEHICLES HEADING FOR CHT."

HE NOTED THAT A NUMBER OF MEASURES WERE BEING TAKEN TO EASE CONGESTION AT THIS AREA, NAMELY INCLUDING THE CANAL ROAD FLYOVER TRAFFIC SIGNAL SYSTEM INTO THE AREA TRAFFIC CONTROL SYSTEM, WIDENING PART OF THE QUEEN'S ROAD EAST, EXTENDING THE EXISTING BUS ONLY LANE AND MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO LANE MARKINGS.

"THE SCHEMES WILL NOT SOLVE THE CONGESTION PROBLEM IN QUEEN'S ROAD EAST EASTBOUND, BUT THEY WILL IMPROVE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND REDUCE QUEUE LENGTHS TO SOME EXTENT.

"FURTHER TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SCHEMES WILL BE CONSIDERED."

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#### AIRPORT RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION BY MTRC LEGITIMATE

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LEGAL ADVICE HAS CONFIRMED THAT THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY CORPORATION (MTRC) HAS THE STATUTORY POWER TO CONSTRUCT AND OPERATE THE NEW AIRPORT RAILWAY, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR JOHN TELFORD, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON STEVEN POON KWOK-LIM, MR TELFORD SAID THE PREMISE THAT THE AIRPORT RAILWAY WAS NOT PART OF THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY WAS INCORRECT.

IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, HE SAID, THERE IS NO NEED TO AMEND THE MTRC ORDINANCE TO ENABLE THE MTRC TO CONSTRUCT AND TO OPERATE THE AIRPORT RAILWAY.

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#### LAWS REGULATING DEMONSTRATIONS AT SEA TO BE REVIEWED

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THE ADMINISTRATION IS REVIEWING EXISTING LEGISLATION TO ENSURE THAT ADEQUATE PROVISIONS ARE IN PLACE FOR PROPER REGULATION OF DEMONSTRATION CONDUCTED BY VESSELS IN THE HARBOUR.

THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MR GORDON SIU, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MRS MIRIAM LAU.

HE SAID THIS WAS TO BALANCE THE RIGHT OF INDIVIDUALS TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AGAINST THE INTEREST OF ALL THOSE WHO USED HONG KONG'S VERY BUSY HARBOUR.

MR SIU SAID THE DEMONSTRATION BY FISHERMEN IN THE VICTORIA HARBOUR ON JUNE 14 WAS CONDUCTED IN AN ORDERLY AND RESPONSIBLE MANNER, CAUSING ONLY TEMPORARY DELAY TO TRAFFIC AND HAD NOT LED TO ANY COLLISION OF VESSELS.

"HOWEVER, GIVEN THE BUSY MARINE TRAFFIC IN THE HARBOUR, THE ADMINISTRATION IS CONCERNED THAT ANY PARADE OR VESSELS WOULD INEVITABLY CAUSE INCONVENIENCE TO NORMAL MARINE ACTIVITIES AND POSE RISKS TO THE MOVEMENT OF VESSELS."

THE DIRECTOR OF MARINE IMPLEMENTED MEASURES TO MINIMISE DISRUPTION TO NORMAL MARINE TRAFFIC AND ENSURE THAT THE SAFETY OF OTHERS USING THE HARBOUR WOULD NOT BE JEOPARDISED. THE MEASURES INCLUDED:

- \* NOTIFYING IN ADVANCE ALL PORT USERS, INCLUDING FERRY AND OTHER SHIP OPERATORS OF THE PROTEST;
- \* DEPLOYING PATROL LAUNCHES TOGETHER WITH THE MARINE POLICE TO ESCORT THE PROCESSION OF VESSELS; AND
- \* MAINTAINING CLOSE MONITORING AND SURVEILLANCE OF THE HARBOUR THROUGH THE VESSEL TRAFFIC CENTRE.

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LAND AUCTION NEGATIVE ASSUMPTIONS NOT WELL-FOUNDED

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A GOOD RANGE OF SITES BY LOCATION, SIZE, TYPE OF USE AND PREMIUM AMOUNT HAS BEEN SOLD IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, INDICATING THAT THE NEGATIVE ASSUMPTIONS THAT ONLY A DOZEN OR SO REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS HAVE THE FINANCIAL CAPABILITY TO BID IN LAND AUCTIONS ARE NOT WELL-FOUNDED.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON EMILY LAU IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

HOWEVER, HE SAID, CONSIDERATION CAN BE GIVEN TO THE SCOPE FOR PUTTING UP MORE SMALL SITES FOR AUCTION.

"THIS IS AMONG THE ISSUES BEING LOOKED AT BY THE THREE-MEMBER PANEL WHICH HAS BEEN INVITED TO REVIEW THE AUCTION SYSTEM," HE SAID.

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PURCHASERS OF YUET WU VILLA SATISFIED

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THE PURCHASERS OF YUET WU VILLA ARE NOW GENERALLY SATISFIED SINCE TAKING OVER THEIR FLATS FROM JUNE 20 THIS YEAR ONWARDS, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ZACHARY WONG, MR EASON SAID THE DEFECTS AT YUET WU VILLA WERE MINOR ONES COMMONLY FOUND IN NEWLY COMPLETED BUILDING PROJECTS AND THEY HAD ALL BEEN MADE GOOD BY THE DEVELOPER.

HE SAID: "NORMALLY THE COMPLETION OF A BUILDING PROJECT IS FOLLOWED BY AN INSPECTION PERIOD DURING WHICH ANY DEFECTS ARE FOUND AND MADE GOOD BEFORE OCCUPATION.

"IN MOST PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION SCHEME (PSPS) PROJECTS THE PERIOD IS THREE TO FOUR MONTHS; BUT WITH YUET WU VILLA IT WAS ABOUT SIX MONTHS BECAUSE, WITH NEARLY 4,000 FLATS, IT IS ONE OF THE LARGEST PSPS PROJECTS TO DATE.

"SOME PURCHASERS OF YUET WU VILLA PREMISES EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER THE TIME TAKEN TO REACH COMPLETION AND WERE WORRIED THAT THIS MIGHT HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE QUALITY OF BUILDING WORKS.

"HOUSING DEPARTMENT STAFF AND THE DEVELOPER HAVE MET THE PURCHASERS AND EXPLAINED THE SITUATION TO THEM."

ON THE MONITORING OF THE PSPS ESTATE CONSTRUCTION, MR EASON SAID, THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING APPOINTED A PRIVATE SECTOR SURVEYOR TO MONITOR AND OVERSEE PSPS PROJECTS AND REPORT ON PROGRESS AND THE DEVELOPER'S PERFORMANCE.

THE SURVEYOR ALSO CHECKS, ON BEHALF OF THE DIRECTOR, THAT DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION PROPOSALS IN TENDER SUBMISSIONS COMPLY WITH THE CONDITIONS OF SALE.

ON THE BASIS OF SURVEYOR'S ADVICE, THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING WILL ADVISE THE DIRECTOR OF LANDS WHETHER THE FLATS ARE COMPLETE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONDITIONS OF SALE.

LEGCO HOLDS SESSION'S LAST SITTING

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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ENDED ITS LAST SITTING OF THE CURRENT SESSION TODAY (THURSDAY) AFTER 11 HOURS OF MEETING.

DURING THE SITTING, A MOTION MOVED BY THE HON MICHAEL HO ON LAND SUPPLY AND PROPERTY PRICES WAS CARRIED IN A DEBATE OF ABOUT AN HOUR.

ANOTHER MOTION MOVED BY THE HON MAN SAI-CHEONG SEEKING THE ALLOCATION OF CABLE TELEVISION CHANNELS FOR PUBLIC TELEVISION BROADCASTING WAS ALSO PASSED.

THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, AND THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE, MRS RACHEL CARTLAND, REPLIED FOR THE GOVERNMENT RESPECTIVELY.

TWO OTHER MOTIONS PROPOSED BY THE HON MRS ELSIE TU TO AMEND THE STANDING ORDERS OF THE COUNCIL WERE ALSO PASSED.

MEANWHILE, TWO MOTIONS MOVED BY THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES, MR TAM WING-PONG, RELATING TO THE COMPANIES ORDINANCE AND THE REGISTERED TRUSTEES INCORPORATION ORDINANCE WERE ENDORSED.

ANOTHER MOTION MOVED BY THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS SHELLEY LAU, ON THE TRAFFIC ACCIDENT VICTIMS (ASSISTANCE FUND) ORDINANCE WAS ALSO PASSED.

TWO PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS - THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES BILL AND THE PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994 - WERE INTRODUCED INTO THE COUNCIL FOR FIRST AND SECOND READINGS RESPECTIVELY BY THE HON ANNA WU AND THE HON PETER WONG.

DEBATE ON THESE TWO PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS AND FIVE OTHER BILLS, ALSO INTRODUCED FOR FIRST AND SECOND READINGS, WERE ADJOURNED.

ANOTHER 24 BILLS WERE PASSED, 11 WITH AMENDMENTS.