



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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COMMUNITY FACES CHOICE IN WAR ON TRIADS

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HONG KONG AS A COMMUNITY WOULD HAVE TO DECIDE WHETHER SOME RESTRICTIONS ON EXISTING FREEDOMS WERE A PRICE WORTH PAYING TOWARDS STRENGTHENING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE LAW SO AS TO BETTER DEAL WITH THE INSIDIOUS THREAT OF TRIADS TO SOCIETY, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

TABLING THE DISCUSSION DOCUMENT +OPTIONS FOR CHANGES IN THE LAW AND IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE LAW TO COUNTER THE TRIAD PROBLEM,+ SIR DAVID SAID IT SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN THAT THESE RESTRICTIONS ON CIVIL LIBERTIES WOULD APPLY TO PEOPLE WHO HAD CHOSEN TO BULLY, EXTORT AND TO INTIMIDATE LAW-ABIDING MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

+THE LAW-ABIDING HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR FROM THE LAW: LET THE CRIMINAL BEWARE,+ HE ADDED.

SIR DAVID SAID THERE WAS NO DOUBT ABOUT THE STRENGTH OF COMMUNITY CONCERN ABOUT TRIADS AND OTHER GANGS.

+AMONG THESE CONCERNS PERHAPS MOST WORRYING IS THE FEAR THAT PARENTS HAVE, IN SOME RESIDENTIAL AREAS, IN ALLOWING THEIR CHILDREN TO GO OUT TO PLAY WITHOUT SUPERVISION.

+IN THESE PLACES, THREATS, ABUSE, INTIMIDATION AND DEMANDS FOR MONEY ARE ALL TOO FAMILIAR.+

THE CHIEF SECRETARY SAID TRIADS WERE ALSO INVOLVED IN ORGANISED CRIME: IN BLACKMAIL; IN GAMBLING; IN PROSTITUTION; IN DRUG TRAFFICKING; AND IN CRIMINAL MONOPOLIES.

THEY INCLUDED GROUPS OF PETTY CRIMINALS WHO BULLIED AND INTIMIDATED LAW-ABIDING CITIZENS, HE ADDED.

WHILE THE DETAIL OF POLICE ORGANISATION AND OPERATIONS COULD NOT BE REVEALED, FOR OBVIOUS REASONS, +BUT OVER MANY YEARS THE POLICE HAVE MOUNTED A CONTINUING ATTACK AGAINST TRIADS.+

+AS A RESULT WE NOW HAVE MORE INTELLIGENCE ABOUT THEM, THE STRUCTURE OF THEIR ORGANISATION AND THEIR ACTIVITIES.

+BECAUSE OF THIS ACCUMULATED KNOWLEDGE THEY MAY HAVE LOST SOME OF THEIR SECRET AND HIDDEN MENACE BUT, LET US BE IN NO DOUBT, THEY ARE A PERVASIVE, CANCEROUS GROWTH IN OUR SOCIETY,+ SIR DAVID STRESSED.

ELABORATING ON THIS POINT IN THE DOCUMENT, WHICH HAD BEEN PREPARED BY THE WORKING GROUP ON GANGS OF THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE, SIR DAVID SAID THERE WAS NO ONE PERSON OR GROUP OF PERSONS CONTROLLING ALL TRIAD SOCIETIES.

/SOME INDIVIDUAL

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SOME INDIVIDUAL SOCIETIES WERE WELL CONTROLLED AND STRUCTURED WHILE OTHERS WERE FRAGMENTED AND MORE LOOSELY CONTROLLED.

+THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT IF THE POLICE ARE TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN ELIMINATING TRIADS, CHANGES TO THE WAY RELEVANT PARTS OF THE LAW ARE ADMINISTERED AND TO PARTS OF THE LAW ITSELF MUST BE CONSIDERED AND GIVEN CAREFUL EXAMINATION AND EVALUATION BY US AS A COMMUNITY,+ HE SAID.

SIR DAVID SAID THAT THE WORKING GROUP, WHICH INCLUDED MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC, HAD ALSO BEEN CONSIDERING HOW THE LAW MIGHT BE CHANGED TO STRENGTHEN THE ATTACK AGAINST TRIADS.

+THE RESULTS ARE THE OPTIONS IN THIS DOCUMENT. THEY ARE DESIGNED TO COVER THE FULL SPECTRUM OF TRIAD ACTIVITY. THEY RANGE FROM THE SIMPLE AND STRAIGHT-FORWARD TO THE HARSH AND COMPLEX.

+THERE ARE OPTIONS BETTER TO PROTECT THE GENERAL PUBLIC TO PREVENT THE OVERT DISPLAY OF TRIAD POWER; TO ATTACK GANGS WHICH SEEK TO INTIMIDATE PEOPLE; TO TIGHTEN THE LEGISLATION DEALING WITH TRIAD SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP; AND TO LIMIT THE MOVEMENT OF CONVICTED TRIAD MEMBERS AND THEIR ACCESS TO CERTAIN FACILITIES,+ SIR DAVID SAID.

TO BE EFFECTIVE, HE ADDED, LAWS MUST HAVE THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY AND PEOPLE MUST BE PREPARED TO COME FORWARD TO REPORT CRIME AND TO ACT AS WITNESSES.

WITHOUT SUCH CO-OPERATION, THE POLICE WERE GREATLY HAMPERED IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ENFORCE THE LAW AND TO REDUCE CRIME.

SIR DAVID SAID THAT TO DETERMINE WHICH OF THE OPTIONS HAD PUBLIC SUPPORT, IT WAS PROPOSED THAT THREE MONTHS BE ALLOWED FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION.

HE SAID ALL COMMENTS RECEIVED AND VIEWS EXPRESSED WOULD BE COLLECTED AND COLLATED BY THE SECRETARIAT OF THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE. THESE WOULD BE SUMMARISED AND DETAILED PROPOSALS MADE TO THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL FOLLOWING WHICH THERE WOULD BE A PUBLIC STATEMENT OF THE WAY FORWARD.

+SPEED OF IMPLEMENTATION WILL DEPEND UPON THE NATURE OF ANY PARTICULAR RECOMMENDATION. BUT THE GOVERNMENT WILL MOVE AS QUICKLY AS IT CAN,+ HE ADDED.

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MTRC MAINTAINS ITS ENVIABLE RECORD
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THE FINAL SECTION OF THE ISLAND LINE FROM ADMIRALTY TO SHEUNG WAN WILL OPEN ON MAY 23, 1986, SOME FOUR MONTHS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE AND AT A COST EXPECTED TO BE MORE THAN \$500 MILLION BELOW BUDGET, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR JOHN BREMRIDGE, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

TABLING THE ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS OF THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY CORPORATION IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, SIR JOHN SAID THAT THIS PRESERVED THE CORPORATION'S ENVIABLE RECORD OF BUILDING ITS RAILWAY ON OR AHEAD OF TIME AND WITHIN BUDGET.

HE SAID THAT THE OPENING OF THE ISLAND LINE IN MAY 1985 HAD ATTRACTED NEARLY 300 000 ADDITIONAL PASSENGERS TO THE MTR PER DAY.

+THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF PASSENGERS CARRIED ON EACH WEEKDAY WAS 1 454 000, AN INCREASE OF 24 PER CENT OVER THE NUMBER CARRIED IN DECEMBER 1984,+ HE SAID.

GIVING A FURTHER BREAKDOWN OF STATISTICS FOR LAST YEAR, SIR JOHN SAID THE RAILWAY CARRIED A TOTAL OF 462 MILLION PASSENGERS IN 1985, AN INCREASE OF MORE THAN 12 PER CENT OVER 1984= AND FARE REVENUE FOR THE YEAR TOTALLED \$1 300 MILLION, AN INCREASE OF 22 PER CENT OVER 1984.

OTHER SOURCES OF REVENUE, FROM ADVERTISING, PROPERTY AND STATION KIOSK RENTALS AND ESTATE MANAGEMENT FEES INCREASED BY 35 PER CENT TO \$140 MILLION, HE ADDED.

SIR JOHN SAID THAT OPERATING PROFIT FOR 1984 BEFORE DEPRECIATION WAS \$789 MILLION (AN INCREASE OF 22 PER CENT) AND AFTER DEPRECIATION TOTALLED \$372 MILLION, AN INCREASE OF 17 PER CENT.

THE RATIO OF OPERATING PROFIT TO REVENUE WAS 55 PER CENT BEFORE DEPRECIATION, HE ADDED.

+WITH THE CHARGING OF INTEREST AND FINANCE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE ISLAND LINE TO THE PROFIT AND LOSS ACCOUNT, INTEREST AND FINANCE CHARGES INCREASED BY 34 PER CENT OVER 1984 TO \$1 160 MILLION,+ SIR JOHN SAID.

+AFTER INTEREST AND FINANCE CHARGES, THE CORPORATION'S LOSS WAS \$788 MILLION, AN INCREASE OF \$243 MILLION OR 45 PER CENT OVER 1984.+

TURNING TO GOVERNMENT'S CASH INJECTION OF \$1 500 MILLION ON DECEMBER 31 LAST YEAR, SIR JOHN SAID THE CORPORATION'S ISSUED SHARE CAPITAL TOTALLED \$6 956 MILLION, COMPARED WITH \$5 212 MILLION A YEAR EARLIER.

/THE CORPORATION,

THE CORPORATION, HE ADDED, WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE CAPITAL RESTRUCTURING PROGRAMME APPROVED BY THE FINANCE COMMITTEE WOULD ENABLE IT TO SERVICE AND TO REPAY STEADILY ITS LARGE DEBTS.

SIR JOHN SAID THAT CONSTRUCTION WORK ON THE EASTERN HARBOUR CROSSING WAS SCHEDULED TO START IN MID-1986.

+INCREMENTAL REVENUES EARNED BY THE CORPORATION FROM OPERATING THIS EXTENSION TO ITS SYSTEM ARE EXPECTED IN EACH YEAR TO EXCEED THE SUM OF FIXED SEMI-ANNUAL PAYMENTS TO BE MADE BY THE CORPORATION AND THE OPERATING COSTS,+ HE ADDED.

SUMMING UP, SIR JOHN SAID THAT DURING THE PAST YEAR, THE MTR SYSTEM OPERATED EFFICIENTLY, AND HAD BECOME AN INTEGRAL AND ESSENTIAL PART OF HONG KONG'S PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE.

+IN FACT A HONG KONG WITHOUT THE MTR IS INCONCEIVABLE.+

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BILL SEEKS FREEDOM TO NAME UNSCRUPULOUS RETAILERS
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THE MEDIA WOULD BE FREE TO MENTION RETAILERS NAMED BY THE CONSUMER COUNCIL WITHOUT FEAR OF BEING HELD LIABLE FOR DEFAMATION, SO LONG AS THE REPORTS WERE FAIR AND ACCURATE AND NOT MOTIVATED BY MALICE, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON MICHAEL THOMAS, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE DEFAMATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986, MR THOMAS SAID IF A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS OF MALPRACTICE DIRECTED TOWARDS A PARTICULAR SHOP WERE SUBSTANTIATED AFTER CONSUMER COUNCIL INVESTIGATION, THE COUNCIL MIGHT CHOOSE TO MAKE PUBLIC THE NAME OF THOSE RETAILERS.

HOWEVER, HE SAID, NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS AND TELEVISION AND RADIO STATIONS WERE UNWILLING TO PUBLISH THESE NAMES IN CASE THEY WERE IMMEDIATELY EMBROILED IN ACTIONS FOR DEFAMATION.

+THIS HAS LARGELY DEFEATED THE COUNCIL'S ATTEMPTS TO WARN CONSUMERS AGAINST UNETHICAL RETAILERS,+ HE SAID.

MR THOMAS POINTED OUT THAT WHILE THE CONSUMER COUNCIL COULD RESIST CLAIMS FOR LIBEL BY RELYING UPON THE DEFENCES OF JUSTIFICATION AND QUALIFIED PRIVILEGE, USING THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THE MATTERS THEY HAD INVESTIGATED, THE MEDIA TOOK THE RISK OF DEFAMING RETAILERS WITHOUT BEING IN A POSITION TO INVESTIGATE THOSE COMPLAINTS AND WEIGH THE EVIDENCE.

IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE THE PUBLICATION OF REPORTS MADE BY THE CONSUMER COUNCIL, HE SAID, THE BILL SOUGHT TO AMEND THE SCHEDULE TO THE DEFAMATION ORDINANCE SO THAT REPORTS OF THE COUNCIL'S ANNOUNCEMENTS ENJOYED THE PROTECTION OF THE DEFENCE OF QUALIFIED PRIVILEGE UNDER SECTION 14 OF THAT ORDINANCE.

HE ALSO SAID THE CONSUMER COUNCIL HAD BEEN CONSULTED ON THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT AND STRONGLY SUPPORTED THE PROPOSAL.

THE BILL ALSO SOUGHT TO CLARIFY ANOTHER AREA OF THE LAW, MR THOMAS SAID.

THE DEFAMATION ORDINANCE AT PRESENT PREVENTED DEFAMATORY STATEMENTS MADE BY CANDIDATES IN ELECTIONS TO THE URBAN COUNCIL OR TO THE REGIONAL COUNCIL BEING GIVEN THE BENEFIT OF THE DEFENCE OF QUALIFIED PRIVILEGE, HE SAID.

+TO ENSURE THAT ALL PUBLIC AND CIVIC ELECTIONS HELD IN HONG KONG ARE TREATED EQUALLY, THIS BILL EXTENDS THE RELEVANT SECTION OF THE DEFAMATION ORDINANCE TO DEFAMATORY STATEMENTS MADE BY CANDIDATES IN ELECTIONS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND TO DISTRICT BOARDS.

+CANDIDATES WILL, OF COURSE, BE ABLE TO DEFEAT CLAIMS FOR DEFAMATION IN RESPECT OF THEIR ELECTIONEERING STATEMENTS IF THEY CAN SHOW THAT THE STATEMENTS MADE WERE TRUE AND ACCURATE INSOFAR AS THEY ARE MATTERS OF FACT AND FAIR AND HONEST INSOFAR AS THEY ARE COMMENT ON MATTERS OF PUBLIC INTEREST.

+THESE ARE THE ORDINARY DEFENCES OF JUSTIFICATION AND FAIR COMMENT,+ HE SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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BILL CONTAINS NEW SECTION ON PROFITS TAX
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THE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT)(NO. 2) BILL 1986 SEEKS TO GIVE LEGISLATIVE EFFECT TO THE CONCESSIONS ON PROFITS TAX AND PERSONAL TAXATION PROPOSED IN THE 1986-87 BUDGET, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR JOHN BREMRIDGE, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, SIR JOHN EXPLAINED THAT ON PROFITS TAX, +THE BILL REPEALS THE AMENDMENTS MADE IN 1984 TO THE INLAND REVENUE ORDINANCE WHICH SOUGHT TO MAKE SOME INTEREST EARNED ON OFFSHORE DEPOSITS CHARGEABLE TO PROFITS TAX.+

/HE SAID

HE SAID THE NEW PROVISIONS WERE IN THE MAIN IDENTICAL TO THOSE EXISTING PRIOR TO THE 1984 AMENDMENTS.

BUT THE OPPORTUNITY HAD BEEN TAKEN TO ADD A NEW SECTION +TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT FOR FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS GAINS OR PROFITS ON TRANSACTIONS IN CERTIFICATES OF DEPOSIT AND BILLS OF EXCHANGE WILL CONTINUE TO BE CHARGEABLE NOTWITHSTANDING THE FACT THAT THE TRANSACTION MAY HAVE TAKEN PLACE OUTSIDE HONG KONG,+ HE SAID.

+THE AMENDMENTS TAKE EFFECT FROM APRIL 1, 1986 AND THE ESTIMATED COST TO THE REVENUE IS ABOUT \$200 MILLION IN 1986-87 AND \$150 MILLION PER ANNUM THEREAFTER.+

AS REGARDS PERSONAL TAXATION, TWO CONCESSIONS HAD BEEN PROPOSED IN THE BUDGET, HE SAID. +FIRSTLY: TO INCREASE THE ADDITIONAL PERSONAL ALLOWANCE FROM \$7 500 TO \$8 500 FOR SINGLE PERSONS AND FROM \$17 000 TO \$19 000 FOR MARRIED PERSONS, THEREBY INCREASING TOTAL PERSONAL ALLOWANCES TO \$29 000 FOR A SINGLE PERSON AND \$60 000 FOR A MARRIED COUPLE.+

+SECONDLY: TO INCREASE THE BASIC DEPENDENT PARENT ALLOWANCE FROM \$8 000 TO \$9 000, THEREBY BRINGING THE TOTAL ALLOWANCE AVAILABLE IN RESPECT OF A DEPENDENT PARENT LIVING WITH THE TAXPAYER TO \$12 000.+

SIR JOHN NOTED THAT ALTHOUGH THESE CONCESSIONS DID NOT GO FURTHER, THEY HAD GENERALLY BEEN SEEN AS REASONABLE, BOTH BY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL AND BY THE PUBLIC.

+IN FACT THEY SHOULD BENEFIT OVER 600 000 PERSONS EITHER BY REMOVING OR REDUCING THEIR LIABILITY TO SALARIES TAX AS WELL AS A FURTHER 30 000 WHO ELECT TO BE ASSESSED UNDER PERSONAL ASSESSMENT,+ HE SAID.

A TRANSITIONAL PROVISION WAS ALSO INCLUDED IN THE BILL TO ENSURE THAT PROVISIONAL SALARIES TAX FOR THE YEAR OF ASSESSMENT COMMENCING ON APRIL 1, 1986 IS BASED UPON THE NEW ALLOWANCES.

+THE COST TO REVENUE OF THE TWO MEASURES IS ESTIMATED AT \$127 MILLION IN 1986-87 AND \$180 MILLION PER ANNUM THEREAFTER,+ SIR JOHN ADDED.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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ANNUAL LICENSING FEES FOR BANKS INCREASED
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A BILL WHICH PROVIDES FOR INCREASES IN THE ANNUAL LICENSING OF BANKS, BRANCHES AND LOCAL AND OVERSEAS OFFICES DESCRIBED IN THE 1986 BUDGET SPEECH, WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BANKING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR JOHN BREMRIDGE, SAID THE INCREASES HAD COME INTO EFFECT ON APRIL 1 AS A RESULT OF AN ORDER SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR UNDER THE PUBLIC REVENUE PROTECTION ORDINANCE.

+THE ADDITIONAL REVENUE YIELD FROM THE INCREASED FEES FOR 1986-87 IS ESTIMATED TO BE \$12.5 MILLION,+ SIR JOHN SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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FEE REVISION FOR DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANY LICENCES
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A BILL WHICH PROVIDES FOR INCREASES IN THE ANNUAL LICENSING AND REGISTRATION OF DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES, THEIR BRANCHES AND OVERSEAS OFFICES - WHICH HAD BEEN DESCRIBED IN THE 1986 BUDGET SPEECH - WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR JOHN BREMRIDGE, SAID THE REVISED RATES HAD COME INTO EFFECT ON APRIL 1 AS A RESULT OF AN ORDER SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR UNDER THE PUBLIC REVENUE PROTECTION ORDINANCE.

+THE ADDITIONAL REVENUE YIELD FROM THE INCREASED FEES FOR 1986-87 IS ESTIMATED TO BE \$2.5 MILLION,+ HE SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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HIGHER FEES WILL YIELD \$40 MILLION
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A BILL PROVIDING FOR INCREASED FEES ON THE ANNUAL REGISTRATION OF MOTOR VEHICLES, PROVISIONAL AND FULL DRIVING LICENCES AND DRIVING TESTS WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN MOVING THE ROAD TRAFFIC (DRIVING LICENCES REGULATIONS AND REGISTRATION AND LICENSING OF VEHICLES REGULATIONS) (AMENDMENTS) BILL 1986, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR JOHN BREMRIDGE, SAID THE REVISED RATES HAD COME INTO EFFECT ON FEBRUARY 26 UNDER A PUBLIC REVENUE PROTECTION ORDER.

HE SAID THE INCREASES WERE ESTIMATED TO YIELD \$40 MILLION IN 1986-87.

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EXCLUSION FROM STAMP DUTY CHARGE SOUGHT
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A BILL SEEKING TO EXCLUDE FROM THE CHARGE TO STAMP DUTY BEARER INSTRUMENTS WHICH ARE IN RESPECT OF LOAN CAPITAL AND OF UNITS IN UNIT TRUSTS INVESTING ONLY IN SUCH INSTRUMENTS WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE STAMP DUTY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR JOHN BREMRIDGE SAID THE BILL WOULD GIVE LEGISLATIVE EFFECT TO THE PROPOSAL IN THIS YEAR'S BUDGET WITH EFFECT FROM APRIL 1 THIS YEAR.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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EXTENSION OF ESTATE DUTY EXEMPTION SOUGHT
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A BILL PROPOSING TO EXTEND EXEMPTION FROM ESTATE DUTY IN RESPECT OF THE PRINCIPAL MATRIMONIAL HOME TO ALL CASES IN WHICH THE DECEASED DIED INTESTATE, LEAVING A SPOUSE, WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE ESTATE DUTY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR JOHN BREMRIDGE, SAID THIS EXTENSION PROPOSAL WAS CONTAINED IN HIS 1986 BUDGET SPEECH AND THE BILL WAS INTENDED TO GIVE IT LEGISLATIVE EFFECT.

+THE COST TO REVENUE IS ESTIMATED AT \$8 MILLION PER ANNUM,+ HE SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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DUTY DIFFERENTIAL REDUCED FURTHER
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THE DUTY DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN UNMANUFACTURED TOBACCO AND IMPORTED MANUFACTURED CIGARETTES WAS LAST YEAR REDUCED TO ITS LOWEST LEVEL SINCE IT WAS INTRODUCED IN 1949, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR JOHN BREMRIDGE, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SIR JOHN WAS MOVING A RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR INCREASES IN EXISTING DUTIES ON TOBACCO AND HYDROCARBON OILS AS PUT FORWARD IN HIS BUDGET ON FEBRUARY 26, WHEN THE INCREASES TOOK EFFECT UNDER A PUBLIC REVENUE PROTECTION ORDER.

+THIS YEAR'S PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE DUTY ON RAW TOBACCO WILL REDUCE THE DIFFERENTIAL FURTHER,+ HE SAID. +THE INCREASED DUTIES ON HYDROCARBON OILS ARE INTENDED TO MAINTAIN THE YIELD IN REAL TERM.+

THE PROPOSALS WERE EXPECTED TO PRODUCE ADDITIONAL REVENUE IN 1986-87 OF \$55 MILLION FROM TOBACCO AND \$50 MILLION FROM HYDROCARBON OILS, HE ADDED.

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\$68.5 MILLION SPENT ON TREATING DRUG ADDICTS
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THE GOVERNMENT SPENT \$68.5 MILLION ON THE TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF DRUG ADDICTS IN 1985/86 AND ITS EFFORTS HAVE PROVED TO BE REASONABLY SUCCESSFUL IN THE SHORT TERM, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON MICHAEL THOMAS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LEE YU-TAI, MR THOMAS SAID: +THERE ARE, ON AVERAGE, OVER 14 500 PERSONS EACH DAY RECEIVING SOME FORM OF TREATMENT, REHABILITATION AND AFTER-CARE. THIS FIGURE REPRESENTS 38 PER CENT OF KNOWN ACTIVE DRUG ADDICTS.

+BY INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS, IT IS A VERY HIGH PROPORTION,+ HE SAID.

MR THOMAS SAID THAT IN THE LONG TERM HEROIN ADDICTION WAS A CHRONIC CONDITION AND MANY OF THOSE WHO BENEFITTED FROM TREATMENT AND CEASED TO TAKE DRUGS MIGHT AT SOME TIME RELAPSE AND RESORT TO THEM AGAIN.

THE MONEY ALLOCATED TO THE TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF DRUG ADDICTS WAS \$48.2 MILLION IN 1983-84 AND \$63.7 MILLION IN 1984-85.

/MR THOMAS

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MR THOMAS SAID \$1.5 MILLION WAS ALLOCATED IN EACH YEAR FROM 1983-84 TO 1985-86 FOR ANTI-NARCOTICS PUBLICITY.

ON MANPOWER RESOURCES IN THIS FIELD, HE SAID ABOUT 1 000 PERSONS HAD BEEN EMPLOYED IN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND IN SUBVENTED VOLUNTARY AGENCIES IN EACH OF THE PAST THREE YEARS.

IN THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR, MR THOMAS SAID MUCH HELP WAS OBTAINED FROM THE IN-PATIENT PROGRAMME OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE AID AND REHABILITATION OF DRUG ABUSERS, AND THE VOLUNTARY OUT-PATIENT METHADONE PROGRAMME PROVIDED BY THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT.

THESE EFFORTS WERE SUPPLEMENTED BY THE COMPULSORY TREATMENT PROGRAMME RUN BY THE CORRECTIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT.

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IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY DENTAL TREATMENT * * * * *

WHILE THE WAITING TIME FOR CIVIL SERVANTS SEEKING ROUTINE DENTAL SERVICES VARIES BETWEEN THREE AND 23 MONTHS WITH AN AVERAGE OF 8.8 MONTHS, NO WAITING IS REQUIRED FOR EMERGENCY TREATMENT, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON POON CHI-FAI, SIR DAVID SAID: +BY ROUTINE DENTAL SERVICES, I MEAN NON-EMERGENCY SERVICES, SUCH AS REGULAR DENTAL CHECK-UPS, SCALING, FILLING AND THE FIXING OF DENTURES.+

HE POINTED OUT THAT IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS, 13 ADDITIONAL DENTAL CHAIRS HAD BEEN PROVIDED IN NEW DENTAL CLINICS, 21 NEW DENTAL CHAIRS WOULD BE AVAILABLE THIS YEAR AND ANOTHER 78 DENTAL CHAIRS WOULD BE ADDED IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

EVENING DENTAL CLINICS HAD ALSO BEEN INTRODUCED, HE SAID SINCE 1977, 10 DENTAL CHAIRS HAD BEEN PROVIDED, AND ANOTHER TWO DENTAL CHAIRS WOULD BE ADDED THIS YEAR.

+SINCE MARCH 1984 CIVIL SERVANTS ARE REQUESTED TO CONFIRM APPOINTMENTS BY TELEPHONE ONE MONTH BEFORE THEY ARE DUE.

+AS A RESULT ABOUT 1 300 UNCONFIRMED APPOINTMENTS HAVE BEEN REALLOCATED TO OTHER PATIENTS WHO REQUIRED EARLIER ATTENTION,+ SIR DAVID SAID.

HE SAID CIVIL SERVANTS MIGHT NOW OBTAIN INFORMATION ON WAITING TIMES AT DIFFERENT DENTAL CLINICS AND MAKE APPOINTMENTS AT ANY CLINIC WHERE THERE WAS A SHORTER WAITING TIME.

+MOREOVER, FOR THOSE WHO WISH, THERE ARE EVENING CLINICS AT WHICH THE WAITING TIME IS BETWEEN THREE AND NINE MONTHS+, HE NOTED.

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VACATION OF BARRACKS NO PROBLEM
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THE TEMPORARY USAGE OF MOST OF THE BUILDINGS IN THE FORMER VICTORIA BARRACKS, INCLUDING CASSELS BLOCK, HAS BEEN ARRANGED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO ALLOW THEIR VACATION AT SIX MONTHS' NOTICE, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON NICKY CHAN, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN, WHO NOTED THAT IT HAD BEEN ALMOST SEVEN YEARS SINCE THE ARMED FORCES HAD VACATED THE BARRACKS SITE TO ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO DEVELOP PART OF IT FOR LEISURE.

MR CHAN SAID THE URBAN COUNCIL'S CONSULTANTS HAD SUBMITTED A PROGRAMME FOR THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE LEISURE AND RECREATION AREA WHICH ENVISAGED THAT WORK WOULD START IN MID-1988.

+I SEE LITTLE PROBLEM IN VACATING THE VARIOUS BUILDINGS AFFECTED TO MEET THIS PROGRAMME DATE,+ HE SAID.

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MORE INDUSTRIAL LOTS LEASED
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FIFTEEN LOTS TOTALLING 9.2 HECTARES WERE LEASED AT THE TAI PO INDUSTRIAL ESTATE IN 1985-86, THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, THE HON ERIC HO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THESE FIGURES COMPARED WITH FOUR LOTS TOTALLING 2.4 HECTARES IN 1984-85, AND THREE LEASES INVOLVING 1.7 HECTARES IN 1983-84.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LIU LIT-FOR, MR HO POINTED OUT THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT, CONSTRUCTION, MARKETING, MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL OF THE TAI PO INDUSTRIAL ESTATE WAS VESTED IN THE HONG KONG INDUSTRIAL ESTATES CORPORATION.

HE ADDED: +THE EXISTENCE OF THE CORPORATION'S INDUSTRIAL ESTATES HAS BEEN GIVEN WIDE GENERAL PUBLICITY, LOCALLY AND OVERSEAS, BY BOTH THE CORPORATION AND THE INDUSTRIAL PROMOTION DIVISION OF THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT.

+DETAILED INFORMATION ON CONDITIONS IN THE ESTATES AND THE CRITERIA FOR ENTRY IS PROVIDED, WHETHER TO ORGANISATIONS OR INDIVIDUAL FIRMS, WHENEVER THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT INTEREST IN OBTAINING A SITE MAY BE STIMULATED.+

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 1986

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POLICY ON MACAU VISITORS BEING REVISED

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THE GOVERNMENT IS IN THE LAST STAGES OF DRAWING UP A SCHEME WHICH WILL ENABLE SOME EX-CHINA MACAU RESIDENTS TO ENTER HONG KONG FOR GENUINE SHORT-TERM VISITS, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON MICHAEL THOMAS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON RITA FAN, MR THOMAS SAID THE RATIONALE FOR DEBARRING THESE MACAU CITIZENS FROM ENTERING HONG KONG WAS THE NEED TO PREVENT TRAVELLERS FROM CHINA GETTING ROUND THE PRESENT RESTRICTIONS ON TRAVEL FROM CHINA AGREED WITH THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALREADY RECOGNISED THE NEED TO REVIEW THIS POLICY, BUT +BECAUSE OF THE LARGE NUMBER OF POTENTIAL APPLICANTS, THE SCHEME WOULD INITIALLY BE LIMITED TO THOSE WHO HAD BEEN RESIDENT IN MACAU FOR AT LEAST SEVEN YEARS.+

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IMMIGRATION POLICY ON HUSBANDS UNDER REVIEW

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THE GOVERNMENT REVIEWED ITS IMMIGRATION POLICIES FROM TIME TO TIME AND THE POLICY REGARDING THE SETTLEMENT OF THE HUSBANDS OF HONG KONG PERMANENT RESIDENTS WAS AT PRESENT UNDER REVIEW, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON MICHAEL THOMAS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HUI YIN-FAT, MR THOMAS SAID THE RESULTS OF THE REVIEW SHOULD BE WITH THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL IN A FEW WEEKS' TIME.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT BORE IN MIND THE FOLLOWING FACTORS:

- * ANY BROAD RELAXATION OF RULES COULD LEAD TO A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN IMMIGRANTS INTO HONG KONG WHICH ITS ALREADY OVER-BURDENED RESOURCES COULD NOT SUPPORT;
- * CONDITIONS OF ENTRY SHOULD BE FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO ALLOW SPECIAL CASES TO BE DEALT WITH ON THEIR MERITS;
- * WHILE HUMANITARIAN CONSIDERATIONS MUST BE ALLOWED FOR, THE BASIC CRITERION IS THE WELFARE OF HONG KONG AS A WHOLE.

MR THOMAS ADDED THAT IT MIGHT NOT BE APPROPRIATE TO COMPARE THE IMMIGRATION POLICIES OF HONG KONG WITH THOSE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AS THE SITUATIONS WERE QUITE DIFFERENT

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STEPS TAKEN TO ALLEVIATE PRESSURE ON BEDS
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UNTIL MORE INFIRMARIES AND CARE AND ATTENTION HOMES ARE BUILT, THE GOVERNMENT ACCEPTS THAT THERE WILL BE A CONTINUING NEED TO RETAIN IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS MANY PATIENTS WHO COULD OTHERWISE BE TRANSFERRED TO SUCH INSTITUTIONS, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON SELINA CHOW, MR CHAMBERS SAID THAT ACCORDING TO A SURVEY CONDUCTED IN 1983, THE LENGTH OF STAY OF PATIENTS IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS WHO COULD BE CARED FOR ELSEWHERE RANGED FROM TWO WEEKS TO THREE YEARS, WITH AN AVERAGE OF 310 DAYS.

+THE MEASURES BEING TAKEN TO ALLEVIATE THIS PROBLEM INCLUDE THE TRANSFER OF SUITABLE PATIENTS FROM ACUTE HOSPITALS, WHERE THERE IS OVERCROWDING, TO CONVALESCENT AND NON-ACUTE DISTRICT HOSPITALS, THE PROVISION OF HOME NURSING THROUGH THE COMMUNITY NURSING SERVICE AND THE PLACEMENT OF SOME PATIENTS IN CARE AND ATTENTION HOMES AND HOMES FOR THE AGED,+ HE ADDED.

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BILL IN FINAL DRAFTING STAGE
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A BILL WHICH SEEKS TO AMEND THE MENTAL HEALTH ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE FOR A SYSTEM OF GUARDIANSHIP FOR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS AGED OVER 18 IS NOW IN THE FINAL DRAFTING STAGE, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON NEIL HENDERSON, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HENRIETTA IP, MR HENDERSON SAID IT WAS HOPED THAT THE BILL WOULD BE INTRODUCED INTO THE COUNCIL BEFORE THE END OF THIS YEAR.

HE SAID IT HAD BEEN INTENDED TO INTRODUCE THE LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS IN 1984 THROUGH RELATIVELY STRAIGHTFORWARD PROVISIONS.

HOWEVER, IT LATER BECAME APPARENT THAT THE COMPLICATED NATURE OF A NUMBER OF OTHER MORE SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENTS NECESSARY AS A RESULT OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKING GROUP OF EX-MENTAL PATIENTS MEANT THAT THE ORIGINAL TIME FRAME COULD NOT BE ADHERED TO.

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 1986

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FIRE SITES CLEARED AFTER CHECKS
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FOLLOWING MAJOR SQUATTER FIRES, THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT USUALLY CONDUCTS SITE IDENTIFICATION EXERCISES TO IDENTIFY GENUINE FIRE VICTIMS, A PROCESS THAT NORMALLY TAKES SEVERAL DAYS, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON NICKY CHAN, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

+THE FIRE SITES WILL THEREAFTER BE HANDED OVER TO THE DISTRICT LANDS OFFICER WHO WILL IMMEDIATELY ARRANGE FOR CLEARANCE WORK TO BE CARRIED OUT,+ MR CHAN SAID IN REPLY TO THE HON PAULINE NG.

MRS NG HAD ASKED WHETHER AFTER A FIRE ACTION WAS TAKEN IMMEDIATELY TO CLEAR SITES IN ORDER TO PROTECT THE HEALTH OF NEARBY RESIDENTS.

TO A FURTHER QUESTION, MR CHAN SAID AT PRESENT THERE WAS ONLY ONE SQUATTER FIRE SITE AWAITING CLEARANCE AT THE HOLY CROSS PATH VILLAGE IN SHAU KEI WAN.

A WORKS ORDER HAD BEEN ISSUED AND CLEARANCE WORK WAS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED BY MID-MAY.

+THERE ARE SIX OTHER SITES WHERE CLEARANCE WORK IS IN PROGRESS AND IS SCHEDULED FOR COMPLETION ALSO BY MID-MAY 1986,+ HE ADDED.

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FUNDING MUST BEAR COST OF SERVICES
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IT IS GENERAL POLICY THAT WHERE A STATUTORY AUTHORITY IS PROVIDED WITH AN INDEPENDENT SOURCE OF FUNDING, THE FULL COST OF ANY ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES PROVIDED BY A GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE MET FROM THAT SOURCE OF FUNDING RATHER THAN IN SOME PART BY SUBSIDY OUT OF GENERAL REVENUE, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON NEIL HENDERSON, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON PANG CHUN-HOI ON THE CONTINUAL INCREASE IN THE SERVICE CHARGE FOR COLLECTING THE CLOTHING INDUSTRY LEVY, MR HENDERSON SAID THE CHARGE WAS DEDUCTED BY THE COMMISSIONER OF CUSTOMS AND EXCISE TO DEFRAY THE COST OF COLLECTING THE LEVY OF 0.03 PER CENT ON THE VALUE (FOB) OF CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR EXPORTS WHICH FINANCED THE ACTIVITIES OF THE CLOTHING INDUSTRY TRAINING AUTHORITY AS PROVIDED BY LAW.

+THE RECOVERY OF THESE COSTS SHOULD HAVE NO ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AUTHORITY'S TRAINING PROGRAMMES AS THESE AND OTHER COSTS ARE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE AUTHORITY'S PROJECTIONS OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE,+ HE SAID.

/MR HENDERSON

MR HENDERSON SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE AUTHORITY'S RESOURCES SHOULD BE QUITE ADEQUATE TO ABSORB THE INCREASED CHARGE DURING THE CURRENT YEAR AND THAT ITS FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS INDICATED A CONTINUING SURPLUS INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE IN THE YEARS IMMEDIATELY AHEAD.

+IF AT SOME FUTURE TIME ANTICIPATED LEVY INCOME WERE INSUFFICIENT TO MEET THE ANTICIPATED COSTS OF THE AGREED TRAINING PROGRAMME, THEN IT WOULD BE OPEN TO THE AUTHORITY TO PROPOSE TO THE GOVERNMENT AN ALTERATION IN THE RATE OF LEVY,+ HE ADDED.

MR HENDERSON SAID EVERY EFFORT WOULD BE MADE BY THE COMMISSIONER OF CUSTOMS AND EXCISE TO ENSURE THAT ANY INCREASE IN THE SERVICE CHARGE WAS KEPT TO A MINIMUM.

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WORKING GROUP ON SIGN BOARDS PROPOSED
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A WORKING GROUP MAY BE SET UP TO EXAMINE THE QUESTION OF THE CONTROL OF ADVERTISING SIGNS.

THIS WAS STATED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON NICKY CHAN, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO QUESTIONS FROM THE HON LEE YU-TAI.

MR CHAN SAID A PROPOSAL FOR SETTING UP A WORKING PARTY UNDER HIS CHAIRMANSHIP WAS BEING DRAWN UP FOR EARLY SUBMISSION TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

HE SAID +IT WOULD BE VERY DESIRABLE TO SET UP A WORKING GROUP TO CONSIDER THE WHOLE QUESTION OF CONTROL AND ENFORCEMENT OF ADVERTISING SIGNS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF THE LEVY OF A DEPOSIT FROM THOSE WHO ERECT SIGNBOARDS.+

MR CHAN SAID THAT LAST YEAR 39 STRUCTURALLY DANGEROUS SIGNS WERE REMOVED BY THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OFFICE AND 546 SIGNS WERE CERTIFIED AS POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS. OF THESE, 327 SIGNS WERE REMOVED BY THE OWNERS THEMSELVES AND 219 BY THE BOO.

THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT WAS EMPOWERED TO DEMOLISH SIGNS TO ENABLE IT TO DEAL WITH FIRES OR OTHER CALAMITIES, BUT THE POLICE DID NOT HAVE SUCH POWERS. HE SAID THE POLICE ROLE WAS TO GUARD AGAINST ANY BREACH OF THE PEACE WHEN SIGNS WERE BEING REMOVED.

HE ADDED THAT THE URBAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT WAS ALSO EMPOWERED TO REMOVE SIGNS, BUT IN PRACTICE THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OFFICE ACTED AS THE AGENCY FOR THE USD IN REMOVING SIGNS.

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MORE PLACES FOR THE DISABLED
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FORTY-THREE SHELTERED WORKSHOPS AND WORK ACTIVITY CENTRES PROVIDING A TOTAL OF 4 320 PLACES WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR DISABLED PEOPLE IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON J.N. HENDERSON, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HUI YIN-FAT, MR HENDERSON SAID THERE WOULD BE 22 SHELTERED WORKSHOPS AND 21 WORK ACTIVITY CENTRES.

+THEY WILL PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL 2 960 SHELTERED WORKSHOP PLACES AND 1 360 WORK ACTIVITY CENTRE PLACES,+ HE SAID.

MR HENDERSON SAID THE SHELTERED WORKSHOPS AND WORK ACTIVITY CENTRES WOULD BE LOCATED EVENLY OVER THE TERRITORY, WITH ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF THEM BEING IN NEW TOWNS.

FIVE SHELTERED WORKSHOPS FOR THE DISABLED, TO BE COMPLETED THIS FINANCIAL YEAR, WOULD BE LOCATED IN TSUEN WAN, SHA TIN, TAI PO AND TUEN MUN, AND PROVIDE A TOTAL OF 600 PLACES.

A FURTHER SIX WORK ACTIVITY CENTRES, PROVIDING 320 PLACES, WOULD OPEN IN WONG TAI SIN, HO MAN TIN, TAI PO, SHA TIN, AND TSING YI.

A TOTAL OF 1 130 PLACES WOULD BE PROVIDED BY FOUR SHELTERED WORKSHOPS AND EIGHT WORK ACTIVITY CENTRES TO OPEN IN 1987-88. THE LARGEST WORK ACTIVITY CENTRE, WITH 200 PLACES, WOULD BE BUILT IN SHA TIN.

SEVEN SHELTERED WORKSHOPS, THE LARGEST BEING IN KWUN TONG, AND FIVE WORK ACTIVITY CENTRES WOULD BE COMPLETED IN 1988-89. TOGETHER THEY WOULD PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL 1 340 PLACES.

FOLLOWING THIS, SIX MORE SHELTERED WORKSHOPS AND TWO WORK ACTIVITY CENTRES WOULD BE BUILT, AND PROVIDE A FURTHER 930 PLACES FOR THE DISABLED.

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 1986

BANKING BILL FINE EXAMPLE OF CONSULTATION
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THE NEW BANKING BILL IS A FINE EXAMPLE OF THE EFFECTIVE WORKING OF THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS IN HONG KONG AND ITS EFFECTS WILL BE FELT MUCH MORE BY BANKS INCORPORATED HERE THAN ELSEWHERE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE ON PRUDENTIAL SUPERVISION, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, SIR JOHN BREMIDGE, SAID THIS (WEDNESDAY) EVENING.

ADDRESSING A DINNER OF THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION OF BANKS AT THE OVERSEAS BANKERS' CLUB, SIR JOHN SAID THE NEW LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS WERE BROADLY IN LINE WITH DEVELOPMENTS IN OTHER MAJOR BANKING CENTRES.

+SOME ARE MODEST IN COMPARISON, BUT THERE ARE OTHER INNOVATIVE IDEAS ON TO WHICH OTHER CENTRES HAVE SINCE CAUGHT. SO THE WORRY SOMETIMES EXPRESSED THAT WE WOULD REGULATE OURSELVES OUT OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET WILL, I AM SURE, PROVE TO BE UNFOUNDED,+ SIR JOHN SAID.

SUBJECT TO SIZE OF ASSETS AND, TO A DEGREE, RECIPROCITY, FOREIGN BANKS WERE FREE TO ENTER OUR MARKET. +THEY HAVE BEEN DOING SO STEADILY OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS - IN FACT OVER 30 OF THEM IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS,+ HE SAID.

+IT IS THEREFORE OUR POLICY STANCE ON BANKING: COMPETITION WITHIN A FRAMEWORK OF PRUDENCE,+ HE STRESSED.

+IN RETROSPECT, GIVEN THE SHOCKS EXPERIENCED IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, PARTICULARLY THE RISE AND FALL IN PROPERTY PRICES, DIFFICULTIES FOR BANKS WERE INEVITABLE. WE HAVE COME THROUGH THE PERIOD WITH FAR LESS DAMAGE THAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED,+ SIR JOHN SAID.

HE SAID THE TWO BANKS THAT THE GOVERNMENT NOW OWNED WOULD IN TIME BE SOLD BACK TO PRIVATE HANDS.

BUT, AS CONTROLLER OF THE EXCHANGE FUND WHICH HAD PUT UP THE MONEY REQUIRED FOR THESE RESCUES, HE SAID THE ONLY QUESTION IN SELLING THEM WAS WHEN AND FOR HOW MUCH, IN ORDER TO MINIMISE THE EVENTUAL COST.

SIR JOHN SAID THE PROBLEMS IN THE BANKING SECTOR HAD LED PROPERLY AND INEVITABLY TO 'PROBING' ON TWO ISSUES: FIRSTLY, DEPOSIT INSURANCE TO PROTECT DEPOSITORS IN CASE OF BANK FAILURE AND, SECONDLY, THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN PRUDENTIAL SUPERVISION TO PREVENT BANK FAILURES.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID HE RELUCTANTLY AGREED THAT DEPOSIT INSURANCE WOULD NOT WORK. THE AIM HAD MERIT BUT THE MEANS OF ACHIEVING IT WERE NOT PRACTICAL.

/+A DEPOSIT

+A DEPOSIT INSURANCE SCHEME MIGHT REDUCE THE CHANCE OF BANK FAILURE BY MAKING PANIC RUNS ON BANKS BY SMALL DEPOSITORS LESS LIKELY. IT WOULD ALSO ARGUABLY GIVE MORE OPTIONS TO THE SUPERVISORS TO DEAL WITH A PROBLEM BANK IN CASE IT DOES FAIL,+ SIR JOHN SAID.

+BUT THE NATURE OF BANK LIABILITIES IN A MAJOR FINANCIAL CENTRE LIKE HONG KONG HAS CHANGED, WITH THE GROWTH OF THE INTERBANK MARKET, BOTH LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL, AND WITH TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS IN TELE-COMMUNICATIONS. A BANK IS MORE LIKELY TO FAIL FROM A WITHDRAWAL OF CREDIT LINES BY OTHER BANKS THAN FROM THE WITHDRAWAL OF DEPOSITS FROM SMALL DEPOSITORS.

+THIS IS SOMETHING WHICH CONVENTIONAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CANNOT PREVENT.+

SIR JOHN SAID ANOTHER PRACTICAL DIFFICULTY STEMMED FROM THE FACT THAT THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE DEPOSIT BASE AMONG HONG KONG BANKS WAS +HIGHLY SKEWED+.

THIS MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO DRAW UP A CREDIBLE AND PRACTICAL INSURANCE SCHEME WITHOUT BEING GROSSLY UNFAIR TO SOME OF THE BIG BANKS, OR WITHOUT COMMITTING SIZEABLE PUBLIC FUNDS, OR BOTH.

THE STRENGTHENING OF PRUDENTIAL SUPERVISION SEEMED TO OFFER A BETTER APPROACH.

THE GOVERNMENT DID ITS PART IN SUPERVISION, TO ESTABLISH THE GROUND RULES AND ENSURE THEY WERE RESPECTED, AND TO ENSURE THAT CONFIDENCE IN THE SYSTEM WAS NOT ERODED. +BUT BEYOND THAT, IT IS PRIVATE ENTERPRISE, LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL, THAT SEEKS THE OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH INNOVATION AND COMPETITION, AND THEN TAKES THE RISKS.+

THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY WAS THEREFORE ONE OF COMPETITION WITH A FRAMEWORK OF PRUDENCE.

REFERRING TO BANK DEPOSITS, SIR JOHN SAID ABOUT HALF OF THESE WERE IN LOCAL CURRENCY AND HALF IN FOREIGN CURRENCIES. THE CORRESPONDING RATIO IN LONDON WAS ABOUT 30 PER CENT LOCAL CURRENCY AND 70 PER CENT FOREIGN CURRENCIES. +IN SINGAPORE, IT IS ABOUT 35 PER CENT AND 65 PER CENT.+

SIR JOHN COMMENTED THAT THE RAPID GROWTH OF OUR FOREIGN CURRENCY DEPOSITS WAS LARGELY THE RESULT OF HONG KONG'S INCREASING ATTRACTION AS AN INTERNATIONAL FINANCE CENTRE, IN TURN ATTRACTING FOREIGN DEPOSITS WHICH WERE NORMALLY DENOMINATED IN FOREIGN CURRENCIES.

+ANOTHER FACTOR,+ HE SAID, +IS THE GREATER SOPHISTICATION OF OUR LOCAL RESIDENTS IN MANAGING THEIR FINANCIAL ASSETS, RESPONDING TO INTEREST RATE DIFFERENTIALS AND THE EXPECTATION OF EXCHANGE RATE GAINS.+

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THE LINK BETWEEN THE LOCAL DOLLAR AND THE UNITED STATES DOLLAR SINCE 1983 HAD CREATED AS STABLE A MONETARY ENVIRONMENT AS WAS OBTAINABLE IN HONG KONG'S CIRCUMSTANCES.

+SUCH A STABLE ENVIRONMENT MAXIMISES THE FREEDOM OF INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESS TO ENGAGE IN WHATEVER TRANSACTIONS THEY WISH,+ HE SAID. +THIS, I BELIEVE, IS THE ULTIMATE PURPOSE OF MONETARY POLICY, IN WHATEVER FORM.+

SIR JOHN RECALLED THAT BEFORE THE LINK WAS INTRODUCED THERE WAS A VIRTUAL ABSENCE OF AN EFFECTIVE MEANS OF MONETARY CONTROL UNDER THE FLOATING EXCHANGE RATE SYSTEM.

+THE ABSENCE WAS BECOMING OBVIOUS AS THE HONG KONG DOLLAR DEPRECIATED, ACCOMPANIED BY HIGH INFLATION, RAPID CREDIT EXPANSION AND HIGH GROWTH IN THE MONEY SUPPLY.

+THIS WAS THE SITUATION WE FACED IN THE LATE 1970'S AND THE EARLY 1980'S, THOUGH ECONOMIC GROWTH THEN WAS RAPID AND THERE WAS FULL EMPLOYMENT.+

THE ONLY MACRO-MONETARY POLICY TOOL AVAILABLE FOR INFLUENCING MONEY AND CREDIT WAS INTEREST RATES, BUT GIVEN THE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF HONG KONG, THE INTEREST RATE TOOL WAS LARGELY INEFFECTIVE.

SIR JOHN REFERRED TO THE THREE-TIER STRUCTURE OF DEPOSIT-TAKING INSTITUTIONS THAT WAS CREATED IN 1981, AND ALSO TO THE SCHEME INTRODUCED LATER THAT YEAR TO ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO INFLUENCE MONEY MARKET OPERATIONS CARRIED OUT BY THE EXCHANGE FUND. BUT, HE SAID, FEW WOULD AGREE THAT EFFECTIVE MONETARY CONTROL HAD BEEN ACHIEVED.

+DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LATE SUMMER OF 1983 ON THE MONETARY FRONT WERE CLEARLY UNJUSTIFIED AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF STRONG BASIC ECONOMIC FUNDAMENTALS,+ HE SAID. +AFTER MANY SLEEPLESS NIGHTS AND WITH USEFUL ADVICE FROM THE BANK OF ENGLAND WE ADOPTED THE PRESENT LINKED RATE SYSTEM.+

+NOW WITH TWO AND A HALF YEARS' EXPERIENCE WITH THE NEW SYSTEM, I CAN SAY THAT IT HAS WORKED OUT EXTREMELY WELL.+

THE NEW SYSTEM HAD BROUGHT STABILITY TO THE EXCHANGE RATE AGAINST THE US DOLLAR AND OUR INFLATION RATE BROADLY INTO LINE WITH THAT OF THE UNITED STATES.

+THERE IS NOW MONETARY DISCIPLINE IN THAT THE LINK PROVIDES AUTOMATIC CONTROL ON THE MONEY SUPPLY WITH INTEREST RATES RESPONSIVE TO CHANGES IN OUR EXTERNAL BALANCE.

+WE HAVE FAR GREATER MONETARY STABILITY THAN COULD OTHERWISE BE POSSIBLE.+

/SIR JOHN

SIR JOHN NOTED THREE COMMON CONCERNS ON THE OPERATION OF THE LINKED EXCHANGE RATE SYSTEM: FIRSTLY, THE INFLATIONARY IMPLICATIONS OF A DEPRECIATING US DOLLAR - AND HENCE THE HONG KONG DOLLAR - VIS-A-VIS OTHER MAJOR CURRENCIES; SECONDLY, THE INTEREST RATE RULES; AND THIRDLY, THE MISCONCEPTION ABOUT THE SHRINKING HONG KONG DOLLAR DEPOSIT BASE.

+THE CONCERN WITH INFLATION IS LEGITIMATE,+ HE SAID, +BUT IT MUST BE PUT IN PERSPECTIVE.+

THE SIGNIFICANT DEPRECIATION OF THE US DOLLAR, AND ALSO THE HONG KONG DOLLAR, SINCE EARLY MARCH 1985 AND PARTICULARLY AFTER THE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL 'GROUP OF FIVE' MEETING IN SEPTEMBER 1985 HAD INCREASED THE PRICES OF OUR IMPORTS FROM EUROPE AND JAPAN.

+BUT WORLD INFLATION RATES HAVE SLOWED DOWN TO HISTORICALLY LOW LEVELS AND ARE EXPECTED TO REMAIN LOW. OIL AND COAL PRICES HAVE FALLEN DRAMATICALLY. PRICES OF IMPORTS FROM CHINA ARE UNLIKELY TO INCREASE MUCH,+ HE SAID.

SIR JOHN SAID HE HAD NO REASON TO CHANGE HIS BUDGET FORECAST OF A MAXIMUM FIVE PER CENT RATE OF CONSUMER PRICE INFLATION IN 1986.

ON INTEREST RATE RULES, SIR JOHN SAID CONCERN HAD BEEN EXPRESSED THAT THE RULES IMPEDED INTEREST RATES FROM ADJUSTING QUICKLY IN DEALING WITH SHIFTS IN THE EXTERNAL BALANCE, AS REQUIRED UNDER THE LINKED RATE SYSTEM.

THE INTEREST RATE RULES, HE SAID, HAD ANOTHER NO LESS IMPORTANT RATIONALE: +TO RESTRAIN CUT-THROAT AND IMPRUDENT COMPETITION ON INTEREST RATES AMONG BANKS.+

+IN CONSIDERING THE MERITS AND DEMERITS OF THE RULES, THEREFORE, ONE SHOULD ASK, NOT WHETHER THEY PUT GRIT IN OUR SYSTEM - THEY DO - BUT WHETHER THEY IMPEDE THE ADJUSTMENT MECHANISM TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT THE MACRO MONETARY DISADVANTAGES OUTWEIGH THE PRUDENTIAL ADVANTAGES,+ HE SAID.

THE RATES WERE ADJUSTED IN LINE WITH MARKET SIGNALS AND WERE CONSISTENT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LINKED EXCHANGE RATE SYSTEM. THUS THE ADMINISTERED RATES COULD NOT BE REGARDED AS INFLEXIBLE.

+OVER THE PAST TWO AND A HALF YEARS, WE HAVE HAD FREQUENT CHANGES IN INTEREST RATES WHICH HAVE BEEN EFFECTIVE IN MAINTAINING THE EXCHANGE RATE AT CLOSE TO THE LINKED RATE.+

ON CONCERN EXPRESSED ABOUT THE ALLEGEDLY SHRINKING HONG KONG DOLLAR DEPOSIT BASE, SIR JOHN SAID THE SIMPLE FACT WAS THAT IT HAD NOT BEEN SHRINKING, ALTHOUGH THE PROPORTION OF HONG KONG DOLLAR DEPOSITS TO TOTAL DEPOSITS HAD BEEN FALLING GENTLY FROM 58 PER CENT AT THE END OF 1984 TO 53 PER CENT AT THE END OF 1985, AFTER ADJUSTING FOR SWAP DEPOSITS.

/IN CONCLUSION,

IN CONCLUSION, SIR JOHN EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION OF THE WISE COUNSEL HE RECEIVED FROM THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION OF BANKS.

+YOUR STATUTORY ASSOCIATION SERVES AS A USEFUL AND PRODUCTIVE CHANNEL FOR DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE BANKING INDUSTRY AND THE GOVERNMENT.

+IT IS AN INDISPENSIBLE ARM IN THE CONDUCT OF OUR MONETARY POLICY, THROUGH REGULAR AND FRANK CONSULTATION WITH THE ADMINISTRATION, AND THROUGH ITS ADMINISTRATION OF THE INTEREST RATES RULES,+ HE SAID.

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HK LEADS WORLD IN TWO EXPORT CATEGORIES
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HONG KONG WAS THE LARGEST EXPORTER OF CLOTHING, TOYS AND GAMES, IN THE WORLD IN 1984.

HONG KONG WAS ALSO THE SECOND LARGEST EXPORTER OF FANS, DOMESTIC TYPE (AFTER TAIWAN); AND THE THIRD LARGEST EXPORTER FOR BOTH COMPLETE WATCHES (AFTER SWITZERLAND AND JAPAN) AND RADIO-BROADCAST RECEIVERS (AFTER JAPAN AND TAIWAN).

FOR EXPORTS OF TRAVEL GOODS AND HANDBAGS, HONG KONG WAS RANKED FOURTH (AFTER TAIWAN, ITALY AND THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA).

DETAILS OF THESE ARE CONTAINED IN THE 'HONG KONG REVIEW OF OVERSEAS TRADE IN 1985' ON SALE AT THE GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS CENTRE AT \$21 PER COPY.

THE REVIEW CONTAINS A BRIEF TEXT ON HONG KONG'S EXTERNAL TRADE PERFORMANCE IN 1985, 13 GRAPHS AND 38 STATISTICAL TABLES WITH COMPARATIVE FIGURES FOR PREVIOUS YEARS.

THE REVIEW PRESENTS A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE DIRECTION AND COMPOSITION OF HONG KONG'S EXTERNAL TRADE IN 1985, INCLUDING A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF TRADE BY MAJOR TRADING PARTNERS BY COMMODITY CATEGORIES, AND STATISTICS ON HONG KONG'S EXPORT PERFORMANCE IN WORLD TRADE AND IN PRINCIPAL OVERSEAS MARKETS, COMPARED WITH THOSE OF MAJOR COMPETITORS ARE INCLUDED IN THE PUBLICATION.

ALSO INCLUDED ARE STATISTICS ON EXCHANGE RATES OF PRINCIPAL FOREIGN CURRENCIES AND THE EFFECTIVE (TRADE-WEIGHTED) EXCHANGE RATE INDEX FOR THE HONG KONG DOLLAR.

ACCORDING TO THE REVIEW, SUBSTANTIAL INCREASES WERE NOTED DURING 1985 IN THE VALUE OF IMPORTS FROM TAIWAN (BY HK\$3 551 MILLION OR 20 PER CENT) AND CHINA (BY \$3 210 MILLION OR 6 PER CENT), WHILE DECREASES WERE RECORDED IN IMPORTS FROM THE UNITED STATES (BY \$2 481 MILLION OR 10 PER CENT) AND SINGAPORE (BY \$948 MILLION OR 8 PER CENT).

OVERSEAS MARKETS FOR DOMESTIC EXPORTS WITH NOTABLE DECREASES WERE THE U.S. (BY \$3 687 MILLION OR 6 PER CENT) AND THE UNITED KINGDOM (BY \$1 950 MILLION OR 19 PER CENT).

HOWEVER, A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE WAS RECORDED FOR DOMESTIC EXPORTS TO CHINA (BY \$3 906 MILLION OR 35 PER CENT).

BY COMMODITY CATEGORIES, SUBSTANTIAL GROWTH IN VALUE WAS REGISTERED FOR IMPORTS OF PHOTOGRAPHIC APPARATUS, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES AND OPTICAL GOODS, N.E.S., AND WATCHES AND CLOCKS (BY \$1 749 MILLION OR 15 PER CENT) AS WELL AS ARTICLES OF APPAREL AND CLOTHING ACCESSORIES (BY \$1 562 MILLION OR 14 PER CENT).

IMPORTS OF ELECTRICAL MACHINERY, APPARATUS AND APPLIANCES, N.E.S. AND ELECTRICAL PARTS THEREOF AS WELL AS PETROLEUM, PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AND RELATED MATERIALS DROPPED IN 1985 (BY \$3 496 MILLION OR 15 PER CENT, AND \$1 638 MILLION OR 16 PER CENT RESPECTIVELY).

DECREASES IN DOMESTIC EXPORTS WERE RECORDED IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND SOUND RECORDING AND REPRODUCING APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT (BY \$2 010 MILLION OR 18 PER CENT) AND OFFICE MACHINES AND AUTOMATIC DATA PROCESSING EQUIPMENT (BY \$1 934 MILLION OR 22 PER CENT).

HOWEVER, INCREASES WERE REGISTERED FOR DOMESTIC EXPORTS OF PHOTOGRAPHIC APPARATUS, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES AND OPTICAL GOODS, N.E.S., AND WATCHES AND CLOCKS (BY \$476 MILLION OR 5 PER CENT) AS WELL AS TOBACCO AND TOBACCO MANUFACTURES (BY \$384 MILLION OR 74 PER CENT).

RE-EXPORT TRADE IN 1985 GREW BY 26 PER CENT IN VALUE. RE-EXPORTS TO CHINA AND THE U.S. INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY BY \$17 959 MILLION OR 64 PER CENT AND \$2 596 MILLION OR 21 PER CENT RESPECTIVELY. DECREASES WERE RECORDED FOR INDONESIA (BY \$1 353 MILLION OR 37 PER CENT) AND TAIWAN (BY \$543 MILLION OR 11 PER CENT).

THE COMMODITIES WITH SUBSTANTIAL GROWTH WERE TEXTILE YARN, FABRICS, MADE-UP ARTICLES, N.E.S. AND RELATED PRODUCTS (BY \$3 291 MILLION OR 26 PER CENT), AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND SOUND RECORDING AND REPRODUCING APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT (BY \$2 409 MILLION OR 52 PER CENT).

HOWEVER, DECREASES WERE REGISTERED FOR MANUFACTURED FERTILIZERS (BY \$110 MILLION OR 57 PER CENT) AND FEEDING STUFF FOR ANIMALS, NOT INCLUDING UNMILLED CEREALS (BY \$62 MILLION OR 38 PER CENT).

IN 1985, RE-EXPORTS OF CHINA ORIGIN INCREASED BY \$6 522 MILLION OR 23 PER CENT, WITH THE LARGEST INCREASE RECORDED IN ARTICLES OF APPAREL AND CLOTHING ACCESSORIES (BY \$1 479 MILLION OR 26 PER CENT).

THE U.S. WAS THE LARGEST MARKET, ACCOUNTING FOR 33 PER CENT OF ALL RE-EXPORTS OF CHINA ORIGIN THROUGH HONG KONG. THE MAJOR GROWTH TO THIS MARKET WAS IN MISCELLANEOUS MANUFACTURED ARTICLES (BY \$993 MILLION OR 45 PER CENT).

VALUE OF AIRBORNE TRADE IN 1985, REPRESENTING 21 PER CENT OF TOTAL MERCHANDISE TRADE, DECREASED BY \$6 954 MILLION OR 7 PER CENT AS COMPARED WITH 1984. IN TERMS OF TONNAGE, AIRBORNE TRADE CONSTITUTED LESS THAN 1 PER CENT OF TOTAL TRADE.

DECREASES IN AIRBORNE TRADE WERE REGISTERED IN IMPORTS FROM THE U.S. (BY \$1 207 MILLION OR 11 PER CENT), EXPORTS TO THE U.S. (BY \$1 241 MILLION OR 6 PER CENT) AND RE-EXPORTS TO TAIWAN (BY \$657 MILLION OR 24 PER CENT).

BY COMMODITY CATEGORIES, IMPORTS OF ELECTRICAL MACHINERY, APPARATUS AND APPLIANCES, N.E.S., AND ELECTRICAL PARTS THEREOF RECORDED THE LARGEST DECREASE (BY \$3 602 MILLION OR 26 PER CENT); WHILE FOR EXPORTS BY AIR, OFFICE MACHINES AND AUTOMATIC DATA PROCESSING EQUIPMENT HAD THE LARGEST DECREASE (BY \$2 508 MILLION OR 37 PER CENT).

RE-EXPORTS OF ELECTRICAL MACHINERY, APPARATUS AND APPLIANCES, N.E.S., AND ELECTRICAL PARTS THEREOF DROPPED BY \$1 267 MILLION OR 23 PER CENT).

AS REGARDS SEABORNE TRADE, WHICH ACCOUNTED FOR 58 PER CENT OF TOTAL MERCHANDISE TRADE IN 1985, AN INCREASE OF \$7 854 MILLION OR 3 PER CENT OVER 1984 WAS RECORDED. IN TERMS OF TONNAGE, 92 PER CENT OF TOTAL TRADE WAS CARRIED BY SEA.

A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE WAS RECORDED IN SEABORNE IMPORTS FROM TAIWAN (BY \$3 966 MILLION OR 27 PER CENT); WHEREAS A DECREASE WAS REGISTERED IN SEABORNE EXPORTS TO THE U.S. (BY \$2 460 MILLION OR 6 PER CENT).

RE-EXPORTS BY SEA TO CHINA INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY (BY \$4 432 MILLION OR 76 PER CENT). THE VALUE OF SEABORNE IMPORTS OF MACHINERY SPECIALISED TO PARTICULAR INDUSTRIES INCREASED BY \$1 410 MILLION OR 47 PER CENT; WHEREAS THAT OF EXPORTS OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND SOUND RECORDING AND REPRODUCING APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT DECREASED BY \$1 910 MILLION OR 23 PER CENT. AN INCREASE IN SEABORNE RE-EXPORTS WAS RECORDED FOR MISCELLANEOUS MANUFACTURED ARTICLES (BY \$1 699 MILLION OR 51 PER CENT).

THE REVIEW ALSO PUBLISHES UNIT VALUE AND QUANTUM INDEXES WHICH ARE OFTEN USED TO ASSESS THE MOVEMENTS IN COMMODITY PRICES AND CHANGES IN TRADE VOLUMES.

DURING 1985, IN TERMS OF TRADE VOLUME, IMPORTS INCREASED BY 6 PER CENT, DOMESTIC EXPORTS DECLINED BY 5 PER CENT, WHILE RE-EXPORTS ROSE BY 25 PER CENT, AS COMPARED WITH 1984.

SUBSTANTIAL DECREASES WERE RECORDED IN THE DOMESTIC EXPORT VOLUMES OF RADIOS OF ALL KINDS; ELECTRONIC COMPONENTS; AND TRAVEL GOODS, HANDBAGS AND SIMILAR ARTICLES (EACH BY 25 PER CENT).

HOWEVER, INCREASES WERE RECORDED IN THE IMPORT VOLUME OF CONSUMER GOODS (BY 14 PER CENT) AND THE RE-EXPORT VOLUME OF CAPITAL GOODS (BY 34 PER CENT).

BASED ON THE UNIT VALUE INDEXES, IMPORT PRICES DROPPED BY 3 PER CENT WHILE TOTAL EXPORT PRICES ROSE BY NEARLY 1 PER CENT, THUS RAISING THE TERMS OF TRADE INDEX (DEFINED AS THE RATIO OF THE TOTAL EXPORT PRICE INDEX TO THE IMPORT PRICE INDEX) BY 3 PER CENT.

WITHIN TOTAL EXPORTS, RE-EXPORT PRICES INCREASED BY 1 PER CENT AND DOMESTIC EXPORT PRICES REMAINED UNCHANGED.

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STANDARDS MAINTAINED IN CHILD CARE CENTRES * * * * *

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE TO CHILD CARE CENTRES HAS HELPED RAISE AND MAINTAIN THE STANDARDS OF SERVICES PROVIDED IN THESE CENTRES, THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE, MRS ANSON CHAN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT A LUNCHEON MEETING OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF KOWLOON WEST, MRS CHAN SAID A CHILD CARE CENTRES ADVISORY INSPECTORATE HAD BEEN SET UP WITHIN HER DEPARTMENT SINCE 1975 TO SUPERVISE AND ADVISE THESE CENTRES.

THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALSO ASSISTED WELFARE AGENCIES BY LOCATING SUITABLE PREMISES FOR CHILD CARE CENTRES, REIMBURSING RENTS AND RATES AND APPROVING ALLOCATIONS FROM THE LOTTERIES FUND TO MEET CAPITAL COSTS.

THE 1981 WHITE PAPER ON PRIMARY EDUCATION AND PRE-PRIMARY SERVICES SUGGESTED THAT APART FROM RE-IMBURSEMENT OF RENT AND RATES, NON-PROFIT-MAKING CHILD CARE CENTRES SHOULD BE PROVIDED WITH A SUBVENTION EQUIVALENT TO FIVE PER CENT OF THE APPROVED FEES BASED ON THE APPROVED CAPACITY.

+THIS MEASURE HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, AND IT WILL BE REVIEWED AT THE END OF THIS FINANCIAL YEAR TO DECIDE ON THE FUTURE MODE OF SUBVENTION,+ MRS CHAN SAID.

ACCORDING TO A SURVEY CONDUCTED BETWEEN NOVEMBER 1982 AND JANUARY 1983, THE MAJORITY OF CHILDREN ATTENDING CHILD CARE CENTRES WERE AGED TWO TO THREE YEARS= WHILE 85 PER CENT OF THE CHILDREN AGED THREE TO FIVE ATTENDED KINDERGARTEN.

/MRS CHAN

MRS CHAN SAID THERE HAD BEEN PUBLIC CALLS FOR CHILD CARE CENTRES AND KINDERGARTENS TO BE ADMINISTERED BY ONE AUTHORITY AND THE GOVERNMENT WAS PRESENTLY CONSIDERING THIS POSSIBILITY.

AT PRESENT THERE WERE 205 CHILD CARE CENTRES IN HONG KONG PROVIDING ABOUT 24 000 PLACES. THIS COMPRISED 134 SUBVENTED CENTRES, FOUR NON-PROFIT-MAKING CENTRES AND 67 PRIVATE CENTRES.

OVER 80 PER CENT OF PRIVATE CENTRES WERE LOCATED ON HONG KONG ISLAND AND WEST KOWLOON AND PROVIDED PARENTS WITH MORE CHOICES WHEN SELECTING CHILD CARE CENTRES.

+THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO PROVIDE ONE CHILD CARE CENTRE WITH 100 PLACES FOR EVERY 20 000 POPULATION. PRESENT STATISTICS INDICATE THAT 15 NEW CHILD CARE CENTRES WILL BE OPENED EVERY YEAR, PROVIDING 1 500 PLACES,+ SHE SAID.

ON THE FEE ASSISTANCE SCHEME FOR CHILD CARE CENTRES, MRS CHAN NOTED THAT LAST YEAR TOTAL EXPENDITURE AMOUNTED TO ABOUT \$35 MILLION, AND ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE FOR THE CURRENT FINANCIAL YEAR WAS \$37 MILLION.

AS OF FEBRUARY 1986, PARENTS OF 62 PER CENT OF THE CHILDREN IN CHILD CARE CENTRES WERE RECEIVING FEE ASSISTANCE.

SOME MILDLY PHYSICALLY OR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN WERE AT PRESENT ATTENDING ORDINARY CHILD CARE CENTRES UNDER AN INTEGRATED PROGRAMME PROVIDED IN 85 CENTRES.

+IN THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR, IT IS PLANNED TO PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL 30 INTEGRATED PLACES,+ SHE SAID.

SPEAKING ON DAY CRECHE SERVICE, MRS CHAN SAID THAT ALTHOUGH HER DEPARTMENT WAS PROVIDING A LIMITED SERVICE, SHE FELT CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF TWO SHOULD BEST BE CARED FOR BY THEIR FAMILIES.

+WE DO NOT ENCOURAGE PARENTS TO BE SEPARATED FROM THEIR VERY YOUNG CHILDREN EXCEPT IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES,+ SHE ADDED.

THAT WAS WHY THERE HAD BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT IN DAY CRECHE SERVICE IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, AND AT PRESENT THERE WERE 18 SUBVENTED DAY CRECHES PROVIDING PLACES, AND A NON-PROFIT-MAKING CRECHE LOOKING AFTER 64 BABIES.

+WE ARE GATHERING STATISTICS TO GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE FAMILY BACKGROUND OF BABIES UNDER CARE IN ORDER TO ESTIMATE THE DEMAND FOR CRECHE SERVICE.

+THE INFORMATION WILL ALSO HELP IN THE FORMULATION OF FUTURE DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN THIS AREA,+ SHE SAID.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 1936

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REQUESTS FOR COMPASSIONATE RESETTLEMENT

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SIX REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CHU KOO CHAI FIRE VICTIMS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) SUBMITTED 26 CASES FOR COMPASSIONATE RESETTLEMENT OR SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR REHOUSING TO THE SHAM SHUI PO DISTRICT OFFICER, MR SYLVESTER TSE, AND THE DISTRICT BOARD CHAIRMAN, MR CHENG PO-HONG.

AT A MEETING HELD AT THE SHAM SHUI PO DISTRICT OFFICE THIS MORNING, THE REPRESENTATIVES ALSO ASKED FOR MORE TIME TO DECORATE THEIR NEW HOMES AND FOR ASSISTANCE IN PROVIDING THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION.

MR TSE PROMISED TO IMMEDIATELY PASS ON THEIR REQUESTS TO THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT FOR INVESTIGATION. HE WOULD ALSO ARRANGE A MEETING NEXT MONDAY (APRIL 21) BETWEEN THE BOARD CHAIRMAN AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM VARIOUS GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS FOR THE CASES TO BE SCREENED.

HE SAID THAT ANY REQUEST FOR INDIVIDUAL ASSISTANCE FROM CHU KOO CHAI FIRE VICTIMS COULD BE REFERRED TO HIM OR TO THE CHAIRMAN DIRECTLY.

+WE SHALL CONTINUE TO MEET REGULARLY WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FIRE VICTIMS TO COLLECT THEIR OPINION AND REQUESTS,+ HE SAID.

+HOWEVER, IN PRINCIPLE, THE GOVERNMENT WILL MAINTAIN THE PRESENT POLICY ON RESETTLEMENT OF FIRE VICTIMS,+ HE EXPLAINED.

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SAM KA TSUEN ILLEGAL STRUCTURES CLEARED

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FIFTY STRUCTURES, INCLUDING ILLEGAL COOKED FOOD STALLS, IN SAM KA TSUEN WERE CLEARED THIS (WEDNESDAY) MORNING IN AN OPERATION LAUNCHED BY THE KWUN TONG DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE.

LOCATED ON THE EMBANKMENT OF SHUNG SHUN STREET NEAR THE LEI YUE MUN TYPHOON SHELTER, ABOUT HALF OF THE STRUCTURES WERE USED FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES, MOSTLY AS ILLEGAL COOKED FOOD STALLS.

AMONG RESIDENTS AFFECTED BY THE CLEARANCE, 140 PEOPLE FROM 40 FAMILIES WERE RE-SETTLED TO PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES, TEMPORARY HOUSING AREAS OR SINGLETON UNITS.

TODAY'S OPERATION FOLLOWED THE COMPLETION OF THE CLEARANCE OF A NEARBY ILLEGAL FISH MARKET AND PLATFORMS LATE LAST MONTH.

/THE CLEARED

THE CLEARED AREA WILL BE FENCED OFF WHEN THE OPERATION IS COMPLETED TO PREVENT ILLEGAL BOAT LANDINGS AND DUMPING OF REFUSE.

THE CLEARANCE WAS PART OF THE MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME, +OPERATION FAR FLING+, INITIATED BY THE DISTRICT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE IN DECEMBER 1983 WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE KWUN TONG DISTRICT BOARD.

DURING THE LAST FINANCIAL YEAR, ABOUT 300 ILLEGAL STRUCTURES WERE DEMOLISHED IN FIVE FAR FLING CLEARANCES.

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BOARD TO CONSIDER AIR MONITORING
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THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT BOARD WILL LOOK INTO THE MONITORING OF AIR QUALITY IN THE DISTRICT AT ITS MEETING TOMORROW (THURSDAY) AFTERNOON.

A SENIOR ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION OFFICER, MR J.S. BOWER, WILL ATTEND THE MEETING. THE BOARD WILL STUDY A PAPER OUTLINING THE GOVERNMENT'S AIR MONITORING EFFORTS, FUTURE MONITORING PROGRAMMES AND THE CURRENT SITUATION IN SOUTHERN DISTRICT.

THE BOARD WILL ALSO DISCUSS ITS BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 1986-87, AND THE APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS TO ITS COMMITTEES.

MEMBERS WILL REVIEW MAJOR ISSUES RAISED DURING LAST MONTH'S DISTRICT BOARD MEETS AREA COMMITTEE SEMINAR.

OTHER ITEMS ON THE AGENDA INCLUDE REPORTS OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND OF MEETINGS OF THE DISTRICT'S SIX AREA COMMITTEES.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT BOARD MEETING TO BE HELD AT 2.30 PM TOMORROW IN THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OFFICE CONFERENCE ROOM, NO 7-11, NAM NING STREET, SECOND FLOOR, MEI FUNG COURT, ABERDEEN CENTRE.

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 1986

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REVIEW OF DISTRICT WORKS PROGRAMME
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MEMBERS OF THE PLANS AND WORKS COMMITTEE OF THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT BOARD WILL DISCUSS THE DISTRICT'S WORKS PROGRAMME AT THEIR MEETING TOMORROW (THURSDAY) AFTERNOON.

THE PROGRAMME IS A REVIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT'S CURRENT AND PROJECTED ENGINEERING AND BUILDING WORKS PROGRAMME IN THE DISTRICT FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

AT THE MEETING, MEMBERS WILL ALSO DISCUSS THE URBAN COUNCIL CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME 1985-86 TO 1988-90.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THE PLANS AND WORKS COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT BOARD TO BE HELD AT 2.30 PM TOMORROW (THURSDAY) IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE DISTRICT OFFICE ON THE 14TH FLOOR OF HARBOUR BUILDING, 38 PIER ROAD, CENTRAL.

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MEET THE MEDIA
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THE DIRECTOR OF ENGINEERING DEVELOPMENT, DR NIP KAM-FAN, AND THE PRINCIPAL GOVERNMENT GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER, DR E.W. BRAND, WILL MEET THE MEDIA TOMORROW (THURSDAY) AT 4 PM IN THE GIS PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM, FIFTH FLOOR, BEACONSFIELD HOUSE, CENTRAL.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE EVENT.

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 1986

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TRAFFIC CHANGES FOR NEW TAI WAI STATION OPENING
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THE NEW KCR PERMANENT STATION, WHICH REPLACES THE TEMPORARY RAILWAY STATION IN TAI WAI INDUSTRIAL AREA AND IS DESIGNED TO CATER FOR LARGER PASSENGER VOLUME, WILL BECOME OPERATIONAL FROM 5 AM NEXT WEDNESDAY (APRIL 23).

SPECIAL TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE INTRODUCED IN TAI WAI TO TIE IN WITH THE OPENING OF THE STATION. THESE ARRANGEMENTS, WHICH COME UNDER STAGE II OF THE TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT SCHEME IN CONNECTION WITH THE OPENING OF THE STATION, WILL COVER THE FOLLOWING MEASURES:

TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS

THE TAI WAI BUS TERMINUS WILL BE CONVERTED INTO A TEMPORARY TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE FOR THE FRANCHISED BUSES, GREEN MINIBUSES, TAXIS AND PRIVATE VEHICLES. THE SECTION OF TSUEN NAM ROAD BETWEEN TAI WAI ROAD AND MEI TIN ROAD WILL BE RE-ROUTED FROM TWO-WAY TO ONE-WAY WESTBOUND.

NO VEHICLES OTHER THAN FRANCHISED BUSES WILL BE ALLOWED TO ENTER THE TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE FROM MEI TIN ROAD AND CHIK WAN ROAD, OR TO ENTER MEI TIN ROAD FROM TSUEN NAM ROAD.

KMB BUS SERVICES

THE ROUTINGS OF KMB ROUTE 80K (SUN CHUI TO SIU LEK YUEN) AND ROUTE 82K (MEI LAM TO FO TAN KCR STATION) WILL BE REVISED. ON JOURNEYS TO SIU LEK YUEN, BUSES ON ROUTE 80K WILL BE DIVERTED TO CHE KUNG MUI ROAD, MEI TIN ROAD, TSUEN NAM ROAD, TAI WAI BUS TERMINUS, TAI WAI ROAD AND TAI PO ROAD.

ON SUN CHUI-BOUND JOURNEYS, BUSES WILL BE DIVERTED TO TAI PO ROAD, SHING HO ROAD, CHIK FUK STREET, CHIK LUK LANE, TSUEN NAM ROAD, MEI TIN ROAD AND CHE KUNG MUI ROAD.

ON JOURNEYS TO FO TAN, BUSES ON ROUTE 82K WILL BE DIVERTED TO MEI TIN ROAD, TSUEN NAM ROAD, TAI WAI BUS TERMINUS, TAI WAI ROAD, CHIK FAI STREET, MEI TIN ROAD AND CHE KUNG MUI ROAD.

ON MEI LAM-ROUND JOURNEYS, BUSES WILL OPERATE VIA CHE KUNG MUI ROAD, MEI TIN ROAD, TSUEN NAM ROAD, TAI WAI BUS TERMINUS, TAI WAI ROAD, CHIK FAI STREET AND MEI TIN ROAD.

GREEN MINIBUS SERVICES

THE TERMINI OF NT GREEN MINIBUS ROUTE 63K (PAK TIN MUI LEE TEMPORARY HOUSING AREA TO TAI WAI KCR STATION) AND ROUTE 64K (FU SHAN-LOWER SHING MUN TEMPORARY HOUSING AREA TO TAI WAI KCR STATION) WILL BE RELOCATED FROM SHING WAN ROAD TO THE TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE.

TAXI SERVICES

TAXI SERVICES

A TAXI STAND WILL BE PROVIDED AT THE TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE.

OTHER VEHICLES

OTHER VEHICLES CAN STOP FOR PASSENGERS AT THE TRANSPORT INTERCHANGE ADJACENT TO THE CAR PARK.

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WING LOK STREET RESTRICTION
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TO FACILITATE ROAD WORKS, THE SECTION OF WING LOK STREET 30 METRES EAST OF ITS JUNCTION WITH RUMSEY STREET WILL BE MADE A DAILY 24-HOUR URBAN CLEARWAY FOR ABOUT SIX WEEKS STARTING FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY (APRIL 19).

WITHIN THE RESTRICTED ZONE, NO VEHICLE WILL BE ALLOWED TO STOP FOR PASSENGERS OR GOODS.

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TUEN MUN WATER CUT
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FRESH WATER SUPPLY TO CERTAIN PREMISES IN TUEN MUN WILL BE TURNED OFF FROM 3 PM ON SATURDAY (APRIL 19) TO 8 AM THE FOLLOWING DAY FOR MAINS WORK.

THE AFFECTED PREMISES ARE BOUNDED BY TSING WAN ROAD AND LUNG MUN ROAD, FROM PUI TO ROAD TO LUNG KWU TAN, INCLUDING TAP SHEK KOK, SIU LANG SHUI, MONG HAU SHEK, SHEK KOK TSUI, PAK KOK, SHAN SHEK WAN AND TSING SHAN TSUEN.

SIU SHAN COURT, BUTTERFLY ESTATE, PAK KOK AND WU KING TEMPORARY HOUSING AREAS, WU KING ESTATE, MELODY GARDEN, SIU HEI COURT, CASTLE PEAK BOYS' HOME, YEUNG SIU HANG AND SHAN KING ESTATE WILL ALSO BE AFFECTED.

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