



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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CONTENTS

PAGE NO.

TRANSCRIPT OF GOVERNOR AT AIRPORT BEFORE DEPARTURE FOR BRUSSELS	1
PHASED PROGRAMME FOR BN(O) APPLICATIONS	4
HK RANKS SIXTH IN GLOBAL FOREIGN EXCHANGE MARKET	5
MONETARY AFFAIRS BRANCH RETITLED	7
SCHEDULE 1 TO COMAC ORDINANCE AMENDED	7
TIME FOR VOTER REGISTRATION	8
HONG KONG PROPERTY REVIEW 1993	8
MORE RESOURCES TO HELP LESS FORTUNATE PEOPLE	9
LICENSING CONTROL FOR PESTICIDES SIMPLIFIED	10
GENERAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY	10
REVISED FEE FOR RATES/CROWN RENT ENQUIRY	11
MORE VIETNAMESE RETURN HOME	11
TEMPORARY ROOMS FOR QUIET STUDY	11
HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND MONEY MARKET OPERATIONS ..	12

TRANSCRIPT OF GOVERNOR AT AIRPORT BEFORE DEPARTURE FOR BRUSSELS

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GOVERNOR : I'M AS YOU KNOW VISITING BOTH BRUSSELS AND LONDON IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS. I'M GOING TO BRUSSELS FOR MEETINGS WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, MR JACQUES DELORS; LEON BRITTAN, THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION AND OTHER COMMISSION OFFICIALS. I'M ALSO MEETING THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE BELGIUM FOREIGN MINISTER. THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THAT VISIT IS TO DISCUSS TRADE MATTERS. WE HAVE AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TRADING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY. WE BOTH HAVE A SHARED INTEREST IN A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION TO THE GATT URUGUAY ROUND, AND I'LL BE DISCUSSING THAT IN PARTICULAR WITH EUROPEAN COMMUNITY OFFICIALS. I HOPE THAT WILL BE A USEFUL EXCHANGE IN THE INTEREST OF EXPORTERS IN HONG KONG, FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY, BUT IN OTHER INDUSTRIES AS WELL. I'M THEN MOVING ON TO LONDON. IN LONDON, I SHALL BE OF COURSE SEEING THE PRIME MINISTER, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY AND OTHER MINISTERS. I'LL BE MAKING A NUMBER OF SPEECHES, INCLUDING ONE AT THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS ON HONG KONG, AND ANOTHER ON FREE TRADE, WHICH IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR US HERE IN HONG KONG. I'LL BE TAKING PART IN A NUMBER OF OTHER DISCUSSIONS AND I HOPE THAT DURING THAT PERIOD IN LONDON AND THE UNITED KINGDOM WE'LL BE ABLE TO REVIEW THE PRESENT POSITION IN HONG KONG AND DEVELOP OUR STRATEGY FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS. SO BEFORE I SEE YOU NEXT AT THIS AIRPORT, I'VE GOT A PRETTY FULL PROGRAMME.

Q : MR LI SAID TODAY THAT BRITAIN HAD SHUT THE DOOR OF TALKS. DO YOU ACCEPT THAT ?

GOVERNOR : I THINK IT'S EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER, FIRST OF ALL, WHERE THE INITIATIVE FOR TALKS CAME FROM. WAS IT BRITAIN OR CHINA WHICH ARGUED FOR TALKS FROM OCTOBER ONWARDS ? IT WAS BRITAIN. WAS IT BRITAIN OR CHINA THAT PROPOSED TALKS IN FEBRUARY ? IT WAS BRITAIN. WAS IT BRITAIN OR CHINA THAT PROPOSED THAT TALKS SHOULD START ON THE FEBRUARY 24 ? IT WAS BRITAIN. WAS IT BRITAIN OR CHINA THAT PRODUCED A NEW PRECONDITION FOR TALKS, UNLIKE ANYTHING WE HAVE HAD FOR THE LAST DECADE ? IT WAS ALAS CHINA. WE ARE VERY HAPPY FOR TALKS TO BEGIN. I WOULD BE HAPPY FOR TALKS TO BEGIN TOMORROW. THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WOULD BE HAPPY FOR TALKS TO BEGIN TOMORROW. WE HAVE AGREED THE BASIS OF TALKS THAT PROPOSED ORIGINALLY BY CHINA, A BASIS WHICH DEPENDS ON THE JOINT DECLARATION, CONVERGENCE WITH THE BASIC LAW AND THE RELEVANT UNDERSTANDINGS AND AGREEMENTS REACHED BETWEEN BRITAIN AND CHINA. WE'VE AGREED THAT. SO LET THE TALKING BEGIN. WE CAN'T TALK INDEFINITELY ABOUT WHEN WE'LL TALK. LET'S START TALKING. THERE'S NO PROBLEM FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW.

Q : IF THERE ARE NO TALKS, ARE YOU DETERMINED TO PRESS AHEAD AND PRESENT YOUR REFORM PROGRAMME TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ?

GOVERNOR : THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL TOOK THE VIEW YESTERDAY THAT WE SHOULD MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THE INTRODUCTION OF THE BILL TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AFTER EASTER IN THE LIGHT OF ANY OTHER DEVELOPMENTS AND THAT MEANS EXACTLY WHAT IT SAYS. BUT WE'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR HONG KONG UNTIL THE MIDDLE OF 1997. WE'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR HONG KONG WHILE THE 1994 AND 1995 ELECTIONS TAKE PLACE, AND WE CAN'T DUCK OUT OF THAT RESPONSIBILITY.

Q : THE SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE UNITED STATES SAID THAT THEY SUPPORTED DEMOCRATIC REFORM IN HONG KONG. DOES IT HELP OR WORSEN THE PRESENT POSITION BECAUSE CHINA SAID THAT THEY WOULD NOT ALLOW ANY THIRD COUNTRY TO INTERFERE WITH HONG KONG AFFAIRS ?

GOVERNOR : I DON'T REMEMBER CHINA DENOUNCING SENIOR MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW WHEN HE MADE A NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE POSITION IN HONG KONG. THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT THE REST OF THE WORLD IS INTERESTED IN THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT DECLARATION. I'M NOT SURPRISED BY THAT. THEY RECOGNISE OTHER COUNTRIES : CANADA, UNITED STATES, AUSTRALIA, THE COUNTRIES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, COUNTRIES IN THE REGION. THEY RECOGNISE THAT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT DECLARATION IS A MATTER PRINCIPALLY FOR BRITAIN AND CHINA, BUT BECAUSE HONG KONG IS SUCH A GREAT INTERNATIONAL CITY, SUCH A GREAT INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, WITH A HUGE EXPATRIATE POPULATION AT THE GATEWAY TO CHINA, AT THE CROSSROADS OF ASIA AND THE REST OF THE WORLD. BECAUSE OF ALL THAT, OTHER PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN OUR SUCCESS AND THAT'S NOT VERY SURPRISING.

Q : (SUPPORT IN BRITAIN)

GOVERNOR : ANYBODY WHO READ THE EXCHANGES IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AFTER THE FOREIGN SECRETARY'S STATEMENT THE OTHER DAY WILL, I THINK, HAVE RECOGNISED THAT THERE IS GREATER SUPPORT FOR THE POLICY WE ARE PURSUING IN HONG KONG THAN THERE HAS BEEN FOR A DECADE OR LONGER. I CAN'T REMEMBER A TIME WHEN THERE WAS SUCH UNEQUIVOCAL SUPPORT FROM ALL PARTIES AT WESTMINSTER FOR THE POLICY BEING PURSUED IN HONG KONG THAN THERE IS TODAY. LOOK AT WHAT SIR DAVID STEEL HAS SAID. LOOK AT WHAT JACK CUNNINGHAM, THE LABOUR PARTY FOREIGN SPOKESMAN HAS SAID. THOSE ARE THE FACT OF THE MATTER AND ANYBODY WHO TRIES TO RE-WRITE WHAT IS HAPPENING AT WESTMINSTER WILL HAVE A VERY BIG JOB TO DO.

Q : WHAT IS THE POINT OF PURSUING YOUR REFORMS IF CHINA THREATENS TO DO, THEY JUST DISMANTLE ANY LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY THAT YOU MAY HAVE ASSEMBLED BY 1997 ?

GOVERNOR : I FIND IT DIFFICULT TO ANSWER HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT CHINA MIGHT DO BEFORE WE KNOW WHAT PROPOSALS WILL EMERGE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. LIFE WOULD BE PERHAPS A LOT EASIER, A LOT EASIER FOR PEOPLE IN HONG KONG TO UNDERSTAND, IF INSTEAD OF JUST CRITICISING WHAT WE'VE PROPOSED FOR DISCUSSION HERE IN HONG KONG, CHINESE OFFICIALS WOULD PUT FORWARD THEIR OWN PROPOSALS. WHERE ARE THEIR PROPOSALS ? WE WAIT IN ANXIOUS ANTICIPATION TO DISCOVER WHAT THEY ARE.

Q : HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND TO THAT SAYING CHINA DOES NOT LIKE FOREIGN INVOLVEMENT?

GOVERNOR : I REPEAT WHAT I SAID EARLIER THAT I RECALLED CHINA'S REACTION WHEN THE SENIOR MINISTER IN SINGAPORE MADE THE COMMENTS. NO. I ALSO REPEAT WHAT I SAID THAT IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT THE WORLD IS INTERESTED IN WHAT HAPPENS IN HONG KONG EVEN THOUGH THE REST OF THE WORLD RECOGNISES THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHAT HAPPENS IN HONG KONG BELONGS TO BRITAIN AND CHINA.

Q : MR. PATTEN, AS YOU SAY, YOU WOULD LIKE TO REVIEW THE LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR THE NEXT TRANSITIONAL PERIOD WITH THE PRIME MINISTER. WHAT SORT OF THAT? IS THAT MEANT THAT BRITAIN WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE TO BREAK THE DEADLOCK?

GOVERNOR: WE TOOK THE INITIATIVE AGAIN AND AGAIN TO BREAK THE DEADLOCK FROM OCTOBER ONWARDS. I REPEAT IT WAS A BRITISH INITIATIVE IN FEBRUARY TO START TALKS. BRITAIN AND THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT WOULD BE VERY VERY HAPPY TO SEE TALKS STARTING TOMORROW AT WHATEVER EARLY TIME OF THE DAY SUITS CHINESE OFFICIALS ON EXACTLY THE SAME BASIS THAT WE'VE BEEN TALKING FOR THE LAST DECADE. IT ISN'T BRITAIN, IT IS NOT THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT, IT IS NOT THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG WHO INVENTED A NEW PRECONDITION. BUT, I'D VERY MUCH HOPE THAT WE CAN FIND A WAY ROUND THIS. I WOULD LIKE TO SEE TALKS THOUGH I AM BOUND TO SAY THAT THE DIFFICULTIES WE'VE HAD IN THE LAST COUPLE OF MONTHS SUGGEST, I THINK, TO EVERYONE THAT TALKS WOULD BE ANYTHING BUT A PUSH-OVER.

Q : ARE YOU SAYING THAT BRITAIN WILL NOT TAKE FURTHER INITIATIVE TO BRING THE TWO PARTIES TO THE NEGOTIATION TABLE ?

GOVERNOR : I THINK YOU SHOULD ASK WHAT INITIATIVES CHINA WILL TAKE, GIVEN THAT IT'S A NEW INVENTED CHINESE PRECONDITION WHICH HAS STOPPED TALKS STARTING.

Q : WHY THERE IS THE NECESSITY FOR SUCH A REVIEW ?

GOVERNOR: BECAUSE YOU WOULD BE AMAZED IF I WAS TO GO TO LONDON AND TALK TO THE PRIME MINISTER AND TALK TO THE FOREIGN SECRETARY AND NOT HAVE A REVIEW OF OUR PRESENT POLICIES. BUT TO REVIEW PRESENT POLICIES DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING MORE THAN THAT. AT EVERY STAGE IN THE LAST WEEKS AND MONTHS, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAVE WHOLE-HEARTEDLY, TOTALLY ENDORSED THE POLICIES THAT WE'VE BEEN PURSUING. THAT HAS BEEN THE SITUATION. IT IS THE SITUATION TODAY. AND I AM SURE IT WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE SITUATION IN THE FUTURE. ONE LAST QUESTION.

Q : NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS TODAY HAS PASSED A RESOLUTION FOR THE SETTING UP OF A WORKING GROUP FOR THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE FUTURE SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION. WHAT DO YOU THINK? IS IT A GOOD THING FOR HONG KONG?

GOVERNOR : THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT CHINA RESUMES SOVEREIGNTY OF HONG KONG IN JULY 1997. THERE IS EQUALLY NO QUESTION THAT BRITAIN IS SOVEREIGN UNTIL THAT DATE IN 1997. IF CHINA WISHES TO MAKE ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS TO TRY TO HELP IT DISCHARGE ITS RESPONSIBILITIES FROM THE MIDDLE OF 1997 MORE EFFECTIVELY, THEN SO BE IT. I HOPE THE ARRANGEMENTS THAT IT MAKES ENABLE IT TO DO ITS JOB MORE CONSCIENTIOUSLY AND MORE COMPETENTLY THAN WOULD OTHERWISE BE THE CASE.

Q : WILL YOU HAVE ANY TIME FOR A EASTER HOLIDAY?

GOVERNOR : I'VE GOT OFF EASTER SATURDAY THOUGH I AM DOING ANY QUESTION ON GOOD FRIDAY, EASTER SUNDAY AND I HOPE THE MONDAY AS WELL. BUT, THAT'S ABOUT IT. I HOPE YOU HAVE LONGER. THANK YOU VERY MUCH INDEED. MANY THANKS.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 1993

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PHASED PROGRAMME FOR BN(O) APPLICATIONS

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THE GOVERNMENT HOPES TO INTRODUCE A PHASED PROGRAMME FROM THE SECOND HALF OF THIS YEAR FOR BRITISH DEPENDENT TERRITORY CITIZENS (BDTCS) WHO WISH TO ACQUIRE BRITISH NATIONAL (OVERSEAS) (BNO) PASSPORTS.

THIS IS SEEN AS THE ONLY PRACTICAL SOLUTION TO OVERCOME LAST-MINUTE APPLICATIONS WHICH COULD NOT POSSIBLY BE HANDLED BY THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT, PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, DR SIMON VICKERS, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN ATTENDING THE LEGCO SUB COMMITTEE ON NATIONALITY.

HE SAID THE PROBLEM HAD BEEN THOROUGHLY EXAMINED AND VARIOUS OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN CONSULTATION WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.

THE PROPOSAL WAS EXPLAINED TO THE SUB COMMITTEE IN RESPONSE TO THEIR EARLIER QUESTION AS TO HOW THE GOVERNMENT WAS GOING TO AVOID A LAST-MINUTE RUSH ON BN(O) APPLICATIONS IN EARLY 1997.

"BDTCS WHO WISH TO APPLY FOR BN(O) PASSPORTS WOULD BE CALLED FORWARD BY AGE GROUPS OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS TO LODGE THEIR APPLICATIONS," HE SAID.

DR VICKERS EMPHASISED THAT THE ACQUISITION OF THE BN(O) STATUS WOULD BE ABSOLUTELY VOLUNTARY. ONLY THOSE WHO WISH TO CONTINUE TO TRAVEL ON A BRITISH PASSPORT BEYOND 1997 AND DO NOT ALREADY HAVE A BN(O) PASSPORT WOULD NEED TO APPLY.

THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY GOT A BN(O) PASSPORT WOULD NOT NEED TO APPLY AGAIN.

THE PROGRAMME WOULD REQUIRE AN AMENDMENT BY ORDER-IN-COUNCIL TO THE UNITED KINGDOM'S HONG KONG (BRITISH NATIONALITY) ORDER 1986.

THE ORDER PUT BEFORE THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT FOR APPROVAL WOULD CONTAIN PROVISIONS FOR ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FROM PEOPLE WHO ARE PREVENTED FROM APPLYING ON TIME B SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

BUT DR VICKERS SAID WANTING MORE TIME TO CONSIDER WOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS A VALID REASON COVERED BY THIS PROVISION.

IF PARLIAMENT APPROVES THE PROPOSALS, THE FIRST SLOT WOULD BE FROM JULY TO OCTOBER AND WOULD COVER BDTCS AGED 22-26.

"FURTHER DETAILS WOULD BE ANNOUNCED AS AND WHEN THE ORDER IS AGREED BY PARLIAMENT," DR VICKERS SAID.

HE POINTED OUT THAT UNDER THE HONG KONG (BRITISH NATIONALITY) ORDER 1986, HONG KONG BDTCS WOULD CEASE TO BE SUCH CITIZENS ON JULY 1, 1997, BUT THEY WERE ENTITLED TO BE REGISTERED AS BN(O)S AND TO HOLD OR BE INCLUDED IN BN(O) PASSPORTS BEFORE THAT DATE.

/IT IS

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THERE ARE ABOUT THREE MILLION BDTCS WHO HAVE NOT APPLIED FOR BN(O) PASSPORTS. THERE WILL ALSO BE A LARGE NUMBER OF RENEWALS OF BN(O) PASSPORTS DUE IN 1997.

"THIS SORT OF NUMBER WOULD BE QUITE IMPOSSIBLE TO DEAL WITH AT THE LAST MOMENT. THE ADMINISTRATION IS THEREFORE PROPOSING A PHASED PROGRAMME, SIMILAR TO PREVIOUS IDENTITY CARD RE-ISSUE EXERCISES, FOR REGISTERING BDTCS AS BN(O)S AND FOR ISSUING THEM WITH BN(O) PASSPORTS IF THEY WANT THEM," DR VICKERS EXPLAINED.

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HK RANKS SIXTH IN GLOBAL FOREIGN EXCHANGE MARKET

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A SURVEY REPORT ON GLOBAL FOREIGN EXCHANGE MARKET ACTIVITY, SHOWS THAT AMONG THE 26 PARTICIPATING CENTRES, HONG KONG RANKED SIXTH, FOLLOWING THE UK, USA, JAPAN, SINGAPORE AND SWITZERLAND, SAME RANK AS THE LAST SURVEY IN 1989.

THE REPORT WAS PUBLISHED YESTERDAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE BANK FOR INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENTS (BIS).

THE GLOBAL FOREIGN EXCHANGE MARKET SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED IN APRIL 1992.

THE REPORT PRODUCED BY BIS SUMMARISES THE RESULTS OF THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE MARKET SURVEYS IN THE 26 PARTICIPATING CENTRES. IT ALSO INCLUDES AN OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE SCALE AND STRUCTURE OF THE GLOBAL FOREIGN EXCHANGE MARKET TRANSACTION.

"OF AN ESTIMATED GLOBAL DAILY NET TURNOVER OF US\$880 BILLION (I.E. ADJUSTED FOR BOTH INTER-DEALER AND CROSS-BORDER DOUBLE-COUNTING), AROUND SEVEN PER CENT INVOLVED THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE MARKET OF HONG KONG," A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID.

"THE PATTERN OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE ACTIVITIES IN HONG KONG, IN TERMS OF CURRENCY COMPOSITION, COUNTERPARTY ANALYSIS AND TYPES OF TRANSACTION, IS BROADLY CONSISTENT WITH THAT OF THE GLOBAL FOREIGN EXCHANGE TRANSACTIONS," HE ADDED.

THE MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE HONG KONG SURVEY ARE SET OUT IN A SPECIAL REVIEW ARTICLE IN THE SEPTEMBER 1992 ISSUE OF THE HONG KONG MONTHLY DIGEST OF STATISTICS.

LIMITED COPIES OF THE BIS REPORT ARE AVAILABLE TO PEOPLE WHO ARE PROFESSIONALLY INTERESTED. THOSE WHO WISH TO REQUEST A COPY CAN WRITE TO:

MONETARY STATISTICS UNIT,
HONG KONG MONETARY AUTHORITY,
ADMIRALTY CENTRE, TOWER I,
ROOM 1804, 18, HARCOURT RD.,
HONG KONG.

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Table 1 : Foreign exchange market transactions in April 1989 and April 1992

Country	Net Turnover ⁽¹⁾ (Daily Average)		
	April 1989 (US\$ Bn)	April 1992 (US\$ Bn)	Percentage change between April 1989 and April 1992
United Kingdom	187	300.2	60.5
United States	129	192.3	49.1
Japan	115	126.1	9.7
Singapore	55	75.9	37.9
Switzerland	57	68.1	19.4
Hong Kong	49	60.9	24.3
Germany	..	56.5	..
France	26	35.5	36.7
Australia	29.7	29.8	0.5
Denmark	13	27.6	112.3
Canada	15	22.5	50.2
Sweden	13	21.5	65.2
Netherlands	13	20.1	54.7
Belgium	10	15.9	59.4
Italy	10	15.5	55.1
Luxembourg	..	13.3	..
Spain	4.4	12.5	183.1
Finland	3.4	6.8	98.8
Ireland	5.2	6.0	16.3
Norway	4.4	5.2	18.6
Austria	..	4.4	..
New Zealand	..	4.2	..
Bahrain	3.0	3.5	15.6
South Africa	..	3.5	..
Portugal	0.9	1.3	47.0
Greece	0.4	1.1	173.8
Total	743.4	1,130.3	41.0⁽²⁾

(1) Net of local inter-dealer double-counting, no adjustment for cross-border double-counting.

(2) Percentage change calculated from data reported by countries in both 1989 and 1992.

.. not reported

MONETARY AFFAIRS BRANCH RETITLED

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THE MONETARY AFFAIRS BRANCH WILL BE RETITLED THE FINANCIAL SERVICES BRANCH WITH EFFECT FROM TOMORROW, A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

AS A CONSEQUENCE, THE DESIGNATION OF THE SECRETARY, MR MICHAEL CARTLAND, WILL BE THE SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID THE FINANCIAL SERVICES BRANCH WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PREPARATION AND PROCESSING OF LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS IN BANKING AND MONETARY MATTERS WHILE THE HONG KONG MONETARY AUTHORITY, TO BE ESTABLISHED ON APRIL 1, WOULD TAKE OVER FROM THE BRANCH THE OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR MONETARY AND RESERVES MANAGEMENT AND BANKING SUPERVISION.

"THE BRANCH WILL THEREFORE BE ABLE TO CONCENTRATE ITS EFFORTS AND RESOURCES MORE TOWARDS OTHER EQUALLY IMPORTANT AREAS IN THE FINANCIAL SERVICES SECTOR, SUCH AS THE SECURITIES MARKETS, THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY AND CORPORATE AND COMPANY MATTERS," HE SAID.

"ALSO ON APRIL 1, THE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS DIVISION, TOGETHER WITH THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT, WILL BE TRANSFERRED FROM THE ECONOMIC SERVICES BRANCH TO THE FINANCIAL SERVICES BRANCH.

"THIS MEANS THAT THE FINANCIAL SERVICES BRANCH WILL BE ASSUMING ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITY AS THE MAIN SOURCE OF ADVICE WITHIN GOVERNMENT ON ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL MATTERS," HE ADDED.

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SCHEDULE 1 TO COMAC ORDINANCE AMENDED

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THE HONG KONG MONETARY AUTHORITY AND THE SECRETARIAT OF THE OFFICE OF MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (OMLEGCO) HAVE BEEN INCLUDED IN THE LIST OF DEPARTMENTS AND ORGANISATIONS GOVERNED BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINTS ORDINANCE UNDER AN AMENDMENT ORDER MADE BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

THIS WAS ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN WHEN COMMENTING ON THE COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINTS ORDINANCE (AMENDMENT OF SCHEDULE 1) ORDER 1993 PUBLISHED IN THE GAZETTE TODAY.

OMLEGCO IS FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE OFFICE OF MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE COUNCILS (OMELCO).

THE SPOKESMAN SAID AS A RESULT OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SEPARATE HONG KONG MONETARY AUTHORITY FROM APRIL 1, 1993 AND THE CHANGE OF TITLE OF THE FORMER OMELCO SECRETARIAT TO OMLEGCO, IT WAS NECESSARY TO AMEND THE LIST TO ENABLE THE COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINTS TO DEAL WITH COMPLAINTS RELATING TO THESE TWO ORGANISATIONS.

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TIME FOR VOTER REGISTRATION

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THE ANNUAL VOTER REGISTRATION CAMPAIGN WILL START TOMORROW (THURSDAY) UNTIL JULY 1.

THE REGISTRATION OFFICER, MR LAI KWAN-TAT, SAID SLIGHTLY MORE THAN HALF OF THE 3.7 MILLION ELIGIBLE ELECTORS WERE ALREADY ON THE ROLL, AND IT WAS TIME FOR THE REMAINING HALF TO CONSIDER SIGNING UP AS WELL.

MAKING PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THOSE IN THE 21-25 AGE GROUP, HE SAID OUT OF AN ESTIMATED TOTAL OF 374,000 IN THIS GROUP, ONLY 75,000 WERE REGISTERED.

THIS REPRESENTS A REGISTRATION RATE OF 20 PER CENT AS COMPARED WITH THE OVERALL RATE OF 52 PER CENT.

MR LAI SAID THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR REGISTRATION WERE SIMPLE.

"GENERALLY, PERSONS AGED 21 OR ABOVE, WHO ARE HONG KONG PERMANENT RESIDENTS OR HAVE ORDINARILY RESIDED IN HONG KONG FOR A PERIOD OF SEVEN YEARS, ARE ELIGIBLE TO REGISTER," HE EXPLAINED.

RESIDENTS MAY PICK UP A REGISTRATION FORM AT ANY OF THE 1,500 DISTRIBUTION POINTS AT DISTRICT OFFICES, HOUSING ESTATE OFFICES, POST OFFICES, SOME GOVERNMENT OFFICES AND BRANCHES OF THE HONGKONGBANK, HANG SENG BANK, CHARTERED BANK AND THE BANK OF CHINA GROUP AND WELFARE AGENCIES.

FORMS MAY ALSO BE REQUESTED THROUGH THE REGISTRATION HOTLINE 827 1122.

MR LAI ALSO URGED REGISTERED ELECTORS TO REPORT ANY CHANGE OF RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS TO THE REGISTRATION AND ELECTORAL OFFICE BY USING THE SAME REGISTRATION FORM OR BY LETTER.

"IT IS IMPORTANT FOR REGISTERED ELECTORS TO KEEP US POSTED ABOUT THEIR RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS, NOT ONLY TO ENSURE THAT THEY CAN VOTE IN THE CORRECT CONSTITUENCY BUT ALSO TO FACILITATE CAMPAIGNING WHEN THERE IS AN ELECTION," HE SAID.

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HONG KONG PROPERTY REVIEW 1993

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THE RATING AND VALUATION DEPARTMENT TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PUBLISHED A PUBLICATION THAT PRESENTS A COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY OF THE LOCAL PROPERTY MARKET LAST YEAR IN TERMS OF STOCK, SUPPLY, TAKE-UP, VACANCY AS WELL AS RENTALS AND PRICES FOR THE MAIN PROPERTY SECTORS.

FORECASTS OF SUPPLY FOR 1993 AND 1994 ARE ALSO INCLUDED.

/THE BILINGUAL

THE BILINGUAL PUBLICATION "HONG KONG PROPERTY REVIEW 1993", AT \$100, IS ON SALE AT THE GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS CENTRE, GROUND FLOOR, GENERAL POST OFFICE BUILDING, 2 CONNAUGHT PLACE, CENTRAL, HONG KONG.

ENQUIRIES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE TECHNICAL SECRETARY, RATING AND VALUATION DEPARTMENT, 26TH FLOOR, HENNESSY CENTRE, 500 HENNESSY ROAD, CAUSEWAY BAY, HONG KONG (TEL 805 7622).

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MORE RESOURCES TO HELP LESS FORTUNATE PEOPLE
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THERE IS A RISING EXPECTATION AND WILLINGNESS IN THE COMMUNITY TO SHARE MORE OF THE RESOURCES WITH THOSE LESS FORTUNATE AND PRODUCTIVE MEMBERS OF SOCIETY.

THIS WAS SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE, MR IAN STRACHAN, WHEN ADDRESSING THE OPENING OF THE MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF HONG KONG'S LEI CHENG UK SHELTERED WORKSHOP.

"WE SHARE THE CALL FOR AN INCREASE SUPPLY OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO HELP THEM ATTAIN THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE DEGREE OF INTEGRATION INTO THE COMMUNITY," HE STRESSED.

MR STRACHAN POINTED OUT THAT IN THE 1992 GREEN PAPER ON REHABILITATION, THE GOVERNMENT HAD PROPOSED EXPANDING REHABILITATION SERVICES OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS AT AN ANNUAL ADDITIONAL RECURRENT COST OF ABOUT \$140 MILLION.

IN ADDITION, THE GOVERNOR, IN HIS POLICY ADDRESS LAST OCTOBER, HAD ALSO UNEQUIVOCALLY COMMITTED AN ADDITIONAL SUM OF \$2.3 BILLION FOR THE EXPANSION AND IMPROVEMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES, INCLUDING REHABILITATION, OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, HE NOTED.

"BUT WE STILL HAVE A CONSIDERABLE SHORTFALL OF REHABILITATION FACILITIES," MR STRACHAN SAID, ADDING THAT IN GENERAL, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SUCH FACILITIES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY HAD BEEN WELL ACCEPTED BY RESIDENTS.

OVER THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS, HOWEVER, THE CONSTRUCTION OF A HOSTEL FOR SEVERELY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PEOPLE IN THE TUNG TAU ESTATE, AND AN ACTIVITY CENTRE FOR DISCHARGED MENTAL PATIENTS AT LAGUNA CITY HAD BEEN OPPOSED BY SOME LOCAL RESIDENTS, HE NOTED.

SUCH REJECTION AND PREJUDICE VERY OFTEN STEMMED FROM UNGROUNDED AND IRRATIONAL REASONS, HE ADDED.

"I BELIEVE THAT AS A RESULT OF MUCH HARD WORK, WITH IMPROVED COMMUNICATION AND EXPLANATION, BASED ON GOOD WILL BY THE GOVERNMENT AND PARTIES CONCERNED, THERE ARE SOME SIGNS THAT THE RESIDENTS OF TUNG TAU ESTATE AND LAGUNA CITY HAVE MODIFIED THEIR ATTITUDES.

"I AM MOST ENCOURAGED TO SEE THAT LEGISLATORS, THE MASS MEDIA AND THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE HAVE ALL GIVEN STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE CONTINUATION OF THE TWO PROJECTS," MR STRACHAN ADDED.

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LICENSING CONTROL FOR PESTICIDES SIMPLIFIED

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THE AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES DEPARTMENT WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FROM TOMORROW (THURSDAY) FOR THE PROCESSING AND APPROVAL OF THE IMPORT AND EXPORT LICENCES FOR PESTICIDES UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY FROM THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF TRADE.

"THE NEW ARRANGEMENT STREAMLINES THE EXISTING PROCEDURES. LICENCES CAN NORMALLY BE READY FOR COLLECTION WITHIN THE SAME DAY SHOULD THERE BE NO COMPLICATIONS," A SPOKESMAN FOR THE TRADE DEPARTMENT SAID.

UNDER THE OLD SYSTEM, IMPORT AND EXPORT LICENCE APPLICATIONS COVERING PESTICIDES HAD TO BE SUBMITTED FIRST TO THE AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES DEPARTMENT FOR ENDORSEMENT AND THEN TO THE TRADE DEPARTMENT FOR SUBSEQUENT LICENSING APPROVAL.

STARTING TOMORROW, LICENCE APPLICATIONS COVERING PESTICIDES SHOULD BE SUBMITTED AND COLLECTED AT THE PLANT AND PESTICIDES REGULATORY UNIT OF THE AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES DEPARTMENT AT ROOM 808 OF CANTON ROAD GOVERNMENT OFFICES.

THE LICENSING REQUIREMENT IN RESPECT OF PESTICIDES IS FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY REASONS.

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GENERAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

* * * * *

THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT IS TO CONDUCT THE GENERAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY FOR THE QUARTER FROM APRIL TO JUNE 1993.

THE SURVEY, CONDUCTED ON A CONTINUOUS BASIS SINCE AUGUST 1981, COLLECTS INFORMATION ON EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT, AND THE GENERAL SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POPULATION.

IN ADDITION, QUESTIONS ON HONG KONG RESIDENTS' EXPENDITURE ABROAD, SICK LEAVE AND MATERNITY LEAVE PATTERN OF EMPLOYEES, EXPENDITURE ON LEGAL SERVICE AND HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE ON RENT WILL ALSO BE INCLUDED IN THIS ROUND OF THE SURVEY.

EACH QUARTER, ABOUT 11,800 HOUSEHOLDS ARE SELECTED SCIENTIFICALLY FROM ALL DISTRICTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE SURVEY.

TO MEASURE MORE ACCURATELY THE CHANGES IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POPULATION, THE SURVEY ADOPTS AN OVERLAPPING SAMPLE DESIGN SUCH THAT ABOUT HALF OF THE HOUSEHOLDS ENUMERATED IN A GIVEN QUARTER ARE THE SAME AS THOSE ENUMERATED IN THE PREVIOUS QUARTER.

AN OFFICIAL LETTER, IN BOTH CHINESE AND ENGLISH, HAS BEEN SENT TO THE SAMPLED HOUSEHOLDS TO EXPLAIN THE PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY AND TO SEEK THEIR VOLUNTARY CO-OPERATION IN THE SURVEY.

CENSUS OFFICERS OF THE DEPARTMENT WILL CONTACT HOUSEHOLDS CONCERNED TO COLLECT THE REQUIRED INFORMATION.

/WHEN THEY

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 1993

- 11 -

WHEN THEY VISIT HOUSEHOLDS, CENSUS OFFICERS CARRY WITH THEM GOVERNMENT IDENTITY CARDS AND CERTIFICATES FOR CONDUCTING THE SURVEY.

THEY WILL MAKE SUCH DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION BY HOUSEHOLDS TO CONFIRM THEIR IDENTITIES.

THE GENERAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY IS CONDUCTED UNDER THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS ORDINANCE.

ACCORDING TO THE ORDINANCE, DATA RELATING TO INDIVIDUAL PERSONS OR HOUSEHOLDS COLLECTED WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL AND WILL NOT BE RELEASED TO THE PUBLIC, ANY PRIVATE ORGANISATIONS OR OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

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REVISED FEE FOR RATES/CROWN RENT ENQUIRY
* * * * *

THE DIRECTOR OF ACCOUNTING SERVICES TODAY (WEDNESDAY) SAID THE FEE FOR ENQUIRY OF AN OUTSTANDING RATES OR CROWN RENT ACCOUNT WILL BE REVISED FROM \$45 TO \$50 WITH EFFECT FROM APRIL 1, 1993.

THE INCREASE IS TO RECOVER THE FULL COSTS INCURRED IN PROVIDING SUCH SERVICE.

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MORE VIETNAMESE RETURN HOME
* * * * *

A GROUP OF 272 VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) RETURNED TO VIETNAM UNDER THE UNHCR'S VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION PROGRAMME.

COMPRISING 95 MEN, 71 WOMEN, 51 BOYS AND 55 GIRLS, THEY WERE THE 147TH BATCH TO GO BACK UNDER THE PROGRAMME.

THE GROUP BROUGHT TO 1,518 THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS WHO HAVE RETURNED VOLUNTARILY THIS YEAR, AND TO 27,830 THE TOTAL NUMBER OF RETURNEES SINCE THE PROGRAMME STARTED IN MARCH 1989.

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TEMPORARY ROOMS FOR QUIET STUDY
* * * * *

STARTING FROM TOMORROW (THURSDAY), STUDENTS CAN MAKE USE OF 101 TEMPORARY STUDY ROOMS PROVIDED BY THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT IN 51 GOVERNMENT AND AIDED SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT THE TERRITORY.

THEY WILL BE OPEN UNTIL JUNE 30 FROM MONDAYS TO FRIDAYS EXCEPT PUBLIC HOLIDAYS.

/OF THESE

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 1993

- 12 -

OF THESE, 21 FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS WILL OPEN FROM 7 PM TO 10 PM. THIRTY FOR BOTH PRIMARY AND SECONDARY STUDENTS WILL BE OPEN FROM 7 PM TO 9 PM.

THE TEMPORARY STUDY ROOM SCHEME PROVIDES A QUIET STUDY PLACE FOR STUDENTS DURING THE EXAMINATION PERIOD.

STUDY ROOM FACILITIES IN OVER 270 LOCATIONS ARE PROVIDED ALL THE YEAR ROUND BY THE URBAN AND REGIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENTS, THE CITY AND NEW TERRITORIES ADMINISTRATION, SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES.

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HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND
MONEY MARKET OPERATIONS
* * * * *

	\$ MILLION

OPENING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT	2,115
REVERSAL OF LAF	+35
BALANCE AFTER REVERSAL OF LAF	2,150
NET INJECTION/WITHDRAWAL TODAY	NIL
EFFECT OF LAF TODAY	-330
CLOSING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT	1,820
LAF RATE 2.00 BID/4.00 OFFER	TWI 113.4 *-0.2* 31.3.93

HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND

EF BILLS

HONG KONG GOVERNMENT BONDS

TERMS	YIELD	TERM	ISSUE	COUPON	PRICE	YIELD
1 WEEK	2.71 PCT	14 MONTHS	2405	5.50	102.44	3.31
1 MONTH	2.72 PCT	17 MONTHS	2408	4.375	101.23	3.48
3 MONTHS	2.90 PCT	20 MONTHS	2411	4.625	101.57	3.65
6 MONTHS	3.05 PCT	23 MONTHS	2502	4.75	101.64	3.87
12 MONTHS	3.35 PCT					

TOTAL TURNOVER OF BILLS AND BONDS - 20,755MN

CLOSED 31 MARCH 1993

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DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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

SUPPLEMENT

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 1993

CONTENTS

PAGE NO.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL:

BUDGET REFLECTS ASPIRATION OF COMMUNITY: FS	1
NEXT MRF WILL COVER 1997/98: FS	1
GROWING RECOGNITION OF TEMPORARY DEFICIT: FS	3
FS EXPLAINS ASSESSMENT IN PUBLIC EXPENDITURE GROWTH	4
IDEAS OPENED IN USING SANDWICH CLASS HOUSING FUND	5
ACCURATE PROVISION ON ACP DIFFICULT TO MAKE: FS	6
GOVT WILL DO EVERYTHING TO CONTAIN INFLATION: FS	7
BUDGET CONTRIBUTES TO MAINTAINING FAVOURABLE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT: FS	8
GOVT DOES NOT IGNORE NEEDS OF LOW-INCOME GROUP: FS	9
DEBATE ON SOCIAL SECURITY NOT VERY SUCCESSFUL: FS	10
BUDGET BUILDS ON SUCCESS: FS	11
FS DISAPPOINTED BY VOTING ABSTENTIONS	12
NO ONE WISHES TO DAMAGE HK: CS	12
/HIGH-LEVEL	

HIGH-LEVEL ADMINISTRATOR NEEDED TO IMPROVE JUDICIARY MANAGEMENT	14
ADMINISTRATION UPHOLDS PRINCIPLES OF OPENNESS, FAIRNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY	15
SANDWICH CLASS HOUSING SCHEME EXPLAINED	16
TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT TO CONTINUE	18
REVIEW OF POLICE MANNING UNDERWAY: S FOR S	19
WAY FORWARD FOR EDUCATION EXCITING AND CHALLENGING	21
HEALTH CARE SERVICES PRINCIPLE REAFFIRMED	23
MAXIMUM SUPPORT FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT	25
MEASURES TO TACKLE PUBLIC WORKS UNDERSPENDING IN PLACE	26
LOCALISATION OF LEGAL DEPARTMENT ENCOURAGING	28
RTHK PROGRAMME QUALITY, MORALE UNAFFECTED BY BUDGET CUT-BACKS	31
PUBLIC VIEWS SOUGHT ON SAHR PROCEDURES	33
CONFIDENTIAL DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES NOT TO MAKE PUBLIC	34
GOVT CONSIDERS RELAXING VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR CHINESE VISITORS	34
58,400 PUBLIC RENTAL UNITS MORE IN NEXT THREE YEARS	35
SPECIAL ALLOCATION OF TIN SHUI WAI FLATS	35
CALL TO PUBLICISE TV/RADIO PROGRAMMES UNDER COMPLAINTS	36
MASSIVE FLOODING CONTROL PROGRAMME IN THE PIPELINE	36

/CREDIT UNIT

CREDIT UNIT SYSTEM FOR TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION	37
HK OFFICIAL TO ATTEND HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE	38
EMPLOYERS ENCOURAGED TO SET UP WORK-BASED CHILD CARE CENTRES	39
APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES ON COURT OF APPEAL JUDGES EXPLAINED ...	39
STUDIES UNDERWAY FOR LANDFILL RESTORATION PROGRAMME	40
WIDE-RANGING CONCESSIONARY SCHEMES FOR ELDERLY	41
TRAFFIC FLOW ON TOLO HIGHWAY WITHIN DESIGN CAPACITY	42
NO SLOPES UNDER HA ARE DANGEROUS	42
INVESTMENT PROMOTION AND PROTECTION AGREEMENTS - AN UPDATE ...	43
HOUSING SOCIETY BUILDINGS GOVERNED BY DMC	44
PROVISION OF ACCOMMODATION FOR STREET SLEEPERS	44
INFORMATION IN FLAT SALES BROCHURES	45
HELP TO ELDERLY AFFECTED BY CLOSURE OF PRIVATE HOMES	45
IMPORTED WORKERS MUST ABIDE BY EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS	46
ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS BOARD BILL INTRODUCED	46
BROADCASTING BILL PLANNED FOR 1993/94	47
APPROPRIATION BILL 1993 PASSED IN LEGCO	49

BUDGET REFLECTS ASPIRATION OF COMMUNITY: FS

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THERE WAS GENERAL SUPPORT FOR THE APPROACH IN THE BUDGET OF MAINTAINING A BALANCE BETWEEN INCREASING SOCIAL SERVICES, AND INVESTING IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE AND FUTURE GROWTH, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THAT IS, A BALANCE BETWEEN ECONOMIC REALITIES AND THE COMMUNITY'S ASPIRATIONS.

WINDING UP THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1993, MR MACLEOD SAID MEMBERS' COMMENTS, WHETHER CRITICAL OR SUPPORTIVE, WILL FORM THE FIRST INPUT INTO THE EXERCISE OVER THE COMING MONTHS TO IDENTIFY PRIORITIES FOR RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND FOR THE NEXT BUDGET.

HE SAID HE WAS EXTREMELY GRATEFUL FOR THE SUPPORT FOR HIS BUDGET, BOTH IN LEGCO AND IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY.

"PERHAPS I SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED AT THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT WHICH MY BUDGET PROPOSALS HAVE RECEIVED BECAUSE, OF COURSE, WE HAVE WORKED TOGETHER TO PRODUCE THEM AND I BELIEVE THAT THEY REFLECT THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE WHOLE COMMUNITY AND THE PRIORITIES EXPRESSED BY MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL."

HE SAID HE LOOKED FORWARD TO CONTINUING THIS PARTNERSHIP IN PREPARING FUTURE BUDGETS.

"DURING THIS DEBATE, ONE MEMBER REFERRED TO A GENERAL ASSUMPTION THAT TO PRAISE THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY'S BUDGET WOULD BE POLITICAL SUICIDE. WELL, IF THAT IS THE CASE, WE CLEARLY HAVE SOME FEARLESS MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL.

"NEVERTHELESS, A HANDFUL OF MEMBERS SEEM UNABLE TO FIND A SINGLE THING TO PRAISE OR SUPPORT IN WHAT ONE MEMBER HAS KINDLY DESCRIBED AS "A BUDGET WHERE THERE IS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE.

"IT IS DIFFICULT TO KNOW WHAT I HAVE TO DO TO WIN THEIR SUPPORT, OR TO ENGAGE IN A RATIONAL AND CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE," MR MACLEOD SAID.

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NEXT MRF WILL COVER 1997/98: FS

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THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE MEDIUM RANGE FORECAST (MRF) NEXT YEAR WOULD BE ROLLED FORWARD A YEAR TO COVER 1997/98, AND AN ADDITIONAL YEAR WILL BE ADDED IN EACH SUBSEQUENT BUDGET.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION, MR MACLEOD SAID HE WAS STRUCK BY THE NUMBER OF MEMBERS WHO URGED THAT THE PLANNING SHOULD GO BEYOND 1997 BECAUSE THEY HAD THE MISTAKEN IMPRESSION THAT THE ADMINISTRATION REGARD THAT YEAR AS A CUT-OFF POINT.

/"I THINK

"I THINK THIS CONFUSION MAY ARISE FROM A MISUNDERSTANDING OVER THE PERIOD COVERED BY THE MRF. AND THIS MISUNDERSTANDING EVEN EXTENDS TO SUCH AREAS AS HOUSING, TRANSPORT AND SO ON WHERE WE PUBLISH PLANS THAT GO BEYOND THAT DATE."

LAST YEAR MR MACLEOD EXTENDED THE NORMAL PERIOD OF THE MRF BY ONE YEAR BECAUSE IT SEEMED VERY USEFUL TO INCLUDE 1996/97 IN THAT YEAR'S FORECAST.

THIS WAS PARTICULARLY THE CASE BECAUSE OF THE MOU ON THE AIRPORT CORE PROGRAMME, WHICH REFERRED TO THE LEVEL OF RESERVES ON JUNE 30, 1997.

"BUT FOR THIS YEAR'S BUDGET, I SIMPLY REVERTED TO THE NORMAL MRF PERIOD, WHICH LOOKS FOUR YEARS AHEAD.

HE REMINDED MEMBERS THE MRF WAS JUST WHAT ITS NAME IMPLIED.

BUDGETARY DECISIONS AFTER JUNE 30, 1997 WILL, OF COURSE, BE FOR THE HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION (SAR) GOVERNMENT, WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE SAR LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

"AS YOU KNOW, THE BUDGET AND OUR FORMAL FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS HAVE TO BE TAKEN ON A YEAR-BY-YEAR BASIS AS A MATTER OF LAW."

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID THERE WERE SOME MEMBERS WHO URGED HIM TO BE MORE CAUTIOUS IN HIS SPENDING PLANS AND ASSUMPTIONS, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE UNRESOLVED ISSUE OF THE 1994/95 ELECTION ARRANGEMENTS.

AND THERE WERE THOSE WHO WERE SIMPLY CONCERNED THAT THE FORECAST RESERVES WOULD NOT BE LARGE ENOUGH.

"I FIND THIS SITUATION SOMEWHAT IRONIC.

"LAST YEAR, I WAS CRITICISED BY MANY MEMBERS FOR BEING TOO CAUTIOUS AND FOR AIMING FOR LARGER RESERVES THAN WERE REALLY NEEDED. THIS YEAR, SOME OF THE SAME PEOPLE HAVE CRITICISED ME FOR THE OPPOSITE REASON."

SOME OF THOSE WHO CONSIDERED LAST YEAR'S FORECAST OF \$71 BILLION FOR 1996/97 TO BE TOO LARGE, BELIEVE THIS YEAR'S HIGHER FORECAST OF \$78 BILLION TO BE TOO SMALL.

"LAST YEAR, SOME MEMBERS USED SUCH HEADY PHRASES AS "A MOUNTAIN OF RESERVES HAS BEEN HOARDED FOR FUTURE YEARS", AND "THIS MONUMENTAL AMOUNT OF RESERVES". APPARENTLY, THE MOUNTAIN HAS NOW BECOME A MOLEHILL."

NONETHELESS, HE SAID HE ACCEPTED THERE WAS ROOM FOR SERIOUS DISCUSSION OF WHAT CONSTITUTES AN ADEQUATE LEVEL OF RESERVES.

IT NECESSARILY INVOLVES A JUDGMENT IN THE LIGHT OF PRESENT AND FUTURE UNEXPECTED CIRCUMSTANCES.

"HOWEVER, SOME MEMBERS SEEM TO BE ADVANCING A VERY DIFFERENT ARGUMENT: THAT IF THE PRESENT DISAGREEMENT OVER POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT PERSISTS, CHINA WOULD TAKE DELIBERATE ACTION TO DAMAGE HONG KONG'S ECONOMY AND THE WELL-BEING OF THE COMMUNITY."

THIS WOULD BE TOTALLY CONTRARY TO CHINA'S REPEATED ASSURANCES ABOUT PROTECTING THE ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF THIS COMMUNITY, HE SAID.

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GROWING RECOGNITION OF TEMPORARY DEFICIT: FS
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THE COMMUNITY WOULD PREFER TO SHARE THE FRUITS OF THE ECONOMIC SUCCESS IN THE FORM OF BETTER HOSPITALS, SCHOOLS AND SOCIAL SERVICES RATHER THAN EVER HIGHER RESERVES WHICH GO BEYOND PRUDENCE TO RIDICULOUS PARSIMONY, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE, MR MACLEOD SAID HE WAS ENCOURAGED BY A GROWING RECOGNITION THAT TO ACCEPT A TEMPORARY DEFICIT IN ORDER TO PUT SOME OF THE RESERVES TO PRODUCTIVE USE IS A PROPER, PRUDENT AND SENSIBLE COURSE-OF ACTION.

"SOME MEMBERS HAVE POINTED OUT THAT IF GOVERNMENT'S ACCOUNTS WERE PREPARED ON THE SAME BASIS AS A COMMERCIAL BUSINESS, WE WOULD NOT BE SEEING A DEFICIT."

ON THIS ANALYSIS, HONG KONG IS ACCUMULATING ANNUAL OPERATING SURPLUSES.

"AND FROM TIME TO TIME, WE ALLOCATE PART OF THOSE ACCUMULATED BALANCES FOR INVESTMENT IN OUR INFRASTRUCTURE AND OTHER WORTHWHILE FACILITIES AND SERVICES.

"I WILL TAKE THE ADVICE OF MEMBERS AND LOOK AGAIN AT WHETHER WE COULD PRESENT OUR FIGURES ON A DIFFERENT BASIS WHICH BRINGS OUT THE POSITION MORE CLEARLY."

MR MACLEOD SAID A FEW STILL BELIEVED THAT A DEFICIT BUDGET WAS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES UNDESIRABLE.

"IT IS WORTH NOTING THE ABSURD SITUATION WHICH THIS WOULD LEAD US TO. IF WE CAN NEVER RUN A DEFICIT, THEN WE CAN NEVER DRAW ON OUR RESERVES, HOWEVER LARGE THEY MAY BE."

HE SAID SOME OF THOSE WHO CRITICISED THE DEFICIT HAD ALSO URGED THE ADMINISTRATION TO EARMARK A SUBSTANTIAL PART OF THE RESERVES AS A FUND FOR CIVIL SERVICE PENSIONS.

"THESE MEMBERS SHOULD REALISE THAT, ON THEIR OWN LOGIC, IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE EVER TO DRAW ON SUCH A PENSION FUND."

ADDRESSING THE WORRIES WHICH HAD BEEN EXPRESSED BY SOME CIVIL SERVANTS ABOUT THE SECURITY FOR THE FUTURE OF THEIR PENSION RIGHTS, HE SAID THESE HAD BEEN GUARANTEED BY THE JOINT DECLARATION AND THE BASIC LAW.

PENSIONS ARE ALSO A STATUTORY CHARGE ON RECURRENT EXPENDITURE.

"MOREOVER, I FIND IT INCONCEIVABLE THAT ANY GOVERNMENT OF THIS TERRITORY WOULD BE UNABLE TO MEET THE ANNUAL COSTS OF PENSIONS WHICH ARE PROJECTED TO REMAIN AT ONLY ABOUT 5% OF RECURRENT EXPENDITURE."

HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALREADY RESPONDED TO CONCERNS VOICED ON THIS SUBJECT BY HAVING A FURTHER LOOK AT A PROPOSAL TO SET UP A PARTIAL PENSION FUND.

"WE HAVE TO EXAMINE THE SIZE, SCOPE AND MEANS OF OPERATION OF ANY SUCH FUND AND THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT AND THE FUTURE SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION GOVERNMENT."

IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER FURTHER WITH THE CHINESE SIDE IN THE JOINT LIAISON GROUP. AND A DECISION ON WHETHER TO SET UP SUCH A FUND WILL BE POSSIBLE ONLY BY THE END OF 1994, HE SAID.

"BUT LET ME ASSURE YOU THAT WE ARE APPROACHING THIS ISSUE IN A SINCERE MANNER AND WITH AN OPEN MIND."

ON THE RESERVES, MR MACLEOD REMINDED THOSE WHO WERE WORRIED BY THE FORECAST RESERVES THAT THE FIGURE FOR 1996/97 WAS ONLY PART OF THE PICTURE.

IN MID-1997, THERE WILL BE A CONSIDERABLE INCREASE IN THE RESERVES WHEN THE BALANCE IN THE LAND FUND IS TRANSFERRED TO THE SAR GOVERNMENT.

"I NOTE THAT A SENIOR CHINESE OFFICIAL HAS RECENTLY FORECAST THAT THE LAND FUND WOULD BY THEN BE IN THE REGION OF \$70-80BILLION. THUS, THE RESERVES IN 1997 WOULD BE ROUGHLY DOUBLE MY FORECAST, ONCE THIS IS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT," HE SAID.

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FS EXPLAINS ASSESSMENT IN PUBLIC EXPENDITURE GROWTH

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THE FULL PLANNING CYCLE HAS TO BE LOOKED AT WHEN ASSESSING WHETHER THE GROWTH IN PUBLIC EXPENDITURE IS IN LINE WITH THE GROWTH OF THE ECONOMY, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"WE CANNOT LOOK SIMPLY AT 1993/94 AS COMPARED WITH THE PREVIOUS YEAR. THIS IS PARTICULARLY SO IF THERE HAS BEEN UNDERSPENDING ON CAPITAL WORKS, AS THERE WAS IN 1992/93.

"WE HAVE TO LOOK AT THE FULL PLANNING CYCLE," MR MACLEOD SAID IN THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE.

THE STARTING POINT FOR THE CURRENT PLANNING CYCLE IS MID-1990.

"I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO REASSURE THOSE WHO ARE CONCERNED THAT WE MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY IN GETTING BACK TO SURPLUS BUDGETS AFTER 1997."

NOT ONLY SHOULD THE MAIN SPENDING ON THE AIRPORT CORE PROGRAMME HAVE CEASED BY THEN, BUT A NUMBER OF OTHER POSITIVE CHANGES WILL TAKE PLACE AT THAT TIME.

IN PARTICULAR, THE SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE THE INTEREST EARNED ON THE LAND FUND, TOGETHER WITH THE FULL PROCEEDS OF LAND SALES, INSTEAD OF ONLY HALF AS AT PRESENT.

PLUS THE RENTALS ARISING FROM THE EXTENSION OF LAND LEASES BEYOND 1997. THE COMBINED EFFECT OF THESE CHANGES ALONE IS LIKELY TO BE ADDITIONAL REVENUE OF AROUND \$15 BILLION IN 1997/98.

HE SAID HE HAD SOME SYMPATHY FOR THOSE WHO COMMENTED THAT A FORECAST DEFICIT FOR 1993/94 COULD WELL TURN OUT TO BE A MODEST SURPLUS.

"IT IS NOT AT ALL EASY TO FORECAST ACCURATELY, AND IT WOULD ONLY TAKE A SMALL PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN EITHER REVENUE OR EXPENDITURE TO TURN A \$3.4 BILLION DEFICIT INTO A MODEST SURPLUS."

THIS PROBLEM IS NOT PECULIAR TO HONG KONG ALONE.

A RECENT STUDY FOUND THE FOLLOWING: "THERE HAS BEEN A CONSISTENT UNDER-ESTIMATION OF TOTAL REVENUE AND OVER-ESTIMATION OF EXPENDITURE, WHICH HAVE LED TO SURPLUSES ON THE CURRENT ACCOUNTS OF THE BUDGET. THERE HAVE BEEN SIMILAR SHORTFALLS IN ESTIMATED, AS OPPOSED TO AUTHORISED, DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURE."

"WHILE THIS SOUNDS LIKE A DESCRIPTION OF HONG KONG, IT IS IN FACT FROM A STUDY WHICH SEEKS TO EXPLAIN SINGAPORE'S BUDGET SURPLUSES.

"THAT SAID, I ENTIRELY ACCEPT THAT WE MUST REDOUBLE OUR EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE ACCURACY OF OUR FORECASTS, AND IN PARTICULAR TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM OF UNDEREXPENDITURE ON CAPITAL WORKS."

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IDEAS OPENED IN USING SANDWICH CLASS HOUSING FUND

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THE ADMINISTRATION IS ENTIRELY OPEN TO IDEAS ABOUT THE BEST WAY OF USING THE \$2 BILLION EARMARKED FOR SANDWICH CLASS HOUSING, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE, MR MACLEOD SAID IDEAS ABOUT INTEREST-FREE LOANS AND THE LIKE WOULD BE LOOKED AT URGENTLY AND SERIOUSLY BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS.

"NEEDLESS TO SAY, I SHALL BE ONLY TOO DELIGHTED IF IT PROVES POSSIBLE TO HELP A LARGER NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITH THE SAME AMOUNT OF MONEY."

IN THE BUDGET, \$2 BILLION HAS BEEN PROPOSED FOR THE HOUSING SOCIETY TO SPEED UP THE INTERIM SCHEME TO HELP GENUINE, FIRST-TIME HOME BUYERS IN THE SANDWICH CLASS TO BUY FLATS AT A DISCOUNT.

/THIS SCHEME

THIS SCHEME WILL BENEFIT UP TO 3,000 FAMILIES IN THE NEXT TWO TO THREE YEARS.

MR MACLEOD SAID A NUMBER OF MEMBERS EMPHASISED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HOUSING PROGRAMME FOR THOSE WHO ARE LESS WELL OFF THAN THE SANDWICH CLASS.

"PUBLIC HOUSING HAS, OF COURSE, BEEN A MAJOR PRIORITY FOR MANY YEARS. IT IS VITAL IN THIS AS IN OTHER AREAS THAT WE ENSURE THAT TAXPAYERS' MONEY IS USED WHERE IT IS MOST NEEDED," HE SAID.

HE SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WAS CURRENTLY REVIEWING THE FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE HOUSING AUTHORITY.

"BUT IT IS TOO EARLY TO DRAW ANY CONCLUSIONS YET.

"I WOULD JUST COMMENT, HERE, THAT WE MUST FIND A SOLUTION TO THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE HEAVILY SUBSIDISED PUBLIC HOUSING ENJOYED BY SOME RELATIVELY WELL-OFF FAMILIES, WHILST OTHERS IN MUCH GREATER NEED REMAIN ON THE WAITING LIST," HE SAID.

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ACCURATE PROVISION ON ACP DIFFICULT TO MAKE: FS
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WHILE THE OTHER PARTS OF THE AIRPORT CORE PROGRAMME (ACP) ARE PROCEEDING WELL, IN THE CONTINUED ABSENCE OF AGREEMENT ON THE FINANCING OF THE AIRPORT AND THE AIRPORT RAILWAY PROJECTS, IT IS DIFFICULT TO MAKE ACCURATE PROVISION, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

WINDING UP THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE, MR MACLEOD SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD CLEARLY NEED IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS TO COME BACK TO LEGCO MEMBERS WITH AN UPDATE POSITION ON THE AIRPORT CORE PROGRAMME.

THE TWO PROJECTS IN QUESTION HAVE YET TO REACH AGREEMENT WITH CHINA ABOUT THE FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS.

MR MACLEOD SAID A MAJOR ELEMENT OF THE SPENDING PLANS OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS IS THE ACP.

HE SAID THE 1993/94 ESTIMATES CONTAIN A TOTAL OF \$10.8 BILLION IN RESPECT OF THE ACP.

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GOVT WILL DO EVERYTHING TO CONTAIN INFLATION: FS

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THE GOVERNMENT SHALL CONTINUE TO DO ALL THAT IS POSSIBLE TO CONTAIN INFLATION, INCLUDING CONTROLLING PUBLIC EXPENDITURE AND INVESTING HEAVILY IN TRAINING AND RETRAINING, AND IN INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, WHEN WINDING UP THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"LET THERE BE NO DOUBT ABOUT OUR COMMITMENT TO COMBAT INFLATION."

BUT IT REMAINS TRUE THAT THE KEY CONSTRAINTS ARE THE SUPPLY OF LAND AND LABOUR, HE SAID.

"NEITHER ARE EASY TO RESOLVE."

THE LABOUR SUPPLY IS A DIFFICULT ISSUE WHICH NEEDS TO BE HANDLED SENSITIVELY AND CAREFULLY.

MR MACLEOD NOTED COMMENTS ON THE RETRAINING SCHEME, AND HE AGREED THAT THIS MUST BE KEPT CLOSELY MONITORED AND FINE-TUNED AS NECESSARY.

"WE ALSO, AS SOME MEMBERS POINTED OUT, NEED TO CONTINUE OUR EFFORTS TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY - EFFORTS WHICH HAVE HAD A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE OF SUCCESS."

THE GENERAL LABOUR IMPORTATION SCHEME IS MODEST BY COMPARISON WITH THOSE IN OTHER BOOMING ASIAN ECONOMIES.

"WE HAVE TO EXPLORE WAYS OF RELIEVING THIS CONSTRAINT WHILST AT THE SAME TIME BEING FAIR TO OUR OWN EXISTING LABOUR FORCE."

SO FAR AS LAND SUPPLY IS CONCERNED, MR MACLEOD SAID HE AGREED WITH MEMBERS THAT EFFORTS SHOULD BE MAINTAINED TO EASE THE SITUATION.

IN RESPECT OF PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL FLATS, PROSPECTS ARE ENCOURAGING IN THE SENSE THAT THE SUPPLY COMING ON THE MARKET IS INCREASING.

THE NUMBER OF VACANT FLATS UP TO THE END OF 1992 IS ESTIMATED TO BE ABOUT 34,000, AND THE NUMBER OF UNITS TO BE COMPLETED IN 1993 AND 1994 IS ESTIMATED TO BE ABOUT 37,000 AND 38,000 RESPECTIVELY.

THESE FIGURES COMPARE WITH THE AVERAGE ANNUAL TAKE-UP OF ONLY 26,000 FLATS OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS.

"WE MUST CONTINUE TO DISCOURAGE SPECULATION IN SUCH FLATS, AND I BELIEVE THAT THE TWO MEASURES OF INTRODUCING STAMP DUTY AND OF THE BANKS RESTRICTING LENDING TO 70% OF THE VALUE HAVE BEEN HELPFUL.

"I AM VERY CONSCIOUS OF THE CONCERNS OF MEMBERS AND OF THE PUBLIC OVER THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE, AND WE SHALL KEEP IT UNDER CLOSE REVIEW," THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID.

ON THE QUESTION OF THE EXCHANGE RATE, HE STRESSED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION REMAINS TOTALLY COMMITTED TO THE PRESENT SYSTEM.

THIS IS FOR GOOD REASONS, HE SAID.

"THE SYSTEM HAS BROUGHT HONG KONG INVALUABLE STABILITY.

"IN ANY CASE, HONG KONG'S INFLATION IS NOT CAUSED BY THE LINK TO THE U.S. DOLLAR AT THE RATE OF US\$1 TO HK\$7.80," HE ADDED.

HE SAID THIS WAS DEMONSTRATED BY THE MARGINAL INCREASES IN THE IMPORT PRICE INDEX (1.9% IN 1991 AND 0.2% IN 1992), PARTICULARLY WHEN COMPARED TO THE DOMESTIC INFLATION RATE.

IN THIS CONTEXT, REVALUING THE HK DOLLAR OR LINKING IT TO A BASKET OF CURRENCIES COULD HAVE NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON DOMESTIC INFLATION.

"WE SUFFER INFLATION PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE OF THE RAPID STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN HONG KONG'S ECONOMY."

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BUDGET CONTRIBUTES TO MAINTAINING
FAVOURABLE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT : FS

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THE BUDGET MADE A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO MAINTAINING A FAVOURABLE ENVIRONMENT FOR BUSINESS IN HONG KONG, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

ALL THE INVESTMENT PROPOSED IN THE INFRASTRUCTURE WILL HELP BUSINESS TO BE MORE EFFICIENT. THIS MUST ESPECIALLY BE TRUE OF THE MAJOR ROAD TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENTS, MR MACLEOD SAID, WHEN WINDING UP THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE.

AND SOME SPECIFIC SECTORS WERE, OF COURSE, FURTHER ASSISTED BY PARTICULAR MEASURES IN THE BUDGET.

THE STOCK MARKET WAS HELPED BY THE REDUCTION IN STAMP DUTY.

THE TOURIST INDUSTRY WAS HELPED BY THE ABOLITION OF COSMETICS DUTY, BY THE INCREASED ASSISTANCE FOR THE TOURIST ASSOCIATION, AND BY THE DECISION TO PROCEED WITH AN EXTENSION TO THE CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION CENTRE.

"I AM HOPEFUL ALSO THAT, AS A RESULT OF THE REVIEW OF THE TRADE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL'S FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS, THERE WILL EMERGE SOME ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR INDUSTRY."

FURTHERMORE, HE SAID THE FACT THAT HE HAD CONTINUED UNAMBIGUOUSLY TO SUPPORT THE BASIC PHILOSOPHY OF A LOW, SIMPLE AND PREDICTABLE TAX SYSTEM WAS VERY MUCH IN THE INTEREST OF BUSINESS.

"SO LET THERE BE NO DOUBT - THIS BUDGET DOES A GREAT DEAL, DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY, FOR BUSINESS."

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID HE WAS DISAPPOINTED AT THE RATHER NARROW FOCUS OF SOME OF THOSE WHO THOUGHT THAT WHAT THE BUDGET IS DOING FOR BUSINESS WAS INADEQUATE.

"WE CANNOT AFFORD THE MINDSET WHICH SEES BUSINESS AS SYNONYMOUS WITH MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY, OR WHICH SEES BENEFITS IN TERMS ONLY OF TAX CONCESSIONS OR SUBSIDIES."

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GOVT DOES NOT IGNORE NEEDS OF LOW-INCOME GROUP: FS

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THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT IGNORE THE NEEDS WHICH RELATIVELY LOW INCOME CAN CREATE, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN FACT, THE GOVERNMENT'S SPENDING ON SOCIAL SECURITY AND TAX SYSTEM IS HEAVILY WEIGHTED IN FAVOUR OF LOWER INCOME GROUPS, MR MACLEOD SAID IN THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

HALF OF ALL EMPLOYEES PAY NO SALARIES TAX.

ALMOST HALF THE POPULATION LIVE IN HEAVILY SUBSIDISED PUBLIC HOUSING.

"NO ONE IS DENIED MEDICAL OR HOSPITAL CARE THROUGH LACK OF MEANS.

"THE BEST CONTRIBUTION WE CAN MAKE TO IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF LOWER INCOME GROUPS IS OUR COMMITMENT TO IMPROVED PUBLIC SERVICES AND OUR CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN FUTURE GROWTH, WHICH BRINGS WITH IT FULL EMPLOYMENT AND STEADILY RISING STANDARDS OF LIVING FOR THE WHOLE COMMUNITY."

AN INCREASE IN PROPERTY RATES WOULD OF COURSE HAVE INCREASED THE REVENUE FROM INDIRECT TAX, AND PROVED A PARTICULARLY RELIABLE SOURCE OF REVENUE, HE SAID.

"BUT I ACCEPT THAT THERE IS A SERIOUS POINT UNDERLYING ALL THIS.

"WHERE POSSIBLE, I AGREE WE SHOULD PREFER STABLE SOURCES OF REVENUE OVER VOLATILE SOURCES OF REVENUE."

THIS IS A MUCH MORE COMPLEX ISSUE THAN THE RATIO BETWEEN DIRECT AND INDIRECT TAXATION.

INDIRECT TAXES AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL REVENUE HAVE NOT IN FACT CHANGED GREATLY OVER THE YEARS. INDIRECT TAXES WERE 25.3% OF REVENUE IN 1983-84, AND ARE 26.8% OF REVENUE IN THE 1993-94 ESTIMATES.

BUT MR MACLEOD SAID THE FACT WAS ALSO THAT SOME OF THE MAJOR INDIRECT TAXES WERE MORE VOLATILE THAN THE MAJOR DIRECT TAXES.

"I AM THINKING FOR EXAMPLE OF STAMP DUTY AND THE FIRST REGISTRATION TAX, BOTH VERY VOLATILE INDIRECT TAXES.

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"SO, I AGREE WITH MEMBERS THAT WE NEED TO KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON OUR REVENUE SOURCES AND ENSURE THAT WE DO NOT MAKE OURSELVES TOO DEPENDENT ON VOLATILE SOURCES OF REVENUE."

BUT HE SAID HE ALSO BELIEVED THAT THE SIGNIFICANT REAL REDUCTION IN THE TAX BURDEN FOR SALARIES TAXPAYERS IN THIS YEAR'S BUDGET WAS JUSTIFIED, AS WELL AS REFLECTING MEMBERS' STRONG CALLS FOR REAL IMPROVEMENTS.

"I AM ENCOURAGED THAT ONLY ONE OR TWO MEMBERS STILL CLAIM THAT THE VARIOUS SALARIES IMPROVEMENTS THAT WE HAVE MADE OVER THE YEARS HAVE BARELY KEPT UP WITH INFLATION.

"I BELIEVE THE FIGURES WHICH WERE PUBLISHED IN THE BUDGET AND ELSEWHERE SHOW CONCLUSIVELY THAT WE HAVE DONE MUCH BETTER THAN MERELY KEEP UP WITH INFLATION."

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DEBATE ON SOCIAL SECURITY NOT VERY SUCCESSFUL: FS

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IT IS VITAL THAT, IN THE ENTIRELY LEGITIMATE DISCUSSION ABOUT HOW MUCH ASSISTANCE THE LESS WELL-OFF NEED, THE ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE WHICH WILL BE PROVIDED UNDER THE NEW COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE SCHEME HAS NOT BEEN UNDERSTATED.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, IN THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE BUDGET IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR MACLEOD SAID IT WAS NOT HELPFUL TO CONDUCT SUCH A DEBATE IN TERMS OF THE OLD BASIC RATE WHEN THE AVERAGE FIGURE OF WHAT WAS PAID OUT WAS VERY MUCH HIGHER.

AND, INDEED, 99% OF ALL BENEFICIARIES RECEIVE FAR MORE THAN THE BASIC RATE BECAUSE OF THE VARIOUS OTHER ADDITIONAL PAYMENTS TO WHICH THEY ARE ENTITLED.

"LET ME REMIND MEMBERS THAT WHEN THE NEW SCHEME IS INTRODUCED IN JULY, THE AVERAGE PAYMENT FOR A FAMILY OF FOUR WILL BE \$5,880 A MONTH, OR APPROXIMATELY EQUAL TO THE SEPTEMBER 1992 AVERAGE MANUFACTURING WORKERS' WAGE.

"LET US NOT BELITTLE THE VERY SIGNIFICANT LEVEL OF ASSISTANCE THAT THIS BRINGS TO THOSE IN NEED.

NONETHELESS, HE SAID HE WOULD CONTINUE TO TAKE VERY SERIOUSLY THE VIEWS WHICH MEMBERS EXPRESS ABOUT WAYS IN WHICH THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM CAN BE IMPROVED.

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 1993

- 11 -

BUDGET BUILDS ON SUCCESS : FS

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THE BUDGET IS TRULY BUILDING ON SUCCESS, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE SAID ONE LEGCO MEMBER DESCRIBED HIM AS SANTA CLAUS.

"UNFORTUNATELY, HE IS NOT HERE TODAY."

MR MACLEOD SAID THE GOVERNMENT COULD NOT LIVE BEYOND ITS MEANS.

"AND WE CANNOT AVOID MAKING OFTEN DIFFICULT CHOICES. MEMBERS WILL NOT EXPECT ME TO FUND EVERY PROPOSAL PUT FORWARD OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS."

"OUR ECONOMIC SUCCESS HAS ENABLED THE GOVERNMENT TO EMBARK ON THE AGENDA OF MAJOR POLICY INITIATIVES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS SET OUT IN THE GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS TO THIS COUNCIL LAST OCTOBER.

"THE SAME SUCCESS HAS ENABLED ME TO RAISE OUR SIGHTS IN THIS BUDGET," MR MACLEOD SAID, WHEN WINDING UP THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE.

HE REMINDED MEMBERS THAT:

- * MORE THAN 250,000 EXISTING TAXPAYERS WILL NO LONGER HAVE TO PAY ANY SALARIES TAX;
- * ANOTHER 1.2 MILLION EXISTING TAXPAYERS WILL PAY LESS SALARIES TAX;
- * AN ADDITIONAL 32,000 FAMILIES WILL QUALIFY FOR THE EXPANDED KINDERGARTEN FEE REMISSION SCHEME;
- * A NEW \$1.1BILLION 600-BED HOSPITAL WILL BE BUILT FOR NORTH DISTRICT;
- * \$4 BILLION WILL BE SPENT ON ROUTE3 TO CREATE A NEW ROAD LINK TO CHINA; AND
- * \$1 BILLION WILL BE SPENT ON IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE TUEN MUN HIGHWAY.

THE LIST GOES ON AND ON.

"THIS HAS TRULY BEEN A BUDGET ABOUT BUILDING ON SUCCESS," MR MACLEOD CONCLUDED.

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 1993

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FS DISAPPOINTED BY VOTING ABSTENTIONS

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THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, MR HAMISH MACLEOD, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) HE WAS VERY DISAPPOINTED BY THE ABSTENTIONS IN THE VOTING ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL.

IN REPLY TO QUESTIONS FROM REPORTERS, HE SAID THERE WAS A GREAT MAJORITY OF SUPPORT FOR THIS YEAR'S BUDGET AND THAT MOST VIEWS WERE THAT IT WAS A PRETTY POPULAR BUDGET.

"IF THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO STILL CAN'T FEEL THEY CAN GIVE SUPPORT, EVEN THIS YEAR WHEN IT IS A POPULAR BUDGET, THAT REALLY MAKES IT QUITE DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE HOW WE WOULD EVER GET THEIR SUPPORT," HE SAID.

HE STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT HE WOULD KEEP ON TRYING.

"MY AIM IS TO CONVERT PEOPLE TO SUPPORT BUDGETS, AND NEXT YEAR WE'LL AIM FOR 100 PER CENT SUPPORT," HE SAID.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID HE EXPERIMENTED THIS YEAR ON HAVING MUCH MORE CONSULTATION WITH MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

"WE WILL DEFINITELY CARRY ON WITH THAT IN THE COMING YEAR. THAT WILL HELP TO MOULD THE NEXT BUDGET," HE ADDED.

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NO ONE WISHES TO DAMAGE HK: CS

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THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) HE DID NOT BELIEVE IT WAS IN CHINA'S INTEREST TO DAMAGE HONG KONG'S ECONOMIC PROSPECTS IN THE FACE OF THE CURRENT POLITICAL DEBATE.

"IN FACT, QUITE THE OPPOSITE. THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT HAVE SAID AS MUCH THEMSELVES," SIR DAVID SAID IN THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

HE SAID HE TOOK SOME ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE COMMENTS LAST WEEK BY THE DIRECTOR OF HONG KONG AND MACAO AFFAIRS OFFICE UNDER CHINA'S STATE COUNCIL, MR LU PING'S THAT THERE WAS A LOT OF BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED AND THAT THE TWO SIDES SHOULD GET ON WITH IT.

THOSE VIEWS WERE ECHOED BY A NEW CHINA NEWS AGENCY OFFICIAL YESTERDAY.

"THEY ARE OUR VIEWS TOO AND WE ARE CONTINUING TO PROPOSE TO THE CHINESE SIDE THAT WE DO INDEED GET ON WITH IT."

SIR DAVID SAID IT COULD BE TO NO PARTY'S INTEREST TO TAKE ACTION THAT UNDERMINED HONG KONG'S STABILITY AND PROSPERITY.

"I DO NOT BELIEVE ANYBODY SHOULD EVER WANT TO DO SO," HE SAID.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY SAID THERE WAS NO DENYING THAT THERE WAS SOME UNEASE ON THIS SUBJECT IN HONG KONG'S COMMUNITY AT THIS TIME.

"THIS IS AN INEVITABLE RESULT, PERHAPS, OF THE CRITICISMS WE HAVE HAD IN RECENT WEEKS AND MONTHS FROM PEKING AND THEIR LOCAL SPOKESMEN."

"WHAT WE ALL WANT IS CALM, RATIONAL DISCUSSION," HE SAID.

BUT, WHILE THE POLITICAL DEBATE CONTINUES, THE GOVERNMENT MUST GET ON WITH THE WORK OF SORTING OUT OTHER PROBLEMS, NOT REMOTELY CONNECTED TO POLITICS, IN A SERIOUS AND PRAGMATIC MANNER.

"AND IN THE YEARS FACING US THERE IS MUCH REAL WORK TO GET ON WITH."

HE SAID HE THOUGHT WHAT WAS REALLY WORRYING PEOPLE AT PRESENT WAS THE IDEA THAT, AS PART OF PUSHING FORWARD THEIR VIEWS ON POLITICAL MATTERS UNDER DEBATE, THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT MIGHT EXTEND ACTION INTO OTHER, UNRELATED AREAS, PARTICULARLY THE ECONOMY: AREAS WHICH AFFECTED EVERYONE'S LIVELIHOOD, DEVELOPMENTS WHICH WOULD BENEFIT EVERYONE AND PROJECTS WHICH WERE PART OF THE FUTURE HONG KONG'S FOUNDATIONS, NECESSARY FOR CONTINUED PROSPERITY AND STABILITY.

"THESE ARE MATTERS WHICH SHOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH POLITICS. YET I SENSE THE COMMUNITY FEELS THAT OTHER MATTERS ARE BEING PULLED INTO A POLITICAL DEBATE WHERE THEY DO NOT BELONG, AND IN A WAY THAT CAN ONLY DAMAGE HONG KONG," SIR DAVID SAID.

AND THOSE PEOPLE WHO ARE WORRIED CAN POINT THEIR FINGERS AT VARIOUS AREAS OF CONCERN, HE ADDED.

FOR EXAMPLE, THEY POINT TO THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE NEW AIRPORT, SIGNED BY THE TWO PRIME MINISTERS IN SEPTEMBER 1991.

IN THAT DOCUMENT THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT PLEDGES ITS SUPPORT FOR THE AIRPORT PROJECTS.

"YET, IT IS NOW A YEAR SINCE WE CONSULTED THEM ON THE OVERALL FINANCING PLAN IN THE AGREED WAY, BUT THERE IS AS YET NO PROSPECT OF AGREEMENT IN SIGHT.

"PEOPLE JUSTIFIABLY WONDER WHETHER THE ISSUE IS BEING CONSIDERED ON ITS MERITS, OR WHETHER IT HAS BECOME A BARGAINING CHIP IN A DIFFERENT GAME."

ANOTHER EXAMPLE IS THE LAND GRANT FOR CONTAINER TERMINAL 9.

THIS WAS PROCESSED THROUGH THE LAND COMMISSION IN EXACTLY THE SAME WAY AS ITS PREDECESSOR, CT8. IT WAS SETTLED AND AGREED.

"THEN DOUBTS WERE CAST ON THE DEVELOPMENT. AGAIN, PEOPLE WONDER WHETHER THE MATTER WAS RAISED FOR REASONS TO DO WITH THE PROJECT ITSELF."

YET OTHERS EXPRESSED WORRIES ABOUT FRANCHISES SPANNING 1997 OR, MORE RECENTLY, THE LAND DISPOSAL PROGRAMME.

"ARE THESE, PURELY ECONOMIC MATTERS, ALSO BEING DRAWN INTO THE POLITICAL DEBATE TOO?" SIR DAVID ASKED.

IN PARAGRAPH FOUR OF THE JOINT DECLARATION, THE BRITISH AND CHINESE GOVERNMENTS DECLARE THAT DURING THE TRANSITION PERIOD UP TO JUNE 30, 1997, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF HONG KONG WITH THE OBJECT OF MAINTAINING AND PRESERVING ITS ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND STABILITY; AND THAT THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT WILL GIVE ITS CO-OPERATION IN THIS REGARD.

"BOTH THE BRITISH AND CHINESE GOVERNMENTS HAVE SAID, AND CONTINUE TO SAY, THAT THEY WILL ABIDE BY THE JOINT DECLARATION.

"FOR OUR PART THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE WITH OUR ENDEAVOURS TO MAINTAIN AND FURTHER HONG KONG'S STABILITY AND PROSPERITY."

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION AND SOME OF ITS CONCRETE MEASURES COULD BE SEEN FROM THE BUDGET.

"WE ARE PREPARED TO DO WHATEVER WE CAN TO CO-OPERATE WITH CHINA TO REALISE OUR JOINT COMMITMENTS UNDER THE JD.

"I HOPE THAT CHINA DEMONSTRATE IN CONCRETE ACTION THEIR PART OF THE JOINT COMMITMENT IS BEING MET," SIR DAVID SAID.

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HIGH-LEVEL ADMINISTRATOR NEEDED TO IMPROVE JUDICIARY MANAGEMENT

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THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVES THAT THE APPOINTMENT OF A HIGH-LEVEL JUDICIARY ADMINISTRATOR, WHO HAS HAD PROVEN SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE IN TOP LEVEL MANAGEMENT, IS NECESSARY TO BRING ABOUT A NEW APPROACH IN THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE JUDICIARY TO MEET CURRENT DAY REQUIREMENTS.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, IN THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SIR DAVID SAID THE OPERATING ENVIRONMENT OF THE JUDICIARY IN THE NINETIES WAS PROVING TO BE VERY DIFFERENT AND DIFFICULT, GIVEN THE INCREASING VOLUME AND COMPLEXITY OF CASES BEFORE THE COURTS, THE INCREASING LEGAL AWARENESS OF THE COMMUNITY AND RISING PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS ABOUT THE STANDARDS OF SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE JUDICIARY.

"A NEW MANAGEMENT CULTURE IS NEEDED AND GREATER EXPERTISE IN RESOURCE AND FUNCTIONAL MANAGEMENT IS ESSENTIAL."

"THE APPOINTMENT OF A PROFESSIONAL ADMINISTRATOR TO TAKE CHARGE OF MANAGEMENT IN THE JUDICIARY UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE IS THE FIRST STEP TO ACHIEVE IMPROVEMENTS," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID SAID THIS PROPOSAL HAD RECEIVED THE SUPPORT IN PRINCIPLE OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE AND HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT DEFINITIVE PLANS WOULD BE ANNOUNCED VERY SOON.

ON LEGAL AID, SIR DAVID SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONDUCTING A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE LAW, POLICY AND PRACTICE GOVERNING THE PROVISION OF LEGAL AID SERVICES IN HONG KONG.

"WE HAVE LOOKED INTO A WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES, INCLUDING THE MEANS LIMIT FOR LEGAL AID APPLICATIONS AND THE LEGAL PROFESSION'S PROPOSAL FOR AN INDEPENDENT LEGAL AID AUTHORITY," HE SAID.

THE WORK IS PROGRESSING WELL AND THE GOVERNMENT IS ABOUT TO CONSULT THE LEGAL PROFESSION, HE SAID.

"WITHOUT PREJUDGING THE FINAL OUTCOME OF THE REVIEW, I MUST HOWEVER URGE MEMBERS NOT TO PRESUME THAT THE PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT LEGAL AID AUTHORITY IS NECESSARILY THE BEST AND MOST VIABLE OPTION TO IMPROVE THE SYSTEM," HE SAID.

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ADMINISTRATION UPHOLDS PRINCIPLES OF OPENNESS,
FAIRNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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THE GOVERNMENT SHARES LEGISLATORS' OBJECTIVES REGARDING THE IMPORTANCE THEY ATTACH TO EFFICIENCY IN THE CIVIL SERVICE, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

"FOR THIS REASON THE EFFICIENCY UNIT IS DEVELOPING THE CONCEPT OF PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT IN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

"A KEY FEATURE WILL BE ONGOING REVIEWS OF ACTIVITIES IN DEPARTMENTS TO ENSURE THAT TARGETS ARE ACHIEVED IN A TIMELY AND COST-EFFECTIVE WAY," SIR DAVID SAID.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY NOTED THAT ANOTHER INITIATIVE NOW WELL UNDERWAY WAS THE PERFORMANCE PLEDGES PROGRAMME.

"OUR AIM IS THAT MOST DEPARTMENTS SERVING THE PUBLIC WILL HAVE MADE THEIR INITIAL PLEDGES WITHIN THIS YEAR, 1993; AND THAT ALL SHOULD HAVE DONE SO BY MID-1994," HE SAID.

"WE ARE KEEN TO USE PERFORMANCE PLEDGES TO BUILD ON THE EXISTING EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF CONTACTS BETWEEN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND THEIR CUSTOMERS.

"WE WILL DO SO THROUGH USERS' COMMITTEES AND USER SURVEYS. OVER TIME THIS WILL ENSURE THAT OUR CUSTOMERS HAVE A GREATER SAY IN THE WAY IN WHICH OUR SERVICES ARE OFFERED," HE ADDED.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY INDICATED THAT COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF FORMS USED BY THE PUBLIC WAS NOW UNDERWAY.

SO FAR, SEVEN DEPARTMENTS HAVE COMPLETED THEIR REVIEW OF SOME 600 FORMS, OF WHICH 25 HAVE BEEN ABOLISHED AND 187 HAVE BEEN IMPROVED.

"CIVIL SERVANTS TAKE PRIDE IN THEIR COMMITMENT TO PROVIDING THE BEST QUALITY OF SERVICE THEY CAN.

"WE WILL CONTINUE TO PROMOTE AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH EACH INDIVIDUAL CAN GIVE OF HIS OR HER BEST IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF THEIR CUSTOMERS," HE SAID.

PAYING TRIBUTES TO HIS SENIOR COLLEAGUES WHO APPEARED REGULARLY IN THE LEGCO CHAMBER AND IN ITS COMMITTEE ROOMS, SIR DAVID SAID IT WAS WORTH REMEMBERING THAT NONE OF THEM HAD JOINED THE PUBLIC SERVICE THINKING THAT THEY WOULD NEED TO BECOME POLITICIANS AND ADMINISTRATORS.

"BUT IN THE ABSENCE OF MR ANDREW WONG'S PREFERRED SOLUTION OF A MINISTERIAL SYSTEM, POLITICIANS WE HAVE HAD TO BECOME.

"NO ONE SHOULD UNDERESTIMATE THE ADDITIONAL BURDEN THIS HAS PLACED ON SENIOR OFFICERS, PARTICULARLY THE POLICY SECRETARIES," SIR DAVID SAID.

"BUT I CAN SAY WITH REAL CONFIDENCE THAT ALL OF US READILY UNDERSTAND THAT ACCOUNTABILITY AND OPENNESS ARE AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT OF ANY DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM; AND I CAN PLEDGE TO MEMBERS THAT IN SERVING THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG, WE IN THE ADMINISTRATION WILL DO OUR VERY BEST TO UPHOLD THE PRINCIPLES OF OPENNESS, FAIRNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY," HE SAID.

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SANDWICH CLASS HOUSING SCHEME EXPLAINED

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS AN OPEN MIND ON HOW TO ACHIEVE COST EFFECTIVENESS FOR THE \$2 BILLION PROPOSED FOR IMPLEMENTING THE INTERIM SCHEME FOR SANDWICH CLASS HOUSING.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE BUDGET IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HOWEVER, MR EASON POINTED OUT THAT THERE IS A NEED TO KEEP THE NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES UNDER THE INTERIM SCHEME WITHIN REASONABLE LIMITS SINCE CASTING THE NET OF THE INTERIM SCHEME TOO WIDE MIGHT PUSH UP PROPERTY PRICES.

"THIS IS BECAUSE, IN THE SHORT TERM, WE HAVE NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO RELY ON THE EXISTING STOCK OF FLATS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR," HE SAID.

MR EASON SAID THERE IS NO QUESTION OF ROBBING THE BENEFICIARIES OF PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMMES TO PAY THE SANDWICH CLASS.

"TO CREATE A SUDDEN SURGE OF SIGNIFICANT DEMAND IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR COULD WELL INFLATE PRICES. IT WOULD BE SELF-DEFEATING AND A DISSERVICE TO THE REMAINDER OF THE SANDWICH CLASS IF OUR SCHEME WERE TO RESULT IN INCREASED PRICES," HE SAID.

IN VIEW OF THIS, THE GOVERNMENT IS PROPOSING TO EXPERIMENT WITH ABOUT 1,000 UNITS IN THE FIRST PHASE.

"THIS PRUDENT, EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH WILL AFFORD US THE OPPORTUNITY TO GAUGE THE EFFECTS OF IMPLEMENTATION ON THE MARKET," HE SAID.

MR EASON SAID CAREFUL CONSIDERATION WOULD BE GIVEN TO SUGGESTIONS OF USING THE \$2 BILLION AS A LOW INTEREST OR AN INTEREST FREE LOAN FUND FOR THE INTERIM SCHEME.

"BEARING IN MIND THAT THE OBJECTIVE OF THE INTERIM SCHEME IS TO CLOSE THE AFFORDABILITY GAP BETWEEN THE PURCHASER'S RESOURCES AND MARKET PRICE, I AM NOT SURE HOW PRACTICABLE IT WILL BE TO THINK IN TERMS OF ADDING THE REPAYMENTS OF SUCH LOANS TO THE MAIN MORTGAGE REPAYMENTS THE PURCHASER WILL HAVE TO MEET."

"WE MUST AVOID DEVISING A SCHEME WHICH IS SO RESTRICTIVE AS TO BE UNATTRACTIVE TO THE TARGET GROUP," HE SAID.

MR EASON SAID THE FIRST SITES HAD ALREADY BEEN IDENTIFIED FOR THE LONG-TERM SCHEME WHICH WOULD INVOLVE THE HOUSING SOCIETY TO BUILD FLATS FOR SALE TO THE SANDWICH CLASS AT AFFORDABLE PRICES.

"WE HOPE TO BE ABLE TO REACH AGREEMENT IN THE LAND COMMISSION REGARDING THE LAND REQUIREMENTS AND THE PREMIUM ARRANGEMENTS FOR SITES TO BE GRANTED DURING THE YEAR," HE SAID.

ON THE ENVIRONMENT, MR EASON SAID THE HIGH PRIORITY PROGRAMME UNDER THE SEWAGE STRATEGY WOULD PROVIDE BY 1997 THE PRINCIPAL SEWAGE COLLECTION AND TREATMENT SYSTEM FOR OVER 70 PER CENT OF TOTAL WASTE WATER DISCHARGES IN THE TERRITORY, OR THE 1.5 MILLION CUBIC METRES OF SEWAGE GENERATED IN THE DENSELY POPULATED AREAS AROUND THE HARBOUR EVERY DAY.

SUBSTANTIAL DISCUSSIONS WITH THE APPROPRIATE CHINESE AUTHORITIES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LATER PHASES OF THE STRATEGY, PARTICULARLY THE OCEANIC OUTFALL, ARE NOT YET POSSIBLE AS THAT STAGE HAVE NOT BEEN REACHED.

"REGULAR CONTACTS ON THE ENGINEERING AND ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATORY ASPECTS OF THE PROJECTS DURING THE CURRENT PLANNING STAGES ARE BEING MAINTAINED AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL AND THROUGH THE JOINT HONG KONG-GUANGDONG ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION LIAISON GROUP," HE SAID.

DISCUSSIONS WITH THE APPROPRIATE CHINESE AUTHORITIES ON THE ENGINEERING AND ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OF THE SHENZHEN RIVER IMPROVEMENT SCHEME ARE PROGRESSING.

"WE ARE WORKING OUT THE IMPACT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S INCREASED CAPITAL INJECTION ON SEWAGE CHARGES AND EXPECT TO CONSULT MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL, THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THE PUBLIC WIDELY ON OUR PROPOSALS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE," HE ADDED.

TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT TO CONTINUE

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THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR MICHAEL LEUNG, HAS PLEDGED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD PROCEED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE IN INVITING FORMAL BIDS FOR THE FRANCHISE TO BUILD AND OPERATE ROUTE-3 COUNTRY PARK SECTION AND IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ADDITIONAL HILL-CLIMBING LANES ON TUEN MUN HIGHWAY.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE TODAY (WEDNESDAY), MR LEUNG ALSO SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO IMPROVE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES AND TO INVEST IN TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE.

ON THE ROUTE-3 COUNTRY PARK SECTION, HE SAID, PRESENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT THERE SHOULD BE A GOOD RESPONSE FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN EXPRESSING INTEREST IN THE PROJECT BY THE CLOSING DATE OF APRIL 30.

HE ALSO EXPLAINED THAT THE TING KAU BRIDGE WHICH FORMS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE ENTIRE ROUTE CANNOT BE BUILT IN ISOLATION.

THE GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVE REMAINS TO BUILD THE ENTIRE ROUTE AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.

ON MEASURES TO RELIEVE PEAK-HOUR CONGESTION ON TUEN MUN HIGHWAY, MR LEUNG SAID WORK ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ADDITIONAL CLIMBING LANES WOULD START IN STAGES BY THE END OF THIS YEAR WITH ALL STAGES DUE FOR COMPLETION BY LATE 1996.

HE EMPHASISED THAT THE CONSTRUCTION WORK WILL BE PROGRAMMED IN SUCH WAY TO ENSURE THAT EXISTING LANES ARE NOT CLOSED DURING PEAK HOURS.

IN PARALLEL, FURTHER EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE TO IMPROVE FERRY SERVICES BETWEEN TUEN MUN AND THE URBAN AREAS.

"TWO NEW HIGH SPEED FERRIES, EACH CARRYING 450 PEOPLE, WILL BE INTRODUCED ON THIS ROUTE BY SEPTEMBER.

"A NEW FERRY SERVICE FROM SO KWAN WAT TO KOWLOON WILL ALSO BE INTRODUCED IN JUNE.

"TOGETHER, THESE EXTRA SERVICES WILL INCREASE CARRYING CAPACITY BY 20 PER CENT," HE SAID.

MR LEUNG ALSO REVEALED THAT A JOINT DISTRICT BOARD/GOVERNMENT WORKING GROUP APPOINTED TO INVESTIGATE FURTHER MEANS OF IMPROVING TRAFFIC FLOW ON TUEN MUN HIGHWAY HAS IDENTIFIED A NUMBER OF IMPROVEMENT MEASURES, INCLUDING THE SCHEDULING OF ROAD MAINTENANCE WORKS DURING OFF-PEAK HOURS, IMPROVING THE RECOVERY OF BROKEN DOWN VEHICLES AND STEPPING UP THE ENFORCEMENT OF LANE DISCIPLINE.

THE WORKING GROUP IS ABOUT TO FINALISE ITS REPORT FOR SUBMISSION TO HIM.

ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT, MR LEUNG SAID THE TWO RAILWAY CORPORATIONS WILL EACH SPEND OVER \$5 BILLION IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS TO IMPROVE THEIR SERVICES.

MTRC IS UPGRADING ITS SIGNALLING SYSTEM TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL TRAINS IN THE NATHAN ROAD CORRIDOR TO MEET PEAK HOUR DEMAND.

KCRC IS INTRODUCING A NEW SIGNALLING SYSTEM TO IMPROVE THE TRAIN FREQUENCY FROM 19 TO 21 TRAINS PER HOUR BETWEEN TAI WAI AND KOWLOON. THIS WILL INCREASE THE TRAIN AVAILABILITY IN THE MOST CRITICAL SECTION OF THE KCR BY 15 PER CENT.

THE LRT SYSTEM HAS BEEN FURTHER IMPROVED WITH THE RECENT OPENING OF THE TIN SHUI WAI LINK. THE DELIVERY OF 30 NEW CARRIAGES, HAS INCREASED PASSENGER CARRYING CAPACITY BY 46 PER CENT.

MR LEUNG SAID THERE WILL BE CONTINUED EXPANSION OF BUS SERVICES TO SERVE THE GROWING NEEDS OF THE NEW TOWNS AND THE URBAN AREAS.

WITHIN THIS YEAR, KMB WILL INTRODUCE 24 NEW ROUTES DEPLOYING 119 BUSES AND CMB WILL START SEVEN NEW ROUTES DEPLOYING 38 BUSES.

ON TOP OF THIS, THE CITY BUS WILL START THEIR SERVICE AS THE SECOND FRANCHISED BUS OPERATOR ON HONG KONG ISLAND IN SEPTEMBER.

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REVIEW OF POLICE MANNING UNDERWAY: S FOR S

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THE POLICE FORCE IS CARRYING OUT A REVIEW OF POLICE MANNING LEVELS TO MAKE THE MOST EFFICIENT USE OF THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE.

SPEAKING IN THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID THE FORCE SHOULD BE PROVIDED WITH ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO ENABLE IT TO CARRY OUT ITS DUTIES EFFECTIVELY.

HE SAID PART OF THE REVIEW BY AN OUTSIDE CONSULTANT ON THE TOP MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE HAD BEEN COMPLETED, WHILE ANOTHER PART RELATING TO THE MANNING AND FORCE ESTABLISHMENT WAS STILL CONTINUING.

"WE WILL BE LOOKING CRITICALLY AT WHETHER ALL THE TASKS THE FORCE IS DOING SHOULD PROPERLY BE DONE BY POLICE OFFICERS AND, IF SO, WHETHER THERE ARE BETTER OR MORE EFFICIENT WAYS OF DOING THIS WORK," HE ADDED.

MR ASPREY NOTED THAT THE 1993/94 ESTIMATES OF EXPENDITURE FOR THE POLICE FORCE AMOUNTED TO \$7.3 BILLION, OF WHICH ABOUT 86 PER CENT WAS ON PERSONAL EMOLUMENTS.

DESPITE A SLIGHT REDUCTION IN EXPENDITURE THIS YEAR, WHEN COMPARED WITH LAST YEAR, HE SAID THE FORCE'S ABILITY TO FIGHT CRIME WOULD NOT BE UNDERMINED.

DISREGARDING CERTAIN EXCEPTIONAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE LAST YEAR, HE SAID OVERALL EXPENDITURE THIS YEAR SHOWED A REAL INCREASE OF OVER FOUR PER CENT, WHILE EXPENDITURE ON POLICE OFFICERS DEPLOYED ON LAW AND ORDER DUTIES WOULD INCREASE BY FIVE PER CENT IN REAL TERMS.

"THE SAME IS TRUE OF RESOURCES ALLOCATED TO THE FORCE FOR GATHERING INTELLIGENCE.

"THERE WILL IN FACT BE AN INCREASE OF 11 PER CENT IN EXPENDITURE ON CRIMINAL INTELLIGENCE," HE NOTED.

ON THE STRENGTH OF THE POLICE FORCE, WHICH STANDS AT SOME 27,000, MR ASPREY SAID THERE HAD BEEN A STEADY INCREASE OVER THE PAST YEAR, AND THE VACANCY RATE WAS AT PRESENT ONLY ONE PER CENT.

"THE NUMBER OF JUNIOR POLICE OFFICERS RECRUITED IN THIS FINANCIAL YEAR IS 23 PER CENT UP ON THE PREVIOUS YEAR. WASTAGE HAS ALSO DECLINED SIGNIFICANTLY.

"I BELIEVE THAT HOUSING IS A MAJOR FACTOR IN RETAINING STAFF AND REDUCING WASTAGE," HE SAID, NOTING THAT SOME 410 UNITS HAVE BEEN ACQUIRED OVER THE LAST 12 MONTHS AND SOME 1,300 MORE UNITS TO BE AVAILABLE IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS.

TO BOOST POLICE MANPOWER ON THE STREETS, MR ASPREY SAID A NUMBER OF NEW INITIATIVES WERE BEING PURSUED.

THESE INCLUDE RELEASING POLICE OFFICERS FROM TASKS WHICH SHOULD, MORE CORRECTLY, BE PERFORMED BY OTHER DEPARTMENTS.

"TOGETHER WITH THE RELEASE OF THE POLICE FROM VIETNAMESE CAMP DUTIES AND THE CONTINUING NET INCREASE IN STRENGTH, SUCH INITIATIVES MEAN THAT WE ARE WELL ON OUR WAY TOWARDS PUTTING ON THE STREETS THE 800 EXTRA POLICEMEN PLEDGED BY THE GOVERNOR IN HIS POLICY ADDRESS LAST OCTOBER," HE SAID.

TURNING TO CRIME PREVENTION AND DETECTION, MR ASPREY SAID THE DETECTION RATE IN RESPECT OF VIOLENT CRIME, INCLUDING ROBBERY WITH FIREARMS, SO FAR THIS YEAR HAD IMPROVED OVER THE SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR.

ON THE USE OF MODERN EQUIPMENT TO HELP ACHIEVE THIS IMPROVEMENT, HE SAID A TOTAL OF \$526 MILLION HAD BEEN APPROVED FOR THE POLICE TO IMPLEMENT OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS AN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY.

"THIS WILL, AMONG OTHER THINGS, CUT DOWN THE TIME AND MANPOWER DEVOTED TO REPETITIVE MANUAL TASKS AND SPEED UP COMMUNICATION.

"WHEN FULLY IN PLACE, SOME 570 POSTS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR RE-DEPLOYMENT TO OTHER POLICE DUTIES," HE ADDED.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 1993

- 21 -

WAY FORWARD FOR EDUCATION EXCITING AND CHALLENGING

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THE INCREASED FUNDING FOR EDUCATION PROVIDED IN THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1993 WILL ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO MOVE FORWARD ON ITS COMPREHENSIVE AND COHERENT PACKAGE OF POLICIES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL EDUCATION, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IT WILL ALSO ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE WITH ITS TERTIARY EXPANSION PROGRAMME AND TO ENHANCE SUPPORT FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH, HE ADDED.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR CHAN DESCRIBED THE WAY AHEAD AS "EXCITING AS WELL AS CHALLENGING".

SOME MEMBERS HAVE NOTED THAT MANY COUNTRIES WITH A PER CAPITA GDP COMPARABLE TO HONG KONG SPEND A GREATER PROPORTION OF THEIR GDP ON EDUCATION.

"I DO NOT DISPUTE THIS," HE SAID. "DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES ASCRIBE DIFFERENT ROLES TO THEIR PUBLIC SECTOR, AND THIS IS REFLECTED BY OTHER INDICATORS AS WELL."

"FOR EXAMPLE, IN TERMS OF TAX RECEIPTS AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP, HONG KONG REGISTERED 13 PER CENT IN 1992/93. BY COMPARISON, THE FIGURES FOR 1989 WERE 46 PER CENT FOR THE NETHERLANDS, BETWEEN 30 AND 40 PER CENT FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM, ITALY, SPAIN, AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND AND 17 PER CENT FOR SINGAPORE.

"IN EACH CASE A BROADLY COMPARABLE PERCENTAGE WAS RECORDED FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TOTAL PUBLIC SPENDING AND GDP."

MR CHAN BELIEVED THAT GREATER SPENDING DID NOT NECESSARILY PRODUCE PROPORTIONATELY BETTER RESULTS, ADDING THAT "WE ALL RECOGNISE THAT TEACHERS HAVE A PIVOTAL ROLE".

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS WORKING PURPOSEFULLY TOWARDS IMPROVING THE PREPARATION OF TEACHERS AND FOSTERING A MORE SUPPORTIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT TO HELP THEM DO THEIR JOB MORE EFFECTIVELY.

IN THIS RESPECT, THE GOVERNMENT HAD APPOINTED THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNING COUNCIL OF THE NEW INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION AND HAD EARMARKED RESOURCES OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS FOR THE INSTITUTE'S DEVELOPMENT.

ON KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION, MR CHAN RECALLED THAT DURING A MOTION DEBATE ON THE SUBJECT IN FEBRUARY THIS YEAR, HE UNDERTOOK TO CONSIDER PROPOSALS FOR A SCHEME TO SUPPLEMENT KINDERGARTEN TEACHER SALARIES, AND FOR KINDERGARTENS EVENTUALLY TO BE BROUGHT WITHIN THE SCOPE OF SUBSIDISED EDUCATION.

"DETAILED EXAMINATION OF THESE PROPOSALS HAS STARTED IN EARNEST, BUT THEY DO HAVE SUBSTANTIAL POLICY AS WELL AS FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS WHICH WILL TAKE TIME TO THINK THROUGH," HE SAID.

/AS REGARDS

AS REGARDS WHOLE-DAY SCHOOLING, MR CHAN REITERATED THAT IT WAS GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TO ENCOURAGE EXISTING BISESSIONAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS WHICH COULD TURN WHOLE DAY TO DO SO, BY PROVIDING THEM WITH ADDITIONAL TEACHERS AND BETTER SENIOR TEACHER RATIOS.

"WE HAVE ALSO UNDERTAKEN TO OPERATE NEW PRIMARY SCHOOLS ON A WHOLE DAY BASIS WHENEVER POSSIBLE.

"BUT WE CONTINUE TO THINK THAT IT WOULD NOT BE REALISTIC TO COMMIT OURSELVES AT THIS JUNCTURE TO A FIRM TIMETABLE FOR FULL SCALE CONVERSION," HE SAID.

TURNING TO EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME, MR CHAN SAID AS A LONG TIME STRATEGY, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SEEK TO UPGRADE THE SKILLS OF LOCAL WORKERS SO THAT THEY COULD TAKE UP THE BETTER PAID JOBS.

"THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT WE HAVE BEEN AIMING TO ACHIEVE THROUGH EXPANDING OUR EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES.

"THE EMPLOYEES RETRAINING BOARD HAS ALSO DECIDED TO LAUNCH A NEW SCHEME UNDER WHICH PARTICIPATING EMPLOYERS WOULD ENGAGE THE RETRAINEES AND GIVE THEM ON THE JOB TRAINING."

THE BOARD WOULD PAY THE RETRAINEES AN ALLOWANCE FOR A SPECIFIED PERIOD AND THE EMPLOYERS WOULD MAKE UP THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ALLOWANCE AND THE APPROPRIATE MARKET WAGE.

MR CHAN BELIEVED THAT THIS ARRANGEMENT WOULD ENCOURAGE THE EMPLOYERS AND THE RETRAINEES TO STAY ON WITH EACH OTHER AFTER RETRAINING.

HOWEVER, HE POINTED OUT THAT EVEN WITH GREATLY EXPANDED RETRAINING, THE GOVERNMENT WAS LIKELY TO HAVE TO CONTINUE TO SUPPLEMENT THE LOCAL LABOUR SUPPLY FROM OUTSIDE TO PROVIDE SCOPE FOR FURTHER ECONOMIC GROWTH.

IT WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE LABOUR MARKET SITUATION CLOSELY AND ADJUST THE LABOUR IMPORTATION SCHEMES AS APPROPRIATE AS WELL AS TO TAKE ALL NECESSARY STEPS TO SAFEGUARD THE INTEREST OF LOCAL WORKERS.

TURNING TO COMPENSATION TO PNEUMOCONIOSIS SUFFERERS DIAGNOSED BEFORE AND AFTER 1981 ALIKE, MR CHAN EXPLAINED THAT WHEN COMPENSATION FOR PNEUMOCONIOSIS WAS FIRST INTRODUCED IN 1980, A CONSCIOUS DECISION WAS TAKEN TO LIMIT ITS COVER ONLY TO SUFFERERS DIAGNOSED AFTER JANUARY 1, 1981.

IT WAS DECIDED ON THE BASIS OF A LEVY ON THE INDUSTRIES MOST DIRECTLY CONCERNED.

THOSE DIAGNOSED BEFORE 1981 RECEIVED AN ONE-OFF EX-GRATIA PAYMENT FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

THEREFORE, HE SAID: "WE ARE NOW DRAFTING LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE THE COMPENSATION ARRANGEMENTS UNDER THE ORDINANCE BUT WE CANNOT EXTEND THOSE ARRANGEMENTS TO PRE-1981 CASES.

"IN PROPOSING TO PUT UP \$100 MILLION TO GIVE THEM ADDITIONAL AND LIFE-LONG COMPENSATION, THE GOVERNMENT IS MAKING A GENUINE EFFORT TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF THE PNEUMOCONIOTICS DIAGNOSED BEFORE 1981," HE ADDED.

ON THE PROPOSED SCHEME TO ASSIST VICTIMS OF WORK-RELATED ACCIDENTS, MR CHAN SAID JUDGING FROM PAST EXPERIENCE, THE PROPOSED INJECTION OF \$10 MILLION SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT.

THE SCHEME IS TO PROVIDE INTEREST-FREE LOANS TO HELP THE VICTIMS TIDE OVER THEIR DIFFICULTIES WHILE WAITING FOR THE PAYMENT OF THE EMPLOYEES COMPENSATION THAT IS LEGALLY DUE TO THEM.

"WE EXPECT THAT, WITH VERY EXCEPTIONS, THESE LOANS WILL BE REPAYED AND THAT, THEREFORE, THE FUND WILL ESSENTIALLY BE OF A REVOLVING NATURE."

MR CHAN ALSO NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD JUST COMPLETED AN INITIAL COLLATION OF THE PUBLIC RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION PAPER ON A COMMUNITY-WIDE RETIREMENT PROTECTION SYSTEM.

"WE WILL NOW BEGIN TO EXAMINE THAT RESPONSE IN DETAIL AND TO CONSIDER WHETHER AND HOW THE ORIGINAL PROPOSALS SHOULD BE MODIFIED.

"WE SHALL WORK WITH ALL DUE DESPATCH AND WILL KEEP THE MANPOWER PANEL OF THIS COUNCIL INFORMED OF PROGRESS," HE SAID.

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HEALTH CARE SERVICES PRINCIPLE REAFFIRMED

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IT HAS BEEN THE GOVERNMENT'S TIME-HONOURED POLICY SINCE 1974 THAT NO ONE SHOULD BE DENIED ADEQUATE MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR WANT OF MEANS, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, REITERATED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1993, MRS WONG SAID WHILE THIS FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE REMAINED VALID, THERE WAS A NEED FOR A REVIEW OF THE HEALTH CARE FINANCING STRUCTURE AS BOTH THE MEDICAL COSTS AND PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS HAD INCREASED AS WELL AS THE COMMUNITY BECAME MORE AFFLUENT.

"THIS IS NOT A QUESTION OF RAISING FEES," MRS WONG STRESSED.

"WHAT IS NEEDED IS A WHOLE NEW SYSTEM TO ENSURE THAT SUFFICIENT FUNDS ARE AVAILABLE TO MEET THE COMMUNITY'S EXPECTATIONS FOR BETTER SERVICE, WHILE ENSURING THAT FEES AND COSTS REMAIN AFFORDABLE BOTH TO USERS AND TO THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE," SHE ADDED.

SHE SAID A CONSULTATION DOCUMENT WOULD BE PUT FORWARD TO THE LEGCO FOR CONSIDERATION SOON.

ON THE PROVISION OF HOSPITAL FACILITIES IN NEW TERRITORIES EAST, THE SECRETARY SAID SHE INTENDED TO CONDUCT A FULL REVIEW IN TWO YEARS' TIME TO ASSESS THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL HOSPITAL FACILITIES IN TSEUNG KWAN O.

IN THE MEANTIME, THE GOVERNMENT WILL EXPLORE THE NEED FOR OTHER IMPROVEMENTS IN THE SHORT TERM SUCH AS THE PROVISION OF SPECIALIST CLINICS.

"FURTHERMORE, THE NORTH DISTRICT HOSPITAL AND TAI PO NETHERSOLE HOSPITAL WILL TOGETHER PROVIDE OVER 1,200 ADDITIONAL BEDS FOR THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN NEW TERRITORIES EAST," MRS WONG SAID.

SHE ALSO OUTLINED THE GOVERNMENT'S NEW INITIATIVES TO REDUCE THE NEED FOR IN-PATIENT ADMISSION AND TO ENHANCE PRIMARY HEALTH CARE.

THESE INCLUDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COHERENT INTERFACE BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR IN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE, THE INTRODUCTION OF PILOT SCREENING FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE AND WOMEN, AND THE INTRODUCTION OF DAY HOSPITALS AND SERVICE CENTRES.

TO IMPROVE SERVICE TO PATIENTS, A MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM IS BEING INTRODUCED FOR ACCOUNTING AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, PATIENTS' RECORDS AND INVENTORY-KEEPING.

"ONCE ALL PUBLIC HEALTH CARE FACILITIES ARE NETWORKED, A PATIENT'S COMPLETE MEDICAL HISTORY WILL BE ACCESSIBLE WHEREVER THAT PATIENT GOES FOR TREATMENT," SHE SAID.

TURNING TO MANPOWER PLANNING FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS, MRS WONG SAID THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY AND THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE WERE CONDUCTING SEPARATE REVIEWS TO ASSESS COMMUNITY NEEDS AS A WHOLE.

"WE INTEND TO SET UP AN INTER-DEPARTMENTAL STUDY GROUP TO EXAMINE THE REPORTS WHEN TO HAND, AND SPECIFICALLY TO TACKLE THE ISSUE OF PERCEIVED NURSING SHORTAGE," SHE SAID.

AS REGARDS SOCIAL WELFARE EXPENDITURE, THE SECRETARY SAID THE RATES OF PAYMENT UNDER THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE SCHEME WOULD BE INCREASED BY NINE PER CENT FOR INFLATION FROM TOMORROW (THURSDAY) WHILE THE NEW COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE SCHEME WOULD BE IMPLEMENTED ON JULY 1 THIS YEAR.

MRS WONG DISMISSED THE QUESTION OF BACKDATING THE NEW SCHEME, ADDING THAT IT COULD NOT BE ACCEPTED IN PRINCIPLE.

REFERRING TO SOME MEMBERS' CONCERN OVER WHETHER RECURRENT FUNDING FOR SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES WOULD CONTINUE AFTER THE \$2.3 BILLION INJECTED INTO THE LOTTERIES FUND WAS USED UP AFTER 1996/97, MRS WONG ASSURED MEMBERS THAT RECURRENT FUNDING FOR THESE NEW SERVICES WOULD CONTINUE.

SHE UNDERTOOK TO UPDATE THE TARGETS OF SERVICES REGULARLY TO ENSURE THAT THEY MET THE CHANGING NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE COMMUNITY.

WIFE ABUSE WAS ANOTHER SUBJECT MRS WONG TOUCHED ON. ACCORDING TO STATISTICS, SHE SAID, THE PROBLEM WAS NOT GETTING OUT OF HAND.

BUT SHE AGREED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MIGHT BE MUCH UNDER-REPORTED AND STRESSED THAT THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY SERVICES COUNSELLING SHOULD NOT BE LIGHTLY DISMISSED OR FORGOTTEN.

MRS WONG ALSO PAID TRIBUTE TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON WELFARE SERVICES FOR UNANIMOUSLY SUPPORTING THE SETTING UP OF REHABILITATION FACILITIES AT TUNG TAU ESTATE AND NEAR LAGUNA CITY.

SHE EMPHASISED THAT SUSTAINED PUBLIC EDUCATION WOULD CONTINUE TO BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGY TO ACHIEVE FULL INTEGRATION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

IN THIS RESPECT, A "FUN DAY OF TOGETHERNESS" WILL BE HELD ON APRIL 11 IN KOWLOON PARK TO KICK OFF THE CAMPAIGN THIS YEAR.

"I LOOK FORWARD TO THE COMMUNITY'S PARTICIPATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

"I WOULD LIKE HERE ALSO TO ENTER A PLEA THAT WE AS A COMMUNITY SHOULD DO WHAT WE CAN TO CARE FOR THE LESS FORTUNATE MEMBERS OF OUR SOCIETY," MRS WONG SAID.

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MAXIMUM SUPPORT FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

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THE OBJECTIVES OF GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ON INDUSTRY ARE THAT THERE SHOULD BE MINIMUM INTERVENTION IN THE MARKET PLACE BUT MAXIMUM SUPPORT FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR T H CHAU, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

RESPONDING TO LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLORS' VIEWS IN THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE BUDGET, MR CHAU OUTLINED THE SUPPORT SERVICES THAT ENABLED INDUSTRY TO BECOME MORE COMPETITIVE THROUGH PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH, QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND PRODUCT INNOVATION.

THIS SUPPORT COMES THROUGH A LOW AND STABLE TAX REGIME, THE DEVELOPMENT OF PHYSICAL AND HUMAN INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE CREATION OF AN EXTENSIVE RANGE OF INSTITUTIONS, SERVICES AND PROGRAMMES TARGETED AT DIFFERENT AREAS OF INDUSTRY TO HELP TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT.

ON PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, MR CHAU SAID IN THE LAST THREE YEARS, THE GOVERNMENT HAD COMMITTED OVER \$1,600 MILLION IN SPECIFIC PROJECTS TO HELP INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT.

THESE INCLUDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE THIRD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE IN TSEUNG KWAN O; THE CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF A TECHNOLOGY CENTRE TO PROVIDE ACCOMMODATION AND SERVICES FOR SMALL AND START-UP HIGH TECHNOLOGY BUSINESSES; AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HONG KONG PRODUCTIVITY COUNCIL BUILDING.

HE SAID INDUSTRY WOULD ALSO BENEFIT FROM THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN EXTENSION TO THE HONG KONG CONVENTION AND EXHIBITION CENTRE.

IN ADDITION, THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT, THE HONG KONG PRODUCTIVITY COUNCIL, THEIR SUBSIDIARY ORGANISATIONS AND THE HONG KONG QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE RANGE OF SERVICES TO INDUSTRY TO HELP PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH, QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION.

/"THESE SERVICES

"THESE SERVICES ARE CONSTANTLY BEING ASSESSED AND ADAPTED TO MEET INDUSTRY'S CHANGING NEEDS," HE SAID.

LAST MONTH THE \$200 MILLION APPLIED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SCHEME WAS LAUNCHED TO ENCOURAGE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

MR CHAU PLEDGED TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE FUNDS TO THE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT AND TO TRAIN TECHNOLOGISTS.

TURNING TO THE IMPORT OF TECHNOLOGY, HE SAID THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT, THROUGH ITS INWARD INVESTMENT PROGRAMME, WOULD CONTINUE TO ATTRACT OVERSEAS INVESTORS WHO CAN BRING IN USEFUL TECHNOLOGIES.

THE CUMULATIVE VALUE OF INVESTMENTS AT THE END OF LAST YEAR IS EXPECTED TO HAVE INCREASED BY OVER 10 PER CENT FROM THE \$34 BILLION AT WHICH IT STOOD AT THE END OF 1991.

MR CHAU SAID THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISED THAT IN A TIME OF RAPID STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN THE ECONOMY, IT WAS IMPORTANT TO ASSESS AND ADAPT ITS SUPPORT AND SERVICES FOR INDUSTRY.

THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT UNDERTAKES A PROGRAMME OF STUDIES TO EXAMINE WHAT THE INFRASTRUCTURAL, TECHNOLOGICAL AND MARKET CONSTRAINTS ON INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT ARE AND HOW THEY CAN BE OVERCOME.

FIVE SUCH STUDIES WERE COMPLETED IN 1992/93. ANOTHER SIX STUDIES WILL BE COMMISSIONED OR COMPLETED IN THE FISCAL YEAR 1993/94.

"THE PROJECTED PHASING OF EXPENDITURE ON THESE STUDIES IS SUCH THAT LESS EXPENDITURE WILL BE MADE IN 1993/94 THAN IN 1992/93.

"THIS IS THE SOLE REASON WHY THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT'S BUDGET FOR 1993/94 IS A FRACTION SMALLER THAN THAT FOR 1992/93.

"WE HAVE NOT, AS WAS SUGGESTED BY ONE MEMBER, CUT BACK ON OUR ALLOCATION TO THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT," MR CHAU SAID.

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MEASURES TO TACKLE PUBLIC WORKS UNDERSPENDING IN PLACE
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MEASURES ARE IN PLACE TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM OF UNDERSPENDING FOR PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN REDUCED FROM \$6.6 BILLION IN 1991/92 TO \$3.6 BILLION AS ANTICIPATED THIS YEAR.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, AT THE RESUMED BUDGET DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR BLAKE SAID THE RE-ORGANISED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRESS COMMITTEE WHICH HE CHAIRED WOULD BRING TOGETHER RELEVANT POLICY SECRETARIES SO AS TO NIP THE PROBLEMS IN THE BUD.

"THE WORKS DIRECTORS HAVE MADE MORE REALISTIC FORECASTS IN TERMS OF TIME AND MONEY FOR PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS IN THE 1993/94 DRAFT ESTIMATES," HE SAID.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT IS ALSO EMBARKING ON A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF PUBLIC WORKS PROCEDURES, PRACTICES AND SYSTEMS WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF CONSULTANCIES.

THE REVIEW WILL LOOK AT ORGANISATION, HIERARCHY AND ACCOUNTABILITY AND WILL INCLUDE THE COMMISSIONING OF A SOPHISTICATED COMPUTER BASED INFORMATION AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM.

TRAINING SEMINARS ON NEW TECHNIQUES WILL BE ORGANISED FOR PROJECT ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS.

TO UPLIFT PERFORMANCES OF THE PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME, MR BLAKE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS PREPARED PROJECT LISTINGS OF ALL WORKS DEPARTMENTS BASED ON VARIOUS KEY START DATES TO ENSURE THAT RESOURCES WERE APPLIED IN THE MOST EFFECTIVE MANNER AND TO HIGHLIGHT POTENTIAL PROBLEMS IN ADVANCE.

STRONG MONITORING CONTROLS ON PROJECTS IN PROGRESS ARE NOW IN PLACE IN ALL WORKS DEPARTMENTS TO PROVIDE BETTER AND MORE TIMELY INFORMATION FLOW. SAME VIGOROUS PROCESS WILL BE APPLIED TO PROJECTS UNDER PLANNING AND DESIGN.

ON ENTRUSTING PROJECTS TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR, MR BLAKE SAID THE WORKS DEPARTMENTS ARE READY FOR THE GREATER USE OF DESIGN AND BUILD PROCEDURES AND WILL ALSO CONSIDER TURN-KEY CONTRACTS WHENEVER APPROPRIATE.

"THE CONSTRUCTION ADVISORY BOARD, WHICH WILL MEET FOR THE FIRST TIME SHORTLY, WILL BE ABLE TO OFFER VALUABLE ADVICE ON HOW TO MAKE THE BEST USE OF THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR," HE SAID.

MR BLAKE SAID THE STRATEGY OF INTEGRATING THE CONTRACTS FOR THE AIRPORT CORE PROJECTS WITHIN A TIGHTLY CONTROLLED BASELINE PROGRAMME IN ORDER TO SECURE COMPLETION TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT POSSIBLE BY JUNE 30, 1997 CONTINUED TO BE IMPLEMENTED SUCCESSFULLY.

"THIS IS NECESSARILY ON A STEP-BY-STEP BASIS WHILST FUNDING PROPOSALS FOR THE AIRPORT AND AIRPORT-RAILWAY STILL REMAIN TO BE AGREED.

"INDIVIDUALLY HOWEVER EVERY CONTRACT SO FAR AWARDED IS WITHIN BUDGET, AND WITH AN APPROPRIATE TIME ALLOWED FOR COMPLETION," MR BLAKE SAID.

LOCALISATION OF LEGAL DEPARTMENT ENCOURAGING

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PROGRESS OF LOCALISATION OF THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS HAD BEEN ENCOURAGING, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON JEREMY MATHEWS, SAID.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1993 IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY, HE SAID AT THE SENIOR CROWN COUNSEL LEVEL, THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT HAD 77 LOCAL LAWYERS OUT OF A TOTAL STRENGTH OF 141.

AT THE DIRECTORATE LEVEL, THERE WERE 10 LOCAL OFFICERS OUT OF A TOTAL OF 53.

"FIVE YEARS AGO, THE CORRESPONDING FIGURES WERE, FOR SENIOR CROWN COUNSEL, 20 LOCAL OFFICERS OUT OF A TOTAL OF 100, AND FOR DIRECTORATE, THREE LOCAL OFFICERS OUT OF A TOTAL OF 43," HE SAID.

"SO WHILE MUCH IS STILL TO BE DONE, WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY IN OUR PROGRESS TOWARDS LOCALISATION," HE ADDED.

IN THE PAST, A KEY OBSTACLE LYING IN THE WAY OF LOCALISATION WAS THE FACT THAT PRIVATE PRACTICE IN HONG KONG WAS IN GENERAL MUCH MORE REWARDING IN MONETARY TERMS THAN GOVERNMENT SERVICE.

THIS CREATED DIFFICULTIES FOR LOCALISATION IN LEGAL DEPARTMENT IN TWO WAYS.

FIRST, IT MEANT THAT VERY FEW LOCAL LAWYERS WOULD WANT TO LEAVE PRIVATE PRACTICE TO JOIN THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT.

SECONDLY, IT MEANT THAT WE HAD DIFFICULTIES IN RETAINING OUR YOUNG LOCAL COUNSEL, AS MANY WERE TEMPTED TO LEAVE GOVERNMENT SERVICE SOON AFTER THEIR TRAINING WAS COMPLETED.

RECOGNISING ALL THESE PROBLEMS, THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT INTRODUCED THE DOUBLE LADDER SCHEME IN DECEMBER 1988 TO HELP RETAIN LOCAL COUNSEL. THIS SCHEME ALLOWS LOCAL CROWN COUNSEL WHO HAVE IDENTIFIED POTENTIAL TO REACH SENIOR CROWN COUNSEL EARLY IN THEIR CAREERS.

THE SCHEME HAD HAD A NOTABLE SUCCESS IN HELPING THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT TO RETAIN LOCAL LAWYERS AND WASTAGE OF LOCAL COUNSEL HAS DROPPED DRAMATICALLY IN THE PAST FEW YEARS.

TO SPEED UP LOCALISATION OF THE DIRECTORATE IN THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT, THE DEVELOPMENT POSTS SCHEME WAS INTRODUCED IN JUNE 1991.

ITS OBJECTIVE WAS TO GROOM ABLE LOCAL SENIOR CROWN COUNSEL SO THAT THEY COULD COMPETE MORE EFFECTIVELY FOR PROMOTION INTO THE DIRECTORATE.

MR MATHEWS SAID OWING TO ITS RELATIVELY SHORT HISTORY AND THE LENGTH OF THE GROOMING PERIOD INVOLVED, THE SCHEME WAS YET TO EXERT ITS FULL IMPACT ON LOCALISATION OF THE DIRECTORATE AND THAT TO DATE ONLY 18.9% OF DIRECTORATE OFFICERS IN THE DEPARTMENT WERE LOCALS.

"I WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE FIGURE SUBSTANTIALLY RAISED IN THE COMING YEARS. I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE DEVELOPMENT POSTS SCHEME WILL ASSIST IN ACHIEVING THIS GOAL," HE SAID.

BOTH SCHEMES WOULD BE REVIEWED THIS YEAR BY AN INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP.

MR MATHEWS ALSO EXPLAINED THE CRITERIA AND PROCEDURE FOR BRIEFING LEGAL WORK OUT AND THE WAY IN WHICH FEES WERE MONITORED AND CONTROLLED.

HE SAID THE MAJORITY OF CASES BRIEFED OUT WERE CRIMINAL PROSECUTIONS.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS KEPT LISTS OF BARRISTERS WHO HAD EXPRESSED INTEREST IN UNDERTAKING PROSECUTIONS WORK FOR THE CROWN AND WHO WERE CONSIDERED TO HAVE THE NECESSARY ABILITY AND EXPERIENCE AT THE RELEVANT LEVEL.

WHEN A CASE WAS TO BE BRIEFED OUT, THE NORMAL PROCEDURE WAS TO CHOOSE COUNSEL ON THE BASIS OF ROTATION AND AVAILABILITY.

OCCASIONALLY, COUNSEL WOULD ALSO BE SELECTED BECAUSE OF HIS OR HER SPECIAL EXPERTISE IN A PARTICULAR AREA, SUCH AS COMMERCIAL CRIME.

MR MATHEWS SAID THE FEES PAYABLE IN PROSECUTIONS CASES WERE IN MOST CASES SUBJECT TO A SCALE WHICH APPLIED EQUALLY TO THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT AND THE LEGAL AID DEPARTMENT AND WHICH HAD BEEN APPROVED BY THE FINANCE COMMITTEE.

THESE SCALE FEES WERE SOMETIMES INCREASED WHERE THE CASE IN QUESTION MERITED IT.

"FOR EXAMPLE, A MAJOR FRAUD CASE IN THE HIGH COURT MAY ATTRACT FEES ABOVE SCALE FEES, PARTICULARLY IF PROSECUTED BY LEADING COUNSEL.

"IT IS RARE FOR FEES TO BE INCREASED IN THE MAGISTRACY BUT OCCASIONALLY THIS HAPPENS IN THE DISTRICT COURT WHERE THE OFFENCE IS SERIOUS AND THE TRIAL IS LONG AND COMPLEX. THE APPROVAL OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS IS REQUIRED FOR ANY DEPARTURE FROM THE SCALE FEES," HE SAID.

THE CROWN SOLICITOR ALSO KEPT A LIST OF BARRISTERS WHO WERE WILLING TO ACCEPT INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE CROWN IN RESPECT OF CIVIL MATTERS.

COUNSEL WISHING TO BE INCLUDED IN THIS LIST WERE ASKED TO STATE THEIR AREAS OF PRACTICE AND THEIR USUAL LEVEL OF FEES.

THEY WERE THEN SELECTED FOR INCLUSION ON THE LIST ON THE BASIS OF THEIR ABILITY, EXPERIENCE AND LEVEL OF FEES.

BECAUSE OF THE COMPARATIVELY SMALL AMOUNT OF CIVIL WORK BRIEFED OUT AND ITS OFTEN HIGHLY SPECIALISED NATURE, IT WAS NOT PRACTICABLE TO BRIEF CIVIL WORK OUT TO COUNSEL ON THE LIST ON A ROTATION BASIS.

RATHER, THE CHOICE OF COUNSEL FOR A PARTICULAR CIVIL CASE WAS BASED ON ABILITY - HAVING REGARD IN PARTICULAR TO COUNSEL'S AREAS OF PRACTICE, AVAILABILITY AND THE LEVEL OF FEES CHARGED.

ALTHOUGH THERE WAS NO AGREED SCALE OF FEES FOR CIVIL WORK, THE CROWN SOLICITOR HIMSELF APPROVED THE LEVEL OF FEES FOR EACH CIVIL MATTER THAT WAS BRIEFED OUT.

IN ADDITION TO BARRISTERIAL WORK, THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT ALSO BRIEFED OUT SOME SOLICITORS' WORK. THE CIVIL DIVISION HAD OVER THE LAST YEAR BEEN AIMING TO REDUCE ITS RELIANCE ON OUTSIDE LAW FIRMS AND, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF A FEW MINOR CASES, NO NEW SOLICITORS' WORK IN CIVIL MATTERS ON BEHALF OF THE CROWN HAD BEEN BRIEFED OUT IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS.

THE SOLICITORS' WORK IN RESPECT OF PROSECUTION CASES WAS RARELY BRIEFED OUT.

GIVEN THE SMALL NUMBER OF CASES IN WHICH SOLICITORS' WORK WAS BRIEFED OUT AND THE FACT THAT THE WORK WAS SOMETIMES VERY SPECIALISED, ONLY A FEW FIRMS OF SOLICITORS WERE ABLE TO UNDERTAKE THIS WORK FOR THE CROWN.

A FIRM WOULD ONLY BE APPROACHED IN RESPECT OF SOLICITORS' WORK IF ITS COMPETENCE AND EXPERIENCE IN THE RELEVANT AREA OF PRACTICE AND ITS LEVEL OF FEES CHARGED COULD WITHSTAND CRITICAL SCRUTINY BY THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS OR THE CROWN SOLICITOR.

MR MATHEWS SAID IT HAD BEEN SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE ABLE TO ACHIEVE SOME SAVINGS IN RESPECT OF THE BRIEFING OUT OF SOLICITORS' WORK IF A SYSTEM COULD BE INTRODUCED WHEREBY FIRMS WERE INVITED TO BID FOR THIS WORK ON A COMPETITIVE BASIS.

"I AM GRATEFUL FOR THIS SUGGESTION AND WILL EXAMINE IT CAREFULLY," HE SAID.

TURNING TO THE WIDER USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN THE GOVERNMENT, HE SAID THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT HAD ALREADY MADE CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS IN THIS RESPECT.

"ALL ORDINANCES AND SUBSIDIARY LEGISLATION ARE NOW STORED AND UPDATED ON OUR IN-HOUSE DATABASE, AND CAN BE RETRIEVED OR SEARCHED IN A MATTER OF SECONDS.

"THERE ARE ALSO OTHER DATABASES WITHIN THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT RELATING TO THE WORK OF INDIVIDUAL DIVISIONS," HE SAID.

HE SAID A COMPREHENSIVE AND COHERENT PLAN FOR OFFICE AUTOMATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY ENHANCE THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT'S PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY.

WITH THIS IN MIND A COMPREHENSIVE INFORMATION SYSTEMS STRATEGIC STUDY WAS UNDERWAY IN THE DEPARTMENT AND RESULTS OF THAT STUDY WERE EXPECTED LATER THIS YEAR.

RTHK PROGRAMME QUALITY, MORALE
UNAFFECTED BY BUDGET CUT-BACKS
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THE BUDGET CUT-BACKS OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS FOR RTHK HAVE NOT RESULTED IN THE PRODUCTION OF FEWER AND POORER QUALITY PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND INFORMATION PROGRAMMES NOR HAVE THESE AFFECTED THE STAFF MORALE.

IN FACT, THE QUALITY OF RTHK'S PROGRAMMES HAS REMAINED CONSISTENTLY HIGH AND HAS MORE THAN ADEQUATELY MET PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS, AS IS CLEARLY REFLECTED IN RECENT AUDIENCE APPRECIATION SURVEYS.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE, MR JAMES SO, WHEN SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1993 IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR SO SAID BOTH TVB AND ATV, NO DOUBT INSPIRED BY THE POPULARITY OF RTHK'S PROGRAMMES, HAD PRODUCED THEIR OWN GOOD QUALITY PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND INFORMATION PROGRAMMES, INCLUDING NEWS MAGAZINE, NEWSLINE, MONDAY MONITOR, PEARL REPORT, AND SUNDAY REPORT.

"ESSENTIALLY, WE LOOK TO RTHK TO UNDERTAKE PROGRAMMING THAT THE COMMERCIAL BROADCASTERS MIGHT BAULK AGAINST," HE SAID.

"IT IS CLEAR THAT IN THIS AREA OF PROGRAMMING, TVB AND ATV ARE NOT BAULKING.

"THUS IT IS RIGHT THAT RTHK SHOULD NOW FOCUS ON AREAS NOT COVERED BY THE COMMERCIAL BROADCASTERS AND GO FOR QUALITY RATHER THAN QUANTITY."

ON THE RADIO SIDE, RTHK ALSO MAINTAINS ITS LEADING POSITION AS IS SHOWN BY THE RECENT SEVEN-DAY LISTENING FIGURES FOR THE TOP FIVE RADIO CHANNELS.

SPEAKING ON STAFF MORALE, MR SO STATED: "LET NO ONE BE UNDER THE DELUSION THAT MORALE IS NOT HIGH AT RTHK.

"IT COULD NOT BE OTHERWISE HAVING REGARD TO THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF RTHK'S RADIO AND TELEVISION SERVICES OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS, OF WHICH BOTH STAFF MEMBERS OF RTHK AND THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE CAN BE JUSTLY PROUD."

TURNING TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURE, THE SECRETARY NOTED THAT SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE IN THE PAST DECADE.

TO MAP OUT THE WAY FORWARD, THE GOVERNMENT HAS PUBLISHED THE ARTS POLICY REVIEW REPORT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION EARLY THIS MONTH.

ONE OF THE MAJOR PROPOSALS CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT IS TO RECONSTITUTE THE EXISTING COUNCIL FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS (CFPA) INTO AN ARTS COUNCIL AND TO EXPAND THE COUNCIL'S SCOPE TO EMBRACE THE VISUAL AND LITERARY ARTS IN ADDITION TO THE PERFORMING ARTS.

MR SO SAID THE \$30 MILLION GRANT TO THE SIR DAVID TRENCH FUND TO PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR ARTS DEVELOPMENT WOULD GO SOME WAY TO MEETING THIS REQUIREMENT.

ON THE CONCERN EXPRESSED BY MEMBERS OVER THE SCOPE AND APPLICATION OF THIS GRANT, MR SO POINTED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH THIS GRANT WAS AIMED AT PROVIDING SUPPORT TO NEW AND DEVELOPING ARTISTIC GROUPS, ITS AMBIT WOULD BE SUCH AS TO ENABLE IT TO COVER THE LITERARY AND VISUAL ARTS AS WELL.

"BUT FUNDS TO SUPPORT THE VISUAL AND LITERARY ARTS CANNOT BE ALLOCATED UNTIL THE NEW POLICY IS APPROVED AND AN ARTS COUNCIL IS SET UP, REPLACING THE CFPA, IN ADVISING ME ON THE PROPER DISBURSEMENTS OF FUNDS TO THESE ART FORMS FROM THIS GRANT," HE SAID.

"THIS GRANT WILL ALSO BE USED FLEXIBLY AND PRUDENTLY TO DEVELOP THE ARTS IN HONG KONG AND THAT NO DESERVING AND WORTHWHILE PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY THE CFPA NOW, OR THE ARTS COUNCIL IN FUTURE, WILL BE TURNED DOWN FOR WANT OF FUNDS.

"IF NEED BE, THE CAPITAL OF THE GRANT MAY BE DRAWN DOWN TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY FUNDING SUPPORT TO THE PROJECT."

AS REGARDS COMMENTS THAT SMALL AND LESS KNOWN PERFORMING GROUPS ENGAGED IN ACTIVITIES AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL WERE INADEQUATELY FUNDED, MR SO SAID THIS MIGHT BE THE CASE IN THE PAST.

HE ADMITTED THAT ONLY SIX PER CENT OF THE FUNDS ALLOCATED TO THE CFPA WAS SPENT ON THE SMALLER GROUPS IN 1988.

BUT THIS HAD RISEN TO 22 PER CENT IN 1992/93 AND WILL BE FURTHER INCREASED TO 24.8 PER CENT IN 1993/94.

ON THE SPORTS SIDE, MR SO REAFFIRMED GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING AND DEVELOPING SPORTS IN HONG KONG.

THE \$100 MILLION ONE-OFF GRANT PROPOSED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HONG KONG'S ATHLETES WOULD BE CRUCIAL IN PREPARING THEM FOR INTERNATIONAL SPORTING EVENTS IN THE YEARS AHEAD, INCLUDING THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES AND THE ASIAN GAMES IN 1994, AND THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN 1996.

"I AM SURE WITH THIS ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO SPORTS, WE CAN LOOK FORWARD TO MUCH BETTER PERFORMANCE BY OUR ATHLETES IN INTERNATIONAL GAMES IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS, AND CAN EXPECT TO SEE THEM COMING HOME WITH MORE MEDALS, THUS RAISING HONG KONG'S PROFILE IN THE INTERNATIONAL SPORTING ARENA," MR SO SAID.

PUBLIC VIEWS SOUGHT ON SAHR PROCEDURES

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THE GOVERNMENT TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PUBLISHED THE CONSULTATION PAPER ON THE FINAL REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENTIFICALLY ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION (SAHR).

TABLING THE DOCUMENT BEFORE THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, SAID SAHR WAS THE ASSISTANCE OF HUMAN CONCEPTION BY ARTIFICIAL MEANS, IN ORDER TO ALLEVIATE HUMAN INFERTILITY.

SINCE 1986, WHEN THE FIRST BABY WAS BORN IN HONG KONG AS A RESULT OF IN-VITRO FERTILISATION, THE PRACTICE OF SAHR PROCEDURES HAS DEVELOPED RAPIDLY AND ARE NO LONGER UNCOMMON.

AS SAHR PROCEDURES RAISE MANY WIDE-RANGING SOCIAL, MORAL, ETHICAL AND LEGAL CONCERNS AND CONTROVERSIES, MRS WONG SAID A COMMITTEE ON SCIENTIFICALLY ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION WAS APPOINTED IN 1987 TO LOOK INTO THE ISSUES INVOLVED.

THE COMMITTEE, CHAIRED BY DR LEONG CHE-HUNG, TOOK FIVE YEARS TO STUDY THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE SUBJECTS AND SUBMITTED ITS FINAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNMENT LAST YEAR.

MRS WONG NOTED THAT THE FINAL REPORT DISCUSSED THE COMPLEX ISSUES THOROUGHLY IN LAYMAN'S LANGUAGE AND MADE 22 WELL-PRESENTED RECOMMENDATIONS, WHICH HAD PROFOUND AND FAR-REACHING IMPLICATIONS.

"I HAVE STUDIED THE FINAL REPORT CAREFULLY AND SOUGHT ADVICE FROM THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL," SHE SAID.

"AS RIGHTLY POINTED OUT BY ONE EXPERT IN OBSTETRICS AND GYNAECOLOGY, THE CONCERN OVER THIS ISSUE MAINLY COMES FROM THE PUBLIC.

"GIVEN THE TIME IT HAS TAKEN FOR US TO COME THUS FAR AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF SAHR PROCEDURES, IT IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE COMMUNITY TO BE UPDATED ON THE ISSUES INVOLVED AND TO TAKE THE LEAD IN FORMING A VIEW ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS BEFORE A FINAL DECISION IS TAKEN," SHE ADDED.

THE CONSULTATION PAPER SETS OUT BRIEFLY THE BACKGROUND AND ARGUMENTS ON SAHR PROCEDURES.

IT ALSO EXPLAINS THE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS ON SAHR PROCEDURES FLOWING FROM THE PARENT AND CHILD ORDINANCE ENACTED EARLIER THIS MONTH.

COPIES OF THE CONSULTATION PAPER, IN ENGLISH AND CHINESE, WILL BE SENT TO CONCERNED INDIVIDUALS AND BODIES IN THE MEDICAL, LEGAL, SOCIAL SERVICE AND RELIGIOUS FIELDS.

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC MAY ALSO OBTAIN COPIES FROM VARIOUS DISTRICT OFFICES AND THE HEALTH AND WELFARE BRANCH, GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT, SEVENTH FLOOR, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT OFFICES, MAIN WING, LOWER ALBERT ROAD.

VIEWS ON THE CONSULTATION PAPER SHOULD BE SENT TO THE HEALTH AND WELFARE BRANCH NO LATER THAN JUNE 30, 1993.

CONFIDENTIAL DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES NOT TO MAKE PUBLIC

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IT IS NOT NORMAL PRACTICE TO DISCLOSE CONFIDENTIAL DIPLOMATIC EXCHANGES BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS, WHICH IN ANY CASE NORMALLY CONSIST OF ORAL EXCHANGES RATHER THAN WRITTEN MESSAGES.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SZE, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HENRY TANG YIN-YEN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

ON THE PUBLICATION OF THE SEVEN LETTERS EXCHANGED BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND CHINESE GOVERNMENTS, MR SZE EXPLAINED THAT BRITISH MINISTERS DECIDED TO DO SO FOLLOWING A SPECIFIC SUGGESTION TO THIS EFFECT FROM THE CHINESE SIDE.

"AT A SPECIAL SITTING OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ON 12 MARCH 1993, THE GOVERNOR MADE CLEAR THE BRITISH SIDE'S POSITION AND EFFORTS IN EXPLORING WHETHER A FIRM AND PRODUCTIVE BASIS COULD BE FOUND TO HOLD FORMAL TALKS WITH THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT ON THE 1994/95 ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS IN HONG KONG," MR SZE ADDED.

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GOVT CONSIDERS RELAXING VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR CHINESE VISITORS

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THE GOVERNMENT IS NOW CONSIDERING WHETHER IT IS POSSIBLE TO RELAX THE REQUIREMENT FOR VISAS FOR SHORT-TERM TOURISTS OR BUSINESS VISITORS FROM CHINA.

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

MR ASPREY SAID: "UNDER THE EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS, RESIDENTS OF CHINA HOLDING CHINESE TWO-WAY PERMITS WHO VISIT HONG KONG INDIVIDUALLY OR IN GROUPS, AS TOURISTS OR ON BUSINESS, DO NOT REQUIRE VISAS."

HOWEVER, THOSE TRAVELLING ON CHINESE PASSPORTS DO REQUIRE VISAS, HE ADDED.

IN NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, VISAS ARE APPROVED WITHIN ONE TO TWO WEEKS.

"IF WE RELAX FURTHER VISA REQUIREMENTS, THIS SHOULD HELP TO REDUCE VISA PROCESSING TIMES," HE SAID.

MR ASPREY SAID THERE WAS NO LIMIT OR QUOTA ON VISITORS FROM CHINA, WHO CONTRIBUTED TO HONG KONG'S TOURISM INDUSTRY.

HOWEVER, THE HONG KONG AND CHINESE GOVERNMENTS AGREED IN 1983 THAT THE NUMBER OF TWO-WAY PERMIT HOLDERS VISITING HONG KONG SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO INCREASE IN A GRADUAL AND CONTROLLED MANNER, HE SAID.

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58,400 PUBLIC RENTAL UNITS MORE IN NEXT THREE YEARS

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THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PUBLIC RENTAL UNITS TO BE COMPLETED IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS IS 58,400.

IN ADDITION, ABOUT 13,000 VACATED UNITS ARE EXPECTED TO BE RECOVERED FROM TENANTS FOR ALLOCATION EACH YEAR.

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

THE NUMBER AND LOCATION OF PUBLIC RENTAL HOUSING UNITS TO BE COMPLETED IN THE NEXT THREE YEARS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

LOCATION	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96
URBAN AREA	6,000	14,800	6,600
EXTENDED URBAN AREA	7,600	6,200	4,600
N.T.	6,100	2,600	3,900
TOTAL	19,700	23,600	15,100

FOR 1993/94, ABOUT 40,000 UNITS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR ALLOCATION, INCLUDING ABOUT 20,000 NEWLY COMPLETED UNITS, 13,000 UNITS RECOVERED AS WELL AS 7,000 UNITS REFURBISHED TO A HIGHER STANDARD, HE ADDED.

"THERE IS NO FIXED RATIO FOR ALLOCATING RENTAL FLATS TO VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF PROSPECTIVE TENANTS," MR EASON SAID.

"AT THE BEGINNING OF EACH FINANCIAL YEAR, THE HOUSING AUTHORITY MAKES AN ASSESSMENT OF THE LIKELY DEMAND FROM VARIOUS CATEGORIES AND SUPPLY FROM DIFFERENT SOURCES," HE EXPLAINED.

"IT THEN DECIDES ON THE ALLOCATION QUOTAS FOR THE YEAR."

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SPECIAL ALLOCATION OF TIN SHUI WAI FLATS

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RESPONSE FROM ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS UNDER A SPECIAL PACKAGE APPROVED BY HOUSING AUTHORITY IN JULY 1991 HAS PROVED TO BE MORE THAN SUFFICIENT TO TAKE UP ALL THE TIN SHUI WAI ESTATE FLATS COMING ON STREAM UP TO MARCH 1994.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION RAISED BY THE HON ZACHARY WONG WAI-YIN, MR EASON SAID: "THUS THE AUTHORITY DECIDED IN JANUARY THIS YEAR NOT TO ACCEPT ANY MORE NEW APPLICATIONS FROM PRIORITY TWO AND THREE FAMILIES."

/HE EXPLAINED

HE EXPLAINED THAT HAVING REGARD TO DIFFICULTIES IN LETTING NEW FLATS IN TUEN MUN IN 1990/91, THE AUTHORITY APPROVED THE PACKAGE, INCLUDING RELAXED ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA, TO ATTRACT TENANTS TO THE MORE REMOTE TIN SHUI WAI ESTATE DUE FOR POPULATION INTAKE FROM MID-1992.

SINCE THE AUTHORITY'S PRIORITY IS TO MEET THE HOUSING NEEDS OF THOSE ALREADY ELIGIBLE UNDER CURRENT CRITERIA FROM WHOM THERE IS MORE THAN SUFFICIENT DEMAND TO TAKE UP AVAILABLE SUPPLY, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO OFFER FLATS TO PRIORITY TWO AND THREE APPLICANTS FOR THE PRESENT, HE SAID.

"THOSE WHO HAVE ALREADY APPLIED HAVE BEEN NOTIFIED THAT THEIR CHANCE OF BEING ALLOCATED A FLAT IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS IS SLIM," HE ADDED.

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CALL TO PUBLICISE TV/RADIO PROGRAMMES UNDER COMPLAINTS

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THE GOVERNMENT WILL INVITE MEMBERS OF THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY (BA) TO CONSIDER PUBLICISING DETAILS OF BREACHES BY LICENSEES OF THE TELEVISION AND RADIO CODES OF PRACTICE ON PROGRAMME AND ADVERTISING STANDARDS.

IN HIS WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ERIC LI KA-CHEUNG, THE SECRETARY FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE, MR JAMES SO, SAID THE PUBLICATION OF SUCH DETAILS WAS A MATTER FOR THE BA TO DETERMINE AND THAT THE COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE OF THE AUTHORITY COULD DETERMINE ITS OWN PROCEDURES.

"CURRENTLY IT IS NOT THE PRACTICE OF THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY TO PUBLICISE DETAILS OF INDIVIDUAL BREACHES CONSIDERED BY THE AUTHORITY.

"HOWEVER, STATISTICS ON COMPLAINT CASES, INCLUDING DETAILS OF WARNINGS AND FINANCIAL PENALTIES, ARE PUBLISHED ANNUALLY IN THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORT WHICH IS TABLED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL," MR SO SAID.

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MASSIVE FLOODING CONTROL PROGRAMME IN THE PIPELINE

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THE LONG-TERM SOLUTION TO THE FLOODING PROBLEM IN NORTHWESTERN NEW TERRITORIES LIES IN THE COMPLETION OF AN EXTENSIVE PROGRAMME OF MAJOR DRAINAGE PROJECTS, THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR BLAKE SAID THE PROGRAMME WOULD COMPRISE THE TRAINING OF MAIN RIVERS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF FLOODWATER PUMPING SCHEMES IN YUEN LONG, KAM TIN, NGAU TAM MEI AND SAN TIN.

HE WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON TANG SIU-TONG.

/THESE PROJECTS

THESE PROJECTS, AT A COST OF \$2,805 MILLION AND THE MAJORITY OF WHICH TO BE COMPLETED BY 1998/9, ARE NOW AT VARIOUS STAGES OF PLANNING AND DESIGN, HE ADDED.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FIRST PROJECT, TRAINING OF THE SHAN PUI RIVER, IS SCHEDULED TO START IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS YEAR.

IN VIEW OF THE TIME NEEDED TO COMPLETE SUCH A SUBSTANTIAL PROGRAMME OF FLOOD PREVENTION PROJECTS, THE GOVERNMENT IS TAKING A NUMBER OF SHORT-TERM MEASURES TO DEAL WITH THE FLOODING PROBLEM IN THE INTERIM.

THESE INCLUDED LOCAL DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENT, RIVER MAINTENANCE, FLOODPLAIN MANAGEMENT AND A FLOOD WARNING SYSTEM.

WHILE THE SHORT-TERM MEASURES WILL NOT ALLEVIATE FLOODING ON A REGIONAL SCALE, MR EASON SAID THEY WOULD HELP TO PREVENT FURTHER DETERIORATION OF THE SITUATION AND TO IMPROVE THE CAPACITY OF SOME LOCAL DRAINAGE SYSTEMS TO COPE WITH LESS SERIOUS FLOODS.

THE FLOOD WARNING INSTALLATIONS SHOULD HELP TO REDUCE THE LOSSES CAUSED BY FLOODING, HE ADDED.

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CREDIT UNIT SYSTEM FOR TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION
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THE UNIVERSITY AND POLYTECHNIC GRANTS COMMITTEE (UPGC) PLANS TO REVERT TO DETAILED CONSIDERATION OF A MORE COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF CREDIT ACCUMULATION AND INTER-INSTITUTIONAL CREDIT TRANSFER, IN THE CONTEXT OF ITS REVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE 1992-95 TRIENNIUM.

EARLIER WHEN THE EDUCATION COMMISSION PUBLISHED ITS RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE SUBJECT IN ITS REPORT NO. 3, THE COMMITTEE HAD DECIDED THAT THE ADOPTION OF CREDIT UNIT SYSTEMS SHOULD BE LEFT INITIALLY TO THE INSTITUTIONS' DISCRETION.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LAU CHIN-SHEK IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR CHAN SAID AT PRESENT ALL OF THE NINE DEGREE-AWARDING INSTITUTIONS IN HONG KONG OPERATED THE CREDIT UNIT SYSTEMS TO VARYING EXTENTS.

OF THE SEVEN UPGC-FUNDED INSTITUTIONS, THREE - THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, THE HONG KONG BAPTIST COLLEGE AND THE LINGNAN COLLEGE - OPERATE FULLY ON THE BASIS OF CREDIT UNIT SYSTEMS.

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY IS MOVING TO A CREDIT UNIT SYSTEM IN LINE WITH ITS MOVE TO THE NORMATIVE THREE-YEAR FIRST DEGREE STRUCTURE WHILE THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG IS INTRODUCING MORE FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS, SOME OF WHICH ARE ON A UNIT BASIS, FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES.

THE CITY POLYTECHNIC OF HONG KONG OPERATES A MODULAR SCHEME FOR THE DESIGN OF ITS COURSE STRUCTURES, WHICH REPRESENTS AN INTERMEDIATE POSITION SHORT OF A FULL CREDIT UNIT SYSTEM WHEREAS THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC OPERATES A CREDIT UNIT SYSTEM ONLY FOR CERTAIN POST-GRADUATE AND POST-EXPERIENCE COURSES.

MR CHAN SAID OF THE OTHER TWO DEGREE-AWARDING INSTITUTIONS, THE ACADEMY FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS ADOPTS THE NORTH AMERICAN SYSTEM UNDER WHICH A STUDENT RECEIVES SPECIFIC CREDITS FOR PREDETERMINED HOURS OF STUDY IN EACH SUBJECT OF HIS CURRICULUM AND THESE COUNT TOWARDS THE AWARD OF A DEGREE.

THE CREDITS CAN BE TRANSFERRED TO OTHER ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS WORLDWIDE, THUS ALLOWING THE STUDENT TO SEEK ADVANCED EDUCATION INTERNATIONALLY.

THE OPEN LEARNING INSTITUTE (OLI) WHICH HAS OPERATED A CREDIT UNIT SYSTEM SINCE IT WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1989, ALLOWS STUDENTS MAXIMUM FLEXIBILITY IN THE CHOICE OF THE NUMBER AND LEVEL OF COURSES TO STUDY IN ANY ONE SEMESTER OR YEAR.

CREDIT TRANSFER SYSTEMS ARE IN PLACE TO ENABLE STUDENTS WHO HAVE SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED EQUIVALENT COURSES IN RECOGNISED INSTITUTIONS TO COUNT THOSE COURSES TOWARDS THEIR OLI DEGREE.

SPECIAL INSTITUTIONAL CREDIT TRANSFER AGREEMENTS ALSO EXIST BETWEEN THE OLI AND THE OPEN UNIVERSITIES IN BRITAIN AND BRITISH COLUMBIA.

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HK OFFICIAL TO ATTEND HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE

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THE BRITISH DELEGATION TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS TO BE HELD IN VIENNA IN JUNE THIS YEAR WILL INCLUDE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL, THE SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SZE, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

EXPLAINING THE POLICY REGARDING HONG KONG GOVERNMENT'S ATTENDANCE AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES, MR SZE SAID EACH CASE WOULD BE CONSIDERED ON ITS OWN MERITS.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHRISTINE LOH IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, HE SAID: "HONG KONG GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WILL NORMALLY ATTEND WHERE THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE CONFERENCE IS OF INTEREST OR CONCERN TO HONG KONG AND WHERE IT IS APPROPRIATE TO DO SO," MR SZE SAID.

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 1993

- 39 -

EMPLOYERS ENCOURAGED TO SET UP WORK-BASED CHILD CARE CENTRES
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IT IS GOVERNMENT POLICY TO ENCOURAGE EMPLOYERS TO SET UP WORK-BASED CHILD CARE CENTRES FOR THEIR EMPLOYEES, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THIS POLICY WAS SET OUT IN THE 1991 WHITE PAPER "SOCIAL WELFARE INTO THE 1990S AND BEYOND".

"THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT WILL CONTINUE TO PROMOTE THE CONCEPT AMONG EMPLOYERS IN HONG KONG AND TO PAVE THE WAY FOR COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE OF THIS RELATIVELY NEW CONCEPT," MRS WONG SAID IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON LAM KUI-CHUN.

THE GOVERNMENT, AS AN EMPLOYER, HAS RECENTLY CONDUCTED A SURVEY OF CIVIL SERVANTS WORKING IN CENTRAL AND WAN CHAI DISTRICTS TO COLLECT THEIR VIEWS ON A PROPOSAL TO SET UP A WORK-BASED CHILD CARE CENTRE IN EITHER CENTRAL OR WAN CHAI FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

AND THE RESPONSE TO THE SURVEY IS ENCOURAGING, MRS WONG SAID.

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APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES ON COURT OF APPEAL JUDGES EXPLAINED
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ONLY CANDIDATES WHO MEET THE STATUTORY QUALIFICATIONS STIPULATED IN THE SUPREME COURT ORDINANCE WILL BE CONSIDERED FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE COURT OF APPEAL IN HONG KONG.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON EMILY LAU WAI-HING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE THREE SOURCES OF CANDIDATES ARE: JUDGES AT HIGH COURT LEVEL, LOCAL LAWYERS OUTSIDE THE JUDICIARY AND LAWYERS RECRUITED FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM.

SIR DAVID SAID WHEN A VACANCY WAS EXPECTED, SOUNDINGS WOULD BE TAKEN IN HONG KONG THROUGH THE CHIEF JUSTICE, MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIAL SERVICE COMMISSION AND LEADERS OF THE PROFESSION TO IDENTIFY ANY SUITABLE CANDIDATES.

SHOULD IT BE CONSIDERED NECESSARY TO SEEK CANDIDATES OUTSIDE HONG KONG, ENQUIRIES WILL BE MADE THROUGH THE JUDICIAL SOURCES AND SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE PROFESSION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, HE ADDED.

ALL LIKELY CANDIDATES ARE CONSIDERED BY THE JUDICIAL SERVICE COMMISSION WHICH WILL MAKE A RECOMMENDATION TO THE GOVERNOR.

IF THE GOVERNOR ACCEPTS THE RECOMMENDATION, HE WILL SUBMIT IT TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR APPROVAL.

/WHEN APPROVAL

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 1993

- 40 -

WHEN APPROVAL IS RECEIVED FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE, THE GOVERNOR WILL MAKE THE APPOINTMENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 6 OF THE SUPREME COURT ORDINANCE, SIR DAVID SAID.

REGARDING THE THREE VACANCIES IN THE COURT OF APPEAL ARISING FROM RETIREMENTS THIS YEAR, SIR DAVID SAID MR JUSTICE BOKHARY HAD BEEN APPOINTED TO FILL ONE OF THESE VACANCIES AND THE JUDICIAL SERVICE COMMISSION WAS CONSIDERING THE PROSPECT OF FILLING THE OTHER TWO POSTS.

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STUDIES UNDERWAY FOR LANDFILL RESTORATION PROGRAMME
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THE GOVERNMENT HAS FORMULATED A PHASED LANDFILL RESTORATION PROGRAMME, WITHIN WHICH STUDIES ARE BEING UNDERTAKEN ON THE EXTENT OF POLLUTION PROBLEMS AND CONTROL AND REMEDIAL MEASURES REQUIRED.

THE PROGRAMME IS NEEDED AS UNLIKE THE NEW STRATEGIC LANDFILLS UNDER PLANNING, CLOSED AND CURRENTLY OPERATING LANDFILLS WERE NOT DESIGNED TO MINIMISE THEIR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT, PARTICULARLY IN RESPECT OF EMISSIONS OF LANDFILL GAS AND LEACHATE.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON GILBERT LEUNG KAM-HO IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR EASON SAID THE STUDY FOR THE SIX LANDFILLS IN THE URBAN AREA - NGAU CHI WAN, JORDAN VALLEY, MA YAU TONG (WEST AND CENTRAL), SAI TSO WAN AND GIN DRINKERS BAY - WAS COMPLETED.

THE POLLUTION CONTROL AND RESTORATION WORKS WHICH ARE REQUIRED HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AND ARE EXPECTED TO COST ABOUT \$250 MILLION.

SIMILAR STUDIES ARE NOW BEING CARRIED OUT IN RESPECT OF LANDFILLS IN THE NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES AND THE NECESSARY WORKS ARE EXPECTED TO COST ABOUT \$310 MILLION, HE SAID.

HE SAID THE USES TO WHICH COMPLETED AND RESTORED LANDFILLS MIGHT BE PUT DEPENDED ON THEIR LOCATION, TOPOGRAPHY AND SURROUNDING LAND USES.

MOST FORMS OF BUILDING DEVELOPMENT ARE RULED OUT, AT LEAST UNTIL THE LANDFILL HAS FULLY STABILISED.

A MORE TYPICAL USE COULD BE PUBLIC OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION BUT EACH CASE WILL NEED DETAILED STUDY, HE SAID.

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WIDE-RANGING CONCESSIONARY SCHEMES FOR ELDERLY

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THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT VARIOUS CONCESSIONARY FARES AND CHARGES WERE OFFERED BY THE GOVERNMENT, PUBLIC CORPORATIONS AND PUBLIC UTILITY COMPANIES FOR ELDERLY PERSONS.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HOWARD YOUNG, MRS WONG SAID AT PRESENT, THE STAR FERRY PROVIDED FREE TRAVEL TO ALL PASSENGERS AGED 65 OR ABOVE WHILE THE HONGKONG AND YAUMATI FERRY OFFERED AN OFF-PEAK HALF-FARE CONCESSIONARY SCHEME FOR PASSENGERS OF THE SAME AGE GROUP.

THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY CORPORATION AND THE KOWLOON-CANTON RAILWAY CORPORATION ALSO OFFER CONCESSIONARY FARES FOR PERSONS AGED 65 OR ABOVE.

MRS WONG NOTED THAT THE FOLLOWING NEW CONCESSIONARY SCHEMES WERE IN HAND AS A RESULT OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY IN HIS BUDGET SPEECH TO WAIVE THE ANNUAL LICENCE FEES AND RENTALS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATORS IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO INTRODUCE CONCESSIONARY FARES FOR THE ELDERLY OR TO IMPROVE THEIR EXISTING SCHEMES:

- * KOWLOON MOTOR BUS TO INTRODUCE A NEW SCHEME BY APRIL OR MAY THIS YEAR;
- * CITYBUS TO INTRODUCE A NEW SCHEME FOR THE ELDERLY WHEN IT TAKES OVER 26 BUS ROUTES FROM CHINA MOTOR BUS IN SEPTEMBER THIS YEAR;
- * CHINA MOTOR BUS TO INTRODUCE A LIMITED CONCESSIONARY SCHEME; AND
- * NEW LANTAO BUS AND HONGKONG AND YAUMATI FERRY WILL ALSO UPGRADE THEIR CONCESSIONARY SCHEMES.

AS REGARDS THE REGIONAL COUNCIL, A 50 PER CENT DISCOUNT IS OFFERED TO PERSONS AGED 60 OR ABOVE FOR USE OF VARIOUS FACILITIES, INCLUDING TICKETS FOR CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS; PROGRAMME FEES FOR SPORTS AND RECREATION ACTIVITIES; AND CHARGES FOR HOLIDAY CAMPS, SWIMMING POOLS, SQUASH COURTS, TENNIS COURTS, GRASS PITCHES AND ARTIFICIAL GRASS PITCHES.

THEY ARE ALSO FREE TO USE THE CLOAK ROOM SERVICES AT CIVIC CENTRES OR LIBRARIES.

FOR THE URBAN COUNCIL, PERSONS AGED 60 OR ABOVE ARE GIVEN A 50 PER CENT DISCOUNT FOR ADMISSION TO MUSEUMS, CULTURAL AND ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMMES, SPORTS AND RECREATION PROGRAMMES, FLOWER SHOW AND HORTICULTURAL CLASSES, AS WELL AS USE OF SPORTS FACILITIES DURING NON-PEAK HOURS.

IN ADDITION, A 35 PER CENT DISCOUNT IS OFFERED TO THOSE OVER 60 FOR ADMISSION TO SHOWS AT THE SPACE MUSEUM AND 40 PER CENT TO THE SCIENCE MUSEUM.

ADMISSION TO THE OCEAN PARK IS FREE FOR PERSONS AGED 60 OR ABOVE SINCE MAY 1991.

TRAFFIC FLOW ON TOLO HIGHWAY WITHIN DESIGN CAPACITY

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THE PRESENT DAILY TRAFFIC FLOW ON TOLO HIGHWAY IS WITHIN THE ROAD'S DESIGN CAPACITY OF 120,000 VEHICLES PER DAY DESPITE INCREASED TRAFFIC OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR MICHAEL LEUNG, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY REV THE HON FUNG CHI-WOOD IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE DAILY TRAFFIC FLOW INCREASED FROM 66,950 VEHICLES PER DAY IN 1990 TO 83,510 IN 1991 AND 98,230 IN 1992.

MR LEUNG SAID A RECENT ROAD CONDITION SURVEY REVEALED THAT THE TOLO HIGHWAY WAS STRUCTURALLY SOUND BUT RESURFACING WAS REQUIRED EVERY FOUR TO FIVE YEARS DUE TO NORMAL WEAR AND TEAR.

SUCH ROAD RESURFACING WORKS ARE ONLY CARRIED OUT AT NIGHT BETWEEN 10 PM AND 6 AM TO MINIMISE TRAFFIC DISRUPTION. OTHER MINOR WORKS SUCH AS REPAINTING ROAD MARKINGS ARE UNDERTAKEN DURING OFF-PEAK HOURS BETWEEN 10 AM AND 4 PM.

MR LEUNG SAID THE USE OF MORE DURABLE ROAD SURFACE MATERIAL HAD BEEN CONSIDERED TO MINIMISE THE NEED FOR REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE WORK FOR THE HIGHWAY.

"HOWEVER, RIGID REINFORCED CONCRETE, WHICH HAS A LONGER DESIGN LIFE, IS CONSIDERED UNSUITABLE FOR TOLO HIGHWAY AS IT WILL CAUSE PROBLEMS OF NOISE, SKID RESISTANCE AND RIDING QUALITY, GIVEN THE HIGH TRAFFIC SPEEDS PERMITTED ON THIS EXPRESSWAY," HE SAID.

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NO SLOPES UNDER HA ARE DANGEROUS

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NO SLOPES UNDER THE MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY ARE CLASSIFIED AS DANGEROUS AS SUCH, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON SAMUEL WONG PING-WAI, MR EASON SAID: "THERE ARE, HOWEVER, 1,200 REGISTERED SLOPES WHICH ARE SUBJECT TO REGULAR INSPECTION AND MAINTENANCE."

TWENTY OF THESE SLOPES HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS AS REQUIRING IMMEDIATE REPAIR AND UPGRADING.

WORK ON 16 HAS ALREADY BEEN COMPLETED; WHILE THAT ON THE REMAINING FOUR IS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED BEFORE THE COMING WET SEASON.

IN ADDITION, UNDER THE LANDSLIP PREVENTIVE MEASURES PROGRAMME OF THE GOVERNMENT GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEERING OFFICE, NINE SLOPES WITHIN THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S ESTATE BOUNDARIES ARE EARMARKED FOR UPGRADING WORK, HE SAID.

WORK ON TWO HAS BEEN INCLUDED IN CURRENT CONTRACTS; WHILE THAT ON THE REMAINING SEVEN IS PROGRAMMED TO START SOON.

THE SECRETARY REASSURED THE COUNCIL THAT THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT WAS ADEQUATELY STAFFED TO CARRY OUT THIS WORK.

HE SAID: "ALL REGISTERED SLOPES ARE SUBJECT TO REGULAR ANNUAL INSPECTION BY THE AUTHORITY'S GEOTECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE TERM CONSULTANTS."

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INVESTMENT PROMOTION AND PROTECTION AGREEMENTS - AN UPDATE

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THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR T H CHAU, SAID AN INVESTMENT PROMOTION AND PROTECTION AGREEMENT (IPPA) WITH CANADA HAD BEEN INITIALLED AND APPROVED BY THE CHINESE SIDE AND WAS AWAITING SIGNATURE.

HONG KONG HAS SIGNED AN IPPA WITH THE NETHERLANDS. A FURTHER SEVEN HAVE BEEN INITIALLED WITH AUSTRALIA, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND, DENMARK, GERMANY, ITALY AND FRANCE.

"NEGOTIATIONS WITH OTHER IMPORTANT INVESTMENT PARTNERS, INCLUDING USA, NEW ZEALAND AND SINGAPORE, ARE UNDER WAY OR PLANNED," MR CHAU SAID.

THE PROGRESS OF THE NEGOTIATION PROGRAMME WAS MADE KNOWN TODAY (WEDNESDAY) TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG.

WITH THE AUTHORISATION OF THE UK GOVERNMENT AND WITH THE AGREEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT IS NEGOTIATING A NETWORK OF IPPAS WITH COUNTRIES WHOSE INVESTORS HAVE INVESTED SUBSTANTIALLY IN HONG KONG.

"AFTER AN IPPA HAS BEEN NEGOTIATED AND INITIALLED BUT BEFORE IT IS SIGNED, THE TEXT IS SHOWN TO THE CHINESE SIDE IN THE JOINT LIAISON GROUP TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARE CONTENT.

"THIS WILL ENABLE THESE AGREEMENTS TO CONTINUE IN FORCE AFTER 1997 WHICH IS OBVIOUSLY AN IMPORTANT FEATURE OF THEM," HE SAID.

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HOUSING SOCIETY BUILDINGS GOVERNED BY DMC

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THE MANAGEMENT OF HOUSING SOCIETY BUILDINGS IS GOVERNED BY THE DEED OF MUTUAL COVENANT (DMC), THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, SAID AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION ASKED BY DR THE HON HUANG CHEN-YA, MR EASON SAID OWNERS CAN ENFORCE THEIR RIGHTS LAID DOWN IN THE DMC.

"IN ADDITION, FOR A DEVELOPMENT ON LAND RESUMED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE HOUSING SOCIETY, THE DMC HAS TO BE APPROVED BY THE DIRECTOR OF BUILDINGS AND LANDS," HE SAID.

OWNERS OF HOUSING SOCIETY FLATS MAY ALSO FORM A MUTUAL AID COMMITTEE OR OWNERS COMMITTEE.

MR EASON SAID MATTERS OF MANAGEMENT, INCLUDING THE QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT SERVICE AND THE SCALE OF MANAGEMENT FEES, WERE DECIDED IN CONSULTATION WITH THE OWNERS.

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PROVISION OF ACCOMMODATION FOR STREET SLEEPERS

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STREET SLEEPERS MAY BE OFFERED PUBLIC HOUSING ON COMPASSIONATE GROUNDS IF RECOMMENDED BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, SAID.

THOSE WHO REQUIRE INSTITUTIONAL CARE CAN ALSO BE PLACED IN A RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME, SUCH AS A HOME FOR THE AGED, A CARE-AND-ATTENTION HOME, OR A PRIVATE HOME FOR THE ELDERLY, MRS WONG SAID.

"FOR THOSE WHO ARE RELUCTANT TO MOVE INTO A PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATE OR TO LIVE IN AN INSTITUTION, TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IN A SHELTER OR HOSTEL IS AVAILABLE," MRS WONG SAID IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHIM PUI-CHUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"THESE SHELTERS AND HOSTELS ARE LOCATED MAINLY IN THE OLD URBAN AREAS AND ARE OPERATED EITHER BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT OR NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS."

ON QUESTIONS WHETHER ALTERATIONS WOULD BE MADE TO SUITABLE VIETNAMESE BOAT PEOPLE CENTRES TO ACCOMMODATE STREET SLEEPERS, MRS WONG SAID THESE CENTRES WERE LOCATED IN REMOTE AREAS AND IT WAS MOST UNLIKELY THAT THEY WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE AS ACCOMMODATION TO STREET SLEEPERS.

AT PRESENT, THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS OPERATE 11 TEMPORARY SHELTERS AND HOSTELS WHICH TOGETHER PROVIDE 482 PLACES FOR STREET SLEEPERS.

ANOTHER SEVEN URBAN HOSTELS HAVE ALSO BEEN PLANNED BY THE DEPARTMENT TO PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL 238 PLACES.

AS AT JANUARY THIS YEAR, THE NUMBER OF STREET SLEEPERS IN HONG KONG RECORDED BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT STOOD AT 1,051.

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INFORMATION IN FLAT SALES BROCHURES

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THE GOVERNMENT'S AIM IS TO ENCOURAGE REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT AND ACCURATE INFORMATION IN THEIR SALES MATERIAL AS FAR AS POSSIBLE.

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

MR EASON SAID A SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE LAW REFORM COMMISSION WAS CURRENTLY STUDYING THE SUBJECT OF DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION IN SALES MATERIAL ON UNCOMPLETED FLATS.

THIS IS TO ENSURE THAT SUFFICIENT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE TO THE PROSPECTIVE PURCHASER IN A PRACTICAL AND PRAGMATIC FASHION.

MR EASON SAID THE SUB-COMMITTEE EXPECTED TO FINALISE ITS RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS AND THE GOVERNMENT WOULD STUDY THEM CAREFULLY.

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HELP TO ELDERLY AFFECTED BY CLOSURE OF PRIVATE HOMES

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NO ELDERLY PERSON WAS RENDERED HOMELESS BY CLOSURES OF PRIVATE HOMES FOR THE ELDERLY AS ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION WAS ARRANGED FOR ALL THE RESIDENTS AFFECTED, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, ASSURED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN THE PAST TWO YEARS, 29 PRIVATE HOMES CEASED OPERATION AND 397 RESIDENTS WERE AFFECTED, MRS WONG SAID IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON LAM KUI-CHUN.

"WHERE ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED, THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT WOULD ARRANGE ALTERNATIVE PLACEMENT FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE AFFECTED BY SUCH CLOSURES.

"IMMEDIATE PLACEMENT WOULD BE ARRANGED FOR THEM EITHER IN PRIVATE HOMES, EMERGENCY UNITS OF SUBVENTED HOMES, OR THE TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION UNIT OF THE ABERDEEN REHABILITATION CENTRE RUN BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT," SHE SAID.

AS AT MARCH 1 THIS YEAR, THERE WERE ABOUT 11,800 PEOPLE LIVING IN PRIVATE HOMES FOR THE ELDERLY.

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IMPORTED WORKERS MUST ABIDE BY EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS

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IMPORTED WORKERS WHO TAKE UP JOBS OTHER THAN THOSE STIPULATED IN THEIR EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS WILL HAVE BREACHED THEIR CONDITIONS OF STAY AND ARE GUILTY OF AN OFFENCE, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY)

ON CONVICTION, AN OFFENDER IS LIABLE TO A FINE OF \$5,000 AND TO IMPRISONMENT FOR TWO YEARS.

HE IS ALSO LIABLE TO BE REMOVED FROM HONG KONG, MR CHAN SAID IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HOWARD YOUNG.

WORKERS RECRUITED FROM OUTSIDE HONG KONG ARE ONLY PERMITTED TO WORK FOR SPECIFIED EMPLOYERS AND IN SPECIFIED JOBS.

"TO ENFORCE THIS RULE, OFFICERS OF THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT CONDUCT SPOT CHECKS REGULARLY AS WELL AS INVESTIGATE COMPLAINTS WHEN RECEIVED," MR CHAN SAID.

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ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS BOARD BILL INTRODUCED

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A BILL THAT SEEKS TO ESTABLISH AN INDEPENDENT ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS BOARD TO HEAR STATUTORY APPEALS AGAINST CERTAIN ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS IS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE BILL PROVIDES FOR A MORE OPEN STATUTORY APPEAL SYSTEM IN LINE WITH ARTICLE 10 OF THE BILL OF RIGHTS ORDINANCE.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS BOARD BILL, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, SAID THE BOARD WOULD BE ABLE TO EXERCISE ALL THE POWERS AND DISCRETIONS CONFERRED ON THE ORIGINAL DECISION-MAKER, AND MAY AFFIRM, VARY OR SET ASIDE THE ORIGINAL DECISION.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS BOARD IS DESIGNED TO HANDLE A WIDE RANGE OF APPEALS.

"INITIALLY, HOWEVER, IT WILL ONLY DEAL WITH 28 TYPES OF RELATIVELY SIMPLE APPEALS INCLUDING MISCELLANEOUS LICENSING AND REGISTRATION APPEALS."

THIS IS TO GIVE THE BOARD TIME TO ESTABLISH ITSELF AND TO BUILD UP EXPERTISE, HE EXPLAINED.

"STATUTORY APPEALS WHICH MAY HAVE IMPORTANT POLICY AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS WILL CONTINUE TO BE DEALT WITH BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL," SIR DAVID SAID.

THE BILL WILL ENABLE THE BOARD TO CONDUCT HEARINGS IN PUBLIC, ALLOWS THE APPELLANT THE RIGHT TO ATTEND AND BE REPRESENTED AT BOARD HEARINGS, AND REQUIRE THE BOARD TO STATE IN WRITING THE REASONS FOR THEIR DECISIONS.

"THIS WILL NOT ONLY IMPROVE THE TRANSPARENCY OF THE DETERMINATION OF APPEALS, BUT WILL ALSO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE," SIR DAVID SAID.

THE BOARD WOULD COMPRISE PEOPLE WITH LEGAL EXPERTISE AND A WIDE SPECTRUM OF EXPERIENCE TO ENABLE IT TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY.

THE CHAIRMAN, DEPUTY CHAIRMEN, PANEL MEMBERS AND THE SECRETARY WOULD BE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR.

THE CHAIRMAN AND DEPUTY CHAIRMEN WILL BE LEGALLY QUALIFIED PERSONS ELIGIBLE FOR APPOINTMENT AS A DISTRICT COURT JUDGE.

THE PANEL OF MEMBERS WILL BE APPOINTED FROM PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE TO PROVIDE THE BOARD WITH THE CAPABILITY TO DEAL WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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BROADCASTING BILL PLANNED FOR 1993/94

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THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO INTRODUCE A BROADCASTING BILL IN THE 1993/94 LEGISLATIVE SESSION TO BRING TOGETHER, IN A SINGLE PIECE OF LEGISLATION, PROVISIONS AFFECTING THE WHOLE RANGE OF SOUND AND TELEVISION BROADCASTING.

IN DRAWING UP THE BILL, THE GOVERNMENT WILL EXAMINE THE APPROPRIATENESS OF PENALTIES WHICH THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY (BA) SHOULD BE ABLE TO IMPOSE.

THE GOVERNMENT WILL ALSO EXAMINE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BILL WHETHER APPEALS AGAINST DECISIONS OF THE BA SHOULD BE DEVOLVED FROM THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL AND HEARD BY AN INDEPENDENT BODY.

THIS WAS STATED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE SECRETARY FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE, MR JAMES SO, DURING THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE TELEVISION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993 (TAB) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

MR SO NOTED THAT SOME MEMBERS OF THE BILLS COMMITTEE ON THE TAB, WHILE AGREEING THE BA'S ABILITY TO IMPOSE FINANCIAL PENALTIES ON LICENSEES IS A SIMPLE AND SPEEDY SANCTION AGAINST TRANSGRESSION, WERE OF THE VIEW THAT, AS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE, SUCH POWER SHOULD MORE APPROPRIATELY BE VESTED WITH THE COURTS.

"I AM OF THE VIEW THAT THE WHOLE QUESTION OF THE APPROPRIATENESS OF ANY OF THE PENALTIES WHICH MAY BE IMPOSED BY A REGULATORY BODY SUCH AS THE BA SHOULD BEST BE EXAMINED BY THE ADMINISTRATION IN A WIDER CONTEXT, AND NOT BE DEALT WITH IN ISOLATION IN RELATION TO TELEVISION BROADCASTING ALONE IN THIS BILL," HE SAID.

"IN THE INTEREST OF FAIRNESS AND UNIFORMITY OF TREATMENT, ANY CHANGES TO THE PENALTY SYSTEM WOULD NEED TO BE INTRODUCED SIMULTANEOUSLY AND BE APPLIED TO THE INDUSTRY ACROSS THE BOARD," HE ADDED.

MR SO ALSO SAID THE EXCELLENT PROGRESS MADE IN PROCESSING THE TAB HAS DISPENSED WITH THE NEED FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO ISSUE A TRANSITIONAL LICENCE FOR SUBSCRIPTION TELEVISION.

HE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO EXPUNGE FROM THE BILL ALL REFERENCE TO THE "TRANSITIONAL" LICENCE.

MR SO ALSO SPELT OUT THE PARAMETERS WITHIN WHICH THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL MAY INVOKE THE POWER TO AMEND ANY OF THE CONDITIONS IN THE LICENCES HE GRANTS.

"IT IS POSSIBLE TO ENVISAGE SOME GENERAL AREAS MENTIONED IN LICENCE CONDITIONS WHICH MIGHT BE SUBJECT NEITHER TO REGULATIONS MADE UNDER THE ORDINANCE, NOR TO CODES OF PRACTICE ISSUED BY THE BA," HE SAID.

"EXAMPLES OF SUCH AREAS IN RELATION TO SUBSCRIPTION TELEVISION WOULD INCLUDE QUALITY CONTROL AND PROGRAMME LINE-UPS, ROLL-OUT AND TRANSMISSION PROVISIONS, MINIMUM BROADCASTING HOURS, CUSTOMER SERVICE AND THE LICENSEE'S PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS ETC," HE SAID.

"ANOTHER AREA IN WHICH WE WOULD BE VIGILANT IS TO COUNTER TRANSACTIONS ON THE PART OF THE LICENSEE TO AVOID OR CIRCUMVENT THE SPIRIT OR INTENTION OF THE LICENCE," HE ADDED.

"THESE WOULD BE SOME AREAS WHERE, IF THE NEED WERE TO ARISE, THE ONLY MEANS TO ACHIEVE A RESULT THAT WOULD BE JUSTIFIABLE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST WOULD BE BY AMENDING CONDITIONS IN THE LICENCE," MR SO SAID.

IN THE EVENT AMENDMENTS ARE TO BE MADE TO ANY OF THE LICENCE CONDITIONS, THE LICENSEE WOULD BE ENTITLED TO BE CONSULTED, TO MAKE REPRESENTATION TO THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL, AND TO HAVE THE LAST SAY TO THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL ON RECOMMENDATIONS PUT TO THE COUNCIL.

MR SO ALSO PROPOSED AN AMENDMENT TO THE TAB SO THAT THE SAME SET OF CROSS-MEDIA OWNERSHIP RULES WILL APPLY TO ALL BROADCASTERS LICENSED UNDER THE TELEVISION ORDINANCE.

THIS WILL RESULT IN ALL EXISTING AND PROSPECTIVE LICENSEES NOT BEING ALLOWED TO ACQUIRE MORE THAN 15 PER CENT OF THE SHARE CAPITAL OF ANY OTHER LICENSEE.

"THIS IS TO PREVENT ANY ONE BROADCASTING LICENSEE FROM DOMINATING THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY," MR SO ADDED.

ANOTHER AMENDMENT TO THE TAB EMBODIED A FRAMEWORK DEvised TO PREVENT DAMAGE TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND MORALS CAUSED BY UNDESIRABLE TELEVISION PROGRAMMES ON THE ONE HAND AND TO PROTECT THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ON THE OTHER.

THE FRAMEWORK OUTLINES THE NATURE OF PROGRAMMES THE LICENSEE IS REQUIRED NOT TO BROADCAST, EMPOWERS THE TA TO IMPOSE SANCTION IN CASE OF CONTRAVENTION, AND PROVIDES FOR THE CHIEF SECRETARY TO APPLY TO THE HIGH COURT TO PREVENT THE BROADCAST OF ANY PROGRAMME LIKELY TO CAUSE DAMAGE.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 1993

- 49 -

MR SO ALSO PROPOSED AN AMENDMENT TO MAKE PROCEEDINGS OF THE BA TO CONSIDER REVOCATION OF A LICENCE MORE TRANSPARENT.

THIS WILL MAKE IT MANDATORY FOR THE BA TO CONDUCT AN INQUIRY WHEN CONSIDERING REVOCATION.

"EXCEPT WHERE THE GROUNDS ARE FINANCIAL INSOLVENCY OR A FAILURE TO PAY ROYALTIES ETC ON THE PART OF THE LICENSEE, THE BA SHALL BE REQUIRED TO CONDUCT A PUBLIC HEARING AS PART OF SUCH AN INQUIRY, AND SHALL PUBLISH A REPORT ON THE PUBLIC HEARING," MR SO SAID.

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APPROPRIATION BILL 1993 PASSED IN LEGCO

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THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1993 WAS PASSED WITHOUT AMENDMENT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

ANOTHER TWO BILLS - HONG KONG INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY CENTRE CORPORATION BILL AND TELEVISION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1993 - WERE BOTH PASSED WITH AMENDMENTS.

IN ADDITION, THE ADMINISTRATIVE APPEALS BOARD BILL WAS INTRODUCED FOR FIRST AND SECOND READINGS. DEBATE ON IT WAS ADJOURNED.

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