



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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NO INTENTION TO RESTRICT NUMBER OF HK AIRLINES
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THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO INTENTION TO RESTRICT THE NUMBER OF HONG KONG AIRLINES IN OPERATING SCHEDULED SERVICES, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, HE SAID THERE HAD BEEN MISCONCEPTIONS RECENTLY ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY ON THE DESIGNATION OF HONG KONG AIRLINES, AND REPORTS SAYING THE GOVERNMENT WOULD STAND BY ITS DECISION +TO MAINTAIN A ONE-AIRLINE SYSTEM.+

MR JACOBS THEN EXPLAINED WHAT STEPS MUST BE TAKEN BEFORE A HONG KONG AIRLINE COULD BE DESIGNATED TO FLY ANY PARTICULAR ROUTE, AND WHY THE GOVERNMENT ADOPTED ITS PRESENT POLICY ON DESIGNATION.

TO START COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS, HE SAID, AN AIRLINE MUST FIRST OBTAIN AN AIR OPERATOR'S CERTIFICATE AND THE NECESSARY QUALIFIED PERSONNEL.

THEN IT MUST APPLY TO THE AIR TRANSPORT LICENSING AUTHORITY (ATLA) FOR A LICENCE TO OPERATE THE PARTICULAR SCHEDULED FLIGHTS.

CHAIRLED BY A HIGH COURT JUDGE AND COMPRISING MEMBERS FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR, THE ATLA, IN DETERMINING AN APPLICATION, MUST HAVE REGARD TO THE CO-ORDINATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF AIR SERVICES WITH THE OBJECT OF ENSURING THE MOST EFFECTIVE SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC WHILE AVOIDING UNECONOMICAL OVERLAPPING OF SERVICES, MR JACOBS SAID,

IN A WRITTEN DECISION DATED JANUARY 23, 1986, ATLA MADE IT CLEAR THAT IF IT CONSIDERED THAT A CASE HAD BEEN MADE OUT FOR A LICENCE FOR A PARTICULAR ROUTE, IT WOULD GRANT THE LICENCE IRRESPECTIVE OF WHETHER RIGHTS TO EXERCISE IT WERE AVAILABLE OR NOT, AND IRRESPECTIVE OF WHATEVER VIEW THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT MIGHT TAKE IN RESPECT OF DESIGNATING HONG KONG AIRLINES FOR THE ROUTE IN QUESTION.

MR JACOBS STRESSED THAT ATLA WAS AN INDEPENDENT BODY MAKING ITS OWN DECISIONS ON LICENCE APPLICATIONS.

HOWEVER, THE MERE FACT THAT A LICENCE HAD BEEN GRANTED BY ATLA DID NOT MEAN THAT AN AIRLINE COULD IMMEDIATELY AND AUTOMATICALLY START FLYING ON THE PARTICULAR ROUTE.

+THE NEXT QUESTION TO CONSIDER IS DESIGNATION, WHICH IS A MATTER FOR THE GOVERNMENT,+ MR JACOBS SAID.

/DESIGNATION WAS

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DESIGNATION WAS THE NOMINATION OF AN AIRLINE TO OPERATE SCHEDULED SERVICES ON A SPECIFIC ROUTE. SUCH SERVICES WERE GOVERNED BY BILATERAL, INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AIR SERVICES ARRANGEMENTS. IN THE CASE OF HONG KONG, IT WAS, AT PRESENT, UNITED KINGDOM/SECOND COUNTRY AIR SERVICES ARRANGEMENTS WHICH COVERED HONG KONG ROUTES.

MR JACOBS EXPLAINED THAT INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORT OPERATED UNDER A HIGHLY REGULATED SYSTEM AND THE BILATERAL AIR SERVICES ARRANGEMENTS FORMED AN INTEGRAL PART OF THAT SYSTEM.

+IF THE RIGHTS TO OPERATE ON A PARTICULAR ROUTE ARE AVAILABLE WITHOUT THE NEED FOR ANY FURTHER INTER-GOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATIONS, THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT WILL REQUEST THE UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT TO DESIGNATE THE LICENSED HONG KONG AIRLINE TO OPERATE THE ROUTE.

+ASSUMING THAT THE DESIGNATION IS ACCEPTED BY THE OTHER GOVERNMENT INVOLVED AND OTHER REQUISITE FORMALITIES, SUCH AS THE GRANT OF THE NECESSARY OPERATING PERMISSION TO THE DESIGNATED HONG KONG AIRLINE BY THE AERONAUTICAL AUTHORITIES OF THE OTHER COUNTRY CONCERNED, ARE COMPLETED, THEN, AND ONLY THEN, MAY THE HONG KONG AIRLINE COMMENCE SERVICES ON THE ROUTE.+

IF RIGHTS TO OPERATE SCHEDULED SERVICES ON THE PARTICULAR ROUTE DID NOT EXIST, THEN THE SITUATION WAS FAR MORE COMPLEX AND WAS LIKELY TO TAKE CONSIDERABLY LONGER TO RESOLVE.

+WHEN RIGHTS DO NOT EXIST, THIS WILL BE DUE TO EITHER THE COMPLETE LACK OF AIR SERVICES ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT AND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE OTHER COUNTRY CONCERNED, OR THE FACT THAT THE EXISTING AIR SERVICES ARRANGEMENTS DO NOT PROVIDE FOR THE ROUTE FOR WHICH THE HONG KONG AIRLINE HAS BEEN LICENSED.

+ALSO, THERE MAY BE NO PROVISION TO DESIGNATE A SECOND HONG KONG AIRLINE FOR THE ROUTE UNDER EXISTING AIR SERVICES ARRANGEMENTS,+ HE ADDED.

IF THERE WERE NO EXISTING AIR SERVICES ARRANGEMENTS, THEN THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT COULD REQUEST THE UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT TO OPEN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE OTHER COUNTRY CONCERNED.

IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE THERE WERE EXISTING AIR SERVICES ARRANGEMENTS NOT SPECIFICALLY COVERING THE ROUTE FOR WHICH THE LICENCE HAD BEEN GRANTED, OR WHERE EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS ONLY PROVIDED FOR THE DESIGNATION OF ONE AIRLINE FROM EACH SIDE, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONSIDER REQUESTING THE UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT TO SEEK RIGHTS BY NEGOTIATING AMENDMENTS TO THE EXISTING AIR SERVICES ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE OTHER COUNTRY CONCERNED.

/MR JACOBS

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MR JACOBS SAID THAT THE TIMING OF THE NEGOTIATIONS DEPENDED UPON THE WILLINGNESS OF THE GOVERNMENT CONCERNED, AND THERE MIGHT BE OTHER COMMITMENTS IN AIR SERVICES NEGOTIATIONS THAT COULD CAUSE DELAY.

+IF IT IS A ROUTE INVOLVING MORE THAN ONE COUNTRY, OBVIOUSLY MORE THAN ONE SET OF NEGOTIATIONS HAVE TO BE UNDERTAKEN, AND THIS TAKES EVEN MORE TIME,+ HE ADDED.

MR JACOBS THEN EXPLAINED THE FACTORS THAT HAD TO BE BORNE IN MIND IF CHANGES TO THE EXISTING AIR SERVICES ARRANGEMENTS WERE SOUGHT.

+FIRST, IF THE OTHER GOVERNMENT CONCERNED IS WILLING TO CONSIDER CHANGES, IT WILL NORMALLY, AND QUITE UNDERSTANDABLY, SEEK ADDITIONAL RIGHTS, FOR WHICH IT MAY DESIGNATE ITS OWN AIRLINE.

+IT MAY SEEK THOSE RIGHTS AT A PRICE.+

MR JACOBS POINTED OUT THAT EFFORTS TO OBTAIN THE RIGHT TO DESIGNATE A SECOND HONG KONG AIRLINE FOR A PARTICULAR ROUTE COULD WELL RESULT IN THE FIRST HONG KONG AIRLINE HAVING TO REDUCE THE LEVEL OF ITS SERVICES ON THAT ROUTE, OR ON ANOTHER ROUTE WHICH IT OPERATED UNDER THE SAME AIR SERVICES ARRANGEMENTS.

ALTERNATIVELY, THE FOREIGN AIRLINE OPERATING ON THE ROUTE, THROUGH ITS GOVERNMENT, COULD SEEK ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR ITSELF ON ANOTHER ROUTE, HE SAID.

MR JACOBS SAID THAT THE PRICE FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF A SECOND HONG KONG AIRLINE ONTO A ROUTE COULD BE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE INCUMBENT HONG KONG AIRLINE, WHICH HAD INVESTED HEAVILY IN AIRCRAFT, PERSONNEL, SUPPORT SERVICES AND PROMOTION IN ORDER TO DEVELOP THE ROUTE.

+IN PRACTICE, IF THE SECOND AIRLINE DOES NOT MATCH THE INCUMBENT'S ALREADY ESTABLISHED STANDARDS, THE OUTCOME COULD BE A LOSS OF HONG KONG'S SHARE OF THE PASSENGER AND CARGO TRAFFIC ON THAT ROUTE,+ HE SAID.

ANOTHER FACTOR, HE ADDED, WAS THAT ANY POSSIBILITY OF A REDUCTION OF AN INCUMBENT AIRLINE'S RIGHTS ON A ROUTE WAS NOT GOING TO GIVE IT THE NECESSARY INCENTIVE AND CONFIDENCE TO INVEST PROPERLY IN DEVELOPING THAT ROUTE TO THE BENEFIT OF HONG KONG AND THE TRAVELLING PUBLIC, AND IN COMPETING FULLY AND PROPERLY WITH OTHER AIRLINES ALREADY OPERATING ON IT.

/MR JACOBS

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MR JACOBS EXPLAINED WHAT HE MEANT BY +OTHER AIRLINES+--THE AIRLINE DESIGNATED BY THE OTHER PARTY TO THE PARTICULAR BILATERAL AIR SERVICES ARRANGEMENTS PLUS THIRD-PARTY AIRLINES PERMITTED TO OPERATE ON THE WHOLE OR PART OF THAT ROUTE.

+A VERY HIGH DEGREE OF COMPETITION THEREFORE DOES EXIST AND HONG KONG BUSINESSMEN AND TRAVELLERS DO HAVE A RANGE OF CHOICES ON THOSE ROUTES THAT HAVE THE HEAVIEST TRAFFIC,+ HE SAID.

IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, MR JACOBS SAID, THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO TAKE A VIEW ON WHETHER PRESERVING THE STATUS QUO IN RESPECT OF A GIVEN ROUTE RATHER THAN SEEKING THE RIGHT TO DESIGNATE A SECOND HONG KONG AIRLINE FOR A ROUTE WAS OF GREATER VALUE TO HONG KONG'S OVERALL INTERESTS IN SUCH MATTERS AS TOURISM AND CARRIAGE OF GOODS.

THE BALANCE OF ADVANTAGE WAS NOT THE SAME IN ALL CASES, HE NOTED.

MR JACOBS SAID THE GOVERNMENT REMAINED OF THE VIEW THAT THE GENERAL RULE ON DESIGNATION HAD TO BE ONE AIRLINE PER ROUTE.

+THAT IS THE GENERAL, BUT NOT THE INVARIABLE, RULE AND THIS POLICY APPLIES EQUALLY TO ALL HONG KONG AIRLINES,+ HE SAID.

IF THE GOVERNMENT JUDGED THAT MORE COMPETITION WAS NEEDED IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST AND THE TRAFFIC WAS SUFFICIENT TO SUSTAIN A SUBSTANTIAL OPERATION BY MORE THAN ONE HONG KONG AIRLINE IN ADDITION TO ALL THE OTHER FOREIGN AIRLINES HAVING RIGHTS ON A PARTICULAR ROUTE, THEN THE QUESTION OF THE DESIGNATION OF A SECOND LICENSED HONG KONG AIRLINE WOULD BE VERY CAREFULLY CONSIDERED, HE ADDED.

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ADEQUATE SAFEGUARDS TO ASSURE CONSISTENCY
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THERE ARE ADEQUATE SAFEGUARDS IN THE CENSORIAL PROCESS TO ASSURE THAT CONSISTENT AND ACCEPTABLE STANDARDS OF CLASSIFICATION OF ARTICLES ARE ACHIEVED, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON DAVID FORD, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

WINDING UP DEBATE ON THE CONTROL OF OBSCENE AND INDECENT ARTICLES BILL 1986, MR FORD SAID THE SAFEGUARDS INCLUDED ACCESS TO FULL HEARINGS, THE ENLISTMENT OF ADDITIONAL ADJUDICATORS AT HEARINGS, ACCESS TO A REPOSITORY OF ARTICLES CLASSIFIED AND THE ABILITY OF THE CROWN TO SEEK A REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT TRIBUNAL'S DECISION IN RESPONSE TO PUBLIC REACTION.

/RESPONDING TO

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RESPONDING TO A PROPOSAL THAT GUIDELINES FOR CLASSIFYING ARTICLES SHOULD BE MADE PUBLIC, MR FORD SAID, +IN MY EARLIER SPEECH ON THIS BILL I EXPLAINED AT SOME LENGTH THE DIFFICULTY OF CODIFYING WHAT CONSTITUTES OBSCENITY AND INDECENCY.

+I EMPHASISE THE FACT THAT EFFORTS MADE IN OTHER PLACES TO DO THIS HAVE PROVED UNSUCCESSFUL.+

ONE COUNCILLOR HAD SUGGESTED THAT PERIODIC SURVEYS SHOULD BE CARRIED OUT TO ASCERTAIN COMMUNITY STANDARDS AND THAT THE FINDINGS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED FOR REFERENCE TO ADJUDICATORS.

MR FORD SAID SUCH SURVEYS WOULD BE CARRIED OUT PERIODICALLY.

HOWEVER, HE HAD BEEN GIVEN LEGAL ADVICE THAT IT WOULD NOT BE APPROPRIATE TO CIRCULATE THEIR FINDINGS TO ADJUDICATORS ON THE GROUNDS THAT SUCH FINDINGS COULD INFLUENCE THEM IN THEIR DECISIONS WHICH WERE INTENDED TO BE MADE ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS..

+SUCH FINDINGS MAY BE ADMISSIBLE, HOWEVER, AS EVIDENCE IN THE COURSE OF A FULL HEARING,+ HE ADDED.

ON A RECOMMENDATION THAT ADJUDICATORS AT INTERIM HEARINGS BE DEBARRED FROM SITTING ON FULL HEARINGS INVOLVING THE SAME ARTICLE, MR FORD SAID THE COMPOSITION OF A PANEL WAS THE PREROGATIVE OF THE REGISTRAR, SUPREME COURT AND AS THE BILL NOW STOOD THE SAME ADJUDICATORS MIGHT SIT ON BOTH HEARINGS.

AS TO THE CONCERNS OF THE RECORDING INDUSTRY, MR FORD EMPHASISED THAT AS FAR AS THAT INDUSTRY WAS CONCERNED WHETHER THEY CHOOSE TO SUBMIT THEIR MATERIALS OR NOT WAS A QUESTION FOR THEM. IT WAS A VOLUNTARY PROVISION.

ON A SUGGESTION THAT THE BILL BE REVIEWED IN A YEAR'S TIME AS IT DID NOT PROVIDE FOR THE PUBLIC TO SUBMIT ARTICLES FOR CLASSIFICATION, MR FORD SAID THE PUBLIC COULD COMPLAIN TO THE TELEVISION AND ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING AUTHORITY ABOUT ARTICLES WHICH THEY CONSIDERED TO BE OBSCENE.

HE SAID, +THE TELEVISION AND ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING AUTHORITY WILL CONSIDER THESE COMPLAINTS AND TAKE ACTION WHERE APPROPRIATE.+

THE TELA WOULD CERTAINLY ADVISE COMPLAINANTS OF THE GROUNDS FOR THE ACTION IT TOOK.

ONE COUNCILLOR PROPOSED THAT PUBLISHERS AND VENDORS SHOULD BE ADVISED THAT CLASS II ARTICLES SHOULD BE SEALED IN OPAQUE WRAPPERS.

/+IN RESPONSE+,

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+IN RESPONSE+, MR FORD SAID, +I WOULD ADVISE THAT THE TRIBUNAL HAS POWERS TO SET ANY CONDITIONS IT DEEMS APPROPRIATE INCLUDING THE REQUIREMENT TO SEAL IN OPAQUE WRAPPER ARTICLES CLASSIFIED AS INDECENT.+

DURING THE COMMITTEE STAGE, MR FORD MOVED AN AMENDMENT TO CLAUSE 13 OF THE BILL.

+AS IT STANDS AT PRESENT, SUB-CLAUSE (2) OF CLAUSE 13 PROVIDES FOR ANY PUBLIC OFFICER TO SUBMIT A PUBLICATION TO AN OBSCENE ARTICLES TRIBUNAL FOR CLASSIFICATION,+ HE SAID.

+I ACCEPT THAT IF THE DEFINITION OF 'PUBLIC OFFICER' IS TOO WIDELY CAST, IT MIGHT BE THE SUBJECT TO ABUSE.

+A SUBSTITUTE SUB-CLAUSE (2) IS THEREFORE INTRODUCED WHICH WILL RESTRICT SUBMISSIONS TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL AND PUBLIC OFFICERS SPECIFICALLY AUTHORISED BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY.+

IN PRACTICE, MR FORD SAID THAT AUTHORITY IN RESPECT OF PUBLIC OFFICERS WOULD BE LIMITED TO THE COMMISSIONER FOR TELEVISION AND ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING AND OFFICERS OF THE RANK OF SUPERINTENDENT OR ABOVE IN THE POLICE FORCE AND THE CUSTOMS AND EXCISE SERVICE.

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CORRELATION BETWEEN PORNOGRAPHY AND CRIME DESERVES STUDY
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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD LOOK INTO THE CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PROLIFERATION OF PORNOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE CIRCULATION AND THE CRIME RATE, THE HON CHAN KAM-CHUEN TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE CONTROL OF OBSCENE AND INDECENT ARTICLES BILL 1986, MR CHAN SAID THAT AMONG THE OPINIONS AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION HE HAD GATHERED AS CONVENER OF THE LEGCO AD HOC GROUP STUDYING THE BILL, THE MOST PERTURBING WAS ONE ON THE SOCIAL EFFECTS OF PORNOGRAPHY WHICH MENTIONED THAT SURVEYS IN THE UNITED STATES SHOWED THAT THERE WAS A RELIABLE CORRELATION BETWEEN HIGH SEX MAGAZINE CIRCULATION AND HIGH RATE OF SEX-RELATED CRIMES.

HE SAID THERE WAS AN OUTCRY BY PARENTS WHO DID NOT WISH THEIR CHILDREN +POISONED+ BY PORNOGRAPHY, AND THE NOTORIOUS DISPLAY OF OBSCENE AND INDECENT PUBLICATIONS IN HONG KONG'S THOROUGHFARES HAD ALSO OFFENDED THE PUBLIC'S SENSE OF DECENCY.

/HE SAID

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HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE COMMENDED FOR CARRYING OUT AN EXTENSIVE AND EFFECTIVE CONSULTATION EXERCISE AND BEING IMPARTIAL IN FORMULATING THE BILL.

HE SAID THAT NO DOUBT INTERESTED GROUPS WERE USING THEIR OLD TACTIC OF +FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION+ AND +ART+ TO PULL WOOL OVER THE EYES OF THE PUBLIC AND THUS HOLD ON TO THEIR MULTI-BILLION DOLLAR BUSINESS.

+IF INDECENT EXPOSURE IS PUNISHABLE BY LAW, THEN WHY SHOULD INDECENT PUBLISHINGS EXPOSING SEXUAL ORGANS NOT BE WRAPPED IN SUCH A WAY SO THAT IT IS OUT OF SIGHT AND OUT OF MIND?+, HE QUESTIONED.

MR CHAN SAID THE ISSUE OF MORAL STANDARDS WAS A CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECT, ESPECIALLY IN HONG KONG WHERE EAST MET WEST.

+I AM PLEASED THAT AT LONG LAST THE 98 PER CENT CHINESE VIEWS HAVE EARNED MORE RESPECT ON THIS ISSUE,+ HE ADDED.

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RECORDING INDUSTRY'S CONCERN OVER OBSCENE ARTICLES BILL
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PRODUCERS OF SOUND AND AUDIOVISUAL RECORDING INDUSTRY HAVE VOICED CONCERN OVER THE SYSTEM OF VOLUNTARY CLASSIFICATION LAID DOWN IN THE CONTROL OF OBSCENE AND INDECENT ARTICLES BILL 1986, THE HON SELINA CHOW SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE BILL, SHE SAID THE INDUSTRY'S ESTIMATION WAS THAT IN SPITE OF THE VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE PROCEDURE RECORDING COMPANIES WOULD BE OBLIGED TO SUBMIT ALL MATERIAL FOR CLASSIFICATION IN ORDER TO GUARANTEE THEIR MANUFACTURE, DISTRIBUTION AND SALE IN HONG KONG.

MRS CHOW SAID THE INDUSTRY REGARDED THIS AS A POTENTIAL IMPEDIMENT TO ITS NORMAL FUNCTION.

+IT LOOKS UPON THE SYSTEM AS A DUPLICATION OF THE CRIMINAL LAW, AND PLACES THE INDUSTRY IN DOUBLE JEOPARDY,+ SHE SAID.

MRS CHOW ADDED THAT THE INDUSTRY ALSO SAW A PRACTICAL PROBLEM IN THAT AS HONG KONG RELEASED SOME 1 000 SOUND RECORDINGS EACH MONTH, VOLUNTARY SUBMISSION OF ALL THIS MIGHT BECOME A TREMENDOUS ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN, INVOLVE RESOURCES WHICH WOULD EVENTUALLY HAVE TO BE BORNE BY THE INDUSTRY, AND WORST OF ALL, CREATE DELAY IN CLASSIFICATION AS WELL AS RELEASE AND PUBLICATION OF THESE MATERIAL.

/IT WAS

IT WAS ARGUED THAT SUCH DELAY MIGHT CREATE A BLACK MARKET FOR UNAUTHORISED MATERIAL, SHE SAID.

MRS CHOW SAID THAT WHILE RECOGNISING AND SUPPORTING THE OBJECTIVE OF THE BILL TO CONTROL OBSCENE OR INDECENT ARTICLES, SHE WAS SYMPATHETIC TO THE RECORDING INDUSTRY'S CONCERN, WHEN THEIR MATERIAL, PARTICULARLY PHOTOGRAPHIC MATERIAL, HAD NOT CONTRIBUTED MUCH TO THE PROBLEM THE BILL AIMED TO ADDRESS.

SHE SAID SHE HOPED THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD WATCH THE SITUATION CLOSELY.

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HEALTHY CULTURE CAN COUNTERACT PORNOGRAPHY
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A NEW YOUTH CULTURE SHOULD BE LAUNCHED IN COLLABORATION WITH PEOPLE FROM ALL QUARTERS SO AS TO COUNTERACT THE INVASION OF PORNOGRAPHY, THE HON YEUNG PO-KWAN SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE CONTROL OF OBSCENE AND INDECENT ARTICLES BILL 1986, MR YEUNG SAID THAT ALL SORTS OF CONTROLS WERE IN FACT PASSIVE MEASURES.

HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT SEX EDUCATION BE PROMOTED.

+AFTER THE SMOOTH INTRODUCTION OF SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS AS THE FIRST STEP, THE SAME SHOULD BE EXTENDED TO FAMILIES SO AS TO MAKE YOUNG PEOPLE UNDERSTAND AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE THEIR OWN ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY,+ HE SAID.

MR YEUNG SAID THE GOVERNMENT AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES SHOULD PROMOTE SEX EDUCATION IN A MORE SYSTEMATIC AND COMPREHENSIVE MANNER.

SCHOOL AUTHORITIES AND PARENTS SHOULD ALSO TAKE THE INITIATIVE TO LEARN ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE'S KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS WITH REGARD TO SEX AND TO UNDERSTAND THE UNDESIRABLE EFFECTS WHICH PORNOGRAPHIC PUBLICATIONS WOULD PRODUCE.

THEY SHOULD ALSO WORK OUT PREVENTIVE MEASURES TO FOSTER THE PROPER GROWTH OF THE YOUNG, SO AS TO CREATE A FRESH AND HEALTHY COMMUNITY.

/HE SAID

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HE SAID THAT OBVIOUSLY HONG KONG WAS IN A PECULIAR SITUATION IN THAT ON THE ONE HAND IT WAS INFLUENCED BY WESTERN IDEAS WHILE ON THE OTHER IT WAS RESTRAINED BY TRADITIONAL CHINESE CONCEPTS.

+THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OBSCENE ARTICLES TRIBUNAL CAN POOL THE WISDOM OF THE MANY AND GATHER DIFFERENT OPINIONS TO FORMULATE A FEASIBLE CLASSIFICATION POLICY WHICH SUITS OUR PRESENT SOCIETY,+ HE SAID.

MR YEUNG SAID THAT IN THEORY THE 80 ADJUDICATORS WHO WOULD COME FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE SHOULD REPRESENT THE GENERAL SENSE OF VALUES. BUT IN APPOINTING ADJUDICATORS, CONSIDERATION MUST ALSO BE GIVEN TO THOSE WHO HAD A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF YOUTH OR WHOSE WORK WAS CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH THEIR GROWING-UP.

+FURTHERMORE, IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT THE TRIBUNAL CAN SCRUTINISE PORNOGRAPHIC MATERIAL FROM THE WOMEN'S POINT OF VIEW AND CONSIDER WHETHER THE FEMALE IMAGE HAD BEEN DISTORTED, THERE SHOULD BE A FAIR NUMBER OF FEMALE ADJUDICATORS,+ HE SAID.

MR YEUNG ADDED THAT WHETHER OR NOT THE ADJUDICATOR SYSTEM COULD FULFIL ITS OBJECTIVE ADJUDICATING FUNCTION HINGED VERY MUCH ON THE FORMULATION OF A SET OF STANDARDS FOR CLASSIFICATION OF OBSCENE AND VIOLENT PUBLICATIONS FOR THE ADJUDICATORS TO RELY UPON, SO AS TO REFLECT TRULY THE PREVAILING MORAL STANDARD.

+IT IS, THEREFORE, NECESSARY TO WORK OUT A SET OF 'ADJUDICATING CRITERIA' WHICH SHOULD BE REGULARLY REVIEWED AND AMENDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CHANGING MORAL STANDARD,+ HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT THE ADJUDICATING CRITERIA COULD BE MADE KNOWN TO THE PUBLIC TO PROMOTE COMPLIANCE.

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OBSCENE ARTICLES BILL PROTECTS MORAL WELL-BEING
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THE CONTROL OF OBSCENE AND INDECENT ARTICLES BILL 1986 REFLECTS THE COMMUNITY'S CONCERN TO PROTECT THE MORAL WELL-BEING OF JUVENILES AND ALSO REFLECTS THE COMMUNITY'S DESIRE TO UPHOLD THE CONFUCIAN CONCEPT OF A WELL-ORDERED SOCIETY, THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE BILL, MR CHEONG-LEEN SAID SETTING UP A SYSTEM OF TRIBUNALS AS PROPOSED BY THE BILL WOULD BRING ABOUT GREATER PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE JUDICIAL PROCESS.

HE SAID THE PANEL OF UP TO 80 ADJUDICATORS WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE SELECTED WITH GREAT CARE.

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+IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO FIND OUT WHETHER THE SELECTION WOULD END UP WITH ABOUT HALF THE PANEL MEMBERS BEING OF THE FEMALE SEX TO REFLECT THE COMPOSITION OF OUR TOTAL POPULATION,+ HE SAID.

HE NOTED THAT DURING PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE BILL IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS, IT WAS CLEAR THAT PUBLIC CONCERN WAS FOCUSED NOT ONLY ON HAVING CLASS III ARTICLES PROHIBITED ALTOGETHER BUT ALSO ON ENSURING THAT CLASS II ARTICLES, WHICH WERE INDECENT, WERE NOT SOLD TO JUVENILES.

IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT THE SPIRIT OF THE BILL WAS FULFILLED, HE SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD HAVE TO STUDY WHETHER IN PRACTICE ALL CLASS II ARTICLES WOULD HAVE TO BE SEALED WITH OPAQUE OR OTHER MATERIALS, AND THAT THERE SHOULD BE LARGE PRINT INDICATING THAT SUCH MATERIAL WAS NOT TO BE SOLD TO JUVENILES, HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT SINCE MATERIAL THAT WAS OBSCENE OR INDECENT INCLUDED MATERIAL THAT WAS VIOLENT, DEPRAVED OR REPULSIVE, HE HOPED THAT THE ELEMENT OF VIOLENCE, WHETHER OR NOT IT WAS LINKED WITH A SEXUAL COMPONENT, SHOULD AT ALL TIMES BE BORNE IN MIND BY A TRIBUNAL IN ORDER TO DISCOURAGE FURTHER PRONENESS TOWARDS VIOLENCE IN THE COMMUNITY.

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LACK OF DIRECT ACCESS REGRETTED
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THE HON HUI YIN-FAT EXPRESSED REGRET IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD FAILED TO INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO ALLOW THE PUBLIC TO SUBMIT DIRECTLY ARTICLES SUSPECTED TO BE OBSCENE OR INDECENT TO THE OBSCENE ARTICLES TRIBUNAL FOR CLASSIFICATION.

SPEAKING DURING THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE CONTROL OF OBSCENE AND INDECENT ARTICLES BILL 1986, MR HUI SAID THE GOVERNMENT ONLY CARED ABOUT THE WORK AND ADMINISTRATIVE DIFFICULTIES OF THE TRIBUNAL. IT HAD NOT GIVEN CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO THE FACT THAT THE LACK OF DIRECT ACCESS WOULD STIFLE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND DAMPEN ENTHUSIASM FOR LODGING COMPLAINTS.

+THE EFFECTS OF EXTENSIVE MONITORING THROUGH PUBLIC SURVEILLANCE WILL ALSO BE REDUCED,+ HE SAID.

HE SUGGESTED THAT AFTER THE NEW LEGISLATION HAD BEEN IN EFFECT FOR ONE YEAR, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONDUCT A REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS LODGED BY THE PUBLIC WITH THE TELEVISION AND ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING AUTHORITY (TELA) TO FIND OUT WHETHER THE RIGHT OF LODGING COMPLAINTS HAD BEEN ABUSED.

/REGARDING COMPLAINTS

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REGARDING COMPLAINTS WHICH HAD BEEN REJECTED, MR HUI HOPED THE TELA WOULD EXPLAIN TO THE COMPLAINANTS WHY THEIR CASES COULD NOT BE ENTERTAINED SO THAT THE PUBLIC WOULD HAVE SOME IDEA OF THE FUNCTIONS OF THE TELA.

EARLIER, MR HUI HAD PRAISED THE GOVERNMENT FOR BEING WILLING TO TAKE ADVICE AND ACT ACCORDING TO PUBLIC OPINION WHEN INTRODUCING THE BILL.

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CALL TO SET UP PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRE
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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SET UP A PUBLIC INFORMATION CENTRE TO EXHIBIT PUBLICATIONS CATEGORISED BY THE OBSCENE AND INDECENT ARTICLES TRIBUNAL AND OTHER RELATED INFORMATION, AFTER THE ENACTMENT OF THE CONTROL OF OBSCENE AND INDECENT ARTICLES BILL 1986.

THE CALL WAS MADE BY THE HON LEE YU-TAI IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN HE SPOKE IN SUPPORT OF THE BILL.

THE CENTRE WOULD ENABLE MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC TO GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE CRITERIA OF ADJUDICATION AND ALLOW DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY TO REFLECT THEIR OPINION.

ADJUDICATING STANDARDS COULD THEN BE REVIEWED REGULARLY TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY, HE SAID.

ON THE WHOLE, MR LEE SAID ADJUDICATION PROCEDURES AND CATEGORISATION OF PUBLICATIONS PROPOSED BY THE BILL WERE PRACTICABLE, THOUGH SPECIFIC STANDARDS HAD YET TO BE SET ON THE THREE WAYS OF CLASSIFYING PUBLICATIONS.

+THE CRITERIA CAN ONLY BE ESTABLISHED AFTER THE ADJUDICATION SYSTEM HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED AND WHEN MORE PRECEDENTS CAN BE REFERRED TO,+ HE EXPLAINED.

MR LEE PROPOSED THAT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS SHOULD ALSO BE ALLOWED TO SUBMIT PUBLICATIONS TO THE TRIBUNAL FOR CLASSIFICATION.

ON THE SALE OF INDECENT PUBLICATIONS AT NEWSPAPER STALLS, HE SAID HE HOPED THAT CONSIDERATION WOULD BE GIVEN TO REQUIRE THEM TO BE SOLD BY SPECIFIED SHOPS, SO AS TO REINFORCE CONTROL ON SALE.

+AT THE SAME TIME, INSPECTIONS MUST BE CARRIED OUT BY THE GOVERNMENT TO ENSURE THAT SELLERS WOULD ABIDE BY THE LAW AND SELL THESE INDECENT PUBLICATIONS TO ADULTS ONLY,+ HE ADDED.

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WIDE PUBLICITY ON PORNOGRAPHY LAW URGED

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VIGOROUS EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE IN PUBLICISING AND ENFORCING THE CONTROL OF OBSCENE AND INDECENT ARTICLES LEGISLATION SO THAT THE DESIRED EFFECT COULD BE ACHIEVED, THE HON ROSANNA TAM SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE RELEVANT BILL, MRS TAM SAID ITS UNDERLYING PRINCIPLE GOVERNING THE PUBLIC DISPLAY OF OBSCENE ARTICLES WAS TO MAKE THESE ARTICLES NOT ACCESSIBLE TO PERSONS UNDER THE AGE OF 18.

+YET, THE BILL DOES NOT PROVIDE THAT OBSCENE ARTICLES SHOULD BE SEALED BY OPAQUE MATERIALS WHEN BEING PUT ON PUBLIC DISPLAY SO AS TO PREVENT PERSONS AGED UNDER 18 FROM GLANCING THROUGH THEM,+ SHE SAID.

SHE NOTED THAT THE AUTHORITIES HAD EXPLAINED TO THE COUNCIL THAT CLAUSE 23 OF THE BILL PROVIDED THAT ANY PERSON WHO PUBLICLY DISPLAYED OBSCENE ARTICLES WAS LIABLE TO PROSECUTION, AND THAT IN EFFECT THIS CLAUSE ALREADY ENSURED THAT ALL OBSCENE ARTICLES SHOULD BE SEALED BY OPAQUE MATERIALS WHEN BEING PUT ON PUBLIC DISPLAY.

+YET I AM WORRIED THAT NEWSPAPER VENDORS, PUBLISHERS AND EVEN LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS IN GENERAL MAY NOT BE ABLE TO REALISE THE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE AFORESAID PROVISION,+ SHE SAID.

SHE THEREFORE SUGGESTED THAT A COMPREHENSIVE PUBLICITY DRIVE SHOULD BE LAUNCHED TO MAKE IT CLEAR TO MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS THAT ALL OBSCENE ARTICLES SHOULD NOT ONLY BE WRAPPED BY OPAQUE MATERIALS BUT ALSO BE SEALED.

MRS TAM NOTED THAT ONE IMPORTANT SPIRIT OF THE BILL WAS TO USE PREVAILING MORAL STANDARDS OF THE COMMUNITY TO JUDGE WHETHER OR NOT AN ARTICLE WAS OBSCENE OR INDECENT.

+HENCE IT IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE TO FOLLOW CLOSELY THE EVER-CHANGING MORAL STANDARD OF THE COMMUNITY ON MATTERS OF OBSCENITY,+ SHE SAID.

SHE SUGGESTED THAT OTHER THAN SETTING UP A TRIBUNAL WITH MEMBERS WHO COULD FULLY REFLECT THE PREVAILING MORAL STANDARD OF THE COMMUNITY, THE AUTHORITIES CONCERNED SHOULD ALSO CONDUCT IN-DEPTH AND COMPREHENSIVE REVIEWS AT REGULAR INTERVALS TO GAUGE THE CHANGES IN THE MORAL STANDARD ON OBSCENITY.

IN ORDER TO ENSURE AND TO LET THE PUBLIC SEE THAT A FAIR JUDGEMENT WOULD BE MADE BY THE TRIBUNAL, SHE SUGGESTED THAT SHOULD ANY PARTY FEEL AGGRIEVED AT THE INTERIM RULING RETURNED BY THE TRIBUNAL AND REQUEST A FULL HEARING, THE ADJUDICATORS WHO HAVE SAT ON THE INTERIM HEARING SHOULD NOT BE APPOINTED TO SIT ON THE FULL HEARING.

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FULL APPLICATION OF ACCOUNTS LAW LONG-TERM AIM
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IT REMAINS THE GOVERNMENT'S LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE TO APPLY TO ALL COMPANIES THE NEW SIX-MONTH TIME-LIMIT FOR THEIR ANNUAL ACCOUNTS WHEN IT IS PRACTICABLE, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PETERS JACOBS, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

WINDING UP THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986 IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR JACOBS SAID HE RECOGNISED THE PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES THE ACCOUNTING PROFESSION MIGHT ENCOUNTER IF ALL COMPANIES WERE OBLIGED TO MOVE AT THIS STAGE TO A SIX-MONTH TIME-LIMIT.

+I HAVE THEREFORE AGREED TO EXCLUDE PRIVATE COMPANIES -- WHICH ARE NOT PART OF GROUPS INCLUDING PUBLIC COMPANIES AND COMPANIES LIMITED BY GUARANTEE -- FROM THIS LIMIT FOR THE TIME BEING,+ HE SAID.

HOWEVER, PRIVATE COMPANIES THAT WERE WITHIN GROUPS CONTAINING PUBLIC COMPANIES WOULD BE BOUND BY THE NEW TIME-LIMIT.

+IF THEY WERE ALLOWED TO KEEP TO THE PRESENT TIME-SCALE OF NINE MONTHS THIS COULD LEAD TO SERIOUS DELAYS IN FINALISING GROUP CONSOLIDATED ACCOUNTS,+ MR JACOBS EXPLAINED.

+THE LONGER TIME-LIMIT, IF APPLIED IN RELATION TO PRIVATE COMPANIES IN A PUBLIC GROUP, MIGHT BE OPEN TO ABUSE, IN THAT DUBIOUS ACTIVITIES COULD BE SHIFTED OUT OF THE PUBLIC COMPANIES IN THE GROUP IN ORDER TO DELAY THEIR DISCOVERY BY AUDITORS.+

MR JACOBS THANKED THE HON PETER POON AND MEMBERS OF THAT AD HOC GROUP FOR THEIR SUPPORT AND CONSIDERATION GIVEN TO THE BILL.

AS REGARDS THE GROUP'S CONCERN ABOUT THE PROPOSED NEW POWERS OF INSPECTORS UNDER SECTION 145B, HE SAID THE INTEGRITY AND PROBITY OF THE INSPECTORS, WHO WOULD BE PERSONS OF CONSIDERABLE STANDING, BOTH WITHIN THEIR PROFESSION AND WITHIN THE COMMUNITY, WOULD PROVIDE THE BEST SAFEGUARD AGAINST ANY ABUSE OF POWER.

THE SECTION EMPOWERS AN INSPECTOR TO OBTAIN DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION WITHOUT THE NECESSITY OF OBTAINING A COURT ORDER.

THE PROPOSED CENTRAL UNIT, CHARGED WITH DRAWING UP CLEAR TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR INVESTIGATIONS AND WITH MONITORING THE PROGRESS AND DIRECTION OF INSPECTORS, WOULD ALSO HELP KEEP THINGS ON THE RIGHT LINES AND ENSURE THAT COSTS DID NOT GET OUT OF CONTROL, HE ADDED.

/NOTING THE

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NOTING THE HON DAVID LI'S REMARKS ON THE NEED TO AMEND SECTION 161B OF THE PRINCIPAL ORDINANCE, MR JACOBS SAID THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL DECIDED NOT TO INTRODUCE THIS PARTICULAR AMENDMENT, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING.

+THE MATTER WAS MOST CAREFULLY CONSIDERED AND THE VIEWS OF THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION OF BANKS WERE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT,+ HE SAID.

SECTION 161B DEALS WITH REPORTING REQUIREMENTS IMPOSED ON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN RESPECT OF THEIR DIRECTORS' LOANS.

+WE SHALL KEEP THE ORDINANCE UNDER REVIEW AND INTRODUCE AMENDMENTS AS AND WHEN EXPERIENCE SHOWS THAT THESE ARE NECESSARY OR DESIRABLE,+ HE ADDED.

MR JACOBS ALSO MOVED A MINOR AMENDMENT SEEKING TO CHANGE THE REFERENCES TO +A RECOGNISED STOCK EXCHANGE+ IN THE NINTH SCHEDULE TO THE PRINCIPAL ORDINANCE TO +THE UNIFIED STOCK EXCHANGE+.

OTHER AMENDMENTS TO BE MOVED BY MR POON WERE SUPPORTED BY THE ADMINISTRATION, HE ADDED.

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NINE-MONTH TIME LIMIT FOR ACCOUNTS TO REMAIN
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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PASSED THE COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986 WHICH CONTAINED A NUMBER OF AMENDMENTS TO THE COMPANIES ORDINANCE, INCLUDING ONE WHICH REQUIRED PUBLIC COMPANIES TO PRESENT YEARLY ACCOUNTS AT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING UP TO A DATE NOT MORE THAN SIX MONTHS BEFORE THE DATE OF THE MEETING. THE PRESENT TIME LIMIT WAS NINE MONTHS.

SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE BILL AS CONVENER OF A LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AD HOC GROUP STUDYING THE BILL, THE HON PETER POON SAID THE BILL ORIGINALLY PROPOSED THAT THE NEW TIME LIMIT SHOULD ALSO APPLY TO PRIVATE COMPANIES.

MR POON SAID THE AD HOC GROUP HAD CAREFULLY STUDIED ALL THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS INCLUDING POINTS RAISED BY FOUR ACCOUNTING ASSOCIATIONS AND FIRMS IN THEIR REPRESENTATIONS TO THE GROUP ON THE NEW TIME LIMIT.

/HE SAID

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HE SAID THE GROUP FELT THAT THOUGH IN THE LONGER TERM THE PROPOSED TIME LIMIT OF SIX MONTHS MIGHT BE DESIRABLE, IT WAS NOT PRACTICAL AT PRESENT TO IMPOSE IT ON PRIVATE COMPANIES AND COMPANIES LIMITED BY GUARANTEE.

THE ADMINISTRATION AGREED TO THAT AND THE RELEVANT AMENDMENT WAS MOVED BY MR POON DURING THE COMMITTEE STAGE OF THE BILL.

MR POON SAID THE AD HOC GROUP HAD ALSO CONSIDERED WHETHER A NEW SECTION WHICH EMPOWERED AN INSPECTOR TO OBTAIN DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION WITHOUT THE NECESSITY OF OBTAINING A COURT ORDER WOULD CREATE ANY ABUSE OF POWER OR INCREASE INSPECTION COSTS.

HE NOTED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAD CONFIRMED THAT THERE WOULD BE A CENTRAL INVESTIGATION UNIT WITHIN THE MONETARY AFFAIRS BRANCH WITH APPROPRIATE TERM OF REFERENCE, EFFECTIVE GUIDELINES AS WELL AS PROPER MONITORING OF PROGRESS, WHICH SHOULD MEET THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED IN THIS RESPECT.

+ON SUCH ASSURANCES, IT WAS CONCEDED THAT IT WOULD NOT BE NECESSARY TO RESTRICT THE EXERCISE OF SUCH POWERS OF INSPECTORS BY LEGISLATION OR OTHER CONSTRAINTS,+ HE SAID.

ALSO SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE BILL, THE HON DAVID LI SAID THE SIX-MONTH TIME LIMIT FOR SUBMISSION OF ACCOUNTS, IN THAT IT WOULD HAVE APPLIED TO PRIVATE COMPANIES AS ORIGINALLY PROPOSED, WOULD HAVE BEEN UNDULY ONEROUS AND SERVED LITTLE PRACTICAL PURPOSE.

+I AM PLEASED, THEREFORE, THAT AFTER FURTHER CONSULTATION THE GOVERNMENT NOW AGREES THAT THE SIX-MONTH TIME LIMIT SHOULD NOT APPLY TO PRIVATE COMPANIES AND THAT THE ADVICE OF PROFESSIONALS HAS BEEN HEEDED IN THIS INSTANCE,+ HE SAID.

+I ONLY HOPE THAT SIMILAR TREATMENT IS AFFORDED TO THE ADVICE OF THE BANKING INDUSTRY IN RESPECT OF WHAT I CONSIDER TO BE THE SERIOUS OMISSION OF ANY AMENDMENT TO SECTION 161(B) OF THE COMPANIES ORDINANCE,+ HE ADDED.

MR LI NOTED THAT THIS PARTICULAR SECTION HAD BEEN STRONGLY CRITICISED BY THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION OF BANKS AND THE FINANCIAL COMMUNITY.

+IT IMPOSES UPON FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, IN RESPECT OF THEIR DIRECTORS' LOANS, MORE ONEROUS REPORTING REQUIREMENTS THAN DOES ANY OTHER INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL CENTRE,+ HE SAID.

IN ADDITION, THE SECTION CLEARLY DISCRIMINATED AGAINST, AND PLACED AT A DISADVANTAGE, ALL LOCALLY INCORPORATED BANKS AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, HE SAID.

MR LI SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS AWARE OF THE STRONG ARGUMENTS AGAINST THIS SECTION WHICH HAD ALREADY BEEN PRESENTED.

+IF WE ARE TO RETAIN THE CREDIBILITY OF OUR SYSTEM OF REFERENCE TO EXTERNAL PROFESSIONAL BODIES AND AN ACTIVE STANDING COMMITTEE, THEN IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT ONLY SEEN TO CONSULT ITS ADVISERS BUT ALSO IN THE ABSENCE OF COMPELLING REASONS TO THE CONTRARY TO HEED THEIR ADVICE,+ HE SAID.

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ADOPTION PROCEDURES TO BE STREAMLINED
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THE ADOPTION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987 SEEKS TO IMPROVE AND STREAMLINE EXISTING ADOPTION PROCEDURES AND DEFINE THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH ADOPTION APPLICATIONS HEARD IN THE DISTRICT COURT BE TRANSFERRED TO THE HIGH COURT, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, MR CHAMBERS SAID THAT UNDER THE EXISTING ORDINANCE THERE WAS SOME DOUBT WHETHER IT WAS LEGALLY CORRECT FOR THE DISTRICT COURT TO CONTINUE HEARING AN ADOPTION APPLICATION IF THE CHILD'S PARENT OR GUARDIAN FAILED TO GIVE CONSENT TO THE MAKING OF AN ADOPTION ORDER OR IF ANY INTERESTED PERSON OBJECTED TO AN ORDER BEING MADE.

+CLAUSE 2 OF THE BILL REMOVES ANY POSSIBLE AMBIGUITY ON THIS POINT BY SETTING OUT CLEARLY THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH A HEARING MAY BE TRANSFERRED FROM THE DISTRICT COURT TO THE HIGH COURT,+ HE SAID.

REFERRING TO THE STATUTORY ADOPTION PROCEDURE, MR CHAMBERS SAID THERE WERE TWO REQUIREMENTS WHICH TENDED TO MAKE THE PROCEDURE MORE PROTRACTED THAN WAS DESIRABLE OR NECESSARY.

FIRST, WHERE ONE OF THE ADOPTIVE PARENTS WAS THE CHILD'S NATURAL PARENT, IT WAS TOO STRINGENT UNDER THE PRESENT TO REQUIRE AN INFANT TO HAVE BEEN IN THEIR CONTINUOUS CARE AND POSSESSION FOR AT LEAST SIX CONSECUTIVE MONTHS BEFORE THE MAKING OF THE ADOPTION ORDER.

HE SAID IT WAS THEREFORE PROPOSED IN CLAUSE 3 OF THE BILL THAT THE REQUIRED PERIOD BE REDUCED FROM SIX MONTHS TO 13 WEEKS CONTINUOUS ACTUAL CUSTODY UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES.

+THE PERIOD IS NOT REGARDED AS BROKEN WHEN A CHILD GOES INTO HOSPITAL OR TO A BOARDING-SCHOOL.+

AS REGARDS THE SECOND REQUIREMENT, MR CHAMBERS SAID UNDER EXISTING ORDINANCE AN INFANT UNDER THE GUARDIANSHIP OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE WAS NOT FREE FOR ADOPTION UNTIL THE CONSENT OF ANYONE WHO WAS A PARENT OR GUARDIAN HAD BEEN OBTAINED.

+HOWEVER, THIS CONSENT CAN BE REVOKED WITHIN A PERIOD OF THREE MONTHS OR WITH THE LEAVE OF THE COURT AFTER THAT PERIOD, IF THE PARENT GIVES A WRITTEN NOTICE OF REVOCATION TO THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE,+ HE ADDED.

/+IN CIRCUMSTANCES

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+IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE AN INFANT HAS BEEN ABANDONED, NEGLECTED OR PERSISTENTLY ILL-TREATED, OR WHERE THE PARENT CANNOT BE FOUND, THE COURT MAY DISPENSE WITH THE CONSENT REQUIRED AND THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT CAN THEN PROCEED TO PLACE THE INFANT WITH THE PROSPECTIVE ADOPTIVE PARENTS.+

MR CHAMBERS POINTED OUT THAT ADOPTIVE PARENTS WERE, HOWEVER, OFTEN RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT A CHILD WHEN THE ISSUE OF PARENTAL CONSENT WAS STILL UNRESOLVED.

+THERE HAVE BEEN CASES WHERE INFANTS WERE LEFT IN THE INSTITUTIONAL CARE OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT INDEFINITELY BECAUSE OF VACILLATION ON THE PART OF THE PARENT OR GUARDIAN,+ HE SAID.

+IN OTHER CASES ADOPTION PROCEEDINGS HAVE HAD TO BE TERMINATED AT A VERY LATE STAGE OF THE SIX-MONTH PRE-ADOPTION PERIOD, RESULTING IN EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCE TO ALL CONCERNED.+

MR CHAMBERS SAID THAT CLAUSE 4 OF THE BILL ENABLED THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE TO APPLY TO THE COURT FOR AN ORDER TO FREE AN INFANT WHO WAS ALREADY A WARD OF THE DIRECTOR FOR ADOPTION WHEN THE CONSENT OF THE PARENT OR GUARDIAN COULD NOT BE OBTAINED, SO AS TO ENABLE THE CHILD TO BE PLACED IN THE ADOPTIVE PARENTS' HOME.

+THE CLAUSE ALSO REQUIRES THE PARENTS OR GUARDIANS, IF THEY CAN BE FOUND, TO BE NOTIFIED BEFORE THE ORDER IS MADE, AND TO BE GIVEN AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD,+ HE SAID.

IT WAS ALSO PROPOSED UNDER CLAUSE 5 OF THE BILL THAT THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE MIGHT CONCEAL THE WHEREABOUTS OF A CHILD WHO WAS THE SUBJECT OF SUCH AN APPLICATION TO PROTECT THE INFANT FROM POSSIBLE PHYSICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERFERENCE AND TO MAINTAIN THE CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE APPLICANT, WHEN THE CHILD WAS ALREADY LIVING WITH HIM.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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MOVE TO CHANGE HONG KONG EXAMINATIONS AUTHORITY MEMBERSHIP
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MEMBERSHIP OF THE HONG KONG EXAMINATIONS AUTHORITY WILL BE CHANGED AND ITS OPERATING PROCEDURES STREAMLINED UNDER AN AMENDMENT BILL, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE HONG KONG EXAMINATIONS AUTHORITY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987, HE SAID THE BILL PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE APPOINTED MEMBERSHIP TO PROVIDE FOR BETTER AND MORE BALANCED REPRESENTATION OF RELEVANT INTERESTS IN THE AUTHORITY.

/CHANGES INCLUDE

CHANGES INCLUDE REDUCING THE NUMBER OF PUBLIC OFFICERS FROM THREE TO TWO WHILE INCREASING THE NUMBER OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS FROM THREE TO FIVE.

APPOINTMENT OF A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PROFESSIONS AND OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY IS ALSO PROVIDED.

ON EX-OFFICIO MEMBERSHIP OF THE AUTHORITY, MR BRIDGE SAID THE BILL SOUGHT AN EXTENSION TO THE HEADS OF ALL TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS FUNDED THROUGH THE UNIVERSITY AND POLYTECHNIC GRANTS COMMITTEE, INCLUDING IN DUE COURSE THE THIRD UNIVERSITY.

ON PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE AUTHORITY'S OPERATING PROCEDURES, HE SAID THE AUTHORITY WOULD NO LONGER BE REQUIRED TO SEEK APPROVAL FOR EACH AND EVERY NEW EXAMINATION -- OTHER THAN THE MAJOR PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS -- IT PROPOSES TO CONDUCT, INSTEAD, IT MIGHT APPLY FOR APPROVAL OF BROAD CATEGORIES OF EXAMINATION.

+NOR WILL THE AUTHORITY NEED TO SEEK PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE FEES WHICH IT PROPOSES TO CHARGE FOR SUCH EXAMINATIONS OR IT PROPOSES TO PAY TO SCHOOLS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS FOR THE USE OF THEIR ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES,+ MR BRIDGE SAID.

THE BILL, HE ADDED, WOULD ALSO EMPOWER THE AUTHORITY TO DELEGATE TO ITS PRINCIPAL SUB-COMMITTEES APPOINTMENTS TO THE 68 SUBJECT AND MORE THAN 200 MODERATION COMMITTEES, AND TO UNDERTAKE PRUDENT INVESTMENT OF ITS SURPLUS FUNDS.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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ABOLITION OF RATES RELIEF SCHEME SUPPORTED
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A FULL LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN-HOUSE MEETING HAD DECIDED THAT THE RATES RELIEF SCHEME SHOULD BE ABOLISHED AS PROPOSED BY THE RATING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987, THE HON CHAN KAM-CHUEN SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN DEBATE ON THE BILL RESUMED.

DESCRIBING DELIBERATIONS BY THE LEGCO AD HOC GROUP TASKED TO STUDY THE BILL AS +NOT AT ALL SMOOTH SAILING+ MR CHAN, THE CONVENER OF THE GROUP, SAID MEMBERS AT FIRST OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORTED SUSPENSION INSTEAD OF ABOLITION OF THE SCHEME.

/HE SAID

HE SAID THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP CHANGED THEIR VIEWS RESULTING IN AN EVEN VOTE AFTER CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND MORE FIGURES WERE RELEASED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO ENABLE THE AD HOC GROUP TO UNDERSTAND MORE OF THE PROBLEMS.

HE SAID THE MATTER WAS THEREFORE REPORTED BACK TO THE FULL LEGCO IN-HOUSE MEETING WITH ALL THE PROS AND CONS LISTED.

+THE RESULT WAS A MAJORITY VOTE FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE SCHEME AND SUPPORT FOR THE BILL,+ MR CHAN SAID.

ALSO SPEAKING DURING THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE BILL, THE HON CHENG HON-KWAN SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD UNDERTAKE TO MONITOR CLOSELY THE RESULT OF THE NEXT GENERAL REVALUATION IN 1988 AND TO REINTRODUCE SUITABLE RELIEF MEASURES WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRED.

MR CHENG SAID HE SUPPORTED IN PRINCIPLE THAT GENERAL REVALUATIONS, IF REQUIRED, SHOULD BE CONDUCTED AT REGULAR INTERVALS SO THAT THE RATES PAYABLE REFLECTED ACCURATELY THE RENTAL VALUE OF PROPERTIES AND THAT RATEPAYERS WOULD NOT BE SHOCKED BY DRAMATIC THOUGH INFREQUENT INCREASES.

HE RECALLED THAT THE PRESENT SCHEME WAS NOT THE ONLY RATES RELIEF MEASURE IN THE HISTORY OF THE TERRITORY AS A SIMILAR SCHEME WAS INTRODUCED IN 1977 FOR A SIMILAR PURPOSE AND EXPIRED AFTER TWO YEARS EXCEPT IN RESPECT OF PRE-WAR RENT-CONTROLLED PREMISES.

HE SAID THIS WAS A RECORD SHOWING THAT SOME FORM OF RATES RELIEF WAS BROUGHT IN WHEN THE RATEABLE VALUES HAD SUBSTANTIALLY GONE UP AND REMOVED WHEN ITS EFFECT WAS SPENT.

MR CHENG SAID HE WAS INITIALLY ATTRACTED TO THE SUGGESTION THAT THE BILL SHOULD BE AMENDED TO PROVIDE FOR SUSPENSION, RATHER THAN ABOLITION OF THE RATES RELIEF SCHEME OF 1984.

HOWEVER, HE SAID HE WAS LATER PERSUADED THAT THE APPARENT ADVANTAGE OF THE SUSPENSION METHOD WAS IN FACT ILLUSORY AS REINTRODUCTION OF THE SCHEME AT A FUTURE DATE WOULD IN ANY EVENT REQUIRE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES THEN PREVAILING.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE SUSPENSION METHOD WOULD COMPLICATE RATHER THAN SIMPLIFY THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS OF REINTRODUCING THE SCHEME.

+IT IS THEREFORE, IN MY VIEW, PREFERABLE TO REPEAL SECTION 19 NOW, WITH A VIEW TO INTRODUCING FRESH PROVISIONS TAILORED TO MEET ACTUAL REQUIREMENTS, SHOULD THE NEED ARISE IN FUTURE,+ HE SAID.

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WINDING UP THE DEBATE, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, SAID MR CHENG'S REMARKS ON PREVIOUS RATES RELIEF SCHEMES HAD HELPED TO GET THE PRESENT PROPOSAL INTO A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.

RATES RELIEF SCHEMES HAD, BY THEIR NATURE, A TEMPORARY EXISTENCE. THEIR PURPOSE WAS TO PHASE IN, WHERE NECESSARY, THE CHANGES IN THE RATES BURDEN BROUGHT ABOUT BY A GENERAL REVALUATION.

+THEY ARE NOT SOME FORM OF CONTINUOUS FINANCIAL SOCIAL WELFARE FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE UNABLE TO PAY THEIR RATES AND, IN THIS RESPECT, I WOULD STRESS THAT THOSE RATE-PAYERS CURRENTLY RECEIVING RATES RELIEF ARE BEING SUBSIDIZED BY THOSE WHO ARE NOT,+ MR JACOBS SAID.

+I CAN ASSURE MR CHENG, MR CHAN AND MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE CONDUCTING FUTURE REVALUATIONS AT REGULAR INTERVALS AND, AS A RESULT, IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ANY FUTURE INCREASES IN RATEABLE VALUES WILL BE SO DRAMATIC AS TO WARRANT THE RE-INTRODUCTION OF THE RATES RELIEF SCHEME.

+IF, HOWEVER, A FUTURE REVALUATION MAKES THIS NECESSARY, THE GOVERNMENT WILL ENSURE THAT THE APPROPRIATE LEGISLATION IS SUBMITTED IN GOOD TIME FOR CONSIDERATION BY BOTH THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE COUNCILS.+

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COMMISSION LIKELY TO REVIEW TERTIARY EDUCATION STRUCTURE
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CONSIDERATION WOULD BE GIVEN TO ASKING THE EDUCATION COMMISSION TO EXAMINE THE STRUCTURE OF TERTIARY EDUCATION IN THE NEXT PHASE OF ITS WORK, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

WINDING UP THE SECOND DEBATE ON THE EDUCATION COMMISSION'S REPORT NO. 2, MR BRIDGE FOCUSED ON ISSUES SURROUNDING SIXTH FORM EDUCATION AND RELATED SUBJECTS.

HE NOTED THERE WAS CRITICISM THAT THE COMMISSION HAD NOT RECOGNISED THE IMPORTANT LINK BETWEEN THE TERTIARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION SECTORS, AND THERE HAD BEEN SUGGESTIONS TO HAVE ANOTHER OVERALL REVIEW ON EDUCATION.

/+THE COMMISSION

+THE COMMISSION HAS ALWAYS FULLY RECOGNISED THAT ALL EDUCATIONAL SECTORS ARE INTERLINKED IN IMPORTANT WAYS. CERTAINLY THE SENIOR SECONDARY AND TERTIARY SECTORS ARE RELATED, IN THE SENSE THAT IT IS WHILE THEY ARE IN THE SIXTH FORM THAT STUDENTS APPLY FOR TERTIARY PLACES,+ MR BRIDGE SAID.

+IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT THE COMMISSION'S REPORT NO. 2 EMPHASISE THE IMPORTANCE OF INTRODUCING THE CENTRALISED ADMISSION SCHEME.

+BUT THE COMMISSION BELIEVES, I THINK RIGHTLY, THAT IT IS NOT ONLY POSSIBLE BUT ESSENTIAL TO TREAT THE EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONS OF THE SIXTH FORM AND OF THE TERTIARY SECTOR SEPARATELY. ONLY ABOUT FOUR PER CENT OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE APPROPRIATE AGE GROUP GO TO ONE OF THE FIVE UPGC FUNDED INSTITUTIONS.+

MR BRIDGE SAID THAT IN VIEW OF PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE PROPOSAL BY THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG TO CHANGE TO A FOUR-YEAR PROGRAMME, THERE MIGHT BE A CASE FOR REQUESTING THE COMMISSION, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE UPGC, TO CARRY OUT A STUDY OF THE STRUCTURE OF TERTIARY EDUCATION SOONER RATHER THAN LATER.

ON THE SUGGESTION OF HAVING ANOTHER +OVERALL REVIEW+, MR BRIDGE POINTED OUT THAT IT WAS ONLY FIVE-AND-A-HALF YEARS AGO THAT THE LLEWELYN REPORT WAS PUBLISHED, AND THAT REPORT HAD REVIEWED THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN ITS ENTIRETY.

FURTHERMORE, THE EDUCATION COMMISSION HAD, SINCE THEN, PUBLISHED ITS REPORT NO. 1 AND NO. 2. TO BEGIN YET ANOTHER OVERALL REVIEW COULD ONLY BE ACHIEVED AT THE PRICE OF SERIOUS AND CONTINUED DISRUPTION TO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM, HE SAID.

IN ANALYSING RESPONSE TO THE EDUCATION COMMISSION'S NO. 2 REPORT, MR BRIDGE NOTED THE RECOMMENDATION THAT THE NUMBER OF PUBLIC SECTOR SIXTH FORM PLACES SHOULD BE FIXED AT ONE FOR EVERY THREE FORM 4 PLACES TWO YEARS EARLIER HAD NOT ATTRACTED SIGNIFICANT CRITICISM.

THE PROPOSAL TO ABOLISH THE HIGHER LEVEL EXAMINATION WAS WIDELY WELCOMED AS THE EXAMINATION INCREASED THE SCHOLASTIC PRESSURE ON SIXTH FORM STUDENTS AND CONTRIBUTED TO THE QUALIFICATION RECEIVING LITTLE RECOGNITION IN HONG KONG OR OVERSEAS.

THE REPORT ALSO RECOMMENDED THAT NEW AND LESS ACADEMIC SUBJECTS SHOULD BE INTRODUCED INTO THE SIXTH FORM CURRICULUM TO BROADEN THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE OF THAT VERY LARGE NUMBER OF SIXTH FORM STUDENTS WHO DID NOT GO ON TO ANY FORM OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

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+THIS PROPOSAL TOO HAS RECEIVED PUBLIC SUPPORT,+ HEN SAID.

MR BRIDGE SAID THE SUGGESTION TO INTRODUCE A CENTRALISED ADMISSION SYSTEM FOR ALL UPGC FUNDED INSTITUTIONS HAD ALSO RECEIVED SUPPORT AS +THIS WILL RELIEVE STUDENTS OF PRESSURE AND CONFUSION NOW CAUSED BY THE NEED TO DEAL WITH FIVE INDEPENDENT MATRICULATION PROCEDURES.+

AS TO MOVES TOWARDS BILINGUALISM TOGETHER WITH THE PROPOSED IMPROVEMENT OF ENGLISH STANDARDS IN CHINESE SCHOOLS, MR BRIDGE POINTED OUT THAT THESE HAVE BEEN +UNDERSTANDABLY WELCOMED.+

HE ALSO SAID THAT THE EXTENSION OF SIXTH FORM EDUCATION TO PRE-VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS AND OF FORM 7 TO CHINESE MIDDLE SCHOOLS HAD GENERALLY BEEN SEEN AS A PROGRESSIVE MOVE.

ON THE PROPOSAL TO INTRODUCE A NEW INTERMEDIATE LEVEL EXAMINATION, MR BRIDGE SAID THAT SOME PEOPLE THOUGHT THIS WOULD INCREASE EXAMINATION PRESSURE ON STUDENTS AT A TIME WHEN THE INTERNATIONAL TREND WAS IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION.

IT HAD ALSO BEEN SUGGESTED THAT THE CURRICULUM WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO DEVISE, THE TEACHING TIME DURING THE ONE YEAR PERIOD WOULD BE INADEQUATE, AND THAT THE PROPOSED I-LEVEL LANGUAGE QUALIFICATIONS WERE NOT NEEDED.

+AGAINST THIS, SOME HAVE SEEN THE I-LEVEL AS A WELCOME MEANS TO BROADEN THE SIXTH FORM CURRICULUM AND TO PROVIDE A MEANINGFUL EXIT QUALIFICATION FOR FORM 6 LEAVERS,+ HE ADDED.

CONCLUDING, MR BRIDGE SAID THAT ALL PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE REPORT WOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD BE MADE TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL LATER THIS YEAR.

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UNCERTAINTIES ARISE OVER SIXTH FORM EDUCATION

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THE PROPOSAL BY THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG TO EXTEND ITS THREE-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM TO FOUR YEARS HAS CREATED CONSIDERABLE UNCERTAINTY CONCERNING THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF SIXTH FORM EDUCATION, THE HON S.L. CHEN SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

LEADING THE SECOND ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE EDUCATION COMMISSION REPORT NO. 2, MR CHEN SAID IT WOULD CONCENTRATE ON THE MOST IMPORTANT SUBJECT COVERED IN THE REPORT, WHICH WAS THE DEVELOPMENT OF SIXTH FORM EDUCATION.

MR CHEN, CONVENOR OF THE AD HOC GROUP STUDYING THE REPORT, SAID MEMBERS HAD DISCUSSED THE VARIOUS RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE COMMISSION, AND IN PARTICULAR THE PROPOSAL FOR CREATING A NEW INTERMEDIATE-LEVEL EXAMINATION.

HE SAID THEY HAD APPROACHED THE ISSUE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE OVERALL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN HONG KONG AND HAD EXAMINED THE ROLE THAT SHOULD BE PLAYED BY SIXTH FORM EDUCATION UNDER THIS SYSTEM.

IN VIEW OF THE UNCERTAINTIES CAUSED BY THE UNIVERSITY'S PROPOSAL, MR CHEN SAID THE AD HOC GROUP DECIDED THAT INSTEAD OF FOCUSING ITS ATTENTION ON THE APPROPRIATE FORM OF SIXTH FORM EDUCATION AND ITS EFFECT ON THE DURATION OF DEGREE LEVEL COURSES, IT WOULD GIVE A MUCH BROADER CONSIDERATION TO THE ENTIRE EDUCATION SYSTEM.

SUMMARISING THE VIEWS OF THE MAJORITY OF MEMBERS, MR CHEN SAID THEY FELT THE PROPOSED I-LEVEL EXAMINATION SHOULD NOT BE IMPLEMENTED AT THE PRESENT STAGE AND THAT THERE SHOULD BE A COMMON ENTRY POINT FOR LOCAL DEGREE LEVEL COURSES.

RATHER THAN CONSIDERING SIXTH FORM EDUCATION IN ISOLATION, THE ADMINISTRATION SHOULD TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONDUCT A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF THE OVERALL EDUCATION SYSTEM FROM PRE-PRIMARY TO TERTIARY LEVEL AND THAT THE PRESENT POLICY-MAKING MACHINERY FOR EDUCATION MATTERS SHOULD BE REVIEWED, HE SAID.

+IT APPEARS WHAT IS NEEDED IS THAT A CENTRAL BODY VESTED WITH MORE DECISION-MAKING POWER SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED TO CO-ORDINATE AND OVERSEE THE WORK OF THE VARIOUS AUTONOMOUS BODIES,+ HE ADDED.

MR CHEN ALSO COMMENTED AS AN INDIVIDUAL MEMBER ON THE PROPOSAL FOR A COMMON ENTRY POINT FOR DEGREE COURSES RUN BY LOCAL TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

HE RECALLED THAT HE HAD SPOKEN ON THE SUBJECT ALMOST NINE YEARS AGO DURING THE DEBATE ON THE GREEN PAPER ON SENIOR SECONDARY AND TERTIARY EDUCATION.

HE SAID HE HAD PROPOSED AT THE TIME THAT THERE SHOULD BE A COMMON ENTRY POINT FOR LOCAL TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS BY ADOPTING THE HONG KONG CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION EXAMINATION AS THE EXAMINATION TO SELECT SUITABLE STUDENTS FOR ENTRANCE TO THE UNIVERSITIES.

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QUOTING HIS OWN WORDS NINE YEARS AGO, MR CHEN SAID THOSE SELECTED FOR ENTRANCE TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG WOULD BE GIVEN A FURTHER TWO YEARS OF EDUCATION, WHILE THOSE FOR THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY WOULD BE GIVEN ONE MORE YEAR, TO PREPARE THEM FOR JOINING THE FIRST YEAR OF THE UNIVERSITY COURSES WITHOUT REQUIRING THEM TO SIT FOR THE MATRICULATION EXAMINATION.

HE NOTED THAT THE PROVISIONAL ADMISSION SCHEME PRACTISED BY THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY AND A SIMILAR SCHEME UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG WERE NOT DISSIMILAR TO HIS PROPOSAL OF NINE YEARS AGO.

+MY PROPOSAL, IF ADOPTED, WOULD ENABLE THE PRESENT THREE-YEAR AND FOUR-YEAR DEGREE SYSTEMS TO CO-EXIST THEREBY AVOIDING UNNECESSARY AND DAMAGING CHANGES IN OUR EXISTING EDUCATION SYSTEMS,+ HE SAID.

MOREOVER, IT WOULD ASSIST IN ACHIEVING THE EDUCATION COMMISSION'S OBJECTIVE OF IMPROVING THE EDUCATION VALUE OF FORM VI AND FORM VII COURSES, HE ADDED.

REFERRING TO THE ISSUED RELATING TO THE DURATION OF UNIVERSITY DEGREE COURSES, MR CHEN SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO CLARIFY A COMMON MISCONCEPTION THAT FOUR-YEAR DEGREE COURSES WERE NECESSARILY MORE COSTLY THAN THREE-YEAR ONES.

HE SAID IT WAS TRUE THAT WHEN VIEWED SUPERFICIALLY A FOUR-YEAR UNIVERSITY COURSE BY ITSELF WOULD BE MORE COSTLY TO THE UNIVERSITY THAN A THREE-YEAR ONE.

HOWEVER, HE SAID PEOPLE MUST NOT OVERLOOK THE TOTAL COST TO THE PUBLIC PURSE WHEN MAKING THE COMPARISON.

QUOTING FIGURES TO SUPPORT HIS VIEW, MR CHEN SAID FOR THE YEAR 1984-85, ONLY ABOUT ONE IN SIX FORM VII STUDENTS EVENTUALLY WENT ON TO THREE-YEAR DEGREE EDUCATION IN HONG KONG, MEANING FOR EVERY ONE STUDENT JOINING A THREE-YEAR DEGREE COURSE, THE PUBLIC PURSE HAD TO BEAR THE COST OF SUBSIDISING SIX FORM VII PLACES.

HE EXPLAINED THAT IF FORM VII EDUCATION WERE TO BE ABOLISHED TO GO WITH A FOUR-YEAR DEGREE SYSTEM, THE COST FOR SIX FORM VII PLACES WOULD BE SAVED, RESULTING IN A NET SAVING DESPITE A HIGHER UNIT COST FOR UNIVERSITY EDUCATION.

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NEED TO RECOGNISE I-LEVEL CURRICULUM
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THE HON CHAN YING-LUN EXPRESSED CONCERN TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHETHER THE INTERMEDIATE-LEVEL CURRICULUM PROPOSED BY THE EDUCATION COMMISSION WOULD GAIN RECOGNITION, ESPECIALLY BY LOCAL TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE EDUCATION COMMISSION REPORT NO 2 IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR CHAN STRESSED THAT THE MATTER OF RECOGNITION WAS THE KEY FACTOR TO THE SUCCESS OF SIXTH-FORM EDUCATION REFORM.

FOR STUDENTS TO BE WILLING TO TAKE UP THE I-LEVEL CURRICULUM -- ESPECIALLY THOSE PRACTICAL SUBJECTS RECOMMENDED BY THE REPORT WHICH THE COMMUNITY USED TO ATTACH NO IMPORTANCE -- A CERTAIN DEGREE OF RECOGNITION MUST BE OBTAINED, HE SAID.

MR CHAN ALSO NOTED THAT TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS STILL CARRIED THE MISCONCEPTION THAT STUDENTS OF GRAMMAR SCHOOLS WERE BETTER THAN THOSE WHO TOOK UP PRACTICAL COURSES.

HE SAID THE PROPOSED I-LEVEL CURRICULUM SHOULD NOT BE IMPLEMENTED UNTIL THE RECOGNITION PROBLEM WAS SOLVED.

MR CHAN SAID THAT HONG KONG'S SECONDARY EDUCATION COULD NOT REMAIN FOREVER WITHIN THE MAJOR MODEL OF GRAMMAR SCHOOLS.

+HONG KONG SHOULD DEVELOP, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, AN INTEGRATED SECONDARY CURRICULUM WHICH COMPRISES BOTH COMMON ACADEMIC SUBJECTS AND PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

+THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION OF PRE-VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS ALREADY PROVIDES A FOUNDATION FOR US; IT IS MOST APPROPRIATE TO EXTEND THIS MODEL TO TECHNICAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND GRAMMAR SCHOOLS,+ HE SAID.

NOW THAT THE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WAS BEING ESTABLISHED AND THE EDUCATION COMMISSION WAS GOING TO INCLUDE THE NINE-YEAR FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION IN ITS NEXT REVIEW, MR CHAN SAID HE THOUGHT SERIOUS CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN INTEGRATED CURRICULUM.

WITH REGARD TO THE ENHANCEMENT OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION, HE PROPOSED THAT TECHNICAL EDUCATION CENTRES SHOULD BE SET UP IN VARIOUS DISTRICTS.

MORE ADVANCED EQUIPMENT SHOULD BE PURCHASED AND PROFESSIONAL TEACHERS SHOULD BE APPOINTED TO GIVE LECTURES ON TECHNICAL COURSES, HE SUGGESTED.

MR CHAN SAID HE BELIEVED THAT THE TEACHING EFFECT IN THESE EDUCATION CENTRES WOULD BE MUCH BETTER THAN OPERATING TECHNICAL COURSES IN INDIVIDUAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

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COMMUNITY, STUDENTS' NEEDS COME FIRST
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THE NEED OF THE COMMUNITY AND THE USEFULNESS OF THE EDUCATION TO THE STUDENTS IN THE SIXTH FORM SHOULD TAKE PRECEDENCE OVER THE EXISTING ADMISSION POLICIES ADOPTED BY INDIVIDUAL TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS, THE HON RITA FAN TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE EDUCATION COMMISSION REPORT NO. 2, MRS FAN SAID THE NEED OF THE COMMUNITY WAS FOR MORE YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE TRAINED AT DEGREE LEVEL RATHER THAN TO HAVE LONGER DEGREE COURSES.

+THIS IS NOT A SACRIFICE OF QUALITY FOR QUANTITY, BECAUSE THE QUALITY OF A DEGREE COURSE IS DEPENDENT ON A NUMBER OF FACTORS INCLUDING TEACHING METHODOLOGY, CURRICULUM PLANNING, STAFF-STUDENT CONTACT HOURS. THE LENGTH OF THE COURSE IS BUT ONE OF THE MANY FACTORS,+ SHE SAID.

DEFENDING SIXTH FORM STUDENTS' POOR LANGUAGE ABILITY AND THEIR LACK OF GENERAL KNOWLEDGE, MRS FAN SAID THE ROOT OF THESE DEFICIENCIES LAY MORE IN THE EXAMINATION SYLLABUSES AND ADMISSION POLICIES OF THE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS OFFERING DEGREE COURSES, RATHER THAN IN THE STUDENTS' ABILITY TO LEARN OR THE SCHOOLS' ABILITY TO TEACH.

SHE SUGGESTED THAT THERE SHOULD BE A STUDY OF THE ACADEMIC STANDARD OF CERTAIN A-LEVEL EXAMINATIONS AND OF THE CURRENT ADMISSION POLICIES ADOPTED BY TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

STATING THAT THESE ADMISSION SYSTEMS COULD CAUSE CONFUSION FOR STUDENTS, WASTAGE OF RESOURCES AND PROBLEMS FOR SCHOOLS, SHE PROPOSED THERE BE A COMMON POINT ENTRY FOR ALL DEGREE COURSES.

+WITH THE SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF DEGREE PLACES TO BE OFFERED BY THE THIRD UNIVERSITY, THE POLYTECHNICS AND BAPTIST COLLEGE OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS, THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO RATIONALISE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TERTIARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION, BY TAKING A DECISION ON A COMMON ENTRY POINT FOR ALL DEGREE COURSES AS A FIRST STEP,+ MRS FAN SAID.

MRS FAN ADMITTED THAT THE DECISION ON THE LEVEL OF THE COMMON ENTRY POINT WOULD NOT BE AN EASY ONE AND THAT TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS SHOULD BE GIVEN TIME TO MAKE THE NECESSARY ADJUSTMENTS.

/+INSTITUTIONS CAN

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+INSTITUTIONS CAN STILL REQUIRE DIFFERENT SUBJECTS AND EXAMINATION GRADES FOR DIFFERENT COURSES, HOWEVER, THE STUDENTS CAN CHOOSE FROM A WIDER RANGE OF COURSES AT THE SAME TIME THROUGH A CENTRALISED ADMISSION SYSTEM, AND THE SCHOOLS CAN EDUCATE THEIR SIXTH FORM STUDENTS IN A WELL PLANNED MANNER WITHOUT HAVING TO COPE WITH SUDDENLY DEFLATED CLASSES AND STUDENTS SITTING FOR DIFFERENT EXAMINATIONS AT DIFFERENT TIMES OF THE YEAR,+ SHE EXPLAINED.

TURNING TO THE SYSTEM FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION, SHE SAID SHE COULD NOT GO ALONG WITH +CHANGE FOR THE SAKE OF CHANGING+ OR +CHANGE IN ORDER TO CONFORM WITH ANOTHER SYSTEM+.

UNTIL SUBSTANTIAL EVIDENCE COULD BE OBTAINED TO ILLUSTRATE THE INAPPROPRIATENESS OF THE FIVE-YEAR SECONDARY SYSTEM FOR HONG KONG, OR ANOTHER SYSTEM COULD BE SHOWN TO BE EMINENTLY MORE SUITABLE, MRS FAN ADVOCATED THE RETENTION OF THE PRESENT SYSTEM.

SHE SUGGESTED THAT THE COMMON ENTRY POINT FOR ALL DEGREE COURSES BE PITCHED AT +A+ LEVEL.

ON THE EDUCATION COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL ON OPEN EDUCATION AT THE POST-SECONDARY LEVEL, MRS FAN EXPRESSED FULL SUPPORT.

SHE POINTED OUT THAT THERE WAS A MAJOR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE HOME ENVIRONMENT OF PROSPECTIVE HONG KONG STUDENTS AND STUDENTS IN THE WESTERN COUNTRIES.

+MANY HONG KONG STUDENTS WILL HAVE DIFFICULTY IN CONCENTRATING ON SELF-STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THEIR CONGESTED AND NOISY HOMES.

+THERE IS A NEED FOR A NUMBER OF PROPERLY EQUIPPED STUDY CENTRES CONVENIENTLY LOCATED IN THE VARIOUS REGIONS OF THE TERRITORY AND OPEN FOR STUDENTS TO STUDY IN AFTER OFFICE HOURS AND DURING WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS,+ SHE SAID.

MRS FAN ADDED THAT THE AVAILABILITY OF SUITABLE AND EASILY ACCESSIBLE STUDY CENTRES COULD HELP TO REDUCE DROP-OUT RATES.

+I SUGGEST THAT EVERY EFFORT BE MADE TO IDENTIFY EXISTING FACILITIES AND EXPLORE NEW FACILITIES FOR USE AS STUDY CENTRES FOR STUDENTS IN OPEN EDUCATION PROGRAMMES,+ SHE SAID.

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SUPPORT FOR TWO-YEAR SIXTH FORM EDUCATION
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NOTING THE DEFECTS OF THE ONE-YEAR SIXTH FORM EDUCATION, THE HON PAULINE NG TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PROPOSED THAT ALL SIXTH FORM EDUCATION IN HONG KONG SHOULD BE OF TWO-YEAR DURATION.

SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DURING THE SECOND ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE EDUCATION COMMISSION REPORT NO. 2, MRS NG SAID THAT AT THE END OF THE TWO YEARS ALL STUDENTS SHOULD ONLY TAKE ONE EXAMINATION, WHICH WOULD QUALIFY THEM TO ENTER ANY SORT OF TERTIARY EDUCATION.

+THE PRECISE FORM THAT THIS EXAMINATION SHOULD TAKE OBVIOUSLY REQUIRES FURTHER CONSIDERATION, BUT THE PRINCIPLE OF INTERCHANGEABILITY SHOULD BE ACCEPTED,+ SHE SAID.

MRS NG SAID THERE WERE DISADVANTAGES IN HAVING STUDENTS SIT FOR THE HIGHER LEVEL EXAMINATION AT THE END OF THE ONE-YEAR CHINESE UNIVERSITY MATRICULATION COURSE.

TO TAKE THE HIGHER LEVEL EXAMINATION ONLY NINE MONTHS AFTER THE HONG KONG SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION WOULD BE TOO MUCH OF A STRESS ON STUDENTS, SHE ADDED.

THERE WAS ALSO NO TIME WHATSOEVER FOR THEM TO PARTAKE OF THE LESS ACADEMIC ASPECTS OF SIXTH FORM EDUCATION, WHICH SERVED TO PREPARE THEM FOR ADULT LIFE AND WIDEN THEIR EXPERIENCE THROUGH EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.

+THIRDLY, TAKING THE HIGH LEVEL EXAMINATION FOR THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY IS OF NO ASSISTANCE TO THOSE WISHING TO ENTER THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY, POLYTECHNIC, OR CERTAIN TYPES OF JOB,+ SHE ADDED.

REFERRING TO HONG KONG'S EDUCATION SYSTEM IN GENERAL, MRS NG STRESSED THAT WHAT WAS REQUIRED WAS A CAREFUL STUDY OF AN OVERALL APPROACH TO THE STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION, INSTEAD OF PIECEMEAL CHANGES.

+I SINCERELY HOPE OUR MASTERMINDS WOULD BE ABLE TO TAKE A BROADER PERSPECTIVE OF HONG KONG'S EDUCATION SYSTEM AS A WHOLE BEFORE EMBARKING ON YET ANOTHER INGENIOUS PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE,+ SHE SAID.

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TACKLE TERTIARY COURSE DURATION ISSUE FIRST
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THE EDUCATION COMMISSION SHOULD HAVE TACKLED DIRECTLY AND URGENTLY THE QUESTION OF DURATION OF TERTIARY COURSES, WHICH IS SO CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH SIXTH FORM EDUCATION, THE HON CHENG HON-KWAN SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE SECOND ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE EDUCATION COMMISSION REPORT NO. 2, MR CHENG NOTED THAT THE COMMISSION HAD WITHHELD ALL OPINION ON THE APPROPRIATE LENGTH OF TERTIARY COURSES, WHICH IT SAID WAS A +SEPARATE ISSUE+.

+I REALLY DON'T SEE HOW WE CAN GET SIXTH FORM EDUCATION INTO TRUE FOCUS UNTIL THE QUESTION OF THE DURATION OF TERTIARY COURSES AND A UNIFIED LEVEL OF ENTRY IS RESOLVED,+ HE SAID.

HE THEREFORE STRESSED THAT ONE OF THE FIRST IMPORTANT TASKS FOR THE COMMISSION WAS TO CONSIDER AND WORK TO THE BASIC REQUIREMENT FOR A UNIFIED LEVEL OF ENTRY TO TERTIARY EDUCATION IN HONG KONG.

MR CHENG EXPRESSED DOUBTS ABOUT THE COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDATION THAT AN INTERMEDIATE LEVEL EXAMINATION SHOULD BE CARVED OUT OF ADVANCED LEVELS TO REPLACE THE HIGHER LEVEL EXAMINATION.

HE FELT THAT THIS MIGHT IMPAIR THE QUALITY OF THE CURRICULUM WITHOUT EASING EXAMINATION PRESSURE ON STUDENTS.

MR CHENG AGREED THAT A CENTRALISED SYSTEM OF ADMISSIONS TO TERTIARY EDUCATION, AS SUGGESTED BY THE COMMISSION, WAS A DESIRABLE OBJECTIVE, SO LONG AS IT WAS BASED ON A GENUINELY UNIFIED LEVEL OF ENTRY.

HE WELCOMED PROPOSALS FOR REINFORCING LANGUAGE TEACHING IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS, WITH PARTICULAR REGARD TO THE NEED FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE LANGUAGE STUDIES CURRICULUM FOR THE SIXTH FORM.

+HONG KONG'S FUTURE AS AN INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY WILL DEPEND IN NO SMALL MEASURE ON THE EFFORTS THAT WE NOW MAKE TO THIS END,+ HE NOTED.

MR CHENG ALSO AGREED THAT SIXTH FORM SCHOOLING SHOULD BE SHAPED SO AS TO BENEFIT ALL STUDENTS, WHETHER OR NOT THEY WOULD GO ON TO TERTIARY COURSES.

HE HOPED THAT THE COMMISSION'S OBJECTIVES OF ENCOURAGING THE DEVELOPMENT OF BALANCED, WILL-INFORMED INDIVIDUALS AND PREPARING STUDENTS FOR ADULT LIFE WOULD THEN BE ACHIEVED.

LASTLY, HE URGED THAT THE OPPORTUNITY BE GRASPED TO TAKE A BOLD AND POSITIVE COURSE TO PUT SECONDARY AND TERTIARY EDUCATION UNDER ONE SINGLE COMPREHENSIVE APPRAISAL.

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SHELVE SIXTH FORM DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SHELVE ALL THE RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SIXTH FORM EDUCATION CONTAINED IN THE EDUCATION COMMISSION REPORT NO. 2, THE HON LEE YU-TAI TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE SAID THESE RECOMMENDATIONS HAD NOT BEEN PUT THROUGH ANY EFFECTIVE CONSULTATION PROCESS, AND THAT THE SWITCHING OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG'S UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME TO A FOUR-YEAR SYSTEM WAS UNFORESEEN.

ADDRESSING THE COUNCIL DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE COMMISSION'S REPORT, MR LEE SUGGESTED THAT A REVIEW OF THE OVERALL EDUCATION SYSTEM SHOULD BE CONDUCTED TO INCLUDE SUCH ITEMS AS UNIVERSAL EDUCATION AND THE LINKING UP OF SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION AND TERTIARY EDUCATION.

HE SAID HE DID NOT THINK THAT UNIVERSITIES SHOULD CONSIDER THE PROBLEM OF COURSE DURATION ALONE.

+THEY SHOULD CONSIDER AT THE SAME TIME THE POSSIBILITY OF ADOPTING THE CREDIT SYSTEM.

+FOR INSTANCE, IS IT POSSIBLE TO MAKE USE OF THE SUMMER VACATION TO PICK UP SOME EXTRA CREDITS, SO THAT STUDENTS CAN GRADUATE AT AN EARLIER DATE,+ HE SAID.

AMONG ALL OTHER MERITS, MR LEE SAID THE CREDIT SYSTEM COULD BE REGULATED TO MEET THE VARYING NEEDS OF STUDENTS AND WORKING ADULTS OF DIFFERENT BACKGROUND.

THE LATTER COULD ALSO ADJUST THEIR PROGRESS ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN CONDITIONS AND WOULD THUS ATTAIN THE MAXIMUM BENEFIT FROM THE SYSTEM.

ON THE MATRICULATION SYSTEM, MR LEE DIRECTED HIS CRITICISM TOWARDS THE EXISTING HONG KONG ADVANCED LEVEL EXAMINATION.

HE HOPED THE AUTHORITIES CONCERNED, INCLUDING THE HONG KONG EXAMINATION AUTHORITY AND THE UNIVERSITIES, WOULD SERIOUSLY REVIEW THIS PROBLEM AND EFFECT IMPROVEMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

HE SAID HE WAS IN FAVOUR OF THE INTRODUCTION OF A CENTRALISED ADMISSION SYSTEM BASED ON THE RESULTS OF PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS.

/+A CENTRALISED ADMISSION

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+A CENTRALISED ADMISSION SYSTEM ONLY SERVES TO MERGE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES,+ HE EXPLAINED.

+BUT ENTRY REQUIREMENTS AND ACADEMIC STANDARD WILL BE DECIDED BY THE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS THEMSELVES,+ HE SAID.

IF A FOUR-YEAR CURRICULUM WAS JOINTLY ADOPTED BY THE UNIVERSITIES, MR LEE SAID THE +3+3+ SECONDARY SYSTEM WAS THE MOST FEASIBLE ONE.

HE BELIEVED A LARGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WERE WILLING TO TAKE UP AN ADDITIONAL YEAR OF SERIOUS SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDIES AS 40 PER CENT OF THE CANDIDATES WHO SAT THE HKCEE WERE MAKING A SECOND ATTEMPT EVERY YEAR IN ORDER TO OBTAIN BETTER RESULTS.

ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF OVERSEAS GRADUATES WHO RETURNED TO HONG KONG, MR LEE HOPED THAT PREFERENCE WOULD BE GIVEN TO LOCAL PEOPLE WHEN RECRUITING WAS UNDERWAY.

+THE DEFINITION OF LOCAL PEOPLE SHOULD INCLUDE HONG KONG STUDENTS WHO HAVE GRADUATED FROM OVERSEAS INSTITUTIONS, IN PARTICULAR THOSE RECOGNISED BY THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT, RATHER THAN BEING RESTRICTED TO GRADUATES OF LOCAL INSTITUTIONS.

+STUDENTS WHO HAVE COMPLETED THEIR STUDIES OVERSEAS SHOULD BE GIVEN EQUAL TREATMENT IN COMPETING WITH LOCAL GRADUATES,+ HE SAID.

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COURAGEOUS STEPS TO EDUCATION REFORMS ADVOCATED
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MORE COURAGEOUS STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN TO BUILD A SOUND EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR HONG KONG SUCH AS A COMMON ENTRY POINT FOR ALL TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS AND A UNIFIED SIXTH FORM SYLLABUS, THE HON DAVID LI SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE EDUCATION COMMISSION REPORT NO. 2, MR LI SAID THIS WAS ESSENTIAL IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE EXAMINATION PRESSURE AND UNCERTAINTIES FACED BY SIXTH FORM STUDENTS.

HE SAID THAT THE COMMISSION'S PROPOSALS REGARDING SIXTH-FORM EDUCATION WERE INADEQUATE TO CORRECT THE FLAWS INHERENT IN THE EXISTING EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND THAT THEY DID NOT MEET THE CHALLENGES POSED BY PROBLEMS ARISING FROM TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

/MR LI

MR LI CRITICISED THE COMMISSION FOR MAKING SWEEPING DECISIONS THAT WOULD AFFECT HONG KONG'S YOUNG PEOPLE FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES.

HE THEREFORE HOPED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD ENHANCE THE COMMISSION THROUGH A CRITICAL RE-EVALUATION OF THE STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS OF ITS PRESENT MEMBERSHIP, SO THAT THE VIEWS OF ALL SECTORS OF THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD WERE ADEQUATELY REPRESENTED AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AVOIDED.

+WITHOUT IMPROVEMENT TO THE CORE OF DECISION-MAKERS, ANY FURTHER REPORTS PRODUCED BY THE COMMISSION WOULD STILL BE PUTTING NEW WINE IN OLD BOTTLES,+ HE SAID.

WITH REGARD TO THE TECHNICAL ASPECT OF THE COMMISSION REPORT, MR LI SAID HE WAS OF THE OPINION THAT THE COMMISSION SHOULD NOT ONLY PRESENT THE CONSENSUS VIEWS, BUT SHOULD ALSO INCLUDE THE DISAGREEMENTS.

+AS AN ALTERNATIVE, I BELIEVE A TABULATION OF THE MAJORITY'S OPINIONS VERSUS THE MINORITY'S OPINIONS WOULD BE MOST BENEFICIAL, AS THIS WOULD PROVIDE FRUITFUL INFORMATION FOR POLICY CONSIDERATION,+ HE SAID.

THE COMMISSION SHOULD CONSIDER HOW TO REFINE ITS PRESENTATION METHODS, MR LI ADDED.

TURNING TO THE PRESENT SIXTH-FORM CURRICULUM, HE SAID IT WAS BASICALLY DESIGNED TO EQUIP STUDENTS FOR UNIVERSITY STUDIES. HOWEVER, THE IRONY WAS THAT ONLY A FEW EVENTUALLY ENTERED THE UNIVERSITIES.

HE SUGGESTED THEREFORE THAT AN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, WHICH PROVIDED OVERALL TRAINING FOR ALL STUDENTS, SHOULD BE ADOPTED.

HE ADDED THAT THE MOST SERIOUS DEFECT OF THE COMMISSION REPORT WAS ITS FAILURE TO PROPOSE STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM THAT COULD REVERSE THE PRESENT DEPLORABLE SITUATION.

HE ALSO CONSIDERED THE PROPOSAL TO SET UP THE INTERMEDIATE LEVEL EXAMINATION IMPRACTICAL AND POTENTIALLY DISASTROUS.

MR LI SAID THERE WAS WIDESPREAD SCEPTICISM WITHIN THE TEACHING PROFESSION AS TO THE EDUCATIONAL VIABILITY OF THE I-LEVEL EXAMINATION IN THE CONTEXT OF A CONTINUING SYSTEM OF CLASSES LEADING TO THE A-LEVEL EXAMINATION.

FURTHERMORE, THE I-LEVEL EXAMINATION WOULD INCREASE EXAMINATION PRESSURE ON STUDENTS, HE ADDED.

+IS THE GOVERNMENT PREPARED TO COMPEL ALL TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS TO ACCEPT THE I-LEVEL EXAMINATION AS THE QUALIFYING EXAMINATION FOR ENTRY?+ MR LI ASKED.

+IF NOT, THEN THE PROPOSAL MUST BE DISMISSED OUT OF HAND,+ HE SAID.

PRESENT STRUCTURE MUST BE REAPPRAISED

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THE PRESENT DISPARITY OF TERTIARY ADMISSION LEVELS IS PRODUCING HARMFUL REPERCUSSIONS WHICH ARE AFFECTING HONG KONG'S SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM THEIR EARLIEST FORMS, PROFESSOR THE HON POON CHUNG-KWONG SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE +EDUCATION COMMISSION REPORT NO. 2+, PROF POON POINTED OUT THAT STUDENTS SEEKING TO FURTHER THEIR STUDIES AT TERTIARY LEVEL FACED A NUMBER OF PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS.

FURTHERMORE, THE PRESENT DISUNITY OF ADMISSION LEVELS TO TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS TEMPTED MANY STUDENTS TO ENHANCE THEIR CHANCES OF SUCCESS BY UNDERTAKING SIMULTANEOUSLY TWO CURRICULA LEADING TO TWO ENTIRELY SEPARATE EXAMINATIONS, HE ADDED.

PROF POON THEREFORE CALLED FOR A COMPLETE REAPPRAISAL OF THE EDUCATION STRUCTURE OF HONG KONG AS A WHOLE, IN PARTICULAR THE INTERFACE BETWEEN SECONDARY AND TERTIARY LEVELS.

+IN ORDER TO RATIONALISE THE SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND TO ACHIEVE AN ATMOSPHERE BENEFICIAL TO A THOROUGH AND BROAD LEARNING EXPERIENCE BY REDUCING THE PRESSURE IMPOSED BY A SUCCESSION OF EXAMINATIONS, THE FUNDAMENTAL STEP IS TO UNIFY THE LEVEL OF ADMISSION TO TERTIARY EDUCATION BY MEANS OF ONE QUALIFYING EXAMINATION THAT SUITS THE PURPOSE OF ALL THE HIGHER EDUCATION ESTABLISHMENTS,+ HE SAID.

PROF POON ALSO ADDED A SHORT FOOTNOTE TO HIS SPEECH DURING THE FIRST DAY'S DEBATE ON THE REPORT ON JANUARY 21 WHEN HE PROPOSED THE USE OF PUTONGHUA IN THE CLASSROOM, WHICH HE SAID HAD SINCE GENERATED A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF PUBLIC COMMENT.

CLARIFYING HIS VIEW, HE SAID HE SUGGESTED THAT PUTONGHUA BE MADE A COMPULSORY SUBJECT AT PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL, NOT THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN THE FIRST INSTANCE.

+IF A PUPIL HAS A CONSTANT EXPOSURE TO PUTONGHUA OVER HIS SIX YEARS OF PRIMARY EDUCATION, I BELIEVE IT WILL BE POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO LEARN IN PUTONGHUA BY THE TIME HE STARTS SECONDARY SCHOOL,+ HE SAID.

+AS IN ALL CASES OF CHANGES OF THIS NATURE, I DO NOT EXPECT THIS TO TAKE PLACE OVERNIGHT AS HAS BEEN SUGGESTED BY SOME CRITICS, BUT I THINK GIVEN A CAREFULLY PHASED PROGRAMME THE USE OF PUTONGHUA IN THE CLASSROOM IS BY NO MEANS A REMOTE POSSIBILITY,+ HE ADDED.

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POWERFUL COORDINATING BODY NEEDED FOR IMPROVED EDUCATION
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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER THE PROPOSAL MADE IN THE 1982 REPORT OF THE VISITING PANEL OF EDUCATION EXPERTS ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COORDINATING COMMISSION TO IMPROVE THE PRESENTLY +FRAGMENTED AND UN-COORDINATED+ STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION SYSTEM IN HONG KONG.

THE CALL WAS MADE BY THE HON ROSANNA TAM TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN SHE SPOKE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE EDUCATION COMMISSION REPORT NO 2.

QUOTING THE 1982 REPORT -- +A PERSPECTIVE ON EDUCATION IN HONG KONG+ -- BY THE VISITING PANEL, MRS TAM SAID SHE AGREED THAT +EXCESSIVE ADMINISTRATION AND INADEQUATE PLANNING+ WAS THE CRUX OF THE PROBLEM WITH HONG KONG'S EDUCATION SYSTEM.

SHE SAID SHE WAS IN FAVOUR OF AN EDUCATION COMMISSION TO BE ESTABLISHED ON TOP OF EXISTING EDUCATIONAL COMMITTEES AND BODIES TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PLANNING AND FORMULATION OF POLICIES IN HONG KONG.

+DESPITE CONSIDERABLE IMPROVEMENTS WHICH HAVE ALREADY BEEN MADE IN THE PAST 10 YEARS GENERALLY, THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN HONG KONG HAS CONTINUED TO BE DISADVANTAGED BY THE LACK OF FRAMEWORK CONCERNED WITH OVERALL COORDINATION AND POLICY-MAKING,+

MRS TAM SAID SHE REGRETTED THAT THE EXISTING EDUCATION COMMISSION WAS NOT GIVEN ANY HIGHER STATUS OVER OTHER EDUCATIONAL COMMITTEES AND BODIES.

BESIDES THE COMMISSION'S TERMS OF REFERENCE PROVIDED MERELY FOR A CO-ORDINATING ROLE, IT WAS IN NO POSITION TO LEAD THE OTHER COMMITTEES.

+HENCE, ITS STATUS AND POWER ARE A FAR CRY FROM THAT TO BE ACCORDED TO THE PROPOSED CO-ORDINATING BODY AS RECOMMENDED BY THE REPORT.

+IN ACTUAL PRACTICE, THE COMMISSION MAY ALSO FIND ITSELF DIFFICULT EVEN TO ACHIEVE EFFECTIVE CO-ORDINATION AMONG THOSE OTHER EDUCATIONAL BODIES,+ MRS TAM SAID.

SHE SAID THAT THERE WAS A NEED TO CONDUCT AN OVERALL REVIEW OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF HONG KONG.

+BUT I ALSO FEEL THAT SHOULD THE PRESENT STRUCTURE FOR COORDINATION AND FORMULATION OF POLICY CONTINUE WITHOUT IMPROVEMENT, THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN OVERALL REVIEW COULD BE GREATLY WEAKENED,+ SHE ADDED.

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CONSUMERS 'ENTITLED TO FULL COMPENSATION'

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THE CONSUMER COUNCIL MAINTAINS THAT CONSUMERS AFFECTED BY THE COLLAPSE OF TRAVEL AGENCIES ARE ENTITLED TO FULL COMPENSATION FOR THE TOUR MONEY THEY HAD PAID WELL IN ADVANCE OF RECEIPT OF GOODS OR SERVICE, THE HON SELINA CHOW TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN TABLING THE 1985-86 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CONSUMER COUNCIL, OF WHICH SHE IS CHAIRMAN, MRS CHOW SAID THE COUNCIL WAS FULLY AWARE OF THE INADEQUACY OF THE PRESENT RESERVE FUND CREATED UNDER THE TRAVEL AGENTS ORDINANCE.

IT WAS ALSO AWARE OF THE STRONG SENTIMENTS OF MEMBERS OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY AT THE PROSPECT OF THEIR HAVING TO DIG INTO THEIR POCKETS FOR ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FUND.

+BUT LET IT NOT BE FORGOTTEN THAT WHEN THE PRESENT TRAVEL AGENTS ORDINANCE WAS BEING FORMULATED AND THE CONCEPT OF A RESERVE FUND WAS RAISED, IT WAS RECOGNISED THAT SUCH A FUND WOULD DERIVE ITS INCOME FROM AN ACROSS-THE-BOARD LEVY IMPOSED ON THE TRADE, AND WHICH SHOULD BE CAPABLE OF BEING USED TO MEET ALL LEGITIMATE CLAIMS,+ MRS CHOW SAID.

FURTHERMORE, IT WAS PROPOSED THEN THAT THE FUND SHOULD BE FINANCED BY A LEVY TO BE DETERMINED BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ANNUALLY ACCORDING TO NEED AND TOWARDS COMPENSATING VICTIMS OF ABSCONDMENTS AND OR FAILURES OF TRAVEL AGENTS, SHE SAID.

+THAT, AS I UNDERSTAND IT, WAS THE ADMINISTRATION'S EXPLANATION OF THE SPIRIT OF THIS LAW AND THE RESERVE FUND CREATED UNDER THE LAW, AND WAS ACCEPTED BY THE TRADE AS A PREFERABLE SOLUTION IN FAVOUR OF OTHER OPTIONS SUCH AS COMPULSORY INSURANCE OR DEPOSITS OF BOND,+ SHE ADDED.

IT WAS THEREFORE THE COUNCIL'S VIEW THAT VICTIMS OF THE RECENT CLOSURE OF TRAVEL AGENCIES MUST BE ACCORDED REDRESS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SPIRIT OF THE TRAVEL AGENTS ORDINANCE.

SHE ADDED THAT IN THE LONG TERM, A SOLUTION MUST BE FOUND TO EFFECTIVELY PROTECT HONG KONG'S OUTBOUND TRAVELLING PUBLIC.

CONSIDERATION HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THE SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY IN THAT THE MAIN BULK OF THIS BUSINESS WAS CONCENTRATED IN THE LAST QUARTER OF THE YEAR. THIS WOULD OBVIOUSLY MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR ANY BOND SYSTEM TO ADEQUATELY COVER CLAIMS ARISING OUT OF THAT PARTICULAR PERIOD OF THE YEAR.

/+IT HAS

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+IT HAS CONSEQUENTLY BEEN SUGGESTED THAT ADVANCE PAYMENTS MADE BY CONSUMERS SHOULD BE PAID INTO A TRUST ACCOUNT SO AS TO LIMIT THE TRAVEL AGENTS' ADVANCED ACCESS TO TOUR MONEY, THEREBY MINIMISING THE LIKELIHOOD OF ABSCONDMENT OR MISAPPROPRIATION OF FUND,+ SHE SAID.

TURNING TO OTHER AREAS OF THE CONSUMER COUNCIL'S WORK, MRS CHOW SAID THE YEAR SAW THE COUNCIL EXERCISING ONE OF ITS STRONGEST SANCTIONS AGAINST UNSCRUPULOUS TRADERS -- BY BRINGING PUBLIC CENSURE TO BEAR ON A TOTAL OF 11 SHOPS WHOSE TRADING PRACTICES WERE FAR FROM WHAT COULD BE CONSIDERED FAIR AND HONEST.

INVARIABLY THE NAMING OF THESE DELINQUENT SHOPS RESULTED IN WIDESPREAD PUBLICITY IN THE MEDIA, SHE NOTED.

+WE HAVE EVERY CONFIDENCE THIS WILL CONTINUE, NOW THAT THE DEFAMATION ORDINANCE WAS AMENDED IN MAY 1986 TO ENABLE THE NEWS MEDIA TO PUBLISH FAIR AND ACCURATE REPORTS OF UNSCRUPULOUS TRADERS,+ SHE SAID.

THE YEAR ALSO SAW THE RESOLUTION OF A LONG-STANDING ISSUE AFFECTING FLAT BUYERS -- THE NEED FOR A STANDARD METHOD OF FLOOR MEASUREMENT, OR SALEABLE AREA, IN NEWLY BUILT FLATS.

THIS JOINT EFFORT, CO-ORDINATED BY THE CONSUMER COUNCIL, ARRIVED AT A FORMULA ACCEPTABLE TO NINE OTHER PARTIES CONSISTING OF PROFESSIONAL BODIES COMPRISING ARCHITECTS, SURVEYORS, LAWYERS AND RELATED GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.

THE TRADE ASSOCIATION OF REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS HAD AGREED TO RECOMMEND TO ITS MEMBERS THE USE OF THIS STANDARD METHOD AND TO INCLUDE INFORMATION PERTAINING TO THE SALEABLE AREA IN THE PRICE LISTS GIVEN IN SALES BROCHURES.

+HOPEFULLY THIS AND OTHER MEASURES WILL RENDER THE INFAMOUS 'SHRUNKEN FLAT' EPISODE DISCUSSED IN THIS COUNCIL NOT TOO LONG AGO A THING OF THE PAST,+ SHE COMMENTED.

MRS CHOW SAID THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HAD REFLECTED THE PUBLIC MOOD AND TAKEN AN INCREASING INTEREST IN CONSUMER PROTECTION NOT THE LEAST IN ENACTING A NUMBER OF PIECES OF VITAL CONSUMER PROTECTION LEGISLATION.

THESE INCLUDED AMENDMENTS IN THE DEFAMATION ORDINANCE, THE SMALL CLAIMS TRIBUNAL ORDINANCE, THE FOOD AND DRUGS (COMPOSITION AND LABELLING) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS AND THE ENACTMENT OF THE MONEY CHANGERS (DISCLOSURE OF RATES, CHARGES AND COMMISSION) ORDINANCE, AND THE TRAVEL AGENTS ORDINANCE.

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NEW LAW A REALISTIC STEP TO COMBAT POLLUTION

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THE AIR POLLUTION CONTROL (AIR CONTROL ZONE) (DECLARATION) ORDER 1986 SHOULD BE MOST WELCOME AS THE FIRST REALISTIC STEP TO COMBAT AIR POLLUTION CAUSED BY THE EXPANSION AND DIVERSIFICATION OF INDUSTRY, PROFESSOR THE HON POON CHUNG-KWONG SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE ORDER, PROF POON SAID THE SUBSIDIARY LEGISLATION RELATED TO THE DECLARATION OF THE HARBOUR AIR CONTROL ZONE AND THE TSUEN WAN - KWAI CHUNG AIR CONTROL ZONE, TOGETHER WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AIR QUALITY OBJECTIVES.

HE NOTED THAT BEFORE THE AIR QUALITY OBJECTIVES WERE DEFINED, THERE HAD BEEN EXTENSIVE CONSULTATION WITH THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR AND THE DISTRICT BOARDS. ON THE WHOLE, THERE WERE NO ADVERSE COMMENTS.

HE SAID THAT TO ACHIEVE THESE AIR QUALITY OBJECTIVES, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER THE TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR.

+IT MAY MEAN TO THE INDUSTRIES A CHANGE IN METHOD OR ROUTINE OF OPERATIONS, THE USE OF MORE EXPENSIVE FUEL AND EVEN ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT IN POLLUTION CONTROL EQUIPMENT,+ HE SAID.

IF NECESSARY, THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR SHOULD BE PROVIDED WITH REASONABLE AND TIMELY ASSISTANCE, AND OPERATORS OF NEW FACTORIES SHOULD BE ADVISED OF THE NECESSITY OF STRICT AIR POLLUTION CONTROL.

PROF POON ALSO SAID THAT RIGID CONTROLS ON MOTOR VEHICLE EMISSIONS HAD TO BE IMPOSED AND OIL COMPANIES SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO FURTHER REDUCE THE LEVEL OF LEAD IN PETROLEUM. AT PRESENT, THE CONCENTRATION OF LEAD IN PETROLEUM IN HONG KONG WAS HIGHER THAN THAT IN MOST WESTERN COUNTRIES.

+REDUCING THE LEAD LEVEL FURTHER MAY MEAN SLIGHTLY MORE EXPENSIVE OIL FOR CONSUMERS BUT THAT IS THE PRICE WE HAVE TO PAY FOR A CLEANER ENVIRONMENT TO LIVE IN+, HE SAID.

PROF POON NOTED THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT HAD FOUND THAT THE QUALITY OF AIR IN KWUN TONG WAS RATHER UNSATISFACTORY, WITH THE LEVELS OF SULPHUR DIOXIDE AND PARTICULATE MATTER, AND TO A LESSER EXTENT NITROGEN DIOXIDE, EXCEEDING THE OBJECTIVES FOR THESE POLLUTANTS.

+I DO URGE THE GOVERNMENT, FOLLOWING THE ENACTMENT OF THIS PIECE OF SUBSIDIARY LEGISLATION, TO CONSIDER IT ITS TOP PRIORITY TO DEVISE A FEASIBLE AND EFFECTIVE SOLUTION TO RECTIFY THE UNCOMMENDABLE STATE OF AFFAIRS AT KWUN TONG AND TO STOP ANY FURTHER DETERIORATION OF AIR QUALITY IN OTHER DISTRICTS,+ HE SAID.

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CO-OPERATION LEADS TO EFFECTIVE AUDIT PROCESS
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THE SUCCESSFUL EVOLUTION OF THE AUDIT PROCESS IS THE OUTCOME OF CLOSE CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE ON THE ONE HAND AND THE LEGISLATURE AND THE DIRECTOR OF AUDIT ON THE OTHER, THE HON ALLEN LEE SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

TABLING THE NINTH REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR LEE PRAISED THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE DIRECTOR OF AUDIT FOR THEIR WORK AS SHOWN BY MANY EXAMPLES PROVIDED BY THE REPORT.

MR LEE, THE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN, SAID THE SUCCESS OF THE ARRANGEMENT WAS FOUNDED ON A SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES WHEREBY ONE SORT OF POWER, THE POWER TO SPEND MONEY, WAS VESTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN THE EXECUTIVE, AND ANOTHER SORT OF POWER, THAT OF CALLING THE EXECUTIVE TO ACCOUNT WAS VESTED IN THE COUNCIL.

+THIS DISTRIBUTION OF POWER IS A DELICATE BALANCE, BUT I BELIEVE THAT PRESENT EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS WE HAVE GOT IT JUST ABOUT RIGHT,+ HE SAID.

MR LEE STRESSED IT WAS VITAL THAT ALL COMPONENTS OF THE SYSTEM CONTINUED TO EXERCISE THEIR POWER RESPONSIBLY AND THAT LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLORS DID NOT SEEK TO ARROGATE SO MUCH POWER TO THEMSELVES THAT IT BECAME IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE EXECUTIVE TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY.

+IN THE CASE OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE, THIS CHALLENGE REQUIRES THE COMMITTEE TO BE CRITICAL WHEN CRITICISM IS DUE, BUT ALSO TO BE FAIR, TO BE OBJECTIVE AND TO BE CONSTRUCTIVE,+ HE ADDED.

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EPD MANPOWER TO BE INCREASED

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THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSES TO STRENGTHEN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT THIS YEAR IN VIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT'S INCREASED WORKLOAD, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHEUNG YAN-LUNG, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE ESTABLISHMENT WOULD EXPAND BY 80 PER CENT (FROM 283 TO 507 POSTS) ON APRIL 1 IF THE PROPOSAL, WHICH WAS SUBJECT TO THE VOTING OF FUNDS BY THE COUNCIL, WAS ACCEPTED.

/MR CHAMBERS

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MR CHAMBERS SAID AN EXPANSION WAS NEEDED AS A RESULT OF THE REORGANISATION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLLUTION CONTROL ACTIVITIES IN APRIL LAST YEAR AND TO ENABLE NEW POLLUTION CONTROL INITIATIVES TO GET UNDERWAY.

HE SAID THAT AMONG THE 224 POSTS TO BE CREATED, 91 WERE REQUIRED TO IMPLEMENT THE PROPOSED AGRICULTURAL WASTE CONTROL SCHEME; 53 FOR MANAGEMENT OF SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE PROJECTS; 33 FOR NEW AIR POLLUTION CONTROL MEASURES; 13 FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF REGULATIONS IN THE TOLO HARBOUR AND CHANNEL WATER CONTROL ZONE; 12 FOR THE CONTROL OF VEHICLE SMOKE EMISSIONS; AND FOUR FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEWS OF GOVERNMENT PROJECTS.

+AS QUITE A LONG LEAD-TIME IS REQUIRED TO RECRUIT PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL OFFICERS, THE DEPARTMENT HAS ALREADY MADE A START, WITHOUT COMMITMENT, ON THE NECESSARY RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES,+ MR CHAMBERS SAID.

+EVEN SO, IT WILL BE SOME MONTHS BEFORE THE NEW STAFF CAN TAKE UP THEIR POSTS AND BECOME FULLY OPERATIONAL,+ HE ADDED.

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METHOD OF ASSESSING PUBLIC OPINION UNDER STUDY
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THE GOVERNMENT IS CONSIDERING HOW PUBLIC OPINION SHOULD BE COLLECTED AND PRESENTED IN RESPONSE TO THE GREEN PAPER ON THE 1987 REVIEW OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON DAVID FORD, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING A QUESTION BY DR THE HON CONRAD LAM, MR FORD SAID HE EXPECTED THAT AN ANNOUNCEMENT WOULD BE MADE IN ABOUT A MONTH'S TIME.

+I AM NOT THEREFORE YET IN A POSITION TO REPLY TO DR LAM'S SPECIFIC QUESTION,+ HE SAID.

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DETECTION MOST EFFECTIVE WEAPON AGAINST ARSON
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THE MOST EFFECTIVE WEAPON IN COMBATTING ARSON IS THE SUCCESSFUL DETECTION AND PROSECUTION OF OFFENDERS, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON DAVID JEAFFRESON, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HO KAM-FAI, MR JEAFFRESON SAID TO DESIGN MEASURES TO PREVENT ARSON WAS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT. ARSON WAS A DELIBERATE CRIMINAL ACT.

+ONLY RARELY DOES NEGLIGENCE ON THE PART OF THE VICTIM CONTRIBUTE TO THE OFFENCE. MANY INCIDENTS ARE BELIEVED TO BE THE RESULT OF VANDALISM OR DOMESTIC DISPUTES,+ HE SAID.

MR JEAFFRESON SAID FIRE SERVICES OFFICERS WERE TRAINED TO DETECT EVIDENCE OF ARSON.

IN 1983 THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT HAD ENGAGED A SPECIALIST IN INVESTIGATING ARSON TO CONDUCT COURSES FOR SELECTED OFFICERS.

BY THE MIDDLE OF THIS YEAR ALL OPERATIONAL FIRE OFFICERS WOULD HAVE UNDERGONE SPECIALIST TRAINING, WHICH WAS NOW PART OF THE THREE-YEAR TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR PROBATIONARY STATION OFFICERS.

IN ADDITION, 12 OFFICERS HAD COMPLETED ATTACHMENT TO THE FIRE AND DETECTION UNIT OF THE LOS ANGELES CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT.

QUOTING NUMBERS OF ARSON CASES IN THE PAST YEARS, MR JEAFFRESON SAID, +IN 1986, 490 FIRES WERE SUSPECTED BY THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT TO HAVE BEEN STARTED DELIBERATELY, COMPARED WITH 463 IN 1985 AND 394 IN 1984.

+THE POLICE INVESTIGATED ALL THESE INCIDENTS AND CLASSIFIED AS ARSON 358 IN 1986, COMPARED WITH 220 IN 1984 AND 283 IN 1985.+

HE SAID THE DEPARTMENT HAD SPECIAL INVESTIGATION TEAMS TO LOOK INTO THE CAUSES OF FIRES IF THE CAUSES WERE NOT CLEAR TO THOSE ACTUALLY FIGHTING THE FIRES.

+WHEN THE DEPARTMENT SUSPECTS ARSON, OR AS A MATTER OF COURSE FOR FIRES OF THIRD ALARM OR ABOVE IN INDUSTRIAL PREMISES, THE DEPARTMENT PASSES THE CASE TO THE POLICE FOR INVESTIGATION.

+STAFF OF THE GOVERNMENT LABORATORY ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP. ALL CONCERNED PREPARE A FULL REPORT,+ HE ADDED.

TENDER DOCUMENTS CHECKED CAREFULLY
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TENDER DOCUMENTS ARE CHECKED INTERNALLY WITHIN DESIGN DIVISIONS AND BY SPECIALIST CONTRACT ADVISERS TO AVOID POSSIBLE CLAIMS BY CONTRACTORS, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

AND ALL LANDS AND WORKS DEPARTMENTS DOCUMENTS AND SELECTED ONES FOR HOUSING AUTHORITY CONTRACTS ESTIMATED TO COST OVER \$100 MILLION ARE CHECKED BY THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT BEFORE TENDERS ARE INVITED.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHENG HON-KWAN, MR BARNES SAID THE TERMS OF GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS WERE KEPT CONSTANTLY UNDER REVIEW BY AN INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE, WITH MEMBERS FROM ALL THE PROFESSIONS INVOLVED IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY.

+IN 1985, GOVERNMENT INTRODUCED REVISED CONDITIONS OF CONTRACTS FOR BUILDING AND CIVIL ENGINEERING CONSTRUCTION, AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THESE REVISED CONDITIONS IS BEING MONITORED,+ HE SAID.

+THERE IS REGULAR LIAISON WITH THE BUILDING CONTRACTORS' ASSOCIATION AND PROFESSIONAL BODIES ON ANY MAJOR REVISION. THE LAST TWO YEARS HAVE SEEN A SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF DISPUTED CLAIMS AS COMPARED WITH THE YEARS 1982, 1983 AND 1984.

+IN THESE TWO YEARS, ONLY SIX CLAIMS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO ARBITRATION,+ MR BARNES SAID.

HE SAID UNFORESEEABLE SITUATIONS SUCH AS GROUND CONDITIONS, DELAYS AND DISRUPTIONS CAUSED BY WEATHER OR UTILITY DIVERSIONS OFTEN OCCURRED DURING CONSTRUCTION.

+SO, CONDITIONS OF CONTRACT PROVIDE FOR THE CONTRACTOR TO BE REIMBURSED FOR SUCH EVENTS, SHOULD THEY OCCUR, BY CLAIMING ADDITIONAL PAYMENT.

+THUS, CLAIMS ARE A NORMAL PART OF CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT LIFE, AND THE VAST MAJORITY OF THESE ARE ASSESSED BY THE ENGINEER OR ARCHITECT, AND RESOLVED TO THE SATISFACTION OF BOTH PARTIES AS PART OF THE NORMAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE CONTRACT.

+IT IS ONLY WHEN THE AMOUNT CLAIMED OR THE CONTRACTOR'S ENTITLEMENT FOR EXTRA PAYMENT IS IN DISPUTE THAT CLAIMS GO TO ARBITRATION OR LITIGATION IN COURT,+ HE SAID.

IN 1984 TO 1986, THERE WERE 16 DISPUTED CLAIMS TALLING \$481 MILLION IN RESPECT OF PUBLIC HOUSING, PUBLIC BUILDING AND CIVIL ENGINEERING PROJECTS. THE AMOUNTS PAID IN SETTLEMENT OR PURSUANT TO AWARDS TOTALLED \$64 MILLION.

IN RECENT YEARS ONLY IN TWO EXCEPTIONALLY COMPLEX CASES INVOLVING CLAIMS IN EXCESS OF \$320 MILLION WERE PRIVATE COUNSEL AND SOLICITORS ENGAGED.

+BY AGREEMENT LEGAL COSTS WERE PAID BY EACH PARTY; GOVERNMENT'S WERE \$11 MILLION IN ONE CASE AND \$18 MILLION IN THE OTHER. THE ARBITRATIONS RESULTED IN SETTLEMENTS FOR A TENTH OF THE AMOUNT CLAIMED, WHICH RESULT SPEAKS FOR ITSELF.

+MOREOVER GOVERNMENT'S FIRM ACTION IN THESE CASES HAS UNDOUBTEDLY DISCOURAGED OTHER EXCESSIVE CLAIMS,+ MR BARNES SAID.

THE REASON FOR CLAIMS WAS BASICALLY THAT THE CONTRACTOR CONSIDERED THE REIMBURSEMENT HE HAD RECEIVED UNDER THE CONTRACT TO BE LESS THAN HIS ENTITLEMENT. THE DISPUTE AROSE FROM DISAGREEMENT EITHER AS TO WHAT RISKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES WERE THE CONTRACTOR'S UNDER THE TERMS OF CONTRACT, OR AS TO WHAT ITEMS OF COST WERE REIMBURSABLE UNDER THE CONTRACT, OR A COMBINATION OF BOTH.

+TO APPRECIATE THE SCALE OF DISPUTED CLAIMS, IT IS WORTH COMPARING THOSE WITH THE TOTAL NUMBER AND VALUE OF CONTRACTS AWARDED,+ HE SAID.

+IN 1985-86, 780 CONTRACTS WERE AWARDED BY GOVERNMENT AND THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, WITH A TOTAL VALUE OF \$9 100 MILLION.

+DISPUTED CLAIMS OCCUR ON AVERAGE IN LESS THAN ONE PER CENT OF ALL CONTRACTS, WITH AWARDS AVERAGING ONLY ABOUT 0.25 PER CENT OF TOTAL CONTRACT VALUES. I CONSIDER THE FIGURES TO BE LOW, AND GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE.+

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IMMIGRATION LEVEL CAREFULLY SET
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THE LEVEL OF IMMIGRATION HAS TO BE VERY CAREFULLY SET SO AS NOT TO UPSET UNDULY THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STRUCTURE OF THE COMMUNITY, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON DAVID JEAFFRESON, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HUI YIN-FAT, MR JEAFFRESON SAID 27 000 PERSONS WERE ARRIVING FROM CHINA EACH YEAR FOR SETTLEMENT THROUGH THE ONE-WAY PERMIT SYSTEM AGREED WITH THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES.

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+IN 1986 OVER 98 PER CENT OF THESE PEOPLE CAME TO HONG KONG TO BE REUNITED WITH THEIR IMMEDIATE FAMILIES, INCLUDING A FEW WHO CAME TO JOIN OTHER CLOSE RELATIVES. NEARLY HALF (13 340 PERSONS) WERE CHILDREN JOINING A PARENT ALREADY IN HONG KONG.

+AS LONG AS LOCAL RESIDENTS CONTINUE TO GO BACK TO CHINA TO GET MARRIED THERE ARE BOUND TO CONTINUE TO BE FAMILIES BEING SEPARATED TEMPORARILY UNTIL EXIT PERMITS CAN BE ISSUED FOR THEM TO JOIN THEIR SPOUSES OR PARENTS IN HONG KONG,+ HE SAID.

MR JEAFFRESON POINTED OUT THAT AS HE SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ON JANUARY 21 THE NUMBER OF LEGAL IMMIGRANTS ARRIVING EACH YEAR WAS INCLUDED IN HONG KONG'S POPULATION PROJECTIONS WHICH PROVIDED THE FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING PUBLIC SERVICES.

+AN ANNUAL INCREASE OF 27 000 PERSONS IS EQUIVALENT TO 0.5 PER CENT OF THE POPULATION,+ HE SAID.

+THIS RATE OF INCREASE, BY MEANS OF IMMIGRATION, IS VERY HIGH, PARTICULARLY IN THE CONTEXT OF HONG KONG'S SIZE AND ITS EXISTING POPULATION. THERE IS NO PLAN TO INCREASE IT,+ MR JEAFFRESON ADDED.

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REPROVISIONING OF POLICE CADET SCHOOL PLANNED
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THERE IS A PROJECT IN CATEGORY B OF THE PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME FOR REPROVISIONING THE POLICE CADET SCHOOL, PARTLY IN ITS PRESENT SITE IN FANLING AND PARTLY ON AN ADJACENT SITE, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON DAVID JEAFFRESON, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON YEUNG PO-KWAN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR JEAFFRESON SAID THE CURRENT PROGRAMME WOULD PROVIDE FOR COMPLETION OF THE SCHOOL BY 1992-93.

BUT THE LATEST ESTIMATES SHOWED THAT THE NEW BUILDING WOULD BE QUITE EXPENSIVE, ABOUT \$80 MILLION, HE NOTED.

+IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES WE ARE HAVING A FURTHER LOOK AT THE PROJECT TO SEE IF IT REALLY WILL GIVE VALUE FOR MONEY HAVING REGARD TO THE STEADY DEVELOPMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION GENERALLY OVER THE YEARS AND THE INCREASING AVAILABILITY OF SUBSIDISED FORM 4 AND FORM 5 PLACES IN THE FUTURE,+ HE SAID.

/MR JEAFFRESON

MR JEAFFRESON SAID THE AIMS OF THE POLICE CADET SCHOOL WERE TWO-FOLD: FIRST, TO PREPARE YOUNG MEN, ACADEMICALLY AND PHYSICALLY, FOR RECRUITMENT INTO THE DISCIPLINED SERVICES; SECOND, TO EDUCATE YOUNG MEN TO MEET THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AS ADULTS IN THE COMMUNITY.

+THE SCHOOL OFFERS A STYLE OF EDUCATION UNIQUE IN HONG KONG. ACADEMIC STUDIES ARE AT FORM 4 AND FORM 5 LEVEL BUT THE SCHOOL ALSO LAYS EMPHASIS ON CHARACTER BUILDING, THROUGH DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP AND THROUGH PHYSICAL TRAINING,+ HE SAID.

MR JEAFFRESON POINTED OUT THAT THE SCHOOL HAD CONSISTENTLY MET ITS OBJECTIVES. SINCE 1973, IT HAD TRAINED 3 241 CADETS OF WHOM ALL BUT 90 OR SO HAD GONE ON TO JOIN THE DISCIPLINED SERVICES. AND 2 984, ABOUT 92 PER CENT, CHOSE TO JOIN THE POLICE FORCE.

+IN 1985-86, 313 GRADUATES OF THE CADET SCHOOL JOINED THE FORCE, REPRESENTING 31 PER CENT OF ALL POLICE CONSTABLES RECRUITED THAT YEAR,+ HE ADDED.

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SEWERAGE SYSTEMS BEING KEPT UNDER REVIEW
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THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS IN THE LONG TERM TO COMPREHENSIVELY REVIEW THE SEWERAGE SYSTEMS IN VARIOUS CATCHMENT AREAS OF THE URBAN AREA, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON JACKIE CHAN, MR BARNES SAID PLANNING OF A COMPREHENSIVE SEWERAGE SYSTEM IN THE POK FU LAM AREA HAD JUST STARTED.

AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT HAD ALSO RECENTLY EMBARKED ON A STUDY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SEWERAGE MASTER PLAN FOR THE WHOLE OF EAST KOWLOON.

+THE STUDY INCLUDES A COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY OF THE EXISTING SEWERS AND TREATMENT WORKS AND INVESTIGATIONS OF THE CAPACITY OF THE SEWERAGE NETWORKS NEEDED TO ACCEPT FLOWS FROM FUTURE POPULATION INCREASES,+ HE SAID.

+DEPENDENT ON THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY, WORKS WILL BE PUT IN HAND TO REBUILD, RENOVATE AND EXPAND THE SEWERAGE NETWORK IN EAST KOWLOON.+

GRADUALLY, SIMILAR STUDIES TO REVIEW AND IMPROVE THE EXISTING SYSTEM WOULD BE CARRIED OUT FOR OTHER SEWERAGE CATCHMENT AREAS IN THE URBAN AREA.

MR BARNES POINTED OUT THAT NOWADAYS FOUL WATER SEWERAGE SYSTEMS WERE DESIGNED AND BUILT TO ACCOMMODATE THE PEAK RATE OF WASTE WATER DISCHARGE FROM THE PLANNED MAXIMUM POPULATION AND THE EXPECTED LEVEL OF INDUSTRIAL OR OTHER NON-RESIDENTIAL ACTIVITIES IN THE CATCHMENT AREAS.

+WHEN NEW DEVELOPMENTS ARE PLANNED WHICH WILL BRING THE POPULATION OR THE LEVEL OF INDUSTRIAL OR OTHER NON-RESIDENTIAL ACTIVITIES ABOVE THE ORIGINAL PLANNED LEVEL, THE CAPACITY OF THE SEWERAGE SYSTEMS NEEDS TO BE ENLARGED TO MEET THE NEW REQUIREMENTS. THE NEED FOR SUCH WORKS IS KEPT UNDER REGULAR REVIEW,+ HE SAID.

OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS SOME 30 KILOMETRES OF NEW TRUNK AND BRANCH SEWERS HAD BEEN LAID IN HONG KONG AND KOWLOON BY THE CIVIL ENGINEERING SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND A FURTHER 22 KILOMETRES OF TRUNK SEWERS WERE NOW UNDER PLANNING OR CONSTRUCTION.

BLOCKAGE OF SEWERS WAS A RECURRING PROBLEM IN THE URBANISED AREAS IN THE TERRITORY. THE CIVIL ENGINEERING SERVICES DEPARTMENT MAINTAINED A LABOUR FORCE TO CLEAR SUCH BLOCKAGES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

THE DEPARTMENT ALSO MANNED A TELEPHONE COMPLAINT HOTLINE THROUGH WHICH THE PUBLIC COULD REPORT CASES OF DRAIN BLOCKAGE.

+IN 1986, ABOUT 47,000 COMPLAINT CASES WERE RECEIVED. THE MAJOR CAUSE OF SUCH BLOCKAGES WAS THE ACCUMULATION OF GREASE AND FOOD REMAINS DISCHARGED FROM FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS AND OF SOLID WASTES FROM STREET HAWKERS, CONSTRUCTION SITES AND INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITIES,+ MR BARNES SAID.

+THE PROBLEM IS CONTAINED AS FAR AS POSSIBLE BY REGULAR INSPECTIONS TO ENSURE THAT GREASE TRAPS IN FOOD ESTABLISHMENTS ARE PROPERLY MAINTAINED AND THE NUMBER OF BLOCKAGES HAS REMAINED STEADY OVER THE PAST YEARS.+

BLOCKAGES IN SEWERS IN PRIVATE STREETS WERE DEALT WITH UNDER THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE. AN ORDER TO CLEAR THE BLOCKAGE MIGHT BE SERVED ON THE OWNER. IF THE OWNER FAILED TO COMPLY THE WORKS COULD BE CARRIED OUT BY GOVERNMENT AND THE COST RECOVERED FROM THE OWNER LATER ON.

+IN PREVIOUS YEARS BLOCKAGES IN PRIVATE STREETS WERE QUITE A MAJOR PROBLEM, ESPECIALLY IN SEWERS IN THE BACK LANES OF CENTRAL DISTRICT AND WAN CHAI, BUT I UNDERSTAND THAT STATUTORY ACTION IS NECESSARY MUCH LESS FREQUENTLY NOWADAYS,+ MR BARNES SAID.

QUOTA SET FOR POLICE CERTIFICATES WITH HQ REDEVELOPMENT
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A DAILY QUOTA OF 200 APPLICATIONS FOR CERTIFICATE OF NO CRIMINAL CONVICTION HAD TO BE INTRODUCED WITH THE PRESENT REDEVELOPMENT OF THE POLICE HEADQUARTERS IN ARSENAL STREET, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON DAVID JEAFFRESON, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON RITA FAN, MR JEAFFRESON SAID THAT, AS A MATTER OF POLICY, THERE WAS NO DAILY LIMIT ON THE NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS FOR SUCH CERTIFICATES.

HE SAID THE AVERAGE DAILY NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS HANDLED IN 1986 WAS 140, WELL WITHIN THE CAPACITY OF RESOURCES AVAILABLE, BUT THE NUMBER DID TEND TO FLUCTUATE.

FOR A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME, HOWEVER, QUOTAS OF 200 A DAY HAD TO BE INTRODUCED, NOT BECAUSE OF LACK OF ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES (STAFF WITHIN THE POLICE FORCE COULD ALWAYS BE REDEPLOYED FOR THE PURPOSE) BUT BECAUSE OF THE LIMITED SIZE OF THE PRESENT CNCC OFFICE, HE SAID.

+TO ENABLE THE PRESENT REDEVELOPMENT OF POLICE HEADQUARTERS IN ARSENAL STREET TO PROCEED, THE CNCC OFFICE HAS BEEN MOVED FROM THERE TO A TEMPORARY LOCATION INSIDE A COMMERCIAL BUILDING,+ MR JEAFFRESON SAID.

HE SAID AS THE PEAK PERIODS WERE SHORT AND INFREQUENT, IT WOULD NOT BE WORTHWHILE TRYING TO RENT LARGER PREMISES.

+WHEN THE CNCC OFFICE MOVES BACK TO THE NEW POLICE HEADQUARTERS BUILDING UPON ITS COMPLETION IN TWO TO THREE YEARS' TIME, MUCH GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN THE USE OF ACCOMMODATION WILL BE POSSIBLE AND TEMPORARY QUOTAS FOR CNCCS SHOULD NO LONGER BE NECESSARY, HE SAID.

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CLEARANCE UNLIKELY TO AFFECT HOUSING PROGRAMME
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THE CLEARANCE OF THE KOWLOON WALLED CITY WOULD UNLIKELY HAVE ANY SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S ONGOING REHOUSING PROGRAMME IN OVERALL QUANTITATIVE TERMS, THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DONALD LIAO, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON CONRAD LAM, MR LIAO SAID THE REHOUSING COMMITMENT ARISING FROM THE CLEARANCE WOULD NOT BE KNOWN UNTIL DETAILED SCREENING HAD BEEN COMPLETED.

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+THIS PROCESS HAS COMMENCED BUT WILL TAKE SEVERAL MONTHS TO COMPLETE,+ HE SAID.

+THE PRELIMINARY SURVEY INDICATES THAT ABOUT 10 000 FAMILIES WILL BE CLEARED FROM THE WALLED CITY AND THEY WILL NEED TO BE REHOUSED BY 1990,+ HE ADDED.

MR LIAO POINTED OUT THAT THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT WAS EXAMINING ITS DETAILED PLANNING FOR THE PERIOD UP TO 1990 TO REHOUSE PEOPLE FROM THE WAITING LIST, REDEVELOPMENT, CLEARANCES AND TO SEE HOW BEST TO ACCOMMODATE THE COMMITMENT WHICH HAD ARISEN FROM THE CLEARANCE OF THE WALLED CITY.

+THE CLEARANCE WILL INEVITABLY INCREASE THE DEMAND FOR URBAN HOUSING AND THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT IS MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO IDENTIFY NEW SUPPLEMENTARY SITES TO INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF URBAN PUBLIC HOUSING,+ HE SAID.

OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS, A TOTAL OF 140 000 FLATS WOULD BE PRODUCED UNDER THE PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME WHICH WOULD PROVIDE A TOTAL OF 20 000 FLATS IN EXCESS OF THE NORMAL ANNUAL PRODUCTION TARGET OF 40 000 FLATS, HE ADDED.

+IT IS TOO EARLY TO ESTIMATE THE FINANCIAL COMMITMENT FOR THE WHOLE PROJECT, WHICH INCLUDES STAFF COSTS, COMPENSATION PAYABLE ON CLEARANCE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A PARK ON THE SITE AFTER THE CLEARANCE.

+AN ESTIMATE CAN BE ESTABLISHED WHEN ALL THE INFORMATION REQUIRED WILL HAVE BEEN OBTAINED IN ABOUT A YEAR'S TIME,+ HE SAID.

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THREE BILLS PASSED
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THE CONTROL OF OBSCENE AND INDECENT ARTICLES BILL 1986, THE COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1986 AND THE RATING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987 WERE PASSED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

TWO OTHER BILLS -- THE ADOPTION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987 AND THE HONG KONG EXAMINATIONS AUTHORITY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987 WERE READ A SECOND TIME AND DEBATE ON THEM WAS ADJOURNED.

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED TO FEBRUARY 25.

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GROUP TO EXAMINE VIEWS OF TRAVEL AGENTS
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THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON TRAVEL AGENTS HAS FORMED A WORKING GROUP TO EXAMINE VIEWS SUBMITTED BY THE INDUSTRY REGARDING ITS FUTURE.

THE GROUP WILL SOON MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMITTEE ON HOW THE PROPOSALS COULD BE ADOPTED IN LINE WITH GOVERNMENT'S STATED POLICY OBJECTIVES TOWARDS THE INDUSTRY.

CHAIRMAN OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, MR RAFAEL HUI, TOLD MEMBERS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S TWO BASIC PRINCIPLES WERE:

- * GIVEN THE NATURE OF HOW THE TRAVEL AGENT INDUSTRY OPERATES THE GOVERNMENT IS OF THE VIEW THAT, ULTIMATELY, SELF-REGULATION IS THE MOST SUITABLE AND PRACTICAL FORM OF PROTECTION FOR BOTH CONSUMER AND THE INDUSTRY; AND
- * WHEN SEEN IN THE OVERALL ORDER OF IMPORTANCE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC INTEREST, ANY MEASURE BY MEANS OF LEGISLATION OR OTHERWISE, WHICH INVOLVES PRUDENTIAL SUPERVISION BY GOVERNMENT OVER THE INDUSTRY, WOULD NOT BE APPROPRIATE. THE DEGREE OF REGULATION (AND HENCE PROTECTION EXTENDED TO CONSUMERS) OVER THE FINANCIAL SECTOR, FOR INSTANCE, SHOULD NOT BE SIMILARLY APPLIED TO THE TRAVEL AGENT INDUSTRY.

DURING TODAY'S MEETING THE COMMITTEE WAS GIVEN UPDATED REPORTS ON THE REVOKING OF TRAVEL AGENTS LICENCES TO CHOICEST HOLIDAY TOURISM INVESTMENT LIMITED AND AUSTRAVEL COMPANY LIMITED.

THE COMMITTEE ALSO DISCUSSED THE POSSIBLE MEANS OF COMPENSATING AFFECTED CLIENTS OF THE TWO AGENCIES AS WELL AS THE POSITION OF THE TRAVEL AGENTS RESERVE FUND.

IT NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE FURTHER CONSULTATION WITH THE INDUSTRY WITH A VIEW TO COME TO AN APPROPRIATE ARRANGEMENT ON HOW THE RESERVE FUND CAN BE REPLENISHED.

IN THE MEANTIME, IT WAS ALSO NOTED THAT UNTIL THERE ARE FIRM PROPOSALS ON HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN BE MORE FIRMLY REGULATED, THE REGISTRAR OF TRAVEL AGENTS WILL CONSULT VERY CLOSELY WITH THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY COUNCIL AND THE CONSUMER COUNCIL ON REGULATORY ACTIONS AND WILL EXERCISE HIS POWERS ON THE BASIS OF THE LAW.

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FARMERS PRAISED FOR DOING WELL
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THE DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES, DR LAWRENCE LEE, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PAID TRIBUTE TO LOCAL FARMERS FOR THEIR GOOD PERFORMANCE LAST YEAR DESPITE KEEN COMPETITION FROM IMPORTED AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS.

DR LEE SAID +HONG KONG FARMERS ARE REPUTED FOR THEIR DILIGENCE, ENDURANCE AND ADAPTABILITY. WITH THESE GOOD QUALITIES, THE LOCAL AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY IN GENERAL PERFORMED QUITE WELL LAST YEAR DESPITE STRONG COMPETITION FROM IMPORT PRODUCTS.+

ADDRESSING FARMER LEADERS AT A SPRING LUNCH HOSTED BY HIM, DR LEE SAID THAT DURING THE PERIOD, LOCAL FARMERS PRODUCED 158 000 TONNES OF FRESH VEGETABLES, 17 MILLION HEAD OF LIVE POULTRY AND 570 000 HEAD OF LIVE PIGS, VALUED AT OVER \$1 BILLION.

THE LOCALLY-PRODUCED FOOD IS GENERALLY OF A HIGHER QUALITY THAN THOSE IMPORTED.

THEY REPRESENTED ABOUT 34 PER CENT OF THE FRESH VEGETABLES, 44 PER CENT OF THE LIVE POULTRY AND 17 PER CENT OF LIVE PIGS CONSUMED LOCALLY LAST YEAR.

+IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT DURING THE PAST YEAR, THERE HAS BEEN A RENEWED PUBLIC INTEREST IN THE LOCAL PRIMARY PRODUCTION INDUSTRIES.

+IN THE YEAR OF THE RABBIT, I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT WE CAN COUNT ON THE CONTINUED SUPPORT AND CO-OPERATION OF ALL CONCERNED TO BETTER SERVE OUR COMMUNITY,+ DR LEE SAID.

TODAY'S LUNCH WAS ATTENDED BY SOME 100 RURAL AND FARMER LEADERS AND SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. AMONG THEM WERE THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MR JOHN YAXLEY, AND THE REGIONAL SECRETARY, NEW TERRITORIES, DR JAMES HAYES.

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DUNN TO ATTEND EASTERN DB MEETING
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THE SENIOR MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MISS LYDIA DUNN, WILL ATTEND THE EASTERN DISTRICT BOARD MEETING TOMORROW (THURSDAY).

SHE WILL EXCHANGE VIEWS WITH MEMBERS ON VARIOUS MATTERS CONCERNING GOVERNMENT.

DURING THE MEETING, MEMBERS WILL CONSIDER WHETHER AN EASTERN DISTRICT FESTIVAL SHOULD BE HELD IN 1987-88.

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BEFORE THE MEETING BEGINS, PRIZES WILL BE PRESENTED TO WINNERS OF THE EASTERN DISTRICT MURAL PAINTING DESIGN COMPETITION, MISS FLORENCE TO AND MISS MARINO LEUNG, BY BOARD MEMBERS MR YUEN KI-KONG AND MRS BETTY YUNG.

THE SELECTION PANEL CHOSE THE TWO WINNING ENTRIES FROM 42 SUBMISSIONS DEPICTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF EASTERN DISTRICT. THEY ARE INTENDED FOR REPRODUCTION AS MURALS ON A RETAINING WALL FACING KING'S ROAD BELOW SAI WAN TERRACE.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE MEETING TO BEGIN AT 2.30 PM TOMORROW IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE DISTRICT OFFICE ON THE FIRST FLOOR AT 880-886, KING'S ROAD.

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COMMITTEE TO EXAMINE GREEN MINIBUS SERVICES
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THE TUEN MUN DISTRICT BOARD'S TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE WILL MEET TOMORROW (THURSDAY) TO EXAMINE GREEN MINIBUS SERVICES IN THE DISTRICT.

WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE LIGHT RAIL TRANIST AND ITS FEEDER BUSES IN AUGUST 1988, ROUTES 45 AND 46 WILL BE WITHDRAWN AND MEMBERS WILL GIVE THEIR VIEWS ON VARIOUS ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS. AT THE SAME TIME, THEY WILL REVIEW THE NEED TO REVISE THE ROUTINGS OF KMB ROUTES 59, 66 AND 66M.

OTHER ITEMS INCLUDE PROPOSED TRAFFIC RESTRICTIONS AT THE JUNCTIONS OF THE TUEN MUN - YUEN LONG CORRIDOR, TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS AFTER THE CLOSURE OF CHOY YEE BRIDGE, THE PROPOSED SCHEME TO LICENSE PUBLIC LIGHT BUSES ON SCHEDULED ROUTES TO CARRY GOODS ON CERTAIN ROUTES, TRAFFIC PROBLEMS NEAR MARDEN FOUNDATION CARITAS PREVOCATIONAL SCHOOL AND THE NEED FOR CROSSING FACILITIES NEAR YAN OI SWIMMING POOL.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE MEETING TOMORROW AT 10 AM IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE DISTRICT BOARD SECRETARIAT ON THE THIRD FLOOR, TUEN MUN GOVERNMENT OFFICES BUILDING, NO. 1, TUEN HI ROAD.

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DB TO DISCUSS HOUSING FOR ELDERLY
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THE CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT BOARD WILL MEET TOMORROW (THURSDAY) TO DISCUSS A PROPOSAL FOR SETTING UP A SPECIAL HOUSING SCHEME FOR THE ELDERLY.

SUCH A SCHEME WOULD ENABLE ELDERLY PEOPLE TO BUY FLATS ON MORE FAVOURABLE TERMS UNDER THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION SCHEME.

THE PROPOSAL WAS MADE BY A BOARD MEMBER CONCERNED ABOUT THE NEEDS OF A RELATIVELY HIGH PERCENTAGE OF SENIOR RESIDENTS IN THE DISTRICT.

MEMBERS WILL ALSO STUDY PROGRESS REPORTS SUBMITTED BY COMMITTEES ON ENVIRONMENT AND WORKS, TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY BUILDING AND SERVICES, PUBLIC OPINION AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT, AND FINANCE.

POLICE REPRESENTATIVES WILL BRIEF MEMBERS ON THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE MEETING TO BEGIN AT 2.30 PM TOMORROW IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM ON THE 14TH FLOOR OF THE HARBOUR BUILDING, 38 PIER ROAD, CENTRAL.

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TUEN MUN CAR PARK SITE TO LET
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A TUEN MUN SITE WILL BE LET ON SHORT TERM TENANCY BY THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT.

MEASURING ABOUT 4 575 SQUARE METRES, THE CASTLE PEAK ROAD SITE CAN BE USED AS A PUBLIC FEE PAYING CAR PARK.

THE INITIAL TENANCY IS FOR ONE YEAR, RENEWABLE QUARTERLY AFTERWARDS.

TENDERS SHOULD BE SUBMITTED BY MARCH 6.

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CHEQUE PRESENTATION
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IN SUPPORT OF THE SIR EDWARD YOUDE FUND, YUEN LONG DISTRICT BOARD CHAIRMAN, MR TAI KUEN, WILL PRESENT A CHEQUE FOR \$20 000 ON BEHALF OF THE HOP YICK CO LTD TO THE DISTRICT OFFICER, MR ALAN WONG, TOMORROW (THURSDAY).

NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE PRESENTATION CEREMONY TO BE HELD AT 9.20 AM AT MR TAI'S OFFICE IN THE YUEN LONG DISTRICT BOARD SECRETARIAT, 13TH FLOOR, TAI KIU GOVERNMENT OFFICES BUILDING, YUEN LONG.

TRAFFIC MEASURES IN CENTRAL TO CONTINUE
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TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED IN CENTRAL SINCE NOVEMBER LAST YEAR FOR UTILITY DIVERSION WORKS WILL REMAIN IN FORCE FOR ANOTHER FIVE WEEKS FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY (FEBRUARY 21).

THESE ARE :

- * NO VEHICLE EXCEEDING SEVEN METRES IN LENGTH, INCLUDING FRANCHISED BUSES, IS ALLOWED TO ENTER THE SECTION OF POTTINGER STREET BETWEEN CONNAUGHT ROAD CENTRAL AND DES VOEUX ROAD CENTRAL.
- * THE WESTERN KERBSIDE LANE OF GILMAN STREET BETWEEN CONNAUGHT ROAD CENTRAL AND DES VOEUX ROAD CENTRAL WILL REMAIN A 24-HOUR DAILY RESTRICTED ZONE. ALL VEHICLES EXCEPT FRANCHISED BUSES ARE BANNED FROM STOPPING FOR PASSENGERS OR GOODS.
- * NO VEHICLE OTHER THAN FRANCHISED BUSES IS ALLOWED TO TURN LEFT FROM WESTBOUND CONNAUGHT ROAD CENTRAL TO SOUTHBOUND GILMAN STREET.
- * VEHICLES ON WESTBOUND CONNAUGHT ROAD CENTRAL HEADING FOR DES VOEUX ROAD CENTRAL ARE DIVERTED TO WING WO STREET.

/x CMB ROUTES

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- * CMB ROUTES 11, 25 AND 75 ARE RE-ROUTED VIA CONNAUGHT ROAD CENTRAL, HARCOURT ROAD, COTTON TREE DRIVE AND QUEENSWAY FOR JOURNEYS LEAVING THE CENTRAL BUS STATION. TEMPORARY BUS STOPS ARE SET UP ON CONNAUGHT ROAD CENTRAL OUTSIDE CONNAUGHT CENTRE AND CITY HALL.
- * CMB ROUTES 3A, 4, 7 AND 37 ARE RE-ROUTED VIA CONNAUGHT ROAD CENTRAL, GILMAN STREET, DES VOEUX ROAD CENTRAL, QUEEN VICTORIA STREET AND QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL FOR JOURNEYS LEAVING THE CENTRAL BUS STATION.

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TWO URBAN CLEARWAY RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED
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TWO ROAD SECTIONS ON HONG KONG ISLAND WILL BE MADE URBAN CLEARWAYS FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY (FEBRUARY 21).

IN WAN CHAI, THE SECTION OF HENNESSY ROAD EASTBOUND BETWEEN HOUSE NO. 139 AND 149 WILL BECOME A PEAK-HOUR (7 - 10 AM AND 4 - 7 PM) URBAN CLEARWAY.

IN THE MID-LEVELS, THE EASTERN KERBSIDE LANE OF ROBINSON ROAD FROM ITS JUNCTION WITH GARDEN ROAD TO A POINT ABOUT 20 METRES NORTH OF THE SAME JUNCTION WILL BE DESIGNATED AN URBAN CLEARWAY OPERATING ROUND THE CLOCK.

WITHIN THE URBAN CLEARWAYS, NO VEHICLE OTHER THAN FRANCHISED BUSES WILL BE ALLOWED TO STOP FOR PASSENGERS OR GOODS.

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TRAFFIC CHANGES AT ADMIRALTY
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MOTORISTS SHOULD WATCH OUT FOR TRAFFIC CHANGES AT ADMIRALTY WHICH WILL TAKE EFFECT FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY (FEBRUARY 21).

THE SOUTHERN KERBSIDE LANE OF DRAKE STREET BETWEEN COTTON TREE DRIVE AND TAMAR STREET WILL BE OPENED TO ALL VEHICLES HEADING FOR QUEENSWAY EASTBOUND. HOWEVER, NO VEHICLE WILL BE ALLOWED TO STOP FOR PASSENGERS OR GOODS WITHIN THE ROAD SECTION AT ANY TIME OF THE DAY.

ALL VEHICLES EXCEPT FRANCHISED BUSES WILL BE BANNED FROM THE MTR ADMIRALTY STATION (WEST) BUS TERMINUS, WHICH IS THE TERMINAL POINT FOR CMB ROUTES 12M, 40M AND 70M.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE EN-ROUTE BUS STOP FOR ROUTES 16, 99, 720, 721 AND 722 WILL BE RELOCATED TO THE MTR ADMIRALTY STATION (EAST) TERMINUS.

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