



# DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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SHW ON BEDSPACE APARTMENTS

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THE FOLLOWING IS THE SPEECH BY THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON ELIZABETH WONG, IN THE DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ON BEDSPACE APARTMENTS ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1991.

SIR,

I SUPPORT THE CALL THAT URGENT ACTION IS REQUIRED TO REMOVE THE BLACKSPOT OF HONG KONG'S VERSION OF A MODERN-DAY "BIDONVILLE" IN OUR GLITTERING CITY. THE COMMONALTY OF THEME, OF VIEWS, WHICH HAVE EMERGED IN THE DEBATE HIGHLIGHTS A SOCIAL AWARENESS; A CRYING NEED FOR REFORM; AND AN UNDERSTANDING THAT THERE ARE ALWAYS INDIVIDUALS WHO CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO BE ABLE TO COPE ON THEIR OWN WITHOUT A NETWORK OF SUPPORT THROUGH OUTSIDE INTERVENTION.

THE QUESTION OF LIVING CONDITION OR THE SHELTER ISSUE, IS NOT SIMPLY ONE OF POVERTY. URBANISATION AND SOCIAL ECONOMIC POLICIES ALL HAVE AN IMPACT ON LIVING CONDITIONS. URBANISATION CAN BE AN ENGINE FOR GROWTH AND AN INCUBATOR FOR INNOVATION IN URBAN DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT.

WHILST PLEDGING MY OWN SUPPORT, I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH THIS COUNCIL MEASURES TAKEN BY MY BRANCH FOR INSTANCE. I SHALL DEFER TO THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS TO ELABORATE ON THE BROADER ISSUE OF HOUSING, LICENCE AND CONTROL AND FINDINGS OF A RECENTLY COMPLETED TERRITORY-WIDE SURVEY ON BEDSPACE APARTMENTS AND THEIR LODGERS.

AN INTERDEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP CHAIRED BY MY BRANCH, WHICH FIRST STUDIED THE PROBLEM, INDEED SOME MONTHS, REACHED A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT CONCLUSIONS. THE FIRST OF THESE WAS THAT:

- (A) THERE WAS AN OBVIOUS AND CONTINUING NEED FOR LOW-COST PRIVATE RENTAL ACCOMMODATION IN THE URBAN AREAS, AND I MIGHT ADD AT RENTS RESIDENTS CAN AFFORD, AVOIDING SOCIAL DISLOCATION AND PREFERABLY IN LOCALITIES OF THEIR CHOICE AND AT STANDARDS MORE COMPATIBLE WITH MODERN HONG KONG; AND
- (B) THERE WAS A CLEAR DUTY ON GOVERNMENT'S PART TO ERADICATE UNSAFE AND DANGEROUS CONDITIONS IN SUCH APARTMENTS AND, AS APPROPRIATE, TO IMPROVE HYGIENE AND LIVING STANDARDS.

HOWEVER, ATTEMPTS TO INTRODUCE SUCH CHANGES IN A NUMBER OF PILOT SCHEMES REVEALED THERE WOULD BE MAJOR DIFFICULTIES IN ACHIEVING THESE OBJECTIVES UNDER EXISTING LEGISLATIVE AND ENFORCEMENT ARRANGEMENTS. THE MOST APPROPRIATE SOLUTION APPEARED TO BE, AND INCLUDING THE INTRODUCTION OF A SPECIFIC LICENSING SCHEME COVERING ALL BEDSPACE APARTMENTS.

/SOCIAL WORKERS .....

SOCIAL WORKERS FROM THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT HAVE AND WILL CONTINUE TO VISIT ALL KNOWN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS AT SIX-MONTHLY INTERVALS. VOLUNTARY AGENCIES ARE ALSO DOING VALIANT WORK, ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN HELPING THE RESIDENTS OF SUCH APARTMENTS. WELFARE SERVICES ARE OFFERED TO ALL RESIDENTS IN NEED, PARTICULARLY THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED PEOPLE. AT PRESENT, THERE ARE 947 LODGERS IN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS RECEIVING PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND 392 RECEIVING SPECIAL NEEDS ALLOWANCES. LAST YEAR, 155 RESIDENTS WERE ALSO GIVEN GRANTS FROM CHARITABLE FUNDS TO HELP THEM WITH SPECIFIC FINANCIAL PROBLEMS. ANOTHER 325 WERE REFERRED FOR EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE. ALL THIS ACTION, THOUGH MEANINGFUL, IS OF COURSE NOT ENOUGH.

REHOUSING OF ELDERLY AND DISABLED RESIDENTS AND OTHERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS SHOULD REMAIN A HIGH PRIORITY. DURING 1990, 119 RESIDENTS WERE REFERRED TO ELDERLY HOMES AND ANOTHER 82 WERE RECOMMENDED FOR COMPASSIONATE REHOUSING. THESE FIGURES ARE LOWER THAN WE WOULD WISH, AND POINT TO A PARTICULAR PROBLEM WHEREIN MANY RESIDENTS OF BEDSPACE APARTMENTS ARE EXTREMELY, THOUGH UNDERSTANDABLY, RELUCTANT TO MOVE FROM THE LOCALITY IN WHICH SOME OF THEM HAVE LIVED FOR OVER A QUARTER OF A CENTURY EVEN THOUGH BETTER ACCOMMODATION IS AVAILABLE ELSEWHERE. MANY WILL NEVER CONSIDER A MOVE UNTIL FACED WITH THE PROSPECT OF LOSING THEIR PRESENT HOME ALTOGETHER. THIS PROSPECT, HOWEVER, BECOMES INCREASINGLY LIKELY AS THE OLDER URBAN AREAS ARE BEING REDEVELOPED.

ENSURING SAFE CONDITIONS IN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS WILL INEVITABLY REQUIRE THAT MORE RESIDENTS BE DISPLACED. HOWEVER, IT IS OUR FIRM COMMITMENT THAT NO PERSON SHOULD BE MADE HOMELESS AS A RESULT OF THIS. RESIDENTS WHOSE MEDICAL AND SOCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES GIVE RISE TO PARTICULAR HOUSING NEEDS MAY BE REHOUSED THROUGH THE EXISTING COMPASSIONATE REHOUSING ARRANGEMENTS. IN ADDITION, BUILDING UPON THE EXPERIENCE GAINED THROUGH THE URBAN HOSTEL PILOT SCHEME FOR STREET SLEEPERS, WE WILL ALSO ESTABLISH FURTHER URBAN HOSTELS TO PROVIDE A TEMPORARY HOME FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS INCLUDING THOSE WHO MAY WISH BUT ARE UNABLE IMMEDIATELY TO FIND THEIR OWN ACCOMMODATION OR WHOSE APPLICATION FOR COMPASSIONATE REHOUSING WITH THE HOUSING AUTHORITY IS STILL BEING PROCESSED. A NUMBER OF SITES FOR SUCH HOSTELS ARE NOW BEING IDENTIFIED WITH THE HELP OF THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION AND THE GOVERNMENT PROPERTY ADMINISTRATION.

SIR, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT ALL THE VALUABLE EXPRESSIONS OF HELP AND IMPRACTICAL COLLABORATION WITH INDIVIDUALS, RELEVANT ORGANISATIONS AND THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE, MY COLLEAGUES AND I WILL CONTINUE TO PERFORM OUR PART IN FULL WITH DEDICATION AND DETERMINATION.

BEDSPACE LODGERS WILL NOT BE RENDERED HOMELESS

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN ITS ASSURANCE THAT NO BEDSPACE APARTMENT LODGERS ALREADY REGISTERED BY THE CITY AND NEW TERRITORIES ADMINISTRATION WILL BE RENDERED HOMELESS AND THAT THEY WILL BE OFFERED SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, THE HON PETER TSAO, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DEBATE ON BEDSPACE APARTMENTS TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

AND HE STRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT GOADED INTO ACTION BY THE TRAGIC FIRE WHICH OCCURRED IN ONE OF THESE APARTMENTS IN SHAM SHUI PO LAST DECEMBER.

"WE WERE GOADED BY THE APPALLING CONDITIONS WHICH WE SAW WHEN THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE AND I VISITED THE PREMISES EARLIER LAST YEAR," MR TSAO SAID.

THE GOVERNMENT, HE SAID, WOULD ADOPT A THREE-PRONGED APPROACH TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM.

"FIRST, ELDERLY PEOPLE AGED ABOVE 60 AND/OR ARE RECEIVING PUBLIC ASSISTANCE OR OTHER FORMS OF WELFARE ASSISTANCE WILL, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, BE DEALT WITH UNDER THE EXISTING SOCIAL WELFARE REHOUSING POLICY.

"THE ARRANGEMENTS BEING CONTEMPLATED FOR THEM HAVE ALREADY BEEN SET OUT BY THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE," MR TSAO SAID.

HE NOTED THAT FOR PLANNING PURPOSES, THE GOVERNMENT WAS ASSUMING THAT 25 PER CENT OF THE EXISTING LODGER POPULATION OF 1,000 LODGERS WOULD BE SO REHOUSED.

MR TSAO SAID THE SECOND CATEGORY OF LODGERS WERE THOSE WHO ARE ABLE-BODIED AND EMPLOYED, BUT WHO COULD NOT AFFORD HIGH RENTS OR FIND SUITABLE ACCOMMODATION OTHER THAN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS.

"FOR SUCH PEOPLE," HE SAID, "WE WILL PROMOTE A PROJECT THROUGH VOLUNTARY AGENCIES TO PROVIDE HOSTEL ACCOMMODATION FOR THOSE DISPLACED FROM EXISTING BEDSPACE APARTMENTS."

HE ADDED THAT THESE HOSTELS WOULD BE SET UP IN NEIGHBOURHOODS FAMILIAR TO THE DISPLACED LODGERS AS FAR AS POSSIBLE AND THIS PROJECT WOULD TAKE CARE OF ANOTHER 1,000 LODGERS.

AS TO THE REST OF THE EXISTING LODGERS - ABOUT 2,000 - THEY WOULD REMAIN IN SITU IN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS IN IMPROVED LIVING CONDITIONS AFTER THE INTRODUCTION OF A LICENSING SCHEME, MR TSAO SAID.

COMING BACK TO THE ARRANGEMENTS BEING PROPOSED FOR THE SECOND CATEGORY OF LODGERS, MR TSAO SAID AT PRESENT, THOSE WHO HAD BEEN DISPLACED AND CLAIMED TO BE HOMELESS WOULD NORMALLY BE OFFERED ACCOMMODATION IN A TRANSIT CENTRE IN THE NEW TERRITORIES.

/"IF SUBSEQUENTLY .....

"IF SUBSEQUENTLY FOUND TO BE GENUINELY HOMELESS, THEY WOULD BE OFFERED TEMPORARY HOUSING IN THE NEW TERRITORIES.

"PROBLEMS WILL ARISE, HOWEVER, IN THOSE CASES WHERE RESIDENTS HAVE STRONG TIES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND REFUSE TO MOVE TO OTHER DISTRICTS, PARTICULARLY TO THE NEW TERRITORIES," HE SAID.

TO ASSIST IN MEETING THE REHOUSING NEEDS OF THE 1,000 LODGERS IN THE SECOND CATEGORY, MR TSAO SAID THE TUNG WAH GROUP OF HOSPITALS HAD GENEROUSLY AGREED TO MAKE AVAILABLE PROPERTIES FOR CONVERSION INTO HOSTELS.

"ONE SUCH BUILDING IS IN WAN CHAI AND WORK HAS ALREADY STARTED TO TURN IT INTO A HOSTEL FOR 50 SINGLE MEN.

"ANOTHER BUILDING IN MONG KOK WILL PROVIDE ACCOMMODATION FOR 200 AND THE NECESSARY ALTERATIONS AND FITTING OUT WORKS WILL COMMENCE TOWARDS THE END OF THE YEAR," HE SAID.

MR TSAO POINTED OUT THAT IN ORDER TO SECURE SUFFICIENT ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION FOR THE REMAINING 750 LODGERS, IT WAS ESTIMATED THAT ABOUT \$56 MILLION WOULD BE REQUIRED TO PURCHASE PROPERTIES AND FURNITURE.

"THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION HAS ALREADY AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO DONATE \$20 MILLION AS A SOCIAL PROJECT.

"AS REGARDS THE BALANCE OF FINANCIAL REQUIREMENT, I AM HAPPY TO SAY THAT THE CHINESE TEMPLES COMMITTEE, AT ITS MEETING YESTERDAY, APPROVED A DONATION OF \$40 MILLION FROM THE GENERAL CHINESE CHARITIES FUND," HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT THE NET ASSETS OF THE GENERAL CHINESE CHARITIES FUND WOULD NOT BE UNDULY DEPLETED, AS ANY PROPERTY PURCHASED WITH MONEY FROM THE FUND WOULD BE OWNED BY THE CHINESE TEMPLES COMMITTEE, AND LEASED OUT TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS INTERESTED IN RUNNING AND MANAGING HOSTELS.

"THE AGENCY FOR VOLUNTEER SERVICE AND THE HOUSING SOCIETY HAVE ALREADY AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO OPERATE SUCH HOSTELS AND WE ARE NOW DISCUSSING DETAILED ARRANGEMENTS WITH THEM," HE SAID.

EARLIER, MR TSAO SAID THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO REGULATE THE SAFETY STANDARDS IN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS WAS TO INTRODUCE A "LICENSING SCHEME".

REFERRING TO SOME MEMBERS' CONCERN OVER THE RENTAL LEVELS OF THE BEDSPACE APARTMENTS UPON ENFORCEMENT OF LICENSING CONTROL, HE SAID THAT GUIDED BY AN EXPERIMENT CONDUCTED IN MONG KOK LAST YEAR, RENTS IN IMPROVED BEDSPACE APARTMENTS WOULD RISE BUT IT WAS BELIEVED THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE SUCH AS TO FORCE OCCUPANTS INTO THE STREETS.

"HOWEVER, MEMBERS' WARNINGS AND CONCERNS HAVE BEEN CAREFULLY NOTED. WE WILL PAY PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THIS ASPECT OF THE EXERCISE," HE ADDED.

ON THE OTHER HAND, HE SAID, HOSTELS MANAGED BY VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS WOULD CHARGE RENTS AT AFFORDABLE LEVELS AND WOULD ACCOMMODATE, FIRST OF ALL, THOSE LODGERS WHO COULD NOT PAY THE HIGHER RENTS OF COMMERCIALY RUN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS.

"WE MAY HAVE TO INTRODUCE A MEANS TEST TO DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THOSE WHO CAN AND THOSE WHO CANNOT AFFORD TO PAY THE FREE MARKET RENT," HE EXPLAINED.

MR TSAO ALSO STRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT INTEND TO SUBJECT BEDSPACE APARTMENTS TO LICENSING CONTROLS UNTIL THERE WERE SUFFICIENT ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION AVAILABLE FOR THE DISPLACED LODGERS.

"IN THE MEANTIME, AS AND WHEN HOSTELS ARE SET UP, ACTIONS WILL BE CAREFULLY SYNCHRONISED BY THE DEPARTMENTS CONCERNED TO ENFORCE THE FIRE SERVICES ORDINANCE AND THE BUILDING ORDINANCE AGAINST BEDSPACE APARTMENTS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD.

"OUR PLANNED ACTION IS NOT EXPECTED TO PRODUCE PERFECT ANSWERS. WHAT WE ARE ATTEMPTING ARE PRACTICAL MEASURES WHICH WILL RESULT IN SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENTS IN THE LIVING CONDITION OF THE 4,000 PEOPLE, OFTEN PERHAPS SLIGHTLY UNCHARITABLY DESCRIBED AS CAGED MEN BUT NONETHELESS AN ACCURATE DESCRIPTION," HE SAID.

BEFORE OUTLINING THE PACKAGE OF MEASURES, MR TSAO DISCUSSED THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM AND THE PRINCIPAL CONSIDERATIONS IN MAPPING OUT THESE MEASURES.

HE NOTED THAT THE BEDSPACE APARTMENT ISSUE WAS A COMPLEX SUBJECT AND DID NOT LEND ITSELF TO EASY OR READY-MADE SOLUTIONS.

HE SAID: "THE ACTION PLAN, AS DEvised WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION, TAKES ACCOUNT OF A NUMBER OF PRINCIPAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- (A) THAT THE POPULATION IN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS SHOULD BE FROZEN AT CURRENT LEVELS, THROUGH LEGISLATION AND A SYSTEM OF LICENSING. SUCCESSIVE SURVEYS SHOW INDEED THAT THIS IS A PRACTICAL MEASURE BECAUSE THE POPULATION IS IN FACT A DIMINISHING ONE, NOT AN EXPANDING ONE;
- (B) THAT THE POPULATION IN THESE APARTMENTS MUST BE REDUCED SO AS TO ENABLE SAFETY MEASURES TO BE INSTALLED AND TO ENSURE THAT THE LIVING CONDITIONS ARE VASTLY IMPROVED;
- (C) THAT PEOPLE DISPLACED IN THIS THINNING OUT EXERCISE DO NOT BECOME HOMELESS. THIS WILL INVOLVE THE CREATION OF SUFFICIENT HOSTELS TO ACCOMMODATE OCCUPANTS WHO ARE NOT QUALIFIED FOR REHOUSING IN THE PUBLIC HOUSING ON COMPASSIONATE GROUNDS;
- (D) THAT SUCH HOSTELS SHOULD BE PROPERLY MANAGED SO THAT THEY DO NOT THEMSELVES DETERIORATE, THEREBY ALLOWING HISTORY TO REPEAT ITSELF;

/(E) THAT THE .....

(E) THAT THE VERY POOR SHOULD BE ASSISTED AS A MATTER OF CHARITY; AND

(F) FINALLY, SUFFICIENT FUNDS MUST BE SECURED TO ENABLE ALL THESE CONSIDERATIONS TO BE PUT INTO PRACTICE."

ON THE TERRITORY-WIDE SURVEY ON BEDSPACE APARTMENTS AND THEIR LODGERS CONDUCTED BY CNTA, IT SHOWED THAT THERE WERE 180 BEDSPACE APARTMENTS IN HONG KONG, WITH A TOTAL OF 5,651 BEDSPACES.

THE ACTUAL POPULATION OF LODGERS WAS ABOUT 4,000 AND 67 PER CENT OF THEM HAD BEEN INDIVIDUALLY INTERVIEWED.

AS REGARDS THE SOCIAL PROFILES OF THE LODGERS, MR TSAO SAID THEIR AVERAGE AGE WAS 55, JUST UNDER HALF HAD FAMILY TIES BUT ALL OF THEM LIVED AS SINGLE MEN; 35 PER CENT WERE RECEIVING PUBLIC ASSISTANCE WHILE 62 PER CENT OF THEM WERE WORKING AND EARNING AN AVERAGE INCOME OF ABOUT \$2,440 A MONTH.

"FOURTEEN PER CENT OF THE LODGERS INTERVIEWED HAVE BEEN LIVING IN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS WHILE 52 PER CENT OF THEM HAVE BEEN LODGERS FOR LESS THAN SIX YEARS.

"ALMOST HALF OF THEM SAY THAT THEY STAY IN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS BECAUSE OF CHEAP RENT, WHICH AVERAGES \$279 A MONTH. ANOTHER 30 PER CENT OF THEM GIVE THE REASON THAT THEY CANNOT FIND ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION.

"THE SURVEY RESULTS HAVE FORMED THE BASIS ON WHICH THE ADMINISTRATION IS ASSESSING THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM AND FORMULATING APPROPRIATE MEASURES TO TACKLE IT," MR TSAO SAID.

AS THERE WERE SOME SIMILARITIES IN THE BASIC APPROACHES BEING PROPOSED FOR THE GUESTHOUSES AND BEDSPACE APARTMENTS, HE SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WAS PROPOSING THAT THE LICENSING OF BEDSPACE APARTMENTS WOULD FORM ONE OF THE TASKS OF THE PROPOSED HOTEL ACCOMMODATION AUTHORITY BEING SET UP UNDER CNTA.

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BILL TO PROVIDE TAX RELIEF FOR UNIT TRUSTS AND MUTUAL FUND CORPORATIONS INTRODUCED  
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THE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1991 SEEKS TO PROVIDE FURTHER TAX RELIEF FOR AUTHORISED UNIT TRUSTS AND SIMILAR TAX RELIEF FOR AUTHORISED MUTUAL FUND CORPORATIONS, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR PIERS JACOBS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, SIR PIERS SAID: "AS THE LAW NOW STANDS, PROFITS ON THE DISPOSAL OF SECURITIES AND INTEREST RECEIVED BY TRUSTEES OF AUTHORISED UNIT TRUSTS ARE EXCLUDED FROM THE CHARGE TO PROFITS TAX.

/"REPRESENTATIONS HAVE .....

"REPRESENTATIONS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED CALLING FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE RELIEF TO AUTHORISED MUTUAL FUND CORPORATIONS, AND ALSO THE WIDENING OF THE DEFINITION OF 'SECURITIES'."

AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE INDUSTRY, THE ADMINISTRATION ACCEPTED BOTH PROPOSALS, AND THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID HE HAD INDICATED IN HIS 1990/91 BUDGET SPEECH THAT HE WOULD INTRODUCE SUITABLE LEGISLATION INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TO EFFECT THESE CHANGES.

"MUTUAL FUND CORPORATIONS AND UNIT TRUSTS, ALTHOUGH DIFFERING IN FORM, ARE IDENTICAL IN SUBSTANCE.

"THEY OPERATE AND ARE MANAGED IN SUBSTANTIALLY THE SAME MANNER, AND BOTH ARE SUBJECT TO THE SAME SCRUTINY BY THE SECURITIES AND FUTURES COMMISSION.

"WITH THE INCREASING USE OF MUTUAL FUND CORPORATIONS AS INVESTMENT VEHICLES, THE ADMINISTRATION CONSIDERS THAT THEY SHOULD BE ACCORDED THE SAME TREATMENT AS UNIT TRUSTS," SIR PIERS SAID.

AS TO "SECURITIES", THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID THE BILL PROPOSED TO EXTEND THE DEFINITION TO INCLUDE BILLS OF EXCHANGE, FOREIGN EXCHANGE CONTRACTS AND FUTURES CONTRACTS.

PROFITS ARISING FROM REDEMPTION OR DISPOSAL OF THESE INSTRUMENTS WOULD NOT BE TAXABLE, HE ADDED.

SIR PIERS SAID THE SECURITIES AND FUTURES COMMISSION AND THE JOINT LIAISON COMMITTEE ON TAXATION HAD BEEN CONSULTED AND HAD ENDORSED THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS.

"THE FULL YEAR COST TO THE REVENUE OF GRANTING THE PROPOSED EXEMPTION HAS BEEN ESTIMATED TO BE \$25 MILLION," HE SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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BILL TO REMOVE DOUBTS ON VALUATION  
PRACTICE ON RATEABILITY OF PLANT INTRODUCED

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THE RATING (AMENDMENT)(NO. 2)BILL 1991 SEEKS TO ENSURE THAT THE COMMISSIONER OF RATING AND VALUATION CAN CONTINUE WITH TWO EXISTING PRACTICES REGARDING THE RATEABILITY OF PLANT FOR A UTILITY COMPANY.

FIRSTLY, THE COMMISSIONER CAN INCLUDE IN RATING ASSESSMENTS THE VALUE OF PLANT SUCH AS CABLES AND DUCTS, RAILWAY AND TRAM LINES AND OIL TANKS AND SECONDLY, THE COMMISSIONER CAN VALUE A SYSTEM SUCH AS THE GENERATION AND DISTRIBUTION NETWORK OF A UTILITY COMPANY AS A SINGLE RATEABLE UNIT.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR PIERS JACOBS, MADE THESE REMARKS WHEN MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON.

"FOLLOWING A RECENT APPEAL BY A UTILITY COMPANY AGAINST ITS RATING ASSESSMENT, DOUBTS WERE RAISED CONCERNING THE COMMISSIONER'S EXISTING VALUATION PRACTICE WITH REGARD TO THE RATEABILITY OF PLANT SUCH AS CABLES AND DUCTS.

"ACCORDINGLY, A NEW SECTION 8A IS PROPOSED TO REMOVE THESE DOUBTS," SIR PIERS SAID.

"SECTION 8A(1) AND (2) SEEK TO PROVIDE THAT WHEN ANY LAND, BUILDING OR STRUCTURE IS OCCUPIED BY PLANT SUCH AS CABLES, DUCTS, PIPELINES OR RAILWAY LINES, BOTH THE LAND, BUILDING OR STRUCTURE AND THE PLANT SHALL BE VALUED TOGETHER FOR RATING PURPOSES," HE ADDED.

CONCERNING THE CURRENT VALUATION PRACTICE RELATING TO THE GENERATION AND DISTRIBUTION NETWORKS OF UTILITY COMPANIES, HE SAID AT PRESENT THE COMMISSIONER VALUED THESE NETWORKS, WHICH COMPRISED MANY SEPARATE COMPONENTS, AS SINGLE RATEABLE UNITS.

"THE LEGAL AUTHORITY FOR DOING SO IS NOT ABSOLUTELY CLEAR.

"CLAUSE 3 OF THE BILL SEEKS TO AMEND SECTION 10 OF THE ORDINANCE TO CLARIFY THE AUTHORITY OF THE COMMISSIONER TO VALUE SEPARATE RATEABLE UNITS AS ONE PROVIDED THEY ARE USED IN CONNECTION WITH EACH OTHER AND AFFECT THE VALUE OF EACH OTHER," HE SAID.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID THE AMENDMENTS PROPOSED IN THE BILL WERE TECHNICAL IN NATURE.

"HOWEVER, THEY ARE NECESSARY NOT ONLY TO CLARIFY THE INTENTION OF THE RATING ORDINANCE, BUT ALSO TO PROTECT RATES REVENUE WHICH MIGHT BE AT RISK IF THE EXISTING LAW IS NOT AMENDED," HE SAID.

SIR PIERS SAID THE EFFECT ON THE PUBLIC SHOULD BE NEGLIGIBLE.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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BILL TO EXTEND TENURE OF HEUNG YEE KUK COUNCILLORS  
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THE HEUNG YEE KUK (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991 WILL AMEND THE TENURE OF THE KUK COUNCILLORS FROM THREE TO FOUR YEARS, THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, THE HON PETER TSAO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, MR TSAO SAID ITS PURPOSE WAS TO CHANGE THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE HEUNG YEE KUK IN ORDER TO FIT INTO THE NEW ELECTORAL CYCLE OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL FOR THE 1991-95 SESSION.

"SECTION 5(2) OF THE HEUNG YEE KUK ORDINANCE DEFINES THE TERM OF THE OFFICE OF HEUNG YEE KUK COUNCILLORS AS THREE YEARS COMMENCING FROM THE FIRST DAY OF JUNE.

"GIVEN THE CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN 1991 AND THE DESIGNATION OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE FULL COUNCIL OF THE KUK AS THE ELECTORATE OF THE RURAL FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY, THE HEUNG YEE KUK (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991 WOULD AMEND THE TENURE OF THE KUK COUNCILLORS FROM THREE TO FOUR YEARS," HE SAID.

DEBATE ON THE MOTION WAS ADJOURNED.

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BILL SEEKS TO RENAME JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE

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THE JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991 SEEKS TO RENAME "JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE" TO "HONG KONG SPORTS INSTITUTE" IN ORDER TO REFLECT MORE ACCURATELY THE ROLE OF THE INSTITUTE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS IN THE TERRITORY, THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, THE HON PETER TSAO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, MR TSAO SAID IF THE NECESSARY LEGISLATION COULD BE ENACTED, IT WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION TO MAKE THE CHANGES ON APRIL 1 THIS YEAR.

"THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS WOULD NOT AFFECT THE DAY-TO-DAY ADMINISTRATION OF THE INSTITUTE WHICH WOULD CONTINUE TO BE RUN AS AN INDEPENDENT STATUTORY BODY," HE SAID, ADDING THAT THERE WOULD ALSO NOT BE ANY FINANCIAL COMMITMENT FOR GOVERNMENT.

"THE AMENDMENT BILL PROVIDES MAINLY FOR THE CHANGE OF THE NAME 'JUBILLEE SPORTS CENTRE' TO 'HONG KONG SPORTS INSTITUTE'; RE-DEFINING MORE CLEARLY THE OBJECTIVES AND UPDATING THE FUNCTIONS AND POWERS OF THE BOARDS; PROVIDING FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A VICE-CHAIRMAN; AND CHANGING ITS FINANCIAL YEAR TO APRIL 1 TO MARCH 31 TO COINCIDE WITH GOVERNMENT PRACTICE."

ON THE JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE, THE SECRETARY NOTED THAT IT WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1977 UNDER THE JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE ORDINANCE (CHAPTER 309), WHICH PROVIDED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE BOARD TO MANAGE AND CONTROL THE CENTRE.

"ON APRIL 25, 1989, THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ADVISED THAT THE HONG KONG SPORTS DEVELOPMENT BOARD SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED TO IMPLEMENT A RESTRUCTURED SPORTS AND RECREATION POLICY AND DEVOTE MORE ATTENTION AND RESOURCES TO COMPETITIVE SPORT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF FIRST-CLASS INTERNATIONAL SPORTSMEN IN HONG KONG.

"IT WAS ENVISAGED THAT, IN SUPPORT OF SUCH OBJECTIVES, THE JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE SHOULD BE DEVELOPED INTO A HONG KONG SPORTS INSTITUTE," MR TSAO SAID.

MR TSAO NOTED THAT OVER THE YEARS, AND IN RECOGNITION OF THE NEED FOR A MORE COMPREHENSIVE PACKAGE IN SPORTS TRAINING AND SUPPORT SERVICES, THE JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE HAD BEEN GRADUALLY ASSUMING AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE CO-ORDINATION OF ATHLETE TRAINING PROGRAMMES AND THE PROVISION OF A RANGE OF SERVICES IN SPORTS SCIENCE, SPORTS MEDICINE, COACH EDUCATION, TRAINING OF TECHNICAL OFFICIALS AND ADMINISTRATORS, AND APPLIED RESEARCH RELATED TO PERFORMANCE ENHANCEMENT.

"THESE TRAINING PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF A SOUND INFRASTRUCTURE GEARED TO UPGRADING HONG KONG'S PERFORMANCE IN COMPETITIVE SPORTS. WITH THESE DEVELOPMENTS, THE NAME 'SPORTS CENTRE' IS NO LONGER APPROPRIATE," HE SAID.

"ON THE OTHER HAND, 'SPORTS INSTITUTE' WOULD MORE APPROPRIATELY REFLECT THE JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE'S ROLE IN PROVIDING A RANGE OF COMPREHENSIVE SPORTS SERVICES AIMED TO ASSIST HIGH PERFORMANCE ATHLETES, COACHES AND TECHNICAL OFFICIALS IN THEIR PURSUIT FOR EXCELLENCE," HE ADDED.

DEBATE ON THE MOTION WAS ADJOURNED.

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BILL TO FURTHER CURB SMUGGLING OF GOODS INTRODUCED  
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A BILL - THE IMPORT AND EXPORT (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991 - WHICH AIMED AT PROVIDING FURTHER CONTROLS ON THE SMUGGLING OF GOODS, WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE MEASURES PROPOSED IN THE BILL WERE DESIGNED TO MAKE EASIER THE PROSECUTION OF THOSE INVOLVED IN SUCH SMUGGLING - BOTH AT SEA AND ON LAND.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID THE SMUGGLING OF GOODS INTO CHINA, PARTICULARLY BY SPEEDBOAT, HAD BECOME A SERIOUS PROBLEM.

"AS I SAID IN THIS COUNCIL THREE WEEKS AGO, THE MEASURES WHICH WE HAVE SO FAR TAKEN TO CURB SMUGGLING BY HIGH-POWERED SPEEDBOAT HAVE HAD ONLY LIMITED SUCCESS."

THE SECRETARY SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD SUCCEEDED IN STOPPING THE SMUGGLING OF CIGARETTES, BUT THE SMUGGLING OF CARS AND ELECTRICAL GOODS REMAINED A MAJOR PROBLEM.

"RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED ON THE OPERATION AND LICENSING OF SPEEDBOATS HAVE LARGELY ELIMINATED THE BASING IN HONG KONG OF HIGH-POWERED SPEEDBOATS USED FOR SMUGGLING, BUT MANY SUCH BOATS ARE STILL BEING CONSTRUCTED, MAINTAINED AND REPAIRED IN HONG KONG," MR ASPREY SAID.

/HE SAID .....

HE SAID THE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES FACED THREE PARTICULAR DIFFICULTIES IN TAKING PROSECUTION ACTION AGAINST THOSE INVOLVED IN SMUGGLING UNDER THE LAW AS IT STOOD:

- \* WHILE IT WAS AN OFFENCE TO EXPORT CERTAIN COMMONLY SMUGGLED ELECTRICAL GOODS SUCH AS TELEVISION AND VIDEO RECORDERS IN VESSELS UNDER 250 TONS, IT WAS IN MANY CASES NOT POSSIBLE TO PROVE THE INTENTION TO EXPORT. THE CLAIM WAS OFTEN MADE THAT THE GOODS WERE DESTINED FOR AN OUTLYING ISLAND SUCH AS TAP MUN, ALTHOUGH THE VOLUME OF GOODS FOR WHICH THE DECLARED DESTINATION WAS THE OUTLYING ISLANDS WAS MUCH GREATER THAN DEMAND COULD POSSIBLY JUSTIFY.
- \* THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVED THAT ONE EFFECTIVE MEANS OF DISRUPTING AND PREVENTING SMUGGLING WAS INTELLIGENCE-BASED OPERATIONS TO ARREST ON LAND THOSE WHO WERE ASSISTING SMUGGLING ACTIVITIES. BUT IT WAS AT PRESENT OFTEN NOT POSSIBLE TO CHARGE SUCH PERSONS WITH ANY OFFENCE.
- \* UNDER EXISTING LEGISLATION, THE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES WERE NOT ABLE TO TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT THE CONSTRUCTION, MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF THE TYPE OF HIGH-POWERED SPEEDBOAT COMMONLY USED FOR SMUGGLING, EVEN THOUGH SUCH VESSELS WERE NOT LICENSEABLE IN HONG KONG.

"IT IS THESE SHORTCOMINGS IN THE LAW WHICH THE PRESENT BILL SEEKS TO REMEDY," HE SAID.

AS SMUGGLERS WOULD OFTEN PRODUCE MANIFESTS INDICATING THAT THE GOODS WERE DESTINED FOR ONE OF THE OUTLYING ISLANDS, MR ASPREY SAID THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSED CONTROLS ON THE CARRIAGE OF CERTAIN SPECIFIED GOODS IN HONG KONG WATERS.

"CLAUSE 10 WILL ENABLE THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL TO MAKE REGULATIONS CONCERNING THE CARRIAGE OF GOODS BY VESSEL.

"THE REGULATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN APPROVED IN PRINCIPLE BY THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL WILL MAKE IT AN OFFENCE TO CARRY ON VESSELS WITHIN THE WATERS OF HONG KONG WITHOUT LAWFUL EXCUSE TELEVISION SETS, VIDEO CASSETTE RECORDS AND PLAYERS, AIR CONDITIONERS, REFRIGERATORS, VEHICLES AND VEHICLE PARTS," HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF TRADE WOULD BE EMPOWERED TO AMEND THE LIST OF RESTRICTED GOODS.

"LAWFUL EXCUSE WILL BE DEFINED SO THAT LEGITIMATE TRADE AND THE CARRIAGE OF PERSONAL BELONGINGS, WILL BE VIRTUALLY UNAFFECTED.

"THE CARRIAGE OF THE SPECIFIED GOODS ON SMALL VESSELS UNDER 250 TONS, ON LAUNCHES OR FERRIES, EXCEPT AS PERSONAL BELONGINGS, WILL NOT BE PERMITTED UNLESS WITH A CARRIAGE PERMIT ISSUED BY THE COMMISSIONER OF CUSTOMS AND EXCISE WHO WILL NOT ISSUE SUCH A LICENCE UNLESS HE IS SATISFIED THAT THE COURIER IS INVOLVED IN LEGITIMATE TRADE.

"THE MAXIMUM PENALTY OF A FINE OF \$500,000 AND IMPRISONMENT FOR TWO YEARS IS PROPOSED FOR A CONTRAVENTION OF THESE CONTROLS," THE SECRETARY SAID.

AS REGARDS TO THE PROBLEM OF TAKING ACTION AGAINST THOSE WHO ASSISTED SMUGGLING ACTIVITIES ON LAND, MR ASPREY SAID THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSED IN CLAUSES 7 AND 11 TO CREATE NEW OFFENCES OF KNOWINGLY ASSISTING IN THE EXPORT OR CARRIAGE OF UNMANIFESTED CARGO AND OF RESTRICTED ARTICLES OR PROHIBITED ARTICLES.

"THERE WILL BE A PRESUMPTION OF KNOWLEDGE WHEN THERE ARE SUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE ACQUISITION, HANDLING OR DEALING WITH SUCH ARTICLES OR CARGO."

HE POINTED OUT THAT A DEFENCE WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO A PERSON AGAINST WHOM SUCH A CHARGE IS MADE IF HE COULD GIVE A REASONABLE EXPLANATION FOR THE CIRCUMSTANCES.

"A MAXIMUM PENALTY OF A FINE OF \$500,000 OR IMPRISONMENT FOR TWO YEARS IS ALSO PROPOSED FOR THESE NEW OFFENCES," HE ADDED.

AS REGARDS THE CONSTRUCTION, MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF SPEEDBOATS USED FOR SMUGGLING, THERE WAS AN EXISTING OFFENCE OF ALTERING THE FITTINGS, FABRIC OR STRUCTURE OF ANY VESSEL FOR THE PURPOSE OF SMUGGLING ANY ARTICLE INTO OR OUT OF HONG KONG, THE SECRETARY NOTED.

"WE PROPOSE, IN CLAUSE 4 OF THE BILL, TO EXTEND THIS OFFENCE TO COVER THE USE OF A VESSEL WITH SUCH ALTERATIONS, AND TO INCREASE THE PENALTY TO IMPRISONMENT FOR TWO YEARS AND A FINE OF \$500,000.

"CLAUSE 5 OF THE BILL WILL MAKE IT AN OFFENCE WITH THE SAME MAXIMUM PENALTY TO CONSTRUCT, MAINTAIN, REPAIR OR BE ON BOARD A VESSEL OF LESS THAN 250 TONS CONSTRUCTED OR USED FOR SMUGGLING PURPOSES," HE SAID.

MR ASPREY SAID UNDER THIS NEW SECTION A VESSEL CONSTRUCTED OR USED FOR SMUGGLING ACTIVITIES IS DEFINED AS ONE WHICH IS REASONABLY SUSPECTED TO BE SO USED, OR INTENDED TO BE SO USED, AND HAS SOME FEATURES CHARACTERISTIC OF THE HIGH-POWERED SPEEDBOATS USED FOR SMUGGLING.

THESE FEATURES INCLUDED THE PRESENCE OF SECRET HIDING PLACES, THE FACILITY TO MOUNT MORE THAN TWO OUTBOARD ENGINES WITH A COMBINED POWER IN EXCESS OF 448 KILOWATTS (600 HP), FUEL TANKS SUITABLE FOR USE WITH OUTBOARD ENGINES AND WITH A CAPACITY IN EXCESS OF 817 LITRES AND METAL PLATING SUITABLE FOR RAMMING OR ACTING AS ARMOURED PROTECTION.

"BOATS WITH THESE FEATURES ARE QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THE SORT OF SPEEDBOATS USED BY THE LEGITIMATE BOATING FRATERNITY.

"THE PURPOSE OF THIS NEW PROVISION IS TO PREVENT THE BOATYARDS IN HONG KONG FROM BUILDING AND MAINTAINING SPEEDBOATS DESIGNED FOR SMUGGLING," HE SAID.

MR ASPREY ALSO POINTED OUT THAT CLAUSE 8 OF THE BILL PROVIDED THAT VESSELS SEIZED AS A RESULT OF INVOLVEMENT IN SMUGGLING ACTIVITIES UNDER THE NEW OFFENCES WERE LIABLE TO FOREFEITURE.

"I BELIEVE THE MEASURES I HAVE OUTLINED TODAY WILL GREATLY ASSIST THE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN THEIR FIGHT AGAINST SMUGGLING," HE ADDED.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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FEE REVISIONS FOR REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS

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A MOTION PROPOSING INCREASES IN THE FEES SPECIFIED IN THE BIRTHS AND DEATHS REGISTRATION ORDINANCE FOR THE REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS AND RELATED MATTERS WAS PASSED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE MOTION, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID IT WAS GOVERNMENT POLICY TO PROVIDE SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC ON A COST-RECOVERY BASIS UNLESS THERE WERE VERY GOOD SOCIAL REASONS FOR DOING OTHERWISE.

HE SAID A RECENT REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES COLLECTED BY THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT SHOWED THAT THERE WAS AN OVERALL UNDER-RECOVERY OF ABOUT 25 PER CENT OF THE COST OF SERVICES PROVIDED.

"IN THREE AREAS IN PARTICULAR, THE DEPARTMENT IS WELL SHORT OF RECOVERING ITS COSTS: THESE ARE THE REGISTRATION OF PERSONS, REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES, AND ISSUE OF TRAVEL DOCUMENTS.

"IN RESPECT OF THE REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES, ONLY 20 PER CENT OF COSTS ARE BEING RECOVERED," HE SAID.

MR ASPREY SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS THEREFORE TAKING ACTION TO REVISE THE FEES WHICH HE HAD MENTIONED IN ALL CASES WHERE COSTS WERE NOT BEING RECOVERED.

"THE PROPOSED INCREASES RANGE FROM 20 PER CENT TO 100 PER CENT, AND WILL INCREASE THE OVERALL PERCENTAGE OF COSTS RECOVERED TO 85 PER CENT.

"WE AIM PROGRESSIVELY TO INCREASE THE FEES OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS TO RECOVER COSTS IN FULL," HE SAID.

THE FEES TO BE REVISED UNDER THE MOTION MOVED UNDER THE BIRTHS AND DEATHS REGISTRATION ORDINANCE INCLUDED THOSE FOR THE REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS, AND RELATED MATTERS SUCH AS THE ISSUE OF CERTIFIED COPIES OF ENTRIES IN REGISTERS, SEARCH OF RECORDS, CORRECTION OF ERRORS AND ALTERATION OF ENTRIES IN REGISTERS.

"ALL THE FEES, EXCEPT THAT FOR A SHORTENED FORM OF BIRTH CERTIFICATE, WERE LAST REVISED IN 1986.

"IT IS PROPOSED THAT THEY BE INCREASED BY BETWEEN 60 TO 70 PER CENT EXCEPT IN THE CASE OF THE FEE FOR THE SHORTENED FORM OF BIRTH CERTIFICATE, LAST REVISED IN 1984, WHICH IT IS PROPOSED TO INCREASE FROM \$5 TO \$10," MR ASPREY SAID.

"IF APPROVED, THE NEW FEES WILL BE INTRODUCED ON MARCH 1, 1991 WHEN THEY ARE GAZETTED," HE ADDED.

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MOTION PASSED TO INCREASE FEES SPECIFIED IN FOREIGN MARRIAGE ORDINANCE  
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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PASSED A MOTION TO INCREASE THE FEES SPECIFIED IN THE FOREIGN MARRIAGE ORDINANCE.

MOVING THE MOTION TO EFFECT THE CHANGE, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID THE FOREIGN MARRIAGE ORDINANCE PROVIDED A MEANS WHEREBY COMMONWEALTH CITIZENS COULD GIVE NOTICE OF MARRIAGE IN HONG KONG, THOUGH THE MARRIAGE TOOK PLACE AT A BRITISH EMBASSY ABROAD.

"FEES ARE PAYABLE FOR THE ISSUE OF A CERTIFICATE BY THE REGISTRAR OF MARRIAGES, AND THE GRANT OF A GOVERNOR'S LICENCE OF FOREIGN MARRIAGE.

"IT IS PROPOSED TO INCREASE THE FEES FROM \$5 TO \$10 AND FROM \$70 TO \$120," HE SAID.

THE FEES WERE LAST REVISED IN 1984 AND 1986 RESPECTIVELY, MR ASPREY ADDED.

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MOTION PASSED TO INCREASE FEES UNDER LEGITIMACY ORDINANCE  
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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PASSED A MOTION TO INCREASE THE FEES SPECIFIED IN THE SCHEDULE TO THE LEGITIMACY ORDINANCE.

MOVING THE MOTION, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID THE REVISION OF FEES WOULD BRING THEM INTO LINE WITH THE FEES FOR SIMILAR SERVICES UNDER THE BIRTHS AND DEATHS REGISTRATION ORDINANCE.

MR ASPREY POINTED OUT THAT THE LEGITIMACY ORDINANCE PROVIDED FOR RE-REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS OF LEGITIMATED PERSONS.

"FEES COLLECTED RELATE TO RE-REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS AND ISSUE OF CERTIFIED COPIES OF ENTRIES OF THE BIRTH OF LEGITIMATED PERSONS.

"IT IS PROPOSED TO REVISE THE FEES FROM \$35 TO \$65 FOR RE-REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS AND FROM \$12 TO \$20 FOR A CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF THE BIRTH," THE SECRETARY SAID.

THESE FEES WERE LAST REVISED IN 1986, MR ASPREY ADDED.

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PUBLIC MUST HELP POLICE IN EXECUTION OF DUTY

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IT IS INCUMBENT ON A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC TO FOLLOW A POLICE OFFICER'S INSTRUCTIONS WHEN HE IS CARRYING OUT HIS OFFICIAL DUTIES, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHEUNG YAN-LUNG, THE SECRETARY SAID IT WAS PROVIDED THAT THE POLICE OFFICER WAS ACTING IN GOOD FAITH AND THAT THE INSTRUCTIONS WERE REASONABLE.

HE SAID UNDER SECTION 63 OF THE POLICE FORCE ORDINANCE, A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC MUST ASSIST A POLICE OFFICER IN THE EXECUTION OF HIS DUTY WHEN CALLED UPON TO DO SO.

"A PERSON IS LIABLE TO PROSECUTION IF HE REFUSES, WITHOUT GOOD REASON, TO ASSIST A POLICE OFFICER WHEN CALLED UPON TO DO SO.

"IN PRACTICE, PROSECUTIONS FOR THIS OFFENCE HAVE BEEN VERY RARE," HE ADDED.

MR ASPREY SAID IF THE GOVERNMENT WAS LIABLE FOR PERSONAL LOSS OR DAMAGE RESULTING FROM COMPLIANCE WITH A POLICE OFFICER'S INSTRUCTIONS, COMPENSATION WOULD BE PAID.

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GOVERNMENT'S TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY CLARIFIED

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HONG KONG GOVERNMENT'S TELECOMMUNICATIONS POLICY IS TO FOSTER AN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH A WIDE RANGE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES CAN THRIVE, TO THE BENEFIT OF BOTH RESIDENTIAL AND BUSINESS CONSUMERS, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, THE HON ANSON CHAN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

"THE PRESENT MIX OF FRANCHISED AND NON-FRANCHISED SERVICES HAS EVOLVED OVER TIME," SAID MRS CHAN IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON SELINA CHOW.

/MRS CHAN .....

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MRS CHAN EXPLAINED THAT IN DECIDING IN THE PAST TO GRANT EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS TO PARTICULAR PRIVATE COMPANIES TO PROVIDE CERTAIN SERVICES, THE GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVE HAD BEEN TO ENSURE THAT BASIC TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES, SUCH AS LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL VOICE TELEPHONY, WERE AVAILABLE TO ALL WHO WANTED THEM, AND AT REASONABLE COST.

"AT THE SAME TIME, THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ALERT TO THE BENEFITS OF ENCOURAGING THE COMPETITIVE PROVISION OF SERVICES SUCH AS PUBLIC RADIO PAGING, MOBILE RADIOTELEPHONE AND VARIOUS VALUE-ADDED SERVICES SO THAT THE CONSUMER CAN BENEFIT FROM THE LATEST TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS AND THE WIDE RANGE OF PRODUCTS NOW ON THE MARKET," SHE SAID.

MRS CHAN POINTED OUT THAT THE SUCCESS OF GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES COULD BE MEASURED BY THE FACT THAT THE TERRITORY NOW HAD A TELEPHONE PENETRATION RATE OF ABOUT SIX PER 10 PEOPLE, A RATE WHICH WAS COMPARABLE TO THE MAJOR DEVELOPED COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD.

"207 COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES ARE NOW ACCESSIBLE THROUGH INTERNATIONAL DIRECT DIALING (IDD).

"WITH ONE RADIO PAGING SUBSCRIBER PER EIGHT PERSONS, WE HAVE THE HIGHEST PER CAPITA SUBSCRIPTION RATE FOR RADIO PAGING SERVICES IN THE WORLD.

"WE ALSO HAVE THE HIGHEST PROPORTION OF HAND HELD PORTABLE RADIOTELEPHONES IN ANY SIZEABLE CELLULAR RADIOTELEPHONE MARKET IN THE WORLD," SHE SAID.

HOWEVER, MRS CHAN SAID THAT DESPITE THESE IMPRESSIVE INDICATORS, IT WAS VITAL THAT GOVERNMENT POLICIES SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE FORWARD LOOKING.

"RAPID TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES MAKE THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS FIELD EXCEPTIONALLY DYNAMIC.

"IF HONG KONG IS TO MAINTAIN ITS ROLE AS AN IMPORTANT TELECOMMUNICATIONS HUB, WE MUST ENSURE THAT CONSUMERS CONTINUE TO BENEFIT FROM THE AVAILABILITY OF THE WIDEST POSSIBLE RANGE OF SERVICES AND AT THE LOWEST POSSIBLE COST," SHE SAID.

MRS CHAN SAID THAT ACCORDINGLY, THE GOVERNMENT HAD COMMISSIONED A TEAM OF OVERSEAS CONSULTANTS TO UPDATE THE GOVERNMENT ON THE LATEST INTERNATIONAL TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND REGULATION OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES AND TO SUGGEST TO THE GOVERNMENT HOW THESE TRENDS MIGHT BE RELEVANT TO THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF SERVICES IN HONG KONG.

"I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE CONSULTANTS' ADVICE WILL MAKE A VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S THINKING IN THIS AREA," SHE SAID.

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NO ONE NEEDS TO BEG ON STREETS UNDER EXISTING WELFARE SYSTEM

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OUR SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM FORMED A SAFETY NET FOR THOSE MEMBERS OF OUR SOCIETY WHO COULD NOT PROVIDE FOR THEMSELVES THE BASIC NECESSITIES OF DAILY LIFE, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON MRS ELIZABETH WONG, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HENRIETTA IP, MRS WONG SAID THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE SCHEME PROVIDED CASH ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES TO BRING THEIR INCOME AND RESOURCES TO A LEVEL SUFFICIENT TO MEET THE COST OF ESSENTIAL ITEMS.

"OTHER ALLOWANCES ARE OFFERED TO MEET SPECIAL NEEDS," SHE ADDED.

MRS WONG SAID A SEPARATE RENT ALLOWANCE WAS PAYABLE TO MEET THE COST OF ACCOMMODATION.

SHE SAID ALL THESE PAYMENTS ARE REVISED REGULARLY TO ENSURE THAT THEIR REAL PURCHASING POWER IS NOT ERODED BY INFLATION.

"UNDER THE EXISTING WELFARE SYSTEM, NO ONE SHOULD NEED TO BEG ON THE STREETS FOR A LIVING," SHE ASSURED.

MRS WONG SAID THESE BENEFITS AND THE FULL ARRAY OF WELFARE SERVICES WERE PROVIDED BY SOCIAL SECURITY FIELD UNITS AND FAMILY SERVICE CENTRES OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND WERE WIDELY PUBLICIZED.

SHE ADDED THAT NO PERSON, WHATEVER THE PROBLEM CONFRONTING HIM, SHOULD NEED TO FEEL THAT THE ONLY SOLUTION WAS TO BEG ON THE STREETS.

SHE SAID SECTIONS 26A AND 26B OF THE SUMMARY OFFENCES ORDINANCE MADE IT UNLAWFUL FOR A PERSON TO BEG IN ANY PUBLIC PLACE OR TO ASK FOR MONEY IN A THREATENING MANNER.

OUTREACHING SOCIAL WORKERS WILL ALSO APPROACH BEGGARS WHEN SPOTTED OR REPORTED BY CONCERNED CITIZENS AND WILL INTRODUCE THEM TO WELFARE SERVICES AVAILABLE, THE SECRETARY SAID.

"ON THE RARE OCCASIONS THAT CHILDREN ARE FOUND BEGGING OR ACCOMPANYING PERSONS BEGGING, SWIFT ACTION TO ENSURE AND SECURE THEIR WELL-BEING WILL BE TAKEN," MRS WONG SAID.

51 II CHILDREN DETAINED AT CENTRE PENDING REMOVAL

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ON FEBRUARY 24 THIS YEAR, 51 ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT CHILDREN AGED 14 OR UNDER WERE DETAINED AT THE VICTORIA IMMIGRATION CENTRE PENDING THE MAKING OF REMOVAL ORDERS OR THEIR APPEALS AGAINST REMOVAL ORDERS, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MIRIAM LAU, MR ASPREY SAID ALL WERE IN THE CARE OF ADULT DETAINEES, IN MOST CASES THEIR MOTHERS.

"THE AVERAGE DETENTION PERIOD IS ABOUT 13 DAYS," HE ADDED.

MR ASPREY SAID ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT CHILDREN MIGHT BE RELEASED ON RECOGNISANCE, AND THIS WAS USUALLY DONE WHERE THE FATHER OR A CLOSE RELATIVE WAS WILLING TO LOOK AFTER THE CHILD, AND WHERE THE MOTHER HAD GIVEN HER CONSENT.

"ONLY WHERE THESE CONDITIONS CANNOT BE MET, WHERE THERE ARE STRONG REASONS TO BELIEVE THE CHILD WILL BE ASSISTED TO ABSCOND, OR WHERE AN ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT CHILD IS LIKELY TO BE REMOVED FROM HONG KONG WITHIN A FEW DAYS WILL A CHILD BE DETAINED," HE SAID.

HE NOTED THAT 46 ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT CHILDREN WERE AT PRESENT RELEASED ON RECOGNISANCE.

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TWO BILLS PASSED IN LEGCO

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DANGEROUS DRUGS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991 AND SOCIETIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991 WERE PASSED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THREE MOTIONS MOVED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY UNDER THE BIRTHS AND DEATHS REGISTRATION ORDINANCE, FOREIGN MARRIAGE ORDINANCE AND LEGITIMACY ORDINANCE WERE ALSO PASSED.

IN ADDITION, AN AMENDMENT MOTION MOVED BY THE HON LEUNG WAI-TUNG TO THE HON MARIA TAM'S MOTION ON BEDSPACE APARTMENTS WAS PASSED. THE MOTION READS: "THAT, RECOGNISING THE APPALLING LIVING CONDITIONS IN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS AS A PRESSING SOCIAL PROBLEM, THIS COUNCIL URGES THE GOVERNMENT TO EXPEDITE THEIR PLANS FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEM AND TO REASSURE THIS COUNCIL THAT NONE OF THE TENANTS WILL BE RENDERED HOMELESS IN THE COURSE OF THEIR ACTION."

FIVE BILLS WERE INTRODUCED FOR FIRST AND SECOND READINGS. THEY WERE THE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) BILL 1991, RATING (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) BILL 1991, HEUNG YEE KUK (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991, JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991 AND IMPORT AND EXPORT (AMENDMENT) BILL 1991.

DEBATES ON THEM WERE ADJOURNED.

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EXPERT TALKS ON BOUNDARIES OF ADMINISTRATION OF HK AND GUANGDONG  
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A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE BOUNDARIES OF ADMINISTRATION BETWEEN HONG KONG AND GUANGDONG WILL TAKE PLACE IN HONG KONG ON FEBRUARY 28 AND MARCH 1 BETWEEN THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT AND THE GUANGDONG PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES.

MR S.E. BRADLEY, DEPUTY POLITICAL ADVISER, WILL LEAD THE HONG KONG TEAM.

THE GUANGDONG TEAM WILL BE LED BY MR ZHANG QINGPING, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF GUANGDONG FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICE.

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TAX EXEMPTION FOR TRAVEL INDUSTRY COUNCIL RESERVE FUND  
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THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL HAS ORDERED THAT THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY COUNCIL RESERVE FUND SHOULD BE EXEMPTED FROM PAYMENT OF ALL TAXES, A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

AS A NON-STATUTORY COMPENSATION FUND ESTABLISHED TO REPLACE THE TRAVEL AGENT'S RESERVE FUND, THE FUND'S MAIN OBJECTS ARE TO COLLECT AND MANAGE LEVIES FROM MEMBERS OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY COUNCIL OF HONG KONG, AND TO MAKE EX-GRATIA PAYMENTS OUT OF THOSE LEVIES TO TRAVELLERS IF A MEMBER DEFAULTS.

THE EXEMPTION WAS GRANTED BY THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL UNDER SECTION 47 OF THE INLAND REVENUE ORDINANCE, THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

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ISLAND EAST TRAFFIC STUDY COMMISSIONED  
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THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT HAS COMMISSIONED A \$3.87 MILLION ISLAND EAST TRAFFIC STUDY AIMED AT INVESTIGATING ALL ASPECTS OF TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT PROBLEMS FROM VICTORIA PARK TO CHAI WAN AND PROPOSING SOLUTIONS TO THEM.

A CONTRACT FOR THE 18-MONTH STUDY WAS SIGNED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR TRANSPORT, MR PANG HAU-CHUNG, AND A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE CONSULTANTS, WILBUR SMITH ASSOCIATES.

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THE STUDY WILL PROPOSE A SERIES OF SOLUTIONS TO TRAFFIC PROBLEMS RELATING TO PEDESTRIAN, MOTOR VEHICLE AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN THE DISTRICT UP TO 1996.

THE DEPARTMENT INTENDS TO CONSULT DISTRICT BOARDS ON THESE PROPOSALS BEFORE FINALISING THEM IN THE TRANSPORT IMPROVEMENT PLAN.

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#### CONSULTANCY STUDIES ON PRIVATISATION OF LANDFILLS

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THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT (EPD) HAS COMMISSIONED THREE CONSULTANCY STUDIES TO LOOK INTO DETAILS CONCERNING THE PRIVATISATION OF THREE STRATEGIC LANDFILLS IN THE NEW TERRITORIES.

THESE LANDFILLS ARE THE NORTH EAST NEW TERRITORIES (NENT) LANDFILL, THE SOUTH EAST NEW TERRITORIES (SENT) LANDFILL, AND THE WEST NEW TERRITORIES (WENT) LANDFILL.

AN EPD SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THESE LANDFILLS WERE DESIGNED TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE MUNICIPAL WASTE DISPOSAL FACILITIES FOR THE NEXT 20 YEARS.

THE WHITE PAPER ON "POLLUTION IN HONG KONG - A TIME TO ACT" PUBLISHED IN 1989 STATED THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION THAT THE THREE STRATEGIC LANDFILLS SHOULD BE DESIGNED, CONSTRUCTED AND OPERATED BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

THIS POLICY OBJECTIVE WAS SUBSEQUENTLY ENDORSED BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL IN DECEMBER 1990.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID THE THREE CONSULTANTS WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DRAWING UP SUITABLE TENDER DOCUMENTS IN CONNECTION WITH THE INDIVIDUAL LANDFILLS.

"THEY WILL THEN TENDER, ASSESS AND THROUGH THE GOVERNMENT AWARD THE PRIVATISATION CONTRACTS.

"IN PARALLEL WITH THE THREE CONSULTANCY STUDIES, A CORE CONSULTANCY TO BE COMMISSIONED SHORTLY WILL STUDY THOSE ASPECTS OF PRIVATISATION COMMON TO ALL THREE LANDFILLS," HE SAID.

"THIS CORE CONSULTANCY WILL PRODUCE A SET OF STANDARD TENDER DOCUMENTS FOR THE PRIVATISED LANDFILL CONTRACTS AND WILL PREQUALIFY SUITABLY EXPERIENCED WASTE DISPOSAL COMPANIES CAPABLE OF DESIGNING, CONSTRUCTING, OPERATING AND PROVIDING AFTERCARE TO THE LANDFILLS," HE ADDED.

THE STUDIES FOR THE NENT, SENT AND WENT LANDFILLS, AT COSTS OF \$10.7 MILLION, \$16.1 MILLION AND \$12.5 MILLION, WILL TAKE 33 MONTHS, 22 MONTHS AND 16 MONTHS RESPECTIVELY TO COMPLETE.

THE AGREEMENTS FOR THE CONSULTANCY STUDIES WERE SIGNED BETWEEN EPD'S ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (WASTE AND WATER POLICY), MR MIKE STOKOE, AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE THREE FIRMS.

THEY WERE A DIRECTOR OF MOUCHEL ASIA LIMITED, MR S.A. KUBRYCHT (FOR THE NENT LANDFILL); A DIRECTOR OF SCOTT WILSON KIRKPATRICK & COMPANY LIMITED, MR W.A. MASLOWICZ (FOR THE SENT LANDFILL); AND A DIRECTOR OF OVE ARUP AND PARTNERS HONG KONG LIMITED, MR J.G. ROBERTSON (FOR THE WENT LANDFILL).

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CLEARANCE FOR TSUEN WAN DEVELOPMENT

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A TOTAL OF 277 TEMPORARY STRUCTURES IN HOI PA VILLAGE, TSUEN WAN, WERE CLEARED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) TO MAKE WAY FOR THE PROPOSED TSUEN WAN CENTRAL DEVELOPMENT.

THESE STRUCTURES, WHICH ARE MOSTLY DILAPIDATED, FALL WITHIN ONE OF THE PLANNING AREAS IN THE NEW TOWN.

THE AREA IS DESIGNATED FOR COMMERCIAL/RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH A NEW ROAD TO ITS EAST. A FOOTBRIDGE LINK IS ALSO PLANNED WITHIN THE SITE SO AS TO IMPROVE THE NORTH-SOUTH PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION.

ABOUT 300 FAMILIES MADE UP OF 1,090 PEOPLE, INCLUDING SOME INDIGENOUS VILLAGERS, WERE AFFECTED BY THE CLEARANCE.

HOWEVER, APART FROM ABOUT NINE TO 10 FAMILIES, THE MAJORITY OF THE RESIDENTS HAD ALREADY MOVED OUT PRIOR TO TODAY'S CLEARANCE.

ELIGIBLE FAMILIES WERE ALLOCATED EITHER PERMANENT HOUSING OR TEMPORARY HOUSING IN TSING YI, KWAI CHUNG AND TSUEN WAN DISTRICTS.

ON THE BUSINESS SIDE, THERE WERE 28 SHOP OPERATORS INVOLVED OF WHOM 24 WERE FOUND ELIGIBLE FOR EX-GRATIA ALLOWANCE AND HAD ALREADY COLLECTED THEIR PAYMENTS.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE TSUEN WAN DISTRICT LANDS OFFICE SAID TODAY'S CLEARANCE WAS MADE IN CONNECTION WITH THE FINAL PHASE OF A RESUMPTION GAZETTED IN JULY LAST YEAR WITH THE AIM TO PROVIDE LAND FOR THE BALANCED DEVELOPMENT OF TSUEN WAN NEW TOWN.

HE POINTED OUT THAT A MAJOR PORTION OF THE VILLAGE OF HOI PA HAD ALREADY BEEN REVERTED TO THE GOVERNMENT IN EARLY 1980 UNDER A BLOCK RESUMPTION APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

FOLLOWING THEIR REVERSION TO GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP, MANY OF THESE LOTS WERE SUBSEQUENTLY DEVELOPED FOR PUBLIC PURPOSES SUCH AS THE PROVISIONS OF ROADS, A PRIMARY SCHOOL, DISTRICT PARKS, OPEN SPACES, THE YAN CHAI HOSPITAL EXTENSION AND PUBLIC PARKING FACILITIES.

TODAY'S CLEARANCE WAS JOINTLY CARRIED OUT BY STAFF OF THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT AND THE TSUEN WAN DISTRICT LANDS OFFICE.

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1991

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50 VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS RETURN TO VIETNAM

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A GROUP OF 50 VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) RETURNED TO VIETNAM UNDER THE UNHCR'S VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION PROGRAMME.

COMPRISING 21 MEN, 12 WOMEN, 9 BOYS AND 8 GIRLS, THEY WERE THE 51ST BATCH TO GO BACK UNDER THE PROGRAMME.

THIS GROUP BROUGHT TO 6,863 THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS WHO HAVE RETURNED VOLUNTARILY.

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NATURE EDUCATION CENTRE READY BY SUMMER

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HONG KONG'S FIRST NATURE EDUCATION CENTRE -- THE LIONS NATURE EDUCATION CENTRE -- WILL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC LATER THIS SUMMER.

THIS WAS ANNOUNCED BY THE DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES, DR LAWRENCE LEE, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN HE WAS OFFICIATING AT THE FOUNDATION LAYING CEREMONY OF THE CENTRE IN TSIU HANG, SAI KUNG.

ALSO OFFICIATING AT THE CEREMONY WAS THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE LIONS CLUB, MR WILLIAM BIGGS, WHO WAS ON A TWO-DAY VISIT TO HONG KONG.

DR LEE PAID TRIBUTE TO THE LIONS CLUB FOR THEIR GENEROUS SPONSORSHIP, INCLUDING THE US\$200,000 CONTRIBUTION FROM THEIR INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION, IN BUILDING THIS MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR EDUCATION CENTRE.

HE ALSO COMMENDED THE LIONS' LONG TERM COMMITMENT TO HONG KONG'S FUTURE AS BORNE OUT BY THIS MEANINGFUL PROJECT.

"UPON COMPLETION, THE CENTRE WILL PROVIDE EDUCATIONAL DISPLAYS AND SPECIMENS TO HELP STUDENTS, YOUTHS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE OUR INTERESTING WILDLIFE, VEGETATION AND OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES.

"IT WILL ALSO STIMULATE THEM TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT AND AROUSE THEIR CONCERN FOR COUNTRYSIDE CONSERVATION," DR LEE SAID.

DR LEE ADDED THAT WHEN THE CENTRE WAS OPEN THIS SUMMER, VISITORS WOULD BE ABLE TO SEE THE DISPLAYS ON HONG KONG'S AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND COUNTRYSIDE RESOURCES, AND TOUR THE SPECIMEN ORCHARDS TO SEE FOR THEMSELVES THE INTERESTING TREE COLLECTIONS AND FIELD CROPS.

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ROOFTOP STRUCTURE AT MONG KOK BUILDING TO BE CLOSED  
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THE BUILDING AUTHORITY IS SEEKING TO CLOSE THE ROOFTOP STRUCTURE AT 24 KAM FONG STREET, MONG KOK.

IN A STATEMENT ISSUED TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE PRINCIPAL GOVERNMENT BUILDING SURVEYOR SAID THE STRUCTURE IS MUTUALLY DEPENDENT WITH A SIMILAR ROOFTOP STRUCTURE AT NO. 26 OF THE SAME STREET, THE BUILDING OF WHICH HAD BEEN CLOSED PRIOR TO DEMOLITION.

THE DEMOLITION OF THE BUILDING AT NO. 26 WILL RENDER THE ROOFTOP STRUCTURE AT NO. 24 DANGEROUS DUE TO LACK OF SUPPORT, THEREFORE IT SHOULD ALSO BE CLOSED AND DEMOLISHED AS BEING LIABLE TO BECOME DANGEROUS.

A NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPLY FOR A CLOSURE ORDER IN THE HONG KONG DISTRICT COURT ON MARCH 27 THIS YEAR WAS POSTED ON THE AFFECTED STRUCTURE TODAY.

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GOVT LAND TO LET BY TENDER  
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THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT IS INVITING TENDERS FOR THE SHORT-TERM TENANCY OF A GOVERNMENT LOT IN YAU TONG, KOWLOON.

THE SITE, MEASURING ABOUT 5,800 SQUARE METRES, IS LOCATED AT SZE SHAN STREET AND CHA KWO LING ROAD. IT IS INTENDED FOR OPEN STORAGE OF NON-DANGEROUS GOODS.

THE TENANCY IS FOR SIX MONTHS AND IS RENEWABLE MONTHLY AFTERWARDS.

THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF TENDERS IS NOON ON MARCH 15.

FORM OF TENDER, TENDER NOTICE AND CONDITIONS MAY BE OBTAINED FROM AND TENDER PLAN INSPECTED AT THE KOWLOON EAST DISTRICT LANDS OFFICE, 10TH FLOOR, YAU MA TEI CARPARK BUILDING, 250 SHANGHAI STREET, KOWLOON AND AT THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT, 14TH FLOOR, MURRAY BUILDING, GARDEN ROAD, HONG KONG.

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 1991

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NEW BRANCH POST OFFICE AT WAH MING ESTATE

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THE WAH MING POST OFFICE AT WAH MING ESTATE, FANLING OPENED FOR BUSINESS AT NOON TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE NEW BRANCH POST OFFICE IS LOCATED AT SHOP NO. 119, GROUND FLOOR, OF THE ESTATE'S COMMERCIAL CENTRE AND PROVIDES THE NORMAL RANGE OF COUNTER SERVICES.

ITS BUSINESS HOURS ARE FROM 9.30 AM TO 1 PM AND 2 PM TO 5 PM, MONDAY TO FRIDAY, AND FROM 9.30 AM TO 1 PM ON SATURDAY.

THE TELEPHONE NUMBER IS 675 0884.

OFFICIATING AT THE OPENING CEREMONY THIS MORNING WERE THE POSTMASTER GENERAL, MR DOMINIC S.W. WONG; THE NORTH DISTRICT BOARD CHAIRMAN, MR PANG HANG-YIN; AND THE NORTH DISTRICT OFFICER, MR WILLIAM HUI.

THE OPENING OF THIS NEW OFFICE BRINGS TO 117 THE TOTAL NUMBER OF BRANCH POST OFFICES IN HONG KONG.

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NEW YEAR CARNIVAL AT KOWLOON PARK

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A CARNIVAL TO GREET THE YEAR OF THE RAM WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY (MARCH 2), FROM 2 PM TO 5 PM, AT THE PIAZZA OF KOWLOON PARK IN TSIM SHA TSUI.

THE REGIONAL SECRETARY FOR HONG KONG AND KOWLOON, MR DAVID LAN, WILL OFFICIATE AT THE OPENING CEREMONY.

THE CARNIVAL IS JOINTLY ORGANISED BY THE YAU MA TEI AND TSIM SHA TSUI CULTURE AND ARTS ASSOCIATION (YTCAA) AND THE YAU TSIM DISTRICT OFFICE WITH SPONSORSHIPS FROM THE DISTRICT BOARD AND THE URBAN COUNCIL.

IT AIMS TO PROMOTE CIVIC EDUCATION AND PROVIDE RESIDENTS WITH FREE ENTERTAINMENT DURING THE FESTIVE SEASON.

THERE WILL BE LANTERN RIDDLES, FORTUNE-TELLING, MAGIC SHOWS, STALL GAMES, AS WELL AS PERFORMANCES BY SINGERS AND THE YTCAA CHILDREN'S CHOIR AND DANCE TROUPE.

THE ORGANISERS WILL ALSO PUT UP A DISPLAY TO PROMOTE THE DISTRICT BOARD ELECTIONS.

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