



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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CONSTITUTIONAL PACKAGE IS NOT TO CONFRONT CHINA: CS

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NO PART OF THE GOVERNMENT'S STRATEGY IN FORMULATING THE CONSTITUTIONAL PACKAGE IS TO STIR UP CONFRONTATION WITH CHINA, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, SAID.

INDEED, THE PRINCIPLES AND COURSE THE GOVERNMENT HAS ADOPTED QUITE DELIBERATELY AIMS TO AVOID SUCH CONFRONTATION.

THIS WAS STATED BY SIR DAVID WHEN WINDING UP THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE MOTION OF THANKS FOR THE GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADDRESS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"HAD WE BEEN BENT ON SUCH A CONFRONTATIONAL COURSE WE MIGHT HAVE TAKEN THE ADVICE OF SOME PEOPLE HERE AND ELSEWHERE AND FORGED AHEAD WITH PROPOSALS WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT A GREATER DEGREE OF DEMOCRACY IN HONG KONG ON THE ONE HAND BUT WERE CONTRARY TO THE BASIC LAW ON THE OTHER," HE SAID.

"WE DID NOT PURSUE SUCH A COURSE," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID STRESSED THAT THE PROPOSALS WERE DESIGNED TO ENSURE THAT THEY FELL CLEARLY WITHIN THE TERMS OF THE BASIC LAW AND COULD PROVIDE CONTINUITY THROUGH 1997.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY ALSO SAID THESE CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS WERE NOT AS HAD BEEN DESCRIBED BY SOME PEOPLE A BLUEPRINT FOR "A GLORIOUS BRITISH WITHDRAWAL FROM HONG KONG".

THEY WERE NOT DESIGNED TO "FURTHER THE POLITICAL CAREER OF THE GOVERNOR".

THEY HAD ALSO NOT BEEN "DRAWN UP BY THE BRITISH CABINET TO ENSURE CONTINUING BRITISH INFLUENCE AFTER 1997".

"SUCH SUGGESTIONS ARE NOT ONLY ABSURD BUT THEY SEEK IN RATHER A CHEAP POLITICAL WAY TO DENIGRATE THE MOTIVES OF AN HONEST AND STRAIGHTFORWARD GOVERNOR WHOSE SOLE INTEREST, AS HE HAS MADE CLEAR, IS TO DO HIS VERY BEST FOR THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG," SIR DAVID SAID.

ON THE FORMULATION OF THESE CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS, SIR DAVID SAID THEY REFLECTED THE RESULTS OF MANY HOURS OF CONSULTATION WHICH THE GOVERNOR HELD WITH THE PEOPLE OF THE TERRITORY.

"THEY TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE WISHES AND ASPIRATIONS OF PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT SECTORS OF THIS COMMUNITY AND FROM PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS HOLDING DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS, INCLUDING OF COURSE, MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL."

THESE PROPOSALS ALSO REPRESENT THE COLLECTIVE WISDOM OF THIS ADMINISTRATION, HE SAID.

"THEY WERE REACHED AFTER MANY HOURS OF DISCUSSION IN THE GOVERNMENT OVER MANY WEEKS, ALL OF THEM INVOLVING SENIOR MEMBERS OF THIS ADMINISTRATION INCLUDING LOCAL SENIOR OFFICERS WHOSE LONG-TERM FUTURE LIES IN HONG KONG.

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"THEY REPRESENT OUR BEST EFFORTS TO BRING FORWARD PROPOSALS ON THIS VITALLY IMPORTANT SUBJECT TAKING ACCOUNT OF ALL THE VIEWS EXPRESSED TO US," SIR DAVID SAID.

ON SOME CONTROVERSY OVER THE QUESTION AS TO WHETHER A "SECRET DEAL" WAS MADE BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND CHINESE GOVERNMENTS ABOUT THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE 1995 ELECTIONS, THE CHIEF SECRETARY SAID THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAD JUST RELEASED ALL THE RELEVANT EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES ON THIS ISSUE.

HE ALSO STRESSED THAT NOTHING COULD TAKE AWAY FROM LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL DUTY TO TAKE A VIEW ON THE LEGISLATION WHICH WAS PUT BEFORE THEM AND TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT IT SHOULD GO FORWARD.

"NO MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL WHETHER HE OR SHE BE ELECTED OR APPOINTED OR INDIRECTLY ELECTED CAN SHIRK THAT RESPONSIBILITY.

"IT WOULD BE A SAD DAY INDEED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN HONG KONG IF MEMBERS TRIED TO OPT OUT," HE SAID.

HE SAID UNDER THE PROPOSED PACKAGE, THE URBAN COUNCIL WOULD HAVE TAKEN NEARLY 22 YEARS TO DEVELOP FROM PARTIAL TO FULLY ELECTED MEMBERSHIP. THE DISTRICT BOARDS, WOULD HAVE TAKEN 12 YEARS FROM THEIR INCEPTION TO BECOME FULLY ELECTED BODIES.

"HOW MEMBERS WILL EVER SUGGESTED THAT THE CURRENT PROPOSALS ON THE MUNICIPAL COUNCILS OR DISTRICT BOARDS CAN BE REGARDED AS A HEADLONG RUSH TOWARDS DEMOCRACY," SIR DAVID SAID.

HE ALSO SAID THE PROPOSAL FOR THE ELECTION COMMITTEE WAS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY AND OPENNESS DESCRIBED IN THE BASIC LAW.

"I FIND IT VERY DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND THE CRITICISM OF IT. IT IS, AFTER ALL, A NATURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ARRANGEMENTS WHICH APPLIED UP UNTIL 1991 WHEN 12 MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL WERE ELECTED BY DISTRICT BOARDS AND THE TWO MUNICIPAL COUNCILS," HE SAID.

ON A PROPOSAL TO HAVE HALF OF THE 100 TO 200-MEMBER ELECTION COMMITTEE NOMINATED BY THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT AND HALF BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, SIR DAVID ASKED:

"HOW DOES SUCH A PROPOSAL SQUARE WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF OPENNESS AND DEMOCRACY?

"ARE MEMBERS REALLY SUGGESTING THAT THE CONSTITUTION OF THE ELECTION COMMITTEE SHOULD BE DESIGNED, OR TO PUT A LESS POLITE DESCRIPTION, RIGGED, TO ENSURE THAT PRE-SELECTED PEOPLE CAN HAVE THEIR CANDIDATURE RUBBER-STAMPED BY SUCH A COMMITTEE?

"IS THAT WHAT A SLOWER PACE OF DEMOCRACY WOULD ENTAIL?"

ON CRITICISM ON FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY PROPOSALS, SIR DAVID SAID HE HAD THREE POINTS TO MAKE.

FIRST, THE PROPOSAL SEEKS TO REMOVE SUCH CRITICISMS BY BROADENING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION WHILE PRESERVING THE 21 FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCIES IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND TO THE COMMUNITY.

"THE OVERALL EFFECT SHOULD THEREFORE BE A FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY SYSTEM WHICH EMERGES STRONGER, MORE REPRESENTATIVE, AND CERTAINLY MORE CREDIBLE."

SECONDLY, THE OBJECTIVE OF THE FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY SYSTEM HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO INCLUDE THE WIDEST POSSIBLE RANGE OF DIFFERENT SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND PROFESSIONAL SECTORS WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE COMMUNITY'S PROSPERITY AND CONFIDENCE.

THE PROPOSED NINE NEW FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCIES FULLY MEET THIS OBJECTIVE.

THEY ARE ALSO ENTIRELY CONSISTENT WITH THE FOUR GUIDELINES FOR THE SELECTION OF FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCIES LAID DOWN IN THE 1988 POLITICAL WHITE PAPER, HE SAID.

"SO WHAT ARE WE DOING? WE ARE BUILDING ON EXISTING SYSTEMS; WE ARE NOT INTRODUCING RADICAL CHANGES," HE SAID.

THIRDLY, THE PROPOSAL IS NOT A SURROGATE FOR MORE TERRITORY BASED DIRECTLY ELECTED SEATS ANY MORE THAN THE PRESENT EDUCATION CONSTITUENCY IS.

THE ELECTORATE, THOUGH CONSIDERABLY EXPANDED, WILL BE RESTRICTED TO THOSE WHO ARE ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE, HE SAID.

"THEY WILL NOT HAVE A GEOGRAPHICAL BASED CONSTITUENCY. HOUSEWIVES, STUDENTS, RETIRED PERSONS ETC WILL BE EXCLUDED."

IN PRACTICE, HE SAID THIS MEANT THAT OVER A MILLION OUT OF A TOTAL OF 3.7 MILLION PEOPLE WHO WERE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE IN GEOGRAPHICAL CONSTITUENCY ELECTIONS WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO VOTE IN FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY ELECTIONS.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY STRESSED THAT THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE OF THE GOVERNMENT IN DEALING WITH MATTERS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO HONG KONG AND YET MIGHT AFFECT RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA MUST BE TO DO WHAT IT BELIEVED TO BE RIGHT IN THE OVERALL INTEREST OF THE HONG KONG PEOPLE.

THAT IN TURN WILL INVOLVE TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE OPINIONS OF THIS COMMUNITY EXPRESSED IN A NUMBER OF WAYS, HE SAID.

THESE ARE THROUGH THE EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL CONTACTS WITH THE COMMUNITY, VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THE COUNCIL, IN THE MEDIA THROUGHOUT OPINION POLLS AND SO ON.

"AND, OF COURSE, IN COMING TO DECISIONS WE MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE IMPACT OF THOSE DECISIONS UPON OUR FRIENDS ACROSS THE BORDER," HE SAID.

"THAT INDEED IS THE WAY WE HAVE OPERATED IN THE PAST."

HE SAID IT HAD LED TO SOME DIFFICULT DECISIONS OVER SUCH ISSUES AS THE BILL OF RIGHTS AND THE BRITISH NATIONALITY SCHEME WHERE THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT RESOLUTELY OPPOSED WHAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS DOING.

"BUT, I REPEAT, OUR DECISIONS SHOULD BE JUDGED BY WHETHER THEY ARE IN THE BEST OVERALL INTEREST OF THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG," THE CHIEF SECRETARY SAID.

THAT PRINCIPLE ALSO APPLIES TO THE PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM PUT FORWARD BY THE GOVERNOR IN HIS ANNUAL ADDRESS, HE SAID.

"IT REMAINS OUR WISH TO REACH AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT ON THIS ISSUE AS WE DO WITH ALL OTHER ISSUES, AND WE WILL CERTAINLY BE WORKING HARD TO TRY TO REACH SUCH AN UNDERSTANDING.

"WE VERY MUCH HOPE THAT IF THE CHINESE SIDE CONTINUES TO OBJECT TO OUR PROPOSALS THEY WILL PUT FORWARD PROPOSALS OF THEIR OWN," HE SAID.

HE ALSO SAID THE DESIRABILITY OF MAINTAINING A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA WAS WELL RECOGNISED BY THE ADMINISTRATION.

"IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A MAJOR FACTOR IN OUR POLICY MAKING. IT IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT NOW AS WE MOVE TOWARDS 1997 WHEN CHINA WILL RESUME SOVEREIGNTY OVER HONG KONG."

"HONG KONG PEOPLE, WHOSE FUTURE CAN BE INFLUENCED GREATLY BY CHINA, OF COURSE RECOGNISE THE IMPORTANCE OF THAT RELATIONSHIP AND WILL SHARE OUR CONCERN WHEN THE RELATIONSHIP IS UNDER STRAIN," HE SAID.

BUT HONG KONG'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA IS NOT FREE-STANDING ENTITY OF ITS OWN, HE ADDED.

"IT IS NOT A BENCH-MARK AGAINST WHICH OUR ACTIONS ALONE MUST BE JUDGED," HE SAID.

HE SAID THE RELATIONSHIP ITSELF WAS A PRODUCT OF ACTIONS AND DECISIONS TAKEN BY BOTH SIDES.

"THERE WILL BE TIMES WHEN IT IS UNDER STRAIN BECAUSE ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER TAKES DECISIONS WHICH ARE IN ITS OWN BEST INTERESTS BUT ARE NOT WELCOME BY THE OTHER," SIR DAVID SAID.

IT SURELY FOLLOWS THAT THE FURTHERANCE OF A GOOD RELATIONSHIP DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT BOTH SIDES CAN AGREE ON ALL ISSUES AT ALL TIMES, HE ADDED.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1992

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GOOD PROGRESS IN REVIEW OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION: CS

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THE GOVERNMENT IS LOOKING AGAIN AT WHAT MAY BE DONE TO IMPROVE PUBLIC ACCESS TO OFFICIAL INFORMATION AND TO REINFORCE PRESS FREEDOMS, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"WHILE WE ARE REVIEWING THESE MATTERS WITH AN OPEN MIND, I MUST SAY, WE REMAIN SCEPTICAL ABOUT THE VALUE OF GENERAL DECLARATORY FREEDOM OF INFORMATION LEGISLATION. I AM GLAD TO SAY THAT WE ARE MAKING GOOD PROGRESS IN THE REVIEW," HE SAID, WHEN WINDING UP THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE MOTION OF THANKS FOR THE GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADDRESS.

SIR DAVID SAID HE HOPED TO BE ABLE TO SEEK THE ADVICE OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL SOON ON SPECIFIC MEASURES TO ENHANCE PUBLIC ACCESS TO OFFICIAL INFORMATION AND ON PROPOSALS TO AMEND LAWS WHICH MIGHT BE A THREAT TO THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.

TO MAINTAIN A STRONG AND INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY, THE CHIEF SECRETARY SAID THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE JUDICIARY NEEDED TO BE STRENGTHENED.

MORE, LAWYERS OF THE HIGHEST CALIBRE AND INTEGRITY SHOULD BE ATTRACTED TO THE BENCH.

HE SAID STEADY PROGRESS WAS BEING MADE TO RECRUIT LOCAL LAWYERS TO THE JUDICIARY AS MAGISTRATES BUT THE SITUATION WAS MUCH LESS SATISFACTORY IN THE DISTRICT COURT AND THE SUPREME COURT.

"THERE IS NO EASY SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM AND WE NEED TO EXPLORE MEASURES TO SPEED UP THE PACE OF LOCALISATION AT THESE LEVELS. AND THIS WE WILL DO," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID ALSO SAID GOOD PROGRESS WAS ALSO BEING MADE IN A REVIEW OF A PROPOSAL FOR AN INDEPENDENT AUTHORITY TO BE ESTABLISHED FOR ADMINISTERING LEGAL AID.

"WE ARE LOOKING AGAIN AT THIS PROPOSAL IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CURRENT INTER-DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW OF THE LAW, POLICY, PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE GOVERNING THE PROVISION OF LEGAL AID," HE SAID.

THE REVIEW WILL BE COMPLETED BY EARLY NEXT YEAR AND AT THAT STAGE THE VIEWS OF THE PUBLIC WILL BE SOUGHT AFTER THE WORKING GROUP HAS FINALISED ITS RECOMMENDATIONS, HE SAID.

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FS EXPLAINS FUNDING STRATEGY

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THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) ASSURED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THAT THE VARIOUS PROPOSALS TO INCREASE SERVICES FOR THE COMMUNITY OUTLINED IN THE GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADDRESS WERE AFFORDABLE.

REPLYING TO MEMBERS' COMMENTS ON THE POLICY ADDRESS, HE SAID THE STRONG ECONOMIC GROWTH IN PARTICULAR HAD ENABLED THE GOVERNMENT TO PLAN WITH CONFIDENCE FOR PUBLIC SECTOR SPENDING TO INCREASE IN REAL TERMS BY FIVE PER CENT A YEAR.

IN ADDITION, HE SAID, THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALSO SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY POSED BY THE PROSPECT OF A "WINDFALL" SURPLUS OF AT LEAST \$6 BILLION TO ADVANCE FUNDING IN SOME KEY AREAS, NOTABLY SOCIAL WELFARE AND THE ENVIRONMENT.

"OUR MEDIUM RANGE FORECAST IS BASED ON AN INCREASE OF FIVE PER CENT IN EXPENDITURE AND SHOWS THAT IN CASH FLOW TERMS THESE PROPOSALS ARE CLEARLY AFFORDABLE WITHOUT ANY MAJOR CHANGES IN TAX OR OTHER REVENUE, AND WILL STILL LEAVE AN ADEQUATE CUSHION IN THE FORM OF OUR RESERVES," HE SAID.

HOWEVER, HE REAFFIRMED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS AS COMMITTED AS EVER TO KEEPING PUBLIC EXPENDITURE GROWTH IN LINE WITH GROWTH IN THE ECONOMY.

MR MACLEOD REFUTED THE CLAIM THAT THERE WAS NOTHING NEW IN THE SPENDING PROPOSALS.

"WHAT WE HAVE NOW DONE - WHICH IS NEW - IS TO UNAMBIGUOUSLY COMMIT FUNDS FOR THE KEY POLICY AREAS NAMED IN THE ADDRESS.

"BUT WE HAVE ALSO GONE FURTHER THAN THIS, MOST NOTABLY IN THE AREA OF REHABILITATION, WHERE WE HAVE SUBSTANTIALLY ADVANCED THE TIMING FOR ACHIEVING KEY TARGETS," HE SAID.

HE ALSO CLARIFIED THAT THE FIGURES IN THE POLICY ADDRESS CONCERNING THE INCREASE IN SPENDING OVER THE PERIOD ON SOCIAL SERVICES WOULD BE AN INCREASE IN REAL TERMS.

REFERRING TO SOME MEMBERS' COMMENTS THAT THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH WAS NOTHING BUT A SHOPPING LIST OF ITEMS ON WHICH TO SPEND MONEY AND LACKING IN STRATEGY, HE SAID: "WHAT DISTINGUISHES THE SPEECH, SO FAR AS SPENDING PROPOSALS ARE CONCERNED, IS PRECISELY THAT IT TAKES A LONG VIEW ON MAJOR POLICIES, THAT IT LOOKS BEYOND THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR OVER THE WHOLE PERIOD TO 1997."

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE MAJOR PROPOSALS STEMMED FROM DETAILED CONSIDERATION AND ADVICE AND DISCUSSIONS CARRIED OUT IN ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND CONTAINED ALSO IN GREEN PAPERS AND WHITE PAPERS.

THE PRIORITIES REFLECTED IN THE SPEECH WERE BASED ON THOSE WHICH EMERGED FROM THE CONSULTATION EXERCISE WHICH HE CARRIED OUT IN JULY THIS YEAR WITH LEGCO MEMBERS ON EXPENDITURE PROPOSALS FOR THE NEXT BUDGET, MR MACLEOD ADDED.

TURNING TO THE PROBLEM OF INFLATION, HE SAID THE MAIN UNDERLYING CAUSE OF INFLATION WAS THE STRONG DEMAND STEMMING FROM ECONOMIC GROWTH BOTH IN HONG KONG AND IN SOUTHERN CHINA, AGAINST A LIMITED SUPPLY OF RESOURCES AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO TAKE STEPS TO CONTAIN AS FAR AS POSSIBLE THESE INFLATIONARY PRESSURES.

HE NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS PRESENTLY TACKLING INFLATION ON VARIOUS FRONTS, INCLUDING KEEPING A TIGHT REIN ON PUBLIC EXPENDITURE, SEEKING TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND ENHANCE PRODUCTIVITY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, INCREASING THE SUPPLY OF LABOUR THROUGH AN EXPANDED RETRAINING PROGRAMME AND BY IMPORTING FOREIGN WORKERS ON A SELECTIVE BASIS AND INVESTING SUBSTANTIALLY IN EDUCATION TO RAISE THE PRODUCTIVITY OF THE WORK FORCE IN THE LONGER TERM.

FURTHERMORE, HE SAID, THE SERIES OF MEASURES TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT TO DISCOURAGE SPECULATION IN RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY HAD HAD A NOTICEABLE CALMING EFFECT ON THE MARKET.

OTHER ANTI-INFLATIONARY MEASURES INCLUDED THE NEW MIDDLE-INCOME HOUSING SCHEME FOR THE SANDWICH CLASS AND A REAL INCREASE IN THE SOCIAL SECURITY PAYMENTS ANNOUNCED IN THE POLICY ADDRESS, HE SAID.

"BUT I WILL NOT CLAIM THAT SUCH MEASURES WILL PRODUCE A DRAMATIC REDUCTION IN INFLATION. I BELIEVE OUR FORECAST OF 9.5 PER CENT FOR THE YEAR TO BE REALISTIC," HE SAID.

HE THEN REITERATED THE GOVERNMENT'S FIRM COMMITMENT TO THE EXISTING LINKED RATE.

STRESSING THAT THE LINKED RATE WAS NOT THE CAUSE OF INFLATION, HE SAID: "A LINK TO SOME OTHER CURRENCY, OR BASKET OF CURRENCIES, WOULD STILL RESTRICT OUR FREEDOM TO USE THE INTEREST RATE WEAPON.

"AND THE NOTION OF FLOATING IS NOT, I BELIEVE, TAKEN AS A SERIOUS OPTION."

ON THE NEW HONG KONG MONETARY AUTHORITY, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID HE WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE GENERALLY POSITIVE REMARKS AND MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE AUTHORITY WOULD REMAIN FIRMLY UNDER HIS CONTROL.

TURNING TO THE CONCERN EXPRESSED OVER THE FAST GROWING PROPERTY MARKET IN CHINA, MR MACLEOD SAID HE WELCOMED THE INITIATIVE TAKEN BY THE CONSUMER COUNCIL IN PUBLISHING GUIDELINES TO HELP THOSE INTERESTED IN BUYING SUCH PROPERTY.

ON THE AIRPORT CORE PROJECTS, HE STRESSED THAT A SENSIBLE AND VIABLE AGREEMENT WITH CHINA WAS STILL "OUR FIRST PRIORITY".

HE ASKED PEOPLE WHO URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO BE MORE COST CONSCIOUS OR COST EFFECTIVE ON THE AIRPORT AND AIRPORT RAILWAY TO TAKE HEART FROM THE FACT THAT "WE HAD \$19 BILLION WORTH OF CONTRACTS ON TIME AND BELOW BUDGET".

"WE MUST ALSO REMEMBER HOW THIS ALL FITS INTO THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF HONG KONG. THE AIRPORT CORE PROJECTS ARE NOT ISOLATED FROM THE REST OF THE ECONOMY.

"WITHOUT EFFICIENT AIR, SEA AND OTHER COMMUNICATION AND TRANSPORT FACILITIES, HONG KONG WOULD NOT REMAIN AT THE FOREFRONT OF WORLD TRADING ECONOMIES. WE MUST REMEMBER THIS WHEN WE CHART OUR WAY FORWARD ON THE AIRPORT.

"THERE IS A VISION OF THE FUTURE HERE AND WE MUST NOT LOSE SIGHT OF IT," HE SAID.

IN CONCLUSION, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY SAID HE WOULD HONOUR HIS PLEDGE TO MEMBERS IN THE LAST BUDGET DEBATE AND THAT HE WOULD BE MEETING THEM IN EIGHT SEPARATE GROUPS OVER THE NEXT FORTNIGHT TO HEAR THEIR VIEWS ON THE REVENUE PROPOSALS FOR THE NEXT BUDGET.

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PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME OUTLINED

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THE GOVERNMENT WILL SPEND \$78 BILLION ON PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS, AT MARCH 1992 PRICES, IN ADDITION TO \$43 BILLION AT MARCH 1991 PRICES WHICH IS BEING SPENT ON SEVEN AIRPORT CORE PROJECTS (ACP) DURING THE FIVE YEARS' PERIOD 1992/93 TO 1996/97.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, IN THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE MOTION OF THANKS FOR THE GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADDRESS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE SAID THE PROJECTED SPENDING ON NON-ACP WORKS OF \$78 BILLION REPRESENTED A 44% GROWTH IN REAL TERMS OVER SPENDING ON PUBLIC WORKS DURING THE PAST FIVE YEARS.

IT ALSO REPRESENTS ABOUT THREE QUARTERS OF GOVERNMENT'S FORECAST OF TOTAL CAPITAL WORKS EXPENDITURE OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, MR BLAKE SAID.

"WE SHALL CONTINUE TO BUILD FOR THE FUTURE," THE SECRETARY SAID.

"WE SHALL INCREASE OUR LAND ASSETS BY RECLAMATION, IMPROVE OUR DRAINAGE SYSTEM AND SEWAGE SERVICES, UPGRADE OUR PORT FACILITIES AND TRANSPORT NETWORK, AND PROVIDE MORE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES.

"OUR INVESTMENTS IN OUR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE WILL ENHANCE THE COMPETITIVENESS OF OUR ECONOMY AND IMPROVE OUR QUALITY OF LIFE," HE SAID.

THERE ARE AT PRESENT OVER 2,000 ITEMS IN THE PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME (EXCLUDING THOSE OF \$10 MILLION OR LESS IN CONTRACT VALUE) ALL OF THEM AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF PLANNING, INVESTIGATION AND CONSTRUCTION.

THE LIST OF NEW PROJECTS FOR LAND FORMATION, ENVIRONMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES WHICH HAVE EITHER STARTED OR WHICH ARE PROGRAMMED TO START CONSTRUCTION DURING THE NEXT THREE YEARS, INCLUDES A \$444 MILLION SCHEME TO RECLAIM 19 HECTARES OF LAND IN ALDRICH BAY, SHAU KEI WAN FOR RESIDENTIAL AND COMMUNITY USES.

IT ALSO INCLUDES A \$1.8 BILLION PROJECT TO DEVELOP A LARGE WASTE DISPOSAL LANDFILL IN NORTHEAST NEW TERRITORIES, A \$1 BILLION PROJECT TO UPGRADE LUNG CHEUNG ROAD AND CHING CHEUNG ROAD, A DUPLICATE TSING YI SOUTH BRIDGE AT \$785 MILLION, A \$2.7 BILLION PROJECT TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY BACK-UP AREA AND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR CT 9 PORT DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHEAST TSING YI, AND A NEW CONVALESCENT/INFIRMARY HOSPITAL AT TAI PO AT \$682 MILLION.

ON NEW TOWN PROGRAMME, WHICH WAS FORMALLY STARTED IN 1972, AND IS CELEBRATING ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR.

HONG KONG NOW HAS EIGHT NEW TOWNS, WITH A TOTAL POPULATION OF 2.3 MILLION. BY THE YEAR 2000, THE POPULATION OF THE NEW TOWNS IS EXPECTED TO REACH ALMOST 3 MILLION, WHICH WILL BE ABOUT HALF OF THE EXPECTED POPULATION OF HONG KONG AT THAT TIME, MR BLAKE SAID.

"DEVELOPMENT OF THE FIRST GENERATION NEW TOWNS, TSUEN WAN, SHA TIN AND TUEN MUN, IS SUBSTANTIALLY COMPLETE. IT IS EXPECTED THAT SHA TIN WILL TAKE OVER FROM KWUN TONG AND EASTERN TO BECOME THE MOST POPULATED DISTRICT IN THE TERRITORY BY THE YEAR 2000," HE SAID.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SECOND GENERATION NEW TOWNS, TAI PO, FANLING/SHEUNG SHUI AND YUEN LONG, HAVE PASSED THEIR HALF-WAY MARK AND ARE CONTINUING.

THE THIRD GENERATION NEW TOWNS, TSEUNG KWAN O AND TIN SHUI WAI, WHICH BEGAN THEIR DEVELOPMENT ONLY IN THE SECOND HALF OF EIGHTIES ARE ALREADY SUCCESS STORIES IN THEIR OWN RIGHT.

"THE GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING THE HOUSING AUTHORITY AND THE URBAN AND REGIONAL COUNCILS, WILL HAVE INVESTED SOME \$240 BILLION IN THE NEW TOWN PROGRAMME, OVER A 40 YEAR PERIOD FROM 1972 ONWARDS," HE SAID.

DURING THIS SAME PERIOD DEVELOPMENT WILL BEGIN FOR THE NINTH NEW TOWN WHICH IS PLANNED FOR THE TUNG CHUNG - TAI HO AREA ON NORTH LANTAU.

INITIALLY, THE SECRETARY SAID, IT WILL PROVIDE AIRPORT SUPPORT TOWN FACILITIES, BUT IS PLANNED FOR INCREMENTAL EXPANSION TO REACH A POPULATION OF 200,000 BY THE YEAR 2011.

MEANWHILE, MR BLAKE SAID WORK ON ALL PROJECTS FUNDED FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S CAPITAL WORKS RESERVE FUND AS PART OF THE AIRPORT CORE PROGRAMME IS PROGRESSING WELL.

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"WE ARE CREATING NEW ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND PORT EXPANSION, AND ARE THUS MAKING A MAJOR LONG TERM INVESTMENT IN THE ECONOMIC FUTURE OF THE TERRITORY AS A CENTRE OF BUSINESS, TRADE AND FINANCE IN THE PEARL RIVER DELTA REGION," HE SAID.

SEVEN MAJOR CONTRACTS ARE ALREADY UNDERWAY TO CONSTRUCT THE WEST KOWLOON RECLAMATION, ADDING WELL OVER 300 HECTARES OF VALUABLE SPACE TO THE LAND AVAILABLE IN PRESENT DAY KOWLOON.

HE SAID THE RECLAMATION WOULD PROVIDE LAND FOR THE WEST KOWLOON EXPRESSWAY, AIRPORT RAILWAY, AND NORTHERN LANDFALL OF THE WEST HARBOUR CROSSING, AS WELL AS PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE URBAN FACILITIES AVAILABLE IN WEST KOWLOON, ESPECIALLY THE SEWAGE AND SURFACE DRAINAGE SYSTEM.

WORK ON THE TSING MA BRIDGE IS PROGRESSING WELL AND THE CONTRACT FOR THE KAP SHUI MUN BRIDGE AND MA WAN VIADUCT WILL START NEXT MONTH.

TENDERS FOR THE LAST OF THE THREE CONTRACTS THAT WILL COMPLETE THE NORTH LANTAU EXPRESSWAY WILL BE INVITED EARLY NEXT YEAR, HE SAID.

SITE FORMATION IS UNDER WAY FOR PHASE I OF THE NEW TOWN DEVELOPMENT AT TUNG CHUNG, TENDERS FOR THE TWO OF THE THREE CONTRACTS FOR THE ACP PART OF ROUTE 3 HAVE BEEN INVITED, AND TENDERS FOR THE FIRST PHASE OF THE CENTRAL RECLAMATION HAVE BEEN RECEIVED AND EVALUATED.

MR BLAKE SAID THE KAP SHUI MUN FORMAL AWARD NEXT MONTH, WOULD BRING TO 18 THE NUMBER OF ACP CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTS AWARDED AND TO BE DIRECTLY FUNDED FROM THE CAPITAL WORKS RESERVE FUND.

THESE CONTRACTS HAVE BEEN PLACED FOR THE MOST PART ON FIXED PRICE LUMP SUM TERMS, AND TOTAL ALMOST \$19 BILLION, A FIGURE WHICH REPRESENTS ABOUT 1/3 OF THE ESTIMATED CAPITAL WORKS EXPENDITURE BUDGETED BY THE GOVERNMENT UNDER THE ACP.

"THE FACT THAT WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MAKE THESE AWARDS WITHIN OUR BUDGETED ESTIMATES, PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE PRUDENT FINANCIAL PLANNING AND STRINGENT CONTROLS THAT HAVE BEEN PLACED OVER SCOPE DEVELOPMENT.

"IT IS ALSO A SIGN OF THE STIFF COMPETITION WE ARE SEEING FROM LOCAL AND OVERSEAS COMPANIES SEEKING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ACP PROJECTS IMPLEMENTATION," HE ADDED.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1992

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SUFFICIENT TALENTED LOCAL OFFICERS AVAILABLE
TO ENSURE SMOOTH TRANSITION

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THE SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE, MR BARRIE WIGGHAM, EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT SUFFICIENT AND TALENTED LOCAL OFFICERS WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO FILL THOSE POSTS SPECIFIED IN THE BASIC LAW.

"WE WILL HAVE QUALIFIED LOCAL OFFICERS WHO CAN MEET THE NATIONALITY AND RIGHT OF ABODE PROVISIONS IN PLACE IN GOOD TIME - THAT IS WELL BEFORE 1997 - SO AS TO ENSURE CONTINUITY AND A SMOOTH TRANSITION IN THE MOST SENIOR RANKS OF OUR CIVIL SERVICE," HE STATED.

"IN MANAGEMENT TERMS, THIS WILL INVOLVE ENSURING THAT WE HAVE A RESERVOIR OF LOCAL TALENT AT SENIOR LEVELS UPON WHICH TO DRAW IN FUTURE TO FILL POSTS AT THE PRINCIPAL OFFICIAL LEVEL."

SPEAKING DURING THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE MOTION OF THANKS FOR THE GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADDRESS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), MR WIGGHAM TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO CLARIFY THE CONFUSION THAT HAD CREPT IN OVER WHICH POSTS WERE COVERED BY BASIC LAW REFERENCES TO PRINCIPAL OFFICIALS.

HE SAID WHEN THE BASIC LAW REFERRED TO SECRETARIES AND DEPUTY SECRETARIES OF DEPARTMENTS, IT WAS TALKING SPECIFICALLY ABOUT THE THREE MOST SENIOR POSTS - CHIEF SECRETARY, FINANCIAL SECRETARY AND ATTORNEY GENERAL TOGETHER WITH THEIR DEPUTIES, IF ANY.

LIKEWISE WHAT THE BASIC LAW CALLS DIRECTORS OF BUREAUX ARE IN FACT POLICY SECRETARIES; BUT THEIR DEPUTIES ARE NOT CAUGHT IN THE LIST OF POSTS WITH A NATIONALITY QUALIFICATION.

"I MAKE THE POINT AS I SAY IN PART TO CLEAR AWAY CONFUSION; IN PART TO EMPHASISE THE RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF POSTS WHICH ARE SUBJECT TO THE RESTRICTIONS STIPULATED IN THE BASIC LAW," SAID MR WIGGHAM.

"IF THE RELEVANT BASIC LAW PROVISION WERE IN FORCE TODAY, ON A STRICT INTERPRETATION, THE RESTRICTION WOULD PROBABLY ONLY AFFECT 22 POSTS."

TURNING TO LOCALISATION IN THE CIVIL SERVICE, MR WIGGHAM REPORTED THAT A NUMBER OF DEPARTMENTS WERE COMPLETELY LOCALISED.

IN THE DIRECTORATE OVERALL, 63 PER CENT OF POSTS ARE FILLED BY LOCAL OFFICERS WHILE OVER HALF HEAD OF DEPARTMENT AND SECRETARY POSTS ARE ALSO FILLED BY LOCAL OFFICERS.

SPECIAL MEASURES HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED IN THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT TO ADVANCE LOCALISATION AND ENSURE A STEADY SUPPLY OF QUALIFIED LOCAL OFFICERS FOR SENIOR POSTS IN FUTURE.

CITING EXAMPLES, MR WIGGHAM SAID LOCAL NON-DIRECTORATE OFFICERS IN THE DEPARTMENT WOULD BE GIVEN ADVANCED PROMOTION AND BETTER CAREER PROSPECTS UNDER THE "DOUBLE LADDER" SCHEME; WHILST THE DEVELOPMENT POSTS SCHEME WOULD FACILITATE THE LOCALISATION OF THE DIRECTORATE BY PROVIDING LOCAL SENIOR CROWN COUNSEL WITH MANAGEMENT TRAINING AND CAREER EXPOSURE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE THEIR PROMOTION PROSPECTS.

HE ALSO

HE ALSO SPOKE OF PERFORMANCE PLEDGES WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS A "NATURAL STEP IN THE CONTINUING PROCESS OF BRINGING ABOUT IMPROVEMENTS TO OUR SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC".

"IT BRINGS INTO THE OPEN THE INTERNAL MANAGEMENT STANDARDS THAT MOST DEPARTMENTS HAVE ALREADY SET TO MONITOR THEIR OWN OUTPUT; IT INTRODUCES MORE EFFICIENT MEANS FOR THE PUBLIC TO MONITOR PERFORMANCE; AND IT AIMS IN THE PROCESS TO BRING ABOUT FURTHER IMPROVEMENT IN OUR DEPARTMENT-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP.

"WE ARE DETERMINED TO MAKE THIS SCHEME A PERMANENT FEATURE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE."

THE GOVERNMENT WILL ADOPT A STEADY PACE AND IMPLEMENT THE EXERCISE IN PHASES, HE NOTED, ADDING THAT ALL DEPARTMENTS PROVIDING SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC SHOULD HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO THE REFORMS IN ABOUT TWO YEARS.

THE GOVERNMENT WILL ALSO LIAISE WITH THOSE STATUTORY AUTHORITIES PROVIDING PUBLIC SERVICE WITH A VIEW TO ENSURING THAT THOSE PARTS OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE UNDER THEIR SCRUTINY ALSO ADOPT THE SAME PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES AS FAR AS PRACTICABLE.

SOME MEMBERS HAD EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE ANNUAL CIVIL SERVICE PAY ADJUSTMENT GAVE CIVIL SERVANTS AN EDGE OVER THE PRIVATE SECTOR WHICH, IN TURN, WAS CONSIDERED TO HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE ECONOMY.

MR WIGGHAM, HOWEVER, DID NOT AGREE. HE STRESSED THAT WHILE THE ADJUSTMENT COULD SERVE AS A REFERENCE FOR SOME EMPLOYERS, THE ULTIMATE DETERMINANTS OF PRIVATE SECTOR PAY WERE SUPPLY AND DEMAND IN THE LABOUR MARKET.

"THERE IS NO DIRECT CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ANNUAL PAY ADJUSTMENT FOR CIVIL SERVANTS AND INFLATION AS SUCH, BUT THERE IS CLEARLY A PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT," HE SAID.

"IT IS ALSO MISLEADING TO COMPARE THE CIVIL SERVICE PAY ADJUSTMENT WITH ONLY THE GENERAL INCREASE FOR PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYEES WHILST EXCLUDING MERIT PAY.

"THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT CIVIL SERVICE SALARIES ARE NOT DIRECTLY RELATED TO PERFORMANCE, WHEREAS MERIT PAY IS INCREASINGLY GIVEN MORE WEIGHT AND ACCOUNTS FOR A LARGER SHARE OF THE ANNUAL PAY ADJUSTMENT IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

"OVERALL, HOWEVER, CIVIL SERVICE PAY ADJUSTMENTS, INCLUDING BOTH GENERAL INCREASE AND ANNUAL INCREMENT, ARE COMPARABLE TO THE GENERAL INCREASE PLUS MERIT PAY IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR, EVEN THOUGH INDIVIDUALLY SOME CIVIL SERVANTS MAY BE BETTER OFF AND OTHERS MAY LOSE OUT UNDER THE PRESENT METHODOLOGY."

ON THE FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS FOR CIVIL SERVICE PENSIONS, MR WIGGHAM REAFFIRMED THAT THE JOINT DECLARATION AND THE BASIC LAW BOTH CONTAINED ASSURANCES ABOUT THE FUTURE PAYMENT OF PENSIONS.

"I SHOULD EMPHASISE THEREFORE THAT IN OUR VIEW PENSIONS ARE SECURE," HE STATED.

NEVERTHELESS, MR WIGGHAM SAID IN RESPONSE TO STAFF REQUESTS, THE GOVERNMENT HAD UNDERTAKEN A STUDY OF POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL SAFEGUARD MEASURES FOR THE FUTURE.

"SEVERAL OPTIONS HAVE BEEN EXAMINED INCLUDING THE OPTION OF A PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME FOR FUTURE SERVICE.

"WE SHALL BE LOOKING FURTHER AT THIS PARTICULAR IDEA IN THE CONTEXT OF TERRITORY-WIDE COMPULSORY PRIVATE SECTOR RETIREMENT SCHEMES," HE ADDED.

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POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF DISTRICT BOARDS NECESSARY: SHA
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HONG KONG HAS NOW REACHED A POINT WHERE THE NEXT STAGE OF EVOLUTION OF THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION SCHEME HAS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE OVERALL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE TERRITORY, THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SUEN, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE MOTION OF THANKS FOR THE GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADDRESS, MR SUEN SAID THIS WAS THE REASON WHY THE GOVERNOR HAD OUTLINED A NUMBER OF MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN DISTRICT BOARDS' PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL AFFAIRS.

AND, IN THIS REGARD, MR SUEN EMPHASISED THAT THE PROPOSAL TO ABOLISH APPOINTED MEMBERSHIP ON THESE BOARDS "IS IN NO WAY INTENDED TO BELITTLE THEIR WORK".

"IT MERELY RECOGNISES THAT THE NEXT STEP IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DISTRICT BOARDS MUST BE CONSISTENT WITH THE OVERALL TREND TOWARDS A MORE REPRESENTATIVE POLITICAL STRUCTURE."

ACKNOWLEDGING THE IMPORTANT ROLE PLAYED BY APPOINTED MEMBERS, MR SUEN HOPED THAT WITH THE CREATION OF ADDITIONAL CONSTITUENCIES - FROM 274 DIRECTLY ELECTED SEATS TO ABOUT 340 - THIS WOULD ENCOURAGE SOME OF THOSE MEMBERS TO SEEK A FURTHER TERM OF OFFICE IN 1994 THROUGH CONTESTING ELECTIONS.

AS FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO RETAIN EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS IN THE NEW TERRITORIES DISTRICT BOARDS, MR SUEN SAID THIS WAS CONSISTENT WITH THE EVOLUTIONARY NATURE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS.

THESE MEMBERS, HE SAID, WERE AN IMPORTANT LINK BETWEEN THE INDIGENOUS NEW TERRITORIES RESIDENTS AND THE GOVERNMENT, AS WELL AS BETWEEN VILLAGERS AND THE NEW RESIDENTS NOW LIVING IN THE AREA.

ALTHOUGH THEIR NUMBERS WERE SMALL AND THEY HAVE ALL BEEN ELECTED, MR SUEN SAID THEIR MEMBERSHIP ON DISTRICT BOARDS WILL BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW IN DUE COURSE.

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EARLIER, IN FOCUSING ON THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF DBS, MR SUEN SAID IT WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S AIM TO INCREASE THEIR EFFECTIVENESS AND CAPABILITY IN DEALING WITH STREET MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS AND OTHER LOCAL ISSUES.

HE SAID DISTRICT BOARDS WERE BETTER PLACED TO ARRIVE AT A JUDGEMENT ON THE BEST WAY TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICTING DEMANDS IN THE INTERESTS OF THEIR OWN COMMUNITY THAN IS THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

IN THIS CONNECTION, HE SAID GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS WILL ALSO PLAY THEIR PART BY BECOMING MORE SENSITIVE AND RESPONSIVE TO DISTRICT NEEDS.

"DEPARTMENTS WILL HAVE TO WORK CLOSELY WITH EACH OTHER AND THE DISTRICT BOARDS TO WORK OUT COMPREHENSIVE ACTION PLANS TO TACKLE DISTRICT PROBLEMS ON A CO-ORDINATED BASIS."

PRIORITIES WILL ALSO HAVE TO BE AGREED WITH THE DISTRICT BOARDS WITH THESE DEPARTMENTS BECOMING MORE ACCOUNTABLE TO THE ADVISORY BODIES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUCH ACTION PLANS, HE SAID.

FURTHERMORE, REGULAR REPORTS WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE BOARDS TO ENABLE THEM TO MONITOR PROGRESS CLOSELY.

AS THE WORK OF DISTRICT BOARDS IS OFTEN HAMPERED BY INADEQUATE FUNDS, MR SUEN SAID SUBJECT TO THE NECESSARY APPROVAL, FUNDS AVAILABLE TO THEM WILL BE SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED FROM \$51 MILLION THIS YEAR TO \$100 MILLION IN 1994-95.

"WITH MORE FINANCIAL RESOURCES AT THEIR DISPOSAL, DISTRICT BOARDS WILL BE BETTER ABLE TO HELP FUND DESERVING COMMUNITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES SUCH AS CIVIC EDUCATION PROJECTS, COMMUNITY AWARENESS SCHEMES, VOLUNTARY SERVICES FOR THE NEEDY AND CELEBRATION OF TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS."

TO FURTHER ENHANCE THE ROLE OF DISTRICT BOARDS, MR SUEN SAID THEY WOULD BE GIVEN THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF COMMUNITY HALLS AND CENTRES.

AND IN ADDITION TO BOARDS AND COMMITTEES, SUCH AS SCHOOL LIAISON COMMITTEES AND THE CIVIC EDUCATION COMMITTEES, DISTRICT BOARD CHAIRMEN WILL ALSO BE CONSULTED ON APPOINTMENTS TO DISTRICT FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEES AND THE BOARDS WILL THEMSELVES FORM NOT LESS THAN HALF OF THE MEMBERS OF THESE DISTRICT FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEES.

AS TO THE COMPOSITION OF A DISTRICT BOARD, MR SUEN BELIEVED THE OPTIMUM NUMBER FOR EFFICIENCY OF OPERATION SHOULD BE BETWEEN 15 TO 30 MEMBERS.

THE POPULATION SIZE ON THE BASIS OF SINGLE SEAT CONSTITUENCIES, HE SAID, SHOULD NOT BE UNDULY SMALL.

"WE BELIEVE THAT CONSTITUENCIES EACH WITH A POPULATION OF ABOUT 17,000 PEOPLE ARE AS LOW AS WE CAN GO."

FIRST, HOWEVER, MR SUEN SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS THE PROPOSED CHANGES WITH THE DISTRICT BOARDS.

"OVER THE NEXT TWO MONTHS, I SHALL BE MEETING THE 19 DISTRICT BOARD CHAIRMEN TO EXPLAIN TO THEM THE CASE FOR INTRODUCING CHANGES TO THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS AND THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES TO USE IN EVALUATING THE COMPARATIVE MERITS OF THE DIFFERENT OPTIONS IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE BEST ARRANGEMENT FOR THE FUTURE.

"THIS WILL PAVE THE WAY FOR 19 MORE MEETINGS WITH INDIVIDUAL DISTRICT BOARDS WHEN WE WILL GO INTO THE DETAILED ARRANGEMENTS PROPOSED FOR EACH OF THEM."

MR SUEN SAID HE WAS KEEN TO HEAR THEIR VIEWS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR ENHANCING THE STATUS, THE INFLUENCE AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DISTRICT BOARDS.

TURNING TO YOUTH MATTERS, MR SUEN SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS WORKING HARD TO ENCOURAGE YOUNG PEOPLE TO TAKE AN INTEREST IN THEIR COMMUNITY AND TO PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN SOCIETY.

HE ALSO SAID THE COMMISSION ON YOUTH WAS ABOUT TO FINALISE ITS CHARTER FOR YOUTH.

THE CHARTER, HE SAID, WOULD CONTAIN PRINCIPLES AND IDEALS FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT WHICH IN TURN WOULD BE OF GREAT VALUE TO THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEWING AND FORMULATING YOUTH SERVICES.

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COMMITMENTS TO HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENT REAFFIRMED

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GOVERNMENT'S STRONG COMMITMENTS TO SUBSIDISED HOUSING AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT WERE REAFFIRMED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON.

IN REPLY TO POINTS RAISED IN THE MOTION DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR EASON SAID THE ADMINISTRATION'S COMMITMENT TO THE PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME IS AS STRONG AS EVER.

THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WILL BE SPENDING OVER \$40 BILLION IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS IN CAPITAL EXPENDITURE TO PROVIDE MORE HOMES.

NEW PRODUCTION OF NEARLY 200,000 FLATS IN THE PERIOD WILL RESULT IN NEW HOMES FOR ABOUT 650,000 PEOPLE.

ON TOP OF THIS, THE HOUSING AUTHORITY ALSO PLANS TO REHOUSE 113,500 MORE FAMILIES THROUGH PUBLIC HOUSING REDEVELOPMENT AND FROM TEMPORARY HOUSING AREAS AND SQUATTER AREAS.

MR EASON NOTED THAT THE NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS LIVING IN "OVERCROWDED" CONDITIONS IN PUBLIC HOUSING HAD DECREASED FROM ABOUT 29 PER CENT IN 1982 TO 5 PER CENT IN 1992.

ON THE SANDWICH CLASS HOUSING SCHEME, MR EASON SAID WHILE THE SCHEME WOULD BE KEPT UNDER REVIEW, THE PRESENT TARGET OF 5,000 UNITS PER YEAR WAS ABOUT RIGHT.

HE SAID THERE WAS A NEED TO STRIKE A BALANCE SO THAT THE SCHEME WOULD NOT AFFECT THE PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME OR THE SUPPLY OF LAND REQUIRED FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

HE NOTED THAT THE INTERIM SCHEME IS DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE A "FAST START" FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO ENTER INTO HOME OWNERSHIP EARLY WITHOUT WAITING FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE PURPOSE-DESIGNED FLATS.

THE INTERIM SCHEME INVOLVES MODEST NUMBERS SINCE THE PURCHASE OF TOO LARGE A NUMBER OF FLATS FROM THE MARKET COULD REDUCE SUPPLY BY TOO MUCH AND CAUSE DISTORTIONS.

WITH REGARD TO SUGGESTIONS FROM SOME QUARTERS FOR FISCAL MEASURES SUCH AS CAPITAL GAINS TAX AND TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR MORTGAGE PAYMENTS, MR EASON SAID THESE MEASURES WOULD RUN CONTRARY TO HONG KONG'S SIMPLE NON-DISCRIMINATORY AND LOW TAX SYSTEM.

THEY WOULD NOT BRING DOWN PROPERTY PRICES, BUT COULD INSTEAD ENCOURAGE GREATER DEMAND IN THE MARKET AND FURTHER INFLATE PROPERTY PRICES.

TURNING TO THE SEWAGE STRATEGY, MR EASON SAID APART FROM GOVERNMENT'S FIRM COMMITMENT TO THE HIGH PRIORITY PROGRAMME TO PROVIDE SEWAGE SERVICES TO THE MAIN URBAN AREA, PLANNING IS ALSO IN HAND FOR THE SUBSEQUENT PHASES.

THESE INCLUDE PRELIMINARY DESIGN WORK FOR THE LONG OCEANIC OUTFALL FOR THE DISPOSAL OF TREATED WASTE WATER.

"CONSULTATIONS WITH THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES ON TECHNICAL ASPECTS OF THE OCEANIC DISPOSAL ARRANGEMENTS AND JOINT SURVEYS TO DETERMINE THE ALIGNMENT OF THE OUTFALL ARE ALSO UNDER WAY," MR EASON SAID.

HE ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT THE PUBLIC WILL BE CONSULTED BEFORE THE END OF THIS YEAR ON CHARGING FOR THE SEWAGE SERVICES BEFORE THE CHARGES ARE FINALISED AND INTRODUCED.

ON TOP OF THE SEWAGE STRATEGY, MAJOR SEWERAGE SCHEMES NOW IN HAND INCLUDE THE \$1.1 BILLION SEWERAGE AND DISPOSAL SCHEME IN THE NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES, THE \$930 MILLION TOLO HARBOUR EFFLUENT EXPORT SCHEME AND THE \$840 TSEUNG KWAN O SEWAGE TREATMENT AND DISPOSAL SCHEME.

HE ALSO REVEALED THAT THE WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ORDINANCE WOULD BE AMENDED TO REQUIRE BUILDINGS TO BE CONNECTED TO THE NEW PUBLIC SEWERS AND TO IMPOSE TIGHTER CONTROLS ON THE OPERATION OF PRIVATE WASTE-WATER TREATMENT FACILITIES.

WITH REGARD TO AIR POLLUTION, MR EASON SAID FURTHER MEASURES TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM OF VEHICLE EXHAUSTS WOULD BE EXPLORED AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION ADVIORY COMMITTEE WOULD BE CONSULTED ON THE ISSUE AGAIN NEXT YEAR.

HE ALSO DISCLOSED THAT A WORKING GROUP HAS RECENTLY BEEN SET UP TO PRODUCE SOME THINKING ON THE POSSIBLE ROLE OF ELECTRIC VEHICLES IN HONG KONG FROM BOTH A POLLUTION AND AN ENERGY EFFICIENCY POINT OF VIEW.

OTHER MEASURES TO DEAL WITH NOISE POLLUTION INCLUDE A PROGRAMME TO PROVIDE 25 MORE SCHOOLS WITH DOUBLE-GLAZING AND AIR-CONDITIONING IN 1992/93 AND THE RESURFACING OF EIGHT MORE SECTIONS OF ROADS IN KOWLOON AND NEW TERRITORIES WITH A QUIET ROAD MIXTURE.

MR EASON DISCLOSED THAT THE PENALTIES UNDER ENVIRONMENTAL ORDINANCES ARE BEING INCREASED TO BRING THEM UP TO DATE AND TO REFLECT MORE ACCURATELY THE COST OF DEALING WITH ENVIRONMENTAL ABUSE.

THE ROAD TRAFFIC ORDINANCE WILL ALSO BE AMENDED TO EMPOWER THE COMMISSIONER FOR TRANSPORT TO IMPLEMENT TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SCHEMES ON ENVIRONMENTAL GROUNDS.

ON THE CONSERVATION SIDE, ACTION IS IN HAND TO ESTABLISH THE FIRST MARINE PARKS AND RESERVES IN HONG KONG.

THE ADMINISTRATION IS ALSO CONSIDERING THE DETAILS OF THE RIO CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY AND ITS APPLICATION TO HK.

WITH REGARD TO TOWN PLANNING, THE CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM THE CONSULTATION EXERCISE ON THE REVIEW OF THE TOWN PLANNING ORDINANCE WOULD BE SET OUT IN THE FORM OF A WHITE BILL TO BE PUBLISHED IN MID-1993.

HE ALSO SAID THE TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY IS BEING UPDATED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT PORT AND AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY, METROPLAN AND RECENT INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENTS IN HONG KONG AND IN SOUTHERN CHINA.

"PARTICULAR ATTENTION WILL BE GIVEN TO INDUSTRIAL LAND AND STORAGE AREA REQUIREMENTS AND THE NEED FOR PORT EXPANSION AND STRATEGIC TRANSPORT REQUIREMENTS," HE SAID.

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SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN EDUCATION SPENDING

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THE OVERALL RECURRENT EXPENDITURE IN EDUCATION WILL RISE BY 15.8 PER CENT IN REAL TERMS BETWEEN NOW AND 1996/97, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, SAID.

COUPLED WITH THE FORECAST DECLINE IN THE STUDENT POPULATION, THIS TRANSLATES INTO AN INCREASE IN THE AVERAGE SPENDING PER STUDENT OF 24 PER CENT, HE SAID.

"WHILE THIS WILL NOT SATISFY EVERYONE'S ASPIRATIONS, THE RATE OF PROGRESS IS SIGNIFICANT BY ANY STANDARDS, AND CERTAINLY NO LESS THAN THE FORECAST RATE OF REAL ECONOMIC GROWTH."

SPEAKING DURING THE DEBATE ON THE MOTION OF THANKS FOR THE GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADDRESS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), MR CHAN OUTLINED VARIOUS CHANGES THAT WOULD BE MADE TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION.

TO UPGRADE THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND IDENTIFY THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND ACADEMIC TASKS WHICH MUST NOW BE DONE, THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNING COUNCIL WILL WORK TOWARDS THE GOAL OF CREATING THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION BY OCTOBER 1994.

MEANWHILE, MR CHAN SAID, INTERIM IMPROVEMENTS WILL BE MADE IN THE COLLEGES, SUCH AS UPGRADING THE STAFF, LIBRARIES AND EQUIPMENT, AND IMPROVING THE PROMOTION RATIO FOR THE BASIC LECTURER RANK.

HE ALSO NOTED THAT THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON TEACHER EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS RECOMMENDED IN EDUCATION COMMISSION REPORT NO. 5 (ECR 5) WOULD BE SET UP AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE IN 1993.

THIS COMMITTEE WILL, AS A PRIORITY TASK, DEVELOP AN ASSESSMENT MECHANISM FOR HOLDERS OF NON-STANDARD TEACHING QUALIFICATIONS.

"THIS WILL HELP US IDENTIFY A LARGER POOL OF POTENTIAL TEACHERS AND ENABLE THOSE WHO DEMONSTRATE THEIR COMPETENCE THROUGH OPEN TESTS TO BE APPOINTED AS QUALIFIED TEACHERS," MR CHAN SAID.

HE ADDED THAT SOME OF THE 780 NEW TEACHING POSTS TO BE CREATED NEXT YEAR WOULD BE FILLED THROUGH THIS NEW MECHANISM.

HOWEVER HE WAS QUICK TO ADDRESS SOME MEMBERS' WORRY THAT QUALITY WOULD BE LOWERED BY ADDING TOO MANY NEW TEACHERS TO THE SCHOOLS TOO QUICKLY.

"THE WHOLE THRUST OF THE ECR 5 STRATEGY IS TO ENABLE SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE A HIGHER QUALITY SERVICE," HE SAID.

"IN THE LONGER TERM, THIS HIGHER QUALITY WILL EMERGE FROM THE GREATER ATTRACTION OF TEACHING AS A CAREER, A REVITALISED TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME, AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TEACHERS TO UPGRADE THEIR QUALIFICATIONS THROUGHOUT THEIR CAREER.

"IN THE SHORT TERM, SCHOOLS SHOULD BE ABLE TO FILL THEIR NEW POSTS WITH COMPETENT TEACHERS, INCLUDING SOME EXPERIENCED TEACHERS DEFERRING THEIR RETIREMENT BY A YEAR OR TWO, AND SOME HOLDERS OF NON-STANDARD QUALIFICATIONS WHO HAVE PROVED THEIR SUITABILITY TO TEACH."

AS FOR KINDERGARTEN EDUCATION, MR CHAN SAID THE EXISTING POLICY WAS TO ENABLE ALL TO HAVE ACCESS TO KINDERGARTEN, BY PROVIDING FEE REMISSION TO THOSE WHO NEED IT AND BY SUBSIDISING, TO THE TUNE OF \$113 MILLION THIS YEAR, THE RENT AND RATES OF NON-PROFIT MAKING KINDERGARTEN.

HE SAID THE MAIN CONCERN AT THIS LEVEL OF EDUCATION WAS TO RAISE THE QUALITY OF TEACHERS.

TO HELP PARENTS MEET THE HIGHER FEES THAT AROSE FROM EMPLOYMENT OF TRAINED TEACHERS, FUNDING TO FEE REMISSION WILL BE INCREASED BY 145 PER CENT OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, FROM \$26 MILLION THIS YEAR TO \$63 MILLION IN 1996/97.

MR CHAN SAID: "THE KINDERGARTEN FEE REMISSION SCHEME WILL BY THEN BE FULLY ALIGNED WITH THE POINTS SYSTEM FOR SENIOR SECONDARY FEE REMISSION.

"WITH THIS SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES WHO NEED HELP WITH KINDERGARTEN FEES, WE SHALL BE IN A POSITION TO CONSIDER LEGISLATING FOR A MINIMUM PROPORTION OF TRAINED STAFF IN EACH KINDERGARTEN."

THIS WILL INCREASE THE DEMAND FOR TRAINED TEACHERS AND LEAD TO IMPROVED SALARIES, WHICH IN TURN, MOTIVATE MORE YOUNG PEOPLE TO UNDERGO TRAINING AS QUALIFIED KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS, HE ADDED.

ON THE ABOLITION OF FLOTATION CLASSES, MR CHAN SAID NEW SCHOOLS BUILT SINCE 1990 HAVE ENOUGH CLASSROOMS TO PROVIDE A BASE FOR ALL CLASSES AT OR BELOW SECONDARY 5.

THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT WILL DISCUSS WITH EXISTING SCHOOLS WITH A VIEW TO IDENTIFYING SUITABLE SOLUTIONS.

FOR FLOTATION AT SECONDARY 6 AND 7, HE SAID THE ANTICIPATED DECLINE IN SECONDARY SCHOOL ENROLMENT IN THE LATTER HALF OF THE 1990'S SHOULD OFFER PROSPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT.

HOWEVER, HE POINTED OUT THAT SPLIT CLASSES AND SMALL GROUP TEACHING WAS VERY MUCH A FACT OF LIFE AND FLOTATION DID HELP ACCLIMATISE STUDENTS FOR TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS WHICH DO NOT AS A RULE PROVIDE SPECIFIC CLASSROOMS.

HE NOTED THAT OF THE EXISTING 1,460 FLOATING CLASSES, 1,100 ARE IN SECONDARY 6 AND 7 AND SOME 360 ARE AT SECONDARY 5 OR BELOW.

MR CHAN ALSO SPOKE OF VARIOUS CHANGES IN THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK TO BE CARRIED OUT IN 1993 IN ORDER TO MAXIMISE THE BENEFIT OF THE IMPROVED TEACHER/STUDENT RATIOS, INCLUDING THE SETTING UP OF A COMMITTEE ON HOME-SCHOOL CO-OPERATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SYSTEMATIC, SCHOOL-BASED INDUCTION PROGRAMME FOR NEW TEACHERS.

TURNING TO EMPLOYMENT-RELATED MATTERS, THE SECRETARY NOTED THAT THE CALL FOR A GREAT EXPANSION OF RETRAINING PROGRAMME FOR WORKERS WAS WELL-MEANT BUT HAVE BEEN FOUNDED ON A MISREADING OF THE STATISTICS.

ACCORDING TO THE LATEST MANPOWER FORECAST RELEASED IN DECEMBER 1991, IT WAS PROJECTED THAT BY 1996, THE WORKFORCE WOULD INCLUDE 84,600 WORKERS WITH JUNIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION OR BELOW BUT OCCUPYING POSTS REQUIRING A HIGHER EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION.

THIS FIGURE REFERS TO PEOPLE WHO ARE ALREADY IN EMPLOYMENT AND DOES NOT EQUATE WITH THE REQUIREMENT FOR RETRAINING, HE SAID, NOTING THAT THE 1991 CENSUS SHOWED THAT 33,600 PEOPLE WITH JUNIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION OR BELOW WERE WORKING AS "MANAGERS AND ADMINISTRATORS".

THE EMPLOYEES RETRAINING SCHEME IS TARGETED AT THOSE WORKERS WHO HAVE DISPLACED FROM THEIR JOBS BECAUSE THEIR SKILLS HAVE BECOME REDUNDANT AS A RESULT OF STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE ECONOMY, AND WHO NEED SPECIAL ASSISTANCE TO ACQUIRE NEW SKILLS IN ORDER TO FIND NEW EMPLOYMENT, HE SAID.

THE PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF A SPECIAL SURVEY CONDUCTED RECENTLY TO QUANTIFY THE SIZE OF THIS TARGET GROUP INDICATED THAT SOME 31,000 WORKERS HAD BEEN DISPLACED FROM THEIR JOBS DURING THE 12-MONTH PERIOD ENDING JUNE THIS YEAR BECAUSE THEIR FORMER EMPLOYERS' BUSINESSES HAD CLOSED DOWN OR MOVED ELSEWHERE OR BECAUSE THEIR JOBS HAD BEEN MADE REDUNDANT.

HOWEVER, THE MAJORITY OF THESE WORKERS HAD MANAGED TO SECURE NEW EMPLOYMENT WITHIN THREE MONTHS. ONLY ABOUT 10,000 OF THEM HAD REMAINED UNEMPLOYED FOR THREE MONTHS OR LONGER.

IT IS RIGHT THAT WE SHOULD FOCUS ON THIS GROUP AT PRESENT AND REVIEW THE DEMAND REGULARLY, HE SAID.

MR CHAN ALSO NOTED A NUMBER OF BILLS DEALING WITH LABOUR MATTERS WHICH WOULD BE INTRODUCED IN THE COUNCIL'S CURRENT SESSION, INCLUDING DRAFT LEGISLATION TO INSTITUTE A COMPENSATION SCHEME FOR NOISE-INDUCED HEARING LOSS AND TO INCREASE THE LEVEL OF EX-GRATIA PAYMENT.

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STI ELABORATES ON COMPETITION POLICY

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THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR T H CHAU, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) EXPANDED ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE COMPETITION POLICY AND THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNOR'S BUSINESS COUNCIL.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADDRESS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR CHAU SAID ENHANCING COMPETITION AND PROVIDING MORE PROTECTION TO CONSUMERS DID NOT NECESSARILY HAD TO BE AT THE EXPENSE OF INHIBITING COMMERCIAL AND BUSINESS GROWTH.

CITING EXAMPLES IN THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS SECTOR, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD RECENTLY INVITED APPLICATIONS FOR ADDITIONAL LOCAL FIXED TELECOMS NETWORK LICENCES.

THE LICENCES ARE TO BE ISSUED IN COMPETITION WITH THAT OF THE HONG KONG TELEPHONE COMPANY, INITIALLY TO PROVIDE DATA AND FAX SERVICES AND THEN, BEYOND THE EXPIRY OF THE TELEPHONE COMPANY'S FRANCHISE OVER LOCAL FIXED NETWORK VOICE TELEPHONY IN 1995, TO COVER THIS SECTOR AS WELL, HE ADDED.

IN THE AREA OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT, HE SAID A NEW BUS FRANCHISE FOR A PACKAGE OF 26 ROUTES ON HONG KONG ISLAND HAD RECENTLY BEEN AWARDED TO A NEW OPERATOR THROUGH COMPETITIVE TENDER.

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"THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD ON THESE INITIATIVES WHILE DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE COMPETITION POLICY," MR CHAU SAID.

HE SAID AT THE PRESENT FORMATIVE STAGE, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE CONSIDERING A WHOLE RANGE OF ISSUES, INCLUDING FOR EXAMPLE, WHAT COMPETITION POLICY WAS BEST SUITED TO HONG KONG'S CIRCUMSTANCES.

MR CHAU ASSURED THE COUNCIL THAT IN THE COURSE OF DELIBERATION, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE VIEWS OF MEMBERS AND WOULD CONSULT OTHER RELEVANT ORGANISATIONS, SUCH AS THE CONSUMER COUNCIL, IN ADDITION TO THE GOVERNOR'S BUSINESS COUNCIL.

TURNING TO THE REPRESENTATION OF THE GOVERNOR'S BUSINESS COUNCIL, HE SAID IT WOULD ACT AS AN ADDITIONAL SOURCE OF EXPERT ADVICE FROM THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY.

"THE ABSENCE OF NON-BUSINESS SECTORS ON THE COUNCIL DOES NOT MEAN THAT THEIR VIEWS ARE UNIMPORTANT OR WILL BE IGNORED.

"QUITE THE REVERSE. THE GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO SEEK THE VIEWS OF THESE SECTORS AND CONSULT OTHER ADVISORY BODIES WHEN A POLICY OR PROPOSAL AFFECTS THEIR SPECIFIC INTEREST," HE SAID.

THE MANY ADVISORY BODIES WITH MULTI-SECTOR REPRESENTATION ALREADY PROVIDE THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE GOVERNOR WITH VALUABLE ADVICE, HE SAID.

"THEY WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO. THERE IS NO INTENTION AT ALL TO SIDESTEP THIS EXISTING NETWORK OF CONSULTATION," HE ADDED.

ON CONCERN ABOUT THE LACK OF REPRESENTATIVES OF SMALL BUSINESSES ON THE COUNCIL, MR CHAU ASSURED MEMBERS THAT THE GOVERNOR'S MIND WAS OPEN ON THIS.

"THERE IS NO REASON WHY THE COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL SHOULD NOT EVOLVE OVER TIME TO REFLECT CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES AND NEEDS," HE ADDED.

TURNING TO THE INDUSTRIAL POLICY, MR CHAU SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WAS COMMITTED TO ALLOWING THE FREE PLAY OF MARKET FORCES AND TO TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITIES WHICH THE OPENING UP OF CHINA HAD PRESENTED.

"THAT SAID, WE ARE COMMITTED TO SUPPORT INDUSTRY'S OWN EFFORTS TO IMPROVE ITS QUALITY, ITS EFFICIENCY, AND ITS DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF TECHNOLOGY," HE SAID.

IN ADDITION TO MAINTAINING A FAVOURABLE CLIMATE FOR BUSINESS AS A WHOLE, THE GOVERNMENT HAS INVESTED HEAVILY IN PROJECTS WHICH ARE SPECIFICALLY TARGETED AT SUPPORTING INDUSTRIAL UPGRADING.

EXAMPLES ARE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A THIRD INDUSTRIAL ESTATE AT TSEUNG KWAN O, THE WIDE RANGE OF SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE HONG KONG PRODUCTIVITY COUNCIL, THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW INDUSTRIAL TECHNOLOGY CENTRE, AN ALLOCATION OF \$200 MILLION FOR INVESTMENT IN APPLIED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN INDUSTRY AND THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT'S INWARD INVESTMENT PROGRAMME.

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ALSO, HE SAID THE INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL WILL ADVISE THE GOVERNMENT ON HOW ITS SUPPORT CAN BE MOST EFFECTIVELY CHANNELLED, AND ON WHAT ADDITIONAL RESOURCES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED.

"THE FACT THAT WE HAVE INSTITUTED PROGRAMMES WHICH ARE SPECIALLY DESIGNED TO SUPPORT INDUSTRY IS A RECOGNITION OF THE IMPORTANCE WHICH WE ATTACH TO THIS VITAL ECONOMIC SECTOR.

"AND I WOULD ADD THAT OUR THINKING ON HOW AND TO WHAT EXTENT WE SHOULD SUPPORT INDUSTRY IS BY NO MEANS STATIC," HE SAID.

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SMUGGLING AND JUVENILE CRIME REMAIN A MAJOR CONCERN

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SMUGGLING AND JUVENILE CRIME REMAIN TWO AREAS OF MAJOR CONCERN AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF A SIX PER CENT DROP IN OVERALL CRIME, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE MOTION OF THANKS, MR ASPREY SAID SEVERAL FACTORS HAD CONTRIBUTED TO THE DROP IN OVERALL CRIME RATE.

THESE ARE INCREASED POLICE DEPLOYMENT ON THE STREETS, INCREASED CO-OPERATION WITH CHINA TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM OF CROSS-BORDER CRIME AND CHANGES IN LEGISLATION IN RESPONSE TO CHANGES IN THE PATTERN AND NATURE OF CRIME.

HE SAID JUVENILE CRIME RATE HAD IN FACT DROPPED BY EIGHT PER CENT IN THE FIRST THREE QUARTERS OF THIS YEAR WHEN COMPARED WITH THE SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR.

BUT WHAT WAS WORRYING WAS THAT YOUNGSTERS WERE INCREASINGLY BECOMING INVOLVED IN MORE SERIOUS OFFENCES, SUCH AS BURGLARIES, ROBBERIES AND UNLAWFUL SOCIETY OFFENCES, HE ADDED.

ALTHOUGH THERE WAS NO ORGANISED TRIAD CAMPAIGN TO ENTER SCHOOLS TO RECRUIT STUDENTS, SOME SCHOOLS DID SUFFER FROM TRIAD AND OTHER GANG ACTIVITIES, HE NOTED.

"TO TACKLE THIS PROBLEM, THE POLICE WILL MAINTAIN A PRESENCE AROUND SCHOOLS DURING SCHOOL HOURS, AND STEPS ARE BEING TAKEN TO REINFORCE AND CO-ORDINATE BETTER SUPPORT GIVEN BY A NUMBER OF DEPARTMENTS TO SCHOOLS WITH TRIAD AND GANG PROBLEMS," HE SAID.

ON THE SUBSTANTIAL INCREASES IN SMUGGLING OFFENCES AND THE RELATED PROBLEM OF CAR THEFT, MR ASPREY SAID THE PRESENT SCALE OF THE PROBLEM AND THE BLATANT FLOUTING OF THE LAW CALL FOR INCREASED PENALTIES.

"THE PRESENT MAXIMUM PENALTIES FOR THE MAIN SMUGGLING OFFENCES ARE A FINE OF \$500,000 AND IMPRISONMENT FOR TWO YEARS ON SUMMARY CONVICTION.

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"I WILL BE PROPOSING THAT THESE OFFENCES BE MADE TRIABLE ON INDICTMENT, WITH PENALTIES INCREASED TO A MAXIMUM FINE OF \$2 MILLION AND SEVEN YEARS' IMPRISONMENT," HE SAID.

HE WOULD ALSO BE PROPOSING FURTHER CONTROLS ON THE OPERATION AND DESIGN OF "CHUNG FEI" SPEEDBOATS, ALONG THE LINES OF THE CONTROLS INTRODUCED LAST YEAR ON "TAI FEIS", WHICH EFFECTIVELY REDUCED THEIR NUMBER AND THEIR OPERATION ON HONG KONG.

ANOTHER PROPOSAL TO DETER CAR THEFT WHICH HE INTENDED TO BRING FORWARD WAS TO INCREASE THE MAXIMUM PENALTY FOR THE OFFENCE FROM THREE YEARS' TO SEVEN YEARS' IMPRISONMENT.

HE SAID NEW LEGISLATIVE MEASURES WERE IMPORTANT BUT WERE NOT THE ONLY WEAPON TO COMBAT SMUGGLING. VIGOROUS ENFORCEMENT ACTION WAS ALSO REQUIRED, TOGETHER WITH EFFECTIVE CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION.

HONG KONG AND CHINA HAD A COMMON INTEREST IN THIS PROBLEM AND THERE HAD BEEN GOOD CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES IN THE PAST YEAR, NOT ONLY AGAINST SMUGGLING BUT AGAINST CROSS-BORDER CRIME GENERALLY, HE NOTED.

"BUT THERE IS SCOPE FOR GREATER CO-OPERATION, AND THE POLICE ARE DISCUSSING WITH THEIR CHINESE COUNTERPARTS THE MOUNTING OF FURTHER CO-ORDINATED OPERATIONS AGAINST SMUGGLING."

ON ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION, MR ASPREY SAID THE AUTHORITIES WERE SEEKING THE CO-OPERATION OF WORKERS AND EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATIONS TO TACKLE THIS PROBLEM.

"WE ARE ALSO DISCUSSING WITH THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY OF CONSTRUCTION SITES, SO AS TO MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS TO WORK THERE.

"WE ARE ALSO WORKING ON IMPROVED PUBLICITY, TO EXPLAIN TO WOULD-BE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS IN CHINA THE RISKS AND PENALTIES THEY FACE IF THEY TRY TO ENTER HONG KONG," HE SAID.

TURNING TO THE POLICE FORCE, MR ASPREY SAID POLICE RECRUITMENT HAD PICKED UP GREATLY SINCE THE ANNOUNCEMENT IN MAY THIS YEAR OF MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF JUNIOR POLICE OFFICERS.

THE POLICE FORCE HAD ALSO CIVILIANISED A NUMBER OF NON-OPERATIONAL POSTS AND TO TRANSFER CERTAIN NON-CONSTABULARY DUTIES TO OTHER DEPARTMENTS.

"I CAN ALSO NOW CONFIDENTLY PREDICT THE CLOSURE OF THE SEK KONG DETENTION CENTRE IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, AND THE CONSEQUENT TRANSFER OF POLICE MANPOWER FROM VIETNAMESE CENTRE DUTIES BACK TO NORMAL POLICE WORK," HE SAID.

THE NET EFFECT OF ALL THESE MEASURES WILL BE A CONTINUING INCREASE OVER THE COMING MONTHS IN THE NUMBER OF POLICE OFFICERS DEPLOYED ON THE STREETS.

HE SAID THE POLICE FORCE WAS ALSO FINALISING PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER COMPUTERISATION OF ITS CRIME INVESTIGATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS.

THESE SHOULD RESULT IN CONSIDERABLE SAVINGS IN MANPOWER, IMPROVED OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY, AND A BETTER SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC.

ON THE PROBLEM OF VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS, MR ASPREY SAID HE VIEWED WITH RELIEF THE ABSENCE OF ANY REFERENCE TO THE VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS IN THE GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADDRESS.

HE NOTED THAT A YEAR AGO, THE VIETNAMESE POPULATION IN THE CENTRES STOOD AT OVER 64,000. TODAY IT WAS ABOUT 48,000.

"ALTHOUGH WE HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM, I BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO SUSTAIN IN FUTURE AT LEAST THE SAME STEADY REDUCTION IN POPULATION THAT WE HAVE SEEN OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS," HE SAID.

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MEASURES TO TACKLE CONGESTION IN NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES

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THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR MICHAEL LEUNG, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) OUTLINED A SERIES OF MEASURES TO DEAL WITH TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN THE NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE MOTION OF THANKS FOR THE GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR LEUNG SAID A WORKING GROUP COMPRISING REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND RELEVANT DISTRICT BOARDS IS BEING SET UP TO EXPLORE WHAT CAN BE DONE TO MANAGE ROAD SPACE BETTER AND TO IMPROVE PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN THE NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES.

THE GROUP WILL CONSIDER THE BETTER SCHEDULING OF ROAD MAINTENANCE PROGRAMMES SO AS TO MINIMISE TRAFFIC DISRUPTION.

OTHER MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED INCLUDE THE PROS AND CONS OF INTRODUCING BUS-ONLY LANES AND OTHER MANAGEMENT MEASURES TO FACILITATE PUBLIC TRANSPORT MOVEMENTS DURING PEAK HOURS.

THE WORKING GROUP IS EXPECTED TO SUBMIT THE FIRST REPORT TO THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT WITHIN THREE MONTHS OF ITS ESTABLISHMENT.

MR LEUNG ALSO DISCLOSED THAT DISCUSSIONS ARE NOW TAKING PLACE WITH ALL FERRY OPERATORS ON HOW BEST TO OPEN UP MORE FERRY SERVICES TO TUEN MUN, PARTICULARLY DURING PEAK HOURS.

"WE BELIEVE THAT THERE IS SCOPE TO INTRODUCE MORE HEALTHY COMPETITION BY BRINGING IN NEW OPERATORS AND ADDING NEW ROUTES TO SERVE THE EXPANDING POPULATION OF THE NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES," MR LEUNG SAID.

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IN THE LONGER TERM, MR LEUNG SAID THE SOLUTION TO ROAD CONGESTION IN THE NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES LAY IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE COUNTRY PARK SECTION OF ROUTE 3.

PRELIMINARY DESIGNS OF THIS \$10 BILLION PROJECT ARE IN HAND AND A REPORT IS EXPECTED FROM THE FINANCIAL CONSULTANTS NEXT MONTH ON HOW BEST THE PROJECT COULD BE FINANCED BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR SO THAT IT COULD BE BUILT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

ON PEAK HOUR CONGESTION OF THE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT SYSTEM (LRT), MR LEUNG SAID A REVIEW IS IN HAND TO CONSIDER HOW BEST TO RELAX EXISTING RULES IN THE TRANSIT SERVICE AREA.

RESULTS OF THE REVIEW WILL BE RELEASED EARLY NEXT YEAR FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION.

OTHER MEASURES TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC FLOW IN THE NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES INCLUDE A \$2.7 BILLION ROAD CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME, AN EXTENSION OF THE LRT TO TIN SHUI WAI, AND AN EXTENSIVE ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME WHICH INCLUDES PLANS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF CLIMBING LANES IN THE UPHILL SECTION OF THE TUEN MUN HIGHWAY AND THE WIDENING OF SECTIONS OF CASTLE PEAK ROAD.

ON LONG-TERM TRANSPORT PLANNING, MR LEUNG SAID A CONSULTANTS REPORT ON RAIL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE AVAILABLE BY THE END OF THIS YEAR.

THE REPORT WILL COVER RAIL LINKS TO THE NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES AND OTHER AREAS INCLUDING TSEUNG KWAN O.

MR LEUNG STRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT COMMITTED TO BUILDING AN MTR EXTENSION TO TSEUNG KWAN O UNTIL AN OVERALL VIEW IS TAKEN ON ITS VIABILITY AND ITS RELATIVE PRIORITY COMPARED WITH OTHER RAIL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES.

ALSO BY EARLY NEXT YEAR, A FREIGHT TRANSPORT STUDY WILL BE FINALISED. THE STUDY WILL RECOMMEND A POSSIBLE FREIGHT RAIL LINE TO THE CONTAINER PORT AND MEASURES TO ORGANISE THE TRUCKING INDUSTRY MORE EFFICIENTLY.

REVIEWING TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT, MR LEUNG SAID HONG KONG CAN JUSTIFIABLY BE PROUD OF ITS RECORD.

"OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS, WE HAVE BUILT THREE MTR LINES, ONE LIGHT RAIL SYSTEM, SIX TUNNELS AND OVER 350 KILOMETRES OF ROAD.

"WE HAVE ADDED 120 BUS ROUTES, 70 RESIDENTIAL COACH SERVICES AND 150 GREEN MINIBUS SERVICES."

IN ADDITION, THE KCRC HAS INVESTED \$5.8 BILLION IN UPGRADING ITS SYSTEM AND ROLLING STOCK AND THE MTRC HAVE SPENT \$15 BILLION, MR LEUNG SAID.

"BUT NO CITY IN THE WORLD CAN EVER REMOVE TRAFFIC CONGESTION COMPLETELY.

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"INDEED, TRAFFIC CONGESTION CAN BE REGARDED AS A SIGN OF A DYNAMIC AND GROWING ECONOMY.

"NEW ROADS WILL SOON BECOME FULL BECAUSE OF RELEASED SUPPRESSED DEMANDS.

"WE CAN NEVER BUILD OURSELVES OUT OF CONGESTION. THE SIMPLE TRUTH IS THAT TRAFFIC CONGESTION HERE AND ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD CAN ONLY BE CONTAINED AND MANAGED, NOT ELIMINATED," MR LEUNG SAID.

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ANXIETY ABOUT FUNDING FOR SOCIAL SECURITY SCHEME ALLAYED

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THE INJECTION INTO THE LOTTERIES FUND OF \$2.3 BILLION TO MEET THE RECURRENT SPENDING ON NEW WELFARE SERVICES OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS IS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE GOOD REVENUE SITUATION THAT HONG KONG HAS ENJOYED IN THE RECENT PAST.

WHEN THIS INJECTION OF FUNDING IS EXHAUSTED, THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO ABSORB ITS COMMITMENTS INTO THE GENERAL REVENUE ACCOUNT.

THIS ASSURANCE WAS GIVEN BY THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, DURING THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE MOTION OF THANKS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SOME LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLORS HAD CRITICISED THIS INJECTION OF NEW MONEY AS MERELY SETTling OLD DEBTS, OR AT BEST OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLE.

HOWEVER, MRS WONG REJECTED THIS CRITICISM, POINTING OUT THAT "WHETHER IT IS OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLE OR NEW WINE IN OLD BOTTLE, THE BOTTLE IS NOT AT ISSUE HERE".

"WHAT MATTERS SURELY IS THE WINE," SHE CONTENDED. "IT IS THE BENEFITS TO THE PEOPLE THAT WE SHOULD BE CONCERNED WITH.

"THESE BENEFITS ARE NEW. THESE BENEFITS ARE ACHIEVEABLE. THIS IS THE POINT OF FOCUS."

SHE RECALLED THAT AT THE TIME OF THE PUBLICATION OF THE WHITE PAPER ON SOCIAL WELFARE AND THE GREEN PAPER ON REHABILITATION, THE MAIN CONCERN WAS THE LACK OF GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL COMMITMENT.

"NOW WE HAVE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT AND WE SHOULD GET ON WITH THE WORK," SHE ADDED.

MRS WONG ALSO ADDRESSED SOME OF THE MAIN ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS IN THE COUNCIL EARLIER.

ON PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, SHE SAID THE SCHEME HAD DEVELOPED ON THE CONCEPT OF NEED TO ENSURE THAT THE CLIENTS' STANDARD OF LIVING DID NOT LAG TOO FAR BEHIND THAT OF THE GENERAL POPULATION.

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IN FACT, SINCE THE SCHEME WAS FIRST INTRODUCED IN 1971, THE RATES HAVE BEEN ADJUSTED 14 TIMES ACCORDING TO THE MOVEMENT OF THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE INDEX OF PRICES (PAIP) - FROM \$70 PER PERSON PER MONTH IN THAT YEAR TO \$825 THIS YEAR.

THIS REPRESENTS AN INCREASE OF 1,079 PER CENT AS COMPARED WITH THE PAIP WHICH HAS INCREASED ONLY BY 508 PER CENT BETWEEN 1971 AND 1992.

"IN OTHER WORDS, THE REAL INCREASE IN THE RATES EXCEEDS INFLATION RATE FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS," SHE SAID.

TO FURTHER IMPROVE THE LEVEL OF BENEFITS, A COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE SCHEME CONSISTING OF STANDARD RATES AND SPECIAL SUBSIDIES TO MEET INDIVIDUAL NEEDS OF RECIPIENTS WILL BE INTRODUCED ON JULY 1 NEXT YEAR.

MRS WONG TOLD THE COUNCIL THAT THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RATES WOULD BE ADJUSTED TWICE NEXT YEAR - FIRST, AN INCREASE IN APRIL UNDER PAIP FOR INFLATION AND SECONDLY, IN JULY TO IMPLEMENT REAL IMPROVEMENTS BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE SCHEME ON TOP OF THE APRIL ADJUSTMENT.

AS REGARDS CALLS TO PERMIT OLD AGE ALLOWANCE AND DISABILITY ALLOWANCE RECIPIENTS TO CONTINUE RECEIVING THE ALLOWANCE WHILST THEY ARE ABSENT FROM HONG KONG, MRS WONG REITERATED THAT THE ALLOWANCE WAS MEANT FOR PERSONS ORDINARILY RESIDENT IN HONG KONG AND NOT HONG KONG PEOPLE WHO RESIDE PERMANENTLY OUTSIDE OF HONG KONG.

SHE SAID: "WE ARE NOW RELAXING THE ABSENCE RULE TO 180 DAYS. THIS IS A RATIONAL CUT-OFF POINT.

"IF WE ARE TO ABOLISH THE ABSENCE RULE COMPLETELY, ANY PERSON WHO FULFILS THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA WOULD RECEIVE THE ALLOWANCE FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE EVEN IF HE IS SETTLED PERMANENTLY ELSEWHERE.

"THIS WOULD BE AN OPEN-ENDED COMMITMENT AND OPEN AT BOTH ENDS, THAT IS TO SAY BOTH IN TERMS OF THE NUMBER OF FUTURE APPLICATIONS AND THE DURATION OF INDIVIDUAL PAYMENT.

"THIS WOULD BE A TREMENDOUS BURDEN ON THOSE WHO REMAIN IN HONG KONG."

SHE ADDED THAT TO COMPLETELY RELAX THE ABSENCE RULE WOULD COST AT LEAST AN ADDITIONAL \$300 MILLION A YEAR AT 1992-93 PRICES BASED ON PRESENT QUALIFYING RESIDENCE REQUIREMENTS.

ON THE PROVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES, MRS WONG SAID THE REAL GROWTH IN THIS AREA WOULD BE INCREASED BY 10 PER CENT FROM THE PRESENT \$477 MILLION TO \$527 MILLION NEXT YEAR.

THERE WILL BE 18 ADDITIONAL SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS AND FOUR ADDITIONAL OUTREACHING SOCIAL WORK TEAMS IN 1993-94 ALONE. THE WHITE PAPER TARGET OF ONE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER TO 2,000 STUDENTS WILL BE ACHIEVED BY 1995-96 AND THE FULL WHITE PAPER TARGET OF 30 OUTREACHING SOCIAL WORK TEAMS BY 1994-95.

AGREEING THAT HONG KONG NEEDS A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO YOUTH SERVICES, MRS WONG CALLED ON TEACHERS, SOCIAL WORKERS AND PARENTS TO WORK TOGETHER TO EXPLORE WAYS TO ENABLE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS TO FUNCTION AS PART OF THE SOCIAL TEAM.

IN THE AREA OF REHABILITATION, MRS WONG POINTED OUT THAT THE PROPOSED EXPENDITURE ON SOCIAL REHABILITATION ALONE WOULD INCREASE IN REAL TERMS BY 73 PER CENT - FROM 1992-93 REVISED ESTIMATES OF \$483 MILLION TO \$836 MILLION IN 1996-97.

SHE ASSURED MEMBERS THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD UNDERTAKEN TO MEET TARGETS IN DAY AND RESIDENTIAL SERVICES FOR DISABLED PERSONS BY 1996-97, WELL BEFORE THE 10 YEARS AS ENVISAGED IN THE GREEN PAPER ON REHABILITATION.

A NUMBER OF ESSENTIAL IMPROVEMENT MEASURES WILL ALSO BE PUT IN PLACE. THESE INCLUDE THE EXPANSION OF SCHEDULED REHABUS ROUTES, AFTER-CARE SERVICE FOR FORMER MENTAL PATIENTS, ADDITIONAL INTEGRATED PROGRAMME UNITS FOR DISABLED CHILDREN, AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCE TEACHERS FOR AUTISTIC CHILDREN.

TURNING TO HOSPITAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, MRS WONG SAID EXPENDITURE ON HOSPITAL AND HEALTH SERVICES THIS YEAR STOOD AT \$12.5 BILLION. THIS WILL BE INCREASED TO \$15.3 BILLION BY 1997.

THE MANY MEASURES THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN TAKING IN RECENT YEARS TO HELP RECRUIT AND RETAIN MORE NURSES ARE ALSO BEGINNING TO SHOW ENCOURAGING RESULTS: THE WASTAGE RATE OF NURSES IS REDUCED FROM OVER 13 PER CENT PREVIOUSLY TO 10 PER CENT NOW, AND THERE HAS BEEN A STEADY PATTERN OF HONG KONG NURSES RETURNING FROM OVERSEAS.

"WE WILL FURTHER RE-DEFINE AND RE-ALIGN THEIR DUTIES AND TAKE ALL NECESSARY STEPS TO ENSURE THAT WE DO NOT HAVE A SHORTAGE OF NURSING," SHE SAID.

AS REGARDS IMPROVEMENT TO HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT, MRS WONG REPORTED THAT THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY WAS CONFIDENT TO BRING INTO OPERATION ALL THE 950 HOSPITAL BEDS COMING ON STREAM NEXT YEAR.

SHE NOTED THAT THE AUTHORITY HAD ALREADY SUCCEEDED IN ELIMINATING CAMP BEDS FROM TWO MAJOR HOSPITALS AHEAD OF SCHEDULE AND DEvised NEW PROCEDURES FOR DRUG ADMINISTRATION.

IT IS NOW NETWORKING SERVICES TO ELIMINATE DUPLICATION, SETTING UP A PATIENT-RELATIONS SYSTEM TO RESPOND BETTER TO PATIENT NEEDS AND REDEPLOYING RESOURCES TO ENHANCE THE LEVEL AND QUALITY OF HOSPITAL SERVICES.

FINALLY, ON THE QUESTION OF MEDICAL POLICY, MRS WONG SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD INTRODUCED MAJOR HOSPITAL REFORMS, REVIEWED THE PRIMARY HEALTH CARE SYSTEM AND ESTABLISHED THE ACADEMY OF MEDICINE.

"WE ARE NOW IN THE THROES OF PREPARING A GREEN PAPER ON OPTIONS FOR OUR FUTURE FEES AND WAIVER STRATEGY," SHE SAID.

"OUR AIM IS FOR BETTER PATIENT CARE: TO ACHIEVE HIGHER QUALITY OF SERVICE, TO EFFECT BETTER COST-CONTAINMENT AND TO PROVIDE GREATER CHOICE AND COMFORT FOR OUR PATIENTS.

"ALL THESE ENDEAVOURS ARE UNDERTAKEN AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF OUR TIME HONOURED POLICY THAT NO PERSON SHOULD BE PREVENTED, THROUGH LACK OF MEANS, FROM OBTAINING ADEQUATE MEDICAL TREATMENT.

"THIS IS OUR POLICY: THIS REMAINS OUR PLEDGE," MRS WONG STATED.

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GOVT COMMITTED TO PROMOTING ARTS AND CULTURE

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THE GOVERNMENT WAS FULLY COMMITTED TO PROMOTING CULTURE AND MAKING HONG KONG A CULTURAL CENTRE OF ASIA, THE SECRETARY FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE, MR JAMES SO, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADDRESS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR SO SAID THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY IN DEVELOPING CULTURE AND THE ARTS WAS TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR THE ARTS TO DEVELOP, AND TO FORGE A SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT THAT WAS CONDUCIVE TO THE FLOURISHING OF THE ARTS.

"THIS POLICY HAS WORKED WELL, AND IN THE PAST 10 YEARS WE HAVE SEEN HONG KONG'S CULTURAL SCENE BLOSSOMING OUT IN A MOST COLOURFUL AND DIVERSED MANNER," HE SAID.

"HONG KONG IS NO LONGER A 'CULTURAL DESERT'. INDEED, IT HAS BECOME THE CULTURAL CENTRE OF ASIA, BLENDING AND OFFERING THE BEST OF EAST/WEST CULTURE.

"THIS ACHIEVEMENT IS HIGHLY REMARKABLE BY ANY STANDARD AND IT CLEARLY DEMONSTRATES THE GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION AND COMMITMENT TO NURTURE, PROMOTE AND DEVELOP CULTURE AND THE ARTS IN HONG KONG," HE ADDED.

HE EXPLAINED THAT ALTHOUGH GOVERNMENT FUNDS ALLOCATED TO THE COUNCIL FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS (CFPA) HAD BEEN FROZEN AT \$35.14 MILLION IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, IT ONLY FOLLOWED A PERIOD OF RAPID GROWTH.

IN 1985/86, THE CFPA WAS ONLY ALLOCATED \$15 MILLION. THIS WAS INCREASED TO \$35.14 MILLION IN 1990/91, AN INCREASE OF OVER 230 PER CENT IN FIVE YEARS.

THIS WAS IN SPITE OF THE URBAN COUNCIL TAKING OVER THE FUNDING OF THE HONG KONG PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA FROM THE CFPA IN 1989, THUS RELEASING SOME \$10 MILLION FROM CFPA'S FUNDS TO FINANCE NEW ACTIVITIES.

HOWEVER, MR SO SAID HE WOULD TRY HIS BEST TO OBTAIN A MODEST INCREASE IN THE FUNDS TO BE ALLOCATED TO THE CFPA IN THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR TO HELP NURTURE NEW AND BUDDING ARTS GROUPS.

/HE SAID

HE SAID APART FROM THE ALLOCATION OF FUNDS TO THE CFPA, SUPPORT TO THE ARTS HAD BEEN PROVIDED BY THE TWO MUNICIPAL COUNCILS.

IN 1990/91, THE MUNICIPAL COUNCILS SPENT \$430 MILLION ON THE PRESENTATION OF ARTS PROGRAMMES AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE VARIOUS PROFESSIONAL, SEMI-PROFESSIONAL AND AMATEUR PERFORMING GROUPS.

"THIS WAS RAISED TO \$509 MILLION IN 1991/92 AND FURTHER INCREASED TO \$539 MILLION IN 1992/93."

HE ADDED THAT CORPORATE AND INDIVIDUAL SPONSORSHIP OF THE ARTS HAD INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY IN THE LAST TWO YEARS.

THE CFPA HAD SUCCEEDED IN ATTRACTING OVER \$3.86 MILLION WORTH OF SPONSORSHIP FOR NEW AND BUDDING PERFORMING GROUPS THROUGH THE MATCHING GRANT SCHEME IN THE LAST TWO YEARS.

MR SO SAID: "ALL THESE ARE IN LINE WITH OUR POLICY TO DEVELOP A CONSTRUCTIVE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT, THE MUNICIPAL COUNCILS AND THE COMMUNITY TO PROMOTE CULTURE AND THE ARTS IN HONG KONG."

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS INTERESTED IN PROMOTING HONG KONG'S CULTURAL IMAGE ABROAD.

THE RECENT SUCCESS OF FESTIVAL HONG KONG '92 IN CANADA WAS CLEAR INDICATION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS IN THIS REGARD, HE ADDED.

A TOTAL OF SEVEN PERFORMING TROUPES, COVERING DANCE, DRAMA AND MUSIC, WITH A CONTINGENT OF SOME 300 PERFORMERS AND ARTISTS, TOOK PART IN THE MULTI-FACETED FESTIVAL THROUGHOUT THIS MONTH IN CANADA.

MR SO TOLD THE COUNCIL THAT THE RECREATION AND CULTURE BRANCH WAS CURRENTLY CONDUCTING A REVIEW OF THE PRESENT ARTS POLICY IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE EDUCATION, URBAN SERVICES AND REGIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENTS AND IN CONSULTATION WITH THE CFPA.

"AT THE SAME TIME, I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A CRITICAL LOOK AT THE ROLE OF THE CFPA TO SEE IF IT IS ADVISABLE TO REMODEL IT INTO AN ARTS COUNCIL OR AN ARTS DEVELOPMENT BOARD," HE SAID.

HE SAID THE ARTS POLICY WOULD EVOLVE WITH SUITABLE INPUT FROM THE ARTS COMMUNITY AND ALL THOSE INVOLVED IN PROMOTING AND DEVELOPING CULTURE AND THE ARTS IN HONG KONG.

MOTION UNDER CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ORDINANCE MOVED

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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) MOVED A MOTION UNDER CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ORDINANCE TO INCREASE THE MAXIMUM FEES PAYABLE TO COUNSEL AND SOLICITORS ENGAGED BY THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AID TO ACT FOR LEGALLY AIDED PERSONS IN CRIMINAL CASES.

MOVING THE MOTION, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID FORD, SAID THE INCREASES WERE CONSIDERED NECESSARY BECAUSE OF INFLATION AND THE DIFFICULTY THE GOVERNMENT HAD EXPERIENCED IN ENGAGING THE SERVICES OF PRIVATE PRACTITIONERS IN LEGALLY AIDED CASES, PARTICULARLY IN THE MAGISTRACIES AND THE DISTRICT COURTS.

THESE FEES WERE LAST REVISED IN APRIL LAST YEAR.

ON OCTOBER 16 THE FINANCE COMMITTEE GAVE APPROVAL FOR THE FEE INCREASES TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN TWO STAGES: WITH EFFECT FROM NOVEMBER 1, 1992 AND APRIL 1, 1994.

THE FIRST STAGE OF THE INCREASES, AS PROVIDED FOR UNDER THE LEGAL AID IN CRIMINAL CASES (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) RULES 1992, WILL HAVE THE EFFECT OF INCREASING PRESENT FEE LEVELS BY A RANGE OF BETWEEN 12.5% AND 50%.

"UNDER SECTION 9A OF THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ORDINANCE, THE CHIEF JUSTICE MAY, WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MAKE RULES PRESCRIBING THE SCALE OF FEES AND COSTS WHICH SHALL BE PAID TO SOLICITORS OR COUNSEL ACTING FOR A LEGALLY AIDED PERSON," THE CHIEF SECRETARY SAID.

HE SAID THE PROPOSED FEE INCREASES HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION WHICH HAD BEEN CONSULTED ON THE PROPOSALS.

THE REVISED FEES WOULD ENABLE THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AID TO ENGAGE COUNSEL OF APPROPRIATE EXPERIENCE IN CRIMINAL CASES, HE SAID.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL ALSO USES THE SAME FEES TO ENGAGE COUNSEL TO APPEAR IN COURT FOR THE CROWN, THE CHIEF SECRETARY ADDED.

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DIFFICULTIES IN ACTION AGAINST VICE
IN MASSAGE PARLOURS EXPLAINED

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THE MAJOR DIFFICULTY ENCOUNTERED BY THE POLICE IN TAKING ACTION AGAINST VICE IN MASSAGE ESTABLISHMENTS LIES IN PROVING THAT THE OPERATORS ARE KNOWINGLY INVOLVED IN SUCH ACTIVITIES, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON JAMES TO KUN-SUN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), MR ASPREY SAID WHEN SEXUAL SERVICES WERE PROVIDED IN THESE ESTABLISHMENTS, THE ARRANGEMENT WAS INVARIABLY MADE DIRECTLY BETWEEN THE CUSTOMER AND THE MASSEUSE, WITHOUT ANY OBVIOUS INVOLVEMENT ON THE PART OF THE OPERATORS OR MANAGEMENT.

"IT IS THEREFORE NOT EASY TO PROSECUTE SUCCESSFULLY THE OPERATORS OF MASSAGE PARLOURS FOR A BREACH OF LICENSING CONDITIONS OR FOR KEEPING A VICE ESTABLISHMENT," HE SAID.

THERE ARE CURRENTLY 175 LICENSED MASSAGE ESTABLISHMENTS OPERATING IN HONG KONG. IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS, 20 LICENCES WERE REVOKED OR NOT RENEWED BECAUSE THE PREMISES WERE OPERATING AS VICE ESTABLISHMENTS.

MR ASPREY SAID: "WE DO NOT HAVE AN ACCURATE RECORD OF THE NUMBER OF UNLICENSED MASSAGE ESTABLISHMENTS. HOWEVER, THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM IS INDICATED BY POLICE ESTIMATES THAT THERE ARE SOME 80 UNLICENSED MASSAGE ESTABLISHMENTS IN MONG KOK, WHERE MOST SUCH PREMISES ARE LOCATED.

"THE MAJORITY OF THE UNLICENSED MASSAGE PARLOURS ARE INVOLVED IN VICE ACTIVITIES."

MR ASPREY INFORMED THE COUNCIL THAT THERE WERE NO PLANS AT PRESENT TO INCREASE THE MAXIMUM PENALTY OR TO PROVIDE FOR CLOSURE ORDERS.

"HOWEVER, WE WILL KEEP UNDER REVIEW THE NEED FOR CHANGES TO THE LAW," HE ADDED.

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BILL TO ENSURE SAFETY OF LIFE AT SEA

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A BILL THAT AIMED TO PROVIDE THE DIRECTOR OF MARINE WITH NECESSARY ADDITIONAL POWERS TO ENSURE SAFETY OF LIFE AT SEA WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE MERCHANT SHIPPING (SAFETY) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MRS ANSON CHAN, SAID THE FIRST POWER RELATED TO THE SURVEY OF FOREIGN REGISTERED PASSENGER SHIPS, OPERATING FROM HONG KONG, WHICH DID NOT CALL AT ANY OTHER PORT.

/FOREIGN REGISTERED

FOREIGN REGISTERED PASSENGER SHIPS BASED IN HONG KONG WHICH PROCEED ON SHORT VOYAGES WITHOUT CALLING AT ANOTHER PORT POSSESS VALID SAFETY CERTIFICATES ISSUED UNDER THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR THE SAFETY OF LIFE AT SEA (SOLAS).

HOWEVER, THE ADMINISTRATION CONSIDERS THAT THE SAFETY OF THESE SHIPS NEEDED TO BE FURTHER GUARANTEED FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS, MRS CHAN SAID.

FIRST, THESE SHIPS ARE REMOTE FROM THE CONTROL OF THEIR FLAG STATE ADMINISTRATIONS, WHO MAY NOT BE WELL PLACED TO ENSURE THAT SAFETY STANDARDS ARE MAINTAINED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONVENTION, MRS CHAN EXPLAINED.

SECONDLY, SUCH SHIPS IN EFFECT OPERATE ON A LOCAL BASIS AND CARRY LARGE NUMBERS OF HONG KONG PASSENGERS WHO NATURALLY LOOK TO THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE A POSITIVE ROLE IN ENSURING THEIR SAFETY.

SHE SAID ONE FURTHER COMPLICATION WAS THAT CERTIFICATES ISSUED UNDER SOLAS WERE ONLY VALID FOR INTERNATIONAL VOYAGES, I.E., VOYAGES FROM ONE PORT TO ANOTHER.

"IT IS DOUBTFUL WHETHER SUCH CERTIFICATES WHEN USED IN RESPECT OF NON-INTERNATIONAL VOYAGES ARE VALID," THE SECRETARY SAID.

THIS UNCERTAINTY IS NOT HELPED BY THE EXISTING LEGISLATION, WHICH DOES NOT DISTINGUISH BETWEEN SHIPS ENGAGED ON INTERNATIONAL AND NON-INTERNATIONAL VOYAGES, MRS CHAN NOTED.

MRS CHAN SAID THE FIRST AIM OF THE BILL THUS WAS TO REMOVE THE LEGAL UNCERTAINTIES BY CLEARLY PROVIDING THE DIRECTOR OF MARINE WITH SPECIFIC POWERS TO CONDUCT SAFETY SURVEYS ON FOREIGN REGISTERED VESSELS ENGAGED IN NON-INTERNATIONAL VOYAGES FROM HONG KONG.

THE SECOND AIM OF THE BILL WAS TO EMPOWER THE DIRECTOR OF MARINE TO REQUIRE THE PRODUCTION OF CERTIFICATES OR DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE OF CARGO SHIPS TO ENSURE THAT THEY COMPLIED WITH EQUIVALENT SAFETY STANDARDS BEFORE PROCEEDING TO SEA.

UNDER EXISTING LEGISLATION SUCH VESSELS ARE NOT REQUIRED TO PROVIDE ANY EVIDENCE OF SAFETY BEFORE CLEARING HONG KONG.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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GAMBLING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992

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A BILL SEEKING TO EXEMPT CERTAIN CONTRACTS FOR DIFFERENCES FROM THE APPLICATION OF THE GAMBLING ORDINANCE WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE GAMBLING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992, THE SECRETARY FOR MONETARY AFFAIRS, MR DAVID NENDICK, SAID THE BILL WAS A POSITIVE STEP TOWARDS DEVELOPING HONG KONG AS AN ATTRACTIVE MARKET FOR WARRANTS AND OTHER CONTRACTS FOR DIFFERENCES.

THE SECRETARY SAID THE BILL ALSO AIMED TO CLARIFY CERTAIN EXISTING LEGAL AMBIGUITIES RELATING TO THOSE OTHER CONTRACTS FOR DIFFERENCES WHICH WERE PRODUCTS SETTLED BY PAYMENT OF CASH DIFFERENCES, SUCH AS CASH SETTLED OPTIONS ON SHARES OR OTHER SECURITIES.

HE SAID THE BILL WAS PROPOSED TO DISAPPLY THE GAMBLING ORDINANCE TO CONTRACTS FOR DIFFERENCES WHICH WERE:

- * LISTED ON THE STOCK EXCHANGE OF HONG KONG;
- * ENTERED INTO AS THE RESULT OF AN ADVERTISEMNET, INVITATION OR DOCUMENT WHICH IS EXCLUDED FROM THE APPLICATION OF SECTION 4 (1) OF THE PROTECTION OF INVESTORS ORDINANCE;
- * ENTERED INTO BY AN EXEMPT DEALER OR A DEALER REGISTERED UNDER THE SECURITIES ORDINANCE; OR
- * ENTERED INTO BY A DEALER REGISTERED UNDER THE COMMODITIES TRADING ORDINANCE.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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CONSIDERATIONS FOR A REFERENDUM EXPLAINED

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THE TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES IN HOLDING A REFERENDUM IN HONG KONG WILL VERY MUCH DEPEND ON A NUMBER OF CONSIDERATIONS, THE SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SZE, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HENRY TANG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR SZE SAID THESE INCLUDED WHETHER A LEGISLATION WOULD NEED TO BE ENACTED TO PROVIDE FOR THE REFERENDUM; WHAT QUESTIONS WERE TO BE ASKED; WHETHER THE VOTING RESULTS WERE TO BE BINDING OR ADVISORY; THE FRANCHISE; AND THE POLLING ARRANGEMENT.

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ON THE TIME AND TOTAL EXPENDITURE REQUIRED FOR A REFERENDUM, MR SZE SAID IT WAS DIFFICULT TO GIVE ESTIMATES.

HE SAID A MEANINGFUL ESTIMATE WOULD BE POSSIBLE ONLY WHEN THERE WERE SPECIFIC PROPOSALS ON THE VARIOUS CONSIDERATIONS MENTIONED ABOVE.

MR SZE ADDED THAT THE QUESTION OF HOW VOTERS WERE TO BE REGISTERED BEFORE A REFERENDUM COULD BE LOOKED INTO ONLY AFTER A DECISION HAD BEEN MADE ON THE FRANCHISE.

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COMPOSITION OF FUTURE LEGCO
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THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT TAKEN A VIEW FOR THE MOMENT AS REGARDS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 67 OF THE BASIC LAW, WHICH INVOLVES SOME COMPLICATED QUESTIONS TO WHICH THE ANSWERS ARE NOT YET AVAILABLE.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SZE, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON EMILY LAU IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

ARTICLE 67 OF THE BASIC LAW STATES THAT PERMANENT RESIDENTS OF THE HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION WHO ARE NOT OF CHINESE NATIONALITY OR WHO HAVE THE RIGHT OF ABODE IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES MAY ALSO BE ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF THE REGION, PROVIDED THAT THE PROPORTION OF SUCH MEMBERS DOES NOT EXCEED 20 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL.

"FOR EXAMPLE, ONE SUCH QUESTION RELATES TO THE DEFINITION OF A CHINESE NATIONAL UNDER THE CHINESE NATIONALITY LAW WHICH, AS MEMBERS ARE AWARE, IS A MATTER BEING DISCUSSED BETWEEN US AND THE CHINESE SIDE," MR SZE SAID.

"UNTIL WE ARE CLEAR ON THESE IMPORTANT AND COMPLICATED ISSUES IT WOULD BE PREMATURE FOR US TO SAY ANY MORE ABOUT THIS PARTICULAR PROVISION OF THE BASIC LAW," HE SAID.

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TALKS ON CEMENT PLANT RELOCATION UNDER WAY
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NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE OWNERS ARE BEING CONDUCTED WITH A VIEW TO RELOCATING THE KENNEDY TOWN CEMENT PLANT AND AN ALTERNATIVE SITE IS BEING SOUGHT, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON YEUNG SUM, MR EASON SAID THE ABOVE PROCESS WAS EXPECTED TO TAKE ANOTHER THREE MONTHS OR SO AND THEREAFTER IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO DETERMINE WHEN RELOCATION COULD BE COMPLETED.

THE ADMINISTRATION RECOGNISE THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF THE KENNEDY TOWN CEMENT PLANT WITH ITS SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT, HE ADDED.

MEASURES TO MEET TRANSPORT NEEDS IN MID-LEVELS

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THE HILLSIDE ESCALATOR PROJECT CONNECTING THE MID-LEVELS AND THE CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT WILL HELP RELIEVE PRESSURE ON THE ROAD SYSTEM IN THE MID-LEVELS, ON COMPLETION IN MID-1993.

THIS WAS STATED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR MICHAEL LEUNG, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON YEUNG SUM IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

MR LEUNG SAID IT WAS FORECAST THAT THE ESCALATOR SYSTEM WOULD CARRY 26,000 PERSONS EACH WORKING DAY WHEN IT OPENED.

TO COPE WITH THE GROWTH IN TRAFFIC IN THE MID-LEVELS AREA, MR LEUNG SAID A TRANSPORT STUDY COMPLETED IN 1989 HAD RECOMMENDED THE INTRODUCTION OF 27 ROAD IMPROVEMENT AND TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SCHEMES.

"FOUR OF THESE SCHEMES HAVE BEEN COMPLETED, ANOTHER 17 ARE AT VARIOUS STAGES OF PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION IN THE PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME, AND SIX, MAINLY ROAD WIDENING SCHEMES, WILL BE UNDERTAKEN IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE REDEVELOPMENT OF ADJACENT LOTS," HE SAID.

"NOTWITHSTANDING THESE IMPROVEMENTS, IT REMAINS CLEAR THAT UNRESTRICTED REDEVELOPMENT OF THE MID-LEVELS WILL OVERBURDEN THE LOCAL ROAD NETWORK AND CANNOT BE TOLERATED," MR LEUNG SAID.

IN VIEW OF THIS, A PLOT RATIO RESTRICTION ON RESIDENTIAL (GROUP B) AREAS WAS INTRODUCED IN 1990 UNDER THE DRAFT MID-LEVELS WEST OUTLINE ZONING PLAN TO REDUCE BY ABOUT 15 PER CENT THE MAXIMUM LEVEL OF REDEVELOPMENT PERMITTED IN THE AREA.

"THE LONGER TERM STRATEGY OF IMPOSING RESTRAINT ON REDEVELOPMENT COMBINED WITH SHORT-AND MEDIUM-TERM IMPROVEMENTS TO THE ROAD NETWORK SHOULD FORM AN EFFECTIVE PACKAGE TO RELIEVE TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN THE MID-LEVEL AREA," MR LEUNG ADDED.

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ELIGIBILITY FOR SMALL HOUSES TO FEMALE VILLAGERS BEING CONSIDERED

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ANY PROPOSAL TO EXTEND THE ELIGIBILITY FOR SMALL HOUSES TO FEMALE VILLAGERS WOULD NEED BE EXAMINED IN THE CONTEXT OF NEW TERRITORIES CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS.

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

HE SAID IT WOULD ALSO HAVE SIGNIFICANT RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS IN TERMS OF BOTH LAND AND GOVERNMENT STAFF WHICH WOULD HAVE TO BE CAREFULLY EXAMINED.

/THE SECRETARY

THE SECRETARY SAID SOME CONSIDERATION, HOWEVER, HAD BEEN GIVEN TO THESE MATTERS BUT FIRM CONCLUSIONS HAD YET TO BE REACHED.

MR EASON SAID UNDER THE TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES OF THE NEW TERRITORIES INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY, PROPERTY WAS INHERITED THROUGH THE MALE LINE.

HE SAID THE SMALL HOUSE POLICY, WHICH WAS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S OVERALL POLICY OF RESPECTING THESE CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES, REFLECTED THIS.

MR EASON SAID MALE INDIGENOUS VILLAGERS OF RECOGNISED VILLAGES IN THE NEW TERRITORIES REACHING THE AGE OF 18 WERE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR AND, SUBJECT TO THE FULFILMENT OF ESTABLISHED CRITERIA, WERE GRANTED EITHER A FREE BUILDING LICENCE IN RESPECT OF LAND OWNED BY THEM OR A SUITABLE SITE ON GOVERNMENT LAND AT CONCESSIONARY PREMIUM ON WHICH THEY COULD BUILD A VILLAGE HOUSE.

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HAND LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION SERVICE ADEQUATE

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IN VIEW OF THE PRESENT AND ESTIMATED FUTURE WORKLOAD, CREATION OF PERMANENT HAND LANGUAGE INTERPRETER POSTS IN THE POLICE FORCE AND THE JUDICIARY IS UNJUSTIFIED, THE SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE, MR BARRIE WIGGHAM, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"HOWEVER, IF AND WHEN THE NEED FOR SUCH INTERPRETATION SERVICE INCREASES SIGNIFICANTLY DUE TO UNFORESEEABLE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE HONG KONG SOCIETY FOR THE DEAF MAY BE REQUESTED TO PROVIDE MORE ASSISTANCE," MR WIGGHAM SAID.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HUANG CHEN-YA IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), MR WIGGHAM SAID HAND LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION FOR DEAF AND DUMB PERSONS INVOLVED IN CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION AND JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS WAS PROVIDED BY COMPETENT FREE-LANCE INTERPRETERS.

A REGISTRY OF THESE INTERPRETERS IS KEPT BY THE POLICE AND THE JUDICIARY.

OF THE FIVE INTERPRETERS ON THE CURRENT REGISTER, TWO ARE SPECIALLY ASSIGNED BY THE HONG KONG SOCIETY FOR THE DEAF FOR COURT AND POLICE WORK.

IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS, HAND LANGUAGE INTERPRETATION WAS REQUIRED IN COURT ON 65 OCCASIONS. NO RECORDS OF CALL OUT WERE MAINTAINED BY THE POLICE BUT THE REQUIREMENT FOR SUCH SERVICES WAS RARE.

MR WIGGHAM NOTED THAT OVERALL, BOTH THE POLICE AND THE JUDICIARY CONSIDERED THE PROVISION OF INTERPRETATION SERVICE WAS PROMPT AND ADEQUATE.

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MARINE PARK LAW IN THE PIPELINE

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THE STATUTORY DESIGNATION, MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF MARINE PARKS AND MARINE RESERVES, AND THE CONTROL OF ACTIVITIES IN THESE AREAS, WILL BE PROVIDED FOR IN NEW LEGISLATION WHICH SHOULD BE READY IN ABOUT A YEAR.

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

REFERRING TO HOI HA WAN IN SAI KUNG, HE SAID IT HAD BEEN DESIGNATED AS A SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST SINCE 1989.

"TO FURTHER PROTECT AND PRESERVE THE AREA, THE COUNTRY PARKS BOARD HAS RECOMMENDED IT SHOULD BE DESIGNATED AS A MARINE PARK," HE ADDED.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON GILBERT LEUNG KAM-HO, MR EASON SAID THERE WAS NO RECORD OF ILLEGAL DUMPING THERE IN THE PAST THREE YEARS.

HOWEVER, THERE WAS ONE SUCH CASE NEAR LAI CHI CHONG LAST YEAR. THE OFFENDER WAS BROUGHT TO THE DISTRICT COURT AND FINED \$50,000 PLUS A COURT CHARGE.

MR EASON SAID THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT (EPD) UPDATED THE MARINE DUMPING ACTION PLAN REGULARLY TO ENSURE THERE WAS A CONCERTED EFFORT BY ALL THE ENFORCEMENT DEPARTMENTS AGAINST ILLEGAL DUMPING ACTIVITIES IN HONG KONG WATERS.

"UNDER THE ACTION PLAN ANY PARTY, WHETHER IT IS A DUMPING LICENSEE, A CONTRACTOR, OR A DUMPING CONTRACTOR, FOUND ENGAGING IN ILLEGAL MARINE DUMPING WILL BE PROSECUTED.

"THE HEAVY FINES WHICH THE DISTRICT COURT CAN IMPOSE ON REPEATED OFFENDERS, AS COMPARED WITH THE MAXIMUM FINE OF \$5,000 THAT CAN BE IMPOSED BY THE MAGISTRATES COURT, IS HAVING A GREATER DETERRENT EFFECT ON ILLEGAL DUMPING.

"EPD WILL CONTINUE TO BRING SUCH CASES TO THE DISTRICT COURT," HE SAID.

WITH EFFECT FROM JANUARY NEXT YEAR, ALL DUMPING BARGES MUST BE EQUIPPED WITH AUTOMATIC SELF-MONITORING DEVICES, MR EASON SAID.

"THESE DEVICES PROVIDE AN ACCURATE RECORD OF THE POSITIONS OF SUCH BARGES, AS WELL AS ANY LOADING AND DUMPING OPERATION, USING SATELLITE SIGNALS 24 HOURS A DAY.

"THIS WILL ENABLE EPD TO KEEP A CLOSE SURVEILLANCE ON ALL MARINE DUMPING ACTIVITIES IN A MORE COST-EFFECTIVE AND LESS LABOUR INTENSIVE WAY," HE SAID.

COMMITTEE SET UP TO STUDY TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION DATABASES

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AN AD HOC COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION DATABASES HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE INDUSTRY AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL (ITDC) TO ASSESS WHETHER HONG KONG NEEDS TO DEVELOP AN INFORMATION DATABASE OF ITS OWN TECHNOLOGIES.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR T.H. CHAU, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HUANG CHEN-YA IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THIS AD HOC COMMITTEE HAS BEEN TASKED TO IDENTIFY THE TYPES OF TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION DATABASES THAT WOULD BE USEFUL TO HONG KONG, AND TO ADVISE ON THE MEANS FOR PROMOTING THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND USE.

MR CHAU SAID IT WOULD COMPLETE ITS WORK SHORTLY AND WOULD THEREAFTER REPORT ITS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ITDC.

THE SECRETARY SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONSCIOUS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF TECHNOLOGY INFORMATION TO INDUSTRIAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT.

SINCE DATABASES REGARDING OVERSEAS INSTITUTIONS AND PROFESSIONALS IN SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH ALREADY EXISTED IN ELECTRONIC OR PRINTED FORMS WHICH WERE EASILY ACCESSIBLE BY LOCAL INDUSTRIALISTS, IT WOULD NOT BE COST-EFFECTIVE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO DUPLICATE SUCH DATABASES, HE ADDED.

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UPGC RECOMMENDS REVISED ENROLMENT TARGETS

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THE UNIVERSITY AND POLYTECHNIC GRANTS COMMITTEE (UPGC) HAS RECENTLY SUBMITTED TO THE GOVERNMENT ITS RECOMMENDATIONS ON REVISED STUDENT NUMBERS AND ADJUSTMENTS TO GRANTS MADE TO THE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

BASED ON THE UPGC'S RECOMMENDATIONS, THE ENROLMENT TARGETS FOR FIRST DEGREE COURSES WILL BE 11,007 FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR 1992-93; 12,520 FOR 1993-94; AND 14,500 FOR 1994-95.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TIK CHI-YUEN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, SAID THE RECOMMENDATIONS WERE MADE IN RESPONSE TO THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO REVISE THE PLANNING TARGET OF FIRST YEAR, FIRST DEGREE PLACES FROM 15,000 TO 14,500 BY 1994-95.

"ON THE BASIS OF THE UPGC'S RECOMMENDED STUDENT NUMBERS, IT IS ESTIMATED THAT A TOTAL OF \$509 MILLION WOULD BE RETURNED TO THE GOVERNMENT FROM THE \$18,200 MILLION APPROVED RECURRENT FUNDING FOR THE UPGC-FUNDED SECTOR FOR THE 1992-95 TRIENNIAL," SAID MR CHAN.

HE SAID THESE "SAVINGS" HAD ALREADY BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN THE RESOURCE ALLOCATION EXERCISE THIS YEAR.

THIS COULD BE NOTED FROM THE GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADDRESS THAT THE SCHOOL SECTOR WOULD BE GETTING ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AMOUNTING TO \$1.5 BILLION DURING THE PERIOD 1993-94 TO 1996-97.

THE SECRETARY SAID IT WAS NOT KNOWN WHAT COURSES WOULD BE AFFECTED BY THE REVISION IN THE PLANNING TARGETS AS THE INSTITUTIONS HAD YET TO BE OFFICIALLY INFORMED OF THE UPGC'S DECISIONS ON THEIR REVISED ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANS.

"IN GENERAL, THE REVISED STUDENT NUMBER TARGETS WILL BE ACHIEVED BY THE INSTITUTIONS BY SPREADING THE REDUCTION IN THEIR INTAKE NUMBERS OVER MOST OR ALL ACADEMIC DEPARTMENTS.

"ALTERNATIVELY THEY CAN DEFER THE INTRODUCTION OF SOME NEW COURSES UNTIL LATER IN THE CURRENT TRIENNIUM OR, IN A FEW CASES, BEYOND THE END OF THE CURRENT TRIENNIUM," MR CHAN ADDED.

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PROFESSIONS TO HANDLE PUBLIC COMPLAINTS

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THE GOVERNMENT SHALL DISCUSS WITH THE VARIOUS PROFESSIONAL BODIES WHETHER THERE ARE ANY PROBLEMS WITH THEIR PRESENT SYSTEM IN DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND WHETHER ANY IMPROVEMENTS ARE NECESSARY.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LEE WING-TAT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS LODGED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AGAINST MEMBERS OF PROFESSIONS VARY FROM PROFESSION TO PROFESSION AND ARE LARGELY A MATTER FOR THE REGISTRATION BOARD OR COUNCIL OF THE RELEVANT PROFESSION.

"GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE GOVERNMENT BELIEVE THAT IT SHOULD BE UP TO THE PROFESSIONS TO DECIDE HOW COMPLAINTS AGAINST THEIR MEMBERS BY THE PUBLIC SHOULD BE HANDLED.

"THE REGISTRATION BOARD OR COUNCIL OF THE VARIOUS PROFESSIONS SHOULD BE IN THE BEST POSITION TO MONITOR COMPLAINTS ABOUT PROFESSIONAL MISCONDUCT FROM THE PUBLIC, AND JUDGE WHAT SORT OF ARRANGEMENTS WOULD INSPIRE THE GREATEST CONFIDENCE IN THE PROFESSION'S ABILITY TO DEAL WITH SUCH COMPLAINTS.

SOME PROFESSIONS REGULARLY REVIEW THESE ARRANGEMENTS, SIR DAVID SAID.

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NO PLAN TO BROADCAST PROGRAMMES
BY PUBLIC IN SUBSCRIPTION TV

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THERE IS NO PLAN TO USE ANY OF THE CHANNELS WHICH THE SUBSCRIPTION TELEVISION LICENSEE MAY BE REQUIRED TO MAKE AVAILABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT FOR BROADCASTING FREE-OF-CHARGE PROGRAMMES PRODUCED BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC, THE SECRETARY FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE, MR JAMES SO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LAU CHIN-SHEK, MR SO SAID IN FACT THE GOVERNMENT'S MAKING USE OF ANY DEDICATED CHANNEL DID NOT AT PRESENT FIGURE IN THE GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITIES FOR SUBSCRIPTION TELEVISION.

"WHILE CHANNEL CAPACITY IS LIMITED BY MICROWAVE SPECTRUM FREQUENCY SCARCITY, THE GOVERNMENT IS MORE CONCERNED THAT THE LICENSEE SHOULD HAVE THE UTMOST FREEDOM ITSELF TO ESTABLISH ITS SUBSCRIBER REVENUE BASE," MR SO SAID.

MR SO ADDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT, THEREFORE, WAS UNLIKELY TO TAKE UP ANY CHANNEL FOR ITS OWN PURPOSES IN THE EARLY STAGES OF SUBSCRIPTION TELEVISION IN HONG KONG.

"THE MATTER WILL BE REVIEWED AS AND WHEN THE SUBSCRIPTION TV LICENSEE INTRODUCES A CABLE NETWORK THEREBY GREATLY INCREASING THE CHANNEL CAPACITY OF THE SERVICE," HE SAID.

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MOTION OF THANKS PASSED

THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PASSED A MOTION AT ITS MEETING THANKING THE GOVERNOR FOR HIS ANNUAL POLICY ADDRESS MADE ON OCTOBER 7.

FIFTY-ONE MEMBERS SPOKE ON THE MOTION LAST WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY. TWELVE GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS REPLIED TODAY TO THE POINTS THEY HAD RAISED.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, LED THE OFFICIAL REPLIES. THE CONCLUDING SPEECH WAS MADE BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD.

ANOTHER MOTION PROPOSED BY SIR DAVID UNDER THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ORDINANCE WAS ALSO PASSED.

AT THE MEETING, THE GAMBLING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 AND MERCHANT SHIPPING (SAFETY) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 WERE INTRODUCED FOR FIRST AND SECOND READINGS. DEBATES ON THE BILLS WERE ADJOURNED.

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NO SECRET DEAL ON POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT: GOVERNOR

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EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE CHINESE AND UNITED KINGDOM FOREIGN MINISTERS IN 1990 MAKE ABUNDANTLY PLAIN THAT THERE WAS NO SECRET DEAL ON THE FUTURE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HONG KONG, THE GOVERNOR, THE RT HON CHRISTOPHER PATTEN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AFTER A DISTRICT VISIT TO TSUEN WAN, MR PATTEN SAID: "NO SECRET, BECAUSE YOU WILL SEE FROM THE PAPERS, THAT ALL THE EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE BRITISH AND CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTERS WERE SEEN BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF HONG KONG AND DISCUSSED BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF HONG KONG.

"NO DEAL, HENCE THE FACT THAT THE BASIC LAW IS SILENT ON THE ISSUES WHICH I HAD TO ADDRESS IN MY LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SPEECH.

"NOW THAT THOSE DOCUMENTS ARE PUBLISHED, I HOPE THAT WE CAN GET BACK TO THE REAL ISSUE WHICH IS THIS: IF PEOPLE HAVE AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE PROPOSALS THAT I HAVE PUT FORWARD THEY SHOULD SAY CLEARLY WHAT IT IS SO THAT THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG AND THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF HONG KONG CAN DISCUSS MATTERS CALMLY AND RATIONALLY AND INTELLIGENTLY.

"THAT IN MY JUDGMENT IS THE WAY FORWARD; THAT IN MY JUDGMENT IS THE WAY TO ENSURE THAT WE HAVE THE STABILITY AND PROSPERITY OF HONG KONG THAT ALL OF US WANT."

"I HAVE TO MAKE IT ABSOLUTELY PLAIN THAT DURING THE MEETINGS THAT I HAD LAST WEEK IN PEKING, AT NO POINT WHATSOEVER DID I SAY THAT THE DOCUMENTS SHOULD NOT BE PUBLISHED," MR PATTEN SAID.

"INDEED, I MADE IT CLEAR ON AT LEAST TWO OCCASIONS THAT I WAS PERFECTLY HAPPY TO SEE THE DOCUMENTS PUBLISHED PROVIDED THE FOREIGN MINISTRIES OF CHINA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM ALSO AGREED. I HAD NO DIFFICULTY IN COMING TO THAT DECISION BECAUSE I DON'T BELIEVE THAT ANYBODY SHOULD WANT TO HIDE FROM THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG THE DEBATES ABOUT THEIR FUTURE," HE ADDED.

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION, THE GOVERNOR SAID THAT IN VIEW OF THE ALLEGATIONS THAT WERE MADE, THERE WAS NO CHOICE BUT FOR HIM TO MAKE THE DOCUMENTS PUBLIC.

"BECAUSE I DON'T WANT ANYBODY IN HONG KONG TO THINK THAT DEALS ARE BEING DONE BEHIND THEIR BACK. THAT, I REPEAT, IS WHY I HAVE BEEN OPEN AND HONEST WITH THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG ABOUT HOW I SEE ABOUT THEIR POLITICAL FUTURE.

"I THINK ONE THING ELSE COMES OUT OF THE DOCUMENTS WHEN YOU READ THEM. AND THAT IS HOW THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AT THE TIME FELT IT NECESSARY AND PROPERLY NECESSARY, TO RESPOND TO THE PRESSURE OF THE COMMUNITY, IN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL FOR A FASTER PACE OF DEMOCRATISATION.

"THE DEBATE WHICH TOOK PLACE IN 1990 WAS BETWEEN THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT ASKING FOR A FASTER PACE OF DEMOCRATISATION AND CHINESE OFFICIALS SAYING THAT THEY DIDN'T THINK THERE WAS A CASE FOR A FASTER PACE OF DEMOCRATISATION. THAT'S WHAT THE ARGUMENT WAS ABOUT IN 1990. I HOPE WE CAN NOW PUT THAT BEHIND US," HE SAID.

GOVERNOR VISITS TSUEN WAN

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THE GOVERNOR, THE RT HON CHRISTOPHER PATTEN, THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON VISITED TSUEN WAN - THE FIRST NEW TOWN OF HONG KONG.

MR PATTEN BEGAN HIS VISIT BY WALKING IN CHUNG ON STREET WHERE LOCAL COMMERCIAL AND SHOPPING CENTRES ARE SITUATED.

HE THEN WENT TO TAI UK WAI VILLAGE, WHICH WAS BUILT BY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE 1950'S TO REHOUSE VILLAGERS AFFECTED BY THE CONSTRUCTION OF TAI LAM CHUNG RESERVOIR.

THERE HE VISITED A FAMILY WHO WAS AMONG THE FIRST GROUP OF VILLAGERS RESETTLED TO THE VILLAGE IN 1956.

MR PATTEN THEN LEFT FOR THE TSUEN KING CHILDREN AND YOUTH CENTRE, A 1,600-MEMBER SOCIAL SERVICES ESTABLISHMENT UNDER THE HONG KONG FEDERATION OF YOUTH GROUPS.

ON A ROOFTOP IN RIVIERA GARDENS, A PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL ESTATE, MR PATTEN HAD A PANORAMIC VIEW OF TSUEN WAN TOWN AND WAS BRIEFED BY TSUEN WAN DISTRICT OFFICER, MR RAYMOND YOUNG, ON LAND USE AND PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AREA.

BEFORE CONCLUDING HIS VISIT, MR PATTEN ATTENDED A COMMUNITY RECEPTION WHERE HE MET AND DISCUSSED LOCAL AFFAIRS WITH DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS.

MR PATTEN WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THE REGIONAL SECRETARY OF THE NEW TERRITORIES, MR ALBERT LAM AND MR YOUNG.

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GOVERNOR'S BUSINESS COUNCIL MEETS

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THE GOVERNOR, THE RT HON CHRISTOPHER PATTEN, THIS (WEDNESDAY) MORNING CHAIRED THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF HIS BUSINESS COUNCIL AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE.

SIXTEEN BUSINESS LEADERS AND THREE SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ATTENDED THE MEETING.

"THE GOVERNOR HAD A VALUABLE DISCUSSION WITH HIS BUSINESS COUNCIL," INFORMATION CO-ORDINATOR, MR MIKE HANSON, SAID.

THE GOVERNOR HAD SAID IN HIS POLICY ADDRESS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THAT HE WOULD ASK THE BUSINESS COUNCIL TO PUT THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETITION POLICY IN HONG KONG AT THE TOP OF ITS AGENDA.

"SO IT WAS APPROPRIATE THAT THE COUNCIL SHOULD HAVE A FULL DISCUSSION OF THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE AT ITS FIRST MEETING," MR HANSON SAID.

INFLATION WAS THE OTHER KEY ISSUE TACKLED DURING THE MEETING.

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REVIEW OF GOVERNMENT INFORMATION MACHINERY

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS COMMISSIONED A HONG KONG MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT FIRM TO CONDUCT A REVIEW OF THE ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND ORGANISATION OF ALL AGENCIES INVOLVED IN THE PROVISION OF OFFICIAL INFORMATION.

THE REVIEW, INITIATED BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID FORD, WILL BE CARRIED OUT BY COOPERS & LYBRAND, AND WILL LAST SIX WEEKS.

A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT AS HONG KONG WAS ENTERING ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT PERIODS IN HISTORY, THERE WAS A NEED FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO BE MORE ACCOUNTABLE AND RESPONSIVE TO CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE REVIEW WILL FURTHER DEVELOP CO-ORDINATION IN THE PRESENTATION OF POLICIES, DEFINE MORE CLEARLY THE OVERALL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION, BOTH LOCALLY AND OVERSEAS; AND IMPROVE LIAISON WITH THE COMMUNITY.

THE REVIEW TEAM WILL COVER:

- . THE GOVERNOR'S PRIVATE OFFICE;
- . THE INFORMATION WING AND THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS ADVISER OF THE CHIEF SECRETARY'S OFFICE;
- . THE INFORMATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT;
- . THE ROLE OF DISTRICT OFFICES IN THE DISSEMINATION AND COLLECTION OF COMMUNITY INFORMATION; AND
- . THE INFORMATION ROLE OF HONG KONG'S OVERSEAS ECONOMIC AND TRADE OFFICES.

AT THE END OF THE REVIEW, THE CONSULTANTS WILL DEVELOP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE PLANNING, ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S VARIOUS INFORMATION FUNCTIONS, AND PUT FORWARD PROPOSALS FOR THEIR IMPLEMENTATION.

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NEW FRANCHISE FOR CMB APPROVED

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THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL HAS APPROVED A NEW FRANCHISE FOR THE CHINA MOTOR BUS COMPANY.

THE TWO-YEAR FRANCHISE STARTS ON SEPTEMBER 1, 1993 AND COVERS A NETWORK OF 90 ROUTES.

ALL THE ESSENTIAL FRANCHISE TERMS PREVIOUSLY LAID DOWN BY THE COUNCIL HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY CMB. THEY INCLUDE:

(A) REDUCTION OF CMB'S CURRENT NETWORK BY 26 ROUTES;

(B) DISCONTINUATION OF CMB'S PROFIT CONTROL SCHEME UPON ITS EXPIRY IN AUGUST 1993; AND

(C) THE INCLUSION OF ADDITIONAL FRANCHISE CONDITIONS TO STRENGTHEN MONITORING.

IN LINE WITH GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TO PROMOTE HEALTHY COMPETITION, THE 26 BUS ROUTES TAKEN AWAY FROM CMB HAVE RECENTLY BEEN AWARDED TO CITYBUS LIMITED THROUGH COMPETITIVE OPEN TENDER.

THE NEW FRANCHISE INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS DESIGNED TO STRENGTHEN THE MONITORING OF CMB'S OPERATIONS, TO EASE TRANSITION AND TO CATER FOR THE FUTURE EXISTENCE OF TWO MAIN BUS OPERATORS ON HONG KONG ISLAND :

(A) MANDATORY ESTABLISHMENT OF PASSENGER LIAISON GROUPS TO INTERACT DIRECTLY WITH THE PUBLIC FOR THE PURPOSE OF ASSESSING AND IMPROVING SERVICE STANDARDS;

(B) A DIRECT COMPUTER LINK GIVING GOVERNMENT INSTANT ACCESS TO UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION PERTAINING TO BUS OPERATIONS;

(C) THE APPOINTMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT TRUSTEE TO MANAGE PENSION FUNDS AS WELL AS A REQUIREMENT TO OBTAIN PROFESSIONAL ACTUARIAL ADVICE ON THE LEVEL OF CONTINGENCY AND PENSION PROVISIONS;

(D) A CLAUSE REQUIRING CMB TO DISCLOSE ITS ASSETS AND TO OBTAIN GOVERNMENT CONSENT BEFORE THE DISPOSAL OF ANY SUCH ASSETS;

(E) A PROVISION WHICH PLACES IT BEYOND DOUBT THAT, UPON THE EXPIRY OF THE PROFIT CONTROL SCHEME ON AUGUST 31, 1993, ANY SURPLUS IN THE DEVELOPMENT FUND SHOULD BE APPLIED TO OFFSET UPWARD PRESSURE ON FARES; AND

(F) A PROVISION WHICH EMPOWERS THE GOVERNMENT TO DIRECT CMB TO SHARE THE USE OF BUS STOPS, TERMINI AND ANCILLARY FACILITIES WITH ANOTHER OPERATOR.

THE RETIREMENT OF ABOUT 200 OLD BUSES IN SEPTEMBER 1993 IS EXPECTED TO REDUCE THE AVERAGE AGE OF CMB'S FLEET, WITH BENEFICIAL EFFECT ON EFFICIENCY AND SERVICE STANDARDS.

A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS DESIGNED TO STRENGTHEN THE PENALTY PROVISIONS IN THE PUBLIC BUS SERVICES ORDINANCE ARE UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION.

THESE AMENDMENTS WILL ALLOW THE FINANCIAL PENALTIES NOW PRESCRIBED IN THE ORDINANCE AGAINST UNSATISFACTORY SERVICE TO BE APPLIED ON A ROUTE-BY-ROUTE BASIS, THEREBY ENHANCING THEIR DETERRENCE.

THE AMENDMENTS WILL ALSO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE FINANCIAL PENALTIES, IF IMPOSED, COULD NOT BE PASSED ON TO PASSENGERS THROUGH HIGHER FARES.

ABOLITION OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

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DRAFT LEGISLATION TO ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY AND REPLACE IT WITH LIFE IMPRISONMENT WILL BE INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL NEXT MONTH, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE CRIMES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 SEEKS TO GIVE EFFECT TO THE MOTION APPROVED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN JUNE LAST YEAR THAT THE DEATH PENALTY SHOULD BE REMOVED FROM THE STATUTE BOOK.

THE BILL WILL BE GAZETTED THIS FRIDAY AND BE INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ON NOVEMBER 11.

ELABORATING ON HIS ANNOUNCEMENT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ON THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION TO ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY, MR ASPREY SAID AT PRESENT, CAPITAL PUNISHMENT WAS THE MANDATORY PENALTY FOR MURDER UNDER THE OFFENCES AGAINST THE PERSON ORDINANCE AND FOR TREASON AND PIRACY WITH VIOLENCE UNDER THE CRIMES ORDINANCE.

THE DEATH PENALTY MAY ALSO BE PROVIDED FOR BY THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL AS THE PUNISHMENT FOR OFFENCES UNDER THE EMERGENCY REGULATIONS.

THE BILL HAS THE EFFECT OF ABOLISHING CAPITAL PUNISHMENT AS THE SENTENCE FOR ANY OFFENCE.

IN ITS PLACE, IT IS PROPOSED THAT LIFE IMPRISONMENT SHOULD BE THE MANDATORY SENTENCE FOR MURDER, TREASON AND PIRACY WITH VIOLENCE AND THAT MANDATORY LIFE IMPRISONMENT WILL BE THE MAXIMUM SENTENCE THAT MAY BE PROVIDED FOR BY THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL UNDER THE EMERGENCY REGULATIONS.

LIFE SENTENCES WILL BE REVIEWED BY THE BOARD OF REVIEW INITIALLY AFTER FIVE YEARS AND SUBSEQUENTLY EVERY TWO YEARS, UNLESS THE GOVERNOR DIRECTS THAT A CASE SHOULD BE REVIEWED EARLIER AFTER HAVING CONSIDERED THE TRIAL JUDGE'S REPORT.

"LIFE IMPRISONMENT WILL INDEED MEAN IMPRISONMENT FOR LIFE UNLESS A PRISONER IS ABLE TO CONVINCING THE BOARD OF REVIEW OF LONG TERM PRISON SENTENCES AND ULTIMATELY CONVINCING THE GOVERNOR THAT THE SENTENCE SHOULD AT SOME STAGE BE REDUCED TO A DETERMINATE PERIOD DUE TO CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES AFTER A LONG PERIOD HAS BEEN SERVED IN JAIL," MR ASPREY SAID.

HE SAID IT WAS NECESSARY TO PROVIDE A STRONG DETERRENT TO POTENTIAL KILLERS AND TO ENSURE THAT THOSE WHO NEVERTHELESS COMMITTED MURDER WERE PUNISHED EFFECTIVELY AND PREVENTED FROM COMMITTING AN OFFENCE AGAIN BY IMPRISONMENT.

IN CASES WHERE A SENTENCE OF LIFE IMPRISONMENT IS IMPOSED, THE GOVERNOR WILL CALL ON THE TRIAL JUDGE TO GIVE HIM A WRITTEN REPORT INDICATING ANY SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS OR MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, WHAT IN HIS VIEW SHOULD BE THE MINIMUM TERM OF IMPRISONMENT TO BE SERVED.

THIS IS CURRENTLY THE PRACTICE WITH REGARD TO SENTENCES OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

"IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE VIEWS OF THE TRIAL JUDGE BE RECORDED FOR THE ATTENTION OF THOSE WHO SUBSEQUENTLY CONSIDER WHETHER THE FIXING OF A DETERMINATE SENTENCE OR RELEASE MAY BE APPROPRIATE," MR ASPREY SAID.

THE BILL ALSO PROVIDES FOR THE REMOVAL OF REFERENCES TO THE DEATH PENALTY IN OTHER LEGISLATION WHERE THEY APPEAR.

HE SAID THAT ONCE THE BILL BECAME LAW, ALL THOSE WHO WERE UNDER THE DEATH PENALTY WOULD HAVE THEIR SENTENCES COMMUTED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT. CURRENTLY THERE ARE 32 UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH.

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FEES RISE FOR LAWYERS IN CRIMINAL LEGAL AID CASES

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THE GOVERNMENT TODAY (WEDNESDAY) ANNOUNCED INCREASES IN FEES FOR LAWYERS IN PRIVATE PRACTICE WHO ARE ENGAGED IN LEGAL AID CRIMINAL CASES.

THE LEGAL AID IN CRIMINAL CASES (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) RULES 1992, WHICH GIVE EFFECT TO INCREASES IN MAXIMUM FEES FOR LAWYERS IN PRIVATE PRACTICE ENGAGED BY THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AID IN CRIMINAL CASES, WERE APPROVED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

THE INCREASES WILL TAKE EFFECT ON NOVEMBER 1.

A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID THE NEW FEES WOULD ENABLE THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AID TO ENGAGE LAWYERS OF APPROPRIATE EXPERIENCE IN CRIMINAL CASES.

"THE ATTORNEY GENERAL ALSO USES THE SAME SCALE OF FEES TO ENGAGE LAWYERS IN PRIVATE PRACTICE TO APPEAR FOR THE CROWN IN COURT IN CRIMINAL CASES. THIS IS DESIGNED TO ENSURE THAT BOTH THE DEFENCE AND THE PROSECUTION ARE REPRESENTED BY LAWYERS OF BROADLY SIMILAR EXPERIENCE," HE EXPLAINED.

THE INCREASES WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN TWO STAGES, ON NOVEMBER 1, 1992 AND APRIL 1, 1994 RESPECTIVELY. AT THE FIRST STAGE, THE INCREASES IN MAXIMUM FEES WILL RANGE FROM 12.5 PER CENT TO 50 PER CENT.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID A REVISION OF FEES FOR DUTY LAWYERS SERVING THE DUTY LAWYER SCHEME WOULD ALSO TAKE EFFECT ON NOVEMBER 1.

THE DAILY FEE WILL BE INCREASED FROM \$3,150 TO \$4,000 WHILE THE FEE FOR EACH HALF DAY WILL BE INCREASED FROM \$1,575 TO \$2,000, HE SAID.

IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT DUTY LAWYERS HAVE BEEN HANDLING A LARGER NUMBER OF COMPLEX CASES SINCE THE EXPANSION OF THE DUTY LAWYER SCHEME IN OCTOBER 1991, A PRE-TRIAL PREPARATION FEE OF \$500 PER HOUR WILL ALSO BE INTRODUCED ON THE SAME DAY.

"THIS FEE IS MAINLY FOR CONFERENCES WHICH ON AVERAGE MAY TAKE ONE OR TWO HOURS PER CASE," THE SPOKESMAN EXPLAINED.

HE ADDED THAT THE MAXIMUM FEES FOR COUNSEL ENGAGED IN CRIMINAL LEGAL AID CASES AND THE DUTY LAWYER FEES WOULD BOTH BE REVIEWED EVERY TWO YEARS.

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RESEARCH ON JUVENILE CRIMES LAUNCHED

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THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE HAS COMMISSIONED A 16-MONTH RESEARCH TO LOOK INTO THE SOCIAL CAUSES OF CRIMES COMMITTED BY YOUNGSTERS AND TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON GOVERNMENT POLICIES AFFECTING YOUTH.

THE RESEARCH IS FINANCED BY A \$200,000 DONATION FROM THE ROYAL HONG KONG JOCKEY CLUB.

A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID THE RESEARCH, TO BE CONDUCTED BY THE RESEARCH TEAM OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH CENTRE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG, WOULD ALSO STUDY RECIDIVISM AMONG YOUNG OFFENDERS.

THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON YOUNG OFFENDERS UNDER THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE COMMISSIONED THE RESEARCH BECAUSE CRIME INVOLVING JUVENILES IS STILL A CAUSE FOR CONCERN.

THE RESEARCH STARTED LAST MONTH AND IS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF NEXT YEAR.

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GOVT LOTS TO LET BY TENDER

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THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT IS INVITING TENDERS FOR THE SHORT-TERM TENANCY ON FOUR PIECES OF GOVERNMENT LAND.

THE FIRST SITE IS LOCATED IN AREA 2, TSING YI ISLAND, NEW TERRITORIES.

WITH AN AREA OF ABOUT 4,025 SQUARE METRES, THE SITE IS INTENDED FOR A PUBLIC FEE-PAYING CAR PARK FOR PARKING OF MOTOR VEHICLES (EXCLUDING CONTAINER TRACTORS AND TRAILERS).

THE TENANCY IS FOR TWO YEARS AND QUARTERLY THEREAFTER.

THE SECOND SITE IS LOCATED IN AREA 10C, KWAI CHUNG, NEW TERRITORIES.

IT HAS AN AREA OF ABOUT 2,070 SQUARE METRES AND IS EARMARKED FOR PARKING OF PRIVATE CARS AND GOODS VEHICLES ONLY (EXCLUDING CONTAINER TRACTORS AND TRAILERS).

THE TENANCY IS FOR THREE YEARS AND RENEWABLE QUARTERLY THEREAFTER.

THE THIRD SITE IS LOCATED IN AREA 46A, TUEN MUN, NEW TERRITORIES.

WITH AN AREA OF ABOUT 9,200 SQUARE METRES, THE SITE IS FOR OPEN STORAGE PURPOSES EXCLUDING STORAGE OF CONTAINERS, CONTAINER TRACTORS AND TRAILERS.

THE TENANCY IS ALSO FOR THREE YEARS AND QUARTERLY THEREAFTER.

THE REMAINING SITE IS LOCATED AT HOI CHAK STREET, QUARRY BAY, HONG KONG.

IT HAS AN AREA OF ABOUT 600 SQUARE METRES, AND IS INTENDED FOR STORAGE OF TENANT'S GOODS (EXCLUDING CONTAINERS, CONTAINER VEHICLES AND TRAILERS) AND/OR WASTE PAPER COLLECTING AND SORTING AND/OR PUBLIC FEE-PAYING VEHICLE PARK FOR LICENSED MOTOR VEHICLES (EXCLUDING CONTAINER VEHICLES AND TRAILERS).

THE TENANCY IS FOR 18 MONTHS AND QUARTERLY THEREAFTER.

CLOSING DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF TENDERS IS NOON, NOVEMBER 13.

FORMS OF TENDER, TENDER NOTICES AND CONDITIONS MAY BE OBTAINED FROM AND TENDER PLANS INSPECTED AT THE DISTRICT LANDS OFFICES, KWAI TSING AND TUEN MUN; THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT, 14TH FLOOR, MURRAY BUILDING, GARDEN ROAD, HONG KONG AND THE DISTRICT LANDS OFFICES KOWLOON, 10TH FLOOR, YAU MA TEI CAR PARK BUILDING, 250 SHANGHAI STREET, KOWLOON.

FOR THE SITE IN QUARRY BAY, THE PLAN AND NOTICE CAN ALSO BE INSPECTED AT THE DISTRICT LANDS OFFICE, HONG KONG EAST, 19TH FLOOR, SOUTHOEN CENTRE, 130 HENNESSY ROAD, HONG KONG.

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QUALITY OF EDUCATION TO CONTINUE AFTER '97

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HONG KONG WILL BECOME A SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION OF CHINA IN LESS THAN FIVE YEARS' TIME, AND UNDER THE TERMS OF THE SINO-BRITISH JOINT DECLARATION AND THE BASIC LAW, THE TERRITORY WILL HAVE A HIGH DEGREE OF AUTONOMY.

THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, MR DOMINIC S W WONG, SAID HONG KONG'S SYSTEMS AND LIFESTYLE WOULD REMAIN BASICALLY UNCHANGED AND THAT THIS WOULD INCLUDE EDUCATION.

"A VARIETY OF ORGANISATIONS PROVIDING DIFFERENT TYPES OF BROAD EDUCATION WILL CONTINUE TO BE ALLOWED IN HONG KONG, INCLUDING COURSES IN RELIGION," HE SAID AT THE ANNUAL SPEECH DAY OF ST PAUL'S CONVENT SCHOOL.

EDUCATION TODAY, HE SAID, ACCOUNTED FOR 17 PER CENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ANNUAL EXPENDITURE WHICH:

- * INSURES FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION UP TO SECONDARY 3;
- * PROVIDES AMPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION AND FOR TRAINING AT TECHNICAL INSTITUTES;
- * ENABLES THE TARGET FOR SECONDARY 6 AND 7 PLACES TO BE REACHED; AND
- * INCREASES TERTIARY EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES SUBSTANTIALLY, SO THAT BY 1994 AT LEAST 18 PER CENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE APPROPRIATE AGE COULD ENTER TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS FOR FIRST DEGREE COURSES.

"OUR PRIORITIES IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS WILL BE TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS, TO STRENGTHEN TEACHER EDUCATION AND TO INCREASE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES AT TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS AS ALREADY ANNOUNCED BY THE GOVERNOR RECENTLY," HE SAID.

MORE TEACHERS WOULD BE PROVIDED TO PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS, CLASS SIZE WOULD BE REDUCED TO 35 STARTING WITH PRIMARY 1, AND NEW PRIMARY SCHOOLS WOULD OPERATE ON A WHOLE-DAY BASIS, HE ADDED.

THESE MEASURES, MR WONG SAID, WOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF REDUCING TEACHERS' WORKLOAD, ENSURING BETTER CLASS PREPARATION AND ENABLING GREATER ATTENTION TO INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS.

"TEACHER EDUCATION WILL BE STRENGTHENED THROUGH THE EVENTUAL UPGRADING OF THE EXISTING FIVE TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES, TRAINING FOR ADVANCED TEACHER CERTIFICATES AND IN DUE COURSE OFFERING BACHELOR OF EDUCATION DEGREE COURSES, THUS PAVING THE WAY FOR GRADUATE TEACHERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS," MR WONG SAID.

"IN THE MEANTIME, INTERIM IMPROVEMENTS WILL BE INTRODUCED TO UPGRADE STANDARDS AT THESE COLLEGES. I AM CERTAIN THAT ALL THESE MEASURES WILL FURTHER IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TEACHERS AND WILL BE ABLE TO ATTRACT MORE SCHOOL LEAVERS INTO THE TEACHING PROFESSION," HE ADDED.

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UNAUTHORISED BUILDING WORKS IN KWUN TONG TO CLOSE

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THE BUILDING AUTHORITY IS SEEKING TO CLOSE THE UNAUTHORISED BUILDING WORKS AT A BUILDING IN KWUN TONG SO THAT THEY CAN BE DEMOLISHED WITHOUT CAUSING DANGER TO THE OCCUPIERS AND THE PUBLIC.

THE UNAUTHORISED STRUCTURES ARE LOCATED AT THE ROOF OVER UNITS F3, Q3 AND T3, 13TH FLOOR, BLOCK 3, KWUN TONG INDUSTRIAL CENTRE, 448-458 KWUN TONG ROAD.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1992

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NOTICES OF INTENTION TO APPLY FOR THREE CLOSURE ORDERS UNDER THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE FROM THE HONG KONG DISTRICT COURT ON DECEMBER 16 WAS POSTED ON THE PREMISES TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

DEMOLITION WORKS ARE EXPECTED TO START AS SOON AS THE CLOSURE ORDERS ARE ISSUED.

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

	\$ MILLION -----
OPENING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT	2,000
REVERSAL OF LAF	-500
BALANCE AFTER REVERSAL OF LAF	1,500
NET INJECTION/WITHDRAWAL TODAY	NIL
EFFECT OF LAF TODAY	+700
CLOSING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT	2,200
LAF RATE 2.00 BID/4.00 OFFER TWI 111.7 *-0.1* 28.10.92	

HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND

EF BILLS			HONG KONG GOVERNMENT BONDS			
TERMS	YIELD	TERM	ISSUE	COUPON	PRICE	YIELD
1 WEEK	3.65 PCT	13 MONTHS	2311	6.25	102.40	3.95
1 MONTH	3.53 PCT	16 MONTHS	2402	5.50	101.50	4.35
3 MONTHS	3.53 PCT	19 MONTHS	2405	5.502	101.50	4.54
6 MONTHS	3.53 PCT	22 MONTHS	2408	4.375	99.54	4.69
12 MONTHS	3.95 PCT					

TOTAL TURNOVER OF BILLS AND BONDS - 7,757 MN

CLOSED 28 OCTOBER 1992

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