



# DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1993

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1993

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STATEMENT ON ELECTIONS TALKS

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IN RESPONSE TO PRESS ENQUIRIES, A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN ISSUED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT:

"WE HAVE SAID FREQUENTLY AND CONSISTENTLY THAT WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO HOLD TALKS WITH THE CHINESE SIDE ON THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE 1994/95 ELECTIONS. WE HAVE SET NO PRECONDITIONS FOR TALKS. THIS REMAINS THE POSITION.

"WE HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT WE BELIEVE THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE 1994/95 ELECTIONS MUST BE FAIR, OPEN AND ACCEPTABLE TO THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG, THAT IS THEY MUST COMMAND THE SUPPORT OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND THE CONFIDENCE OF THE COMMUNITY.

"WE HAVE EXPLAINED OUR POSITION TO THE CHINESE SIDE ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS AND THESE DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS ARE CONTINUING. WE HOPE THAT THEY WILL LEAD TO TALKS BUT AT THIS STAGE WE HAVE NO ANNOUNCEMENT TO MAKE."

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WORKING GROUP TO INTERVIEW BANKS SHORTLY

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THE WORKING PARTY SET UP TO EXAMINE THE IMPACT OF NEW SHARE ISSUES ON THE MONETARY AND BANKING SYSTEMS WILL SHORTLY BEGIN A SERIES OF INTERVIEWS WITH AUTHORISED INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER MARKET PARTICIPANTS, A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"IT HAS PREPARED A DETAILED QUESTIONNAIRE TO FACILITATE DISCUSSIONS WITH SUCH PARTIES. THE AIM OF THE EXERCISE IS TO ESTABLISH THE FACTS, TO IDENTIFY THE RISKS AND HOW AUTHORISED INSTITUTIONS ARE MANAGING THESE RISKS," THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

THE INTERVIEWS WILL BE CONDUCTED, ON BEHALF OF THE WORKING PARTY BY THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF BANKING, MR ALBERT CHEOK.

THE WORKING PARTY, CHAIRED BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (DESIGNATE) OF THE HONG KONG MONETARY AUTHORITY, MR JOSEPH YAM AND CONSISTS OF OFFICIALS OF THE OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF BANKING AND OFFICE OF THE EXCHANGE FUND AND A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE MONETARY AFFAIRS BRANCH, HELD ITS FIRST MEETING LAST SATURDAY (FEBRUARY 13).

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\$1 MILLION AWARDED TO BOOST HK/UK RESEARCH LINKS

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THE BRITISH COUNCIL AND HONG KONG RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) ANNOUNCED THE 16 ACADEMIC RESEARCH PROJECTS AWARDED GRANTS IN THE SECOND YEAR (1992/93) OF THE "JOINT RESEARCH SCHEME".

THIS YEAR A TOTAL OF HK\$1 MILLION WAS PROVIDED BY BOTH COUNCILS EQUALLY FOR THE 1992/93 SCHEME.

THE SCHEME AIMS TO FACILITATE ACADEMIC INTERCHANGE THROUGH PROVISION OF GRANTS TO ENABLE ACADEMICS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND HONG KONG TO COLLABORATE ON WORTHWHILE RESEARCH PROJECTS.

IT IS MODELLED ON SUCCESSFUL JOINT ACADEMIC RESEARCH SCHEMES WHICH THE BRITISH COUNCIL MANAGES IN MOST WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.

THE PROJECTS, WHICH WERE SELECTED ON THE BASIS OF ACADEMIC MERIT, MUTUAL BENEFITS AND LONG-TERM PROSPECTS FOR COLLABORATION, ARE IN DIVERSE RESEARCH FIELDS SUCH AS DRUG ABUSE; PHARMACOLOGY AND DRUGS FROM PLANTS; SPEECH AND HEARING SCIENCE; MONITORING OF COASTLINE POLLUTION IN HONG KONG AND OPTO-ELECTRONICS.

THE GRANTS, UP TO A MAXIMUM OF \$70,000 PER PROJECT, COVER TRAVEL BETWEEN HONG KONG AND THE UNITED KINGDOM AND SOME SUBSISTENCE EXPENSES.

THE "JOINT RESEARCH SCHEME" AROSE FROM A RECOMMENDATION OF A BRITISH COUNCIL-FUNDED MISSION TO HONG KONG IN LATE 1990 WHICH ADVISED ON MEANS OF DEVELOPING AND STRENGTHENING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTORS IN BRITAIN AND HONG KONG.

THE BRITISH COUNCIL AND THE HONG KONG RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL AGREED IN JUNE 1991 TO LAUNCH THE SCHEME, INITIALLY AS A PILOT PROJECT, TO ENCOURAGE COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH LINKS BETWEEN BRITAIN AND HONG KONG TO SUPPORT THE CONTINUING ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF HONG KONG.

FOR THE PILOT SCHEME IN 1991/92, HK\$500,000 WAS JOINTLY PROVIDED BY THE BRITISH COUNCIL AND THE HONG KONG RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL.

EIGHT ACADEMIC RESEARCH PROJECTS WERE FUNDED, SOME HAVE ALREADY BEEN COMPLETED AND OTHERS STILL HAVE ONE OR TWO OUTSTANDING VISITS.

THE PROJECTS WERE ALSO SELECTED FOR THEIR POTENTIAL FOR INCREASED LONG-TERM CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE UK AND HONG KONG.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSES ARE:

\* PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR HONG KONG HOSPITALS  
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A PROTOTYPE SYSTEM FOR HONG KONG HOSPITALS HAS BEEN DEVELOPED AND BEING PILOTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH;

\* DEVELOPMENT OF EXPERT SYSTEM INTERFACES  
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THE PROJECT HAS BEEN VERY SUCCESSFUL IN PROMOTING AN INTEGRATED PATTERN OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN THE TWO INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED, ALLOWING FOR SEMINARS TO TAKE PLACE BOTH HERE AND IN THE UK AND THE TWO TEAMS TO DEVELOP THE SYSTEMS, DERIVE PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS, WORK ON JOINT PUBLICATIONS AND DEVELOP OTHER WORTHWHILE PROJECTS;

\* LABOUR MARKET STRUCTURATION AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SKILLED WORK  
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THIS PROJECT HAS RESULTED IN EXCHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT OF FURTHER PROJECTS BETWEEN CHINA, HONG KONG AND THE UNITED KINGDOM IN SUCH AREAS AS FACTORS INFLUENCING INDIVIDUALS ENTRY INTO AND CHANGE OF WORK AND A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT. LINKED DOCTORAL DEGREES AND INCREASED STAFF EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE TWO INSTITUTIONS HAVE ALSO BEEN DEVELOPED.

AS IN 1991/92, APPLICATIONS WERE INVITED FROM TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN HONG KONG AND THE UNITED KINGDOM AND WERE VETTED BY TWO SELECTION COMMITTEES, ONE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND ONE IN HONG KONG.

THE UNITED KINGDOM SELECTION COMMITTEE COMPRISED PROFESSOR D E N DAVIES OF LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY AND PROFESSOR RAY COWELL OF THE NOTTINGHAM ON TRENT UNIVERSITY.

THE HONG KONG SELECTION COMMITTEE COMPRISED PROFESSOR M ANSON OF HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC AND DR EDGAR CHENG, A PROMINENT LOCAL BUSINESSMAN.

BOTH PROFESSOR ANSON AND DR CHENG WERE MEMBERS OF THE HONG KONG RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL AT THE TIME, ALTHOUGH DR CHENG HAS SINCE STEPPED DOWN.

FOLLOWING A REVIEW OF THE SCHEME BY THE BRITISH COUNCIL AND THE HONG KONG RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL, IT HAS BEEN AGREED TO CONTINUE AND EXPAND IT FURTHER IN 1993/94.

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Academic research projects awarded grants in 1992/93  
under the "Joint Research Scheme"

Number JR92/	Project Title	Project Coordinator	Main Partner
6	Extending the Scope of the Software Development Process to Improve Software Quality	David W Buxard Computing Science U of Ulster	Graham Tate/ M Lee Information Systems CPHK
7	The Structure of the Supply System of Drug Abuse in Hong Kong	T W Lo Applied Social Studies CPHK	Philip Bean Social Sciences Loughborough U
8	Numerical Modelling of Electromagnetic Stirring	Sean McKee Mathematics U of Strathclyde	Jim Caldwell Mathematics CPHK
13	Development of an Enzyme-linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA)	John H K Yeung Pharmacology CUHK	B K Park Pharmacology & Therap Liverpool U
18	A Molecular Approach to Tuberculosis: Diagnosis, Epidemiology and Drug Resistance	David Cally Infection U of Birmingham	Augustine F Cheng Microbiology CUHK
21	Computer Simulation of Processing for Optoelectronic Devices	I H Wilson Electronic Engineering CUHK	R P Webb Engineering U of Surrey
27	Antitranspirant Activity of Xylem Sap Collected from Landfill Sites	J Zhang Biology Hong Baptist College	W J Davies Env and Biol Science U of Lancaster
36	Analysis of Composite Steel and Concrete Frames with Semi-rigid Joints	D A Nethercot Civil Engineering U of Nottingham	B L Chan Civil & Structural Engineering HKP
48	Cross-Language Quantitative Study of Cleft Palate Speech	W J Hardcastle Linguistic Science U of Reading	T Whitehill Speech & Hearing Science -HKU
50	A Transgenic Mouse Model to Study the Phenotypic Consequences of Mutations in the Type X (ten) Collagen Gene	K S F Chesh Biochemistry HKU	R P Boot-Handfort Biochemistry & Molecular Biology U of Manchester
51	Study of Transcription Factors Involved in Mammalian Hindbrain Segmentation	M H Sham Biochemistry HKU	R Krumlauf Development Neurobiolo National Inst for Med Res
52	Using Maritime Lichens to Monitor Hong Kong Coastline Pollution	I J Hodgkiss Botany / Science HKU	Mark Seaward Environmental Science U of Bradford
54	Cloning of RCC1 and Ran Homologues in Fucus Serratus	Yung H Wong Biology HKUST	Joseph T Y Wong Marine Biology Marine Biology Assoc
55	Aggregation of GABA Receptors Expressed in C2 Muscle Cells by Agrin	Karl W Talm Biology HKUST	F Anne Stephenson Pharmaceutical Chem U of London
57	Training Neural Networks	K Y M Wong Physics HKUST	D Sherrington Theoretical Physics U of Oxford
58	Quality Control of Plant Drugs: Chemical and Assessment	Chun-tao Che Chemistry HKUST	Kevin Chan Pharmacy Liverpool John Moores U

Academic research projects funded under the pilot scheme for the "Joint Research Scheme"

Number	Department - HKG	Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Project Coordinator	Main Partner
JRS91/02	Geography and Geology, HKU	Quantification of Microfabric of Offshore Soils of HK	Dec 91	Nov 92	Dr N K Tovey UEA	Dr W W S Yim HKU
JRS91/13	Economics, CUHK	The International Role of HK and 1997: the Political and Economic Links of HK with UK, USA, Japan, Taiwan and Singapore	Jan 92	Dec 92	Brian Hook U of Leeds	Yun Wing Sung CUHK
JRS91/18	Physics, HKUST	Novel Oxide and Organic Materials for Thin Film Devices	Feb 92	Dec 92	Dr David Barber HKUST	Dr Jack Silver U of Essex
JRS91/26	Management, HKP	Developing Indicator of Performance for the Hospitals of HK	Jan 92	Dec 92	Dr Peter Yuen HKP	Dr Michael Harley U of Birmingham
JRS91/29	Manufacturing Engineering, HKP	The Surface Integrity of Machined Ceramics	Jan 92	Dec 92	Dr T C Lee HKP	Dr J Huddleston Nottingham Poly
JRS91/34	Computer Science, CPHK	Development of Expert System Interface	Jan 92	Dec 92	Dr Barbara Gorzyska CPHK	Mr John L. Neilson Oxford Poly
JRS91/45	Sociology, HKBC	Labour Market Structuration and the Significance of Skilled Work: A Comparative Analysis of Conditions in China, HK and UK.	Jan 92	Dec 92	Dr Brian Ranson HKBC	Dr Theo Nichols U of Bristol
JRS91/50	Biology, HKBC	The Decontamination of Metal-polluted Effluents and Wastewaters using the Hydrophytes <i>Typha Latifolia</i> and <i>Phragmites Australis</i>	Jan 92	Dec 92	Prof M H Wong HKBC	Dr A J M Baiter U of Sheffield

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SUBVENTION FOR ADULT EDUCATION COURSES

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VOLUNTARY AGENCIES ARE INVITED TO APPLY FOR GOVERNMENT SUBVENTION TO RUN ADULT EDUCATION COURSES FOR THE 1993/94 SCHOOL YEAR.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THE COURSES WOULD SUPPLEMENT THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTIVITIES IN THIS FIELD.

AREAS ELIGIBLE FOR SUBVENTION INCLUDE PREVOCAATIONAL TRAINING, EDUCATION ON LABOUR, PRE-RETIREMENT AND RETIREMENT TRAINING, JOB-ORIENTED COURSES, SPECIAL EDUCATION FOR PHYSICALLY OR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED ADULTS, AND GENERAL EDUCATION FOR PARTICULAR GROUPS SUCH AS FACTORY WORKERS.

THE SUBVENTION WILL COVER MAINLY COST OF STAFFING, BASIC TEACHING AND OFFICE EQUIPMENT, UTILITIES CHARGES AND RENT.

APPLICATION FORMS, OBTAINABLE AT THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT'S ADULT EDUCATION SECTION, WU CHUNG HOUSE, 11TH FLOOR, 213 QUEEN'S ROAD EAST, WAN CHAI, SHOULD BE RETURNED BY APRIL 30.

APPLICANTS WILL BE INFORMED OF THE RESULT IN JULY.

FURTHER INFORMATION CAN BE OBTAINED FROM THE ADULT EDUCATION SECTION ON TEL 892 6671 OR 892 6674.

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FIRE SERVICES OPENS SECOND RECRUITING CENTRE

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THE SECOND FIRE SERVICES RECRUITING CENTRE WILL BE OPENED TOMORROW (THURSDAY) FROM 2 PM TO 6 PM TO HELP PEOPLE WISHING TO JOIN FIRE AND AMBULANCE SERVICES.

OCCUPYING AN AREA OF 110 SQUARE METRES, THE NEW CENTRE IS LOCATED AT THE MEZZANINE FLOOR OF MIDDLE ROAD MULTI-STOREY CARPARK BUILDING IN TSIM SHA TSUI.

THE OPENING HOURS OF THE CENTRE ARE: 10 AM TO 6 PM FROM MONDAY TO SATURDAY, 9 AM TO 5 PM ON SUNDAY AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS.

IT WILL BE CLOSED ON NEW YEAR DAY, LUNAR NEW YEAR HOLIDAYS, MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL AND CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS.

APPLICANTS CAN ALSO CALL AT ANOTHER RECRUITING CENTRE ON THE FIRST FLOOR OF FIRE SERVICES HEADQUARTERS BUILDING, 1 HONG CHONG ROAD, TSIM SHA TSUI EAST.

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1993

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DEATH SENTENCE ON VIETNAMESE COMMUTED

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THE GOVERNOR, AFTER TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THE ADVICE OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, HAS DECIDED THAT THE DEATH SENTENCE PASSED ON NGUYEN VAN-HIEP, A VIETNAMESE MAN, ON MARCH 14, 1990 SHOULD BE COMMUTED TO A SENTENCE OF 30 YEARS' IMPRISONMENT.

NGUYEN VAN-HIEP WAS FOUND GUILTY OF THE MURDER OF TRAN TRONG-KHANG, ALSO A VIETNAMESE MAN.

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SALT WATER CUT IN HUNG HOM

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SALT WATER SUPPLY TO ALL PREMISES IN HUNG HOM WILL BE CUT OFF FROM 10 AM ON FRIDAY (FEBRUARY 19) TO 10 AM THE FOLLOWING DAY TO FACILITATE CONNECTION WORK ON WATER MAINS.

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LAN KWAI FONG INQUIRY

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OUTLINE OF WORK DONE ON WEDNESDAY  
(FEBRUARY 17) UP TO 4.30 PM

1. WRITING FINAL REPORT.
2. STUDYING POLICE INCIDENT REPORT ON INCIDENT AT THE COLISEUM ON FEBRUARY 13, 1993.
3. CORRESPONDENCE.

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1993

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HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND  
MONEY MARKET OPERATIONS  
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	\$ MILLION -----
OPENING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT	2,150
REVERSAL OF LAF	NIL
BALANCE AFTER REVERSAL OF LAF	2,150
NET INJECTION/WITHDRAWAL TODAY	NIL
EFFECT OF LAF TODAY	+2,800
CLOSING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT	4,950

LAF RATE 2.00 BID/4.00 OFFER TWI 114.4 \*-0.4\* 17.2.93

HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND

EF BILLS		HONG KONG GOVERNMENT BONDS				
TERMS	YIELD	TERM	ISSUE	COUPON	PRICE	YIELD
1 WEEK	3.05 PCT	15 MONTHS	2405	5.50	102.18	3.73
1 MONTH	3.04 PCT	18 MONTHS	2408	5.50	100.76	3.89
3 MONTHS	3.04 PCT	21 MONTHS	2411	4.375	100.80	4.18
6 MONTHS	3.16 PCT	24 MONTHS	2502	4.625	100.81	4.37
12 MONTHS	3.56 PCT					

TOTAL TURNOVER OF BILLS AND BONDS - 16,313 MN

CLOSED 17 FEBRUARY 1993

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## SUPPLEMENT

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GOVT'S ECONOMIC POLICY IS CONSISTENT: FS  
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THE GOVERNMENT'S BROAD ECONOMIC POLICY IS REMARKABLY CONSISTENT, THOUGH NO DOUBT THE PRECISE FORMULATION HAS VARIED OVER THE YEARS, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON NGAI SHIU-KIT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR MACLEOD STRESSED THAT HONG KONG'S ECONOMIC PHILOSOPHY "IS A COMMITMENT TO ENTERPRISE, A COMMITMENT TO LOW TAXATION AND A COMMITMENT TO FREE MARKETS AND FREE TRADE."

MORE RECENTLY, THE GOVERNOR IN HIS OCTOBER POLICY SPEECH REFERRED TO THE PRINCIPLE OF "MINIMUM INTERFERENCE AND MAXIMUM SUPPORT".

HE SAID HIS COMMENTS ABOUT THE PHRASE "POSITIVE NON-INTERVENTIONISM" WERE INTENDED TO DISCOURAGE ITS USE IN DISCUSSIONS OF ECONOMIC OR INDUSTRIAL POLICY BECAUSE IT WAS SO WIDELY MISUSED.

"SINCE IT HAS CONTINUED TO BE SO MISUSED, IT SEEMED - AND STILL SEEMS - TO ME THAT IT WOULD BE BETTER NOT TO USE IT," HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT THE POLICY WAS IN FACT FAR FROM "DOING NOTHING".

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LINKED EXCHANGE RATE SYSTEM STAYS ON  
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THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO INTENTION OF CHANGING THE PRESENT POLICY OF LINKED EXCHANGE RATE SYSTEM.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON HAMISH MACLEOD, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON PHILIP WONG YU-HONG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR MACLEOD SAID EXCHANGE RATE STABILITY WAS A CRUCIAL ELEMENT FOR THE STABILITY AND PROSPERITY OF HONG KONG.

"THE MAINTENANCE OF THE PRESENT LINKED EXCHANGE RATE SYSTEM IS THEREFORE FIRM GOVERNMENT POLICY," HE SAID.

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GOVT SUPPORTS OBJECTIVES OF EARTH SUMMIT

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THE ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES OF THE EARTH SUMMIT ARE WORTHY OF SUPPORT AND THE GOVERNMENT INTENDS TO DO ITS BEST TO FULFIL THEM.

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

MR EASON SAID THE SECOND REVIEW OF THE 1989 WHITE PAPER ON THE ENVIRONMENT, WHICH WAS DUE TO BE PUBLISHED LATER THIS YEAR, WOULD PROVIDE ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO DEMONSTRATE ITS COMMITMENT TO THE CONVENTIONS.

"WE ARE NOW ASSESSING THE OVERALL IMPLICATIONS," MR EASON SAID, ADDING THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO CONSULT WIDELY WITHIN THE ADMINISTRATION ON HOW A MORE COMPREHENSIVE YET INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COULD BE ACHIEVED.

IN THE MEANTIME, MR EASON SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO ACTIVELY CONSIDER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF MARINE PARKS AND MARINE RESERVES AND, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL PROFILE FOR THE TERRITORY IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE WORLD WIDE FUND FOR THE NATURE (HK).

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MORE PUBLIC HOUSING FLATS FOR ALLOCATION

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THE HOUSING AUTHORITY HAS TAKEN MEASURES TO ENSURE THAT MORE FLATS CAN BE LET OUT TO WAITING LIST APPLICANTS, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, SAID.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ZACHARY WONG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), MR EASON SAID THESE MEASURES INCLUDED RELEASING FLATS RESERVED FOR COMMITTED CATEGORIES TO THESE APPLICANTS; EXPEDITING THE REFURBISHMENT PROGRAMME BY APPOINTING REGIONAL CONSULTANTS AND REDEPLOYING INTERNAL MAINTENANCE RESOURCES; AND STREAMLINING PROCEDURES FOR THE HAND-OVER OF NEWLY COMPLETED FLATS FROM CONTRACTORS.

MR EASON SAID AS A RESULT, THE NUMBER OF VACANT FLATS HAD BEEN REDUCED BY 53 PER CENT IN THE PAST TWO YEARS.

AS AT DECEMBER 31, 1992, THERE WERE 16,900 VACANT FLATS IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES WITH A MAJORITY OF THEM NOT BEING READY FOR IMMEDIATE ALLOCATION.

"SOME 36 PER CENT OF THEM WERE RESERVED TO MEET PLANNED REDEVELOPMENT, CLEARANCE AND MAJOR REPAIRS PROGRAMME REQUIREMENTS AND 47 PER CENT WERE UNDER REFURBISHMENT.

"THE REMAINDER (17 PER CENT) WERE EITHER NOT TAKEN OVER BY THE ESTATE MANAGEMENT OR WERE ALREADY BEING OFFERED TO ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS," HE ADDED.

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'RENT OR BUY' HOUSING SCHEME UNDER REGULAR REVIEW

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THE BASIS OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S 'RENT OR BUY' SCHEME WILL BE REVIEWED REGULARLY AND THERE IS NO INTENTION TO SET FLAT PRICES IN ACCORDANCE WITH A REPLACEMENT COST PRICING FORMULA AT PRESENT.

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).

MR EASON SAID THE AIM OF THE SCHEME WAS TO GIVE THOSE WHOSE TURN FOR REHOUSING WAS DUE THE OPTION OF EITHER RENTING A FLAT OR BUYING A HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME FLAT IN THE SAME DISTRICT.

HE SAID FLATS NOT TAKEN UP WOULD BE OFFERED TO APPLICANTS DRAWN BY BALLOT FOR HOS OR PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION SCHEME FLATS ON SALE AT THE TIME AND PRICES WERE SET AT A LEVEL SIMILAR TO CURRENT HOS/PSPS PRICES.

THE SCHEME, LAUNCHED ON JANUARY 2, 1993, INVOLVED TWO BLOCKS: ONE IN TIN SHUI WAI AND THE OTHER IN TSEUNG KWAN O, WITH A TOTAL OF 1,216 FLATS AVAILABLE FOR SALE.

THE RESPONSE EXCEEDED THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S EXPECTATIONS AND PRESENT INDICATIONS WERE THAT MOST OF THE 608 FLATS IN TIN SHUI WAI AND 40 IN TSEUNG KWAN O WOULD BE SOLD, HE SAID.

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CRITERION FOR RELIEF OF OVERCROWDING EXPLAINED

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THE CURRENT CRITERION FOR THE RELIEF OF OVERCROWDING IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES IS THE SAME AS THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S MINIMUM ALLOCATION STANDARD FOR NEW TENANTS, WHICH IS 5.5 SQUARE METRES PER PERSON.

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

MR EASON SAID PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS LIVING IN UNITS PROVIDING LESS THAN 5.5 SQUARE METRES PER PERSON MIGHT APPLY TO TRANSFER TO LARGER UNITS.

HOWEVER, HE SAID A TIGHTER CRITERION OF 4.5 SQUARE METRES PER PERSON WAS USED FOR TENANTS WISHING TO TRANSFER TO NEW FLATS IN THE URBAN AND SUB-URBAN AREAS.

"THIS IS BECAUSE THE SUPPLY OF NEW FLATS IN THESE AREAS IS TIGHT DUE TO REDEVELOPMENT AND CLEARANCE COMMITMENTS," HE ADDED.

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GOVT ALL OUT TO CURB DRUG PROBLEM AMONG YOUTH

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THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES THAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE A HIGH-RISK GROUP IN DRUG PROBLEMS, AND THEY ARE THE MAIN TARGET OF THE ANTI-DRUG EDUCATION AND PUBLICITY PROGRAMMES.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHEUNG MAN-KWONG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

A MAJOR ELEMENT OF THESE PROGRAMMES IS THE DRUG EDUCATION SCHOOL TALKS CONDUCTED BY THE NARCOTICS DIVISION IN ALL SECONDARY SCHOOLS, BOYS AND GIRLS HOMES AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS.

THE TALKS PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF DRUG ABUSE AND THE LEGAL CONSEQUENCES AND DANGERS OF INVOLVEMENT IN DRUG OFFENCES, MR ASPREY SAID.

THE SECRETARY SAID IT WAS PLANNED TO EXTEND THESE SCHOOL TALKS TO ALL PRIMARY 6 STUDENTS IN SEPTEMBER THIS YEAR.

THE GOVERNMENT ALSO AIMS TO DISSEMINATE THE ANTI-DRUG MESSAGE TO THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE AND TO PARENTS IN PARTICULAR.

THE WAYS INCLUDED:

- \* A PILOT SCHEME TO INTRODUCE DRUG EDUCATION TALKS TO PARENTS;
- \* WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS FOR STUDENT TEACHERS AND SOCIAL WORKERS;
- \* ANTI-DRUG ACTIVITIES JOINTLY ORGANISED BY DISTRICT BOARDS AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES;
- \* AN ANNUAL "DRUG WISE CAMP" ORGANISED BY THE POLICE PUBLIC RELATIONS BUREAU, THE SOCIETY FOR THE AID AND REHABILITATION OF DRUG ABUSERS.

APART FROM PREVENTIVE EDUCATION AND PUBLICITY, LAW ENFORCEMENT IS ESSENTIAL TO DETER YOUNG PEOPLE FROM DRUG ABUSE AND TRAFFICKING, MR ASPREY SAID.

THE POLICE AND CUSTOMS AND EXCISE DEPARTMENT TAKE VIGOROUS ACTION TO COUNTER DRUG TRAFFICKING BOTH AT THE REGIONAL AND DISTRICT LEVEL, AND HAVE ACHIEVED POSITIVE RESULTS IN APPREHENDING AND PROSECUTING MORE DRUG OFFENDERS, HE SAID.

"WE HOPE THAT THE INCREASE IN THE MAXIMUM PENALTIES FOR THE OFFENCE OF POSSESSION OF DANGEROUS DRUG, INTRODUCED LAST JUNE, WILL HAVE A DETERRENT EFFECT ON YOUNG PEOPLE," MR ASPREY SAID.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT ALSO ENCOURAGED THOSE YOUNG PEOPLE WHO UNFORTUNATELY BECAME VICTIMS OF HEROIN TO PARTICIPATE IN THE VOLUNTARY DRUG TREATMENT PROGRAMMES, LIKE THE METHADONE TREATMENT PROGRAMME OR THE IN-PATIENT TREATMENT PROGRAMME OPERATED BY THE SOCIETY FOR THE AID AND REHABILITATION OF DRUG ABUSERS.

/HE SAID .....

HE SAID THE NUMBER OF PERSONS AGED UNDER 21 WHO WERE PROSECUTED FOR HEROIN OFFENCES INCREASED FROM 285 IN 1990 TO 332 IN 1991 AND TO 303 IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS LAST YEAR.

THE PROPORTION OF THESE OFFENDERS PROSECUTED FOR MINOR DRUG OFFENCES, WHICH INCLUDE SIMPLE POSSESSION OR SMOKING/CONSUMPTION OF THE DRUG, HAD INCREASED FROM 40.4% IN 1990 TO 61.7% IN 1991 AND TO 79.2% IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS LAST YEAR.

HE EXPLAINED THAT THE INCREASE IN THE PROPORTION OF PROSECUTIONS FOR MINOR DRUG OFFENCES WAS IN PART, A RESULT OF THE REPEAL, IN SEPTEMBER 1991, OF PRESUMPTIONS CONCERNING POSSESSION OF DANGEROUS DRUGS FOR TRAFFICKING, IN THE DANGEROUS DRUG ORDINANCE.

HE SAID THE MAJORITY OF THOSE CONVICTED WERE SENTENCED TO A PERIOD OF DETENTION IN A DRUG ADDICTION TREATMENT CENTRE OR TO PROBATION.

THE PROPORTION SENTENCED INCREASED FROM 46.6% IN 1990 TO 55.2% IN 1991 AND TO 69.4% IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF 1992.

THIS IS CONSISTENT WITH THE INCREASE IN THE PROPORTION CONVICTED OF MINOR DRUG OFFENCES OVER THE SAME PERIOD, HE ADDED.

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#### TV PROGRAMMES GOVERNED BY CODES

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THERE ARE SPECIFIC PROVISIONS IN THE TELEVISION CODES OF PRACTICE GOVERNING THE TIMING, FORM AND NATURE UNDER WHICH MATTERS ABOUT FORTUNE-TELLING, SUPERNATURALISM, SPIRITUALISM, EVIL SPIRITS AND WEIRD PHENOMENA MAY BE COVERED ON TV PROGRAMMES, THE SECRETARY FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE, MR JAMES SO, SAID.

THE AIM IS TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM ANXIETY OR FEAR CAUSED BY SUCH SUBJECTS, HE ADDED.

"FOR EXAMPLE, NO SUCH SUBJECTS ARE ALLOWED TO BE COVERED IN PROGRAMMES BROADCAST DURING FAMILY VIEWING HOURS AND ADVERTISEMENTS ON FORTUNE-TELLERS AND THE LIKE ARE PROHIBITED," MR SO SAID IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LEE WING-TAT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"IN ADDITION, THERE ARE PROVISIONS IN THE CODES OF PRACTICE RESTRICTING MATERIAL LIKELY TO MISLEAD, ALARM, FRIGHTEN OR BE INJURIOUS TO COMMUNITY WELL-BEING, WITH PARTICULAR RESTRICTIONS ON MATERIAL LIKELY TO UPSET CHILDREN.

"ANY TV STATION FOUND TO HAVE BREACHED THESE CODES IS LIABLE TO SANCTIONS BY THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY."

THE GOVERNMENT'S ATTENTION HAS BEEN DRAWN TO THE UNDESIRABLE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT WHICH INAPPROPRIATE COVERAGE OF SUCH MATTERS MAY HAVE ON THE PUBLIC, PARTICULARLY ON CHILDREN, BY COMPLAINTS MADE TO THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY.

HOWEVER, MR SO TOLD COUNCILLORS THAT IT DID NOT INTEND TO TAKE ADDITIONAL MEASURES, APART FROM THOSE COVERED IN THE TELEVISION CODES OF PRACTICE, TO ADVISE THE PUBLIC FURTHER ON THE MATTERS RAISED.

AS REGARDS THE PRINTED MEDIA, MR SO POINTED OUT THAT THEY ENJOYED FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND HAD EDITORIAL FREEDOM TO GIVE TREATMENT TO ANY SUBJECT IN A WAY THEY CONSIDERED APPROPRIATE, HAVING REGARD TO THE LAWS OF HONG KONG ON SUCH MATTERS AS OFFICIAL SECRETS, LIBEL, SECURITY AND EMERGENCY, CONTEMPT OF COURT AND INDECENCY.

"I HOPE THAT ANY PUBLICITY GIVEN TO THIS QUESTION AND MY ANSWER TO IT WILL SERVE TO REMIND THOSE IN THE MEDIA TO ACT RESPONSIBLY AND HAVE REGARD TO PUBLIC SENSITIVITY AND FEELINGS.

"HOPEFULLY, THIS WILL ALSO SERVE TO REMIND PARENTS AND TEACHERS OF THEIR OWN PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITIES IN EDUCATING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TO ADOPT THE RIGHT ATTITUDE IN DEALING WITH SUCH MATTERS," MR SO ADDED.

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BAGGAGE CHECK-IN MEASURE AIMS TO EASE AIRPORT CONGESTION  
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BAGGAGE NOT READILY IDENTIFIABLE AS PERSONAL EFFECTS IS PROHIBITED FROM BEING CHECKED IN AS PASSENGER BAGGAGE AT THE AIRPORT TERMINAL BECAUSE OF THE RECENT GROWTH IN THE NUMBER OF PASSENGERS ATTEMPTING TO CHECK IN COMMERCIAL GOODS AS PERSONAL BAGGAGE.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MRS ANSON CHAN, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HOWARD YOUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SHE SAID IN ONE CASE, A PASSENGER ATTEMPTED TO CHECK IN NO LESS THAN 75 ITEMS.

APART FROM CAUSING DELAY AND INCONVENIENCE TO OTHER DEPARTING PASSENGERS, COMMERCIAL GOODS ARE OFTEN PACKED IN CONTAINERS WHICH ARE TOO LARGE TO PASS THROUGH X-RAY SCREENING EQUIPMENT, SHE SAID.

"AS A RESULT TIME-CONSUMING HAND SEARCHES ARE NECESSARY," SHE ADDED.

UNLOADING OF CONSIGNMENTS FROM TRUCKS HAD ALSO CAUSED TRAFFIC CONGESTION AT THE DEPARTURE LEVEL KERBSIDE, SHE SAID.

UNDER THE ORDER MADE BY THE AIRPORT GENERAL MANAGER UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE HONG KONG AIRPORT (REGULATIONS) ORDINANCE IN 1989, ONLY PASSENGER BAGGAGE CONTAINING PERSONAL EFFECTS MAY BE CHECKED IN AT THE PASSENGER TERMINAL.

CONSIGNMENTS READILY IDENTIFIABLE AS COMMERCIAL GOODS, INCLUDING COURIER CONSIGNMENTS, MUST BE HANDLED THROUGH THE CARGO TERMINAL.

THE ORDER AIMS TO ALLEVIATE THE CONGESTION WITHIN THE AIRPORT PASSENGER TERMINAL BUILDING AND THE OVERLOADING OF THE BAGGAGE HANDLING SYSTEM, MRS CHAN SAID.

ACCORDING TO THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AIR TRANSPORT, BAGGAGE MEANS SUCH ARTICLES, EFFECTS AND OTHER PERSONAL PROPERTY OF A PASSENGER AS ARE NECESSARY OR APPROPRIATE FOR WEAR, USE, COMFORT OR CONVENIENCE IN CONNECTION WITH HIS TRIP.

"THIS IS OBVIOUSLY A FAIRLY NARROW DEFINITION AND THE ULTIMATE DECISION AS TO WHETHER AN ITEM PRESENTED FOR CHECK-IN SHOULD BE ACCEPTED AS BAGGAGE RESTS WITH THE AIRLINE," MRS CHAN SAID.

GENERALLY SPEAKING PASSENGERS ARE GIVEN THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT, AND ONLY ITEMS THAT ARE READILY IDENTIFIABLE AS COMMERCIAL CONSIGNMENTS ARE LIKELY TO BE REFERRED TO THE CARGO TERMINAL, SHE ADDED.

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#### EFFORTS MADE TO COMBAT CAR THEFT

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THE GOVERNMENT IS PLANNING TO BRING FORWARD LEGISLATION TO IMPOSE HIGHER MAXIMUM PENALTIES FOR SMUGGLING GENERALLY, AND MORE EFFECTIVE CONTROL ON CERTAIN TYPES OF BOATS WHICH ARE COMMONLY USED IN THE SMUGGLING OF VEHICLES.

THESE ARE IN ADDITION TO INTRODUCING HEAVIER PENALTIES FOR VEHICLE THEFT.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHIM PUI-CHUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR ASPREY SAID THE POLICE AND OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES WERE CONTINUING THEIR EFFORTS TO TACKLE THE RELATED PROBLEMS OF VEHICLE THEFT AND SMUGGLING.

HE ALSO SAID OPERATIONAL TACTICS WERE REGULARLY REVIEWED TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE INCREASING SOPHISTICATION OF VEHICLE THEFT AND SMUGGLING SYNDICATES, AND VERY CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES WERE DEVOTED TO THIS TASK.

MR ASPREY ADDED THAT THE POLICE, APART FROM PUBLICISING THE IMPORTANCE OF SECURITY TO VEHICLE OWNERS, CAR PARK OPERATORS AND THE SECURITY STAFF OF PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS, HAD ALSO HELD MEETINGS WITH AN AD-HOC GROUP FOR THE REDUCTION OF THE INCIDENCE OF VEHICLE CRIME ON A QUARTERLY BASIS SINCE 1990.

"THE GROUP IS A USEFUL FORUM FOR THE EXCHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAS AND WE BELIEVE IT SHOULD CONTINUE," HE SAID.

IT COMPRISES REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE GENERAL INSURANCE COUNCIL, THE ACCIDENT INSURERS ASSOCIATION, THE MOTOR TRADERS ASSOCIATION, THE FINANCE HOUSE ASSOCIATION AND CAR PARK OPERATORS. IT ALSO COMPRISES OFFICIALS FROM TRANSPORT, CUSTOMS AND EXCISE AND TRADE DEPARTMENTS.

MR ASPREY SAID THE POLICE WOULD CONSIDER ADDING TO THIS GROUP OTHER RELEVANT BODIES AS NECESSARY.

HE SAID IT WAS NOT NECESSARY TO ESTABLISH A SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE ON SIMILAR JOBS.

"WE BELIEVE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW COMMITTEE WOULD BE A DUPLICATION, AND IS NOT NECESSARY," HE SAID.

MR ASPREY SAID THERE WAS CLOSE AND REGULAR LIAISON WITH THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES ON THE SMUGGLING OF STOLEN VEHICLES FROM HONG KONG INTO CHINA.

"THIS PROBLEM IS HIGH ON THE AGENDA OF EVERY DISCUSSION WHICH WE HAVE WITH THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES ON LAW ENFORCEMENT MATTER, AT BOTH THE POLITICAL AND OPERATIONAL LEVELS," HE SAID.

MR ASPREY ALSO BELIEVED THAT THE CHINESE POLICE LIAISON OFFICERS WHO HAD RECENTLY ARRIVED IN HONG KONG WOULD STRENGTHEN THE LIAISON WITH THE MAINLAND LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES.

HE SAID THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE HAD PERSONALLY RAISED THE MATTER ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS WITH THE CHINESE LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES.

HE HAS ALSO RECENTLY WRITTEN TO THE HEADS OF THE LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES OF NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES AND TO THE INTERPOL SECRETARIAT TO REQUEST THEIR ASSISTANCE IN TACKLING THE PROBLEM OF VEHICLE THEFT IN HONG KONG.

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SCHOOLS ADVISED TO BALANCE PUPILS' HOMEWORK  
AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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SCHOOLS RATHER THAN THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR DECIDING ON THE VOLUME OF HOMEWORK OR THE FREQUENCY OF TESTS AND EXAMINATIONS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT VARIOUS FACTORS, PARENTAL WISHES AND OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS.

THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HOWEVER ISSUES ANNUAL GUIDELINES TO HELP SCHOOLS DETERMINE THE TYPE, FREQUENCY AND AMOUNT OF HOMEWORK AT ALL LEVELS.

"SCHOOLS ARE ADVISED TO BALANCE THE DEMANDS OF THE CURRICULUM WITH THE PUPILS' ABILITIES, THEIR HOME ENVIRONMENT AND THE NEED FOR PLAY TIME," THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, SAID IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ERIC LI KA-CHEUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"THEY ARE SPECIFICALLY ASKED TO ALLOW AMPLE TIME FOR SOCIAL EVENTS, EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND REST, WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE."

GIVEN THAT, MR CHAN SAID THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HAD NO PLANS TO CONDUCT REGULAR SURVEYS AMONG PARENTS TO FIND OUT THE AVERAGE TIME SPENT BY PUPILS DOING HOMEWORK OR PREPARING FOR EXAMINATIONS.

OFFICERS OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, THROUGH REGULAR VISITS TO SCHOOLS, MONITOR THE SITUATION REGARDING HOMEWORK, TESTS AND EXAMINATIONS TO ENSURE THAT THERE ARE NO EXCESSES, HE ADDED.

ON QUESTIONS WHETHER PARENTS WOULD BE CONSULTED ON THE APPROPRIATE VOLUME OF THEIR CHILDREN'S HOMEWORK, MR CHAN REPLIED THAT THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT MAINTAINED AN EXTENSIVE NETWORK OF AD HOC OR STANDING COMMITTEES THROUGH WHICH PARENTAL VIEWS ON HOMEWORK AND OTHER ISSUES WERE SOLICITED AND TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT.

"THE DEPARTMENT RECOGNISES THAT MORE DIRECT PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT WILL HELP SCHOOLS DECIDE ON THE MOST APPROPRIATE BALANCE BETWEEN WORK AND PLAY IN DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

"TO THIS END, THE HOME-SCHOOL CO-OPERATION COMMITTEE WAS ESTABLISHED RECENTLY, FOLLOWING A RECOMMENDATION IN EDUCATION COMMISSION REPORT NO. 5, TO PROMOTE MORE INTERACTION BETWEEN PARENTS AND SCHOOLS," MR CHAN SAID.

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PROCEDURES TO ASSESS TEXTBOOKS UNDER REGULAR REVIEW  
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THE EXISTING PROCEDURES FOR ASSESSING TEXTBOOKS ARE REVIEWED REGULARLY IN CONSULTATION WITH THE THREE LOCAL PUBLISHER'S ASSOCIATIONS, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR JOHN CHAN, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE PROCEDURES HAVE EVOLVED OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME AND NO SEPARATE REVIEW OUTSIDE THIS ONGOING PROCESS IS CONSIDERED NECESSARY, HE ADDED.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON JAMES TO KUN-SUN, MR CHAN EXPLAINED THAT THE REVIEW OF TEXTBOOKS WAS UNDERTAKEN BY A TEXTBOOKS COMMITTEE OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND ITS TEXTBOOKS REVIEWING PANELS.

THE COMMITTEE AND THE REVIEWING PANELS ARE MADE UP OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OFFICERS, HEADS AND TEACHERS OF SCHOOLS, AND LECTURERS OF COLLEGES OF EDUCATION AND TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS.

EACH TEXTBOOK SUBMITTED FOR REVIEW IS ASSESSED BY AT LEAST TWO REVIEWERS, TO SEE WHETHER IT FOLLOWS THE SYLLABUSES PREPARED BY THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OR THE HONG KONG EXAMINATION AUTHORITY.

THE REVIEWERS WOULD ALSO FIND OUT WHETHER THE TEXTBOOK ATTAINS ACCEPTABLE STANDARDS IN TERMS OF CONTENT, SEQUENCE, EXERCISES, LANGUAGE, ILLUSTRATION AND FORMAT.

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE ASSESSMENTS OF THE REVIEWERS, A TEXTBOOK IS THEN GRADED EITHER A, B OR C BY THE CO-ORDINATOR OF THE RELEVANT SUBJECT REVIEWING PANEL AND CONSIDERED BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE TEXTBOOKS COMMITTEE.

IF ENDORSED, THE PUBLISHER IS NOTIFIED ACCORDINGLY.

ALL TEXTBOOKS GRADED "A" ARE INCLUDED IN THE "LIST OF TEXTBOOKS RECOMMENDED BY THE TEXTBOOKS COMMITTEE" WHICH IS ISSUED TO SCHOOLS QUARTERLY.

TEXTBOOKS GRADED "B" ARE EXCLUDED FROM THE LIST AND ARE NEITHER RECOMMENDED NOR PROHIBITED FROM BEING USED IN SCHOOLS.

A TEXTBOOK FOUND TOTALLY UNSUITABLE IS GRADED "C" AND IS PROHIBITED FROM BEING USED IN SCHOOLS.

MR CHAN ALSO TOLD THE COUNCIL THAT OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS, TWO CASES OF ALLEGED ERRORS IN THE TEXTBOOKS OF SECONDARY AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS HAD BEEN REPORTED TO THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

ONE COMPLAINT TURNED OUT TO BE UNSUBSTANTIATED WHILE THE OTHER PARTIALLY SUBSTANTIATED.

"THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT HAS ISSUED INSTRUCTIONS TO ITS REVIEWERS TO TAKE GREATER CARE TO CHECK FOR GRAMMAR, USAGE, STYLE AND THE APPROPRIATENESS OF EXAMPLES USED IN THE TEXT," MR CHAN SAID.

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STEPS IN PLACE TO ENSURE GUESTHOUSE SAFETY  
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THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN TAKING A NUMBER OF MEASURES TO IMPROVE SAFETY STANDARDS IN COMMERCIAL OUTLETS AND COMMON AREAS WITHIN GUESTHOUSE BUILDINGS, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPECIALIST TEAMS INCLUDING STAFF FROM THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT ENSURE GUESTHOUSES AND CLUBS COMPLY WITH THEIR LICENSING REQUIREMENTS, HE SAID.

THEY ALSO MONITOR THEIR FIRE SAFETY STANDARDS TO ENSURE PUBLIC SAFETY, HE ADDED.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MARTIN BARROW IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR ASPREY SAID GUESTHOUSES WERE USUALLY FOUND IN BUILDINGS OF MIXED COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL USE.

/HE POINTED .....

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE TWO PROBLEMS MOST FREQUENTLY FOUND IN THE COMMON AREAS OF MIXED USER BUILDINGS WERE OBSTRUCTION TO MEANS OF ESCAPE AND AGEING ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS AND WIRING.

AS REGARDS OBSTRUCTIONS, MR ASPREY SAID IN ADDITION TO INSPECTIONS MADE IN RESPONSE TO COMPLAINTS, REGULAR INSPECTIONS WERE CARRIED OUT BY THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT.

"FIRE HAZARD ABATEMENT ACTION OR PROSECUTION ACTION IS TAKEN, AS APPROPRIATE, AGAINST OFFENCES UNDER THE FIRE SERVICES ORDINANCE, TO ENSURE THAT THE COMMON AREAS ARE FREE FROM OBSTRUCTION AND THAT THE FIRE SERVICES INSTALLATIONS ARE IN PROPER WORKING ORDER," HE SAID.

"OWNERS OF FIXED ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS IN THE COMMON AREAS OF BUILDINGS ARE REQUIRED TO EMPLOY REGISTERED ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS TO CARRY OUT MAINTENANCE WORK ON ELECTRIC WIRING, UNDER THE ELECTRICITY ORDINANCE.

"THE ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT CARRIES OUT CHECKS IN THESE PREMISES," MR ASPREY TOLD THE COUNCIL.

THE SECRETARY FURTHER ADDED THAT PUBLIC EDUCATION WAS IMPORTANT BECAUSE THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY OF ENSURING BUILDING SAFETY WAS TO PERSUADE OWNERS AND COMMERCIAL OPERATORS TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY THEMSELVES FOR MANAGING THEIR OWN BUILDINGS PROPERLY.

"MESSAGES ON FIRE PREVENTION AND GOOD BUILDING MANAGEMENT HAVE BEEN DISSEMINATED THROUGH LOCAL PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS, PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS ON TELEVISION AND RADIO AND INFORMATION LEAFLETS.

"IN ADDITION, STAFF FROM THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT MAKE REGULAR VISITS TO THESE PREMISES TO DRIVE HOME THESE MESSAGES AND TO GIVE THE OWNERS AND COMMERCIAL OPERATORS ADVICE ON WAYS OF IMPROVING SAFETY IN THEIR BUILDINGS," HE SAID.

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#### STEPS TAKEN TO PREVENT POWER STATION EXPLOSION

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THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) ASSURED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THAT ALL POSSIBLE STEPS WOULD BE TAKEN TO PREVENT THE RECURRENCE OF A INCIDENT SIMILAR TO THE EXPLOSION AT TAP SHEK KOK POWER STATION LAST AUGUST.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LAU CHIN-SHEK, MR ASPREY SAID THE CHINA LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY HAD UNDERTOOK TO INTRODUCE POSITIVE MEASURES FOR IMPROVEMENT IF AND WHEN IT DID REBUILD THE SYSTEM DAMAGED IN THE EXPLOSION.

ON RECEIPT OF AN APPLICATION BY THE COMPANY TO REBUILD THE PLANT, THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE IN A POSITION TO ENSURE THAT ALL THE NECESSARY SAFETY REQUIREMENTS ARE IN PLACE TO PREVENT THE RECURRENCE OF A SIMILAR INCIDENT IN FUTURE, HE SAID.

/THE COMPANY .....

THE COMPANY HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHETHER TO REBUILD THE SYSTEM DAMAGED IN THE EXPLOSION.

REGARDING THE REPORT OF THE INTER-DEPARTMENTAL INVESTIGATION HEADED BY THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT, MR ASPREY SAID ITS CONCLUSION AS TO THE CAUSE OF THE EXPLOSION WAS SIMILAR TO THAT REACHED BY THE COMPANY.

HE ADDED THAT THERE WERE, HOWEVER, SOME DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ITS FINDINGS AND THOSE OF THE COMPANY'S REPORT.

A DEATH INQUEST WILL BE CARRIED OUT IN THE SECOND HALF OF APRIL TO LOOK INTO THE CAUSES OF THE DEATHS OF THE TWO EMPLOYEES KILLED IN THE EXPLOSION.

IN THE COURSE OF THIS INQUEST, THE CORONER AND HIS JURORS WILL CONSIDER THE EVIDENCE CONTAINED IN THESE TWO REPORTS.

"UNTIL THE COMPLETION OF THIS INQUEST, AND ANY OTHER RELATED LEGAL PROCEEDINGS THAT MAY BE INITIATED, PUBLICATION OF THE REPORT OF THE INTER-DEPARTMENTAL GROUP WOULD BE PREJUDICIAL TO THE PARTIES INVOLVED," MR ASPREY SAID.

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PENALTY FOR ORAL SEX CRIME ADEQUATE

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THE EXISTING PENALTY FOR THE OFFENCE OF INDECENT ASSAULT IS ADEQUATE TO TACKLE THE CRIME OF FORCING ANOTHER PERSON TO PERFORM ORAL SEX, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON PEGGY LAM IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR ASPREY SAID THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT CONSIDER THAT A SEPARATE OFFENCE OF THE ACT WAS NECESSARY.

"THE PRESENT LAW HAS NOT CAUSED DIFFICULTIES IN RELATION TO THE CHARGING OR SENTENCING OF SUCH OFFENDERS; NOR IS THERE ANY INDICATION THAT SEXUAL OFFENCES OF THIS SORT ARE INCREASING," HE SAID.

AT PRESENT, A PERSON WHO FORCES ANOTHER PERSON TO PERFORM ORAL SEX, BUT COMMITS NO OTHER VIOLENCE, IS CHARGED WITH INDECENT ASSAULT UNDER THE CRIMES ORDINANCE.

THE MAXIMUM PENALTY FOR THIS OFFENCE IS 10 YEARS' IMPRISONMENT. THIS PENALTY WAS INCREASED FROM FIVE YEARS IN 1991.

HOWEVER, MR ASPREY SAID AN ANALYSIS OF PROSECUTIONS INVOLVING THE OFFENCE SHOWED THAT IT WAS OFTEN ACCOMPANIED BY OTHER SEXUAL OFFENCES, SUCH AS RAPE OR ATTEMPTED RAPE.

"IN SENTENCING OFFENDERS WHO FORCE OTHERS TO PERFORM ORAL SEX, THE COURT IS BOUND TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ALL OF THE ACTIONS OF THE OFFENDERS," HE SAID.

AS WITH RAPE AND BUGGERY, THE EXTENT AND SEVERITY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DAMAGE DONE TO A VICTIM FORCED TO PERFORM ORAL SEX DEPENDS ON A WIDE RANGE OF FACTORS, SUCH AS THE VIOLENCE USED, AND OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CASE, HE SAID.

GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DAMAGE DONE TO VICTIMS FORCED TO PERFORM ORAL SEX IS LESS THAN THAT EXPERIENCED BY VICTIMS OF RAPE AND BUGGERY, HE ADDED.

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GOVT VALUES VIEWS IN LEGCO DEBATES

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALWAYS ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE TO THE VIEWS OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS EXPRESSED IN DEBATES OF THE COUNCIL, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, SAID.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HENRY TANG YING-YEN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), SIR DAVID SAID THE MEMBERS' VIEWS ON GOVERNMENT POLICIES WERE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION IN THE FORMULATION OR DEVELOPMENT OF SUCH POLICIES.

"WHERE IT IS NOT POSSIBLE, FOR POLICY OR RESOURCE REASONS, TO AGREE TO PROPOSALS SUPPORTED BY MEMBERS IN DEBATES, THE GOVERNMENT WILL STATE CLEARLY THE REASONS," HE ADDED.

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CONTROLLED USE OF PYROTECHNICS IN THE PIPELINE

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THE GOVERNMENT IS DRAWING UP PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES TO FACILITATE THE GRANTING OF PERMITS FOR THE CONTROLLED USE OF PYROTECHNICS IN THEATRICAL, FILM AND TV PRODUCTIONS.

THE RELEVANT INDUSTRIES HAVE BEEN CONSULTED ON THESE PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE, MR JAMES SO, WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON MAN SAI-CHEONG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR SO EXPLAINED THAT APART FROM SAFEGUARDING PUBLIC SAFETY, INCLUDING THAT OF THE FILM CREW AND PRODUCTION TEAM, THESE GUIDELINES WERE ALSO DESIGNED TO MEET THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF THE INDUSTRIES.

"WE HOPE TO PROMULGATE THESE GUIDELINES SOON, POSSIBLY WITHIN THE NEXT COUPLE OF MONTHS," MR SO SAID.

SINCE 1967, THE GOVERNMENT HAS IMPOSED A GENERAL BAN ON FIREWORKS WHICH INCLUDE PYROTECHNICS.

THIS BAN IS STILL IN FORCE.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1993

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PERMITS TO DISCHARGE FIREWORKS HAVE BEEN GRANTED FROM TIME TO TIME FOR SPECIAL OCCASIONS AND CELEBRATIONS SUCH AS THE LUNAR NEW YEAR FIREWORKS DISPLAY.

IT APPEARS THAT PYROTECHNICS HAS ONLY BEEN USED IN FILM AND TV PRODUCTIONS IN RECENT YEARS.

BUT NO APPLICATIONS FOR PERMITS FOR THE USE OF PYROTECHNICS IN FILM AND TV PRODUCTIONS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED BY ANY OF THE RELEVANT AUTHORITIES SINCE 1967.

"WE DO NOT KNOW WHY THE FILM AND TV INDUSTRIES HAVE NOT APPLIED FOR PERMITS," HE SAID.

"THIS COULD BE DUE TO A NUMBER OF REASONS INCLUDING IGNORANCE, OR FEAR OF NOT OBTAINING THE NECESSARY PERMIT IN TIME, OR FEAR OF NOT BEING GRANTED A PERMIT AT ALL," MR SO ADDED.

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#### REDEVELOPMENTS OF CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING SCHEME

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REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS FOR CIVIL SERVANTS' CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING SCHEMES ARE PROCESSED IN THE SAME WAY AS OTHER REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON JIMMY MCGREGOR IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR EASON SAID THE GOVERNMENT PROCEDURES AIMED AT DEALING WITH APPLICATIONS AS SPEEDILY AS POSSIBLE WHILE ENSURING THAT PLANNING, LEASING AND BUILDING REQUIREMENTS WERE MET.

HE SAID THREE APPLICATIONS FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL SERVANTS' CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING SCHEMES, INVOLVING 41 FLATS, HAD BEEN RECEIVED SO FAR.

"ONE APPLICATION INVOLVING 19 FLATS HAS BEEN APPROVED AND THE PREMIUM IS BEING NEGOTIATED.

"THIS CASE TOOK APPROXIMATELY FIVE MONTHS TO PROCESS FROM RECEIPT OF APPLICATION TO OFFER OF BASIC TERMS," HE SAID.

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TIMBER INDUSTRY UNDER SURVEY

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THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT IS CURRENTLY CONDUCTING A SURVEY ON THE TIMBER INDUSTRY, INCLUDING THE IMPORTATION, STORAGE AND SAWING OF LOGS AND THE USE OF SAWN LOGS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY.

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

MR EASON SAID IF STORAGE SITES WERE FOUND INSUFFICIENT IN THE STUDY, WHICH WOULD BE COMPLETED SHORTLY, THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT WOULD INITIATE A SITE SEARCH FOR MORE.

HE EXPLAINED THAT A NUMBER OF FACTORS WERE CONSIDERED IN ALLOCATING LAND FOR TIMBER STORAGE. THESE INCLUDED SITE AVAILABILITY, COMPETING DEMANDS FROM DIFFERENT END-USERS, COMPATIBILITY WITH THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE INDIVIDUAL CASE.

ABOUT \$3,693 MILLION WORTH OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF TIMBER WAS IMPORTED LAST YEAR AND A TOTAL OF 39.1 HECTARES OF LAND SPECIFICALLY DESIGNATED FOR LOG POND, TIMBER STORAGE AND SAWMILL PURPOSES WAS KNOWN TO THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT, HE ADDED.

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AIRPORT TAX COLLECTION SYSTEM WORKS WELL

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THE PRESENT SYSTEM OF AIR PASSENGER DEPARTURE TAX COLLECTION HAS GENERALLY WORKED WELL BOTH IN TERMS OF PASSENGERS' CONVENIENCE AND SECURITY OF REVENUE COLLECTION, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MRS ANSON CHAN, SAID.

"THE GOVERNMENT IS NEVERTHELESS ALWAYS PREPARED TO CONSIDER SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING THE SYSTEM FURTHER," SHE ADDED.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), MRS CHAN SAID SINCE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE TAX IN 1983, AIRLINE OPERATORS HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE COLLECTION OF THE TAX.

THE GOVERNMENT PAID A FEE TO THE AIRLINE OPERATORS TO COVER STAFF AND OTHER COSTS INCURRED IN CONNECTION WITH COLLECTION, ACCOUNTING, SECURITY AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE TAX.

THE APPROVED ESTIMATE FOR THE COLLECTION FEE IN THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1992/93 IS \$19 MILLION.

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RAILWAY CORPORATIONS CLOSELY MONITORED

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE TWO RAILWAY CORPORATIONS ARE CAREFULLY MONITORED TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARE SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THE TRAVELLING PUBLIC.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR MICHAEL LEUNG, IN A MOTION DEBATE ON THE MECHANISMS FOR MONITORING THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY CORPORATION (MTRC) AND KOWLOON-CANTON RAILWAY CORPORATION (KCRC) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR LEUNG STRESSED THAT THE BASIC REQUIREMENTS TO MONITOR THE OPERATIONS OF BOTH CORPORATIONS WERE LAID DOWN IN THEIR RESPECTIVE ORDINANCES.

UNDER THE LAW, THE TWO CORPORATIONS ARE REQUIRED TO OPERATE RAIL SERVICES HAVING REGARD TO THE REASONABLE REQUIREMENTS OF THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM OF HONG KONG.

"THIS REQUIRES THEM TO PROVIDE AN EFFICIENT, SAFE AND RELIABLE RAILWAY SERVICE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY," MR LEUNG SAID.

THE MEMBERS OF THE TWO GOVERNING BOARDS ARE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR.

THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL IS EMPOWERED TO GIVE DIRECTIONS TO THE TWO CORPORATIONS IF PUBLIC INTEREST SO REQUIRES.

IN ADDITION TO THE STATUTORY SAFEGUARDS, THE GOVERNMENT HAS INTRODUCED ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS OVER THE YEARS TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC INTEREST. THIS IS AN ONGOING PROCESS OF REGULAR REVIEWS AND IMPROVEMENTS.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE CORPORATIONS ARE REQUIRED TO PRODUCE CORPORATE STRATEGIES AND BUSINESS PLANS FOR AGREEMENT WITH THE ADMINISTRATION.

IN ADDITION, THE ADMINISTRATION RECEIVES AND STUDIES THEIR MONTHLY OPERATING REPORTS TO EXAMINE ANY DEVIATIONS FROM APPROVED PLANS AND BUDGETS AND TO TAKE REMEDIAL ACTION.

TO REVIEW PERFORMANCE AND PROVIDE ANY NECESSARY DIRECTIONS ON POLICY ISSUES, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT MEETS THE CORPORATIONS' CHAIRMEN REGULARLY.

THE OPERATIONS OF THE TWO CORPORATIONS ARE ALSO SUBJECT TO THE REGULAR SCRUTINY OF LEGCO, TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THE DISTRICT BOARDS THROUGH QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS ON ISSUES OF PUBLIC CONCERN.

ON FINANCIAL MONITORING, MR LEUNG SAID THE TWO CORPORATIONS WERE REQUIRED TO PRODUCE AUDITED ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL REPORTS FOR TABLING AT LEGCO.

THEY CANNOT UNDERTAKE ANY INVESTMENTS OF THEIR OWN MONEYS WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OF THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY.

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MOREOVER, THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT PROVIDE ANY GUARANTEE TO THE CORPORATIONS BORROWINGS WITHOUT THE APPROVAL OF THE LEGCO, MR LEUNG SAID.

ON RAILWAY SAFETY, MR LEUNG SAID THERE WAS A LOCAL RAILWAY INSPECTORATE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR TO UNDERTAKE SAFETY INSPECTIONS AND TO INVESTIGATE ACCIDENTS.

REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UK RAILWAY INSPECTORATE ALSO VISIT HONG KONG REGULARLY TO CARRY OUT RAILWAY INSPECTIONS AND TO REVIEW MATTERS CONCERNING SAFETY.

ABOVE ALL, THE TRAVELLING PUBLIC PROVIDE THE MOST DIRECT AND EFFECTIVE MONITORING. THIS IS DONE THROUGH AN EXTENSIVE NETWORK ESTABLISHED BY THE TWO CORPORATIONS INCLUDING PASSENGERS LIAISON GROUPS, CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRES AND REGULAR CUSTOMER SURVEYS.

SUCH DIRECT COMMUNICATION HAS PRODUCED USEFUL RESULTS. THESE INCLUDE IMPROVEMENTS TO TRAIN FREQUENCIES, AIR CONDITIONING, PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEMS, PASSENGER QUEUING AND TICKETING, AND STATION FACILITIES.

FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS, THE TWO CORPORATIONS HAVE SPENT A TOTAL OF \$1.2 BILLION ON SUCH IMPROVEMENTS.

IN ADDITION TO THE EXISTING COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES, THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL HAS RECENTLY DECIDED TO EXTEND THE JURISDICTION OF THE COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINTS TO INCLUDE THE TWO CORPORATIONS.

IN RESPONSE TO CONCERNS ON THE CORPORATIONS' ABILITY TO DETERMINE FARES, MR LEUNG EXPLAINED THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL REASON FOR HAVING PUBLIC CORPORATIONS WAS TO ENABLE THEM TO GENERATE SUFFICIENT REVENUE TO COVER EXPENDITURE, AND TO ALLOW FOR A RESERVE TO MEET IMPROVEMENTS AND EXPANSIONS.

THIS ENSURES THAT THE TWO CORPORATIONS DO NOT REQUIRE ANY GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY.

"GIVEN THESE CONSIDERATIONS," MR LEUNG SAID, "THE TWO CORPORATIONS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN DEVELOPING A FARE POLICY OF MODEST ANNUAL INCREASES, GENERALLY LOWER THAN INFLATION.

"IN SETTING THEIR FARES, THE CORPORATIONS MUST ALSO ENSURE THAT THEIR COMPETITIVE EDGE VIS-A-VIS OTHER TRANSPORT MODES IS NOT ERODED. THIS ACTS AS AN EFFECTIVE CONSTRAINT ON FARE INCREASES," MR LEUNG EMPHASISED.

"THUS, SINCE 1980, MTR FARES HAVE INCREASED BY AN AVERAGE OF 7.6 PER CENT PER ANNUM COMPARED WITH AN ANNUAL INCREASE OF 9 PER CENT IN CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (A). KCR FARES HAVE ALSO BEEN KEPT BELOW INFLATION IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS," MR LEUNG SAID.

OVERALL, MR LEUNG SAID THE CORPORATIONS HAD BEEN OPERATING SUCCESSFULLY SINCE THEIR ESTABLISHMENT. THIS IS ILLUSTRATED BY THEIR EFFICIENT SERVICE, SAFETY RECORDS, IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMMES AND REASONABLE FARES, WHICH COMPARE VERY FAVOURABLY WITH SYSTEMS ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD.

"ANY UNWARRANTED ATTEMPT TO UPSET THE BALANCE OF SUSTAINING THE CORPORATIONS' COMMERCIAL VIABILITY ON THE ONE HAND AND DEMANDS FOR INCREASED MONITORING ON THE OTHER COULD AFFECT THEIR FINANCIAL VIABILITY AND CREDIT RATING, AND CONSEQUENTLY THEIR ABILITY TO FUND FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS AND EXPANSIONS," MR LEUNG SAID.

MR LEUNG CONCLUDED THAT IN VIEW OF THE PRESENT EXTENSIVE AND EFFECTIVE MONITORING SYSTEM AND ONGOING REVIEWS AND IMPROVEMENTS OF IT, A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW DID NOT APPEAR TO BE NEEDED.

HOWEVER, HE HAS TAKEN FULL NOTE OF ALL SPECIFIC AREAS OF CONCERN RAISED AND WILL CONSIDER HOW FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS COULD BE MADE WITHIN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.

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SPEECH BY SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY,  
MR T H CHAU, IN MOTION DEBATE ON FAIR TRADE POLICY  
AT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY)

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MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT,

ABOUT A MONTH AGO, IN ANSWERING A QUESTION IN THIS COUNCIL RAISED BY MR LI WAH-MING ON THE SUBJECT OF TODAY'S DEBATE, I POINTED OUT THAT, DURING THE DEBATE LAST OCTOBER ON THE GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADDRESS, DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED VIEWS HAD BEEN EXPRESSED BY MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL ON HOW THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD APPROACH THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPETITION POLICY.

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY MEMBERS TODAY ARE NO LESS DIVERGENT OR EVEN CONFLICTING. AT ONE END OF THE SPECTRUM, WE HAVE HEARD THAT GOVERNMENTAL OR LEGISLATIVE INTERVENTION WHICH WOULD RESULT IN A PROBABLY HUGE BUREAUCRATIC APPARATUS AND MORE RED TAPE AND WHICH WOULD DISTORT MARKETS AND THE ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES SHOULD NOT BE PURSUED SINCE IT WOULD STIFLE ENTERPRISE, REDUCE EFFICIENCY AND DAMAGE OUR ECONOMY. AT THE OTHER END OF THE SPECTRUM, VIEWS HAD BEEN EXPRESSED THAT MONOPOLISTIC TENDENCIES AND ANTI-COMPETITION PRACTICES ALREADY EXIST IN SOME SECTORS OF OUR ECONOMY. AND THAT ANTI-TRUST LAWS, MORE LEGISLATION ON CONSUMER PROTECTION AND FAIR TRADE LAWS SHOULD BE INTRODUCED AND A FAIR TRADE COMMISSION SHOULD BE SET UP TO GIVE CONSUMERS A FAIR DEAL.

IT IS WORTH NOTING ONCE AGAIN THAT, AS IN THE CASE OF THE OCTOBER DEBATE, SUCH DIVIDED VIEWS ARE ALL ABOUT WHAT REGULATORY FRAMEWORK, OR WHAT MEANS, HONG KONG SHOULD ADOPT IN ORDER TO ENHANCE COMPETITION, BUT THAT THERE IS NO DISAGREEMENT ON WHAT OUR FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE SHOULD BE, AND THAT IS TO GIVE CONSUMERS ADEQUATE PROTECTION.

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I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE IT CLEAR ON THIS OCCASION THAT THE GOVERNMENT SUBSCRIBES FULLY TO THE PHILOSOPHY OF FREE AND FAIR MARKETS, WHICH IS THE BEST FORMULA FOR ENHANCING COMPETITION AND EFFICIENCY ON THE ONE HAND AND KEEPING COSTS AND PRICES DOWN ON THE OTHER.

I AM GRATEFUL TO MEMBERS FOR THEIR SUGGESTIONS ON WAYS TO ENHANCE COMPETITION IN OUR ECONOMY AND FOR THEIR OBSERVATIONS ON THE POSSIBLE OR PERCEIVED RESTRICTIVE TRADE PRACTICES IN CERTAIN SPECIFIC SECTORS. I WOULD LIKE TO ASSURE MEMBERS THAT, IN OUR FURTHER DELIBERATIONS ON THIS ISSUE, WE WILL GIVE THE MOST CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS COUNCIL THIS AFTERNOON. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO UNDERLINE THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE USE OF APPROPRIATE AND PRAGMATIC MEASURES TO RECTIFY ANY UNFAIR TRADE PRACTICES, SAFEGUARD FAIR COMPETITION AND PROTECT THE INTEREST OF CONSUMERS.

I DO NOT THINK IT IS NECESSARY TODAY FOR ME TO RESPOND INDIVIDUALLY TO OBSERVATIONS MADE BY MEMBERS ON ALLEGED MONOPOLISTIC OR OLIGOPOLISTIC TENDENCIES OR INADEQUATE COMPETITION IN A NUMBER OF BUSINESS SECTORS. MOST OF THESE SECTORS HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECTS OF COMMENTS BY MY COLLEAGUES ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS. AND, SOME ARE THE SUBJECTS OF STUDIES CURRENTLY BEING UNDERTAKEN BY THE CONSUMER COUNCIL. ONE OF THEM, THE MONITORING OF OUR TWO RAILWAYS, WILL INDEED BE THE SUBJECT OF A DEBATE FOLLOWING THIS ONE. BUT I MUST STRESS THAT MY NOT RESPONDING TO POINTS MADE BY MEMBERS ON THESE SECTORS DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT THE GOVERNMENT AGREES WITH ANY OF THOSE POINTS. AS A GENERAL POINT, WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO SAY IS THAT IT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S BELIEF THAT, WHENEVER POSSIBLE, COMPETITION SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED AND THAT IT IS THROUGH COMPETITION THAT FAIR PRICES AND SERVICES CAN BE OBTAINED. THERE ARE HOWEVER CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE THE LEVEL OF INVESTMENT REQUIRED, OR THE NEED FOR PRUDENTIAL SUPERVISION, OR THE LONG-TERM INTEREST OF CONSUMERS, OR OTHER FACTORS, INDICATE THAT FREE COMPETITION MAY NOT BE OBTAINABLE, OR MAY NOT BE THE BEST SOLUTION. IN SUCH CASES, THROUGH VARIOUS ARRANGEMENTS, WE HAVE ACHIEVED A REASONABLE BALANCE BETWEEN A JUSTIFIED MONOPOLISTIC OR OLIGOPOLISTIC SITUATION ON THE ONE HAND AND THE BENEFITS OF QUALITY SERVICES AND FAIR PRICES ON THE OTHER.

IN RESPECT OF THOSE SECTORS IN THE ECONOMY WHICH ARE SUBJECT TO GOVERNMENT CONTROLS, A KEY IMPERATIVE IN THE FORMULATION OF SUCH CONTROLS IS THE PROMOTION OF COMPETITION AND PROTECTION OF CONSUMERS. THESE CONTROLS ARE REVIEWED AND REVISED FROM TIME TO TIME TO IDENTIFY AREAS FOR POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENT AND TO MEET THE NEEDS OF CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES. THE EFFORTS WE HAVE MADE IN THE LAST YEAR, FOR EXAMPLE, INCLUDE THE INJECTION OF MORE COMPETITION INTO THE AREAS OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS, PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND TELEVISION. WE ARE BY NO MEANS COMPLACENT ABOUT THESE EFFORTS. THERE MUST ALWAYS BE ROOM FOR FURTHER IMPROVEMENT.

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AS I SAID IN THIS COUNCIL A MONTH AGO, WE BELIEVE THAT THE BEST WAY FORWARD IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMPETITION POLICY IS TO ASCERTAIN WHAT ANTI-COMPETITIVE TRADE PRACTICES EXIST IN THOSE MAJOR BUSINESS SECTORS AFFECTING THE DAILY LIFE OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC. TO THIS END, WE HAVE ALLOCATED ADDITIONAL FUNDS TO THE CONSUMER COUNCIL FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONDUCTING A SERIES OF STUDIES ON THE STATE OF COMPETITION IN SUCH MAJOR BUSINESS SECTORS. THE SECTORS BEING STUDIED ARE : SUPERMARKETS, THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY, TELECOMMUNICATIONS, SUPPLY OF ENERGY AND FINANCIAL SERVICES. IN CONDUCTING THESE STUDIES, THE CONSUMER COUNCIL WILL, I AM SURE, HAVE REGARD TO ANY VIEWS EXPRESSED BY THE PUBLIC, THE CONCERNED BUSINESS SECTOR AND OTHER RELEVANT SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY. ON THE GOVERNMENT'S PART, WE SHALL CO-OPERATE FULLY WITH THE CONSUMER COUNCIL AND ASSIST IN THESE STUDIES IN ANY WAY WE CAN.

WE DO NOT WISH TO PRE-EMPT THE FINDINGS OF THESE SECTOR-SPECIFIC STUDIES. WE HAVE AN OPEN MIND AND ARE WILLING TO CONSIDER ALL OPTIONS BEFORE RECOMMENDING WHICH OPTIONS ARE BEST SUITED TO PROMOTE COMPETITION IN DIFFERENT SECTORS OF OUR ECONOMY.

WE HOPE THAT THE FINDINGS OF THESE STUDIES WILL SHED LIGHT ON ANY PROBLEMS AFFECTING COMPETITION IN THESE SECTORS. ON THE BASIS OF THESE FINDINGS, WE SHALL, AS NECESSARY, REVISE OUR EXISTING POLICIES AND FORMULATE NEW ONES AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, CONSIDER INTRODUCING LEGISLATIVE OR INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES TO IMPLEMENT THOSE POLICIES IN ORDER TO PROMOTE COMPETITION AND ENHANCE CONSUMER PROTECTION.

MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT, WE BELIEVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD ADOPT A STEP-BY-STEP PRAGMATIC APPROACH IN ITS FORMULATION OF THE FRAMEWORKS THAT ARE MOST SUITED FOR ENHANCING COMPETITION IN THE DIFFERENT SECTORS OF OUR ECONOMY. WE BELIEVE THAT WE SHOULD NOT RUSH INTO CONCLUSIONS ON THIS IMPORTANT SUBJECT. WE SHOULD NOT AT THIS STAGE COME DOWN IN FAVOUR OF OR AGAINST ANY PARTICULAR OPTION, WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT INVOLVE A NEW INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT OR A NEW LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK. FOR THESE REASONS, THE EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL WILL ABSTAIN FROM VOTING ON EITHER MR. LI'S MOTION OR MR. MCGREGOR'S AMENDMENT.

THANK YOU, MR DEPUTY PRESIDENT.

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LEGCO CONSIDERS BILL ON FILING OF COMPANY RETURN

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A BILL THAT AIMS TO ENSURE A MORE EVEN FLOW OF SUBMISSIONS OF ANNUAL RETURNS FOR FILING IN THE COMPANIES REGISTRY IS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1993 ALSO SEEKS TO INTRODUCE A DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY FOR COMPANIES LIMITED BY GUARANTEE AND TO PROVIDE FOR A COMPREHENSIVE INDEX OF THE DIRECTORSHIPS HELD BY DIRECTORS OF LISTED COMPANIES.

IN ADDITION, THE BILL PROPOSES TO STRENGTHEN THE SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR THE VOLUNTARY WINDING UP OF COMPANIES AND TO UPDATE CERTAIN FEES AND PENALTIES.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR MONETARY AFFAIRS, MR TAM WING-PONG, SAID THE PROPOSALS HAD BEEN RECOMMENDED BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMPANY LAW REFORM AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL BODIES.

UNDER THE BILL, COMPANIES WILL BE REQUIRED TO FILE THEIR ANNUAL RETURNS WITHIN 28 DAYS OF THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE DATE OF THEIR INCORPORATION.

MR TAM SAID THESE ANNIVERSARIES WERE, IN GENERAL, MORE EVENLY SPREAD THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

AT PRESENT, A COMPANY IS REQUIRED TO FILE A COPY OF ITS ANNUAL RETURN WITH THE REGISTRAR OF COMPANIES WITHIN 42 DAYS OF ITS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WHICH IS USUALLY HELD AROUND THE END OF THE CALENDER YEAR.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE ORDINANCE USUALLY LEADS TO A SUDDEN AND HEAVY INFLUX OF ANNUAL RETURNS DURING JANUARY AND FEBRUARY.

"THIS RESULTS IN INCREASED QUEUING TIMES AND GENERAL INCONVENIENCE FOR THE PUBLIC, AND IMPOSES UNNECESSARILY ONEROUS DUTIES ON THE COMPANIES REGISTRY AT THIS TIME OF YEAR," MR TAM SAID.

AS REGARDS PROPOSALS FOR COMPANIES LIMITED BY GUARANTEE, MR TAM EXPLAINED THAT ANY MEMBER OF A COMPANY WAS AT PRESENT ENTITLED TO APPOINT ANOTHER PERSON, WHETHER A MEMBER OR NOT, AS HIS PROXY.

HE ADDED THAT UNDER THE ORDINANCE, AT A GENERAL MEETING OF A COMPANY, OTHER THAN A PRIVATE COMPANY, A MOTION FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF TWO OR MORE DIRECTORS BY A SINGLE RESOLUTION WAS PROHIBITED.

THESE PROVISIONS HAVE CAUSED SOME CONCERN FOR COMPANIES LIMITED BY GUARANTEE ESPECIALLY THOSE COMPANIES WHICH ARE PRIVATE CLUBS, HE SAID.

THEY FIND IT UNPALATABLE THAT NON-MEMBERS ARE ALLOWED TO VOTE AT MEETINGS, AS PROXIES, BUT MEMBERS HAVE AT ALL TIMES TO VOTE INDIVIDUALLY IN PERSON ON COMMITTEE MEMBERS, HE SAID.

"WE PROPOSE THEREFORE TO RELAX THESE REQUIREMENTS IN RELATION TO COMPANIES LIMITED BY GUARANTEE. HOWEVER, THESE COMPANIES WILL BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO APPLY SUCH REQUIREMENTS IF THEY SO WISH UNDER THE TERMS OF THEIR MEMORANDA AND ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION," HE SAID.

ON THE KEEPING OF A COMPREHENSIVE INDEX OF ALL COMPANY DIRECTORS, MR TAM SAID THE PRESENT PROVISION REQUIRING THE REGISTRAR OF COMPANIES TO MAINTAIN SUCH AN INDEX FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION HAD NOT YET BEEN BROUGHT INTO EFFECT BECAUSE OF RESOURCE PROBLEMS.

"WE NOW PROPOSE THAT, AS AN INTERIM MEASURE, A COMPREHENSIVE INDEX BE CREATED TO COVER THE PARTICULARS OF ALL THE DIRECTORSHIPS HELD BY DIRECTORS OF LISTED COMPANIES," HE SAID.

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THIS INFORMATION WILL THEREFORE NEED TO BE KEPT ON THE REGISTER OF DIRECTORS AND SECRETARIES THAT COMPANIES ARE REQUIRED TO KEEP UNDER THE ORDINANCE.

"THE INDEX WILL INITIALLY BE OPEN FOR SEARCHES BY CERTAIN REGULATORY AGENCIES BUT IT MAY BE MADE ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC IN DUE COURSE IF RESOURCES PERMIT," MR TAM SAID.

TURNING TO FURTHER SAFEGUARDS IN RELATION TO THE CONDUCT OF VOLUNTARY WINDING-UP, HE SAID THE CHANGES INCLUDED SPECIFYING WHO MAY QUALIFY FOR APPOINTMENT AS PROVISIONAL LIQUIDATOR, LIMITING THE POWERS OF THE APPOINTEE AND STRENGTHENING CERTAIN NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS IN ORDER TO ENHANCE THE PROTECTION OF CREDITORS.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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#### LEGCO DISCUSSES FAIR TRADE POLICY

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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PASSED AN AMENDED MOTION ON FAIR TRADE POLICY AFTER A DEBATE THAT LASTED MORE THAN TWO HOURS.

THE AMENDED MOTION WAS MOVED BY THE HON JIMMY MCGREGOR. TWENTY-ONE MEMBERS SPOKE IN THE DEBATE WITH THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR T H CHAU, REPLIED FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

THE ORIGINAL MOTION PROPOSED BY THE HON FRED LI WAS DEFEATED.

A TOTAL OF 22 MEMBERS SPOKE IN ANOTHER MOTION DEBATE ON THE MONITORING OF MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY CORPORATION AND KOWLOON-CANTON RAILWAY CORPORATION. THE MOTION, PROPOSED BY THE HON LAU CHIN-SHEK, WAS PASSED.

THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR MICHAEL LEUNG, WINDED UP THE DEBATE.

THE FORESTS AND COUNTRYSIDE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1992 WAS PASSED WITHOUT AMENDMENT.

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