



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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STUDIES CONFIRM SPUR LINE TO TUEN MUN NORTH FEASIBLE

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FURTHER STUDIES COMMISSIONED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOLLOWING PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE RAILWAY DEVELOPMENT STUDY (RDS) HAVE CONFIRMED THAT A SPUR LINE FROM TIN SHUI WAI TO TUEN MUN NORTH FOR THE PROPOSED NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES RAILWAY WAS FEASIBLE AND VIABLE.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR HAIDER BARMA, DURING A MOTION DEBATE ON THE NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES RAILWAY AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HOWEVER, HE SAID, FURTHER EXTENSION OF THE SPUR LINE FROM TUEN MUN NORTH TO TUEN MUN TOWN CENTRE USING AN UNDERGROUND ALIGNMENT WOULD BE PROHIBITIVELY EXPENSIVE AND COULD NOT BE JUSTIFIED AT PRESENT.

AN ALTERNATIVE ALIGNMENT TO TUEN MUN TOWN CENTRE, MAINLY ABOVE GROUND, WAS IDENTIFIED BUT PINPOINTED LAND, ENGINEERING AND ENVIRONMENT CONSTRAINTS, HE SAID.

MR BARMA SAID WITH A PURPOSE BUILT INTERCHANGE BETWEEN THE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT AND THE WESTERN CORRIDOR RAILWAY AT TUEN MUN NORTH, THE TRAVEL TIMES BETWEEN TUEN MUN AND THE URBAN AREA COULD BE MUCH REDUCED.

ON THE RDS AS A WHOLE, MR BARMA SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS IN THE PROCESS OF FINALISING THE STRATEGY AND HE EXPECTED THAT A BOARD POLICY STEER AND APPROVAL COULD BE OBTAINED WITHIN THE NEXT THREE MONTHS.

HE SAID SINCE MOST OF THE EXPENDITURE ON THE NEW RAILWAY WOULD COME AFTER 1997, THE CHINESE SIDE OF THE JOINT LIAISON GROUP WOULD BE CONSULTED.

MR BARMA ALSO NOTED THAT DURING THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION LAST YEAR, THERE WAS OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW WESTERN CORRIDOR RAILWAY SYSTEM TO PROVIDE THREE RAIL SERVICES, NAMELY: A CROSS BORDER FREIGHT LINE, A CROSS BORDER PASSENGER LINE AND A COMMUTER LINK BETWEEN THE NORTHWEST NT AND THE URBAN AREA.

HE SAID THE SYSTEM WAS ACCORDED THE HIGHEST PRIORITY IN THE RDS, RECOMMENDING THAT IT SHOULD BE BUILT BY THE YEAR 2001.

MR BARMA SAID THE INITIAL STUDIES INDICATED THAT THE COSTS FOR THIS RAILWAY SYSTEM WOULD BE IN THE ORDER OF \$23 BILLION IN 1992 PRICES, AND DECISIONS ON FUNDING WOULD HAVE TO AWAIT THE OUTCOME OF DETAILED FINANCIAL STUDIES WHICH WOULD BE UNDERTAKEN ONCE A STRATEGY HAD BEEN AGREED.

"ONE OBVIOUS APPROACH WOULD BE TO SEEK INVESTMENT FROM PROSPECTIVE OPERATORS SINCE THE INITIAL STUDY INDICATES THAT THE WESTERN CORRIDOR RAILWAY SYSTEM SHOULD BE FINANCIALLY VIABLE," HE SAID.

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STI ON CHINA'S MFN STATUS

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THE FOLLOWING IS THE SPEECH BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR T H CHAU, IN LEGCO'S MOTION DEBATE ON RENEWAL OF CHINA'S MOST FAVOURED NATION STATUS BY THE US:

MR PRESIDENT,

I AM GRATEFUL TO THE HONOURABLE JAMES TIEN FOR GIVING ME AN OPPORTUNITY TO RESTATE THE IMPORTANCE TO HONG KONG OF THE RENEWAL OF CHINA'S MFN STATUS IN THE UNITED STATES, AND TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT, FOR THE RECORD, OF THE EFFORTS WHICH BOTH THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN MAKING TO LOBBY FOR THE UNCONDITIONAL RENEWAL OF THAT STATUS.

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S UNRESERVED AND UNFAILING SUPPORT OF THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON MFN, AS WELL AS THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS IN LOBBYING THE US ADMINISTRATION ON THIS ISSUE, WERE CLEARLY SPELT OUT IN MY SPEECHES DURING THIS COUNCIL'S PREVIOUS DEBATES ON MFN IN 1992 AND 1993. IN RESPECT OF THIS YEAR'S RENEWAL, THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAVE AGAIN PRESSED THE CASE FOR RENEWAL OF MFN FOR CHINA WITH THE UNITED STATES ADMINISTRATION AT A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LEVELS, INCLUDING BRIEFLY WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER MET PRESIDENT CLINTON LAST WEEK.

AS FOR THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT, WE ARE AGAIN GIVING MFN LOBBYING THE HIGHEST PRIORITY AND ARE DEVOTING MORE RESOURCES TO IT THAN IN PREVIOUS YEARS. IN 1993, PRESIDENT CLINTON SUBJECTED TO RENEWAL OF CHINA'S MFN STATUS IN 1994 TO CONDITIONS RELATED TO "OVERALL, SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS" IN CERTAIN HUMAN RIGHTS AREAS. THIS PLACES HONG KONG IN A DIFFICULT POSITION IN OUR ADVOCACY OF MFN RENEWAL BECAUSE WHETHER "OVERALL, SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS" HAS BEEN MADE IN TERMS OF PRESIDENT CLINTON'S EXECUTIVE ORDER IS ESSENTIALLY A BILATERAL MATTER BETWEEN THE US AND CHINA. WE ARE SIMPLY NOT IN A POSITION TO DEFEND CHINA'S HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS; NOR ARE WE SO PRESUMPTUOUS AS TO TRY TO DO SO. WHILE WE DO NEED TO MAKE OUR CONCERNS ON MFN HEARD, WE MUST DO SO WITHOUT GIVING THE IMPRESSION THAT WE CARE ONLY ABOUT DOLLARS AND CENTS AND DO NOT CARE ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS. SUCH AN IMPRESSION WOULD BE ENTIRELY WRONG. FOR THIS REASON, WE NEED TO BE CAREFUL THAT OUR LOBBYING EFFORTS IN THE US DO TAKE ACCOUNT OF AMERICAN SENSITIVITIES ON HUMAN RIGHTS.

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ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNOR WILL NOT BE GOING TO WASHINGTON THIS YEAR TO LOBBY PERSONALLY FOR MFN RENEWAL, HE CONTINUES TO TAKE THE KEENEST POSSIBLE INTEREST IN SECURING THE RENEWAL OF CHINA'S MFN STATUS AND WILL CONTINUE TO LOBBY STRONGLY FOR UNCONDITIONAL RENEWAL. HE HAS MADE KNOWN HIS STRONG VIEWS ON THIS ISSUE IN PRESS INTERVIEWS. ONLY AS RECENTLY AS LAST WEEK, IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN THE EASTERN EXPRESS, THE GOVERNOR SAID THAT MFN SHOULD NOT BE "THE ANNUAL HINGE IN CHINESE-US RELATIONS" AND THAT "HUMAN RIGHTS ARE BEST PURSUED THROUGH POLITICAL DIALOGUE RATHER THAN ECONOMIC DECISIONS". THE GOVERNOR WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE KNOWN HIS VIEWS FORCEFULLY IN HIS CONTACTS WITH AMERICAN OFFICIALS, POLITICIANS AND BUSINESSMEN, AND TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC THROUGH INFLUENTIAL US MEDIA. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE GOVERNOR'S VIEWS ON THIS ISSUE WILL MAKE A SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT ON THOSE IN POSITIONS OF INFLUENCE IN THE US.

AS WE ANNOUNCED YESTERDAY, IN APRIL THE CHIEF SECRETARY WILL VISIT WASHINGTON, WHERE SHE WILL CONVEY HONG KONG'S CONCERNS ON MFN TO SENIOR MEMBERS OF THE US ADMINISTRATION AND THE US CONGRESS. SHE WILL BE SETTING OUT IN NO UNCERTAIN TERMS HONG KONG'S COMMITMENT TO FREE TRADE AS A GENERAL PRINCIPLE AND THE IMPORTANCE TO HONG KONG OF THE UNCONDITIONAL RENEWAL OF CHINA'S MFN STATUS IN THE US. THE CHIEF SECRETARY IS A PERSUASIVE AND FORCEFUL REPRESENTATIVE OF HONG KONG AND, AS OUR FIRST LOCAL CHIEF SECRETARY, MRS CHAN WILL BE ABLE TO CONVEY TO HER AMERICAN INTERLOCUTORS HER OWN INSIGHTS ON HONG KONG'S SITUATION AND GIVE FRESH IMPETUS TO THE HONG KONG ARGUMENT.

DR THE HONOURABLE HUANG CHEN-YA HAS PROPOSED AN AMENDMENT TO THE ORIGINAL MOTION URGING NOT ONLY THE UK GOVERNMENT TO LOBBY FOR MFN RENEWAL BUT ALSO THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS IN ORDER TO SECURE MFN RENEWAL. IT WOULD BE TEMPTING TO THINK THAT SUCH AN APPEAL TO CHINA WOULD BE ENTIRELY LOGICAL, GIVEN THAT PRESIDENT CLINTON'S EXECUTIVE ORDER HAS PLACED THE ONUS ON CHINA TO MAKE "OVERALL, SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS" IN HUMAN RIGHTS BEFORE SHE IS ELIGIBLE FOR MFN RENEWAL. NEVERTHELESS, WE HAVE DECIDED TO ABSTAIN FROM VOTING ON THIS AMENDMENT BECAUSE OF THE FIRM VIEW WHICH WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY HELD THAT IT WOULD NOT BE APPROPRIATE TO MIX POLITICS WITH TRADE; NOR WOULD IT BE APPROPRIATE TO USE MFN AS AN INSTRUMENT TO ACHIEVE POLICY OBJECTIVES NOT RELATED TO TRADE. AS I SAID IN THIS COUNCIL LAST YEAR, THE GRANT OF MFN STATUS IS NOT A PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT : IT IS INSTEAD THE NORMAL CONDITION UNDER WHICH INTERNATIONAL TRADE IS CONDUCTED AND THE STANDARD TREATMENT FOR AMERICA'S TRADING PARTNERS, INCLUDING EVEN COUNTRIES SUCH AS IRAN AND LIBYA.

ALSO, WE ARE OPPOSED TO CONDITIONING MFN, OR CUTTING OFF MFN, IF CHINA DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE SATISFIED THE CONDITIONS IN THE PRESIDENT'S EXECUTIVE ORDER, BECAUSE OF OUR BELIEF THAT TRADE IS THE MOST RELIABLE AGENT OF CHANGE FOR THE BETTER. CUT OFF TRADE AND DIALOGUE WITH CHINA, AND YOU CUT OFF A MOST POTENT SOURCE OF INFLUENCE ON CHINA. YOU WILL BE CUTTING OFF THE CHANCE OF MANY MILLIONS IN CHINA TO HAVE SUSTAINED ACCESS TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD THROUGH TRADE, AND TO ENGAGE FREELY IN THE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS AND INFORMATION. ONE ONLY HAS TO LOOK AT WHAT HAS HAPPENED IN SOUTHERN CHINA TO APPRECIATE THE WAY IN WHICH TRADE AND DIALOGUE HAVE HELPED TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS ALL ROUND, NOT JUST MATERIAL CONDITIONS BUT ALSO, FOR EXAMPLE, THE ABILITY OF INDIVIDUALS TO CHOOSE WHERE TO LIVE AND WORK.

THE IMPORTANCE TO HONG KONG'S ECONOMY OF CHINA'S MFN STATUS IS INCREASING YEAR BY YEAR. AS HONG KONG BENEFITS INCREASINGLY FROM THE CONTINUING OPENING UP OF CHINA TO EXTERNAL TRADE, THE STAKES FOR HONG KONG IN THE RENEWAL OF CHINA'S MFN STATUS ARE BECOMING HIGHER YEAR BY YEAR. SOME MEMBERS HAVE REFERRED TO OUR MOST RECENT ASSESSMENT OF THE DAMAGING IMPACT OF THE LOSS OF MFN ON HONG KONG'S ECONOMY. THIS ASSESSMENT HAS NOT TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT THE FURTHER LOSS IN INCOME AND JOBS IF CHINA WERE TO CUT BACK ON ITS IMPORTS, EITHER IN RETALIATION AGAINST THE US OR AS A CONSEQUENTIAL ECONOMIC RETRENCHMENT PROGRAMME. NOR HAS IT TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT THE EXTREMELY DAMAGING EFFECT ON BUSINESS CONFIDENCE IN HONG KONG AS THE GATEWAY TO CHINA, OR CONFIDENCE IN HONG KONG'S ABILITY TO MAINTAIN STEADY AND LONG-TERM ECONOMIC GROWTH. ALL THIS WOULD HAPPEN AT A TIME WHEN HONG KONG IS ENTERING THE FINAL STAGES OF PREPARATIONS FOR OUR RETURN TO CHINESE SOVEREIGNTY, WHEN THE ASPIRATIONS OF OUR PEOPLE FOR BETTER AND MORE COMPREHENSIVE SOCIAL SERVICES, AS WELL AS ENVIRONMENTAL AND INFRASTRUCTURAL IMPROVEMENTS TO ENHANCE THEIR QUALITY OF LIFE, ARE GETTING EVER HIGHER.

MR PRESIDENT, THE HONG KONG STORY IS NOT JUST ABOUT MAKING PROFITS. THE HONG KONG STORY IS, ABOVE ALL, ABOUT HOW SIX MILLION PEOPLE AND THEIR PREDECESSORS HAVE MANAGED TO PULL THEMSELVES UP BY THEIR OWN BOOTSTRAPS AND TRANSFORMED THE BACKWATER MIRED IN POVERTY AND INSTABILITY THAT WAS HONG KONG IN THE YEARS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR, INTO A COMMUNITY WHICH IS NOT ONLY PROSPEROUS AND A PROMINENT ENTITY IN THE WORLD ECONOMIC ORDER BUT WHICH IS, EQUALLY IMPORTANTLY, ALSO FREE AND FAIR AND CARING. A COMMUNITY WHICH CARES ABOUT OUR QUALITY OF LIFE, ABOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE AND ABOUT CIVIL RIGHTS. TAKE AWAY MFN, AND YOU CUT BACK OUR ECONOMIC GROWTH SHARPLY. TAKE AWAY GROWTH, AND YOU TAKE AWAY THE VERY FOUNDATION ON WHICH WE PLAN TO BUILD A BETTER HONG KONG - A HONG KONG ABLE TO COPE WITH THE ASPIRATIONS OF ALL OF OUR PEOPLE AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE. DOUBTLESS, WE WOULD OVERCOME THE PROBLEMS, IF MFN WAS REMOVED - AS WE HAVE SURMOUNTED DIFFICULT PROBLEMS IN THE PAST. IT WOULD BE A TOUGH CHALLENGE, BUT RISING TO CHALLENGES HAS ALWAYS BEEN HONG KONG'S GREAT STRENGTH.

TO SUM UP, MR PRESIDENT, THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO ARGUE VIGOROUSLY FOR THE UNCONDITIONAL RENEWAL OF CHINA'S MFN STATUS IN THE US. THE OPENING OF CHINA TO EXTERNAL TRADE IN THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS HAS WORKED WONDERS IN THE ECONOMIC ARENA, AND IS SETTING IN TRAIN A PROCESS OF GRADUAL BUT STEADY PROGRESS ACROSS THE BOARD. I DO BELIEVE, MR PRESIDENT, THAT WITHDRAWAL OF MFN WOULD NOT ONLY DAMAGE HONG KONG'S ECONOMY, BUT ALSO BE UNPRODUCTIVE, OR EVEN COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE, IN TERMS OF THE OBJECTIVES WHICH THE US HAS SET ITSELF. THE OFFICIAL MEMBERS WILL VOTE FOR THE ORIGINAL MOTION.

ELECTION BILL INTRODUCED

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A BILL THAT SETS OUT THE ADMINISTRATION'S PROPOSED ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE 1995 LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY AND ELECTION COMMITTEE ELECTIONS WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGCO TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS, MR NICOLAS NG, TOLD THE LEGCO THAT THE AIM OF THESE PROPOSALS WAS TO PUT IN PLACE ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS WHICH WERE OPEN AND FAIR, CONSISTENT WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE JOINT DECLARATION AND THE BASIC LAW, AND ACCEPTABLE TO THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (ELECTORAL PROVISIONS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994, MR NG SAID:

"ON 24 FEBRUARY, THIS COUNCIL PASSED THE FIRST STAGE BILL ON THE MORE IMMEDIATE ISSUES RELATING TO THE 1994/95 ELECTIONS.

"THE TIME HAS NOW COME FOR US TO CONSIDER LEGISLATION FOR THE REMAINING AND MORE COMPLEX ELEMENTS OF THE 1995 LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS."

THE SECRETARY SAID SUCH LEGISLATION NEEDED TO BE ENACTED BEFORE THE LEGCO'S SUMMER RECESS, TO ALLOW THE ADMINISTRATION TO PUT IN PLACE THE VARIOUS PRACTICAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE ELECTIONS.

"AS MEMBERS CAN SEE, WE MUST PRESS AHEAD AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLY CAN," HE SAID.

HE SAID THE PROPOSALS WOULD ALLOW ALL ELIGIBLE WORKING PERSONS A VOTE IN THE FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY ELECTION.

"OBVIOUSLY, SUCH A BROADENING OF THE FRANCHISE WILL STRENGTHEN THE CREDIBILITY OF OUR FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY SYSTEM AS A WHOLE," HE SAID.

THE BILL ALSO STIPULATES THAT THE ELECTION COMMITTEE TO BE ESTABLISHED WILL COMPRISE ELECTED DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS AND THAT CANDIDATURE FOR THE 10 SEATS IS OPEN TO ALL PERSONS WHO ARE ON THE GENERAL ELECTORAL ROLL AND NOT JUST MEMBERS OF THE ELECTION COMMITTEE.

"SINCE ALL DB MEMBERS ARE THEMSELVES ELECTED, WE BELIEVE THIS ARRANGEMENT WILL ENSURE THAT THE ELECTION COMMITTEE WOULD BE ONE GENUINELY REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMMUNITY."

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

ADJUDICATION BOARD TO HEAR MINOR EMPLOYMENT CLAIMS

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A BILL THAT SEEKS TO ESTABLISH A MINOR EMPLOYMENT CLAIMS ADJUDICATION BOARD IN THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT TO HELP RELIEVE THE HEAVY WORKLOAD OF THE LABOUR TRIBUNAL WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE SECOND READING OF THE MINOR EMPLOYMENT CLAIMS ADJUDICATION BOARD BILL 1994, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR MICHAEL LEUNG, SAID THE PROPOSAL WAS INTENDED TO PROVIDE A QUICK, SIMPLE AND INEXPENSIVE SERVICE.

THE BOARD WILL TAKE OVER THE JURISDICTION OF THE LABOUR TRIBUNAL IN RESPECT OF CLAIMS INVOLVING NOT MORE THAN FIVE CLAIMANTS FOR A SUM OF MONEY NOT EXCEEDING \$5,000 PER CLAIMANT, HE SAID.

"THIS MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF \$5,000 WILL BE SUBJECT TO REGULAR REVIEW."

MR LEUNG ESTIMATED THAT ABOUT 1,300 CASES, ROUGHLY ONE-THIRD OF THE EXISTING WORKLOAD OF THE LABOUR TRIBUNAL, WOULD BE PROCESSED BY THE BOARD EACH YEAR.

IT IS EXPECTED THAT THE BOARD WILL COME INTO OPERATION WITHIN SIX MONTHS AFTER THE PASSAGE OF THE BILL.

UNDER THE PROPOSED BILL, ANY MINOR EMPLOYMENT CLAIMS ARISING FROM DISPUTES OF STATUTORY OR CONTRACTUAL RIGHTS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR WHICH SETTLEMENT CANNOT BE ACHIEVED THROUGH CONCILIATION OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT'S LABOUR RELATIONS SERVICE WILL BE REFERRED TO THE BOARD FOR DETERMINATION.

SENIOR LABOUR OFFICERS WITH ADEQUATE EXPERIENCE IN LABOUR LAWS AND LABOUR RELATIONS IN HONG KONG WOULD BE APPOINTED AS ADJUDICATION OFFICERS.

THE ADJUDICATION OFFICER MAY ON HIS OWN MOTION OR ON THE APPLICATION OF A PARTY REVIEW AN AWARD MADE BY THE BOARD WITHIN 14 DAYS.

"APPEAL AGAINST THE AWARD OF THE BOARD SHALL LIE WITH THE HIGH COURT ON THE GROUND THAT THE AWARD IS ERRONEOUS ON A POINT OF LAW OR OUTSIDE THE JURISDICTION OF THE BOARD," SAID MR LEUNG.

"A PARTY MAY REGISTER THE AWARD IN HIS FAVOUR IN THE DISTRICT COURT AND, UPON REGISTRATION, SUCH AWARD BECOMES FOR ALL PURPOSES A JUDGEMENT OF THE DISTRICT COURT AND MAY BE ENFORCED ACCORDINGLY," HE ADDED.

THE PROCEDURES FOLLOWED BY THE BOARD IN HEARING CLAIMS WOULD BE AS SIMPLE AND INFORMAL AS POSSIBLE.

HEARINGS WILL BE CONDUCTED IN PUBLIC, AND IN AN INFORMAL MANNER. NO LEGAL REPRESENTATION ON EITHER SIDE WILL BE ALLOWED.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

TRANSITIONAL PROVISION INTRODUCED TO TOWN PLANNING ORDINANCE

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A BILL THAT SEEKS TO INTRODUCE A TRANSITIONAL PROVISION TO THE TOWN PLANNING ORDINANCE TO ENABLE PLANNING APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED UNDER DEVELOPMENT PERMISSION AREA (DPA) PLANS TO CONTINUE TO BE PROCESSED WHEN DPA PLANS ARE REPLACED BY OUTLINE ZONING PLANS (OZPS) WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE TOWN PLANNING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, SAID THE ORDINANCE STIPULATED THAT A DPA PLAN WAS EFFECTIVE FOR THREE YEARS AFTER FIRST GAZETTING AND ITS EFFECT WOULD LAPSE WHEN IT WAS REPLACED BY AN OZP.

OF THE 35 DPA PLANS GAZETTED SO FAR, 30 WERE GAZETTED ON JULY 12, 1991 AND WILL BE REPLACED BY OZPS BEFORE MID-JULY THIS YEAR.

MR EASON NOTED THAT THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S CHAMBERS HAD ADVISED THAT WHEN A DPA PLAN CEASED TO HAVE EFFECT, ANY PLANNING APPLICATION MADE UNDER IT COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED OR REVIEWED BY THE TOWN PLANNING BOARD SINCE THE BOARD'S POWERS TO CONSIDER OR REVIEW THE APPLICATION DERIVED FROM THE DPA PLAN.

SIMILARLY, HE SAID, AN APPLICANT COULD NOT APPEAL AGAINST THE BOARD'S DECISION ON REVIEW UNDER THE ORDINANCE IF THE OZP REPLACED THE DPA PLAN BEFORE THE APPLICANT LODGED HIS APPEAL.

"WE EXPECT A NUMBER OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS WHICH ARE BEING PROCESSED BY THE BOARD OR BY THE TOWN PLANNING APPEAL BOARD TO BE OUTSTANDING WHEN THESE DPA PLANS ARE REPLACED BY OZPS.

"IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, IN FAIRNESS TO THE APPLICANTS AND TO MAINTAIN REASONABLE CONTINUITY IN THE WORK OF THE BOARD AND THE APPEAL BOARD, WE PROPOSE TO INTRODUCE A TRANSITIONAL PROVISION TO ALLOW FOR THE CONTINUATION OF PLANNING APPLICATION, REVIEW AND APPEAL PROCESSES, UNTIL THEY HAVE BEEN EXHAUSTED," MR EASON SAID.

HE SAID THE BILL ALSO CLARIFIED THAT UNDER THE ORDINANCE, THE PLANNING AUTHORITY MIGHT ENTER A SITE ON WHICH THERE WAS UNAUTHORISED DEVELOPMENT AND TAKE WHATEVER STEPS HE CONSIDERED NECESSARY TO ENSURE THE DISCONTINUANCE OF SUCH DEVELOPMENT, AND TO PREVENT ADVERSE EFFECTS OR REINSTATE THE SITE CONCERNED.

IN CARRYING OUT THESE FUNCTIONS, THE AUTHORITY MAY HAVE TO TAKE POSSESSION OF, REMOVE, DETAIN AND SUBSEQUENTLY DISPOSE OF PROPERTY REMAINING ON THE LAND, SUCH AS CONTAINERS, ABANDONED VEHICLES AND SO ON.

AS THE ORDINANCE DID NOT STATE EXPRESSLY THAT THE AUTHORITY HAD THE POWER TO TAKE SUCH ACTION BEFORE CARRYING OUT THESE FUNCTIONS, NOR DID IT LAY DOWN PROCEDURES, MR EASON SAID IT WAS NECESSARY TO CLARIFY WHAT THE POWER OF THE AUTHORITY WAS AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE MAKING OF REGULATIONS BY THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL TO LAY DOWN THE NECESSARY PROCEDURES FOR THE EXERCISE OF THIS POWER.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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LEGCO COMMISSION BILL

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A BILL SEEKING TO ESTABLISH BY STATUE AN INDEPENDENT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL COMMISSION AND TO EMPOWER IT TO ACT IN ALL FINANCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS RELATING TO THE PROVISION OF SUPPORT SERVICE FOR THE LEGCO WAS INTRODUCED INTO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL COMMISSION BILL, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON MRS ANSON CHAN, SAID IN DRAWING UP THE PROVISIONS IN THE BILL, THE ADMINISTRATION HAD KEPT IN MIND TWO GUIDING PRINCIPLES.

ONE OF THE PRINCIPLES IS THAT THE FUTURE LEGCO COMMISSION SHOULD BE GIVEN THE MANAGERIAL AND FINANCIAL AUTONOMY IT NEEDS TO ORGANISE ITS OWN ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT FACILITIES.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE ADMINISTRATION ALSO HAS TO ENSURE THAT IT IS SUBJECT TO THE SAME DEGREE OF FINANCIAL CONTROL AND ACCOUNTABILITY AS OTHER PUBLICLY-FUNDED ORGANISATIONS.

MRS CHAN SAID THE GOVERNOR HAD, IN HIS ADDRESS TO THE LEGCO IN OCTOBER 1992, INVITED PROPOSALS FROM THE COUNCIL ON HOW THE ADMINISTRATION MIGHT HELP LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLORS TO DEVELOP FINANCIAL AND MANAGERIAL AUTONOMY IN ORGANISING THEIR ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT FACILITIES.

SUBSEQUENTLY, A WORKING GROUP DREW UP A LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REORGANISATIONS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SECRETARIAT.

"AFTER CONSULTING THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL ON THESE, THE ADMINISTRATION AGREED THAT A STATUTORY LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL COMMISSION SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY LEGAL FRAMEWORK TO ENABLE THIS COUNCIL TO DIRECT ITS OWN SECRETARIAT," MRS CHAN SAID.

THE OPPORTUNITY IS ALSO TAKEN TO AMEND IN THE SCHEDULE OF THE BILL THE REFERENCES IN VARIOUS ORDINANCES TO THE CLERK TO THE LEGCO AND THE RE-TITLED CLERK TO THE EXCO, SO THAT THE DIFFERENT ROLES AND FUNCTIONS PERFORMED BY THESE TWO OFFICIALS CAN BE CLEARLY SPECIFIED, MRS CHAN SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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LEGCO PASSES VOTE ON ACCOUNT RESOLUTION

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A RESOLUTION TO SEEK FUNDS ON ACCOUNT TO ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO CARRY ON EXISTING SERVICES BETWEEN THE START OF THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR AND THE ENACTMENT OF THE APPROPRIATION BILL WAS PASSED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE AGGREGATE TOTAL UNDER ALL HEADS IS FIXED AT \$53,146,695,000.

A VOTE ON ACCOUNT WARRANT WILL BE ISSUED TO THE DIRECTOR OF ACCOUNTING SERVICES AUTHORISING HIM TO MAKE PAYMENTS UP TO THE AMOUNT SPECIFIED AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS CONDITIONS.

THE VOTE ON ACCOUNT WILL BE SUBSUMED UPON THE ENACTMENT OF THE APPROPRIATION BILL, AND THE GENERAL WARRANT ISSUED AFTER THE ENACTMENT OF THE APPROPRIATION BILL WILL REPLACE THE VOTE ON ACCOUNT WARRANT AND WILL BE EFFECTIVE FROM APRIL 1.

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RESOLUTIONS TO INCREASE BANKRUPTCY AND COMPANIES FEES PASSED

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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PASSED TWO RESOLUTIONS THAT SOUGHT TO INCREASE BY 10 PER CENT CERTAIN FEES PAYABLE TO THE REGISTRAR OF THE SUPREME COURT STARTING FROM APRIL 1 THIS YEAR.

THESE FEES INCLUDE THOSE IN RELATION TO PROCEEDINGS IN BANKRUPTCY AND THE RELATED RESEARCH, CERTIFICATION AND PHOTOCOPYING OF DOCUMENTS; AND TO COMPANIES AND COMPANIES WINDING-UP.

MOVING THE RESOLUTIONS, THE SECRETARY FOR FINANCIAL SERVICES, MR MICHAEL CARTLAND, SAID THOSE FEES WERE LAST REVIEWED IN 1992. THE INCREASE WAS IN LINE WITH THE RISE IN COST, TO RECOVER THE FULL COST OF PROVIDING THE SERVICES.

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CAPITAL GAINS TAX NOT RIGHT WAY TO CURB SPECULATION

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THE ADMINISTRATION HAS STRONG RESERVATIONS TO INTRODUCE A CAPITAL GAINS TAX, ALTHOUGH THE SUBJECT IS NOT CLOSED AND IT IS STILL STUDYING THE POSSIBLE RAMIFICATIONS OF SUCH A TAX IN HONG KONG.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR THE TREASURY, MR DONALD TSANG, WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON YEUNG SUM IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"A CAPITAL GAINS TAX WOULD SEND A STRONG NEGATIVE SIGNAL TO BOTH LOCAL AND OVERSEAS INVESTORS."

HE SAID THE ADMINISTRATION'S INITIAL ASSESSMENT WAS THAT SUCH A TAX WOULD HAVE A SIGNIFICANT, NEGATIVE IMPACT ON PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT IN HONG KONG.

TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE DETERRENT AGAINST PROPERTY SPECULATION, THE TAX WOULD HAVE TO BE SET AT A RELATIVELY HIGH LEVEL, HE SAID.

"THIS WOULD DAMPEN DEMAND NOT ONLY AMONG SPECULATORS BUT ALSO THOSE WHO WANT TO MAKE A LONG-TERM INVESTMENT IN THE PROPERTY MARKET."

THIS WOULD ULTIMATELY REDUCE THE AVAILABILITY OF PREMISES FOR THOSE END-USERS WHO OPT TO LEASE RATHER THAN TO OWN PROPERTY.

THERE IS OF COURSE THE DANGER THAT PROPERTY DEVELOPERS WOULD RESPOND BY CUTTING BACK ON THEIR PRODUCTION, HE ADDED.

"THE LONGER-TERM DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROPERTY SECTOR COULD THUS BE JEOPARDISED," MR TSANG SAID.

BETWEEN 1989 TO 1993, THE SECRETARY SAID PRIVATE SECTOR BUILDING EXPENDITURE TOOK UP 50 TO 60 PER CENT OF THE OVERALL EXPENDITURE ON BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION IN THE ECONOMY.

"IF YOU INCLUDE THE SERVICE MARGIN OF REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS, THIS EXPENDITURE ACCOUNTED FOR 30 TO 40 PER CENT OF THE OVERALL INVESTMENT EXPENDITURE IN OUR GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCTS."

A CAPITAL GAINS TAX ON PROPERTY TRANSACTIONS WOULD THUS IMPACT ON A LARGE SEGMENT OF INVESTMENT IN THE ECONOMY, HE SAID.

MR TSANG SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WAS WORKING ON A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF SUCH TAX ON THE PROPERTY SECTOR AND ON THE ECONOMY AS A WHOLE.

THIS STUDY HAS NOT YET BEEN COMPLETED, HE SAID.

HE ALSO LISTED THE OTHER PRACTICAL ISSUES THAT HAD TO BE ADDRESSED IN INTRODUCING A CAPITAL GAINS TAX:

- * THE APPROPRIATE TREATMENT OF GAINS ATTRIBUTABLE TO INFLATION;
- * WHETHER LOSSES SHOULD BE DEDUCTIBLE AND, IF SO, WHETHER THEY SHOULD ONLY BE OFFSET AGAINST CAPITAL GAINS;

* WHETHER GAINS SHOULD BE AVERAGED AND BROUGHT TO CHARGE OVER A NUMBER OF YEARS; AND

* WHETHER THE TAX SHOULD APPLY TO TRANSACTIONS IN STOCKS AND SHARES IN PROPERTY-RELATED BUSINESSES.

AS TO THE ADVANTAGE OF SUCH A TAX, HE SAID IT MIGHT DEPRESS PROPERTY PRICES AND BRING IN ADDITIONAL REVENUE FOR THE PUBLIC COFFERS FOR A LIMITED DURATION.

"BUT THEY SEEM TO BE UNCONVINCING ARGUMENTS FOR INTRODUCING A CAPITAL GAINS TAX, GIVEN THE UNPREDICTABLY WIDE IMPLICATIONS OF SUCH A TAX AND OUR PRESENT STRONG RESERVES," HE SAID.

TO CURB PROPERTY SPECULATION, MR TSANG SAID ALL AGREEMENTS OF SALE OF RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES WERE REQUIRED TO PAY STAMP DUTY.

THIS WILL INCREASE THE COST OF SPECULATION WITHOUT HARMING GENUINE HOME-BUYERS.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE INLAND REVENUE DEPARTMENT WILL CONTINUE ITS EFFORTS IN COLLECTING PROFITS TAX FROM SPECULATIVE PROPERTY TRANSACTIONS.

"THESE MEASURES HAVE PROVIDED SOME RELIEF," HE SAID.

HE SAID THE KEY TO TACKLING RISING PROPERTY PRICES MUST BE TO INCREASE SUPPLY.

IN CONCLUSION, HE SAID THE ADMINISTRATION BELIEVED THAT ON PRESENT INDICATIONS, THE SHORT-TERM BENEFITS WHICH A CAPITAL GAINS TAX MIGHT HAVE WERE HEAVILY OUTWEIGHED BY ITS LONG-TERM DISBENEFITS.

"THERE IS A SERIOUS RISK THAT IMPOSING A CAPITAL GAINS TAX NOW, ASSUMING THAT IT COULD BE EFFECTIVE IN CURBING ACTIVITY IN THE PROPERTY MARKET, WOULD DO NO MORE THAN REDUCING PRICES FOR THE PRESENT GENERATION OF HOME-BUYERS AND INCREASING COSTS FOR FUTURE ONES."

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INDEPENDENT POLICE ADVISORY COMMITTEES UNNECESSARY

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IT IS NEITHER NECESSARY NOR DESIRABLE TO ESTABLISH ADDITIONAL INDEPENDENT POLICE ADVISORY COMMITTEES, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, MR ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON JAMES TO KUN-SUN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR ASPREY SAID THERE WERE ALREADY PROCEDURES TO MONITOR THE POLICE FORCE PROPERLY AND ADEQUATE CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE POLICE AND THE COMMUNITY.

"EXPENDITURE AND PERFORMANCE, INCLUDING THE EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE USE OF RESOURCES, WERE MONITORED ON A CONTINUING BASIS BY THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT," MR ASPREY SAID.

BROAD STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING LAW AND ORDER ARE MONITORED BY THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE, WHICH INCLUDES REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE COMMUNITY AND THE LEGCO.

"THE COMMITTEE REGULARLY RECEIVES AND ASSESSES REPORTS FROM THE POLICE FORCE ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH PLANS TO REDUCE CRIME HAVE BEEN IMPLEMENTED," MR ASPREY SAID.

HE ADDED THAT THE LEGCO'S SECURITY PANEL TOOK A CLOSE AND ACTIVE INTEREST IN ALL ASPECTS OF POLICE PERFORMANCE AND REGULARLY CALLED FOR, AND RECEIVED, PAPERS AND REPORTS FROM THE FORCE.

MR ASPREY SAID THE POLICE PLACED GREAT EMPHASIS ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WITH THE PUBLIC AND COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE POLICE AND THE PUBLIC.

"THE POLICE PUBLIC RELATIONS BUREAU HAS IN RECENT YEARS STRENGTHENED YOUTH LIAISON, THROUGH THE JUNIOR POLICE CALL, AND LIAISON WITH THE PUBLIC, THROUGH THE ORGANISED AND SERIOUS CRIME HOTLINE AND CRIME INFORMATION FORMS.

AT DISTRICT LEVEL, THE FORCE IS REPRESENTED, THROUGH THE DISTRICT COMMANDERS, ON ALL DISTRICT BOARDS AND A COMMUNITY RELATIONS OFFICER IS ASSIGNED TO EACH DISTRICT TO FOSTER CLOSER RELATIONS BETWEEN THE POLICE AND THE COMMUNITY IT SERVES.

"THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE, TOGETHER WITH THE DISTRICT CRIME COMMITTEES, FURTHER ENHANCE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE FORCE AND THE COMMUNITY," MR ASPREY SAID.

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AIDS PUBLICITY MESSAGE ABOUT RIGHT

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THE FOCUS ON THE USE OF CONDOMS IN THE GOVERNMENT'S AIDS-RELATED PUBLICITY IS ABOUT RIGHT, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, SAID.

"OUR STRATEGY THEREFORE ON AIDS IS ENTIRELY IN LINE WITH THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION'S GLOBAL STRATEGY ON THE PREVENTION OF AIDS AND HIV TRANSMISSION.

"OUR FOCUS IS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE, BOTH IN TERMS OF AIDS PREVENTION AND GENERALLY.

"THIS MESSAGE IS TARGETED PARTICULARLY AT YOUTH, WOMEN AND AT THE FAMILY," SHE ADDED WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON LEONG CHE-HUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN THE ABSENCE OF A CURE OR VACCINE, MRS WONG BELIEVED THAT PREVENTION REMAINED THE ONLY EFFECTIVE WAY TO CONTAIN THE SPREAD OF HIV AND AIDS.

/SHE SAID

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SHE SAID ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT WAYS TO PREVENT AIDS, AND PARTICULARLY HIV TRANSMISSION THROUGH SEXUAL INTERCOURSE, WAS THE PRACTICE OF SAFER SEX WHICH COVERED MANY LIFESTYLE CHOICES.

THESE VARY FROM MAINTAINING A MUTUALLY MONOGAMOUS RELATIONSHIP WITH A SINGLE PARTNER, AVOIDING CAUSAL SEX, REDUCING THE NUMBER OF SEXUAL PARTNERS, TO WEARING A CONDOM.

THE SECRETARY NOTED THAT THE CONSUMER COUNCIL HAD SINCE 1988 CONDUCTED THREE TESTS ON CONDOMS OBTAINED FROM RETAIL OUTLETS.

THE RESULTS ON EACH OCCASION HAVE BEEN WIDELY PUBLICISED TO ENABLE CONSUMERS TO MAKE SENSIBLE AND INFORMED CHOICES.

SUBJECT TO THE ENACTMENT OF THE CONSUMER GOODS SAFETY BILL INTRODUCED BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY LAST DECEMBER, THE COMMISSIONER FOR CUSTOMS AND EXCISE WILL ENFORCE THE LEGISLATION TO ENSURE THAT THE CONSUMER GOODS SUPPLIED ARE REASONABLY SAFE.

MRS WONG SAID THE COMMISSIONER WOULD ALSO BE EMPOWERED TO REFER SAMPLES TO THE GOVERNMENT LABORATORY FOR TESTING SO AS TO PROVIDE AN ADDED SAFEGUARD FOR THE PUBLIC.

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CONDITIONS SET FOR ACCEPTANCE OF
ORGAN DONATIONS FROM EXECUTED PRISONERS

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS AN ESTABLISHED POLICY ON THE ACCEPTANCE OF ORGAN DONATIONS FROM EXECUTED PRISONERS OUTSIDE THE TERRITORY, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, MRS ELIZABETH WONG, SAID.

HOWEVER, TWO CONDITIONS MUST BE FULLY MET.

"FIRST, ANY ORGAN DONATION MUST BE A VOLUNTARY ACT AND THE DECISION TO DONATE MUST REST ON THE FREE WILL OF THE DONOR," SHE SAID.

"SECONDLY, THERE MUST NOT BE ANY COMMERCIAL TRANSACTION OF ORGANS."

MRS WONG WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON CONRAD LAM KUI-SHING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SHE EMPHASISED THAT UNLESS THESE TWO CONDITIONS WERE FULFILLED BEYOND A SHADOW OF A DOUBT, ACCEPTANCE OF ORGANS FROM EXECUTED PRISONERS WAS BOTH REPUGNANT AND OBNOXIOUS.

"THUS, WE WILL ONLY ACCEPT A PRISONER'S EXPRESSED WISH TO DONATE IF HIS OFFER IS MADE VOLUNTARILY, WITHOUT ANY COERCION, AND BEFORE IMPARTIAL AND RELIABLE WITNESSES," SHE ADDED.

IN RESPECT OF DONATED ORGANS FROM PRISONERS ABOUT TO BE EXECUTED, MRS WONG SAID EACH CASE WAS CAREFULLY CONSIDERED ON ITS OWN CIRCUMSTANCES AND SUBJECT TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE POLICY BEING FULLY MET.

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BRIDGE'S POTENTIAL TO ATTRACT TOURISTS RECOGNISED

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THE GOVERNMENT CERTAINLY RECOGNISES THE POTENTIAL FOR THE LANTAU FIXED CROSSING TO BECOME A MAJOR TOURIST ATTRACTION, THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM DR THE HON SAMUEL WONG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR BLAKE SAID CONSIDERATION WAS BEING GIVEN TO A NUMBER OF SITES IN THE VICINITY OF THE CROSSING, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THEIR LOCATIONS AS VIEWING POINTS FOR THE WHOLE OF THE CROSSING AS WELL AS IN PARTICULAR THE TSING MA SUSPENSION BRIDGE.

"CAREFUL ATTENTION IS BEING GIVEN TO THE NEED FOR INCORPORATING ADEQUATE PARKING FACILITIES, AS WELL AS THEIR POTENTIAL FOR COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES SUCH AS SOUVENIR SHOPS AND RESTAURANTS," HE SAID.

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REMODELLING OF KCR KOWLOON STATION TO MEET DEMAND

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IT IS IMPERATIVE TO UPGRADE THE KOWLOON-CANTON RAILWAY (KCR) KOWLOON STATION TO PROVIDE MODERN INTERNATIONAL FACILITIES AND A PODIUM DOUBLE ITS PRESENT SIZE TO MEET THE GROWING PATRONAGE FOR BOTH DOMESTIC AND CROSS-BORDER TRAFFIC.

IN VIEW OF THE SIZE AND COMPLEXITY OF THE PROJECT, THE ESTIMATED TOTAL COST OF \$1 BILLION IS CONSIDERED TO BE REASONABLE BY THE KOWLOON-CANTON RAILWAY CORPORATION (KCRC).

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR HAIDER BARMA, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON SAMUEL WONG PING-WAI.

MR BARMA SAID: "THE EXISTING TERMINAL OF THE KCRC KOWLOON STATION WAS NOT DESIGNED TO COPE WITH INTERNATIONAL TRAFFIC; NOR WAS IT DESIGNED TO HANDLE THE CURRENT VOLUME OF 150,000 TO 160,000 PASSENGERS PER DAY WHICH WAS FOUR TIMES ITS DESIGN CAPACITY.

"CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION FACILITIES HAVE BEEN PROVIDED ON AN IMPROVISED BASIS AND THROUGH-TRAIN PASSENGERS HAVE TO WAIT IN LONG QUEUES OUTSIDE THE CONCOURSE."

IN SEEKING CONCEPTUAL SOLUTIONS TO THE CAPACITY AND DESIGN CONSTRAINTS OF THE KOWLOON STATION, THE KCRC CALLED FOR PROPOSALS FROM SIX EXPERIENCED ARCHITECTURAL AND DESIGN CONSULTING FIRMS, WHOSE PROFESSIONAL MEMBERS ARE FULLY QUALIFIED AND REGISTERED LOCALLY, MR BARMA SAID.

FOLLOWING AN INTERNAL ASSESSMENT, THE FIRM WHICH BEST DEMONSTRATED ITS ABILITY AND EXPERIENCE WAS SELECTED TO EXAMINE THE PROBLEMS AND IDENTIFY POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS.

"THE PRELIMINARY STUDY HAS BEEN COMPLETED. THE BOARD OF KCRC WILL SHORTLY CONSIDER THE FINDINGS AND DECIDE HOW BEST THE PROJECT SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED."

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ESCORT TEAMS TO FIGHT CRIME NOT TO BE EXTENDED

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THE COMMUNITY AWARENESS PROGRAMME INTRODUCED BY THE POLICE IN TIN SHUI WAI LAST NOVEMBER TO COMBAT CRIME THERE WILL NOT BE EXTENDED TO OTHER DISTRICTS.

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

MR ASPREY SAID THE PROGRAMME WAS DESIGNED TO TACKLE A SPECIFIC LAW AND ORDER PROBLEM IN A NEWLY ESTABLISHED RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT WHERE COMMUNITY RELATIONS HAD YET TO BE FULLY DEVELOPED.

"THERE ARE ALREADY WELL-ESTABLISHED CHANNELS TO ADDRESS SIMILAR POLICING PROBLEMS ELSEWHERE, AND SO WE DO NOT CONSIDER IT APPROPRIATE TO EXTEND THE PROGRAMME TO OTHER DISTRICTS," HE SAID.

THE PROGRAMME INVOLVES THE TRAINING OF RESIDENTS AND SECONDARY STUDENTS IN TIN SHUI WAI IN CRIME PREVENTION AND PERSONAL SAFETY, SO THAT THEY CAN ESCORT UNACCOMPANIED GIRLS TO THEIR HOMES.

SINCE THE START OF THE PROGRAMME IN NOVEMBER LAST YEAR, NO REPORTS OF RAPE OR INDECENT ASSAULT HAS BEEN RECEIVED IN THE DISTRICT.

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CLEANING UP OF COUNTRYSIDE IN GOOD PROGRESS

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THE "CLEANING UP OF THE COUNTRYSIDE" EXERCISE WILL BE UNDERTAKEN BY A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TASK FORCE TO BE SET UP IN THE LANDS DEPARTMENT, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON TANG SIU-TONG, MR EASON SAID THAT A CORE TEAM HAD BEEN FORMED LAST NOVEMBER TO CARRY OUT PREPARATORY WORK AND THE FULL TEAM OF OVER 100 STAFF WAS EXPECTED TO BE ESTABLISHED IN PHASES OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

FIRST REQUEST FOR FUNDS WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE FINANCE COMMITTEE SHORTLY, HE SAID.

DUE TO THE SCALE AND COMPLEXITY OF THE PROBLEM, THE EXERCISE MAY LAST SOME YEARS.

THE TASK FORCE WILL TARGET SPECIFIC AREAS AND SHEK KONG VALLEY WILL PROBABLY BE THE FIRST ONE.

NOTING THAT ALL POSSIBLE EXISTING ADMINISTRATIVE AND LEGAL MEASURES WOULD BE TAKEN TO ACHIEVE AN IMMEDIATE EFFECT, MR EASON SAID THE ACTION WOULD MAINLY INVOLVE THE CLEARANCE OF BLACK SPOTS ON GOVERNMENT LAND, REHABILITATING THE CLEARED LAND, AND SEEKING CO-OPERATION OF THE OPERATORS ON THE LAND UNDER GOVERNMENT CONTROL.

AS REGARDS THE PRIVATE LAND, THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT WILL ALSO BE TAKING ACTION UNDER THE TOWN PLANNING ORDINANCE AGAINST UNAUTHORISED DEVELOPMENT.

MR EASON SAID OTHER LONGER TERM SOLUTIONS WOULD BE DEvised CAREFULLY TO TACKLE THE MORE DIFFICULT PROBLEMS.

A SPECIAL COMMITTEE COMPRISING MAINLY NON-OFFICIAL MEMBERS WILL SHORTLY BE SET UP TO ADVISE THE GOVERNMENT ON THE MONITORING OF THIS EXERCISE, HE ADDED.

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MTRC WILL ENSURE A RELIABLE SERVICE

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THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY CORPORATION (MTRC) WILL CONTINUE TO ENSURE THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE RELIABILITY FROM ITS EQUIPMENT AND SEEK THE CO-OPERATION OF ITS CUSTOMERS TO MAINTAIN ITS HIGH STANDARD OF SERVICES.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR HAIDER BARMA, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LEE WING-TAT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR BARMA SAID THERE WAS NO SERIOUS PROBLEM OF DELAYS ON THE MTR TSUEN WAN LINE AND ONLY FOUR COMPLAINTS HAD BEEN LODGED WITH THE TRANSPORT COMPLAINTS UNIT SINCE MAY 1992.

MOREOVER, THE MTRC HAD CONFIRMED THAT THEY HAD NOT RECEIVED ANY FEEDBACK ON DELAYS DURING THEIR "COFFEE TIMES" WITH COMMUTERS OR THROUGH OTHER CHANNELS OF LIAISON.

ACCORDING TO MTRC RECORDS, 90.4 PER CENT OF TRAINS ON THE TSUEN WAN LINE DURING THE MORNING PEAK HOUR WERE ON TIME BETWEEN MAY 1992 AND FEBRUARY 1993, COMPARING WITH 87.5 PER CENT BETWEEN MAY 1993 AND FEBRUARY 1994.

"BUT BEARING IN MIND THAT THERE HAS BEEN AN ADDITIONAL SCHEDULED TRAIN DURING THE MORNING PEAK HOUR SINCE MAY 1993, THERE HAS BEEN NO REAL SIGNIFICANT DELAY IN SERVICE," HE SAID.

TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, MR BARMA SAID THE CORPORATION ACHIEVED ITS TARGET OF 30 TO 31 TRAINS ON THE TSUEN WAN LINE DURING THE MORNING PEAK HOUR ON 184 WEEKDAYS OUT OF A TOTAL OF 210 WEEKDAYS BETWEEN MAY 1993 AND FEBRUARY 1994 AS COPARED WITH A TOTAL OF 29 TO 30 TRAINS ON 190 WEEKDAYS OUT OF 203 WEEKDAYS BETWEEN MAY 1992 AND FEBRUARY 1993.

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"MTRC BELIEVES THAT THE VERY SLIGHT DECLINE IN THE LEVEL OF SERVICE IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO LONGER EMBARKATION AND DISEMBARKATION TIME DURING RUSH HOURS RATHER THAN ANY TECHNICAL OR ENGINEERING PROBLEM," HE SAID.

RECORDS ALSO SHOWED THAT THERE HAD BEEN AN INCREASE IN THE USE OF PASSENGERS ALARMS ON THE TSUEN WAN LINE DURING THE PAST THREE WINTER MONTHS, WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO SOME DELAY IN TRAIN MOVEMENTS, HE ADDED.

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NO PLANS TO INTRODUCE ELECTRONIC NEWSPAPERS

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS NO PLANS TO INTRODUCE ELECTRONIC NEWSPAPERS BUT WOULD BE HAPPY TO SEE THEIR INTRODUCTION BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR, THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SUEN, INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CONRAD LAM KUI-SING, MR SUEN SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS FULLY COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING A FREE AND ACTIVE PRESS IN THE TERRITORY.

THE GOVERNMENT, HE ADDED, ALSO SUBSCRIBED TO THE CONCEPTS OF FREE MARKET IN SERVICES AND AN OPEN SOCIETY.

"AS SUCH, THERE ARE NO RESTRICTIONS ON THE INTRODUCTION OF NEW FORMS OF MEDIA," HE SAID.

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GUIDELINES ON DISPLAY OF BANNERS ON GOVT LAND

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UNDER EXISTING GUIDELINES, DISTRICT LANDS OFFICERS ONLY APPROVE NON-COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING INVOLVING THE DISPLAY OF BANNERS AND POSTERS ON GOVERNMENT LAND FOR SPECIAL EVENTS.

THE MAIN CRITERION FOR APPROVAL IS WHETHER THE EVENT TO BE PUBLICISED IS NON-COMMERCIAL AND OF INTEREST TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

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

FACTORS SUCH AS POSSIBLE OBSTRUCTION TO THE PUBLIC AND TRAFFIC SAFETY WERE ALSO TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT, MR EASON SAID, ADDING THAT APPLICATIONS WHICH WERE NOT RELATED TO A PARTICULAR EVENT WERE NORMALLY NOT ACCEPTED.

IN VIEW OF THE DEMAND FROM SOME DISTRICT BOARD AND LEGCO MEMBERS TO ERECT SIGNBOARDS AND BANNERS IN PUBLIC PLACES, FOR EXAMPLE ON STREET RAILINGS, TO PUBLICISE THEIR ACTIVITIES, SERVICES AND OFFICES, A REVIEW WAS CARRIED OUT IN MID 1992 TO SEE IF THIS DEMAND COULD BE MET AND TO CONSIDER THE REGULATORY ASPECTS AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS AS WELL AS THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF ANY NEW ARRANGEMENTS.

A PILOT SCHEME WAS BEGUN IN WAN CHAI IN JUNE LAST YEAR FOR A TRIAL PERIOD OF TWO MONTHS USING A NEW SET OF GUIDELINES, UNDER WHICH APPLICATIONS FOR THE DISPLAY OF SIGNBOARDS AND BANNERS WOULD BE APPROVED PROVIDED THAT NO COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING OR MATERIAL OF AN INVIDIOUS NATURE WAS INVOLVED.

MR EASON SAID IT WAS INTENDED THAT IF THE SCHEME WAS SUCCESSFUL, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONSIDER INTRODUCING IT ON A TERRITORY-WIDE BASIS SUBJECT, AMONG OTHER THINGS, TO RESOURCES BEING AVAILABLE.

TWO ADDITIONAL STAFF WERE SPECIALLY DEPLOYED IN THE DISTRICT LANDS OFFICE/HONG KONG WEST TO IMPLEMENT THE SCHEME.

ON COMPLETION OF THE PILOT SCHEME IN AUGUST LAST YEAR, THE TWO STAFF WERE REMOVED BUT DLO/HKW CONTINUED TO HANDLE APPLICATIONS RELATING TO THE WAN CHAI DISTRICT BASED ON THE NEW GUIDELINES BUT WITHOUT THE FOLLOW-THROUGH ENFORCEMENT ACTION WHICH WAS PART OF THE PILOT SCHEME.

MR EASON SAID IT HAD NOT BEEN POSSIBLE TO EXTEND THE PILOT SCHEME TO OTHER DISTRICTS BECAUSE OF RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS AND OTHER COMPETING PRIORITIES.

HE NOTED THAT BILL OF RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS WOULD ARISE IF FAVOURABLE TREATMENT WERE GIVEN TO ANY GROUP, BE IT CHARITABLE OR PUBLIC INTEREST-BASED, AND SIMILAR TREATMENT WAS NOT GIVEN TO OTHER GROUPS IN RESPECT OF SIMILAR TYPES OF ACTIVITY.

"THIS IS NOT THE CASE UNDER THE EXISTING GUIDELINES, WHICH ARE APPLIED TO ALL GROUPS IN THE SAME WAY.

"THE SAME IS TRUE OF THE GUIDELINES CURRENTLY APPLIED IN WAN CHAI," HE SAID.

CONSIDERATION WAS BEING GIVEN TO EXTENDING THE GUIDELINES NOW BEING APPLIED IN WAN CHAI TO OTHER DISTRICT, MR EASON SAID, ADDING THAT CHANGES TO CURRENT LEGISLATION SHOULD NOT BE REQUIRED TO ENSURE FAIRNESS.

PROCEDURE OF SELECTING ATHLETES EXPLAINED

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THE FORTHCOMING MERGER OF THE HONG KONG SPORTS DEVELOPMENT BOARD AND THE HONG KONG SPORTS INSTITUTE WILL NOT RESULT IN ANY CHANGE TO THE PROCEDURE OF SELECTING ATHLETES FOR PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL SPORTS COMPETITIONS.

THIS IS BECAUSE THE SELECTION OF ATHLETES TO REPRESENT HONG KONG RESTS WITH THE NATIONAL SPORTS ASSOCIATIONS WHO ARE THE SOLE AUTHORITY IN SINGLE-SPORT COMPETITIONS.

IN THE CASE OF MULTI-SPORTS GAMES, THE AMATEUR SPORTS FEDERATION AND OLYMPIC COMMITTEE OF HONG KONG IS RESPONSIBLE FOR APPROVING THE SELECTION AND FOR CONTROLLING HONG KONG'S REPRESENTATION IN OLYMPIC, ASIAN, COMMONWEALTH AND OTHER MULTI-SPORTS REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL GAMES.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHIM PUI-CHUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE SECRETARY FOR RECREATION AND CULTURE, MR JAMES SO, EXPLAINED THAT THE SELECTION PROCESS WENT THROUGH TWO STAGES, THAT IS, THE IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL HIGH PERFORMANCE ATHLETES THROUGH LOCAL OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS AND THE SELECTION OF REPRESENTATIVES THROUGH A SERIES OF SELECTION TRIALS.

"THE AIM OF THE SELECTION PROCESS IS TO ENSURE THAT HONG KONG IS REPRESENTED IN THE BEST WAY POSSIBLE AND IN THE SPIRIT OF FAIR PLAY WITHOUT DISTINCTION OF RACE OR BACKGROUND AND COMPLYING WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE SPORTS ASSOCIATIONS CONCERNED," MR SO SAID.

WHEN SELECTING ATHLETES TO REPRESENT HONG KONG, THE NATIONAL SPORTS ASSOCIATIONS ENSURE THAT THE SELECTION PROCESS IS OPEN AND FAIR AND THAT THE PROCEDURES ARE PUBLISHED TO ALL REGISTERED PLAYERS, MEMBERS AND MEMBER CLUBS WITHIN A REASONABLE TIME FRAME.

ALL NATIONAL COMPETITIONS AND THE SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS IN INTERNATIONAL GAMES ARE UNDERTAKEN WITHIN GUIDELINES LAID DOWN BY THE RESPECTIVE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION.

ATHLETES MUST ALSO MEET RESIDENTIAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA APPLIED BY THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION AND/OR THE EVENT ORGANISER, AND ACCORDING TO THE RULES AND PRACTICE OF THE AMATEUR SPORTS FEDERATION AND OLYMPIC COMMITTEE OF HONG KONG.

PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES SECURITY MEASURES TO IMPROVE

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THE HOUSING AUTHORITY IS COMMITTED TO IMPROVING SECURITY MEASURES IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES, THE SECRETARY FOR PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT AND LANDS, MR TONY EASON, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON ZACHARY WONG, MR EASON SAID A THREE-YEAR PROGRAMME WOULD BEGIN EARLY NEXT YEAR TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL SECURITY MEASURES TO ALL NEW HARMONY BLOCKS NOW UNDER CONSTRUCTION AND TO 209 EXISTING TRIDENT AND HARMONY BLOCKS.

THESE MEASURES INCLUDE THE INSTALLATION OF SECURITY GATES AT MAIN ENTRANCES, CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION AND DOORPHONE SYSTEMS AND THE PROVISION OF A 24-HOUR SECURITY GUARD SERVICE.

A WORKING GROUP HAS BEEN SET UP BY THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT TO EXAMINE SUITABLE SECURITY MEASURES AND IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS FOR THE REMAINING 983 HOUSING BLOCKS OF VARIOUS DESIGNS AND WILL SUBMIT ITS RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE AUTHORITY IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS YEAR, MR EASON SAID.

IN ADDITION TO USING THE FINDINGS OF A RECENT SURVEY ON SECURITY MEASURES IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES, HE SAID THE DEPARTMENT WOULD ALSO CONSULT MUTUAL AID COMMITTEES ON THE PROPOSED MEASURES.

"THE WORKING GROUP WILL TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE SECURITY SITUATION IN PARTICULAR ESTATES IN SETTING PRIORITIES FOR THE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME.

"THE POSSIBILITY OF INSTALLING TELEPHONES AND STATIONING SECURITY GUARDS IN THE LOBBIES OF HOUSING ESTATE BLOCKS BEFORE COMPLETION OF THE MAIN SECURITY WORKS WILL BE CONSIDERED BY THE WORKING GROUP," MR EASON SAID.

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PERCENTAGE OF NON-LOCAL STUDENTS
WITHIN APPROVED STUDENT NUMBER TARGETS

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THERE WERE 179 NON-LOCAL STUDENTS ATTENDING UNDERGRADUATE COURSES AT THE SEVEN INSTITUTIONS FUNDED BY THE UNIVERSITY AND POLYTECHNIC GRANTS COMMITTEE (UPGC) IN THE 1992/93 ACADEMIC YEAR.

THE TOTAL REPRESENTED 0.5 PER CENT OF THE APPROVED STUDENT TARGETS FOR THESE COURSES.

DURING THE SAME PERIOD, THE NUMBER OF NON-LOCAL STUDENTS TAKING UP TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE AND RESEARCH POSTGRADUATE COURSES WAS 96.5 (2.8 PER CENT) AND 290 (15.5 PER CENT) RESPECTIVELY.

THE STATISTICS WERE RELEASED BY THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, MR MICHAEL LEUNG, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TIK CHI-YUEN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

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MR LEUNG EXPLAINED THAT UNDER THE POLICY APPROVED BY THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL IN MAY LAST YEAR, THE UPGC-FUNDED INSTITUTIONS COULD ENROL NON-LOCAL STUDENTS AT SUB-DEGREE, FIRST DEGREE AND TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE LEVELS UP TO A MAXIMUM OF TWO PER CENT OVER AND ABOVE THE RESPECTIVE APPROVED STUDENT NUMBER TARGETS.

FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH COURSES, THE INSTITUTIONS MAY ENROL UP TO 20 PER CENT OF NON-LOCAL STUDENTS WITHIN THE APPROVED STUDENT NUMBER TARGETS FOR THESE COURSES.

MR LEUNG SAID THE STUDENT ENROLMENT SITUATION IN THE UPGC-FUNDED INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING THE NUMBER OF "NON-LOCAL STUDENTS" ATTENDING DEGREE AND POST-GRADUATE COURSES, WOULD BE MONITORED BY THE UPGC IN THE CONTEXT OF THE INSTITUTIONS' ANNUAL STATISTICAL RETURNS.

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APPOINTMENT OF AOS TO DIRECTORATE POSTS
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OUT OF A TOTAL OF 90 DIRECTORATE POSTS IN THE SOCIAL WELFARE, THE EDUCATION AND THE HOUSING DEPARTMENTS, ONLY FIVE ARE HELD BY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS AND SEVEN BY OTHER GENERAL GRADES OFFICERS.

THE REST ARE TAKEN UP BY DEPARTMENTAL STAFF.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE, MR MICHAEL SZE, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON LEE WING-TAT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR SZE POINTED OUT THAT THERE WAS NO RATIO FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS TO THE DIRECTORATE POSTS IN THE THREE DEPARTMENTS CONCERNED, OR IN ANY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

OTHER GENERAL GRADES OFFICERS INCLUDE EXECUTIVE OFFICERS, TREASURY ACCOUNTANTS AND MANAGEMENT SERVICES OFFICERS.

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9, 1994

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DECISION SOON ON CEDAW

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THE GOVERNMENT HOPES TO BE ABLE TO TAKE A DECISION SHORTLY ON WHETHER IT SHOULD SEEK TO HAVE THE UNITED KINGDOM EXTEND CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW) TO HONG KONG, THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SUEN, INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHRISTINE LOH, MR SUEN ADDED THAT IF IT WAS DECIDED THAT CEDAW SHOULD BE SO EXTENDED, A SET OF LEGISLATIVE AND NON-LEGISLATIVE MEASURES WOULD NEED TO BE DEVELOPED TO ENABLE THE ADMINISTRATION TO COMPLY WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE CONVENTION.

HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT AS CEDAW WOULD INTRODUCE NEW INTERNATIONAL RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS IN RESPECT OF HONG KONG, IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO CONSULT THE CHINESE SIDE IN THE SINO-BRITISH JOINT LIAISON GROUP IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE AGREED GUIDELINES.

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LAWYERS TO SERVE AS TEMPORARY DISTRICT JUDGES

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THE JUDICIARY HAS ALREADY ACCEPTED THE LEGAL PROFESSION'S OFFER TO SERVE AS TEMPORARY DISTRICT JUDGES TO HELP CLEAR THE BACKLOG OF DISTRICT COURT CASES, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON MRS ANSON CHAN, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON EMILY LAU WAI-HING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MRS CHAN SAID THE CHIEF JUSTICE HAD ISSUED INVITATIONS TO A FIRST GROUP OF 12 LAWYERS.

ELEVEN OF THESE LAWYERS ARE WILLING TO SERVE FOR FOUR WEEKS OR MORE. MOST OF THEM WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THE SUMMER.

ARRANGEMENTS ARE NOW BEING MADE TO FIT THE DATES WHEN THEY ARE AVAILABLE INTO THE COURT DIARY.

THERE ARE OTHER PLANS TO REDUCE THE BACKLOG IN THE DISTRICT COURT, MRS CHAN NOTED.

A RECORDING SYSTEM WILL BE IMPLEMENTED ON A TRIAL BASIS IN THE DISTRICT COURT TO RELIEVE DISTRICT JUDGES FROM TAKING DETAILED NOTES AND THUS SPEED UP THE PROCEEDINGS.

FURTHERMORE, COMPUTERISATION WILL BE INTRODUCED TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IN THE LISTING OF CASES.

ADDITIONAL JUDICIAL OFFICERS WILL ALSO BE DEPLOYED TEMPORARILY TO THE DISTRICT COURT.

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POSITIVE MEASURE ADOPTED TO TACKLE MAINS DAMAGE

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THE GOVERNMENT IS AWARE OF THE FREQUENT DAMAGE TO WATER MAINS BY ROADWORK ACTIVITIES IN RECENT YEARS AND HAS TAKEN A POSITIVE AND IMMEDIATE MEASURE TO TACKLE THIS PROBLEM.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR WORKS, MR JAMES BLAKE, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON FRED LI IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR BLAKE SAID THE WATER SUPPLIES DEPARTMENT HAD SET UP INSPECTION TEAMS TO STEP UP THE SURVEILLANCE OF ROADWORK ACTIVITIES WHICH WERE LIKELY TO AFFECT THE UNDERGROUND WATER MAINS AS WELL AS TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE AND ADVICE TO CONTRACTORS AND UTILITY UNDERTAKERS FOR THE PROTECTION OF WATER MAINS.

"IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT THE IMPACT OF ROADWORK AND/OR OTHER UTILITIES' ACTIVITIES RESULTING IN MAINS BURST WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED IN FUTURE," HE SAID.

REGARDING PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES, MR BLAKE SAID MONITORING OF THE PERFORMANCE OF MAINTENANCE CONTRACTORS HAD BEEN TIGHTENED UP TO BRING ABOUT QUICKER RESPONSE TO PUMPING BREAKDOWNS AND BETTER REPAIR SERVICE.

HE SAID THE PROBLEM OF STRAINER BLOCKAGE HAD BEEN SATISFACTORILY RESOLVED IN 1993 BY MORE FREQUENT CLEANING OF THE SUPPLY SYSTEM.

"IN THE LONGER RUN, HOUSING DEPARTMENT HAS PLANNED TO UPGRADE INTERNAL PUMPING INSTALLATIONS FOR OLD ESTATES IN THE TERRITORY AT A RATE OF 40 TO 50 PUMPING SYSTEMS PER YEAR IN ORDER TO MINIMISE THE OCCURRENCE OF EQUIPMENT FAILURE AND HENCE SUPPLY INTERRUPTIONS," HE SAID.

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AMENDED MOTION ON NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES RAILWAY PASSED

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THE MOTION ON EARLY CONSTRUCTION OF THE NORTHWEST NEW TERRITORIES RAILWAY WAS PASSED WITH AMENDMENT BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN A DEBATE OF ABOUT TWO HOURS TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE ORIGINAL MOTION WAS MOVED BY THE HON ALFRED TSO, WITH AN AMENDMENT RAISED BY THE HON MICHAEL HO.

AFTER 13 COUNCILLORS SPOKE ON THE MOTION, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR HAIDER BARMA, REPLIED FOR THE GOVERNMENT.

/ANOTHER MOTION

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ANOTHER MOTION ON RENEWAL OF CHINA'S MOST FAVOURED NATION STATUS BY THE UNITED STATES, WHICH WAS PROPOSED BY THE HON JAMES TIEN, WAS PASSED WITHOUT AMENDMENT.

A TOTAL OF 16 MEMBERS HAVE DEBATED THE MOTION FOR ABOUT TWO HOURS, AND THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR T H CHAU, GAVE A CONCLUDING SPEECH.

IN ADDITION, MOTIONS MOVED BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS ON CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ORDINANCE, TRADING FUNDS ORDINANCE, HOUSING ORDINANCE, PUBLIC FINANCE ORDINANCE, BANKRUPTCY ORDINANCE AND COMPANIES ORDINANCE WERE ALL PASSED.

THERE WERE ALSO THREE BILLS, NAMELY LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (POWER AND PRIVILEGES) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994, PUBLIC HEALTH AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994 AND COPYRIGHT (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994, PASSED WITHOUT AMENDMENT.

FIVE BILLS WERE INTRODUCED INTO THE COUNCIL FOR FIRST AND SECOND READINGS. THEY ARE THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL COMMISSION BILL, MINOR EMPLOYMENT CLAIMS ADJUDICATION BOARD BILL, AMUSEMENT RIDES (SAFETY) BILL, TOWN PLANNING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994 AND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (ELECTORAL PROVISIONS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1994.

DEBATES ON THESE BILLS WERE ADJOURNED.

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GOVERNOR SPEAKS TO MEDIA

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THE FOLLOWING IS THE TRANSCRIPT OF THE GOVERNOR, THE RT HON CHRISTOPHER PATTEN, SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AFTER HIS VISIT TO THE POLICE TRAINING SCHOOL THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON:-

GOVERNOR: I DON'T WANT TO GIVE A PRESS CONFERENCE NOW BECAUSE I AM SPEAKING TONIGHT AND I AM GIVING A SPEECH ON FRIDAY, QUITE A BIG SPEECH AT THE CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY THE FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW. BUT I COULDN'T COME TO THE TRAINING SCHOOL WITHOUT SAYING A WORD OR TWO ABOUT OUR POLICE FORCE. I'VE JUST SAID TO THE STAFF AND SOME OF THOSE ON THE COURSES IN THE MESS THAT, I THINK, WE HAVE HERE IN HONG KONG ONE OF THE FINEST, MOST PROFESSIONAL POLICE FORCES IN THE WORLD. I AM DELIGHTED TO SEE THE TRAINING SCHOOL AND TO SEE WHAT AN EXTREMELY COMPETENT JOB IS BEING DONE HERE TO MAKE SURE THAT THE STANDARDS WHICH HAVE BEEN SET BY OUR POLICE FORCE CONTINUE INTO THE FUTURE. WE SOMETIMES PERHAPS TAKE FOR GRANTED THE COMPETENCE AND BRAVERY OF THOSE WHO SECURE LAW AND ORDER HERE IN HONG KONG. BUT, WE SHOULD NEVER FORGET HOW MUCH WE DEPEND ON THEM, NOT ONLY FOR OUR STABILITY BUT ALSO FOR HONG KONG BEING AS PROSPEROUS AND AS SUCCESSFUL AND AS HAPPY A PLACE AS IT IS. I AM VERY PLEASED THAT RECRUITMENT FIGURES HAVE REMAINED GOOD. THAT'S A TRIBUTE TO THE POLICE AND I WANT TO ASSURE THEM AND I WANT TO ASSURE THE WHOLE COMMUNITY THAT WE INTEND TO GIVE OUR POLICE ALL THE RESOURCES THAT THEY REQUIRE, ALL THE HELP THAT THEY REQUIRE, ALL THE MORAL ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT THAT THEY REQUIRE. THEY ARE A VERY FINE FORCE AND WE'VE GOT EVERY REASON TO BE PROUD OF THEM. THANK YOU VERY MUCH INDEED.

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HK BUILDS FOR ITSELF AND CHINA

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WHILE HONG KONG IS BUILDING AND INVESTING TO MAINTAIN ITS ECONOMIC GROWTH, IT IS, AT THE SAME TIME, BUILDING FOR CHINA, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, MR GORDON SIU, SAID THIS (WEDNESDAY) MORNING.

SPEAKING AT THE CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF TRANSPORT CONFERENCE, MR SIU SAID:

"FAILURE TO MEET DEMAND FOR OUR PORT AND AIRPORT FACILITIES WOULD HARM NOT ONLY HONG KONG BUT ALSO PROSPECTS FOR CONTINUING GROWTH IN SOUTHERN CHINA AND THE NEIGHBOURING PEARL RIVER DELTA IN PARTICULAR."

MR SIU SAID THE NEW PORT AND AIRPORT FACILITIES BEING BUILT IN CHINA WOULD COMPLEMENT RATHER THAN PROVIDE A SUBSTITUTE FOR CONTINUING EXPANSION OF HONG KONG'S FACILITIES.

"TO PUT THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE CHINA IS PLANNING, BY THE END OF THIS CENTURY, TO CONSTRUCT 10 NEW CONTAINER TERMINALS WHICH WILL BE CAPABLE OF HANDLING SOME 5 MILLION TEUS: EQUIVALENT TO ABOUT HALF OF HONG KONG'S PROJECTED THROUGHPUT OF CONTAINERS IN THE CURRENT YEAR.

"FAR FROM SUPPLANTING HONG KONG THE DEVELOPMENT OF ADDITIONAL PORTS IN SOUTHERN CHINA WILL STIMULATE GROWTH THAT WILL BE GOOD NOT ONLY FOR CHINA BUT FOR HONG KONG.

"THE ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC WILL INCREASE THE CHANCE OF ADDITIONAL SHIPPING CALLS AT HONG KONG AND ENHANCE OUR MARITIME SUPPORT SERVICES," HE SAID.

MR SIU SAID THE SAME WAS TRUE FOR AIRPORT CONSTRUCTION WHERE THE PEARL RIVER DELTA AREA WOULD SOON BE SERVED BY NO LESS THAN FOUR AIRPORTS: HONG KONG, SHENZHEN, MACAU AND ZHUHAI.

IN GUANGZHOU, A REPLACEMENT AIRPORT FOR THE CURRENT BAIYUN AIRPORT IS EXPECTED TO OPEN IN 1998 WITH A PLANNED ANNUAL CAPACITY OF 48 MILLION PASSENGERS.

"I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT ALL THESE AIRPORTS WILL BE NEEDED AND WILL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN THE CONTINUING EXPANSION OF THE ECONOMY OF SOUTHERN CHINA.

"THEIR CONSTRUCTION WILL BE A STRONG STIMULUS TO GROWING BUSINESS AND COMMERCIAL TIES, AS WELL AS TO TOURISM," HE SAID.

MR SIU SAID IT REMAINED TO BE SEEN HOW THE NEW PORTS AND AIRPORTS COMPETED AND COMPLEMENTED ONE ANOTHER, AND HOW HONG KONG AND CHINA COULD WORK TOGETHER.

"WE HAVE STARTED PLANNING FOR THIS WITH OUR COUNTERPARTS IN CHINA.

"WE SEE NO INSURMOUNTABLE PROBLEMS; IT IS IN EVERYBODY'S INTEREST THAT ALL THE PORTS AND AIRPORTS IN THE PEARL RIVER DELTA WORK TOGETHER, AND COMPETE.

"AFTER ALL, THE ECONOMIC CAKE IN SOUTH CHINA LOOKS BIG ENOUGH FOR ALL TO SHARE, AND IS GROWING EVERY DAY," HE SAID.

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SCHOOLS COMPETE IN TELEMATCH ON AIDS

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STUDENTS FROM FIVE SECONDARY SCHOOLS WILL COMPETE IN THE FINAL EVENT OF THE INTER-SECONDARY SCHOOL TELEMATCH COMPETITION ON AIDS AT THE SOUTHERN STADIUM ON SATURDAY (MARCH 12).

THE COMPETITION IS AIMED AT ENHANCING STUDENTS' AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE BASIC FACTS ABOUT AIDS AS WELL AS TO DEVELOP CONCERN FOR HIV-INFECTED PEOPLE.

THE SCHOOLS ENTER THE TELEMATCH FINAL EVENT AFTER BEATING 47 OTHER SCHOOLS IN THE HEATS HELD LAST MONTH.

/THE FIVE

THE FIVE SCHOOLS ARE NEW TERRITORIES HEUNG YEE KUK YUEN LONG DISTRICT SECONDARY SCHOOL, SOUTH TUEN MUN GOVERNMENT SECONDARY SCHOOL, ST PAUL'S SECONDARY SCHOOL, ST PAUL'S CONVENT SCHOOL AND WONG SHIU CHI SECONDARY SCHOOL.

IN THE FINAL EVENT, PARTICIPATING SCHOOL TEAMS WILL COMPETE IN SEVEN TELEMATCH GAMES WHICH ARE DESIGNED TO AROUSE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING ABOUT HIV-INFECTED PEOPLE.

THE TELEMATCH WILL BE RECORDED BY RADIO AND TELEVISION HONG KONG AND TELEVISED IN TELEVISION BROADCASTS LATER.

THE COMPETITION, SPONSORED BY THE COUNCIL FOR AIDS TRUST FUND, WAS JOINTLY ORGANISED BY THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, RTHK AND THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION OF MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE EDUCATION.

THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE HONG KONG FEDERATION OF YOUTH GROUPS, MS ROSANNA WONG YICK-MING, AND CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND PUBLICITY ON AIDS, MS CARLYE TSUI WAI-LING, WILL BE THE ADJUDICATORS AND WILL PRESENT PRIZES TO THE WINNING TEAMS.

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ATTENTION NEWS EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE INTER-SECONDARY TELEMATCH COMPETITION ON AIDS AT THE SOUTHORN STADIUM, WAN CHAI, AT 2.45 PM ON SATURDAY (MARCH 12).

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CLOSURE OF UNAUTHORISED STRUCTURES SOUGHT

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THE BUILDING AUTHORITY IS SEEKING TO CLOSE THREE UNAUTHORISED STRUCTURES IN YAU MA TEI SO THAT THEY CAN BE DEMOLISHED WITHOUT CAUSING DANGER TO THE OCCUPIERS AND THE PUBLIC.

THE SINGLE-STOREY STRUCTURES ARE LOCATED ON THE ROOF OF THREE BUILDINGS AT 226, 228 AND 230-236 AT TEMPLE STREET IN YAU MA TEI FOR DWELLING PURPOSES.

NOTICE OF INTENTIONS TO APPLY FOR THREE CLOSURE ORDERS FROM THE HONG KONG DISTRICT COURT UNDER THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE ON APRIL 15 AND JULY 15 WERE 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

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OPENING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT	1,836
REVERSAL OF LAF	+1,164
BALANCE AFTER REVERSAL OF LAF	3,000
NET INJECTION/WITHDRAWAL TODAY	NIL
EFFECT OF LAF TODAY	-1,611
CLOSING BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT	1,389
LAF RATE 2.00 BID/4.00 OFFER	TWI 125.7 **+0.0* 9.3.94

HONG KONG GOVERNMENT EXCHANGE FUND

EF BILLS		EF NOTES/HONG KONG GOVERNMENT BONDS				
TERMS	YIELD	TERM	ISSUE	COUPON	PRICE	YIELD
1 WEEK	3.45	18 MONTHS	2508	4.625	99.80	4.83
1 MONTH	3.57	21 MONTHS	2511	4.15	98.67	5.03
3 MONTHS	3.71	24 MONTHS	2602	4.40	98.67	5.19
6 MONTHS	3.93	32 MONTHS	3610	4.20	96.93	5.54
12 MONTHS	4.39	35 MONTHS	3701	4.60	97.41	5.66

TOTAL TURNOVER OF BILLS AND BONDS - 11,836 MN

CLOSED 9 MARCH, 1994

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