



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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CONTENTS

PAGE NO.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING:

INCREASED TAXI CHARGES ANNOUNCED	1
'NEW DEBTORS LAW - A TRIUMPH FOR LEGAL SYSTEM'	4
BILL DRAWS SUPPORT ALONG WITH RESERVATIONS	8
MORE USE OF COST ACCOUNTANTS PROPOSED	10
MINOR CLAIMS PROCEDURE SIMPLE	11
NEW SAFE GAS WATER HEATERS INTRODUCED	13
PUBLIC SERVICE MORALE HIGH - ROWLANDS	14
POLICY ON GAZETTED CEMETERIES EXPLAINED	15
CORPORATION STILL FACING DIFFICULTIES FROM PAST	16
MORE MARINE REFUSE REMOVED	17
BILL STRESSED COMMITMENT TO ANTI-DRUG FIGHT	18
MORE CYCLE TRACKS BEING PROVIDED	19
NT TAXI REGISTRATION PERIOD EXTENDED	19
SAFETY CONDITION IMPOSED ON SHUTTERS	20
'CLADDING' REGULATIONS SUFFICIENT	20
SCRIPTS REQUIRED BEFORE STAGE PRODUCTION	21
LEGCO PASSES FIVE BILLS	21
GOVERNOR REJECTS PESSIMISM ON HONG KONG'S FUTURE	22
FIRST, SECOND CLASS HOSPITAL BED FEES REVISED	24
NEW TOWN SCHEME SEEN AS BEST ANYWHERE	25
SHA TIN HAS BRIGHT PROSPECTS FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT	26
JOINT VENTURE CONTRACT SIGNED	28
MEASURES ON TAXIS	28
FIRE HAZARDS HOTLINE	29
KWAI CHUNG FAIR SITES LEASED	29
ANTI-DRUGS DRIVE	30
LEAKAGE TEST IN CENTRAL	30

INCREASED TAXI CHARGES ANNOUNCED
* * * *

TAXI FARES ARE TO INCREASE BY 17 PER CENT AND THE ISSUE OF NEW LICENCES FOR URBAN TAXIS IS TO BE FROZEN, THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HEARD TODAY.

THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR ALAN SCOTT, MADE THE ANNOUNCEMENT AS PART OF A WIDE RANGING REVIEW OF THE ROLE OF TAXIS IN THE TRANSPORT PATTERN OF HONG KONG.

HE MOVED THE SECOND READING OF TWO BILLS PUBLISHED IN AN EXTRAORDINARY GAZETTE EARLIER TODAY - THE FIRST INCREASING FIRST REGISTRATION TAX FOR TAXIS AND THE SECOND INCREASING THEIR ANNUAL LICENSING FEES. THESE BILLS ARE THE MOTOR VEHICLES (FIRST REGISTRATION TAX) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1984 AND THE ROAD TRAFFIC (REGISTRATION AND LICENSING OF VEHICLES) REGULATIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1984.

ON THE FARE INCREASE, MR SCOTT SAID THAT THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL HAD CONCLUDED THAT AN INCREASE OF ABOUT 10 PER CENT IS JUSTIFIED FOR BOTH URBAN AND NEW TERRITORIES TAXIS, BASED ON INCREASES IN THEIR EXPENDITURE SINCE THE LAST RISE IN OCTOBER 1982. THE INCREASE IN OPERATING EXPENDITURE ARISING FROM THE NEW TAXATION HAD ALSO TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT AND THEREFORE FARES WERE TO INCREASE BY A TOTAL OF 17 PER CENT FROM FEBRUARY 1.

URBAN TAXI FARES WILL GO UP FROM THE PRESENT FLAGFALL OF \$4.50 FOR THE FIRST TWO KILOMETRES TO A FLAGFALL OF \$5.30. THE ADDITIONAL DISTANCE CHARGE WILL INCREASE FROM 60 CENTS TO 70 CENTS FOR EACH 266.6 METRES.

FOR NT TAXIS, THE FLAGFALL WILL INCREASE FROM \$3 TO \$3.50. THE ADDITIONAL DISTANCE CHARGE WILL INCREASE FROM 30 CENTS FOR EVERY 0.2 OF A KILOMETRE TO 70 CENTS FOR EVERY 0.4 OF A KILOMETRE.

WAITING TIME FOR BOTH URBAN AND NT TAXIS WILL BE SET AT 70 CENTS FOR EVERY TWO MINUTES. THE ADDITIONAL FARE FOR EACH ARTICLE OF BAGGAGE, ANIMAL OR BIRD, WHICH HAS BEEN UNCHANGED SINCE 1969, WILL BE RAISED FROM 50 CENTS TO \$1.

MR SCOTT SAID HE WISHED TO SET THE MOVES IN CONTEXT. THE NUMBER OF TAXIS HAD INCREASED SIGNIFICANTLY IN RECENT YEARS, HE SAID, AND IT WAS EXPECTED THAT DURING 1984 THE NUMBER OF REGISTERED URBAN TAXIS WOULD REACH 13 000 AND THAT OF REGISTERED NEW TERRITORIES TAXIS TO REACH 2 330.

AS RECOGNISED IN MAY 1982 WHEN PRIVATE VEHICLE RESTRAINTS WERE INTRODUCED, TAXIS WERE NEEDED IN A SUPPORTING ROLE WHILE MAJOR IMPROVEMENTS CONTINUED IN PUBLIC TRANSPORT, HE SAID. THESE INCLUDED THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY, THE MODERNISED KOWLOON CANTON RAILWAY AND A WIDE RANGE OF ROAD PROJECTS AND ASSOCIATED IMPROVEMENTS. ADDITIONALLY, BUS SERVICES HAD IMPROVED ENORMOUSLY AND NOW THE TWO PRINCIPAL COMPANIES CARRY 3.5 MILLION PASSENGERS A DAY, COMPARED WITH 2.5 MILLION IN 1976.

+THE NEED FOR THE TAXI AS AN ADJUNCT TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT HAS THEREFORE DIMINISHED SIGNIFICANTLY,+ SAID MR SCOTT.

A VERY CLOSE LOOK WAS TAKEN DURING 1983, THEREFORE, AT ALL ASPECTS OF TAXI POLICY AND OPERATIONS, IN GREATER SCOPE AND DETAIL THAN EVER BEFORE. THE REPORT WAS STUDIED BY THE TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THEN BY THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL. PARTICULAR CARE WAS TAKEN TO OBTAIN A WIDE RANGE OF OPINION AS WELL AS FACTS, AND ALL DISTRICT BOARDS WERE INVITED TO DISCUSS AN INFORMATION PAPER AND PUT FORWARD THEIR VIEWS. THE 14 TAXI ASSOCIATIONS WERE ALSO CONSULTED AND NOTE WAS TAKEN OF PUBLIC OPINION EXPRESSED IN THE MEDIA.

THE REVIEW SHOWED THAT TAXIS CARRIED 1 030 000 PEOPLE A DAY IN SEPTEMBER 1983 - COMPARED WITH 396 000 IN APRIL 1976. THE TWO MAJOR BUS COMPANIES, MTR, KCR AND TRAM FIGURES, FOR THE SAME DATES, TOTALLED 5 222 000 AND 2 941 000.

+THUS, TAXI PASSENGERS INCREASED BY 160 PER CENT OVER THE PERIOD, COMPARED WITH AN INCREASE OF 78 PER CENT IN PASSENGERS CARRIED ON PUBLIC LAND TRANSPORT,+ SAID MR SCOTT.

THE GENERAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY SHOWED THAT ONLY SEVEN PER CENT OF TAXI TRIPS WERE URGENT.

+THIS PUTS IN PROPER PERSPECTIVE THE ROLE OF TAXIS AS ESSENTIAL CARRIERS, WHICH IS A THOUGHT SOMETIMES EXPRESSED BY THOSE WHO COMMENT ON TRANSPORT AFFAIRS,+ HE SAID.

THE NUMBER OF TAXIS HAS MORE THAN TREBLED SINCE APRIL 1976 - COMPARED WITH AN 80 PER CENT GROWTH IN PRIVATE CARS AND THE TOTAL VEHICLE FLEET OVER THE SAME PERIOD. SINCE THE MAY 1982 INCREASES IN FIRST REGISTRATION TAX AND ANNUAL LICENCES FOR PRIVATE VEHICLES, TAXIS, AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL TRAFFIC IN ALL THE MAJOR CORRIDORS, HAVE INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY. ABOUT 40 PER CENT OF THE DISTANCE COVERED BY THE TAXI FLEET WAS DUE TO VACANT CABS CRUISING FOR FARES. WAITING TIMES WERE NOW AT AN ALL TIME LOW OF 0.3 OF A MINUTE ON HONG KONG ISLAND AND 1.2 MINUTES IN KOWLOON.

ON FARES, MR SCOTT SAID THAT THESE HAD ACTUALLY FALLEN IN REAL TERMS OVER THE PERIOD 1974-82, DESPITE MONETARY INCREASES. OF 15 CITIES SURVEYED, TAXI FARES IN HONG KONG ARE THE LOWEST.

THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL, AFTER CONSIDERING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REVIEW, AND THE ADVICE OF THE TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE DECIDED:

1. TAXIS ARE A FORM OF PERSONALISED TRANSPORT AND IN TERMS OF POLICY SHOULD BE TREATED LIKE PRIVATE CARS, NOT LIKE PUBLIC TRANSPORT, IN THE TRANSPORT HIERACHY.
2. THE NUMBER OF TAXIS SHOULD BE LIMITED TO WHAT THE ROAD NETWORK CAN BEAR.
3. THERE SHOULD BE A FREEZE ON THE ISSUE OF NEW URBAN TAXI LICENCES CONTINUING TO BE ISSUED BY TENDER AT THE CURRENT RATE OF 50 PER MONTH UP TO A LIMIT OF 3 000.
4. THERE IS NO LONGER JUSTIFICATION FOR PREFERENTIAL TAXATION FOR TAXIS.

/MR SCOTT

MR SCOTT THEN MOVED THE TWO BILLS TO FOLLOW UP THE PROVISIONS OF THE TWO REVENUE PROTECTION ORDERS WHICH CAME INTO EFFECT TODAY. THEY PROVIDE THAT:

FIRST REGISTRATION TAX

A TAXI WILL PAY THE SAME FIRST REGISTRATION TAX AS A PRIVATE CAR, INSTEAD OF THE PRESENT FLAT 15 PER CENT OF COST INSURANCE AND FREIGHT VALUE. THESE ARE:-

- | | |
|---|-----|
| (A) WHERE THE CIF VALUE OF THE TAXI DOES NOT EXCEED \$20 000 | 70% |
| (B) WHERE THE CIF VALUE OF THE TAXI EXCEEDS \$20 000 BUT DOES NOT EXCEED \$30 000 | 80% |
| (C) WHERE THE CIF VALUE OF THE TAXI EXCEEDS \$30 000 | 90% |

VIRTUALLY ALL TAXIS FALL IN CATEGORY (C), BUT IT IS NECESSARY TO PROVIDE FOR ALL CATEGORIES.

ANNUAL LICENCE FEES

RECOGNISING THAT EACH TAXI COVERS MANY TIMES THE DISTANCE THAT THE AVERAGE PRIVATE CAR DOES, THE ANNUAL LICENCE FEE FOR TAXIS WILL BE SET HIGHER THAN FOR PRIVATE CARS, NAMELY DOUBLE. THIS REPLACES THE PRESENT FLAT FEE OF \$1 600 PER ANNUM. THE NEW RATES ARE:-

- | | |
|--|----------|
| (A) FOR A TAXI WHERE THE CYLINDER CAPACITY OF THE ENGINE DOES NOT EXCEED 1 500 CUBIC CENTIMETRES | \$4 600 |
| (B) WHERE THE ENGINE EXCEEDS 1 500 C.C. BUT DOES NOT EXCEED 2 500 C.C. | \$6 800 |
| (C) BETWEEN 2 500 AND 3 500 C.C. | \$9 000 |
| (D) BETWEEN 3 500 AND 4 500 C.C. | \$11 200 |
| (E) OVER 4 500 C.C. | \$13 400 |

PRACTICALLY ALL TAXIS FALL IN CATEGORY (B), BUT IT IS NECESSARY TO PROVIDE FOR ALL CATEGORIES.

DIESEL ENGINE SURCHARGE

PRIVATE CARS WITH DIESEL ENGINES PAY AN ANNUAL SURCHARGE OF \$1 000. TAXIS WITH DIESEL ENGINES WILL IN FUTURE PAY AN ANNUAL SURCHARGE OF \$2 000.

THESE MEASURES WILL INCREASE THE COST OF OPERATING A TAXI BY ABOUT SEVEN PER CENT.

DEBATE ON THE BILLS WAS ADJOURNED TILL JANUARY 25.

'NEW DEBTORS LAW - A TRIUMPH FOR LEGAL SYSTEM'
* * * * *

THE DEBTORS (ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT) BILL 1983, IF PASSED INTO LAW, WOULD BE A TRIUMPH FOR THE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL SYSTEM WHICH WE ALL CHERISH AND WOULD LIKE TO SEE PRESERVED, THE HON PETER C. WONG SAID.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE BILL IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), MR WONG SAID, +WHILE PRESERVING THE RIGHTS OF THE CREDITOR, THE BILL REMOVES A GLARING INEQUITY AND ABOLISHES AN ANACHRONISM WHICH BELONGS TO ANOTHER AGE.+

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS SUPPORTED THE GENERAL PRINCIPLE THAT IN CIVIL CASES A COURT ORDER WAS ESSENTIAL IF A JUDGMENT CREDITOR SOUGHT TO COMMIT THE DEBTOR TO PRISON.

MR WONG IS THE CONVENER OF THE AD HOC GROUP OF UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS ON THE BILL AND THE LEGISLATION SCRUTINY GROUP WHICH HAD MET SEVERAL TIMES TO CONSIDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE BILL AS WELL AS THE REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED.

IN ADDITION, LENGTHY DISCUSSIONS WERE HELD WITH THE ADMINISTRATION.

+AS A RESULT OF THESE MEETINGS AND DISCUSSIONS, SEVERAL AMENDMENTS HAVE BEEN AGREED AND WILL BE MOVED AT THE COMMITTEE STAGE,+ MR WONG SAID.

MR WONG THEN GAVE AN ACCOUNT OF THE MAIN CHANGES PROPOSED BY THE BILL IN ITS AMENDED VERSION:

- * NO DEBTOR SHALL BE ARRESTED OR IMPRISONED WITHOUT AN ORDER OF THE COURT.
- * PROVISION FOR EXAMINATION OF THE DEBTOR AND FOR HIS ARREST IN CERTAIN CASES.
- * THE COURT SHALL HAVE POWER TO ORDER THE IMPRISONMENT OF THE DEBTOR IN APPROPRIATE CASES.
- * PROVISION FOR ORDERING THE PAYMENT OF THE DEBT BY INSTALMENTS. THERE IS NO SUCH PROVISION UNDER THE EXISTING LEGISLATION.
- * THE PERIOD OF IMPRISONMENT SHALL NOT EXCEED THREE MONTHS. THE EXISTING LAW PROVIDES FOR A MAXIMUM PERIOD OF ONE YEAR.
- * THE COURT MAY ORDER THE IMPRISONMENT OF A DEBTOR ON EACH OCCASION OF A FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH AN ORDER. THE EXISTING LAW ALLOWS IMPRISONMENT ON ONE OCCASION ONLY.
- * THE COURT SHALL HAVE POWER TO MAKE AN ORDER PROHIBITING A DEBTOR FROM LEAVING HONG KONG. THIS NEW PROVISION IS MOST USEFUL AS IT WILL ALLOW A CREDITOR TO PURSUE HIS CLAIM IN COURT WITHOUT THE NECESSITY OF SENDING THE DEBTOR TO PRISON.

* THE AMENDED VERSION GIVES THE COURT POWER TO MAKE A PROHIBITION ORDER AGAINST AN ALLEGED DEBTOR, INCLUDING A VISITOR, FROM LEAVING HONG KONG BUT THERE WILL BE NO POWER TO ORDER IMPRISONMENT. THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL WAS THAT SUCH PROCEDURE SHOULD NOT BE AVAILABLE AGAINST FOREIGNERS WHO COME TO VISIT HONG KONG.

MR WONG BELIEVED THAT THE BILL IN ITS AMENDED FORM SHOULD MEET MOST OF THE OBJECTIONS RAISED.

+IN FACT, THE INTRODUCTION OF PROHIBITION ORDERS IS AN IMPROVEMENT UPON THE EXISTING LEGISLATION.

+FURTHERMORE, THE PROVISION OF DETAILED RULES REGARDING THE EXAMINATION OF DEBTORS AND OTHER RELATED MATTERS WILL FACILITATE COURT PROCEEDINGS,+ HE SAID.

HE THEN ELABORATED ON THE AMENDMENTS THAT HE WOULD BE MOVING AT THE COMMITTEE STAGE.

ON THE EXAMINATION OF DEBTORS, THE NEW RULE 1A PROVIDES THAT WHERE THE EXAMINATION IS ADJOURNED, THE COURT MAY ORDER THAT THE DEBTOR BE IMPRISONED UNTIL THE RESUMPTION OF THE EXAMINATION.

+IT WAS CONSIDERED THAT IMPRISONMENT SHOULD ONLY BE ORDERED IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AS THE DEBTOR MAY AT THE END OF THE EXAMINATION BE RELEASED BY THE COURT.

+UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, A PROHIBITION ORDER SHOULD BE AN ADEQUATE SAFEGUARD TO ENSURE THE DEBTOR'S APPEARANCE AT THE RESUMED HEARING OF THE EXAMINATION. AMENDMENTS TO THAT EFFECT WILL ACCORDINGLY BE MADE,+ MR WONG SAID.

HE WOULD ALSO PROPOSE AMENDMENTS TO MAKE THE FORMS MORE READILY UNDERSTANDABLE AND EASIER TO USE.

HE STRESSED THAT HE WAS OF THE VIEW THAT THE CRUX OF THE PROBLEM WAS TO DEVISE AN EFFECTIVE MACHINERY TO RECOVER MONEY FROM A DEBTOR WHO HAD EITHER ASSETS OR REGULAR EARNINGS AND THAT IMPRISONMENT WAS INADEQUATE TO MEET THIS NEED AND ITS MANY INJUSTICES AND ABUSES SHOULD BE TERMINATED.

+THE MEASURES NOW PROPOSED ARE A COMPROMISE WHICH GO FAR TO MEET THE LEGITIMATE NEEDS OF THE FINANCIAL AND TRADING COMMUNITY IN THE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF HONG KONG WHILE RECOGNISING THE LIBERTY OF THE PERSON IS AN IMPORTANT FREEDOM WHICH ONLY THE COURTS SHOULD TAKE AWAY,+ HE SAID.

THE AIM OF THE BILL IS TO STRIKE A RIGHT BALANCE AS BETWEEN THE CLAIMANT AND THE DEFENDANT, THE HON JOHN SWAINE SAID.

HE STRESSED THAT THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLE OF THE BILL HAD NOT BEEN CHANGED THOUGH A LARGE NUMBER OF AMENDMENTS WERE TO BE MADE AT THE COMMITTEE STAGE WITH SOME OF THEM INVOLVING POINTS OF SUBSTANCE.

/+THAT PRINCIPLE

+THAT PRINCIPLE IS OF COURSE THAT NO PERSON SHOULD BE IMPRISONED WITHOUT AN ORDER OF THE COURT, AND JUDGMENT DEBTORS ARE NO EXCEPTION.

+IN ADDITION, THE PRESENT BILL ALSO SEEKS TO REFORM THE LAW IN THE RELATED AND IMPORTANT AREA OF ARREST OF A DEFENDANT IN CIVIL PROCEEDINGS BEFORE ANY JUDGMENT IS OBTAINED AGAINST HIM,+ HE SAID.

+THIS AREA OF LAW REFORM HAS PERHAPS RECEIVED LESS PUBLICITY THAN THAT OF THE JUDGMENT DEBTOR, BUT IS AT LEAST AS DESERVING A CANDIDATE, BECAUSE THE POTENTIAL FOR ABUSE IS GREATER IN A CASE WHERE JUDGMENT HAS NOT EVEN BEEN OBTAINED,+ HE ADDED.

MR SWAINE, WHO WOULD BE MOVING THE BULK OF THE AMENDMENTS, THEN PRESENTED THE OUTLINES OF THE BILL AS REFORMULATED.

ON THE IMPRISONMENT OF DEBTORS, HE EXPLAINED THAT UNDER THE PROPOSED NEW SECTION 21A OF THE SUPREME COURT ORDINANCE, THE COURT'S JURISDICTION TO MAKE AN ORDER FOR ARREST OR IMPRISONMENT OF A DEFENDANT IN A CIVIL CASE IS LIMITED TO ENFORCING, SECURING OR PURSUING A JUDGMENT FOR THE PAYMENT OF A SPECIFIED SUM OF MONEY.

SUCH AN ORDER FOR IMPRISONMENT SHALL NOT EXCEED THREE MONTHS, BUT UNDER THE PROPOSED ORDER 49B RULE 1B(3)(B) THE COURT MAY ORDER THE IMPRISONMENT OF THE JUDGMENT DEBTOR ON EACH OCCASION OF A FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH AN ORDER TO SATISFY THE JUDGMENT BY INSTALMENTS OR IN SUCH OTHER MANNER AS THE COURT THINKS FIT, OR MORE THAN ONCE IN RESPECT OF A CONTINUING FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH SUCH AN ORDER, HE ADDED.

ON THE NEW CONCEPT OF A PROHIBITION ORDER INTRODUCED UNDER THE PROPOSED NEW SECTION 21B, MR SWAINE SAID THAT THIS IS AN ORDER PROHIBITING A PERSON FROM LEAVING HONG KONG IN CERTAIN SPECIFIED CIRCUMSTANCES.

+THESE ARE BROADLY IN TWO CATEGORIES, NAMELY WHERE THERE IS ALREADY A JUDGMENT AGAINST THAT PERSON AND WHERE THERE IS NO JUDGMENT AS YET BUT ONLY A CLAIM,+ HE SAID.

+IT IS THE LATTER CATEGORY WHICH I HAD SAID EARLIER WAS POTENTIALLY THE MOST OPEN TO ABUSE, AND THE CONCERN OF THE UNOFFICIALS WAS (AS INDEED WITH ALL OTHER PROVISIONS OF THE BILL) TO STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN THE DESIRE TO PROTECT THE CLAIMANT'S LEGITIMATE NEEDS AND TO PREVENT INJUSTICE BEING DONE TO THE DEFENDANT,+ HE ADDED.

WHERE A JUDGMENT HAS ALREADY BEEN OBTAINED, THE PROHIBITION ORDER IS TO BE AVAILABLE NOT ONLY WHERE THE JUDGMENT IS FOR THE PAYMENT OF A SPECIFIED SUM OF MONEY, BUT ALSO WHERE THE JUDGMENT IS FOR THE PAYMENT OF AN AMOUNT TO BE ASSESSED OR FOR THE DELIVERY OF ANY PROPERTY OR PERFORMANCE OF ANY OTHER ACT.

+THIS CASTS THE NET VERY WIDE INDEED AND IS INTENDED TO PREVENT THE ABSCONDING OF JUST ABOUT EVERY CLASS OF JUDGMENT DEBTOR,+ MR SWAINE OBSERVED.

+THE FINAL SANCTION OF IMPRISONMENT UNDER THE BILL IS HOWEVER CONFINED TO JUDGMENT DEBTORS WHO WILFULLY REFUSE TO PAY A JUDGMENT FOR MONEY OR WHO KNOWINGLY CONTRAVENE A PROHIBITION ORDER.+

WHERE THERE IS A CLAIM BUT AS YET NO JUDGMENT, THE ABSCONDING DEFENDANT MAY BE STOPPED WHERE THERE IS A CLAIM AGAINST HIM FOR MONEY, OR DAMAGES, OR THE DELIVERY OF ANY PROPERTY OR THE PERFORMANCE OF ANY OTHER ACT.

+THIS REMEDY WILL BE AVAILABLE AGAINST ALL WHO ARE ORDINARILY RESIDENT IN HONG KONG, OR CARRY ON BUSINESS HERE, OR WHO INCURRED THE LIABILITIES IN HONG KONG WHILE PRESENT IN HONG KONG,+ MR SWAINE SAID.

+THE AREA OF IMMUNITY HAS BEEN CUT DOWN SHARPLY FROM THAT ENVISAGED WHEN THE BILL WAS FIRST BEFORE COUNCIL, AND THE NET WILL CATCH ALL SAVE THE GENUINE VISITOR WHO DOES NOT HIMSELF ENGAGE A LIABILITY WHILE IN HONG KONG,+ HE ADDED.

THE PROHIBITION ORDER IS INITIALLY GOOD FOR ONE MONTH BUT MAY BE RENEWED FOR A TOTAL OF NOT MORE THAN THREE MONTHS.

UNDER THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS, THE PERSON SO PROHIBITED MAY APPLY TO THE COURT FOR THE ORDER TO BE DISCHARGED.

IN THE CASE OF A DEFENDANT AGAINST WHOM THERE IS A CLAIM BUT AS YET NO JUDGMENT, HE MAY HAVE THE PROHIBITION ORDER DISCHARGED ON SHOWING TO THE COURT THAT HE HAS A SUBSTANTIAL DEFENCE TO THE CLAIM.

IF THE CLAIMANT APPLIES FOR A PROHIBITION ORDER ON INSUFFICIENT GROUNDS OR KEEPS IT GOING AFTER IT WAS NO LONGER REQUIRED, HE IS LIABLE TO PAY COMPENSATION TO THE AGGRIEVED DEFENDANT.

+THIS AGAIN EXEMPLIFIES THE BILL'S AIM TO STRIKE THE RIGHT BALANCE AS BETWEEN THE CLAIMANT AND DEFENDANT,+ MR SWAINE SAID.

SIMILAR PROVISIONS ARE MADE FOR CASES WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF THE DISTRICT COURT.

MR SWAINE THANKED THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S CHAMBERS FOR HAVING THE BILL, TOGETHER WITH ALL PROPOSED AMENDMENTS THEN CURRENT, PUBLISHED IN A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT OF THE GAZETTE ON DECEMBER 23, 1983 FOR INFORMATION.

HE SAID THAT THIS HAD GREATLY ASSISTED THE UNOFFICIALS WORKING GROUP AS WELL AS INTERESTED PARTIES.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON MICHAEL THOMAS SAID THAT THE BILL, AS AMENDED, WOULD PROVIDE A +REASONABLE AND JUST SOLUTION+ TO THE PROBLEM OF RECONCILING THE PROTECTION OF CREDITORS WITH THE AVOIDANCE OF UNJUSTIFIED IMPRISONMENT.

/+I BELIEVE

+I BELIEVE THAT THE BILL IS A BALANCED MEASURE WHICH IS CONSISTENT BOTH WITH THE REALITIES OF COMMERCIAL LIFE IN MODERN HONG KONG AND WITH ITS CONCERN FOR INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM,+ MR THOMAS SAID.

HE THANKED UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS AND MANY OUTSIDE THE COUNCIL FOR THEIR TIME, EFFORT AND WISDOM IN THEIR CONSIDERATION OF THE BILL.

+THIS IS A LONG OVERDUE REFORM OF THE LAW OF WHICH MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL MAY FEEL PROUD,+ HE SAID.

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BILL DRAWS SUPPORT ALONG WITH RESERVATIONS

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THE HON CHARLES YEUNG, THE HON WONG PO-YAN AND THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG SPOKE IN SUPPORT OF THE DEBTORS (ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT) BILL 1983 WHILE THE HON K.C. CHAN VOICED HIS RESERVATIONS.

THEY WERE SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE BILL IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

MR YEUNG POINTED OUT THAT UNDER THE UNIQUE SOCIAL, HUMAN AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONDITIONS OF HONG KONG, MOST PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY THOSE IN BUSINESS, THOUGHT THAT THE PRESENT LAW ON THE IMPRISONMENT OF DEBTORS HAD NOT PRODUCED ANYTHING TOO INEQUITABLE, AND THEREFORE CONSIDERED THAT IT SHOULD BE PRESERVED.

GOING OVER THE STATISTICS ON THE IMPRISONMENT OF DEBTORS, HE OBSERVED THAT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IMPRISONED WAS NOT HIGH AND ON THE AVERAGE, A DEBTOR STAYED IN PRISON FOR ONLY ABOUT 20 DAYS.

WHEN A DEBTOR REALISED THAT THE COURT'S BAILIFF WAS GOING TO TAKE HIM TO PRISON, HE WOULD USUALLY REPAY THE DEBT IMMEDIATELY OR CAME TO TERMS WITH THE CREDITOR TO AVOID IMPRISONMENT, MR YEUNG SAID.

+THEREFORE IN A FREE AND TRADE-ORIENTED SOCIETY LIKE HONG KONG, IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT MOST PEOPLE WOULD LIKE TO MAINTAIN THIS LAW OF IMPRISONMENT OF DEBTORS,+ MR YEUNG ADDED.

NOTED THAT MOST JUDGES WERE SAID TO BE IN FAVOUR OF THE PRESENT LEGAL SYSTEM OF IMPRISONING DEBTORS AND THE SPECIAL WORKING GROUP APPOINTED BY THE ATTORNEY GENERAL IN 1981 WAS ALSO IN GENERAL AGREEMENT TO MAINTAIN THE PRESENT SYSTEM AFTER LONG AND CAREFUL STUDIES.

+HOWEVER, ONE POINT OPEN TO CRITICISM IN THE PRESENT LAW OF IMPRISONING DEBTORS IS THAT A DEBTOR WHO IS GENUINELY UNABLE TO PAY THE DEBT, AND BEING IGNORANT OF THE LEGAL PROCEDURE, IS DEPRIVED OF HIS LIBERTY AS HE IS PUT IN PRISON FOR A SHORT TIME. HE THUS HAS TO ENDURE THE SHAME OF BEING IMPRISONED, WHICH IS UNFAIR,+ HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT THE BILL HAD THIS POINT AS ITS OBJECTIVE.

+I THINK IF ALL THE AMENDMENTS ARE ACCEPTED, THE NEW ORDINANCE WOULD BE A PIECE OF FAIR LEGISLATION WHICH WILL RECEIVE THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY,+ HE SAID.

MR WONG BELIEVED THAT THE BILL, IN ITS AMENDED FORM AFTER GOING THROUGH THE COMMITTEE STAGE, WOULD PROVIDE ESSENTIAL AND ADEQUATE PROTECTION FOR BOTH CREDITORS AND DEBTORS WITH DUE CONSIDERATION TO THEIR RESPECTIVE INTERESTS.

+THE PROPOSED BILL MAKES FUNDAMENTAL MODIFICATIONS TO THE PRESENT PROCEDURE WHEREBY DEBTORS ARE PROTECTED AGAINST ARREST WITHOUT COURT HEARING AND EXAMINATION AND CREDITORS ARE AFFORDED IMPROVED MEANS OF COMPELLING DEBTORS TO FULFIL THEIR CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS,+ HE SAID.

HOWEVER, HE URGED THE COURT TO EXERCISE CAUTION IN CASES WHERE AN ELEMENT OF FRAUD WAS SUSPECTED SO THAT DISHONEST DEBTORS COULD BE DETECTED AND PENALISED.

HE SAID THAT IN THE COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL SECTORS, CREDITORS DID ACCEPT INABILITY TO PAY AS PART OF THE RISK AN ENTREPRENEUR OR BUSINESS HAD TO TAKE.

+HOWEVER, SHOULD THESE CREDITORS SUSPECT THAT THE DEBTOR IS UNABLE TO PAY BECAUSE HE HAS DISPOSED OF HIS ASSETS WITH THE INTENTION TO DEFRAUD (A SITUATION WHICH IS NOT ALL THAT INFREQUENT IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES OF HONG KONG), THERE BEING NO IMMEDIATE SANCTION TO COMPEL THE DISHONEST DEBTOR TO REPAY AND NOT CERTAIN OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NEW BILL, THEY WOULD BE TAKING THE ATTITUDE OF PRUDENCE BY BEING LESS WILLING TO EXTEND CREDIT,+ HE WARNED.

+SHOULD THESE TRADERS ADOPT AN OVER-CAUTIOUS AND OVER-CONSERVATIVE POLICY IN CREDIT EXTENSION, THE GROWTH OF OUR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, AND CONSEQUENTIALLY, OUR OVERALL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WOULD BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED,+ HE SAID.

MR CHEONG SAID THAT HE DID NOT SUBSCRIBE TO THE VIEW THAT NOTHING NEEDED TO BE DONE TO UPSET A PIECE OF LEGISLATION THAT HAD BEEN DESIGNED WITH LOCAL CONDITIONS IN MIND, TESTED AND PROVEN ACCEPTABLE.

HE ADDED THAT IN ANY CASE, THE RIGHTS OF CREDITORS TO SUE AND TO PURSUE A DEBT WOULD NOT BE DIMINISHED WITH THE ENACTMENT OF THE BILL.

+FURTHERMORE, IT SHOULD BE POINTED OUT THAT WITH THE DETAILED AMENDMENTS TO BE INTRODUCED LATER THIS AFTERNOON, IN SOME RESPECTS THEIR RIGHTS HAVE EVEN BEEN ENHANCED AND STRENGTHENED,+ HE SAID.

+WE MUST ACCEPT THAT THE INTRODUCTION OF THIS BILL IN FACT HAS CORRECTED AN ANOMALY OF OUR OTHERWISE NEAR TO PERFECT LEGAL AND JUDICIAL SYSTEM,+ HE SAID.

MR CHAN ACCEPTED THAT +NO ONE SHALL BE IMPRISONED MERELY ON THE GROUND OF INABILITY TO FULFIL A CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATION.+

+BUT FIRST WE MUST CONSIDER IN PRINCIPLE WHETHER HONG KONG SHOULD ALWAYS FAITHFULLY AND RELIGIOUSLY FOLLOW ALL INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS WITHOUT MODIFICATIONS,+ HE SAID.

HE POINTED OUT THAT CREDIT WAS THE LIFEBLOOD OF MANY BUSINESSES IN HONG KONG BUT CREDIT CONTROL FACILITIES WERE NOT PERFECT.

+THIS CAN BE PROVEN BY THE 14 000 HIGH COURT WRITS ISSUED IN A YEAR. THE AVERAGE OF 44 DEBTORS IMPRISONED PER MONTH IS ONLY THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG,+ HE SAID.

+IT IS THE USE OF THE EXISTING SYSTEM AND THE FEAR OF IMPRISONMENT WHICH KEEPS THE BULK OF CASES FROM APPEARING BEFORE A JUDGE,+ HE ADDED.

HE SAID THAT THE PRESENT BILL WOULD COMPLICATE THE EXISTING PROCEDURE FOR THE JUDGMENT CREDITOR TO RECOVER HIS LAWFUL DEBT FROM UNSCRUPULOUS DEBTORS.

+IF MOST OF THE 14 000 CASES HAVE TO BE HEARD BEFORE A JUDGE, IT WILL MEAN EITHER LONG DELAYS OR THE APPOINTMENT OF MORE JUDGES,+ HE SAID.

+THE INCREASED COST AND DELAY CAUSED BY THE CHANGE IN PROCEDURE MAY ENCOURAGE THOSE WHO ARE NOT SO LAW-ABIDING AND THOSE FOR WHOM THE NEW LEGAL PROCESS IS TOO EXPENSIVE TO TAKE THE SHORT CUT OF USING HIRED MUSCLE TO UNDERTAKE THE COLLECTION OF DEBTS. THE COMMUNITY WILL FEEL THE EFFECT OF INCREASED VIOLENCE,+ HE SAID.

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MORE USE OF COST ACCOUNTANTS PROPOSED
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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD MAKE MORE USE OF COST ACCOUNTANTS IN ITS MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE, THE HON S.L. CHEN SAID WHEN HE TABLED THE SIXTH REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

ON BEHALF OF THE COMMITTEE, MR CHEN MADE THE SUGGESTION THAT THE MANAGEMENT TEAM OF ALMOST ANY DEPARTMENT WHICH DEALS WITH LARGE SUMS IN TERMS OF EITHER REVENUE OR EXPENDITURE SHOULD INCLUDE A COST ACCOUNTANT SECONDED FROM THE TREASURY.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ACCOUNTANT WOULD BE TO ADVISE THE DIRECTOR OF THAT DEPARTMENT ON APPROPRIATE YARDSTICKS FOR THE MEASUREMENT OF COST-BENEFIT, AND NECESSARY MEASURES TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY, HE EXPLAINED.

+I SHOULD STRESS, HOWEVER, THAT THE THINKING HERE IS NOT TO HAVE ONE MAN IN EACH DEPARTMENT WHO IS THE ONLY ONE CONCERNED WITH THESE MATTERS- BUT ONE MAN WHO CAN PROMOTE AWARENESS OF THESE CONSIDERATIONS AMONG HIS COLLEAGUES,+ HE ADDED.

EARLIER IN HIS SPEECH, MR CHEN QUOTED THE FINAL PARAGRAPH FROM THE COMMITTEE'S REPORT WHICH READS: +THE COMMITTEE IS DISAPPOINTED AND DISTRESSED THAT THE DIRECTOR OF AUDIT SHOULD HAVE FOUND IT NECESSARY IN SO MANY AREAS OF HIS REPORT TO DRAW ATTENTION TO OVERSIGHTS, OMISSIONS AND FAILURES BY CIVIL SERVANTS WHICH POINT TO WHAT WE WOULD TERM INEFFICIENCIES IN THE SYSTEM OF ADMINISTRATION.

+SENIOR MANAGEMENT MUST ACCEPT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR A CONTINUOUS CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF THE PROCEDURES IN FORCE IN DEPARTMENTS SO AS TO ENSURE THAT THESE PROCEDURES ARE BOTH ADEQUATE IN THEIR CONCEPTION AND EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED.

+THE COMMITTEE WAS FRANKLY DISCOURAGED ON OCCASIONS WHEN INTERVIEWING SOME OF THE WITNESSES WHO APPEARED BEFORE IT BY THE SENSE GIVEN THAT FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS WERE OFTEN A POOR SECOND TO OTHER CONCERNS IN THE MINDS OF CONTROLLING OFFICERS.

+THERE IS ALL TOO LITTLE EVIDENCE THAT VALUE FOR MONEY CARRIES THE WEIGHT WHICH IT SHOULD WITH THOSE WHO HAVE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTION OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS,+ HE SAID.

+ALTHOUGH THE COMMITTEE NEVER DOUBTED THE DILIGENCE AND DEDICATION OF CONTROLLING OFFICERS, THERE WAS MORE THAN ONE OCCASION WHEN IT FELT THAT THESE OFFICERS IN GRAPPLING WITH THE VERY REAL PROBLEMS WHICH THEY FACE FELT CONSTRAINED TO PRESS ON REGARDLESS EITHER IN TERMS OF FINISHING A PROJECT OR RETAINING AN OLD AND INEFFICIENT SYSTEM BECAUSE THEIR DEPARTMENTS DID NOT HAVE THE CAPACITY TO INITIATE A THOROUGH REVIEW OF WHAT THEY WERE DOING,+ HE ADDED.

HE POINTED OUT THAT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, THE ACCOUNTING OFFICER FOR EACH HEAD OF EXPENDITURE RECEIVES ON APPOINTMENT A LETTER WHICH LAYS DOWN HIS PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND HE BELIEVED THAT THE ISSUE OF A SIMILAR LETTER WOULD BE A GOOD PRACTICE TO FOLLOW IN HONG KONG.

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MINOR CLAIMS PROCEDURE SIMPLE * * *

UNDER A RECENTLY-INTRODUCED SPECIALLY SIMPLE PROCEDURE, THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN ABLE TO ISSUE CERTIFICATES OF COMPENSATION ASSESSMENT IN ABOUT EIGHT DAYS TO EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE BEEN GRANTED SICK LEAVE OF LESS THAN 14 DAYS FOR MINOR WORK INJURIES.

THE EMPLOYER IS THEN BOUND TO PAY ANY BALANCE OF COMPENSATION WITHIN 21 DAYS.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR, THE HON RON BRIDGE, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHEUNG YAN-LUNG, WHO ASKED HOW LONG IT USUALLY TOOK FOR A WORKER INJURED AT WORK TO RECEIVE COMPENSATION AND WHAT ASSISTANCE WAS PROVIDED BY GOVERNMENT IN THE INTERIM.

/MR BRIDGE

MR BRIDGE POINTED OUT THAT THE TIME TAKEN TO PAY COMPENSATION TO A WORKER INJURED IN THE COURSE OF HIS DUTIES DEPENDED ON THE NATURE OF HIS INJURIES.

WHATEVER THE NATURE OF HIS INJURY, HIS EMPLOYER WAS BOUND TO PAY HIM A SUM EQUIVALENT TO TWO THIRDS OF HIS MONTHLY SALARY FROM THE TIME HE WAS INJURED UNTIL HE RETURNED TO WORK OR, IN THE CASE OF PERMANENT INJURY, UNTIL HIS FINAL COMPENSATION HAD BEEN ASSESSED. THESE PAYMENTS MUST BE MADE WITHIN SEVEN DAYS OF HIS NORMAL PAY DAY.

THE SIMPLE PROCEDURE, HE CONTINUED, COVERED ABOUT 70 PER CENT OF ALL COMPENSATION CASES.

AS REGARDS THE 30 PER CENT INVOLVING MORE SERIOUS INJURIES OR PERMANENT INCAPACITY, THE POSITION WAS INEVITABLY MORE COMPLICATED.

IT WAS SOMETIMES IMPOSSIBLE FOR DOCTORS TO ASSESS THE DEGREE OF PERMANENT INCAPACITY UNTIL THE PATIENT HAD RECOVERED FROM ITS TEMPORARY EFFECTS. DEPENDING ON THE NATURE OF THE INJURY, THE PERIOD OF CONVALESCENCE REQUIRED, AND THE EMPLOYEE'S OWN WILLINGNESS TO FOLLOW STRICTLY MEDICAL ADVICE, IT MIGHT TAKE SOME TIME BEFORE THE DEGREE OF PERMANENT INCAPACITY COULD BE FULLY AND FAIRLY ASSESSED.

+THIS PERIOD CAN VARY GREATLY- ON AVERAGE IT IS ABOUT TWO MONTHS, BUT WITH MORE SERIOUS INJURIES IT CAN TAKE FOUR OR FIVE MONTHS, AND IN A FEW CASES MUCH LONGER,+ HE ADDED.

ONCE THE EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION BOARD HAD BEEN ABLE TO ASSESS THE DEGREE OF PERMANENT INCAPACITY AND THE EMPLOYEE'S LOSS OF EARNING CAPACITY, MR BRIDGE CONTINUED, THE EMPLOYER WAS REQUIRED TO MAKE A COMPENSATION AGREEMENT WITH THE EMPLOYEE WITHIN 21 DAYS AND HE MUST THEN PUT THE AGREEMENT TO THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT WITHIN THREE DAYS.

THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT NORMALLY APPROVED THE AGREEMENT WITHIN NINE DAYS AND, ONCE IT HAD DONE SO, THE EMPLOYER MUST PAY THE BALANCE OF COMPENSATION WITHIN 21 DAYS.

WHEN THE EMPLOYER REFUSED TO ACCEPT LIABILITY OR DISPUTED THE AMOUNT OF COMPENSATION, THE DEPARTMENT TRIED TO CONCILIATE THE TWO SIDES AND ENCOURAGED THEM TO REACH A SETTLEMENT. IF THIS FAILED, THE DEPARTMENT PUT THE EMPLOYEE IN TOUCH WITH THE LEGAL AID DEPARTMENT, WHICH, GAVE HELP AND ADVICE AND, IF APPROPRIATE, HELPED THE EMPLOYEE PURSUE HIS CLAIM IN COURT.

IF, DESPITE PERIODIC PAYMENTS, AN INJURED EMPLOYEE WAS STILL IN FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY WHILE HIS INJURY WAS BEING ASSESSED OR WHILE HE WAS PURSUING HIS CLAIM IN COURT, THE DEPARTMENT WOULD PUT HIM IN TOUCH WITH THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT FOR HELP, MR BRIDGE ADDED.

NEW SAFE GAS WATER HEATERS INTRODUCED

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WITH THE COOPERATION OF THE SUPPLIERS OF GAS APPLIANCES, UNSAFE GAS WATER HEATERS ARE NO LONGER INSTALLED IN BATHROOMS, THE SECRETARY FOR ECONOMIC SERVICES, THE HON PIER JACOBS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON PETER WONG, MR JACOBS SAID THAT, IN ADDITION, A NEW RANGE OF SAFE REPLACEMENT APPLIANCES, SOME OF WHICH HAVE BEEN SPECIALLY DESIGNED FOR USE IN HONG KONG, ARE BEING MADE AVAILABLE AND ACTIVELY PROMOTED.

MR WONG HAD ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO REPORT ON +THE PROGRESS MADE AS A RESULT OF THE APPOINTMENT OF A GAS ADVISER, THE REVISION OF RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND THE EXTENSIVE PUBLICITY ON GAS SAFETY.+

MR JACOBS ALSO SAID THAT SINCE THE GAS ADVISER'S APPOINTMENT IN 1982, MUCH PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY IN RELATION TO THE SAFE USE OF GAS FUELS AND THE EXTENSION OF A PIPED GAS SUPPLY TO DOMESTIC CONSUMERS.

HE SAID HE WOULD SHORTLY BE SUBMITTING A DETAILED PROGRESS REPORT ON GAS SAFETY TO THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

WITH REGARD TO LIQUIFIED PETROLEUM GAS, HE SAID THAT AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED WITH THOSE INVOLVED IN THE GAS INDUSTRY ON A NUMBER OF SAFETY MEASURES IN RELATION TO THE FILLING, CHECKING, TRANSPORTING AND SORTING OF THE CYLINDERS. AND, TRAINING PROGRAMMES WERE BEING DRAWN UP FOR OPERATORS AND DRIVERS HANDLING LPG CYLINDERS, AND FOR LPG ROAD TANKER DRIVERS.

REAFFIRMING GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN ABOUT THE SAFE USE OF GAS HEATERS, HE SAID THAT THE PUBLIC WERE CONTINUALLY BEING URGED TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS BY ENSURING THAT THEIR BATHROOMS ARE ADEQUATELY VENTILATED WHEN GAS WATER HEATERS ARE USED.

WITH REGARD TO PIPED GAS, HE SAID IT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TO ENCOURAGE THE USE OF PIPED GAS IN DOMESTIC PREMISES.

HE SAID THAT THE GROWING DEMAND FOR TOWNGAS IS EXPECTED TO OUTSTRIP THE HONG KONG AND CHINA GAS COMPANY'S (GASCO) PRODUCTION CAPACITY AT ITS MA TAU WAI PLANT BY THE END OF 1986.

ACCORDINGLY A SECOND GAS PRODUCTION PLANT IS REQUIRED, AND TALKS ARE TAKING PLACE BETWEEN GASCO AND THE HONG KONG INDUSTRIAL ESTATES CORPORATION ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A GAS PRODUCTION PLANT BEING LOCATED IN THE TAI PO INDUSTRIAL ESTATE.

RECOGNISING THE NEED FOR LEGISLATION IN GAS SAFETY, MR JACOBS SAID, AN AMENDMENT TO THE BUILDING (PLANNING) REGULATIONS WAS MADE IN APRIL LAST YEAR.

THE AMENDMENT PROVIDES THAT ALL NEW BUILDINGS BE CONSTRUCTED WITH SUFFICIENTLY LARGE APERTURES IN THE EXTERNAL WALLS OF BATHROOMS TO FACILITATE INSTALLATION OF SAFE GAS HEATERS.

UNDER ACTIVE CONSIDERATION, IN ADDITION, IS A PROPOSAL THAT PLANS TO PROVIDE FOR CORRECTLY DESIGNED PIPING TO FACILITATE THE SUPPLY OF PIPED GAS INTO ALL NEW BUILDINGS, HE ADDED.

+AND WE INTEND TO INTRODUCE A MAJOR PIECE OF GAS LEGISLATION TO REGULATE THE MANUFACTURE, STORAGE, TRANSMISSION, DISTRIBUTION AND UTILISATION OF GAS FUELS,+ HE SAID.

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PUBLIC SERVICE MORALE HIGH - ROWLANDS
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DESPITE THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE PAST YEAR THE MORALE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE, INCLUDING THE DISCIPLINED SERVICES, REMAINS HIGH, THE HON MARTIN ROWLANDS, SECRETARY FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE, SAID TODAY.

+INDEED I DO NOT RECALL IT HAVING BEEN HIGHER THAN IT IS NOW : THE FACT IS THAT WE PRIDE OURSELVES ON BEING A THOROUGHLY PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AND WE DO NOT ALLOW EXTRANEIOUS EVENTS TO AFFECT OUR WORK,+ HE SAID.

MR ROWLANDS WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HO KAM-FAI WHO ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO STATE WHAT MEASURES ARE BEING TAKEN TO ENHANCE MORALE IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE, ESPECIALLY IN THE DISCIPLINED SERVICES - AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF GOVERNMENT'S STATED POLICY TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY, AND AT THE SAME TIME TO RESTRICT THE GROWTH OF THE CIVIL SERVICE.

MR ROWLANDS ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT RESTRICTIONS ON THE GROWTH OF THE SERVICE COULD ADD TO THE PRESSURES ON THE INDIVIDUAL CIVIL SERVANT, AND THE GOVERNMENT WAS THEREFORE TAKING CONCERTED ACTION TO COMBAT THIS.

+ALL DEPARTMENTS ARE NOW ENGAGED ON PROJECTS AIMED SPECIFICALLY AT INCREASING PRODUCTIVITY BY SUCH MEANS AS SIMPLER WORK PROCESSES, LABOUR SAVING EQUIPMENT AND IMPROVED MANNING SCHEDULES.

+STAFF ARE PARTICIPATING IN THESE PROJECTS WHEREVER POSSIBLE, SO THAT IMPROVEMENTS IN PRODUCTIVITY ARE BEING ACHIEVED WITH THE SUPPORT OF STAFF, AND SOMETIMES ON THEIR INITIATIVE. THE RESULT IN MANY CASES IS JOB ENRICHMENT, AND THIS WE FIND IS ALMOST INVARIABLY GOOD FOR MORALE,+ HE SAID.

GOOD MANAGEMENT, MR ROWLANDS SAID, BECOMES EVER MORE IMPORTANT AS WORKLOADS GROW WITHOUT ATTENDANT INCREASES IN STAFF.

+WE ARE THEREFORE PRESSING AHEAD WITH IMPROVEMENTS TO STAFF MANAGEMENT PRACTICES, AND PLACING RENEWED EMPHASIS ON TRAINING IN SUPERVISORY SKILLS.

+CONSULTATION WITH STAFF IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT AND WE ARE NOW MAKING FULL AND, I BELIEVE, EFFECTIVE USE OF THE CENTRAL AND DEPARTMENTAL CONSULTATIVE MACHINERY WHICH WE HAVE BUILT UP IN RECENT YEARS.

+THROUGH THIS MACHINERY WE ARE ABLE TO EXPLAIN OUR PRESENT POLICIES, TO DISCUSS WITH STAFF THEIR REACTIONS TO THEM, AND THEN TO PROCEED IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT WE HAVE STAFF SIDE SUPPORT.

+AS PART OF THIS PROCESS, MY SENIOR STAFF AND I ARE ENGAGED IN A CONTINUOUS ROUND OF VISITS TO DEPARTMENTS, DURING WHICH WE DISCUSS CURRENT ISSUES WITH STAFF REPRESENTATIVES,+ HE SAID.

MR ROWLANDS SAID THAT AT THE END OF THE DAY IT WAS PERHAPS THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP WHICH MOST AFFECTED THE MORALE OF THE SERVICE, AND HE ACKNOWLEDGED THE KEY ROLE WHICH HEADS OF DEPARTMENT WERE PLAYING +IN PROVIDING THAT RESOLUTE LEADERSHIP WHICH THE STAFF BOTH LOOK FOR AND APPRECIATE.+

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POLICY ON GAZETTED CEMETERIES EXPLAINED

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THOUGH THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY GENERALLY IS TO ENCOURAGE CREMATION, THERE ARE GAZETTED CEMETERIES AVAILABLE ON OUTLYING ISLANDS FOR BURIAL OF RESIDENTS, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON GEOFFREY BARNES, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

MR BARNES WAS REPLYING TO THE HON CHEUNG YAN-LUNG WHO WISHED TO KNOW ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT POLICY ON THE PROVISION OF BURIAL GROUNDS AND PUBLIC CEMETERIES ON OUTLYING ISLANDS.

BURIALS IN THESE CEMETERIES ARE SUBJECT TO THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY FOR A SIX-YEAR EXHUMATION CYCLE TO PROVIDE GRAVE SPACES FOR REUSE.

MR BARNES POINTED OUT THAT IN ADDITION, THERE ARE DESIGNATED BURIAL GROUNDS RESTRICTED TO THE BURIALS OF INDIGENOUS VILLAGERS AND LOCALLY BASED FISHERMEN WHO MAY ALSO BE BURIED IN THE GAZETTED CEMETERIES.

HE EXPLAINED THAT AS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE NEW TERRITORIES, IT IS UNLAWFUL FOR ANY BURIAL TO TAKE PLACE OUTSIDE A GAZETTED PUBLIC OR PRIVATE CEMETERY UNLESS IT IS AUTHORISED IN WRITING BY A DISTRICT OFFICER.

THIS AUTHORISATION IS GIVEN ONLY IN THE CASE OF INDIGENOUS VILLAGERS AND LOCALLY BASED FISHERMEN FOR BURIALS IN DESIGNATED BURIAL GROUNDS, HE ADDED.

THERE ARE THREE PUBLIC CEMETERIES SERVING THE RESIDENTS OF OUTLYING ISLANDS: THE CHEUNG CHAU CEMETERY CATERING FOR RESIDENTS ON CHEUNG CHAU, THE TAI O CEMETERY ON LANTAU FOR THE RESIDENTS OF THE ISLAND DISTRICT AND THE WO HOP SHEK CEMETERY IN FANLING TO SERVE THE ENTIRE TERRITORY.

THERE ARE AT PRESENT 40 DESIGNATED BURIAL GROUNDS ON THE OUTLYING ISLANDS AND OTHER SITES ARE UNDER CONSIDERATION, HE SAID.

+RESTRICTING TRADITIONAL BURIALS TO DESIGNATED BURIAL GROUNDS ENSURES THAT THE GRAVES WILL BE READILY IDENTIFIABLE, THAT THEY WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH DEVELOPMENT AND WILL NOT CREATE HAPHAZARD ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS POLLUTION, SOIL EROSION, FIRE HAZARD AND SPOILING OF THE LANDSCAPE,+ MR BARNES EXPLAINED.

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CORPORATION STILL FACING DIFFICULTIES FROM PAST

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THE DIFFICULTIES FACING THE HONG KONG EXPORT CREDIT INSURANCE CORPORATION IN 1982-83 WERE NOT YET A THING OF THE PAST, THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, THE HON E.P. HO SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

TWO MAJOR INSOLVENCIES HAD OCCURRED IN EUROPE IN THE CURRENT YEAR, AND THE PROBLEMS ARISING FROM THE INDEBTEDNESS OF A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES WERE A LONG WAY FROM BEING RESOLVED, MR HO TOLD THE COUNCIL WHEN TABLING THE REPORT AND ACCOUNTS OF THE CORPORATION FOR 1982-83.

+IN ADDITION, THE CORPORATION'S RE-INSURER GAVE NOTICE OF TERMINATION OF THE RE-INSURANCE TREATY WITH EFFECT FROM SEPTEMBER 1, 1983 UNLESS THE CONTRACT WAS RE-WRITTEN IN TERMS WHICH WERE UNACCEPTABLE.

+ACCORDINGLY, THE CORPORATION IS WITHOUT RE-INSURANCE COVER AT PRESENT, BUT ON THE ADVICE OF THE ADVISORY BOARD DISCUSSIONS ARE IN PROGRESS WITH OTHER INTERESTED RE-INSURERS,+ MR HO SAID.

HE REPORTED THAT IN THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW, THE LARGE CLAIMS PAYABLE WERE DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE RECESSION IN HONG KONG'S MAJOR OVERSEAS MARKETS WHICH HAD BROUGHT ABOUT BANKRUPTCIES IN ITS WAKE WHILE POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN OTHER MARKETS HAD ADDED TO THE SUBSTANTIAL CLAIMS ON THE CORPORATION.

+OVERALL, BUYER RISKS (I.E. WHERE THE OVERSEAS BUYER DEFAULTS ON PAYMENT OR BECOMES INSOLVENT OR REPUDIATES THE CONTRACT) ACCOUNTED FOR SOME 79 PER CENT OF PAYMENTS AND COUNTRY RISKS FOR 21 PER CENT.

+THE PERCENTAGES OF THESE TWO TYPES OF RISKS FOR 1981-82 WERE 84 PER CENT AND 16 PER CENT RESPECTIVELY. THE AREAS OF MAJOR CLAIMS IN 1982-83 WERE THE UNITED KINGDOM, LATIN AMERICA AND AFRICA,+ MR HO DISCLOSED.

IN 1982-83 THERE WAS MODERATE GROWTH IN THE CORPORATION'S BUSINESS -- A NET INCREASE OF 148 POLICIES ISSUED, BRINGING THE TOTAL TO 1 357, A SMALL INCREASE IN THE VALUE OF TOTAL INSURED EXPORTS AT \$3 919 MILLION, AND EIGHT PER CENT GROWTH IN GROSS PREMIUM INCOME TO \$21 MILLION.

BUT UNFAVOURABLE MARKET CONDITIONS OVERSEAS RESULTING IN THE PAYMENT OF A NUMBER OF BIG CLAIMS AND THE WRITING OFF OF \$7.8 MILLION OF THE EXPENDITURE ARISING FROM OFFICE REMOVAL, FITTING OUT OF THE NEW PREMISES AND COMPUTER HARDWARE PURCHASE, LED TO A NET DEFICIT OF \$6 MILLION FOR THE YEAR.

AS IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR, EXPORTS INSURED WITH THE CORPORATION REPRESENTED JUST UNDER FIVE PER CENT OF HONG KONG'S TOTAL DOMESTIC EXPORTS, MR HO SAID.

EUROPE REMAINED THE CORPORATION'S LARGEST EXPOSURE AREA WITH A STABLE \$2 463 MILLION OF INSURED EXPORTS.

/WHILE THERE

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WHILE THERE WAS AN ENCOURAGING GROWTH OF 18 PER CENT IN BUSINESS WITH NORTH AMERICA TO REGISTER A TOTAL OF \$654 MILLION WORTH OF INSURED EXPORTS, THIS REPRESENTED ONLY TWO PER CENT OF HONG KONG'S DOMESTIC EXPORTS TO THE AREA, HE POINTED OUT.

+HOWEVER, THE PRODUCTS COVERED BY THE CORPORATION REMAINED CONSISTENT WITH THE OVERALL PATTERN OF OUR EXPORTS: TEXTILES AND CLOTHING WERE PREDOMINANT WITH 41 PER CENT OF EXPORTS INSURED, FOLLOWED BY TOYS AT 11 PER CENT,+ MR HO ADDED.

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MORE MARINE REFUSE REMOVED

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THE MARINE DEPARTMENT OPERATING A FLEET OF 29 CLEANSING VESSELS REMOVED OVER 8 000 TONNES OF REFUSE FROM HONG KONG'S WATERS LAST YEAR, COMPARED WITH 4 400 TONNES IN 1980, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON GEOFFREY BARNES SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

MR BARNES WAS REPLYING TO QUESTIONS FROM REV THE HON P.T. MCGOVERN ON THE SUBJECT OF WATER POLLUTION.

NOTING THAT MORE NEEDED TO BE DONE ABOUT THIS PROBLEM, MR BARNES REPORTED THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY STUDY, COMMISSIONED AT THE END OF 1982, WOULD BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF NEXT MONTH.

THIS STUDY WILL IDENTIFY THE SOURCES AND MOVEMENT PATTERNS OF MARINE REFUSE, INCLUDING THE SEASONAL VARIATIONS OBSERVED, AND WILL MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MORE EFFECTIVE INTERCEPTION AND COLLECTION OF FLOATING REFUSE.

+IN THE LIGHT OF THE FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY THE DEPARTMENTS CONCERNED WILL REASSESS THEIR EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS AND DEPLOYMENT OF RESOURCES AND WILL REVIEW THE ADEQUACY OF THEIR EXPANSION PLANS,+ MR BARNES SAID.

AT PRESENT THESE PLANS INCLUDE ADDITIONAL VESSELS FOR THE MARINE DEPARTMENT'S CLEANSING FLEET AND AN EXTENSION OF ITS COVERAGE TO INCLUDE TUEN MUN, SHA TIN, SAI KUNG AND TAI PO IN ADDITION TO SERVICES PRESENTLY PROVIDED FOR VICTORIA HARBOUR, ABERDEEN AND CHEUNG CHAU.

THERE ARE ALSO PLANS TO EXTEND THE COLLECTION SERVICE IN THE TYPHOON SHELTERS TO INCLUDE CHEUNG CHAU, CHAI WAN, SAI KUNG AND SAM KA CHUEN.

BUT MR BARNES NOTED THAT DUE TO THE MARINE DEPARTMENT'S BUDGET CONSTRAINTS FOR 1984-85, EFFORTS IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE WOULD BE DIRECTED AT ENSURING THE COLLECTING SERVICE AT ITS PRESENT LEVELS AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF APPROVED RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE EPA STUDY +AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE+.

/APART FROM

APART FROM THE REMOVAL OF REFUSE, STEPS ARE ALSO TAKEN TO PREVENT REFUSE AND POLLUTANTS FROM ENTERING THE WATERS.

BESIDES EXISTING PREVENTIVE PROGRAMMES, ADDITIONAL STEPS BEING TAKEN INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- * DEVELOPMENT OF CONTROLS UNDER THE WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ORDINANCE TO REGULATE DISCHARGES INTO WATER CONTROL ZONES.
- * A NEW WATER COURSE MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM.

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BILL STRESSES COMMITMENT TO ANTI-DRUG FIGHT
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THE DANGEROUS DRUGS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1984 WILL EMPHASISE HONG KONG'S TOTAL COMMITMENT TO COMBAT INTERNATIONAL DRUG TRAFFICKING AND TRAFFICKING IN HONG KONG, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON DAVID JEAFFRESON, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, MR JEAFFRESON SAID THE MAIN PURPOSES ARE TO CLOSE A LOOPHOLE IN THE DANGEROUS DRUGS ORDINANCE RELATING TO DRUGS IN TRANSIT THROUGH HONG KONG AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE PRESUMPTION THAT A PERSON WHO IS PROVED OR PRESUMED TO HAVE BEEN MANUFACTURING A DANGEROUS DRUG KNEW THAT SUCH A DRUG WAS A DANGEROUS DRUG.

HE SAID THE CONSEQUENCE OF THIS LOOPHOLE IS THAT A PERSON BRINGING ILLICIT DRUGS INTO HONG KONG AND CHARGED WITH BEING IN POSSESSION OF DANGEROUS DRUGS FOR THE PURPOSE OF TRAFFICKING CAN PLEAD THAT AS THE DRUGS WERE IN TRANSIT, HE WAS NOT TRAFFICKING.

+SEVERAL CASES HAVE OCCURRED IN WHICH THE PROSECUTION WAS NOT ABLE TO ESTABLISH CONCLUSIVELY THAT THE DRUGS WERE TO BE DISPOSED OF IN HONG KONG, AND THE COURT OF APPEAL QUASHED CONVICTIONS OF DRUG TRAFFICKERS UNDER SECTION 7 ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE DRUGS FOUND IN THEIR POSSESSION ON ENTRY TO HONG KONG WERE IN TRANSIT,+ HE SAID.

+IN SUCH CASES, OFFENDERS MAY BE FOUND GUILTY OF SIMPLE POSSESSION OF DANGEROUS DRUGS, THE MAXIMUM SENTENCE FOR WHICH IS IMPRISONMENT FOR THREE YEARS AND A FINE OF \$10 000 WHEREAS A PERSON FOUND GUILTY OF TRAFFICKING IS LIABLE TO A FINE OF \$5 MILLION AND TO IMPRISONMENT FOR LIFE.

+THE BILL NOW BEFORE THIS COUNCIL IS DESIGNED TO AMEND THE ORDINANCE SO THAT A DANGEROUS DRUG MAY BE HELD TO BE IN TRANSIT ONLY IF IT HAS BEEN LAWFULLY EXPORTED FROM THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN FOR LAWFUL IMPORTATION INTO THE COUNTRY OF DESTINATION, AND IF IT IS ACCOMPANIED BY VALID AUTHORISATIONS OR DIVERSION CERTIFICATES ISSUED BY THE EXPORTING COUNTRY WHICH IS A PARTY TO THE U.N. CONVENTIONS GOVERNING THE CONTROL OF DANGEROUS DRUGS,+ HE SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED TO JANUARY 25.

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MORE CYCLE TRACKS BEING PROVIDED

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EXTENSIVE CYCLE TRACKS ARE PLANNED AND BEING PROVIDED IN THE NEW TOWNS OTHER THAN TSUEN WAN AND SOME OF THE OLDER DEVELOPED AREAS, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON ALAN SCOTT TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

THE PRESENT PROVISION TOTALS 50 KM, WITH 60 KM BEING PLANNED FOR, MR SCOTT SAID IN REPLY TO QUESTIONS FROM THE HON WONG LAM.

HE REPORTED THERE WERE 2 252 PROSECUTIONS OF CYCLISTS FOR OFFENCES ON THE ROADS DURING THE FIRST 11 MONTHS OF LAST YEAR, A 43 PER CENT INCREASE OVER THE SAME PERIOD IN 1982.

OF THIS TOTAL, 1 464 WERE FOR NEGLIGENT RIDING, 722 FOR RIDING A BICYCLE WITHOUT LIGHTS AT NIGHT, 39 FOR CARRYING PASSENGERS AND 27 FOR OVERLOADING.

ALMOST ALL RESULTED IN CONVICTIONS, WITH FINES RANGING FROM \$50 TO \$70.

MR BRAY SAID THAT 1 610 OF THE PROSECUTIONS WERE IN THE NEW TERRITORIES, 442 IN KOWLOON AND 200 ON HONG KONG ISLAND.

HE POINTED OUT THAT CONTINUOUS ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION AND PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS ARE BEING MAINTAINED.

THEY INCLUDE THE ROAD USERS' CODE WHICH IS CURRENTLY BEING REVISED, A FILM ON SAFE CYCLING NOW BEING MADE FOR INCLUSION IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHING KIT, REGULAR LECTURES ON ROAD SAFETY TO SCHOOLS BY POLICE OFFICERS AND DEMONSTRATIONS AT WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS IN POPULAR RECREATIONAL CYCLING AREAS.

A WORKING PARTY ON CYCLING, ESTABLISHED BY THE COMMITTEE ON SAFETY IN OUTDOOR PURSUITS, WILL SHORTLY REPORT ON POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL SAFETY MEASURES, MR SCOTT SAID.

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NT TAXI REGISTRATION PERIOD EXTENDED

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THE PERIOD LIMITING THE NUMBER OF MOTOR VEHICLES WHICH MAY BE REGISTERED AS NEW TERRITORIES TAXIS HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO JANUARY 31, 1985.

MOVING THE MOTION AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON ALAN SCOTT, SAID THE EXTENSION WILL PERMIT THE NT TAXI LICENCES TO CONTINUE TO BE ISSUED AT THE RATE OF 50 PER MONTH.

MR SCOTT ALSO REPORTED THAT THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL INTENDED THAT THE NUMBER OF URBAN TAXI LICENCES SHOULD BE FROZEN FOR TWO YEARS AT THE PRESENT NUMBER OF 13 000.

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SAFETY CONDITION IMPOSED ON SHUTTERS

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IT IS FOR SAFETY REASONS THAT THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT, IN ALLOWING THE INSTALLATION OF ALUMINIUM FRAMED SHUTTERS, HAS IMPOSED THE CONDITION THAT ONE-THIRD OF THE BALCONY ON PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS SHOULD BE LEFT UNENCLOSED.

THE SECRETARY FOR HOUSING, THE HON DONALD LIAO, SAID THIS TODAY IN REPLY TO THE HON PAULINE NG CHOW MAY-LIN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

MR LIAO SAID THAT IN MOST OF THE PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS, KITCHENS AND TOILETS WERE VENTILATED THROUGH THE BALCONY AREA.

+ENCLOSURE OF THE BALCONY OPENING WOULD THUS CREATE HEALTH HAZARD AND CONTRAVENE THE BUILDING REGULATIONS, AND THEREFORE SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED.

+HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF THE LARGE NUMBER OF UNAUTHORISED WIND SHUTTERS ALREADY EXISTING AND THE FACT THAT MANY OF THEM ARE BEING REPLACED BY ALUMINIUM FRAMED SCREENS, THE DEPARTMENT HAS FOUND IT NECESSARY TO LAY DOWN A CERTAIN MINIMUM STANDARD WITHIN WHICH SUCH INSTALLATIONS CAN BE TOLERATED.+

FURTHERMORE, MR LIAO SAID, MANY TENANTS STILL USED FLUELESS GAS WATER HEATERS IN THE BALCONY AREA.

+IT IS IMPORTANT, THEREFORE, THAT THE BALCONY SHOULD BE KEPT AT LEAST PARTIALLY OPEN TO ENSURE ADEQUATE VENTILATION.+

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'CLADDING' REGULATIONS SUFFICIENT

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THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, MR NICKY CHAN, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE BUILDING (CONSTRUCTION) REGULATIONS REQUIRED THAT CLADDING TO BUILDINGS SHOULD BE SECURELY FIXED TO THE MAIN STRUCTURE.

MR CHAN WAS ANSWERING A QUESTION FROM THE HON W.C.L. BROWN, WHO ASKED WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WAS SATISFIED THAT THERE WERE SUFFICIENT SAFEGUARDS IN THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE TO ENSURE THAT GLASS OFFICE BUILDINGS IN HONG KONG WERE ABLE TO WITHSTAND TYPHOON CONDITIONS.

MR CHAN SAID THE STRENGTH, STIFFNESS, STABILITY AND DURABILITY OF ANY SUCH CLADDING SHOULD BE TO THE SATISFACTION OF THE BUILDING AUTHORITY.

+ALL FIXINGS USED FOR CLADDING MUST MOREOVER BE OF STAINLESS STEEL, PHOSPHOR BRONZE, ALUMINIUM BRONZE OR OTHER NON-CORRODIBLE MATERIAL TO THE SATISFACTION OF THE AUTHORITY,+ HE TOLD THE COUNCIL.

GLASS CURTAIN-WALLING OF THE TYPE MR BROWN HAD REFERRED TO WAS INCLUDED IN THE DEFINITION OF CLADDING, AND IT WAS THE BUILDING AUTHORITY'S ESTABLISHED PRACTICE TO REQUIRE ALL SUCH CURTAIN-WALLING TO BE DESIGNED TO WITHSTAND TYPHOON CONDITIONS, HE SAID.

+I AM SATISFIED THAT THE PRESENT REGULATIONS AND THE CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS UNDER THE ORDINANCE ARE SUFFICIENT,+ HE STATED.

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SCRIPTS REQUIRED BEFORE STAGE PRODUCTION
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THEATRICAL SCRIPTS ARE NORMALLY REQUIRED BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR TELEVISION AND ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING BEFORE THEY ARE PRODUCED ON STAGE, THE SECRETARY FOR HOME AFFAIRS, THE HON DENIS BRAY SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

WHERE THERE ARE PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES, THE COMMISSIONER IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT A SYNOPSIS, MR BRAY SAID IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON ALEX WU.

+WHEN WELL KNOWN CLASSICS ARE TO BE PERFORMED ALL THAT IS NECESSARY IS AN ASSURANCE THAT IT REALLY IS THE CLASSIC ITSELF AND NOT A SUBSTANTIALLY ALTERED VERSION THAT IS TO BE PLAYED,+ HE EXPLAINED.

+THESE SCRIPTS ARE REQUIRED BY THE COMMISSIONER BECAUSE NOBODY MAY PUT ON A THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC WITHOUT A PERMIT FROM THE COMMISSIONER AND HE HAS TO KNOW WHAT HE IS GIVING A PERMIT FOR,+ MR BRAY ADDED.

THE COMMISSIONER HAS DRAWN UP GUIDELINES WHICH, WITHOUT FETTERING HIS DISCRETION GRANTED BY LAW, LET PEOPLE KNOW HOW FAR THEY CAN GO.

MR BRAY POINTED OUT CURRENT GUIDELINES WERE DRAWN UP WITH REFERENCE TO STANDARDS FOR FILMS AND TELEVISION SHOWS BUT ARE LESS RESTRICTIVE BECAUSE AUDIENCES ARE MORE RESTRICTED.

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LEGCO PASSES FIVE BILLS
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FIVE BILLS, THE DEBTORS (ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT) BILL 1983, THE SUMMARY OFFENCES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1983, THE IMPORT AND EXPORT (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1983, THE INDUSTRIAL TRAINING (CLOTHING INDUSTRY) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1983 AND THE CROWN LANDS RESUMPTION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1983, WERE PASSED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

THE FOLLOWING THREE BILLS WERE INTRODUCED AND READ A SECOND TIME AND DEBATE ON THEM WAS ADJOURNED : THE MOTOR VEHICLES (FIRST REGISTRATION TAX) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1984, THE ROAD TRAFFIC (REGISTRATION AND LICENSING OF VEHICLES) (REGULATIONS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1984 AND THE DANGEROUS DRUGS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1984.

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GOVERNOR REJECTS PESSIMISM ON HONG KONG'S FUTURE

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THE GOVERNOR, SIR EDWARD YOUDE, TODAY REFUTED JEREMIAHS WHO SEE HONG KONG AS +A STAR ABOUT TO FALL+, SAYING THAT THE TERRITORY IS VERY MUCH A GOING CONCERN AND THERE IS NO REASON WHY IT SHOULD NOT REMAIN SO.

SIR EDWARD WAS SPEAKING IN NEW YORK WHERE HE ADDRESSED THE COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS.

ON THE SINO-BRITISH TALKS HE CITED IN SUPPORT OF HIS VIEW, THE COMMON INTEREST OF CHINA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM IN MAINTAINING HONG KONG'S STABILITY AND PROSPERITY, THE CLOSE NATURE OF HONG KONG'S OWN RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND THE CONTRIBUTION IT COULD MAKE TO THE NATION'S MODERNISATION PROGRAMME.

+THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND CHINA ARE GOOD AND THE RELATIONSHIP IS A DEVELOPING ONE,+ SAID SIR EDWARD. HONG KONG'S OWN RELATIONS WITH CHINA ARE CLOSE. IN TOTAL TRADE TERMS, CHINA IS NOW OUR SECOND LARGEST TRADING PARTNER, THE LARGEST SOURCE OF OUR IMPORTS AND THE FOURTH LARGEST DESTINATION FOR OUR DOMESTIC EXPORTS.

+MANY OF CHINA'S CORPORATIONS AND BANKS ARE ACTIVE IN HONG KONG AND WE HAVE A CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE AUTHORITIES OF NEIGHBOURING GUANGDONG ON A WIDE RANGE OF PRACTICAL MATTERS.

+THE NEWLY FORMED HONG KONG NUCLEAR INVESTMENT CORPORATION WILL, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT, BE CLOSELY INVOLVED IN THE NEW NUCLEAR POWER STATION TO BE BUILT BY THE CHINESE IN GUANGDONG PROVINCE CLOSE TO HONG KONG. THIS IS ONLY ONE EXAMPLE OF THE CONTRIBUTION WHICH HONG KONG SEEKS TO MAKE TO CHINA'S MODERNISATION PROGRAMME. IT IS PART OF THE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP MUCH VALUED BY BOTH SIDES.+

HE SAID THAT BOTH THE UNITED KINGDOM AND CHINA, IN TALKS ON THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG, HAD +FROM THE BEGINNING STATED THEIR AIM OF MAINTAINING ITS STABILITY AND PROSPERITY, A PHRASE WHICH SOME CYNICS MAY CALL HACKNEYED BUT WHICH HAS REAL MEANING FOR ALL THOSE INVOLVED IN THE TALKS IN PEKING+.

HE SAID THAT SOME RECENT COMMENT +GIVES THE IMPRESSION THAT HONG KONG IS A STAR ABOUT TO FALL. ONE U.S. REPORT WHICH I RECENTLY READ STARTED WITH THE WORDS 'THE FALL OF HONG KONG SEEMS TO HAVE BEGUN'. WHILE WE HAVE OUR DIFFICULTIES AND THERE IS UNDERSTANDABLE ANXIETY IN HONG KONG ABOUT THE FUTURE, HONG KONG IS VERY MUCH A GOING CONCERN AND THERE IS NO REASON WHY IT SHOULD NOT REMAIN SO.+

HONG KONG IS A PLACE OF GREAT INTEREST TO THE UNITED STATES, SAID SIR EDWARD. +IT IS AN OPEN MARKET FOR U.S. GOODS WITH NO RESTRICTIONS, NO RESTRAINTS, NO LIMITS ON THE REMITTANCE OF PROFIT OR CONTROLS ON FUNDS MOVING IN AND OUT.+

LISTING THE TERRITORY'S ADVANTAGES FOR U.S. INVESTMENT, HE WENT ON: +HONG KONG IS ALSO LIVING PROOF OF THE MESSAGE WHICH YOUR GOVERNMENT IS KEEN TO SPREAD - THAT DEVELOPING SOCIETIES CAN THRIVE IN A WORLD OF OPEN TRADE.+

/THE GOVERNOR

THE GOVERNOR SAID THAT RECENT PROBLEMS WHICH HAD ARISEN IN HONG KONG STARTED IN 1982 AFTER A DECADE OF EXPANSION. THERE IS NO PLACE IN THE WORLD MORE EXPOSED TO WORLD TRADE TRENDS, HE SAID. IN ADDITION THE EFFECTS OF A SUBSTANTIAL FALL IN PROPERTY PRICES BECAME APPARENT.

+THERE ARE THOSE WHO WILL TELL YOU THAT THE COLLAPSE OF THOSE PRICES BEGAN IN THE AUTUMN OF 1982 WITH THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE TALKS IN PEKING. IT DID NOT.+

SIR EDWARD SAID THAT THE MAIN CAUSE WAS OVERSUPPLY AND HIGHLY INFLATED PRICES. +THE BOOM WAS BOUND TO BUST,+ HE ADDED. IN ADDITION THE INTERNATIONAL BANKING COMMUNITY BECAME GENERALLY MORE CAUTIOUS ABOUT OVERSEAS EXPOSURE. THEN CAME THE NEW ELEMENT - THE REALISATION THAT 1997 WAS ONLY 15 YEARS AWAY.

THE YEAR 1983 BEGAN IN A CALMER ATMOSPHERE BUT THE SECOND HALF BROUGHT PROBLEMS. THERE WERE RUMOURS OF TROUBLE AMONG SOME FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, SOME COMPANIES WERE IN DIFFICULTY, THE EXCHANGE VALUE OF THE HONG KONG DOLLAR DECLINED. +BUT A GREAT DEAL WAS ATTRIBUTABLE TO POLITICAL NERVOUSNESS ABOUT THE STATE OF THE TALKS IN PEKING,+ SAID SIR EDWARD.

THE FALL IN THE HK DOLLAR WAS NOT CAUSED BY ECONOMIC FACTORS ALONE AND IT WAS THEREFORE DECIDED TO LINK THE RATE OF THE CURRENCY TO THE US CURRENCY VIA THE NOTE ISSUING MECHANISM, LEAVING INTEREST RATES AND ARBITRAGE TO KEEP THE OPEN MARKET RATE CLOSE TO IT.

TURNING TO THE STRENGTHS OF HONG KONG SIR EDWARD SAID: +THOUGH THE DIFFICULTIES HAVE BEEN AND ARE REAL, RELATIVELY THE PICTURE IS NOTHING LIKE AS BLEAK. THERE ARE MANY PLACES IN THE WORLD WHICH HAVE HAD AS DIFFICULT, IF NOT MORE DIFFICULT, TIMES THAN HONG KONG HAS HAD= AND THERE ARE FEW WHICH HAVE THE INNATE STRENGTHS OF THE COMMUNITY OF HONG KONG WITH WHICH TO CONFRONT THEM.+

HE CITED THE RECORD OF VERSATILITY AND POWER OF ADAPTATION WHICH HONG KONG HAD DISPLAYED OVER ITS HISTORY. BUILDING ON ITS PORT AND TRADING TRADITIONS IT HAD DEVELOPED AS A MAJOR LIGHT MANUFACTURING CENTRE - MANUFACTURING CAME TO ACCOUNT FOR AS MUCH OF A THIRD OF GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT AND STILL EMPLOYS ABOUT 40 PER CENT OF THE LABOUR FORCE. MANUFACTURERS HAD CONSTANTLY UPGRADED QUALITY AND THE SPEED OF REACTION OF CHANGES IN DEMAND.

NOW A NEW STRING HAD BEEN ADDED TO THE BOW - THE DEVELOPMENT OF HONG KONG AS THE WORLD'S THIRD FINANCIAL CENTRE AFTER LONDON AND NEW YORK.

NONE OF THE FACTORS WHICH LED TO HONG KONG'S PRESENT SUCCESS AND PROSPERITY HAD CHANGED, SAID SIR EDWARD.

HONG KONG'S 1983 EXPORTS AND RE-EXPORTS, AT ABOUT US\$22 BILLION, ARE 25 PER CENT ABOVE THE 1982 FIGURE.

OF THESE, NEARLY ONE THIRD - US\$7 BILLION - WENT TO THE U.S., AND IMPORTS FROM THIS COUNTRY CAME TO OVER US\$2.6 BILLION.

UNEMPLOYMENT WAS NOW DOWN TO ABOUT FOUR PER CENT, FROM FIVE TO SIX PER CENT.

THE CURRENCY STABILISATION MEASURES HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL. +YOU WILL NOT FIND THE NAME OF HONG KONG ON THE LIST OF THOSE REQUIRING THEIR DEBTS TO BE RESCHEDULED, OR SEEKING IMF SUPPORT, NOR IS THERE ANY REASON IT SHOULD APPEAR THERE IN THE FUTURE.+

SIR EDWARD SAID THAT DESPITE THE TROUBLES OF SOME COMPANIES MOST HAD WEATHERED THE STORM. +A GDP GROWTH RATE OF SIX PER CENT IN 1983 IS NOT A SIGN OF A COLLAPSING ECONOMY.+

HE STRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT REMAINED STRONGLY COMMITTED TO VIGOROUS AND CONTINUING INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE OF THE TERRITORY - AS DEMONSTRATED BY AMBITIOUS NEW DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES.

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FIRST, SECOND CLASS HOSPITAL BED FEES REVISED
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THE DAILY MAINTENANCE CHARGES FOR FIRST AND SECOND CLASS BEDS IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS WILL BE REVISED FROM JANUARY 15, 1984, A SPOKESMAN FOR THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

AT PRESENT, THERE ARE THREE GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS WITH FIRST AND SECOND CLASS BEDS. THEY ARE QUEEN MARY, QUEEN ELIZABETH AND CASTLE PEAK HOSPITALS.

FOR A FIRST CLASS BED IN QUEEN MARY AND QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL, THE DAILY RATE WILL BE REVISED FROM \$240 TO \$600. THE FEE FOR A SECOND CLASS BED WILL GO UP FROM \$160 TO \$400.

AT CASTLE PEAK HOSPITAL, THE NEW RATES FOR A FIRST AND SECOND CLASS BED WILL BE \$195 (PRESENT RATE \$120) AND \$130 (PRESENT RATE \$80) RESPECTIVELY.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE RATE FOR SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION IN TSAN YUK HOSPITAL WILL ALSO BE REVISED TO \$250. THE PRESENT RATE IS \$45.

THE SPOKESMAN EXPLAINED THAT THE AIM OF THE REVISION IN FEES IS TO RECOVER COSTS FOR THE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE FIRST AND SECOND CLASS WARDS.

AT PRESENT, THERE ARE 49 FIRST CLASS BEDS AND 172 SECOND CLASS BEDS (INCLUDING 18 SPECIAL CLASS BEDS IN TSAN YUK HOSPITAL) IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS.

THE SPOKESMAN POINTED OUT THAT THE REVISION OF RATES WILL ONLY AFFECT A SMALL NUMBER OF PRIVATE PATIENTS WHO CHOOSE TO RECEIVE THEIR TREATMENT IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS AND WHO ARE WELL ABLE TO AFFORD THE NEW FEES.

MAINTENANCE CHARGES IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS COVER ACCOMMODATION, DRUGS, FOOD AND ROUTINE LABORATORY INVESTIGATIONS.

IN ADDITION, PATIENTS ARE REQUIRED TO PAY FOR MEDICAL CONSULTATION, OPERATIONS, TREATMENT AND SPECIAL LABORATORY INVESTIGATIONS.

MAINTENANCE RATES FOR THE GENERAL WARDS REMAIN UNCHANGED.

THE MEDICAL DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE HAS BEEN CONSULTED AND HAS ENDORSED THE INTRODUCTION OF THE NEW RATES.

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NEW TOWN SCHEME SEEN AS BEST ANYWHERE

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HONG KONG'S NEW TOWN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME STANDS UNRIVALLED ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD, THE VISITING CHAIRMAN OF THE BRITISH HONG KONG PARLIAMENTARY GROUP, SIR PETER BLAKER SAID TODAY.

SPEAKING AFTER A TOUR OF THE NEW TERRITORIES TODAY, SIR PETER SAID HE WAS MOST IMPRESSED WITH THE PACE OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEW TOWNS AND THE IMPROVEMENTS IN FACILITIES PROVIDED.

SIR PETER ALSO PRAISED THE COMMUNITY SPIRIT OF HONG KONG'S PEOPLE AND SAID HE WAS IMPRESSED WITH THE WORK OF THE DISTRICT BOARDS.

DURING A BUSY DAY, SIR PETER AND LADY BLAKER, ACCOMPANIED BY THE REGIONAL SECRETARY FOR NEW TERRITORIES, MR IAN MACPHERSON, FIRST VISITED THE KOWLOON-CANTON RAILWAY STATION WHERE THEY WERE BRIEFED ON THE RAILWAY'S OPERATIONS BY KCRC MANAGING DIRECTOR, MR PETER QUICK, AND THE OPERATIONS DIRECTOR, MR GORDON GRAHAM.

SIR PETER THEN TRAVELLED ON AN ELECTRIC TRAIN TO SHEUNG SHUI TO SEE THE CHOI YUEN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATE, WHERE HE CALLED AT A MUTUAL AID COMMITTEE OFFICE IN CHOI WU HOUSE AND A FAMILY THERE.

LATER, ON THE ROOF OF THE HOUSING BLOCK, SIR PETER WAS BRIEFED ON DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN FANLING NEW TOWN BY THE NORTH DISTRICT OFFICER, MR IAN WOTHERSPOON, AND THE PROJECT MANAGER OF TAI PO AND FANLING, MR ROBERT HANNA.

HE WAS TOLD THAT EXPENDITURE ON PUBLIC WORKS IN THE NEW TOWN FOR THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEAR WOULD AMOUNT TO \$350 MILLION.

APART FROM CHOI YUEN, THREE OTHER PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES ARE NOW IN VARIOUS STAGES OF CONSTRUCTION.

THE PARTY THEN PROCEEDED TO TUEN MUN VIA YUEN LONG TO VISIT THE NEWLY COMPLETED YAN OI TONG COMMUNITY AND INDOOR SPORTS CENTRE.

SIR PETER DESCRIBED THE CENTRE AS AN EXCELLENT FEATURE OF THE NEW TOWN, PROVIDING MANY COMMUNITY AND SPORTING FACILITIES FOR YOUNG AND OLD ALIKE.

THE TUEN MUN DISTRICT OFFICER, MR RICKY FUNG, AND PROJECT MANAGER, MR S.K. KWEI, ALSO BRIEFED HIM ON THE PROGRESS OF WORKS FOR A CIVIC AND CULTURAL COMPLEX, THE TUEN MUN HOSPITAL AND OTHER MAJOR PROJECTS IN THE NEW TOWN.

LATER, SIR PETER WAS BRIEFED ON THE DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM BY SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE CITY AND NEW TERRITORIES ADMINISTRATION HEADED BY MR MACPHERSON AND THE REGIONAL SECRETARY FOR HONG KONG AND KOWLOON, MR BARRIE WIGGHAM.

IN THE AFTERNOON, HE ATTENDED THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT BOARD MEETING FOR A CLOSE UP VIEW ON HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS AND HAD INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH BOARD MEMBERS.

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SHA TIN HAS BRIGHT PROSPECTS FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT * * * * *

PROSPECTS FOR THE INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT OF SHA TIN ARE BRIGHT, THE NEW TOWN'S PROJECT MANAGER, MR C.K. CHOW, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE LUNCHEON MEETING OF KOWLOON WEST ROTARY CLUB, MR CHOW SAID THERE WERE 760 FACTORIES IN THE TWO MAIN INDUSTRIAL AREAS, ONE OF WHICH - FO TAN - HAD A SUPPLY OF FACTORY SPACES READILY AVAILABLE FOR LETTING OR FOR SALE AT REASONABLE PRICES.

FOR THE WHOLE NEW TOWN, HE SAID, THERE WOULD BE A TOTAL OF 57 HECTARES OF LAND FOR INDUSTRY, WITH A TARGET LABOUR FORCE OF WELL OVER 100 000.

+BY REASON OF GOOD TRANSPORT AND THE LARGE POPULATION, I AM QUITE SURE THAT THE PROSPECTS FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT OF SHA TIN ARE VERY BRIGHT,+ MR CHOW SAID.

THE NEW TOWN COVERED AN AREA OF 3 600 HECTARES, HALF OF WHICH WAS BEING DEVELOPED, WHILE THE OTHER HALF WAS RESERVED AS GREEN BELT TO LINK UP WITH THE FOUR ADJACENT COUNTRY PARKS, HE SAID.

HE SAID SHA TIN WAS +NOT BAD+ FOR TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC CONDITIONS HAD GREATLY IMPROVED.

THE SHA TIN SECTION OF THE ROUTE 1 TRUNK ROAD WOULD BE COMPLETED THIS YEAR AND IT WOULD LINK UP WITH THE COASTAL ROAD TO TAI PO WHICH WAS SCHEDULED TO OPEN NEXT YEAR.

ANOTHER ROUTE 5 TRUNK ROAD LINKING SHA TIN WITH TSUEN WAN WAS AT THE DESIGN STAGE.

THE ROAD NETWORK WAS ALSO BEING EXTENDED TO MA ON SHAN AND EVENTUALLY IT MIGHT REACH SAI KUNG, MR CHOW SAID.

SHA TIN HAD BEEN MOST FORTUNATE IN RESPECT OF RECREATIONAL AREAS, HE SAID.

THE SHING MUN RIVER WATER QUALITY HAD IMPROVED RAPIDLY AS A RESULT OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENT AND DREDGING WORKS AND ONE COULD NOW SEE SMALL FISH JUMPING ON THE SURFACE.

A CENTRAL PARK WAS UNDER CONSTRUCTION AT A COST OF OVER \$50 MILLION AND THERE WERE LOTS OF AMENITY SPACES SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE TOWN.

ON MEDICAL SERVICES, MR CHOW SAID SHA TIN HAD SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF.

THE 1 400-BED PRINCE OF WALES HOSPITAL WOULD OPEN IN MAY AND WOULD BE THE LARGEST HOSPITAL IN THE NEW TERRITORIES. IT WOULD PROVIDE EXCELLENT FACILITIES SERVING THE EASTERN NEW TERRITORIES.

BESIDES THE TWO EXISTING CLINICS ALREADY SERVING SHA TIN, ANOTHER THREE CLINICS AND A PRIVATE HOSPITAL WERE UNDER PLANNING.

HE SAID THE TOWN CENTRE, OCCUPYING 20 HECTARES, WOULD BECOME THE FOCAL POINT OF ALL ACTIVITIES IN SHA TIN WHEN IT WAS COMPLETED IN TWO YEARS.

A GOVERNMENT BUILDING THERE HAD JUST BEEN OCCUPIED BY 19 DEPARTMENTS AND BY SHA TIN DISTRICT BOARD.

THE COMMERCIAL CENTRE BEING DEVELOPED BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR WAS DUE FOR COMPLETION THIS YEAR AND WOULD OFFER FOR LETTING 90 000 SQUARE METRES OF FLOOR SPACE.

THE WHOLE AREA WOULD BE LANDSCAPED TO MATCH WITH THE CENTRAL PARK.

MR CHOW SAID, DUE TO ITS GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION, THERE WERE CERTAIN RESTRICTIONS IN PLANNING SHA TIN AS A NEW TOWN.

THE SURROUNDING HILLS MADE SMOKE DISPERSION DIFFICULT AND THE LOW LYING AREAS WERE SUBJECT TO FLOODING AT TIMES.

SHA TIN COULD NOT BE PLANNED AS A PORT WITH HARBOUR FACILITIES AND GODOWNS, AND INDUSTRIES LIKELY TO INDUCE AIR POLLUTION COULD NOT BE ALLOWED.

SEWAGE AND INDUSTRIAL WASTE REQUIRED SPECIAL TREATMENT BEFORE BEING DISCHARGED.

THERE COULD NOT BE A POWER STATION OR INCINERATOR.

REFUSE HAD TO BE TRANSPORTED AWAY AND AN EXPENSIVE SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT WAS NEEDED.

HE SAID DURING THE PAST 10 YEARS GOVERNMENT HAD SPENT \$5.2 BILLION ON DEVELOPING SHA TIN AND THIS FINANCIAL YEAR AND NEXT ANNUAL EXPENDITURE WOULD REACH A PEAK OF AROUND \$1.5 BILLION PER ANNUM.

THE TOTAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, ACCORDING TO CURRENT ESTIMATES, WOULD COST \$16 BILLION.

+SUCH A HUGE SCHEME IS UNMATCHED ANYWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD,+ MR CHOW CONCLUDED.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 1984

- 28 -

JOINT VENTURE CONTRACT SIGNED

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A JAPANESE GARMENT LABEL MANUFACTURING COMPANY HAS EMBARKED ON A JOINT VENTURE WITH A LOCAL COMPANY.

YOKOHAMA TAPE CO. LTD. OF JAPAN AND PACMAN QUALITY AND SERVICE PRINTING CO. IN HONG KONG SIGNED A CONTRACT TODAY (WEDNESDAY) TO SET UP A JOINT VENTURE FACTORY TO MANUFACTURE GARMENT LABELS AND TAGS.

THE AGREEMENT FOLLOWS THE RECENT VISIT BY MR K. ANDO, PRESIDENT OF YOKOHAMA TAPE. MR ANDO WAS A MEMBER OF AN INDUSTRIALIST MISSION WHICH CAME TO HONG KONG LAST MONTH UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT.

AT TODAY'S CONTRACT SIGNING CEREMONY, MR ANDO THANKED THE HONG KONG INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT AND THE JAPAN TRADE CENTRE IN HONG KONG, FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE WHICH HELPED ACCELERATE THE COMPANY'S DECISION ON THE PROJECT.

THE JOINT VENTURE COMPANY WILL START WITH A CAPITAL OF \$1 MILLION, USING THE EXISTING PRODUCTION FACILITIES OF THE HONG KONG COMPANY WITH TECHNOLOGY AND KNOW-HOW PROVIDED BY YOKOHAMA TAPE. IT PLANS TO INSTALL ADVANCED EQUIPMENT AND MACHINES IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS AND TO SEND WORKERS TO JAPAN FOR TRAINING.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

MEASURES ON TAXIS

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ARRANGEMENT HAS BEEN MADE FOR YOUR REPRESENTATIVES TO MEET THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MR ALAN SCOTT AT 11 AM TOMORROW (THURSDAY), WHEN HE WILL ANSWER QUESTIONS ON THE MEASURES ARISING FROM THE 1983 TAXI REVIEW ANNOUNCED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

MR SCOTT WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, MRS AGNES ALLCOCK.

THE EVENT WILL TAKE PLACE AT THE GIS THEATRE, BEACONSFIELD HOUSE, 5TH FLOOR, QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL, HONG KONG.

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 1984

- 29 -

FIRE HAZARDS HOTLINE
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A SUB-REGIONAL OFFICE OF THE FIRE PROTECTION BUREAU HAS BEEN OPENED IN KWAI CHUNG, NEW TERRITORIES, TO SERVE RESIDENTS OF NEARBY AREAS.

+PUBLIC WISHING TO ENQUIRE ABOUT FIRE PROTECTION MATTERS DO NOT HAVE TO TRAVEL ALL THE WAY TO SHA TIN REGIONAL OFFICE AT SHA TIN FIRE STATION,+ A SPOKESMAN FOR THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT SAID TODAY.

THE NEW OFFICE, WHICH IS HEADED BY AN ASSISTANT DIVISIONAL OFFICER IS SITUATED AT KWAI HING GOVERNMENT OFFICES. THE TELEPHONE NUMBER IS 0-256717.

+HOWEVER,+ THE SPOKESMAN SAID, +THE PUBLIC WHO WISH TO REPORT FIRE HAZARDS AND ALL COMPLAINTS CAN MAKE USE OF OUR TELEPHONE HOTLINE 5-281124 WHICH OPERATES 24-HOUR DAILY.+

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KWAI CHUNG FAIR SITES LEASED
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NINETY OUT OF 112 STALL SITES AT THE FORTHCOMING KWAI CHUNG LUNAR NEW YEAR FAIR WERE LEASED AT A PUBLIC AUCTION TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SOME OF THE STALLS FETCHED ABOVE THE UPSET PRICE. THE HIGHEST PRICE FOR A WET GOODS STALL WAS \$640 AND FOR A DRY GOODS STALL WAS \$300.

THE LOWEST PRICE WAS \$100, SAID A SPOKESMAN FOR THE NEW TERRITORIES SERVICES DEPARTMENT.

THE AUCTION, CONDUCTED BY STAFF OF THE KWAI CHUNG URBAN SERVICES OFFICE, TOOK PLACE AT THE KWAI FONG COMMUNITY HALL AT LAI FONG STREET IN KWAI CHUNG.

THE STALLS WILL BE ERECTED AT THE KWAI CHUNG SPORTS GROUND BETWEEN JANUARY 26 AND FEBRUARY 2.

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WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 1984

- 30 -

NOTE TO EDITORS :

ANTI-DRUGS DRIVE

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A TWO-WEEK ANTI-NARCOTICS CAMPAIGN WILL BE LAUNCHED IN KWUN TONG ON SUNDAY (JANUARY 15).

DETAILS OF THE CAMPAIGN WILL BE ANNOUNCED AT A PRESS CONFERENCE AT 3 PM TOMORROW (THURSDAY) IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE KWUN TONG DISTRICT OFFICE ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF THE KWUN TONG BRANCH OFFICES BUILDING AT 6 TUNG YAN STREET.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE ORGANISING COMMITTEE OF THE CAMPAIGN, DR SIU LEUNG-CHOW, WILL CHAIR THE CONFERENCE WITH THE DISTRICT OFFICER, MR KEVIN MAK.

YOU ARE WELCOME TO COVER THE CONFERENCE.

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LEAKAGE TEST IN CENTRAL

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FRESH WATER SUPPLY TO SOME PREMISES IN CENTRAL DISTRICT WILL BE TURNED OFF FROM 11 PM ON SATURDAY (JANUARY 14) TO 6 AM THE FOLLOWING DAY FOR LEAKAGE TESTS.

THE AFFECTED PREMISES ARE BOUNDED BY ABERDEEN STREET, CAINE ROAD, LADDER STREET AND HOLLYWOOD ROAD, INCLUDING KUI IN FONG, LADDER STREET TERRACE AND U LAM TERRACE.

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