



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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BILL AIMED AT ENCOURAGING ELIGIBLE PERSONS TO VOTE

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THE PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (ELECTORAL PROVISIONS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988 IS TO ENCOURAGE AS MANY ELIGIBLE VOTERS AS POSSIBLE TO VOTE IN THE FUNCTIONAL CONSTITUENCY ELECTIONS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN SEPTEMBER THIS YEAR.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID FORD, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL.

"TO THIS END, THE BILL SEEKS TO MAKE SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS TO ENABLE THOSE WHO ARE NOT YET REGISTERED AS ELECTORS ON THE GENERAL ELECTORAL ROLL, BUT WHO ARE ELIGIBLE TO DO SO, TO BE REGISTERED AS ELECTORS ON THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTORAL ROLL," HE SAID.

"THIS WILL IN TURN MAKE THEM ELIGIBLE TO NOMINATE, OR BE NOMINATED AS CANDIDATES.

"THESE ARE SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS BECAUSE, UNDER EXISTING LEGISLATION, A PERSON IS NOT ENTITLED TO BE REGISTERED AS AN ELECTOR FOR THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS UNLESS HE IS ALREADY REGISTERED ON THE GENERAL ELECTORAL ROLL."

SIR DAVID SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE EXAMINING, IN THE LONGER TERM, WHETHER IT SHOULD REMAIN A REQUIREMENT FOR A PERSON TO BE INCLUDED ON THE GENERAL ELECTORAL ROLL BEFORE HE MIGHT BE REGISTERED ON THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTORAL ROLL.

IN THE MEANTIME, THE BILL MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE SPECIAL DISPENSATION - NAMELY THE DISPENSATION FROM PRIOR REGISTRATION ON THE GENERAL ELECTORAL ROLL - WAS ONLY GOOD FOR THIS YEAR'S LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS.

"PERSONS WHO BENEFIT FROM THIS DISPENSATION WILL HAVE TO BE PROPERLY REGISTERED ON THE GENERAL ELECTORAL ROLL AT THE NEXT OPPORTUNITY, IF THEY WISH TO REMAIN ON THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTORAL ROLL AFTER THE FORTHCOMING SEPTEMBER ELECTIONS," HE SAID.

"THOSE CONCERNED ARE THEREFORE BEING ADVISED AND ENCOURAGED TO SUBMIT APPLICATIONS FOR REGISTRATION ON THE GENERAL ELECTORAL ROLL AT THE SAME TIME AS THEY SUBMIT THEIR APPLICATIONS FOR REGISTRATION ON THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTORAL ROLL."

SIR DAVID SAID THE SECOND PURPOSE OF THE BILL WAS TO PROVIDE FOR THE AUTOMATIC ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE BY THE ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND TO REDUCE FROM 30 DAYS TO SEVEN DAYS THE PERIOD DURING WHICH SUCH MEMBERS MIGHT DECIDE NOT TO ACCEPT OFFICE.

/"THE PURPOSE

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"THE PURPOSE OF DOING SO IS TO SHORTEN THE ELECTION TIMETABLE, AND TO MAKE IT EASIER TO MEET THE REQUIREMENT IN THE ROYAL INSTRUCTIONS WHEREBY THE PERIOD BETWEEN THE LAST SITTING OF A SESSION OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND THE FIRST SITTING OF THE NEXT SESSION IS NOT TO EXCEED THREE MONTHS," HE SAID.

"THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT, TO PROVIDE FOR AUTOMATIC ACCEPTANCE UNLESS NON-ACCEPTANCE IS NOTIFIED TO THE GOVERNOR WITHIN SEVEN DAYS OF PUBLICATION OF ELECTION RESULTS IN THE GAZETTE, WILL MAKE IT SIMPLER TO KEEP TO THIS TIMETABLE.

"SEPARATE CONSIDERATION WILL BE GIVEN TO WHETHER SIMILAR ARRANGEMENTS SHOULD BE INTRODUCED FOR MUNICIPAL COUNCIL AND DISTRICT BOARD ELECTIONS."

SIR DAVID SAID THE BILL ALSO AMENDED THE POST OFFICE REGULATIONS, BY ADDING REFERENCE TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (ELECTORAL PROVISIONS) (PROCEDURE) REGULATIONS, SO AS TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT CANDIDATES IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ELECTIONS QUALIFIED FOR FREE POSTAGE UNDER THE POST OFFICE ORDINANCE.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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SECURITIES BILL GIVEN SECOND READING

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A BILL EMPOWERING THE COMMISSIONER FOR SECURITIES TO RELEASE TO SPECIFIED PERSONS INFORMATION OBTAINED IN THE COURSE OF HIS DUTIES WAS READ A SECOND TIME IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE SECURITIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, SAID THAT AN AMENDMENT TO SECTION 19 OF THE SECURITIES ORDINANCE WOULD PERMIT GREATER ASSISTANCE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES CONCERNED WITH SECURITIES MARKETS IN HONG KONG.

IT WOULD ALSO PERMIT INCREASED CO-OPERATION WITH OVERSEAS REGULATORY AUTHORITIES AND WOULD BRING THE PROVISIONS OF THE ORDINANCE INTO LINE WITH THE RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF THE BANKING ORDINANCE, HE SAID.

/MEMBERS OF

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MEMBERS OF THE SECURITIES COMMISSION, THE COMMISSIONER FOR SECURITIES AND HIS STAFF, AND INSPECTORS APPOINTED UNDER THE SECURITIES ORDINANCE WERE REQUIRED TO OBSERVE THE SECRECY PROVISION IN SECTION 19.

"THE RESTRICTIVE NATURE OF THIS SECTION HAS MEANT THAT THE COMMISSION AND THE COMMISSIONER HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO OFFER THEIR FULL ASSISTANCE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN HONG KONG AND TO OVERSEAS REGULATORY AUTHORITIES," MR JACOBS SAID.

"NOR HAS IT BEEN POSSIBLE FOR THE COMMISSION TO RELEASE INFORMATION OBTAINED BY INSPECTORS TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN HONG KONG.

"THIS SITUATION IS UNSATISFACTORY.

"AS THE FINANCIAL SERVICES INDUSTRY BECOMES INCREASINGLY INTEGRATED, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE COMMISSIONER AND ANY INSPECTORS APPOINTED UNDER THE ORDINANCE SHOULD BE ABLE TO CO-OPERATE FULLY WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES.

"MOREOVER, WITH THE INCREASING INTERNATIONALISATION OF SECURITIES MARKETS, IT IS BECOMING ESSENTIAL FOR REGULATORY AUTHORITIES IN DIFFERENT JURISDICTIONS TO BE ABLE TO CO-OPERATE FULLY WITH EACH OTHER IN THE GENERAL INTEREST OF INVESTORS."

MR JACOBS SAID THAT THESE CHANGES IN THE MARKET HAD LED TO THE RELAXATION OF THE SECRECY PROVISIONS IN THE BANKING ORDINANCE IN 1986, WHICH ALLOWED THE COMMISSIONER OF BANKING TO CO-OPERATE WITH DOMESTIC AND OVERSEAS AGENCIES.

HE PROPOSED THAT THE RELEVANT PROVISIONS IN THE SECURITIES ORDINANCE BE BROUGHT INTO LINE WITH THOSE IN THE BANKING ORDINANCE SO AS TO PERMIT GREATER DISCRETION IN THE DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION IN SPECIFIED CIRCUMSTANCES, WHILE PRESERVING THE GENERAL OBLIGATION OF SECRECY.

THE BILL WOULD SPECIFY THE PERSONS TO WHOM AND, IN SOME CASES, THE PURPOSES FOR WHICH SUCH INFORMATION MIGHT BE DISCLOSED BY THE COMMISSIONER FOR SECURITIES.

SUCH PURPOSES WOULD INCLUDE ANY INVESTIGATION OR CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS IN HONG KONG, OR CIVIL PROCEEDINGS UNDER THE ORDINANCE.

INFORMATION MIGHT ALSO BE DISCLOSED TO THE INSIDER DEALING TRIBUNAL AND TO THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE SECRETARY FOR MONETARY AFFAIRS, AND THE REGISTRAR GENERAL.

/IT MIGHT

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IT MIGHT ALSO BE DISCLOSED TO ANY PUBLIC OFFICER AUTHORISED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE COMMODITIES TRADING COMMISSION, THE FUTURES EXCHANGE, OVERSEAS REGULATORY AUTHORITIES AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS CONCERNED WITH THE SECURITIES AND COMMODITIES MARKETS, AND TO PROFESSIONAL AND SEMI-PROFESSIONAL BODIES SPECIFIED BY THE SECURITIES COMMISSION.

PROVISION WOULD ALSO BE MADE TO ALLOW THE DISCLOSURE OF NOTES AND INFORMATION OBTAINED BY INSPECTORS IN THE COURSE OF INVESTIGATION TO SPECIFIED PUBLIC OFFICERS AND BODIES.

TO ENSURE THAT PERSONS RECEIVING SUCH INFORMATION WOULD NOT FURTHER DISCLOSE WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE PROPER AUTHORITIES, MR JACOBS SAID A NEW PROVISION WOULD STATE THAT THE ORIGINAL RECIPIENT OF INFORMATION AND ANY THIRD PARTY MIGHT NOT DISCLOSE WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE SECURITIES COMMISSION OR COMMISSIONER AS APPROPRIATE.

A SUB-SECTION OF THE ORDINANCE WOULD ALSO BE AMENDED TO MAKE ANY SUCH UNAUTHORISED DISCLOSURE AN OFFENCE, HE SAID.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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OBJECTS OF INSURANCE COMPANIES BILL OUTLINED

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THE INSURANCE COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988 HAS THREE MAIN OBJECTS, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, MR JACOBS SAID FIRSTLY IT CLARIFIED THE RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE INSURANCE AUTHORITY ON THE DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION TO DOMESTIC AND OVERSEAS REGULATORY AUTHORITIES.

SECONDLY, IT GAVE THE AUTHORITY A DISCRETION TO DETERMINE WHEN CONDITIONS IMPOSED AT THE TIME OF AUTHORISATION OF AN INSURANCE COMPANY SHOULD BE REVOKED.

THIRDLY, IT EMPOWERED THE AUTHORITY TO WITHDRAW AUTHORISATION WHERE AN AUTHORISED INSURER HAD CEASED TO CARRY ON ANY CLASS OR PART OF ANY CLASS OF INSURANCE BUSINESS.

/MR JACOBS

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MR JACOBS SAID THAT THERE WERE CURRENTLY NO PROVISIONS IN THE INSURANCE COMPANIES ORDINANCE GOVERNING OFFICIAL SECRECY OR THE DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION.

"THE INSURANCE AUTHORITY'S POSITION IS THEREFORE UNCERTAIN AND THIS CAUSES PROBLEMS FOR THOSE INVOLVED ON THE REGULATORY SIDE," HE SAID, ADDING THAT "CLAUSE 6 INSERTS NEW PROVISIONS ON SECRECY, DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION AND EXAMINATION BY OUTSIDE AUTHORITIES."

MR JACOBS EXPLAINED THAT THESE NEW PROVISIONS CREATED A GENERAL PROHIBITION AGAINST THE DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION OBTAINED UNDER THE ORDINANCE AND, NOTWITHSTANDING THAT PROHIBITION, SPECIFIED IN WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES AND TO WHOM SUCH INFORMATION MIGHT BE DISCLOSED.

THIS WOULD ENABLE THE INSURANCE AUTHORITY TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION ON AUTHORISED INSURERS WITH REGULATORY BODIES IN HONG KONG AND INSURANCE SUPERVISORY AUTHORITIES OVERSEAS IN THE INTERESTS OF POLICY HOLDERS OR POTENTIAL POLICY HOLDERS.

IT WOULD ALSO BRING THE ORDINANCE INTO LINE WITH THE RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF THE BANKING ORDINANCE.

"ANY COMPANY WISHING TO CARRY ON ANY CLASS OF INSURANCE BUSINESS MUST FIRST SEEK AND OBTAIN AUTHORISATION FROM THE INSURANCE AUTHORITY," HE SAID.

HE FURTHER POINTED OUT THAT SECTION 8 OF THE ORDINANCE ENABLED THE AUTHORITY TO IMPOSE CONDITIONS, AS NECESSARY, FOR THE BETTER REGULATION OF THE INSURER AND THE PROTECTION OF POLICY HOLDERS, WHEREAS SECTION 12 PROVIDED THAT ANY SUCH CONDITIONS WOULD AUTOMATICALLY CEASE TO HAVE EFFECT FIVE YEARS AFTER THE DATE OF AUTHORISATION.

HOWEVER, THE AUTHORITY DID NEED TO IMPOSE CONDITIONS WHICH WERE OF A CONTINUING NATURE FOR THE PROTECTION OF POLICY HOLDERS.

MOREOVER, CLAUSE 3 AMENDED SECTION 12 TO GIVE THE AUTHORITY A DISCRETION TO DETERMINE WHEN CONDITIONS IMPOSED UNDER AUTHORISATION SHOULD BE REVOKED.

THIS WOULD ALLOW A DISTINCTION TO BE DRAWN BETWEEN CONDITIONS IMPOSED FOR AN INITIAL PERIOD AND THOSE INTENDED TO BE OF A CONTINUING NATURE.

IN ADDITION, HE SAID THAT SECTION 40 OF THE ORDINANCE EMPOWERED THE INSURANCE AUTHORITY TO WITHDRAW AUTHORISATION WHERE AN AUTHORISED INSURER CEASED TO CARRY ON ANY INSURANCE BUSINESS, OR INSURANCE BUSINESS OF ANY CLASS, OR HAD NOT COMMENCED TO CARRY ON INSURANCE BUSINESS OF ANY CLASS WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF HIS BEING AUTHORISED FOR THAT CLASS.

/ "AS THE

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"AS THE LAW NOW STANDS, THE AUTHORITY HAS NO POWER TO WITHDRAW THE AUTHORISATION OF A TYPE OF INSURANCE BUSINESS WHICH IS NOT A 'CLASS' OF INSURANCE WITHIN THE MEANING OF THE FIRST SCHEDULE TO THE ORDINANCE. THIS HAS CAUSED PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES," MR JACOBS ADDED.

THEREFORE CLAUSE 5 AMENDED SECTION 40 TO ENABLE THE INSURANCE AUTHORITY TO WITHDRAW AUTHORISATION FOR A PART OF A CLASS OF INSURANCE BUSINESS IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES SET OUT IN THE ORDINANCE.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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MEASURE AIMED AT AVOIDING UNNECESSARY TRIAL DELAY
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THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988 ADDRESSES A PROBLEM WHICH CAN LEAD TO UNNECESSARY DELAY IN CRIMINAL TRIALS, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON JEREMY MATHEWS, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR MATHEWS EXPLAINED THAT SECTION 65B OF THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE ORDINANCE ALLOWED THE ADMISSION INTO EVIDENCE OF WRITTEN STATEMENTS IN A CRIMINAL PROCEEDING, OTHER THAN A COMMITTAL.

CERTAIN CONDITIONS MUST BE MET. ONE WAS THAT UNDER SECTION 65B(3)(C) A STATEMENT IN A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH, MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION CERTIFIED BY THE COURT TRANSLATOR.

"THE REQUIREMENT THAT AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION BE CERTIFIED BY THE COURT TRANSLATOR CAN CAUSE PROBLEMS AT THE TRIAL," HE SAID.

"A STATEMENT MAY BE AGREED BY THE PARTIES AND A TRANSLATION AVAILABLE, BUT IT CANNOT BE ADMITTED IN EVIDENCE UNTIL A CERTIFIED TRANSLATION IS OBTAINED.

"DELAY IS EXPERIENCED WHILE THE COURT TRANSLATION SERVICE PRODUCES A CERTIFIED TRANSLATION.

"THE USUAL LENGTH OF TIME REQUIRED FOR CERTIFICATION OF TRANSLATIONS TO BE USED BY THE HIGH COURT IS 21 DAYS. IN CASES WHERE THERE ARE LENGTHY AND BULKY DOCUMENTS THE CERTIFICATION OF TRANSLATION TAKES MUCH LONGER."

/MR MATHEWS

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MR MATHEWS SAID THE BILL AMENDED SECTION 65B(3)(C) TO REMOVE THE REQUIREMENT FOR A CERTIFIED TRANSLATION WHERE THE PARTIES AGREED.

HE SAID THE SECTION, AS AMENDED, WOULD PROVIDE THAT IF A STATEMENT TENDERED IN EVIDENCE WAS MADE IN A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH, IT SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION, WHICH SHOULD BE CERTIFIED, UNLESS OTHERWISE AGREED BY OR ON BEHALF OF THE PROSECUTOR AND THE DEFENDANT (OR, IF MORE THAN ONE, ALL THE DEFENDANTS).

"WHERE ALL THE PARTIES ARE IN AGREEMENT THAT AN AVAILABLE TRANSLATION IS SATISFACTORY, NO USEFUL PURPOSE IS SERVED BY REQUIRING THE COURT TO CERTIFY THE TRANSLATION, AND TIME MAY BE LOST AND COST INCURRED WHILE WAITING FOR IT TO DO SO," HE SAID.

MR MATHEWS SAID THE AMENDMENT WAS UNANIMOUSLY RECOMMENDED BY A COMMITTEE, WHICH INCLUDED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BAR ASSOCIATION AND THE LAW SOCIETY, SET UP BY THE FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE TO EXAMINE QUESTIONS OF CRIMINAL PROCEDURE.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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DETERRENT EFFECT OF FINES REQUIRES STRENGTHENING

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THE DETERRENT EFFECT OF PENALTIES UNDER THE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE AND ITS SUBSIDIARY LEGISLATION HAS DECLINED OVER THE YEARS, AND A REVIEW LAST YEAR SHOWED THAT FINES NEEDED TO BE INCREASED TO MAINTAIN THEIR VALUE IN REAL TERMS.

THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE EMPLOYMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988.

MR BRIDGE EXPLAINED THAT THE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE WAS ENACTED IN 1968 AND THE MAXIMUM PENALTIES FOR CONTRAVENTION OF ITS PROVISIONS WERE SET AT \$5,000.

A NUMBER OF NEW PROVISIONS HAD BEEN ADDED TO THE ORDINANCE OVER THE YEARS, MOST NOTABLY PROVISIONS FOR SEVERANCE PAY, MATERNITY PROTECTION, ANNUAL LEAVE WITH PAY, SICKNESS ALLOWANCE AND LONG SERVICE PAY.

MAXIMUM PENALTIES UNDER THESE PROVISIONS HAD BEEN SET BETWEEN \$1,000 AND \$5,000.

IN 1973 A NEW PART WAS ADDED TO THE ORDINANCE TO COVER EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES AND THE EMPLOYMENT AGENCY REGULATIONS WERE MADE.

MAXIMUM PENALTIES UNDER THIS NEW PART OF THE ORDINANCE RANGED FROM \$5,000 TO \$10,000 AND UNDER THE REGULATIONS WERE \$2,000.

THE EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN REGULATIONS WERE MADE IN 1979. AND THE WOMEN AND YOUNG PERSONS (INDUSTRY) REGULATIONS IN 1980.

OFFENCES RELATING TO THE ILLEGAL EMPLOYMENT OF CHILDREN CARRIED MAXIMUM FINES OF BETWEEN \$5,000 AND \$10,000 AND BREACHES OF THE WOMEN AND YOUNG PERSONS (INDUSTRY) REGULATIONS CARRIED FINES OF BETWEEN \$1,000 AND \$5,000.

MR BRIDGE SAID THAT IN PROPOSING THE NEW LEVELS OF FINES ACCOUNT HAS BEEN TAKEN OF INFLATION OF ABOUT 400 PER CENT AND WAGE INCREASES OF ABOUT 700 PER CENT OVER THE PERIOD SINCE 1968.

"THERE ARE NOW FIVE MAXIMUM LEVELS OF FINES, AND IT IS PROPOSED TO REDUCE THESE TO THREE: \$5,000, \$10,000 AND \$20,000," HE SAID.

"WHEN REVIEWING THE LEVELS OF FINES WE HAVE ALSO CONSIDERED INTRODUCING CUSTODIAL SENTENCES FOR VERY SERIOUS OFFENCES. PROPOSALS ARE BEING DEVELOPED AND I HOPE TO PUT THESE TO THIS COUNCIL BEFORE THE END OF THIS LEGISLATIVE SESSION."

THE PURPOSE OF THE BILL WAS TO INCREASE FINES SO AS TO RESTORE THEIR ORIGINAL DETERRENT EFFECT, AND THE MEASURE HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD, HE ADDED.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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POSTAGE STAMPS TO RAISE MONEY FOR CHARITY
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THE EFFECT OF THE POST OFFICE (AMENDMENT) BILL IS TO PERMIT THE POSTMASTER GENERAL, WITH THE PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL, TO ISSUE POSTAGE STAMPS WHICH INCIDENTALLY ALSO RAISE MONEY FOR CHARITY.

THE SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND INFORMATION, THE HON PETER TSAO, SAID THIS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL WHEN MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL.

HE SAID IT WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION THAT IF THE BILL WAS PASSED THERE SHOULD BE A SPECIAL ISSUE OF CHARITY STAMPS LATER THIS YEAR TO RAISE FUNDS ON BEHALF OF THE COMMUNITY CHEST.

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"1988 IS, AS MEMBERS WILL BE AWARE, THE CHEST'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY AND THE CHEST IS THE UMBRELLA ORGANISATION FOR MANY OF HONG KONG'S MOST DESERVING CAUSES," HE SAID.

THE IDEA WAS THAT STAMPS SHOULD SHOW BOTH THE POSTAGE AMOUNT AND, SEPARATELY, THE DONATION ELEMENT.

HE SAID THAT MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WOULD HAVE THE CHOICE OF BUYING THE SLIGHTLY MORE EXPENSIVE CHARITY STAMPS OR STAMPS AT NORMAL PRICES.

"THERE WILL BE NO PRESSURE ON PEOPLE BUYING STAMPS TO OPT FOR THE CHARITY ONES," HE SAID.

DEBATE ON THE MOTION WAS ADJOURNED.

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BILL ENHANCES KUK'S CAPABILITY

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THE HEUNG YEE KUK (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988 ENHANCES THE CAPABILITY OF THE HEUNG YEE KUK IN COPING WITH THE CHANGING NEEDS AND ENABLES IT TO DRAW FROM A WIDER POOL OF AVAILABLE TALENTS TO IMPROVE ITS EFFICIENCY IN SERVING THE COMMUNITY, THE HON CHEUNG YAN-LUNG SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE AMENDMENT BILL IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR CHEUNG NOTED THAT THE 15 ADDITIONAL CO-OPTED COUNCILLORS OF THE KUK PROPOSED IN THE BILL COULD NOT BE MEMBERS OF A RURL COMMITTEE BUT WERE OTHERWISE UNRESTRICTED AS TO THEIR ELIGIBILITY FOR OFFICE.

"THIS IS A CLEAR INDICATION OF THE KUK'S DETERMINATION TO CHANGE ITS RULES," HE SAID.

"IF TALENTED PEOPLE ARE TO BECOME CO-OPTED COUNCILLORS ONLY BY WAY OF ELECTION OR NOMINATION ON A DISTRICT BASIS, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THE HEUNG YEE KUK TO DRAW BENEFIT FROM THE TALENT OF INDIVIDUALS OF HIGH CALIBRE.

"HOWEVER, IT IS NECESSARY THAT THESE CO-OPTED COUNCILLORS SHOULD HAVE CERTAIN LINKS WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN THE NEW TERRITORIES."

/AS REGARDS

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AS REGARDS THE INTRODUCTION OF THE OFFICES OF NON-VOTING PERMANENT ADVISERS AND THE NEW PROVISION TO DISQUALIFY MEMBERS WHO FAIL TO REGULARLY ATTEND THE KUK'S MEETINGS, MR CHEUNG SAID THAT THESE WERE CONSIDERED AS TANGIBLE MEASURES TO ENHANCE THE KUK'S EFFICIENCY AND RESPONSIBILITY, IN A BID TO PREVENT MEMBERS FROM HOLDING THEIR POSITIONS MERELY IN NAME.

HE SAID THAT CONSEQUENTIAL UPON THE EXPANSION OF MEMBERSHIP BY 15 CO-OPTED COUNCILLORS, AMENDMENTS TO THE PROVISIONS REGARDING THE KUK'S MEETINGS AND ITS ELECTION PROCEDURES WERE ALSO NECESSARY.

MR CHEUNG SAID HE WOULD, THEREFORE, MOVE SOME AMENDMENTS TO THE BILL AT THE COMMITTEE STAGE TO ENSURE THAT THESE PROCEDURES WOULD BE CLEARLY PROVIDED IN LAW.

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TWO BILLS PASSED

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THE HEUNG YEE KUK (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988 AND THE EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS FUND (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988 WERE PASSED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SIX OTHER BILLS WERE READ A SECOND TIME AND DEBATE ON THEM WAS ADJOURNED.

THESE WERE THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (ELECTORAL PROVISIONS) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988, THE INSURANCE COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988, THE SECURITIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988, THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988, THE EMPLOYMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988 AND THE POST OFFICE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1988.

THE COUNCIL ALSO APPROVED FIVE MOTIONS, ALL MOVED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY AND RELATING TO THE RAISING OF CERTAIN FEES.

THE MOTIONS CONCERNED THE MATRIMONIAL CAUSES (FEES) RULES 1988, THE MAGISTRATES (FEES) REGULATIONS 1988, THE CRIMINAL APPEAL (AMENDMENT) RULES 1988, THE COMPANIES (FEES AND PERCENTAGES) (AMENDMENT) ORDER 1988 AND THE BANKRUPTCY (FEES AND PERCENTAGES) (AMENDMENT) ORDER 1988.

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TIME TO REVIEW SCOPE OF CONSUMER COUNCIL'S WORK

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THE TIME HAS COME TO REVIEW THE SCOPE OF THE CONSUMER COUNCIL'S WORK TO SEE WHETHER IT ADEQUATELY COVERS THE AMBIT REGULARLY AFFECTING CONSUMERS, THE HON SELINA CHOW SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IT WAS ONLY WITH CONSTANT ASSESSMENT AND ALIGNMENT THAT THE CONSUMER COUNCIL WAS ABLE TO MEET THE DEMAND MADE ON IT BY THE COMMUNITY, MRS CHOW SAID WHEN TABLING THE 1986-87 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE COUNCIL, OF WHICH SHE IS CHAIRMAN.

APART FROM THE ONGOING RESPONSIBILITIES IN PRODUCT TESTING, RESEARCH AND SURVEY, SCHOOL AND PUBLIC EDUCATION, INFORMATION AND COMPLAINTS MONITORING, DISTRICT SERVICE AND LEGISLATION STUDIES, THE CONSUMER COUNCIL'S WORK HAD EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS WITH THE CHANGES THAT CHARACTERISED HONG KONG, SHE SAID.

"MORE EXPECTATION HAS BEEN GENERATED, AND WE HAVE HAD TO MOVE INTO NEW AREAS OF ACTIVITIES," SHE SAID.

WITH IMPROVEMENT OF STANDARD OF LIVING CAME LOCAL ENQUIRIES AND COMPLAINTS CONCERNING NEW AREAS OF ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES FOR WHICH THE CONSUMER COUNCIL WOULD HAVE TO ADOPT NEW APPROACHES AND ACQUIRE OUTSIDE EXPERTISE, SHE ADDED.

MRS CHOW SAID HONG KONG'S BUOYANT ECONOMY HAD STIMULATED MORE VIBRANT CONSUMER ACTIVITIES, AND THIS HAD IN TURN LED TO MORE COMPETITION IN THE MARKET PLACE.

"BOMBARDED BY IMAGES AND JARGONS OF ADVERTISING, THE CONSUMER MUST BE SURE OF HIS RIGHT TO CORRECT INFORMATION AT ALL TIMES," SHE SAID.

ON CONSUMER LEGISLATION, MRS CHOW SAID THERE WAS NO DOUBT THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOWADAYS MUCH MORE SENSITIVE TO THE NEED FOR CONSUMER PROTECTION LEGISLATION.

SHE NOTED THAT APART FROM THE RECOMMENDATIONS INITIATED BY THE CONSUMER COUNCIL'S LEGISLATION COMMITTEE CHAIRED BY THE HON CHUNG PUI-LAM, THE CONSUMER COUNCIL WAS ASSISTED IN ITS EFFORTS BY THE LAW REFORM COMMISSION AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS SUCH AS THE MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.

"IT IS FAIR TO SAY THAT THE TIME TAKEN FOR THE PASSAGE AND ENACTMENT OF SUCH LAWS IS CONSIDERABLY SHORTER THAN THREE OR FOUR YEARS AGO," SHE SAID.

/SHE ADDED

SHE ADDED THAT A MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO PROCEED WITH PREPARATIONS TO INTRODUCE CONSUMER SAFETY LEGISLATION, WHICH HAD BEEN ANNOUNCED BY THE GOVERNOR, SIR DAVID WILSON, WHEN HE OPENED THE "CONSUMERS' RIGHT TO KNOW" CAMPAIGN LAST SATURDAY.

"ALTHOUGH IT IS ENVISAGED THAT SUCH A LAW WOULD ONLY BE USED IN RARE CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN THE SALE OF PRODUCTS POSING AN IMMEDIATE HEALTH AND SAFETY THREAT WOULD BE CONTROLLED OR BANNED, ITS IMPORTANCE NEVERTHELESS WARRANTS PRIORITY TREATMENT," SHE SAID.

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MTR EASTERN HARBOUR EXTENSION WILL HELP EASE CONGESTION
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THE EASTERN HARBOUR CROSSING, DUE TO OPEN BEFORE THE END OF NEXT YEAR, WILL EXTEND THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY SYSTEM FROM KWUN TONG TO QUARRY BAY, PROVIDING RELIEF FOR MORNING PEAK HOUR PASSENGERS ON THE CURRENTLY OVERCROWDED NATHAN ROAD CORRIDOR.

THIS WAS SAID BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, WHEN TABLING THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY CORPORATION ANNUAL REPORT 1987 AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR JACOBS NOTED THAT IN 1987, THE FIRST FULL YEAR OF OPERATING THE COMPLETED MTR SYSTEM, THE CORPORATION CARRIED 593 MILLION PASSENGERS, REPRESENTING AN INCREASE OF 11.4 PER CENT OVER THE 532 MILLION CARRIED IN 1986.

"THE CORPORATION'S TOTAL REVENUE FROM FARES ROSE BY 18 PER CENT TO \$1,850 MILLION, AND ADDITIONAL REVENUE, FROM ACTIVITIES SUCH AS ADVERTISING AND INVESTMENT PROPERTIES, ROSE BY 20 PER CENT TO \$202 MILLION.

"THE CORPORATION'S PROFIT BEFORE INTEREST AND FINANCE CHARGES INCREASED BY 38 PER CENT FROM \$472 MILLION IN 1986 TO \$651 MILLION IN 1987.

"SUCH RETURNS DEMONSTRATE THAT THE CORPORATION CONTINUES TO KEEP TIGHT CONTROL OF ITS COSTS," HE SAID.

MR JACOBS POINTED OUT THAT THE CORPORATION'S MAJOR INVESTMENT IN THE THREE RAILWAY LINES, FUNDED PRINCIPALLY BY DEBT, WAS COMPLETED.

/"LAST YEAR

"LAST YEAR THE CORPORATION'S AGGREGATE DEBT REDUCED BY \$1,000 MILLION TO \$18,179 MILLION.

"HOWEVER, INTEREST AND FINANCE COSTS FOR THE YEAR AT \$1,400 MILLION WERE LITTLE CHANGED FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR," HE SAID.

"THE RECEIPT OF PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PROFITS OF \$720 MILLION FOLLOWED THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF SEVERAL JOINT VENTURES, INCLUDING THAT OF THE KORNHILL DEVELOPMENT AT QUARRY BAY."

HE CAUTIONED THAT WHILST PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT PROFITS HAD BEEN AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF FUNDS FOR THE CORPORATION, THEY WERE NOT A SECURE FORM OF RECURRENT REVENUE.

"THEY CONTINUE, HOWEVER, TO MAKE A VERY USEFUL CONTRIBUTION TO THE CORPORATION'S FINANCIAL POSITION."

NOTING THAT THE CORPORATION'S NET LOSS FOR 1987 WAS SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED TO \$78 MILLION COMPARED WITH \$470 MILLION IN 1986, MR JACOBS SAID THE CORPORATION'S PROJECTIONS LOOKED FORWARD TO A GROWTH IN OPERATING PROFITS WELL ON SCHEDULE TO COVER INTEREST COSTS IN THE EARLY NINETIES AND THEREAFTER TO RETIRE PROGRESSIVELY THE CORPORATION'S DEBT.

"BUT EVEN WITH A REDUCING DEBT, AN ACTIVE FINANCING PROGRAMME WAS NECESSARY DURING 1987, MAINLY TO REFINANCE MATURING AND EXISTING FACILITIES AT LOWER COST AND FOR LONGER PERIODS.

"THIS WAS MATERIALLY ASSISTED BY THE CORPORATION'S SUCCESS IN OBTAINING VERY FAVOURABLE CREDIT RATINGS FROM INTERNATIONAL RATING AGENCIES.

"THESE RATINGS ARE IMPORTANT, BOTH FOR THE CORPORATION AND FOR HONG KONG, IN DEMONSTRATING THE INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL COMMUNITY'S CONFIDENCE IN THE CORPORATION AND ITS ECONOMIC WELL BEING AS A PRINCIPAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT OPERATOR IN HONG KONG," HE ADDED.

"FOLLOWING THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL'S AGREEMENT TO INCREASE THE CORPORATION'S AUTHORISED SHARE CAPITAL BY THE ISSUE OF SHARES WITH A NOMINAL VALUE OF \$5,000 MILLION IN PARTLY PAID FORM, \$1,500 MILLION WAS PAID IN DECEMBER 1985 AND THE SECOND TRANCHE OF \$1,000 MILLION ON MARCH 31, 1988, IN ACCORDANCE WITH FINANCE COMMITTEE'S APPROVAL.

"ON THE BASIS OF CURRENT FORECASTS, BOTH THE BOARD OF THE CORPORATION AND I HOPE THAT IT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY TO REQUEST FINANCE COMMITTEE TO APPROVE PAYMENT OF THE REMAINING \$2,500 MILLION," HE NOTED.

ON FUTURE PLANNING, MR JACOBS SAID THE CORPORATION WAS ALSO CONSIDERING PROPOSALS FOR A POSSIBLE EXTENSION TO JUNK BAY NEW TOWN.

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LONG AND SHORT-TERM MEASURES TO TACKLE WATER POLLUTION

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THE GOVERNMENT REMAINED VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE CONDITION OF HONG KONG'S BATHING BEACHES AND MEASURES RANGING FROM SHORT TO LONG TERM WOULD BE TAKEN TO ENSURE THAT BEACHES AND COASTAL WATERS WERE PROTECTED AGAINST POLLUTION.

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHEUNG YAN-LUNG, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE POLLUTION WAS MAINLY CAUSED BY DISCHARGES OF SEWAGE FROM INADEQUATE OR BADLY OPERATED TREATMENT FACILITIES AND THE PROBLEM WAS COMPOUNDED BY RAPID POPULATION INCREASES IN CERTAIN AREAS.

"THE LONG TERM SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM IS THE PROVISION OF PROPER SEWAGE DISPOSAL FACILITIES SO THAT EXISTING AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS CAN BE CONNECTED TO MAIN PUBLIC SEWERS.

"TO ACHIEVE THIS END, AN OVERAL SEWAGE STRATEGY FOR THE WHOLE TERRITORY, AND MASTER PLANS FOR DIFFERENT AREAS (SUCH AS THE SOUTH OF HONG KONG ISLAND) ARE BEING DEVELOPED UNDER SEPARATE CONSULTANCIES.

"TO IMPLEMENT THESE PLANS WILL REQUIRE AN ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE OF SOME \$10 BILLION AND A PHASED PROGRAMME OF WORKS OVER 10 YEARS."

ON THE MEDIUM TERM SOLUTION, MR CHAMBERS SAID IT WAS NECESSARY TO TACKLE AT SOURCE THE SEWAGE POLLUTION PROBLEMS OF BATHING BEACHES USING THE WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ORDINANCE.

"THE ORDINANCE IS CURRENTLY IMPLEMENTED ONLY IN THE TOLO HARBOUR AREA, WHICH IS AT PRESENT HONG KONG'S ONLY WATER CONTROL ZONE," HE SAID.

"WE PLAN TO DECLARE THE SOUTHERN WATERS AS THE SECOND WATER CONTROL ZONE LATER THIS YEAR, AND THIS WILL COVER ALL OF THE 22 BATHING BEACHES IN THE SOUTHERN AND ISLANDS DISTRICTS.

"INITIALLY, ALL SEWAGE TREATMENT FACILITIES IN THIS PROPOSED WATER CONTROL ZONE, INCLUDING SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANTS AND SEPTIC TANKS, WILL BE CONTROLLED. LATER, INDUSTRIAL EFFLUENTS WILL ALSO BE INCLUDED."

SIMILAR CONTROLS WOULD EVENTUALLY BE EXTENDED TO THE REST OF THE COASTAL WATERS OF HONG KONG, FOLLOWING THEIR DECLARATION AS WATER CONTROL ZONES, MR CHAMBERS SAID.

"IN ADDITION, SHORT TERM WORKS TO INTERCEPT AND DIVERT THE STORMWATER DRAINS RUNNING INTO REPULSE BAY, STANLEY MAIN AND TUNG WAN BEACHES ARE PLANNED TO BE CARRIED OUT THIS YEAR, AT A TOTAL ESTIMATED COST OF \$6.2 MILLION," HE CONTINUED.

/ "THESE SURFACE

"THESE SURFACE WATER DRAINS ARE POLLUTED BY IMPROPERLY TREATED SEWAGE DISCHARGED BY BUILDINGS IN THE BEACH HINTERLANDS, AND THESE WORKS WILL DIVERT POLLUTING DRAINS AWAY FROM THE MAIN SWIMMING AREAS.

"OTHER BEACHES ARE BEING INVESTIGATED WITH A VIEW TO DEVELOPING SIMILAR SHORT TERM SCHEMES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE WATER."

MR CHAMBERS ADDED THAT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INITIAL PHASE OF THE LIVESTOCK WASTE CONTROL SCHEME IN JUNE WOULD HELP TO IMPROVE THE WATER QUALITY OF SILVERMINE BAY AND ANGLERS' BEACHES, WHICH WERE AT PRESENT SERIOUSLY POLLUTED BY LIVESTOCK WASTE AND CONSIDERED UNSUITABLE FOR SWIMMING.

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LEGISLATION SOON TO CONTROL PRIVATE HOMES FOR ELDERLY

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED, FOLLOWING CONSULTATION WITH VARIOUS BODIES INCLUDING THE SOCIAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THE OMELCO WELFARE PANEL, TO INTRODUCE LEGISLATION AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE TO CONTROL ASPECTS OF THE OPERATION OF PRIVATE HOMES FOR THE EDLERLY.

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HUI YIN-FAT.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THE TARGET DATE WAS TWO YEARS FROM NOW, IN MID-1990.

"INITIALLY THE STANDARDS REQUIRED WILL BE SET AT A REALISTIC LEVEL, TO AVOID AS FAR AS POSSIBLE SITUATIONS WHERE HOMES ARE FORCED TO CLOSE OR REDUCE NUMBERS, MAKING ELDERLY PEOPLE HOMELESS," HE ADDED.

MR CHAMBERS NOTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN CONCERN, BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT, ABOUT STANDARDS IN THESE PRIVATE HOMES.

"TOWARDS THE END OF LAST YEAR, THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTED A REVIEW OF THE EXTENT OF COMPLIANCE BY OPERATORS OF SUCH HOMES WITH THE VOLUNTARY CODE OF PRACTICE WHICH WAS INTRODUCED IN 1986 ON THE ADVICE OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE," HE SAID.

THE REVIEW ALSO ADDRESSED THE QUESTION OF THE BEST MEANS OF ENSURING THAT APPROPRIATE OPERATING STANDARDS WERE MET IN FUTURE.

IN THE INTERIM, MR CHAMBERS SAID A VOLUNTARY REGISTRATION SCHEME TO BE RUN BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT WAS PLANNED. UNDER THIS, HOMES WHICH MET THE VARIOUS REQUIREMENTS WOULD BE ISSUED WITH A REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE.

"THIS WOULD AMOUNT TO RECOGNITION OF THE STANDARD OF SERVICE PROVIDED.

"IT WOULD ACT AS A GUIDE TO CONSUMERS AND IN TURN AS AN INCENTIVE TO OPERATORS TO BECOME REGISTERED," HE SAID.

"I HOPE THAT IT WILL BE POSSIBLE TO IMPLEMENT THIS VOLUNTARY REGISTRATION SCHEME BY OCTOBER THIS YEAR," HE ADDED.

IN ADDITION, THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT WOULD STEP UP VISITS TO PRIVATE HOMES AND CONTINUE TO PROVIDE ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE TO THE OPERATORS WHERE NECESSARY.

SUITABLE PUBLICITY WOULD ALSO BE CARRIED OUT TO ENCOURAGE FAMILIES OF ELDERLY PEOPLE LIVING IN THESE HOMES TO VISIT THEM MORE OFTEN AND TO DISCUSS MATTERS RELATING TO THEIR WELFARE WITH THE MANAGEMENT OF THE HOMES, MR CHAMBERS SAID.

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PRISONER TRANSFER A COMPLEX ISSUE

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THE QUESTION OF MAKING ARRANGEMENTS WITH CHINA SIMILAR TO THOSE IN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE ON THE TRANSFER OF SENTENCED PERSONS IS A VERY COMPLEX ISSUE WHICH HAS NOT YET BEEN FULLY AND FORMALLY ADDRESSED, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON GEOFFREY BARNES, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN, MR BARNES SAID NO DECISIONS HAD THEREFORE BEEN REACHED.

"HOWEVER, THE MATTER WILL BE PURSUED AND GIVEN VERY CAREFUL CONSIDERATION," HE ADDED.

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COMPUTERISATION WITHIN GOVERNMENT BEING REVIEWED

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A TEAM OF CONSULTANTS HAS COMMENCED AN EIGHT-MONTH STRATEGIC REVIEW OF COMPUTERISATION WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT TO EXAMINE ITS STRATEGIC GOALS FOR COMPUTER USAGE, THE SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND INFORMATION, THE HON PETER TSAO, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY PROF THE HON POON CHUNG-KWONG, MR TSAO SAID PARTICULAR ATTENTION WOULD BE GIVEN TO OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN DATA PROCESSING AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS.

"THE CONSULTANTS WILL CONSIDER THE POTENTIAL FOR INFORMATION EXCHANGE, THE NEED FOR NETWORKING BETWEEN GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND THE CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION.

"CONSIDERATION WILL ALSO BE GIVEN TO DATA SHARING AND EXCHANGE WITH THE PUBLIC, INCLUDING THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR, WITH DUE EMPHASIS UPON THE NEED FOR DATA SECURITY AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY," MR TSAO SAID.

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BOO ISSUES 746 ORDERS FOR STRUCTURAL REPAIRS

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THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OFFICE OF THE BUILDINGS AND LANDS DEPARTMENT ISSUED A TOTAL OF 746 ORDERS LAST YEAR REQUIRING STRUCTURAL DEFECTS TO BE REPAIRED.

THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON EDWARD HO.

MR BARNES SAID OF THE 746 ORDERS, ABOUT 85 PER CENT WERE FOR POST-WAR BUILDINGS, WHILE SIX POST-WAR HIGH-RISE CONCRETE BUILDINGS FROM THE FIFTIES WERE IN SUCH POOR STATE THAT DEMOLITION WAS NECESSARY.

HE SAID THAT TO INDICATE THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM WOULD REQUIRE A SYSTEMATIC SURVEY OF THE WHOLE POST-WAR BUILDING STOCK OF SOME 60,000 BUILDINGS.

/MR BARNES

MR BARNES SAID THAT CONCRETE DETERIORATION OF BUILDINGS IN THE SIXTIES PERIOD USUALLY OCCURRED FIRST IN KITCHEN AREAS, THEN IN EXTERNAL STAIRCASES AND IN THE BUILDING FACADE. DETERIORATION OF THE CONCRETE STRUCTURE OCCURRED AT A MUCH LATER STAGE.

"WHERE A BUILDING HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS SHOWING SIGNS OF STRUCTURAL DETERIORATION, THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OFFICE SERVES AN ORDER ON THE OWNERS TO APPOINT A QUALIFIED PERSON TO INVESTIGATE THE EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM AND FOR APPROPRIATE REMEDIAL WORKS TO BE CARRIED OUT.

"IF THE OWNERS DO NOT COMPLY WITH THE ORDER, THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OFFICE CARRY OUT THE INVESTIGATION AND WORKS THEMSELVES AND RECOVER THE COSTS FROM THE OWNERS.

"ACTION IS USUALLY ONLY INITIATED FOLLOWING A COMPLAINT, BUT IT IS INTENDED TO STRENGTHEN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OFFICE DURING THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1989-90," MR BARNES SAID.

THE OFFICE COULD THEN SURVEY BUILDINGS SYSTEMATICALLY, AND IDENTIFY POTENTIAL PROBLEMS AT AN EARLY STAGE WHEN REPAIRS COULD BE DONE MORE EASILY AND LESS EXPENSIVELY, THEREBY AVOIDING THE NEED FOR POSSIBLE CLOSURE AND DEMOLITION AT A LATER STAGE, HE ADDED.

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USE OF EXCHANGE FUND IN PUBLIC'S BEST INTERESTS

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THE PRACTICE OF DEPOSITING THE MAJORITY OF THE ACCUMULATED FISCAL RESERVES WITH THE EXCHANGE FUND IS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE PUBLIC, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON THOMAS CLYDESDALE, MR JACOBS SAID IT WAS TRUE THAT THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT ACCOUNT PUBLICLY FOR THE INVESTMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF THE ASSETS AND LIABILITIES OF THE EXCHANGE FUND.

"BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THERE IS NO ACCOUNTING TO THE PUBLIC FOR THE INVESTMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF THE ACCUMULATED FISCAL RESERVES," HE SAID.

MR JACOBS EXPLAINED THAT FISCAL RESERVES WERE TRANSFERRED TO THE EXCHANGE FUND AGAINST THE ISSUE OF DEBT CERTIFICATES.

/"THESE DEBT

"THESE DEBT CERTIFICATES ARE INTEREST-BEARING AND ARE HELD BY THE TREASURY," HE SAID.

"IN OTHER WORDS, FISCAL RESERVES ARE INVESTED IN DEBT CERTIFICATES ISSUED BY THE EXCHANGE FUND AND THESE INVESTMENTS EARN INTEREST AS IF THE MONEY WERE DEPOSITED WITH A BANK.

"INTEREST EARNED IS CREDITED TO THE GENERAL REVENUE AND IS CLEARLY, FULLY AND PUBLICLY ACCOUNTED FOR AS INTEREST INCOME UNDER THE REVENUE HEAD, 'PROPERTIES AND INVESTMENTS' IN THE SAME MANNER AS, FOR EXAMPLE, PROFITS TAX UNDER THE HEAD, 'INTERNAL REVENUE'."

STATING THAT THE RATIONALE UNDERLYING THE PLACING OF FISCAL RESERVES ON DEPOSIT WITH THE EXCHANGE FUND WAS SIMPLE, MR JACOBS SAID: "FIRST, THERE IS THE SECURITY OF THE PRINCIPAL SUM;

"SECONDLY, THE REASONABLENESS OF THE RATE OF RETURN OFFERED; AND LASTLY, THERE IS SIMPLY NO OTHER SINGLE AVENUE FOR HONG KONG DOLLAR INVESTMENT OF COMPARABLE QUALITY CAPABLE OF ABSORBING THE LARGE AMOUNT OF MONEY INVOLVED WITHOUT ADVERSELY AFFECTING MONETARY CONDITIONS."

MR JACOBS SAID IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR FISCAL RESERVES TO BE INVESTED BY THE TREASURY IN FOREIGN CURRENCY ASSETS, BUT THEN THE GENERAL REVENUE WOULD BE ASSUMING EXCHANGE RISKS.

"THE ASSUMPTION OF SUCH RISKS WOULD BE IMPROPER," HE SAID.

"THIS WAS RECOGNISED IN 1976 AND AS A CONSEQUENCE THE MANAGEMENT OF THE FOREIGN CURRENCY ASSETS OF THE GOVERNMENT WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE EXCHANGE FUND."

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MAGISTERIAL APPOINTMENT ARRANGEMENTS UNDER STUDY

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CONSIDERATION IS NOW BEING GIVEN TO THE ARRANGEMENTS UNDER WHICH MAGISTRATES ARE APPOINTED AND REMOVED, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID FORD, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"A NUMBER OF MEASURES, WHICH INCLUDE CHANGES TO THE COMPOSITION AND PROCEDURES OF THE JUDICIAL SERVICE COMMISSION AND ITS MORE FORMAL INVOLVEMENT IN DISCIPLINARY CASES, ARE PROPOSED FOR INTRODUCTION SHORTLY," SIR DAVID SAID WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TAI CHIN-WAH.

/"CONSIDERATION IS

"CONSIDERATION IS ALSO BEING GIVEN TO WHETHER ANY CHANGES NEED TO BE MADE IN THE PRESENT SECURITY OF TENURE ARRANGEMENTS OF MAGISTRATES."

SIR DAVID EXPLAINED THAT WHILE APPOINTED UNDER DIFFERENT PROCEDURE, ALL JUDICIAL OFFICERS, INCLUDING BOTH JUDGES AND MAGISTRATES, WERE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR.

ALSO, ALL SUCH APPOINTMENTS WERE MADE ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE JUDICIAL SERVICE COMMISSION WHICH WAS AN INDEPENDENT STATUTORY BODY.

HE SAID: "AS REGARDS REMOVAL, A JUDGE MAY ONLY BE REMOVED FROM OFFICE FOR INABILITY TO DISCHARGE THE FUNCTIONS OF HIS OFFICE OR FOR MISBEHAVIOUR.

"MOREOVER, SUCH INABILITY OR MISBEHAVIOUR MUST BE INVESTIGATED BY A TRIBUNAL OF JUDGES APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR AND, IF REMOVAL IS RECOMMENDED, THE CASE MUST BE REFERRED TO THE JUDICIAL COMMITTEE OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL.

"IN THE CASE OF MAGISTRATES, THOSE ON PENSIONABLE TERMS MAY ONLY BE REMOVED FROM OFFICE ON DISCIPLINARY GROUNDS BY THE GOVERNOR AFTER CONSIDERATION OF THEIR CASE BY A BOARD HEADED BY A SUPREME COURT JUDGE APPOINTED BY THE CHIEF JUSTICE AND INCLUDING AT LEAST ONE OTHER JUDGE.

"AS FAR AS MAGISTRATES ON AGREEMENT TERMS ARE CONCERNED, DISCIPLINARY CASES ARE, AS A MATTER OF PRACTICE, REFERRED TO THE JUDICIAL SERVICE COMMISSION."

SIR DAVID ADDED THAT IN CONSIDERING ANY CHANGES, REGARD MUST BE HAD TO THE PROVISIONS OF THE JOINT DECLARATION.

SECTION III OF ANNEX I TO THE JOINT DECLARATION PROVIDED FOR JUDGES TO BE REMOVED BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF A TRIBUNAL OF JUDGES APPOINTED BY THE CHIEF JUDGE OF THE COURT OF FINAL APPEAL.

THE REMOVAL OF PRINCIPAL JUDGES ALSO REQUIRED THE ENDORSEMENT OF THE LEGISLATURE.

FOR OTHER JUDICIAL OFFICERS INCLUDING MAGISTRATES, THE SECTION PROVIDED FOR THE PRESENT SYSTEM TO BE MAINTAINED.

CONTROL MEASURES ON BUSINESSES INVOLVING ILLEGAL GOODS ADEQUATE

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THE MEASURES TO CONTROL BUSINESSES DEALING HABITUALLY IN SMUGGLED, COUNTERFEIT OR PORNOGRAPHIC GOODS ARE GENERALLY ADEQUATE, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON GEOFFREY BARNES, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HELMUT SOHMEN, MR BARNES SAID OFFENCES INVOLVING SMUGGLED, COUNTERFEIT OR PORNOGRAPHIC GOODS WERE DEALT WITH UNDER THE IMPORT AND EXPORT ORDINANCE, THE TRADE DESCRIPTIONS ORDINANCE, THE COPYRIGHT ORDINANCE AND THE CONTROL OF OBSCENE AND INDECENT ARTICLES ORDINANCE.

HE POINTED OUT THAT PENALTIES FOR THESE OFFENCES WERE REVIEWED REGULARLY.

"DEPENDING ON THE NATURE OF THE OFFENCE AND THE GOODS INVOLVED, EITHER THE POLICE OR THE CUSTOMS AND EXCISE DEPARTMENT TAKE ACTION.

"ANY SUCH ACTION IS USUALLY DIRECTED AGAINST THE INDIVIDUALS INVOLVED RATHER THAN AGAINST A BUSINESS."

THEREFORE, MR BARNES SAID, HE WAS NOT SURE THAT THE REVOCATION OF A BUSINESS REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WOULD BE AN EFFECTIVE MEASURE IN THIS CONTEXT.

HE SAID: "THE REQUIREMENT TO HOLD A BUSINESS REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE IS TO ENSURE THAT THE INLAND REVENUE HAS A RECORD OF ALL BUSINESSES FOR TAXATION PURPOSES.

"IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE REVOCATION OF BUSINESS REGISTRATION CERTIFICATES WOULD PREVENT SUCH BUSINESSES CARRYING ON ILLEGALLY, AND OF COURSE THERE WOULD BE NOTHING TO PREVENT THE PRINCIPAL RE-REGISTERING UNDER A DIFFERENT NAME.

"I FEAR THAT THE EFFECT WOULD BE A WEAKENING OF OUR REVENUE CONTROL WITHOUT A SIGNIFICANT STRENGTHENING OF OUR ABILITY TO CONTROL BUSINESSES DEALING IN SMUGGLED, COUNTERFEIT OR PORNOGRAPHIC GOODS."

MR BARNES SAID HE WOULD BE HAPPY TO CONSIDER ANY SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS.

"I HAVE ASKED THE DEPARTMENTS INVOLVED WITH THIS MATTER TO CONSIDER WHETHER FURTHER MEASURES ARE NECESSARY.

"AND IN THE LIGHT OF THEIR RESPONSES, I SHALL CONSIDER REFERRING THE MATTER TO THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE, TOGETHER WITH ANY OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS."

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DISCUSSIONS HELD ON EASING MTR CONGESTION

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THE GOVERNMENT HAS HELD INITIAL DISCUSSIONS WITH THE FRANCHISED BUS AND FERRY OPERATORS ON PROVIDING AN ADDITIONAL CHOICE OF MODE OF TRANSPORT FOR MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY PASSENGERS IN THE MORNING PEAK PERIOD.

THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON MICHAEL LEUNG, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON SELINA CHOW.

MR LEUNG SAID THE SOLE PURPOSE OF THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY CORPORATION'S PEAK CONGESTION FARE WAS TO INDUCE ABOUT 5,000 TO 6,000 PASSENGERS TO TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE HEIGHT OF THE MORNING PEAK - BETWEEN 8 AM AND 8.45 AM - TO ENSURE PASSENGER SAFETY ON TRAINS AND IN STATIONS.

THE PURPOSE WAS NOT TO RAISE REVENUE, HE EMPHASISED.

TAKING FULL ACCOUNT OF PUBLIC COMMENTS AND REACTIONS, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CORPORATION HAD DECIDED TO DEFER IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PEAK CONGESTION FARE UNTIL MAY 30, HE NOTED.

THIS WAS TO GIVE SUFFICIENT TIME FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO ARRANGE THE DEPLOYMENT OF ALTERNATIVE MODES OF TRANSPORT TO PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL CHOICE FOR THE 5,000 TO 6,000 PASSENGERS.

"THE BUS COMPANIES HAVE INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO MOBILISE 30 EXTRA BUSES IN THE MORNING PEAK IN MAY IF REQUIRED," HE SAID.

"MORE RESOURCES COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS WHEN THE BUSES NORMALLY HAVE SPARE CAPACITY.

"THESE ADDITIONAL BUSES WILL BE DEPLOYED ON CERTAIN EXISTING PRIORITY BUS ROUTES; NAMELY, ROUTES ORIGINATING IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE NEW TERRITORIES SERVING JORDAN ROAD AND TSIM SHA TSUI; AND FROM KOWLOON TO CENTRAL, WAN CHAI AND CAUSEWAY BAY."

THE BUS OPERATORS WOULD MONITOR THE LOADING SITUATION ON THESE ROUTES IN THE PEAK PERIOD AND INCREASE CAPACITY WHEREVER NECESSARY.

THE FERRIES GENERALLY HAD SPARE CAPACITY IN THE PEAK, BEING ONLY 60 PER CENT OCCUPIED.

LARGER VESSELS COULD ALSO BE DEPLOYED SHOULD THE NEED ARISE.

MR LEUNG SAID THAT ONE OF THE REASONS FOR PUBLIC DISCONTENT OVER THE PEAK CONGESTION FARE WAS A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING.

/THE MTRC

THE MTRC HAD THEREFORE DECIDED TO USE THE NEXT FOUR WEEKS TO EXPLAIN MORE FULLY TO THE PUBLIC THE REASONS FOR THE FARE.

THE POINT WAS THAT THE PRESENT LOADING OF 81,000 TO 82,000 PASSENGERS DURING THE CRITICAL HOUR HAD RESULTED IN THE OVERLOADING OF TRAINS BY UP TO 40 PER CENT.

WHILE TRAIN SAFETY WAS NOT IN ANY WAY AT RISK, OVERCROWDING HAD REACHED SUCH AN INTOLERABLE STAGE THAT PASSENGER SAFETY COULD BE COMPROMISED.

HE SAID THAT ALL POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS TO DEAL WITH THE OVERCROWDING PROBLEM HAD BEEN EXPLORED BY THE CORPORATION.

THESE INCLUDED INCREASING THE FREQUENCY OF TRAINS TO LESS THAN TWO MINUTES, ADDING MORE CARS, CLOSING CERTAIN NORTH KOWLOON STATIONS, REQUIRING PASSENGERS TO QUEUE UP AT DESIGNATED POSITIONS, RUNNING THROUGH TRAINS FROM KWUN TONG TO CENTRAL, AND REDUCING NON-PEAK FARES.

HOWEVER, NONE HAD BEEN FOUND TO PROVIDE PRACTICAL OR ACCEPTABLE SOLUTIONS.

IN ALL THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE CORPORATION CONSIDERED THAT APPLYING A PRICING MECHANISM IN THE FORM OF HIGHER FARES FOR TRAVELLING DURING THE PEAK CONGESTION PERIOD WAS THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND PRACTICAL MEASURE TO ACHIEVE A BETTER BALANCE BETWEEN SUPPLY AND DEMAND.

THE SOLE PURPOSE WAS TO ENCOURAGE PASSENGERS TO TRAVEL EARLIER, BY NO MORE THAN 15 MINUTES OR SO, TO AVOID SERIOUS OVERCROWDING.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE MTRC HAD TAKEN STEPS TO ADVANCE THE TWO-MINUTE FREQUENCY SERVICE TO BEGIN AT 7.40 AM, THUS ENSURING THAT THERE WAS ADEQUATE CAPACITY TO COPE WITH THOSE PASSENGERS WHO CHOSE TO TRAVEL EARLIER.

THIS WAS IN ADDITION TO THE CHOICE OF OTHER TRANSPORT MODES ALREADY MENTIONED.

MR LEUNG SAID THE DECISION TO INTRODUCE A PEAK CONGESTION FARE WAS MADE BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE MTRC IN FULL RECOGNITION OF PUBLIC SAFETY.

THEIR DECISION TO POSTPONE IMPLEMENTATION WAS ALSO TAKEN IN FULL REGARD TO THE NEED TO EXPLAIN MORE FULLY TO THE PUBLIC THE REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL.

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS HAD ACTED IN A RESPONSIBLE MANNER AND HAD BEEN RESPONSIVE TO PUBLIC CRITICISM.

HE SAID, HOWEVER, GIVEN THAT THE BUILD-UP OF PASSENGERS USING THE MTR NORMALLY STARTED IN MAY AND ESCALATED DURING THE SUMMER, IT WOULD BE IRRESPONSIBLE FOR THE MTRC TO FURTHER POSTPONE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PEAK CONGESTION FARE.

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TO DO SO WOULD BE PUTTING THE SAFETY OF MTR PASSENGERS AT RISK.

ON FARE POLICY, MR LEUNG SAID THAT UNDER SECTION 6(2) OF THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY CORPORATION ORDINANCE, THE CORPORATION HAD THE POWER TO DETERMINE THE FARES PAYABLE BY ITS PASSENGERS.

SINCE THE OPENING OF THE MTR IN 1979, THE CORPORATION HAD ADOPTED A CONSISTENT POLICY OF SMALL ANNUAL INCREASES IN AVERAGE FARES WHICH ROUGHLY MATCHED RISES IN THE PURCHASING POWER OF PASSENGERS.

THE GOVERNMENT CONSIDERED THIS PRACTICE OF REGULAR BUT MODERATE REVISIONS TO BE ACCEPTABLE.

HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT ALSO RECOGNISED THE IMPORTANCE OF SAFEGUARDING PUBLIC INTEREST.

THIS WAS DONE THROUGH THE ORDINANCE WHICH REQUIRED THE CORPORATION TO OPERATE ACCORDING TO PRUDENT COMMERCIAL PRINCIPLES, HAVING REGARD TO THE REASONABLE REQUIREMENTS OF THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM OF HONG KONG.

CONTROL WAS FURTHER EXERCISED THROUGH THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WHOSE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS WERE ALL APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR.

IN ADDITION, THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL MIGHT, IF HE CONSIDERED THE PUBLIC INTEREST SO REQUIRED, GIVE DIRECTIONS IN WRITING OF A GENERAL CHARACTER TO THE CORPORATION, MR LEUNG ADDED.

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TRANSPORT PLANNING AIMED AT REDUCING CONGESTION

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THE SECOND COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORT STUDY, SCHEDULED FOR COMPLETION LATER THIS YEAR, SHOULD PROVIDE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF OVERALL CONGESTION AND A RANGE OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON MICHAEL LEUNG, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON CONRAD LAM IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING, MR LEUNG SAID AN INVESTMENT PROGRAMME FOR MAJOR NEW ROADS, RAILWAYS AND OTHER TRANSPORT FACILITIES SHOULD BE ABLE TO MEET THE INCREASING DEMAND FOR TRAVEL UP TO THE YEAR 2001.

/HE POINTED

HE POINTED OUT THAT MUCH OF THE GOVERNMENT'S TRANSPORT PLANNING WAS DESIGNED TO REDUCE CONGESTION AND TO IMPROVE THE MOBILITY OF PEOPLE AND GOODS.

"AS THE DEMAND FOR MOST TRANSPORT FACILITIES IS AT A MAXIMUM DURING THE MORNING AND EVENING PEAK PERIODS, MOST OF OUR PLANNING EFFORTS ARE DIRECTED TOWARDS ENSURING THAT TRAVEL DURING THESE PEAK PERIODS IS AS EFFICIENT AS POSSIBLE," HE SAID.

MR LEUNG SAID THAT PEAK HOUR CONGESTION, WHICH INCLUDED BOTH TRAFFIC CONGESTION AND CONGESTION ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT, WAS AN ON GOING PROBLEM AND COULD BE ADDRESSED THROUGH THE ADOPTION OF A VARIETY OF MEASURES MOST APPROPRIATE AT THE TIME.

ONE OF THE MEASURES WAS PROVIDING ADDITIONAL TRANSPORT FACILITIES FOR BOTH VEHICULAR TRAFFIC AND PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT.

"EXAMPLES OF NEW TRANSPORT FACILITIES ARE THE NUMEROUS ROAD AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES BUILT OR UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

"THE BETTER KNOWN EXAMPLES ARE THE EASTERN HARBOUR CROSSING AND TATE'S CAIRN TUNNEL. THEIR COMPLETION IN 1989 AND 1991 RESPECTIVELY WILL BRING LONG TERM RELIEF TO THE CONGESTION PROBLEM AT THE CROSS HARBOUR AND THE LION ROCK TUNNELS.

"OTHER HIGHWAYS AND TRUNK ROADS WHICH ARE BEING BUILT INCLUDE ROUTE 5 AND THE NEW TERRITORIES CIRCULAR ROAD," HE SAID.

THE PROBLEM COULD ALSO BE ALLEVIATED BY THE PROVISION AND CO-ORDINATION OF A RANGE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES, WHICH CARRIED SOME NINE MILLION PASSENGERS EVERY DAY.

MR LEUNG POINTED OUT THAT THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY NOW CARRIED A DAILY AVERAGE OF 1.8 MILLION PASSENGERS AND TRAINS WERE ALREADY RUNNING AT TWO-MINUTE FREQUENCY TO COPE WITH DEMAND DURING PEAK PERIODS.

"WITH THE EXTENSION OF THE MTR THROUGH THE EASTERN HARBOUR CROSSING BETWEEN KWUN TONG AND QUARRY BAY, THERE SHOULD BE MUCH NEEDED RELIEF ALONG THE NATHAN ROAD CORRIDOR," HE ADDED.

AS REGARDS THE KOWLOON-CANTON RAILWAY SERVICE, IT CARRIED OVER 400,000 PASSENGERS A DAY, AND ITS CAPACITY WOULD BE FURTHER INCREASED THROUGH THE ACQUISITION OF NINE ADDITIONAL SETS OF SIX-CAR UNITS FOR INTRODUCTION BY STAGES BEFORE 1992.

IN ADDITION, PHASE I OF THE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT SYSTEM BETWEEN TUEN MUN AND YUEN LONG WOULD BE COMPLETED IN AUGUST THIS YEAR, AND FIVE ADDITIONAL REGIONAL EXTENSIONS OF THE SYSTEM WERE ALSO PLANNED OVER THE NEXT SIX YEARS.

/MEANWHILE, THE

MEANWHILE, THE STANDARD AND LEVEL OF BUS AND FERRY SERVICES, WHICH CARRIED ABOUT 4.3 MILLION PASSENGERS PER DAY, HAD CONTINUED TO BE IMPROVED THROUGH MORE EFFECTIVE PLANNING AND MONITORING OF THE FIVE-YEAR PLANS OF THE FRANCHISED BUS AND FERRY COMPANIES.

"STUDIES ARE ALSO UNDERTAKEN ON A REGULAR BASIS TO IDENTIFY DEFICIENCIES OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES. ONE EXAMPLE IS THE FURTHER STUDY OF CROSS HARBOUR PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES TO COMMENCE LATER THIS YEAR," MR LEUNG SAID.

THE SECRETARY ALSO STRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT MAINTAINED AN INTERMODAL CO-ORDINATION POLICY WHICH AIMED AT MAXIMISING THE USE OF THE VARIOUS TRANSPORT MODES, AND ALLOWED FOR ADJUSTMENT OF SERVICES TO COPE WITH THE CHANGING CONGESTION SITUATION.

FOR EXAMPLE, TO COPE WITH PASSENGER DEMAND AT CERTAIN MTR STATIONS ALONG NATHAN ROAD CORRIDOR DURING THE HEIGHT OF THE MORNING PEAK, ALTERNATIVE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES HAD BEEN AND WOULD BE PROVIDED.

THESE INCLUDED AN INCREASE IN THE FREQUENCIES OF CROSS HARBOUR BUS SERVICES AND FEEDER BUS SERVICES TO FERRY CONCOURSES AS FAR AS NECESSARY.

MR LEUNG SAID ANOTHER METHOD WAS THE ADOPTION OF TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT MEASURES TO INCREASE THE EFFICIENCY OF EXISTING FACILITIES.

"EXAMPLES ARE GRADE SEPARATION ACCESS FACILITIES FOR THE WAN CHAI RECLAMATION TO HELP ALLEVIATE CONGESTION AT THE CROSS HARBOUR TUNNEL AND THE PROPOSED TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SCHEME FOR KWUN TONG TOWN CENTRE AND KWUN TONG INDUSTRIAL AREA TO COINCIDE WITH THE OPENING OF THE EASTERN HARBOUR CROSSING.

"MOREOVER, COMPUTERISED AREA TRAFFIC CONTROL SYSTEMS ARE NOW BEING EXTENDED TO KWUN TONG AND TSUEN WAN. MORE ADVANCED AND EFFECTIVE PROGRAMMES ARE ALSO BEING EXPERIMENTED ON HONG KONG ISLAND," HE SAID.

FURTHERMORE, POLICY INITIATIVES COULD ALSO BE USED TO MAKE THE MOST ECONOMIC USE OF THE TRANSPORT SYSTEM GIVEN THAT DEMAND ALMOST ALWAYS EXCEEDED SUPPLY.

THESE INCLUDED THE INCREASES IN CAR REGISTRATION TAX AND LICENCE FEES IN 1982 AND THE INTRODUCTION OF A PASSAGE TAX FOR USERS OF THE CROSS HARBOUR TUNNEL IN 1984.

"PRICING CAN BE AN EFFECTIVE MEANS OF CONTROL AS PROVEN BY THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE CONGESTION SITUATION AT THE CROSS HARBOUR TUNNEL FOLLOWING THE IMPOSITION OF THE PASSAGE TAX IN 1984. CONGESTION LEVELS TOOK NEARLY THREE YEARS TO RETURN TO LEVELS COMPARABLE WITH THE PRE-TAX SITUATION.

/"HOWEVER, IT

"HOWEVER, IT IS GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TO AVOID USING CONGESTION PRICING IF OTHER ALTERNATIVE MEANS ARE AVAILABLE TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM," MR LEUNG STRESSED.

"FOR EXAMPLE, TIDAL FLOW AND BUS ONLY LANES ARE USED TO ALLEVIATE THE CONGESTION PROBLEM AT THE LION ROCK TUNNEL AND HAVE PROVED TO BE EFFECTIVE, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT TERM."

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MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPROVE ISSUE OF VISIT PERMITS

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THE GOVERNMENT WELCOMES THE INCREASE IN TOURISM FROM TAIWAN AND IS AWARE THAT COMPLAINTS HAVE BEEN MADE OVER DELAYS IN PROCESSING APPLICATIONS FOR VISIT PERMITS, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON GEOFFREY BARNES, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN, MR BARNES SUBMITTED A TABLE OF MONTHLY STATISTICS OF TAIWAN VISIT APPLICATIONS TO THE COUNCIL.

APPLICATIONS RECEIVED IN MARCH 1986, 1987 AND 1988 WERE 17,460, 35,130 AND 89,670 RESPECTIVELY.

"THE UNEXPECTED LARGE UPSURGE IN THESE APPLICATIONS, CURRENTLY RUNNING AT 150 PER CENT ABOVE THE CORRESPONDING PERIOD IN 1987, RESULTED IN A DETERIORATION OF SERVICE WHICH THE DIRECTOR OF IMMIGRATION HAS TAKEN STEPS TO RESTORE," HE EXPLAINED.

"MEASURES WHICH HAVE BEEN TAKEN INCLUDE THE STREAMLINING OF PROCEDURES AND A DOUBLING OF THE STAFF FROM 39 TO 81.

"AN ADDITIONAL 48 STAFF ARE BEING SOUGHT TO RESTORE THE SERVICE TO ITS FORMER LEVEL, THAT IS, TO DESPATCH PERMITS WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF THE RECEIPT OF APPLICATION. THE COSTS WILL BE COVERED BY THE REVENUE FROM FEES.

"MEANWHILE, PERMITS ARE BEING ISSUED WITHIN THREE WEEKS FOR GROUP TOURS AND WITHIN FIVE WEEKS FOR INDIVIDUALS," HE ADDED.

FINALLY, MR BARNES SAID FEASIBILITY OF COMPUTERISING THIS ACTIVITY WAS NOW RECEIVING URGENT ATTENTION.

OPERATION OF SOCIAL CENTRES FOR ELDERLY BEING STUDIED

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THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT IS NOW EXAMINING THE MODE OF OPERATION OF SOCIAL CENTRES FOR THE ELDERLY WITH A VIEW TO PROVIDING SERVICES ON A MORE FLEXIBLE BASIS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF A GREATER NUMBER OF ELDERLY PEOPLE, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION RAISED BY THE HON ROSANNA TAM, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE CURRENT PLANNING RATIO WOULD BE REVIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY.

THE CURRENT PLANNING RATIO FOR THE PROVISION OF SOCIAL CENTRES FOR THE ELDERLY IS ONE CENTRE FOR 30,000 GENERAL POPULATION.

"THIS IS A BROAD GUIDELINE AND IS USED, FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE PLANNING OF SERVICES AND RESERVATION OF PREMISES IN NEW PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES WHERE THE DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE WILL NOT BE APPARENT UNTIL THE ACTUAL INTAKE OF POPULATION," MR CHAMBERS SAID.

"IN PRACTICE, HOWEVER, THIS STANDARD IS APPLIED WITH FLEXIBILITY (WITH A DEVIATION OF PLUS OR MINUS 20 PER CENT) TO TAKE ACCOUNT, FOR EXAMPLE, OF AREAS WITH A CONCENTRATION OF ELDERLY PEOPLE OR OF REMOTE AREAS OF SCATTERED POPULATION."

TURNING TO THE MULTI-SERVICE CENTRES AND DAY CARE CENTRES FOR THE ELDERLY, MR CHAMBERS SAID BOTH OF THESE SERVICES WERE PROVIDED ON A DISTRICT BASIS AND PROVISION WAS NOT CALCULATED BY REFERENCE TO A SPECIFIC PLANNING RATIO.

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CRITERION FOR ICAC INVESTIGATION EXPLAINED

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THE CRITERION FOR DECIDING WHETHER THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION OR ONE OF THE OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES SHOULD INVESTIGATE A CASE INVOLVING CONSPIRACY TO DEFRAUD OR TRAFFICKING IN DANGEROUS DRUGS DEPENDS ON WHETHER THERE IS AN ALLEGATION OF CORRUPTION OR AN INDICATION THAT CORRUPTION HAS TAKEN PLACE.

THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON GEOFFREY BARNES, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY DR THE HON HELMUT SOHMEN.

/MR BARNES

MR BARNES POINTED OUT IN HIS WRITTEN REPLY THAT IF A CORRUPTION OFFENCE WAS SUSPECTED THE ICAC WOULD INVARIABLY UNDERTAKE THE INVESTIGATION.

"IF THERE IS NO INDICATION OF CORRUPTION, THE POLICE OR CUSTOMS AND EXCISE WILL CARRY OUT THE INVESTIGATION," HE SAID.

"IF IN THE EARLY STAGES OF AN INVESTIGATION BY THE ICAC, THE COMMISSION IS SATISFIED THAT NO CORRUPTION IS INVOLVED, THEN IT INVARIABLY REFERS THE CASE TO ONE OF THE OTHER AGENCIES.

"EQUALLY, IF THE POLICE ARE INVESTIGATING A CASE AND DISCOVER THAT CORRUPTION OFFENCES MAY BE INVOLVED, THEY NORMALLY REFER IT TO THE ICAC. THE ICAC WILL THEN ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE INVESTIGATION."

MR BARNES SAID THAT THE "INTERFACE" BETWEEN THE ICAC AND THE POLICE IN HANDLING CORRUPTION CASES WHICH WERE CONNECTED WITH CONSPIRACY TO DEFRAUD OR TRAFFICKING IN DANGEROUS DRUGS LAY IN THE CLOSE LIAISON THAT EXISTED BETWEEN THE ICAC AND THE POLICE AND ALSO WITH CUSTOMS AND EXCISE AND WITH THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT.

HE SAID THAT WHERE THE ICAC HAD BECOME HEAVILY ENGAGED IN A CASE BEFORE IT APPEARED THAT THE CORRUPTION ASPECT WAS LACKING, OR INSUFFICIENT FOR PROSECUTION PURPOSES, IT WOULD BE A WASTE OF TIME AND MANPOWER FOR THE ICAC TO HAND THE CASE OVER TO ANOTHER AGENCY TO START THE INVESTIGATION AGAIN.

"SO, FOLLOWING CONSULTATION, INCLUDING THE LEGAL DEPARTMENT, IT WILL CONTINUE TO INVESTIGATE THE CASE IN CLOSE CO-OPERATION WITH THE APPROPRIATE AGENCY, SOMETIMES IN WHAT IS DELIBERATELY DESIGNED AS A JOINT OPERATION," HE SAID.

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REQUIREMENT PROTECTS INTERESTS OF LOCAL WORKERS

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WHEN A FOREIGN NATIONAL IS PERMITTED TO ENTER HONG KONG TO WORK, ONE OF THE CONDITIONS OF ENTRY IMPOSED BY THE DIRECTOR OF IMMIGRATION IS THAT THE SALARY TO BE PAID SHOULD NOT BE LESS THAN THE CURRENT MARKET RATE FOR THE JOB TO BE PERFORMED.

THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON GEOFFREY BARNES, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO THE HON POON CHI-FAI WHO INQUIRED ABOUT THE RATIONALE FOR ADOPTING "A POLICY OF STIPULATING A MINIMUM MONTHLY SALARY FOR FOREIGN DOMESTIC HELPERS".

/MR BARNES

MR BARNES SAID THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE SALARY CONDITION WAS TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF LOCAL EMPLOYEES, WHO WOULD SUFFER A LOSS OF REAL EARNINGS IF CHEAPER SOURCES OF LABOUR WERE READILY AVAILABLE FROM OVERSEAS.

"THE GOVERNMENT THEREFORE ASCERTAINS WHAT THE CURRENT MARKET RATE IS FOR A PARTICULAR JOB, SO THAT IT CAN BE SATISFIED, WHEN EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS ARE PRESENTED FOR APPROVAL, THAT THE SALARY TO BE PAID IS NOT LESS THAN THE MARKET RATE," HE SAID.

HE NOTED THAT INFORMATION ABOUT CURRENT MARKET RATES WAS PROVIDED BY RELEVANT GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS WITH EXPERT KNOWLEDGE OF THE TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT CONCERNED.

"IN THE CASE OF DOMESTIC HELPERS, THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT SURVEYS THE SALARIES OFFERED TO LOCAL EMPLOYEES, AND INFORMS THE DIRECTOR OF IMMIGRATION OF CURRENT SALARY LEVELS."

MR BARNES ADDED THAT IT WAS NOT THE NORMAL PRACTICE TO CONSULT EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS ABOUT THESE MATTERS WHICH WERE PART OF IMMIGRATION ENTRY POLICY.

"THE PURPOSE OF ANNOUNCING PUBLICLY THE CURRENT SALARY LEVEL FOR DOMESTIC HELPERS IS TO ASSIST THE LARGE NUMBERS OF EMPLOYERS WHO PRESENT EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS TO THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT TO OBTAIN SPEEDY APPROVAL," HE SAID.

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MERGER OF SALARY SCALES A LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE

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A COMPLETE MERGER OF TWO EXISTING SALARY SCALES FOR CIVIL SERVANTS SHOULD BE A LONG-TERM OBJECTIVE, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID FORD, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG, SIR DAVID SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD ACCEPTED THE ADVICE OF THE STANDING COMMISSION ON CIVIL SERVICE SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE IN 1980 THAT STEPS SHOULD BE TAKEN GRADUALLY TO REDUCE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MODEL SCALE 1 AND MASTER PAY SCALE STAFF.

MASTER PAY SCALE HAS EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AS THE MAIN DETERMINANT FOR ENTRY INTO THE GRADES CONCERNED WHEREAS MODEL SCALE 1, WHICH COMPRISES WORKMAN AND ARTISAN GRADES, REQUIRES OPERATIVE SKILL RATHER THAN EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND.

SIR DAVID SAID THAT BEFORE 1971, CIVIL SERVICE GRADES WERE REMUNERATED ON 10 MODEL SCALES - FROM SCALES 1 TO 10 - ACCORDING TO ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS AND OCCUPATIONAL GROUPING.

/FOLLOWING THE

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FOLLOWING THE 1971 SALARIES COMMISSION, MODEL SCALES 2 TO 10 HAD BEEN REPLACED BY THE CONSOLIDATED MASTER PAY SCALE, HE ADDED.

SINCE 1980, SIR DAVID SAID, SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENTS HAD BEEN MADE TO THE PAY AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE FOR MODEL SCALE 1 STAFF.

"THE MORE RECENT OF THESE HAVE BEEN THE IMPROVED PENSION ARRANGEMENTS IMPLEMENTED WITH EFFECT FROM JULY 1 LAST YEAR, WHICH HAVE BROUGHT THEM CLOSER INTO LINE WITH PENSIONABLE STAFF ON THE MASTER PAY SCALE.

"THE IMPROVEMENT PACKAGE COMPRISES A SALARY INCREASE AND REDUCTION IN WORKING HOURS WHICH WAS IMPLEMENTED IN MARCH 1988 TO REFLECT THE RESULTS OF THE 1986 PAY LEVEL SURVEY," HE SAID.

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CS TO VISIT CHINA

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THE CHIEF SECRETARY, SIR DAVID FORD, WILL PAY A VISIT TO PEKING AND SICHUAN FROM MAY 3 TO 8.

IN PEKING HE WILL MEET CHINESE OFFICIALS IN CHARGE OF HONG KONG AFFAIRS.

IN SICHUAN HE WILL BE RECEIVED BY SENIOR PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS.

SIR DAVID WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE POLITICAL ADVISER, MR DICK CLIFT.

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NENDICK TO ATTEND ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK MEETING

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THE SECRETARY FOR MONETARY AFFAIRS, MR DAVID NENDICK, LEFT FOR MANILA TODAY (WEDNESDAY) TO ATTEND THE 21ST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK.

THE MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE FROM TOMORROW (APRIL 28) TO APRIL 30. MR NENDICK IS EXPECTED TO ADDRESS THE MEETING AT A GOVERNOR'S SESSION.

MEMBERS OF THE HONG KONG DELEGATION ALSO INCLUDED THE PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR MONETARY AFFAIRS, MS MARIA KWAN, AND THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR MONETARY AFFAIRS, MR EARNEST CHEUNG.

THE DELEGATION WILL RETURN TO HONG KONG ON APRIL 30.

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PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE TO HOLD OPEN HEARING

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AN OPEN HEARING OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, MAY 2, FOLLOWING THE TABLING OF THE REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF AUDIT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE HEARING WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL CHAMBER, STARTING AT 10 AM.

CONTROLLING OFFICERS WILL APPEAR BEFORE THE COMMITTEE IN RELATION TO POINTS MADE IN THE REPORT.

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HONG KONG ACHIEVES SUCCESS IN TALL BUILDINGS

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HONG KONG'S BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT IN TALL BUILDINGS IS THAT IT HAS BUILT MANY VERY TALL RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS FOR ALL SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY AND HAS MADE THEM WORK WELL AS FAMILY HOMES, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, MR GRAHAM BARNES, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HOWEVER, HONG KONG HAS NOT YET SUCCEEDED IN SELLING TALL BUILDINGS TO OLD PEOPLE, PROBABLY BECAUSE MOST OF THEM WERE BROUGHT UP IN LOW BUILDINGS WITHOUT LIFTS, HE SAID.

MR BARNES SAID IT IS FAIRLY OPTIMISTIC THAT EVEN OLD PEOPLE CAN BE SATISFACTORILY HOUSED IN TALL BUILDINGS IN THE FUTURE BECAUSE HONG KONG'S FUTURE OLD WOULD HAVE BEEN ACCUSTOMED TO LIVING IN SUCH BUILDINGS.

MR BARNES SAID THESE WHEN HE OPENED THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TALL BUILDINGS AT THE SHANGRI-LA HOTEL.

HE NOTED THAT THERE WAS NO SOCIAL STIGMA ATTACHED TO HIGH-RISE LIVING IN HONG KONG.

"WITH VERY FEW EXCEPTIONS MOST OF US LIVE IN HIGH RISE AND THE RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF FLATS SHARING EACH FLOOR AND THE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS WHICH CAN BE ARRANGED AT GROUND LEVEL IN THE VERY TALL RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PROBABLY MAKE PEOPLE FEEL MORE SECURE," MR BARNES SAID.

IN ADDITION, HE NOTED THAT HONG KONG HAD ALWAYS HAD THE ADVANTAGE OF CASH FREE TELEPHONES TO MAKE LIFE IN A HIGH FLAT LESS LONELY.

THE WEIGHTING WHICH SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THIS SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED, HE SAID.

"IN MY VIEW IT IS ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS WHY WE SEEM TO HAVE SUCCEEDED WHERE OTHERS HAVE FAILED," HE SAID.

MR BARNES SAID HE WAS ALWAYS CONCERNED ABOUT THE VULNERABILITY OF TALL BUILDINGS DURING TIMES OF ENERGY SHORTAGE.

ANOTHER AREA OF CONCERN WAS THE LAW REGARDING THE MAINTENANCE OF TALL BUILDINGS, HE SAID.

"AS REGARDS THEIR CONSTRUCTION I BELIEVE THAT THE HONG KONG BUILDINGS ORDINANCE WITH ITS INSISTENCE ON PROFESSIONAL DESIGN AND OFFICIAL CHECKING OF PLANS AT VARIOUS STAGES OF CONSTRUCTION IS THE MINIMUM NECESSARY CONTROL.

/"BUT AT

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"BUT AT THE MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT STAGE THE LEGAL ARRANGEMENTS TO ENSURE THESE ARE DONE PROPERLY ARE BY NO MEANS AS SATISFACTORY.

"CERTAINLY THIS APPLIES TO ALL MULTI-STOREY BUILDINGS, TALL OR LESS TALL, BUT THE INADEQUACIES ARE EXAGGERATED BY HEIGHT.

"THESE ARE JUST THOUGHTS, BUT THEY ARE ONES WHICH HAVE WORRIED ME," MR BARNES SAID.

ON THE CONFERENCE, MR BARNES SAID IT HAD VIRTUALLY ALL PEOPLE WHO WERE INTERESTED IN ANY ASPECT OF TALL BUILDINGS AND EACH PERSON WOULD BE CONTRIBUTING HIS OWN POINT OF VIEW.

"BY THE TIME WE HAVE FINISHED I THINK THAT THE WHOLE FIELD WILL BE AS FULLY COVERED AS IT HAS EVER BEEN BEFORE," HE SAID.

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NEW HOME FOUND FOR RARE ANIMALS

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A CONSIGNMENT OF 29 RARE ANIMALS AND BIRDS SEIZED BY THE GOVERNMENT AS A RESULT OF ENFORCEMENT ACTION OVER THE LAST THREE MONTHS WILL BE SENT TO PEKING TOMORROW (THURSDAY) MORNING.

AMONG THEM ARE SIX SLOW LORIS, ONE PYTHON, FIVE INDIAN ROOFED TURTLES, TWO SEA EAGLES, ONE SPOTTED EAGLE, ONE BLACK KITE, NINE PARAKEETS AND FOUR RHESUS MONKEYS INCLUDING THE ONE CAPTURED IN LEI CHENG UK ESTATE EARLY THIS MONTH.

THE ANIMALS, PROTECTED UNDER THE ANIMALS AND PLANTS (PROTECTION OF ENDANGERED SPECIES) ORDINANCE, WILL JOIN THE BREEDING COLONIES IN THE "BEIJING ENDANGERED ANIMALS BREEDING CENTRE".

THE HOMING EXERCISE IS ORGANISED BY THE AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES DEPARTMENT IN CONJUNCTION WITH CHINA'S ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD FAUNA AND FLORA IMPORT AND EXPORT ADMINISTRATION OFFICE.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES TO TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE RARE ANIMALS BEFORE THEIR DEPARTURE AT THE AFD AIRPORT ANIMAL HOSTEL AT 61 CONCORD ROAD (OPPOSITE HAECO BUILDING), KOWLOON AT 9.15 AM TOMORROW (THURSDAY).

THE DEPARTMENT'S SENIOR VETERINARY OFFICER, DR NORMAN CHENG, AND THE CONSERVATION OFFICER, MR RICHARD CHAN, WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS ABOUT THE HOMING EXERCISE.

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE OCCASION.

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CHAIRMEN OF SHA TIN DB'S COMMITTEES ELECTED
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THE CHAIRMEN OF THE SIX COMMITTEES OF THE SHA TIN DISTRICT BOARD WERE ELECTED AT THE BOARD'S MEETING TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THEY ARE: DR FANNY CHEUNG FOR THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SUB-COMMITTEE; MR WONG PO-MING FOR THE CULTURE AND SPORTS SUB-COMMITTEE; AND MR KAN CHUNG-NIN FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING SUB-COMMITTEE.

ALSO, MR FUNG CHI-WOOD WAS ELECTED CHAIRMAN FOR THE HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE SUB-COMMITTEE; MR ANDREW WONG FOR THE FINANCE AND GENERAL AFFAIRS SUB-COMMITTEE; AND MR CHOY KAN-PUI FOR THE TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT SUB-COMMITTEE.

AT AN EARLIER MEETING, THE BOARD ELECTED MR NG CHAN-LAM AS ITS CHAIRMAN AND MR CHOY KAN-PUI AS ITS REPRESENTATIVE TO THE REGIONAL COUNCIL.

MR LI PO-MING, MR CHAN HON-YING, MR WONG LUEN-KIN AND MR KAN CHUNG-NIN WERE ELECTED TO SIT ON THE SHA TIN DISTRICT COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONAL COUNCIL.

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KWUN TONG PROGRAMME TO PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH
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THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT'S KWUN TONG DISTRICT OFFICE AND THE KWUN TONG COMMUNITY HEALTH PROJECT OF THE UNITED CHRISTIAN MEDICAL SERVICES HAVE JOINTLY ORGANISED A ONE-DAY PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE THE IMPORTANCE AND THE METHODS OF MAINTAINING SOUND MENTAL HEALTH.

THE ACTIVITIES WILL BE HELD AT THE COMMUNITY HALL OF THE LOK WAH ESTATE COMMUNITY CENTRE, NGAU TAU KOK, ON SATURDAY (APRIL 30).

THE INTENTION IS TO ENHANCE RESIDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF MENTAL ILLNESS AND THE NEEDS OF MENTAL PATIENTS.

THE DAY'S PROGRAMME WILL ALSO HELP THE PUBLIC TO DEVELOP A CARING ATTITUDE TOWARDS FORMERLY MENTALLY ILL PEOPLE AND TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THEIR REHABILITATION.

THE PROGRAMME INCLUDES AN EXHIBITION, DEMONSTRATION OF RELAXATION EXERCISES, FILMS AND SLIDES SHOW AND A QUIZ COMPETITION.

/REPRESENTATIVES FROM

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REPRESENTATIVES FROM VARIOUS DISCIPLINES WILL BE PRESENT TO ANSWER QUESTIONS RELATING TO MENTAL HEALTH, AND PAMPHLETS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED.

OFFICIATING AT THE OPENING CEREMONY AT 10.30 AM WILL BE THE COMMISSIONER FOR REHABILITATION, MR FRANCIS HO, KWUN TONG DISTRICT OFFICER, MR CHRISTOPHER WAN, AND REGIONAL SOCIAL WELFARE OFFICER, MR LOK MAN-PAN.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION PROGRAMME IN KWUN TONG WHICH IS JOINTLY ORGANISED BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT'S KWUN TONG DISTRICT OFFICE AND THE KWUN TONG COMMUNITY HEALTH PROJECT OF THE UNITED CHRISTIAN MEDICAL SERVICES.

IT WILL BE HELD AT THE COMMUNITY HALL OF THE LOK WAH ESTATE COMMUNITY CENTRE, LOK WAH ESTATE, CHUNG WAH ROAD, NGAU TAU KOK, AT 10.30 AM ON SATURDAY (APRIL 30).

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SCHOLARSHIP TO HELP PROBATIONER

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A PROBATIONER UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT WAS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) AWARDED A SCHOLARSHIP BY THE ZONTA CLUB.

THE \$7,700 SCHOLARSHIP WILL ENABLE THIS 18-YEAR-OLD GIRL TO CONCENTRATE ON HER FORM FIVE STUDIES WITHOUT HAVING TO TAKE UP PART-TIME JOB TO PAY FOR HER SCHOOLING AS IS THE CASE NOW.

THE GIRL WAS PUT ON PROBATION FOR 12 MONTHS AFTER BEING CONVICTED FOR SHOPTHEFT LAST YEAR. SHE HAS SINCE MADE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN HER REHABILITATION PROGRAMME UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF HER PROBATION OFFICER AND WORKED VERY HARD AT HER STUDIES.

THE SCHOLARSHIP WAS RECEIVED ON HER BEHALF BY THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE (YOUTH AND REHABILITATION), MR KWOK KA-CHI, IN HIS CAPACITY AS THE PRINCIPAL PROBATION OFFICER.

MR KWOK SAID HE WAS HEARTENED BY THE RECOGNITION OF AND SUPPORT FOR THE PROBATION SERVICE AS REFLECTED BY THIS DONATION OF THE ZONTA CLUB.

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"I AM SURE THE RECIPIENT, AS WELL AS OTHER PROBATIONERS, WILL BE GREATLY ENCOURAGED BY THE CARE AND CONCERN SHOWN BY THE COMMUNITY AND WILL DO THEIR BEST TO TURN A NEW LEAF," HE SAID.

PROBATION SERVICE IS ONE OF SEVERAL SERVICES OPERATED BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT TO GIVE EFFECT TO THE DIRECTIONS OF THE COURTS ON THE TREATMENT OF OFFENDERS.

IT PERMITS OFFENDERS TO REMAIN IN THE COMMUNITY UNDER THE GUIDANCE AND SUPERVISION OF A PROBATION OFFICER FOR A PERIOD RANGING FROM ONE TO THREE YEARS.

DURING THE PROBATION PERIOD, THE PROBATION OFFICER PROVIDES SUPERVISION AND PERSONAL GUIDANCE TO THE PROBATIONERS THROUGH REGULAR HOME VISITS AND INTERVIEWS.

HE ALSO WORKS CLOSELY WITH THE PROBATIONERS' FAMILIES AND ARRANGE FOR ANY SPECIAL SERVICES WHICH ARE DEEMED NECESSARY FOR THE REHABILITATION OF THE PROBATIONERS.

THERE IS CURRENTLY A TEAM OF 70 PROBATION OFFICERS AND THEY HANDLE AN AVERAGE OF 3,600 PROBATION CASES EVERY YEAR.

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ENTRY DEADLINE FOR TAI PO DRAGON BOAT RACE
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TEAMS WISHING TO TAKE PART IN THIS YEAR'S TAI PO DRAGON BOAT RACE SHOULD SUBMIT THEIR APPLICATIONS BY SATURDAY, APRIL 30.

THE EVENT IS BEING ORGANISED BY THE TAI PO DISTRICT DRAGON BOAT RACE COMMITTEE AND CO-SPONSORED BY THE REGIONAL COUNCIL AND THE TAI PO DISTRICT BOARD TO CELEBRATE THE TUEN NG FESTIVAL.

IT WILL TAKE PLACE ALONG THE WATREFRONT OF THE TAI PO INDUSTRIAL ESTATE IN THE MORNING OF JUNE 18.

THE RACE IS DIVIDED INTO MEN'S OPEN, WOMEN'S OPEN, MIXED INVITATION AND INDUSTRIAL CUP SECTIONS.

EACH TEAM SHOULD CONSIST OF 27 MEMBERS COMPRISING 24 PADDLERS, A DRUMMER, A GONG-BEATER AND A COXSWAIN.

COMPETING TEAMS WILL BE PROVIDED WITH DRAGON BOATS AND OTHER EQUIPMENT AND WILL BE ALLOCATED PRACTICE TIME.

ENTRY FORMS ARE AVAILABLE AT THE TAI PO RURAL COMMITTEE AT 1 HEUNG SZE WUI STREET; THE TAI PO SPORTS ASSOCIATION'S LI FOOK LAM INDOOR SPORTS CENTRE AT 2 ON CHEUNG ROAD; AND THE TAI PO DISTRICT OFFICE AT 1 TING KOK ROAD.

ENQUIRIES CAN BE MADE ON 0-6577111 EXT 254 OR 258.

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BOE MEMBERS VISIT CCC NIM TSI SPECIAL SCHOOL
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THE CHAIRMAN AND SEVEN MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION (BOE), TODAY (WEDNESDAY) VISITED THE CCC NIM TSI SCHOOL TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE OPERATION OF AN AIDED SPECIAL SCHOOL CATERING FOR THE SOCIALLY DISABLED AND ACADEMICALLY LESS GIFTED CHILDREN.

THEY WERE BOE CHAIRMAN, MRS RITA FAN, AND MEMBERS MR CHAN YING-LUN, MISS BOW SUI-MAY, MR DAVID CHEUNG, MR TAM MAN-KWAN, MR TIMOTHY HA, DR JOHN CHEN AND MR DOMINIC WONG.

ACCOMPANYING THEM WERE THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION (SERVICES), MR LUCAS CHAN, AND THE BOE SECRETARY, SENIOR EDUCATION OFFICER MISS ROSE LAU.

DURING A TOUR OF THE SCHOOL AT KAU PUI LUNG ROAD, LOK MAN SUN CHUEN, TO KWA WAN, THE VISITORS LEARNED THAT THE SCHOOL WAS ESTABLISHED IN SEPTEMBER 1980 UNDER THE SPONSORSHIP OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN CHINA, THE HONG KONG COUNCIL, AT BORROWED PREMISES IN MONG KOK.

THE SCHOOL MOVED TO ITS EXISTING PURPOSE-BUILT PREMISES FOR EDUCATING CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL IN 1981.

THE PARTY NOTED THAT SOME 290 BOYS AND GIRLS AGED BETWEEN 12 AND 16 WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES ARE ATTENDING 15 JUNIOR SECONDARY CLASSES IN THE WHOLE-DAY CO-EDUCATIONAL SCHOOL.

SCHOOL CHILDREN ARE GROUPED INTO DIFFERENT CLASSES ACCORDING TO THEIR INTELLECTUAL ABILITIES AND ALSO THEIR ATTAINMENT IN CHINESE, MATHEMATICS AND ENGLISH. THE CURRICULUM OF THE SCHOOL FOLLOWS THAT OF AN ORDINARY SCHOOL AS CLOSELY AS POSSIBLE.

THE PARTY WAS ALSO TOLD THAT PUPILS USE ORDINARY TEXTBOOKS BUT ADAPTATIONS HAVE TO BE MADE AND ONLY THOSE PARTS OF THE TEXT AND SYLLABUS APPROPRIATE TO THEIR LEVEL OF ATTAINMENT, INTEREST AND NEED ARE SELECTED.

A LARGE AMOUNT OF SUPPLEMENTARY REMEDIAL TEACHING MATERIAL IS PREPARED FOR THEM.

SECONDARY THREE SCHOOL LEAVERS WILL BE ISSUED A CERTIFICATE BY THE SPECIAL EDUCATION SECTION OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TOGETHER WITH A SCHOOL LEAVING CERTIFICATE BY THE SCHOOL.

THE BOE MEMBERS ALSO LEARNT THAT WITH THE HELP OF THE SCHOOL CAREERS MASTER AND SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS, A NUMBER OF SCHOOL LEAVERS RECEIVED FURTHER TRAINING IN GARMENT MANUFACTURING AND CONSTRUCTION.

SOME OF THEM ATTENDED BRIDGING COURSES AND SHORT COURSES RUN BY THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND INDUSTRIAL TRAINING DEPARTMENT IN TECHNICAL INSTITUTES, VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRES AND SKILLS CENTRES, AND UNDER THE APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT.

SOME OF THE PUPILS CONTINUED THEIR STUDIES IN THE POLICE CADET SCHOOL AND IN THE GOVERNMENT EVENING INSTITUTES OR IN SECONDARY FOUR IN PRIVATE SCHOOLS.

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TRAFFIC RESTRICTIONS ON HONG KONG ISLAND AND LANTAU

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THE UNNAMED ROAD IN FRONT OF THE MACAU FERRY TERMINAL FROM ITS JUNCTION WITH CLEVERLY STREET TO A POINT ABOUT 125 METRES WEST OF THE SAME JUNCTION WILL BE DESIGNATED A 24-HOUR DAILY URBAN CLEARWAY FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY (APRIL 30).

NO VEHICLES EXCEPT FRANCHISED BUSES WILL BE ALLOWED TO STOP WITHIN THE URBAN CLEARWAY FOR GOODS OR PASSENGERS.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE EASTBOUND SECTION OF HENNESSY ROAD OUTSIDE HOUSE NOS. 527-543 WILL BE DESIGNATED A RESTRICTED ZONE FOR PUBLIC LIGHT BUSES FROM 7 AM TO MIDNIGHT DAILY.

ALL PUBLIC LIGHT BUSES WILL BE PROHIBITED FROM STOPPING WITHIN THE RESTRICTED ZONE FOR GOODS OR PASSENGERS.

MEANWHILE, THE EXISTING RESTRICTED ZONE AT HENNESSY ROAD BETWEEN HOUSE NO. 527 AND A POINT ABOUT 35 METRES WEST OF ITS JUNCTION WITH YEE WO STREET WILL BE RESCINDED.

ON LANTAU, NO VEHICLES EXCEPT FRANCHISED BUSES WILL BE ALLOWED TO ENTER THE BUS TERMINUS IN TONG FUK 24 HOURS DAILY FROM 10 AM ON FRIDAY (APRIL 29).

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RESTRICTED ZONES IN CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT

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RESTRICTED ZONES WILL BE DESIGNATED AT TWO LOCATIONS IN CENTRAL AND WESTERN DISTRICT FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY (APRIL 30).

THE NORTHERN KERBSIDE LANE OF QUEEN'S ROAD WEST FROM A POINT ABOUT 75 METRES WEST OF ITS JUNCTION WITH HILL ROAD TO A POINT ABOUT 105 METRES WEST OF THE SAME JUNCTION WILL BE DESIGNATED AS PEAK HOUR (THAT IS 7 - 10 AM AND 4 - 7 PM) DAILY RESTRICTED ZONE.

MEANWHILE, JUBILEE STREET FROM A POINT ABOUT 15 METRES NORTH OF ITS JUNCTION WITH QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL TO A POINT ABOUT 35 METRES NORTH OF THE SAME JUNCTION WILL BE DESIGNATED AS 7 AM TO 7 PM DAILY RESTRICTED ZONE.

NO VEHICLES EXCEPT FRANCHISED BUSES WILL BE ALLOWED TO STOP FOR PASSENGERS OR GOODS THERE.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE EXISTING PEAK HOUR DAILY RESTRICTED ZONE ON THE WESTERN KERBSIDE LANE OF JUBILEE STREET FROM A POINT ABOUT 15 METRES NORTH OF ITS JUNCTION WITH QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL TO A POINT ABOUT 35 METRES NORTH OF THE SAME JUNCTION WILL BE LIFTED.

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