



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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AG MAKES LEGAL ACTION PLEDGE

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THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON MICHAEL THOMAS, ASSURED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT HIS CHAMBERS WOULD DO THE BEST IT COULD TO INITIATE ACTION AGAINST THE CONTRACTORS WHERE THERE APPEARED TO BE REASONABLE PROSPECTS OF SUCCESS AND A FAIR CHANCE OF MAKING SUBSTANTIAL RECOVERIES FOR STRUCTURAL DEFECTS IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES.

AND THE ICAC WAS NOW MAKING A PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT WITH REGARD TO A NUMBER OF HOUSING BLOCKS WITH A VIEW TO ADVISING THE GOVERNOR WHETHER THERE WERE GROUNDS FOR SUSPECTING THAT CORRUPTION OFFENCES MIGHT HAVE BEEN COMMITTED, AND IF THAT WAS THE CASE, WHETHER THOSE SUSPICIONS WARRANTED FURTHER INVESTIGATION, MR THOMAS SAID.

SPEAKING ON THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON +THE REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR 26 PUBLIC HOUSING BLOCKS ANNOUNCED BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY ON NOVEMBER 21, 1985, + MR THOMAS SAID HE SHARED CONCERN EXPRESSED BY UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS ABOUT THE SERIOUS PROBLEMS RAISED IN THE DEBATE AND WHAT ACTION SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT THEM, AND THE REQUEST THAT THE GOVERNMENT INITIATE LEGAL PROCEEDINGS AGAINST THOSE CONTRACTORS INVOLVED IF THERE WAS EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT THOSE CONTRACTORS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEFECTS.

RECALLING THAT A WRIT HAD ALREADY BEEN ISSUED AGAINST A CONTRACTOR IN THE SUPREME COURT EARLIER THIS YEAR SEEKING COMPENSATION FOR DEFECTIVE WORKS IN BLOCKS 4 TO 11 OF KWAI FONG ESTATE, MR THOMAS SAID THAT IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS, HIS CHAMBERS HAD BEEN SUPPLIED BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WITH A LIST OF MANY OTHER PUBLIC HOUSING BLOCKS WHERE STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS OF A SIMILAR NATURE HAD BEEN IDENTIFIED.

+THESE HOUSING BLOCKS HAVE BEEN CLASSIFIED INTO FOUR CATEGORIES. AT THE MOMENT, WE IN CHAMBERS ARE CONCENTRATING ON THE 26 HOUSING BLOCKS CLASSIFIED UNDER THE FIRST TWO CATEGORIES WHERE DEMOLITION IS PLANNED.

+OF THESE 26 BLOCKS, FOUR ARE IN KWAI FONG ESTATE AND ALTOGETHER NINE CONTRACTORS WERE INVOLVED. SOME OF THESE ARE STILL ACTIVE BUT QUITE A NUMBER OF THEM WENT OUT OF BUSINESS YEARS AGO.

+IN ORDER TO ASSESS THE PROSPECTS OF RECOVERING COMPENSATION IN ANY OF THESE CASES, THOROUGH INVESTIGATION OF THE CAUSES OF THE DEFECTS THAT HAVE COME TO LIGHT WILL BE NECESSARY.

+AS SOON AS THIS IS COMPLETED, WE SHALL BE ABLE TO ADVISE UPON THE CHANCES OF ESTABLISHING A CAUSE OF ACTION, HAVING REGARD TO ALL THE LEGAL AND FACTUAL CRITERIA.

+AT A LATER STAGE, WE SHALL ALSO HAVE TO CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF TAKING LEGAL ACTION AGAINST THE CONTRACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BLOCKS IN CATEGORIES THREE AND FOUR WHERE EXTENSIVE REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE IS REQUIRED, + MR THOMAS SAID.

/BUT MR

BUT MR THOMAS WARNED THE COUNCIL THAT THE INVESTIGATION OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THE CONSTRUCTION OF SUCH A LARGE NUMBER OF HOUSING BLOCKS, SOME OF WHICH WERE BUILT NEARLY 20 YEARS AGO, WAS LIKELY TO BE +AS UNPRODUCTIVE AS IT WOULD BE TIME CONSUMING AND EXPENSIVE.+

HE ADDED: +I HOPE HONOURABLE MEMBERS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WILL UNDERSTAND, AND TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE DIFFICULTIES WE FACE IN CONTEMPLATING LEGAL ACTION NOW AGAINST ALL THE CONTRACTORS INVOLVED.+

WHEN PROBLEMS OF THIS NATURE CAME TO LIGHT, IT WAS NATURAL TO THINK THAT THERE SHOULD BE RETRIBUTION, AND THAT COMPENSATION SHOULD BE PAID BY THOSE RESPONSIBLE. AND THE LAW COULD BE INVOKED TO MAKE CULPRITS PAY FOR LOSSES THEY HAD CAUSED.

BUT IN REALITY, PROBLEMS ALWAYS AROSE IN PRACTICE WHEN THERE WAS SUCH A LONG DELAY BEFORE DEFECTS CAME TO LIGHT.

+MUCH TIME HAS PASSED SINCE THESE BLOCKS WERE BUILT. THIS DELAY MAKES THE TASK OF THE COURTS VERY DIFFICULT INDEED,+ HE SAID.

IT WAS DIFFICULT TO TRACE THE RELEVANT RECORDS AFTER ALL THIS TIME AND TO FIND THE MATERIAL WITNESSES. MOST OF THEM WOULD BY NOW HAVE RETIRED, SOME OF THEM TO VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD, HE SAID.

EVEN WHEN THEY COULD BE TRACED, THEIR RECOLLECTION OF DETAILED MATTERS WAS LIKELY TO BE VERY DIM. ALL TOO OFTEN, CONTEMPORANEOUS DOCUMENTS COULD NOT BE FOUND AND CRITICAL FACTS WERE IMPOSSIBLE TO ESTABLISH. FURTHERMORE, MANY OF THE CONTRACTORS HAD ALREADY GONE OUT OF BUSINESS. SOME OF THE COMPANIES HAD LONG GONE INTO LIQUIDATION.

+AND NO LESS SERIOUS FROM THE LEGAL POINT OF VIEW, WE FACE PROBLEMS BECAUSE OF THE STATUTORY TIME LIMITS FOR BRINGING CLAIMS BEFORE THE COURTS,+ MR THOMAS SAID.

MR THOMAS SAID THAT HE COULD NOT AGREE WITH THE SUGGESTION THAT A COMMISSION OF INQUIRY BE SET UP TO LOOK INTO THE CASE. THE EXPENSE THAT WOULD BE INCURRED BY HOLDING A FORMAL PUBLIC INQUIRY AT THIS TIME COULD NOT, IN HIS VIEW, BE JUSTIFIED.

HE CONGRATULATED UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS FOR THE TIME AND TROUBLE THEY HAD TAKEN TO ENSURE THAT THIS MATTER WAS FULLY AND OPENLY DISCUSSED WITH MEMBERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND EXPLAINED TO THEM.

+THE PUBLIC WILL SURELY APPRECIATE THE EFFORTS OF HONOURABLE MEMBERS ON THEIR BEHALF,+ HE SAID.

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RENT NOT AFFECTED BY REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
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THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR HOUSING, THE HON FRED PANG YUK-LING, TODAY ASSURED PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS THAT THE EXTENDED REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR THE 26 HOUSING BLOCKS WOULD NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT RENT LEVELS.

SPEAKING AT THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, HE SAID REDEVELOPMENT OF THE 26 BLOCKS WOULD COST ABOUT \$800 MILLION TO BE SPREAD OVER A NUMBER OF YEARS.

ANOTHER \$400 MILLION, HE SAID, HAD BEEN ESTIMATED FOR DEVELOPING NEW SUPPLEMENTARY SITES SUCH AS CHUK YUEN, SHUN TIN, SHAM SHUI PO AND SHEK LEI.

+THE COSTS OF THIS PROGRAMME WILL BE FUNDED UNDER THE CAPITAL EXPENDITURE BUDGET THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT LOAN FUND,+ MR PANG SAID.

HE ADDED THAT ANY PRODUCTION ARISING FROM THE PROGRAMME WOULD BE ADDITIONAL TO THE CURRENT PRODUCTION TARGETS AND WOULD HAVE NO ADVERSE EFFECT AT ALL ON THE CURRENT HOUSING PROGRAMME.

+INDEED,+ HE SAID, +FINANCIAL PROVISIONS OF \$35 MILLION AND \$99 MILLION HAVE BEEN MADE UNDER THE CAPITAL BUDGET FOR THIS AND THE NEXT FINANCIAL YEARS,+

MR PANG EXPLAINED THAT RENTS FOR NEW PUBLIC HOUSING FLATS WERE DETERMINED BY COMPARING RENTS IN COMPARABLE EXISTING ESTATES, HAVING REGARD TO FACTORS SUCH AS ESTATE VALUE AND LOCATION, TENANTS' AFFORDABILITY AND RATES.

+REVIEW OF RENTS FOR EXISTING FLATS TAKE ACCOUNT OF GENERAL INFLATION, RUNNING COSTS, PREVAILING RATES AND TENANTS' AFFORDABILITY. THEREFORE, RENTS BEAR NO RELATION TO BUILDING COSTS,+ HE SAID.

HE ALSO SAID THAT LIKE ALL PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION, PUBLIC HOUSING WAS EXEMPT FROM THE BUILDING ORDINANCE.

BUT THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE ORDINANCE WERE FOLLOWED, PARTICULARLY IN RESPECT OF CONCRETE WORK, FOR PUBLIC HOUSING CONSTRUCTION, HE SAID.

+THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT USES A CODE OF PRACTICE MORE RIGOROUS THAN THAT REQUIRED BY THE BUILDING ORDINANCE AND THIS CODE IS EMBODIED IN ITS CONTRACT SPECIFICATION,+ HE SAID.

MR PANG STRESSED THAT IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, IT WAS SUPERVISION RATHER THAN REGULATION BY THE ORDINANCE THAT MATTERED AS FAR AS QUALITY CONTROL WAS CONCERNED.

/+THE BLOCKS

+THE BLOCKS IN QUESTION WERE BUILT SOME 12 TO 20 YEARS AGO, BY THE FORMER PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, AS DISTINCT FROM THE CURRENT BUILDING ACTIVITIES OF THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT UNDER ITS PRESENT SUPERVISION AND MONITORING SYSTEMS ENFORCED BY A STAFF OF OVER 300 PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL OFFICERS,+ HE SAID.

+THERE IS NO CONCERN WHATSOEVER IN REGARD TO THE QUALITY OF BUILDINGS CONSTRUCTED BY THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT.+

HE SAID THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WAS EXTREMELY CONSCIOUS OF NOT ONLY THE NEED TO ACHIEVE THE ANNUAL PRODUCTION TARGETS, BUT ALSO THE NEED TO PRODUCE BUILDINGS OF GOOD QUALITY AND DESIGN.

A GREAT DEAL OF IMPROVEMENTS HAD BEEN MADE, HE SAID.

+ALL HOUSING AUTHORITY CONTRACTS NOW HAVE AN IMPROVED SPECIFICATION FOR CONCRETE AND STIPULATE THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE CONTRACTOR TO EMPLOY A QUALIFIED ENGINEER FOR EACH CONTRACT - A REQUIREMENT THAT IS MORE STRINGENT THAN PRACTISED IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR,+ HE SAID.

MR PANG SAID THE SUPERVISION OF CONTRACTORS WAS MONITORED RIGOROUSLY BY A STANDING COMMITTEE WITHIN THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT, AND BY REGULAR VISITS BY SENIOR DIRECTORATE STAFF.

QUALITY CONTROL, HE SAID, WAS CLOSELY MONITORED BY THE DEPARTMENT'S RECENTLY ESTABLISHED MATERIALS TESTING LABORATORY WHICH WAS OF AN EXTREMELY HIGH STANDARD.

FOR ITS BUILDING ACTIVITIES, HE SAID THE DEPARTMENT WAS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE TO, AND MONITORED BY THE BUILDING COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY CHAIRED BY AN UNOFFICIAL WITH MEMBERSHIP FROM THE ARCHITECTURAL, ENGINEERING, LEGAL AND ACCOUNTING DISCIPLINES.

+IT IS FUNCTIONING EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY,+ HE ADDED.

THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT, MR PANG SAID, WOULD CONTINUE TO TAKE ANY NECESSARY STEPS TO FURTHER IMPROVE ALL ASPECTS OF THE SUPERVISION AND ADMINISTRATION OF CONTRACTS AND, IN THIS REGARD, CLOSE LIAISON HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED WITH THE CORRUPTION AND PREVENTION DEPARTMENT OF ICAC.

ON AWARD OF TENDERS, MR PANG EMPHASISED THAT THE AUTHORITY WAS NOT BOUND TO ACCEPT THE LOWEST TENDER.

HE SAID IT WOULD DO SO ONLY AFTER A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT REQUIREMENTS WERE MET, INCLUDING:

- * ALL TENDERS RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE BY THE AUTHORITY ARE SUBJECT TO RIGOROUS SCRUTINY BY THE PROFESSIONAL STAFF OF THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT TO ENSURE THAT PRICES QUOTED IN THE TENDERS ARE NOT UNREALISTIC;

- * THE TENDERER MUST PROVE TO THE AUTHORITY THAT IT WAS THE FINANCIAL, TECHNICAL AND MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES TO CARRY OUT AND COMPLETE THE CONTRACT, IF AWARDED, AND
- * WHETHER A TENDER IS RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE IS ALSO DETERMINED TO A VERY LARGE EXTENT BY THE PERFORMANCE OF THE TENDERER IN COMPLETED AND CURRENT CONTRACTS, NOT ONLY WITH THE AUTHORITY, BUT ALSO WITH OTHER GOVERNMENT WORKS DEPARTMENTS.

MR PANG SAID HE COULD NOT FIND GOOD REASONS TO SUPPORT THE SUGGESTION THAT A SPECIAL COMMITTEE BE FORMED TO SUPERVISE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXTENDED REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME.

HE SAID THE PROGRAMME WAS AN EXTENSION OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S ON-GOING REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR MARKS I AND II ESTATES. ALTHOUGH IT DID NOT CONSTRUCT THE 26 BUILDINGS IN QUESTION, THE HOUSING AUTHORITY HAD ACCEPTED THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR REDEVELOPING THEM AS PART OF ITS OBJECTIVES TO PROVIDE BETTER HOMES FOR THOSE IN NEED OF PUBLIC HOUSING.

+THE AUTHORITY HAS SO FAR SUCCESSFULLY REDEVELOPED 117 OLD ESTATE BLOCKS. THERE IS NO REASON TO DOUBT ITS ABILITY TO HANDLE THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THESE 26 BLOCKS,+ HE SAID.

MR PANG SAID THE 26 BLOCKS WERE NEITHER UNSAFE NOR IN A STATE OF IMMINENT FAILURE, ALTHOUGH THE QUALITY OF CONCRETE WAS SUB-STANDARD.

+IF THESE BLOCKS WERE UNSAFE, THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WOULD HAVE DECIDED TO EVACUATE THEM IMMEDIATELY,+ HE SAID.

ON THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM, MR PANG SAID: +THE HOUSING AUTHORITY HAS ACTED IN A QUICK AND RESPONSIBLE MANNER IN DEALING WITH THIS INHERITED PROBLEM, AND HAS BEEN FRANK IN PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGING THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM.+

+ITS PRIMARY CONSIDERATIONS ARE THE CONCERN FOR ITS TENANTS AND THE INTERESTS OF THE PUBLIC,+ HE SAID.

MR PANG ALSO SAID THAT EVERY EFFORT WAS BEING MADE TO MINIMISE ANY DISRUPTION CAUSED TO TENANTS AFFECTED BY THE EXTENDED REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME.

+THEY WILL HAVE AMPLE TIME, RANGING FROM 24 MONTHS TO 44 MONTHS TO PREPARE FOR THE MOVE,+ HE SAID.

MR PANG SAID DOMESTIC TENANTS WOULD BE GIVEN THE CHOICE OF A WIDE RANGE OF REHOUSING ACCOMMODATION OF DIFFERENT RENT LEVELS IN BOTH NEW AND EXISTING ESTATES.

+ALL AFFECTED FAMILIES WILL BE PAID AN ALLOWANCE TO ASSIST IN THE COSTS OF REMOVAL AND BASIC DECORATIONS TO THE NEW FLATS, PLUS A SPECIAL ALLOWANCE TO ASSIST IN THE COSTS OF TELEPHONE REMOVAL AND OTHER SIMILAR MATTERS,+ HE SAID.

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+THE TOTAL AMOUNT RANGED FROM \$1 800 FOR A ONE OR TWO-PERSON FAMILY TO \$2 200 FOR A FAMILY WITH MORE THAN FIVE PERSONS,+ HE SAID.

ALSO, THE RENTS OF THEIR EXISTING FLATS WERE FROZEN AT THE CURRENT LEVEL.

+FOR FIXED TERM SHOP TENANCIES, THEY CAN BE TERMINATED UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE TENANCY AGREEMENT BY GIVING THREE MONTHS' NOTICE WITHOUT ANY LEGAL OBLIGATION TO PAY COMPENSATION,+ HE SAID.

BUT, HE ADDED, THE AUTHORITY HAD DECIDED THAT THESE SHOP TENANTS WOULD BE PAID AN EX-GRATIA ALLOWANCE EQUIVALENT TO 15 MONTHS' CURRENT EXCLUSIVE RENT.

MR PANG SAID THIS RATE OF PAYMENT WAS FAR MORE GENEROUS THAN THAT USED IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN COMPARABLE CIRCUMSTANCES.

THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT WAS ALSO LOOKING INTO THE QUESTION OF SEVERANCE PAY THAT MAY ARISE IN SOME CASES, HE SAID.

MR PANG SAID THAT ALL SHOP TENANTS WERE FREE TO TERMINATE THEIR TENANCIES ANY TIME BETWEEN NOW AND THE FINAL REMOVAL DATE.

THIS, HE SAID, WOULD NOT AFFECT THE ARRANGEMENTS APPLICABLE TO THEM AND, RENTS FOR ALL SHOPS AFFECTED WERE FROZEN AT THE CURRENT LEVEL.

+IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF ALLOWANCES PAYABLE TO DOMESTIC AND COMMERCIAL TENANTS WOULD BE ABOUT \$69 MILLION,+ MR PANG ADDED.

HE SAID THAT THE EFFECT ON THE WAITING LIST AND OTHER ALLOCATION QUOTAS WOULD BE TEMPORARY ONLY, BECAUSE NEW REPLACEMENT ACCOMMODATION BUILT ON THE CLEARED SITES AND A NUMBER OF NEW SUPPLEMENTARY SITES WOULD BECOME AVAILABLE FROM THE THIRD YEAR ONWARDS.

MR PANG ESTIMATED THAT MORE THAN 14 500 REPLACEMENT FLATS WOULD BE PRODUCED AND THAT THEY WOULD BE ADDITIONAL TO THE CURRENT ANNUAL PRODUCTION TARGETS.

+EFFORTS ARE CONTINUING TO SECURE MORE SUPPLEMENTARY SITES IN THE URBAN AREA TO MEET THE SHORTFALL,+ MR PANG SAID.

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GREAT IMPROVEMENTS IN CONCRETE QUALITY, CONTROL
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THERE HAVE BEEN GREAT IMPROVEMENTS IN CONCRETE SPECIFICATIONS AND QUALITY CONTROL OVER THE PAST DECADE, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON NICKY CHAN, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

ANSWERING POINTS RAISED BY UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS ABOUT SUBSTANDARD CONCRETE IN 26 PUBLIC HOUSING BLOCKS, MR CHAN SAID THERE WERE NOW IMPROVED LABORATORY FACILITIES AND MORE STRINGENT CONTROL OF TESTING PROCEDURES.

+THERE IS GREATER EMPHASIS ON TRAINING FOR SUPERVISORY STAFF AND NO LESS THAN 2 700 SITE STAFF HAVE UNDERGONE COURSES ON SITE CONCRETE CONTROL DURING THE LAST TWO YEARS.

+CONTROL OF CONTRACTORS IS NOW BETTER, WITH IMPROVED LEVELS OF SUPERVISION AND CLOSER MONITORING OF CONTRACTORS' PERFORMANCE.+

TO ILLUSTRATE HOW THINGS HAD IMPROVED, MR CHAN SAID THAT AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY THE FORMER PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT CONTINUED TO BUILD PUBLIC HOUSING FOR ABOUT 300 000 PEOPLE BETWEEN 1973 AND 1980. +RECENT TESTS HAVE SHOWN THAT THESE BLOCKS ARE SOUND AND SAFE,+ HE ADDED.

+A FEW MEMBERS HAVE ASKED WHETHER THE 26 BLOCKS IN QUESTION WOULD HAVE BEEN DECLARED DANGEROUS AND CLOSED RIGHT AWAY IF THEY WERE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR. THE ANSWER IS NO. BASED ON THE TECHNICAL REPORTS AVAILABLE, THESE BLOCKS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN DECLARED DANGEROUS UNDER THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE IF THEY WERE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR,+ MR CHAN SAID.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT REGARDED THE SUBSTANDARD WORK IN THE 26 BLOCKS AS A SERIOUS MATTER. +THE GOVERNMENT WILL SPARE NO EFFORT TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF IT,+ HE SAID.

MR CHAN SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE MATTER SHOULD BE VIEWED IN CONTEXT. HE SAID MANY OF THE PROBLEM BLOCKS WERE BUILT IN THE 1960'S WHEN THERE WAS A SUDDEN INFLUX OF IMMIGRANTS AND A RAPID GROWTH OF THE SQUATTER PROBLEM.

+THE GOVERNMENT WAS UNDER TREMENDOUS PRESSURE TO PROVIDE HOUSING FOR HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF SQUATTERS,+ MR CHAN SAID.

+SPEED AND LOW COST WERE THE MAIN CONSIDERATIONS, AND NEW BLOCKS WERE BUILT AT THE RATE OF ROUGHLY ONE EVERY WEEK.

+THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY AT THAT TIME WAS TO BUILD LOW-COST HOUSING BY REDUCING FIXTURES AND FINISHINGS TO ABSOLUTE BASICS AND TO KEEP THE COST DOWN BY THE SIMPLICITY OF THE DESIGN THEREBY ACHIEVING THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF UNITS WITHIN THE BUDGET.

/+BUT AT

+BUT AT NO TIME WAS IT THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION THAT SAFETY SHOULD BE COMPROMISED.

+THE TERM LOW COST HOUSING DOES NOT IMPLY LOWER STANDARDS OF SAFETY,+ HE ADDED.

CONTINUING ON THE SUBJECT OF SAFETY, MR CHAN SAID THAT ALL GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, ALTHOUGH EXEMPT FROM THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE, FULLY CONFORMED TO THE STRUCTURAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE ORDINANCE AND THEIR DESIGNS WERE VETTED BY THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OFFICE.

IN FACT CHANGES TO THE BUILDING (CONSTRUCTION) REGULATIONS WERE BEING CONSIDERED TO BRING STANDARDS IN PRIVATE CONTRACTS UP TO THE LEVEL OF THOSE IN GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS.

ON A SUGGESTION BY THE HON HO SAI-CHU THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD HAVE THE DISCRETION NOT TO ACCEPT THE LOWEST TENDER, MR CHAN SAID THIS WAS THE CURRENT PRACTICE.

NO CONTRACT WAS AWARDED UNLESS ALL THE NECESSARY REQUIREMENTS WERE MET AND THE CENTRAL TENDER BOARD WAS SATISFIED THAT THE TENDERER COULD SATISFACTORILY COMPLETE THE CONTRACT AT THE PRICE TENDERED.

+IN CONCLUDING,+ MR CHAN SAID, +LET ME ASSURE MEMBERS THAT PRESENT DAY STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES FOR BUILDING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED WHEN COMPARED WITH THOSE UNDER WHICH THE 26 PROBLEM HOUSING BLOCKS WERE BUILT. CURRENT CONSTRUCTION PRACTICE GIVES US NOT ONLY BUILDINGS WHICH ARE STRUCTURALLY SAFE, BUT ALSO DURABLE AND VALUE FOR MONEY AS THEY SHOULD BE.+

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CALL TO HANDLE HOUSING REDEVELOPMENT EXPEDITIOUSLY
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IT IS THE DUTY OF THE SECRETARY FOR HOUSING TO EXPEDITIOUSLY ATTEND TO ALL THE PROBLEMS ARISING FROM THE REDEVELOPMENT OR REPAIRS OF ALL THOSE PUBLIC HOUSING BLOCKS WITH CONCRETE PROBLEMS.

THIS WAS SAID BY DR THE HON HO KAM-FAI IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN LEADING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON +THE REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR 26 PUBLIC HOUSING BLOCKS ANNOUNCED BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY ON NOVEMBER 21, 1985+.

DR HO, CONVENER OF A LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AD HOC GROUP ON THE STRUCTURAL SAFETY OF PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES, WAS JOINED BY 20 OTHER UNOFFICIALS IN THE DEBATE.

DR HO SAID THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S DECISION TO DEMOLISH THE 26 BLOCKS WITH LOW CONCRETE STRENGTH WAS A RESPONSIBLE ACT, REFLECTING ITS CONCERN AND CARE FOR THE SAFETY OF THE RESIDENTS.

/HE ALSO

HE ALSO CONSIDERED THE AUTHORITY'S EFFORTS TO CONVINCE THE FINANCE BRANCH TO ALLOCATE THE NECESSARY PROVISIONS FROM THE DEVELOPMENT LOAN FUND TO REDEVELOP THESE BLOCKS, OVER AND ABOVE THE FUND FOR THE NORMAL PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME SHOULD BE SEEN AS +A DEMONSTRATION OF RESPONSIBILITY AND GOOD PLANNING+.

IT SHOULD BE RECOGNISED, DR HO ADDED, THAT ALL THESE SUBSTANDARD BLOCKS HAD BEEN CONSTRUCTED BY THE FORMER PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT AND THE HOUSING AUTHORITY ONLY ASSUMED MANAGEMENT OF THESE BUILDINGS UPON ITS ESTABLISHMENT IN 1973.

HOWEVER, DR HO AND MANY OTHER UNOFFICIALS STRESSED THAT EFFORTS MUST BE MADE TO ALLEVIATE THE HARDSHIP AND INCONVENIENCE CAUSED TO DOMESTIC AND COMMERCIAL TENANTS AND TO MINIMISE DISRUPTION TO SOCIAL ACTIVITIES.

IN THE LONGER TERM, THEY CALLED FOR IMPROVEMENT TO THE SUPERVISION AND CONTROL OVER THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC HOUSING CONSTRUCTION TO PREVENT RECURRENCE OF SIMILAR INCIDENT.

THE NEED FOR THOROUGH INVESTIGATION INTO LEGAL LIABILITIES AND POSSIBLE DERELICTION OF DUTIES WAS ALSO EMPHASISED.

DR HO URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO CARRY OUT A VIGOROUS INVESTIGATION WITH AN INTENT TO IDENTIFYING THE PERSONS, BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CIVIL SERVICE, WHO SHOULD BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POOR QUALITY OF THE 26 BLOCKS.

HE SAID THE HOUSING AUTHORITY MUST WORK OUT PROCEDURES TO IMPOSE MORE STRINGENT SUPERVISION AND CONTROL ON SITE AND ON THE ENTIRE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS, INCLUDING CONCRETING.

HE ALSO STRESSED THAT GOVERNMENT MUST BE PREPARED TO DO ITS UTMOST TO ASSIST THE AFFECTED BUSINESS OPERATORS.

THE HON S.L. CHEN QUERIED WHY GOVERNMENT'S AND THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S BUILDINGS WERE EXEMPTED FROM THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE AND CALLED FOR CLARIFICATION BY THE GOVERNMENT THROUGH STATEMENTS MADE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

THE HON F.K. HU, A MEMBER OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, BELIEVED THAT THE POLICY AND PROCEDURE ADOPTED BY THE AUTHORITY COULD ENSURE THE QUALITY AND DURABILITY OF ITS BLOCKS AND THE TENANTS LIVING IN THESE BLOCKS SHOULD HAVE NO FEAR OF COMPULSORY REMOVAL BECAUSE OF POOR CONSTRUCTION STANDARDS.

HE POINTED OUT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY HAD STEADILY IMPROVED THE CONCRETE SPECIFICATIONS AND INTRODUCED MODERN MECHANISED CONSTRUCTION SYSTEM IN ORDER TO ENSURE CONSISTENCY.

THE TENDER SYSTEM, HE SAID, ENSURED THAT THE AUTHORITY OBTAIN THE OPTIMUM VALUE FOR MONEY.

FURTHERMORE, THE AUTHORITY HAD SET UP ITS OWN MATERIAL TESTING LABORATORY RECENTLY IN ORDER TO ACT AS A CHECK ON PRIVATE LABORATORIES.

MAKING SIMILAR OBSERVATIONS, ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, THE HON CHEUNG YAN-LUNG, SAID THE AUTHORITY AND THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT WERE IN FACT +SCAPEGOATS+.

HE NOTED THE VERY HIGH STANDARD OF THE PUBLIC HOUSING CONSTRUCTED BY THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT NOW AND HOPED THAT THE MORALE OF ITS ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED BY THIS INCIDENT AND THEY WOULD CONTINUE TO WORK HARD TO FULFIL THEIR DUTIES.

THE HON SELINA CHOW POINTED OUT THAT FAMILIES ON THE WAITING LIST WHO WERE ORIGINALLY DUE TO BE HOUSED IN 1987 AND 88 WOULD HAVE TO WAIT A LITTLE LONGER.

IN A WIDER CONTEXT, SHE SAID THE GOVERNMENT, UNLIKE THE HOUSING AUTHORITY WHICH CLAIMED THAT THE PROBLEM WAS THE RESULT OF ACTION TAKEN BEFORE IT EXISTED, WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO PASS THE BUCK.

SHE SAID THE CASE WAS OF ENOUGH IMPORTANCE AND PUBLIC INTEREST TO WARRANT A COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY TO INVESTIGATE HOW SUCH A CATASTROPHE COULD HAVE OCCURED.

THE HON CHAN YING-LUN, ALSO A MEMBER OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY, SAID A POINT TO CONSIDER WAS THAT THERE MIGHT BE SIMILAR REQUESTS FROM TENANTS AFFECTED BY OTHER REDEVELOPMENT OR CLEARANCE PROJECTS IF COMPENSATION FOR SHOP OPERATORS WERE TO BE FURTHER INCREASED.

HE EXPLAINED HOW THE HOUSING AUTHORITY CALCULATED ITS RENTS AND ASKED MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC NOT TO WORRY THAT THE REDEVELOPMENT OF THE 26 BLOCKS WOULD LEAD TO RENT INCREASE.

THE HON PAULINE NG, IN CALLING FOR REASONABLE COMPENSATION FOR AFFECTED TENANTS, SAID THAT THE MASSIVE REMOVAL EXERCISE SHOULD NOT BE INCLUDED AS PART OF THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT'S REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME OF OLDER ESTATES BECAUSE THIS WOULD TANTAMOUNT TO COVERING UP THE TRUTH.

SHE SAID A SEPARATE DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE SET UP BY THE GOVERNMENT TO DEAL WITH THE QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY AND THE RELOCATION OF AFFECTED COMMERCIAL AND DOMESTIC TENANTS.

DESCRIBING THE INCIDENT AS +AN EXPENSIVE LESSION+, THE HON CHENG HON-KWAN SAID IT WAS VITAL FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO ASSURE THE PUBLIC OF THE STRUCTURAL SAFETY OF THESE BUILDINGS THE LEVEL OF WHICH WAS APPROPRIATE TO THE CONTINUING USE OF THESE BUILDINGS WITHOUT IN ANY WAY ENDANGERING THE PUBLIC.

SUCH ASSURANCE MUST BE JUSTIFIED BY PROFESSIONAL APPRAISAL THE RESULTS OF WHICH SHOULD BE DISCLOSED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO AVOID UNNECESSARY CONCERN BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN URGED THE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO ACCEPT THIS EXTENDED REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME AS A CHALLENGE AND NOTED THAT ALL SITES CHOSEN FOR THIS PURPOSE SHOULD BE EASILY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL THE RESIDENTS CONCERNED.

HE ALSO ASKED FOR AN ASSURANCE FROM THE AUTHORITY THAT THE RENTS FOR THIS PARTICULAR PROGRAMME WOULD BE HISTORICALLY COMPATIBLE AND REASONABLE.

IN ADDITION, THE AUTHORITY SHOULD REVIEW WHAT ADDITIONAL INCENTIVES COULD BE OFFERED THE RESIDENTS CONCERNED TO BUY HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME FLATS, HE SAID.

HE FURTHER CALLED FOR EVERY EFFORT TO ENSURE THAT THE AFFECTED TENANTS WOULD BE DECANDED WITH THE MINIMUM HARDSHIP AND DISRUPTION TO THEIR LIVES AND THAT COMPENSATION ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE AS REASONABLE AND GENEROUS AS THE PUBLIC PURSE ALLOWED.

FINALLY, HE URGED THE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO KEEP UP THE REDEVELOPMENT MOMENTUM SO AS TO UPGRADE LIVING STANDARDS.

THE HON CHUNG PUI-LAM NOTED THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO FIND OUT WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE TO SEE IF THERE WERE ANY CORRUPTION OR DERELICTION OF DUTIES INVOLVED.

TO ENSURE MINIMUM DISRUPTION TO THE TENANTS, HE SAID THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT SHOULD CONSIDER MAKING USE OF THE OPEN SPACE IN THE AFFECTED DISTRICTS FOR BUILDING THE REDEVELOPMENT FLATS.

HE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT GOVERNMENT SHOULD REVIEW THE REMOVAL AND EX-GRATIA ALLOWANCES, ENCOURAGE THE AFFECTED TENANTS TO BUY HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME FLATS AND RESERVE UNITS COMPARABLE TO THE ONES THEY WERE LIVING IN FOR TENANTS WHO COULD NOT AFFORD THE RENTS OF THE NEWER ESTATES.

THE HON HO SAI-CHU CALLED FOR AN ASSURANCE ON THE STRUCTURAL SAFETY OF THE 26 BLOCKS AND A DISTINCTION BE MADE CONCERNING THE BLOCKS WHICH WERE BUILT YEARS AGO BY THE FORMER PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT AND THE CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT.

HE SUGGESTED THAT IN THE COURSE OF INVESTIGATION INTO THIS INCIDENT, CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO REVIEW THE PRESENT PROCEDURE REGARDING THE AWARD OF A TENDER FOR GOVERNMENT BUILDING AND CIVIL ENGINEERING WORKS TO ENSURE THAT THE LOWEST TENDER SUBMITTED FOR SUCH WORKS NEEDED NOT BE ACCEPTED UNLESS IT WAS A REALISTIC FIGURE CAPABLE OF PERFORMING THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS CALLED FORTH IN THE TENDER.

THE HON HUI YIN-FAT QUERIED WHY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY HAD TAKEN SO LONG TO REACH THE DECISION TO REDEVELOP THE 26 BLOCKS AND WHY SO MUCH MONEY HAD BEEN SPENT ON MAINTENANCE WORK IN KWAI FONG ESTATE.

HE SAID THE LACK OF UNIFORM POLICIES AND SYSTEMATIC PROCEDURES HAD LEFT TENANTS ENTIRELY AT THE MERCY OF THE HOUSING MANAGERS IN THE VARIOUS DISTRICTS.

HE SAID IT WAS INCUMBENT UPON EACH HOUSING ESTATE OFFICE TO MAKE KNOWN ALL VACANT PREMISES IN THE AREA TO WORK OUT RESETTLEMENT DETAILS IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL TENANTS.

DR THE HON CONRAD LAM SAID ALL BUILDINGS, INCLUDING GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, SHOULD BE UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE.

IN IMPLEMENTING THE REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, MORE CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE DEMAND FOR MARKETS AND ALSO TO THE NAMING OF BUILDINGS TO ENSURE THEY WERE IN LINE WITH THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT'S DEMARCATION OF DISTRICTS, HE SAID.

THE HON LEE YU-TAI STRESSED THAT GOVERNMENT MUST ANNOUNCE THE DETAILS OF ITS INVESTIGATION.

HE SAW THE NEED FOR A SUBSTANTIVE APPOINTMENT TO THE POST OF SECRETARY FOR HOUSING AND A REVIEW OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S BUILDING COMMITTEE REGARDING ITS MEMBERSHIP, THE ADEQUACY OF UNOFFICIAL AND PROFESSIONAL INPUT AND ITS TERMS OF REFERENCE.

THE HON LIU LIT-FOR CALLED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CENTRAL CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE AND OF ADVISORY CENTRES IN ALL THE AFFECTED DISTRICTS, WHILE STRESSING THE NEED TO PROVIDE PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE TO TENANTS, SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS.

THE HON POON CHI-FAI, HIGHLIGHTING THE PLIGHT OF THE COMMERCIAL TENANTS, NOTED THAT IT WAS ECONOMICALLY UNSOUND FOR THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT TO MAINTAIN BASIC SERVICES TO THE AFFECTED BLOCKS AND THEREFORE CALLED UPON THE DEPARTMENT TO ASSIST THE COMMERCIAL TENANTS IN SOLVING THEIR REMOVAL PROBLEMS SO THAT EARLY DEMOLITION OF THE AFFECTED BLOCKS COULD BE CARRIED OUT.

THE HON SZETO WAH URGED THAT SURVEY BE IMMEDIATELY CARRIED OUT ON SCHOOL PREMISES TO SEE IF THEY WERE STRUCTURALLY SAFE.

HE ALSO PROPOSED THAT A JOINT WORKING GROUP SHOULD BE SET UP BY THE HOUSING AUTHORITY AND THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT TO KEEP IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH THE AFFECTED SCHOOLS, TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE SURVEY, TO FIND ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS FOR THE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS AND TO DEAL WITH THE REMOVAL OF SCHOOL PREMISES.

THE HON ROSANNA TAM ASKED WHAT ARRANGEMENTS THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT HAD DRAWN UP FOR THE 11 SOCIAL SERVICE ESTABLISHMENTS IN THESE AFFECTED HOUSING BLOCKS.

SHE SAID ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION MUST BE FOUND FOR THESE ESTABLISHMENTS TOGETHER WITH REASONABLE AND COMPREHENSIVE COMPENSATION.

DR THE HON DANIEL TSE QUESTIONED WHY THE CONTRACTORS OF THESE PROBLEM BLOCKS WERE AWARDED CONTRACTS WORTH MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO CARRY OUT REPAIR WORKS, THUS GIVING THEM YET A SECOND CHANCE TO MAKE PROFIT.

HE WANTED TO KNOW WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT HAD ANY PLAN TO SUSPEND THESE CONTRACTS UNTIL THE TRUTH WAS REVEALED.

HE SAID THE ATTITUDE ADOPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT IN THIS RESPECT WOULD AFFECT THE TRUST OF THE PUBLIC IN THE GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PUBLIC HOUSING POLICY.

THE HON MARTIN LEE URGED THAT THE RELEVANT AUTHORITIES MUST LEAVE NO STONE UNTURNED IN ITS INVESTIGATION INTO THIS SCANDAL.

THEY MUST ALSO ENSURE THAT EVERY LEGAL STEP WOULD BE TAKEN AGAINST THOSE WHO WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS UNFORTUNATE STATE OF AFFAIRS INCLUDING THE INSTITUTION OF CRIMINAL, CIVIL OR DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS, HE SAID.

HE SAID THE ADMINISTRATION MUST BE PERCEIVED TO BE DOING ITS VERY BEST TO SUPPLY THE UNOFFICIALS WITH ALL RELEVANT DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION OR ELSE THERE WOULD BE A REAL FEAR THAT THE TRUTH MIGHT NOT BE KNOWN.

THE PUBLIC MUST BE TOLD EXACTLY WHAT THE POSITION WAS BECAUSE OPEN GOVERNMENT REQUIRED THAT THE RELEVANT AND MATERIAL INFORMATION BE SUPPLIED TO THE PUBLIC, HE ADDED.

DR THE HON RICHARD LAI SAID THIS INCIDENT MIGHT INVOLVE CORRUPTION OR DERELICTION OF DUTIES AND HE SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT SHOULD SPEEDILY CONSIDER SETTING UP AN OMBUDSMAN TO DEAL WITH MALADMINISTRATION.

HE FURTHER SUGGESTED A SPECIAL COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY BE SET UP AND FOR THE HOUSING AUTHORITY TO INCLUDE MORE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PUBLIC HOUSING TENANTS TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC.

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WIDE SUPPORT FOR LONG SERVICE PAYMENT SCHEME
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THE LONG SERVICE PAYMENT SCHEME PROPOSED UNDER THE EMPLOYMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL 1985 SHOULD BE ADOPTED TO PROVIDE BETTER AND IMMEDIATE PROTECTION TO THE LOCAL WORKFORCE.

THIS WAS THE VIEW OF 10 UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS WHO SPOKE IN SUPPORT OF THE MOTION DURING THE RESUMED DEBATE OF THE BILL IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THEY WERE THE HON WONG PO-YAN, THE HON K.C. CHAN, THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG, THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN, THE HON HUI YIN-FAT, THE HON MARTIN LEE, THE HON NGAI SHIU-KIT, THE HON SZETO WAH, THE HON ROSANNA TAM AND THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG.

THE HON PANG CHUN-HOI ALSO SPOKE ON THE BILL BUT ABSTAINED FROM VOTING ON THE MOTION.

MOST OF THE SPEAKERS EXPRESSED THEIR SUPPORT ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE SCHEME WOULD BE REVIEWED AFTER IMPLEMENTATION FOR ONE YEAR, WHEN THE CONDITIONS FOR PAYMENT, IN PARTICULAR THE AGE LIMITS WOULD BE FURTHER LOOKED INTO AND IMPROVED IF NECESSARY.

A FEW OF THEM ALSO CALLED FOR THE SETTING UP OF A CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME.

THE HON WONG PO-YAN, CONVENER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AD HOC GROUP, SAID THAT THE INTRODUCTION OF A LONG SERVICE PAYMENT TO AN EMPLOYEE WHOSE CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT WAS TERMINATED BY DISMISSAL HAD ATTRACTED A GREAT DEAL OF GENERAL INTEREST.

REPRESENTATIONS BOTH IN WRITING AND IN PERSON HAD BEEN RECEIVED AND THE VIEWS, FEARS AND ASPIRATIONS OF BOTH THE EMPLOYERS AND THE EMPLOYEES WERE WELL TAKEN AND UNDERSTOOD, HE SAID.

HOWEVER, MR WONG SAID: +HAVING REGARD TO THE INTENTIONS OF THE BILL AND, BEFORE ITS INCEPTION, THE CONSIDERATIONS GIVEN TO THE ISSUE IN THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD AND THE CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT, IT IS OUR FIRM BELIEF THAT THE BILL IS DEFINITELY A POSITIVE STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.+

+ALTHOUGH IT MAY NOT BE TO THE ENTIRE SATISFACTION TO BOTH EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS, THE STAGE AT PRESENT REACHED IS A GOOD COMPROMISE TO BE IMPLEMENTED,+ HE SAID.

IN GIVING FULL SUPPORT TO THE BILL, THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG SAID: +I SUPPORT IT NOT JUST BECAUSE OF ITS INHERENT QUALITIES BUT ALSO BECAUSE IT MARKS A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD IN THE SPIRIT OF CO-OPERATION BETWEEN MANAGEMENT AND LABOUR IN THE SEARCH OF COMMON GROUNDS FOR THE COMMON GOOD.+

HE SAID THE RATIONALE OF THE BILL WAS TO OFFER SOME DEGREE OF PROTECTION TO THE GROUP OF EMPLOYEES OVER 40 YEARS OF AGE, WHO WERE MORE VULNERABLE IF THEY WERE DISMISSED THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN AND WITHOUT ANY COMPENSATION.

IT HAD ALSO BEEN POSTULATED THAT 40 WAS POSSIBLY THE START OF A DOWN HILL PATH BEYOND WHICH IT MIGHT BE PROGRESSIVELY MORE DIFFICULT TO FIND AND ADJUST TO NEW JOBS, HE ADDED.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE BILL WAS DESIGNED TO ACHIEVE THIS PURPOSE AND THE PACKAGE ADDRESSED FULLY THIS MAIN RATIONALE, ADDING THAT IT WOULD BE MISLEADING AT BEST TO CLAMOUR FOR FURTHER STRAYING FROM WHAT THE BILL WAS DESIGNED FOR.

MR CHEONG CAUTIONED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION SHOULD NOT ENTER INTO ANY REVIEW OF THE BILL IN FUTURE WITH A CLOSED MIND.

+ANY REVIEW SHOULD, IF AT ALL POSSIBLE, BE ACCOMPANIED BY OBJECTIVE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS ON THE OVERALL CUMULATIVE COST EFFECTS ON HONG KONG'S ECONOMY,+ HE SAID.

THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN SAID THE BILL WAS MAINLY TO GIVE STATUTORY RECOGNITION TO AN ELDERLY EMPLOYEE'S LOYALTY TO HIS EMPLOYER AND COMPARATIVELY LIMITED PROSPECTS IN THE EMPLOYMENT MARKET, IF DISMISSED.

+THIS WOULD BE IN LINE WITH THE BEST OF SOCIAL LEGISLATION GOVERNING THE SAFETY, HEALTH AND EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS IN OTHER SOUTH-EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES,+ HE SAID.

MR CHEONG-LEEN SAID HE SUPPORTED THE BILL ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD WOULD CONSIDER WHETHER THE LONG SERVICE PAYMENT WOULD COVER CASES OF SUMMARY DISMISSAL AND RESIGNATIONS ON GROUNDS OF ILL-HEALTH, WHEN THE SCHEME WAS TO BE REVIEWED IN ONE YEAR'S TIME.

+THE PROPOSALS IN THIS AMENDMENT BILL MAY NOT BE COMPREHENSIVE ENOUGH AND THEREFORE NOT IDEAL, BUT IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THE BILL BE ENACTED QUICKLY TO REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY OF DISMISSALS IN ANTICIPATION OF ITS BECOMING LAW,+ HE ADDED.

THE HON HUI YIN-FAT SAID THE AGE LIMITS LAID DOWN IN THE PROPOSALS OF THE BILL WERE MOST UNREASONABLE, AND REQUESTED THE GOVERNMENT TO ASSURE ALL LABOUR ORGANISATIONS AND THE COMMUNITY THAT A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW WOULD BE CONDUCTED AFTER ITS IMPLEMENTATION.

AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES FIELD, MR HUI SAID IT WAS HIS RESPONSIBILITY TO POINT OUT THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF SETTING UP A CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND AS A PUBLIC LIABILITY TO PROVIDE AN OVERALL SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM FOR THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG SHOULD BE SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED.

THE HON MARTIN LEE SAID THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE BILL WAS TO GIVE PROTECTION TO THE OLDER EMPLOYEES, BUT ON THE CONTRARY HE FOUND IT WOULD CREATE DIFFICULTY FOR THEM IN SEEKING EMPLOYMENT.

IT WAS BECAUSE UNDER THE BILL AN EMPLOYER WOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO EMPLOY THE YOUNGER ONE, IF HE HAD A CHOICE, AS IT WOULD TAKE LONGER FOR THESE YOUNGER WORKERS TO QUALIFY FOR THE LONG SERVICE PAYMENT, HE SAID.

HOWEVER, MR LEE SAID HE SUPPORTED THE BILL +BEARING IN MIND THAT FROM THE EMPLOYEES' POINT OF VIEW, HALF A LOAF IS BETTER THAN NO BREAD, AND THAT THIS HAS THE SUPPORT OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF BOTH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES THROUGH CONSULTATIONS HELD WITH THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD.+

THE HON NGAI SHIU-KIT NOTED THAT THE ABSENCE OF REASONABLE PROTECTION FOR THE EMPLOYEE DISMISSED FOR REASONS OTHER THAN REDUNDANCY HAD LONG BEEN CONSIDERED A SERIOUS SHORT-COMING IN HONG KONG'S LABOUR LEGISLATIONS.

+IT IS, THEREFORE, HIGH TIME THAT THIS COUNCIL PROPOSED A LONG SERVICE PAYMENT TO GIVE BETTER AND IMMEDIATE PROTECTION TO OUR INDUSTRIOUS, EFFICIENT AND DISCIPLINED LABOUR FORCE,+ HE SAID.

MR NGAI SAID HE DISAGREED THAT THE PROPOSED AGE LIMITS AS RECOMMENDED BY THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD WERE DISCRIMINATORY AGAINST OR UNFAIR TO YOUNG WORKERS.

INSTEAD, HE THOUGHT THAT THE PRESENT BILL FELL IN LINE WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S CONSISTENT POLICY OF IMPLEMENTING SUCH CHANGES AND IMPROVEMENT IN A REALISTIC AND GRADUAL MANNER SO THAT ANY ADAPTATION OR PLANNING DIFFICULTIES FACED BY THE EMPLOYERS COULD BE MINIMISED.

HE ADDED THAT BEARING IN MIND THAT THE PROPOSED SCHEME IMPOSED RESPONSIBILITY ON ALL EMPLOYERS ALIKE IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR SIZES, ITS IMPACT ON THE SMALL EMPLOYER IN PARTICULAR SHOULD BY NO MEANS BE UNDER-ESTIMATED.

HE HOPED THAT EXISTING LAWS AND REGULATIONS WHICH WERE CONDUCIVE TO INVESTMENT WOULD NOT BE CHANGED DRACONICALLY AND ABRUPTLY AND BE CHANGED ONLY IF CIRCUMSTANCES SO WARRANTED, WHILE HARD WORK AND LOYALTY WOULD BE DULY RECOGNISED AND REWARDED.

THE HON SZETO WAH PRAISED THE SWIFT PROCESS OF THE BILL SAYING THAT IT SHOWED THE RESPONSIBLE AND SENSIBLE MANNER AMONG THE REPRESENTATIVES FROM BOTH EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS IN WORKING OUT A COMPROMISE.

HE SAID AS HONG KONG HAD ENTERED INTO THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD, SUCH SPIRIT AND ATTITUDE SHOULD BE FURTHER DEVELOPED TO PROMOTE HARMONIOUS LABOUR RELATIONS, WHICH WAS VERY IMPORTANT TO THE MAINTENANCE OF ITS STABILITY AND PROSPERITY.

HE REGARDED AS IRRESPONSIBLE AND CONTRADICTORY TO THE INTERESTS OF EMPLOYEES AT LARGE ANY SUGGESTIONS TO DELAY PASSING OR DISCARD THE BILL.

HE SAID THE NEW LEGISLATION WOULD NOT HINDER THE SETTING UP OF A CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND SCHEME BUT WOULD IN FACT PAVE THE WAY FOR ITS ESTABLISHMENT.

THE HON ROSANNA TAM SAID THE PRINCIPLE AND SPIRIT OF THE BILL WAS MOST ENCOURAGING, BUT URGED THE AUTHORITIES TO SERIOUSLY CONSIDER DELETING THE AGE LIMITS WHEN REVIEWING THE SCHEME AFTER ONE YEAR.

THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG SAID THE AMENDMENT BILL PROVIDED MORE PROTECTION FOR THE EMPLOYEES AND WAS A FURTHER ENHANCEMENT OF THE EXISTING LABOUR LEGISLATIONS.

HE SAID THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LONG SERVICE PAYMENT SCHEME WOULD ASSIST IN PROMOTING A SENSE OF BELONGING AMONG THE WORKERS TOWARDS THEIR EMPLOYERS THUS REDUCING THE MOBILITY OF THE WORKFORCE.

THE BILL ALSO PLUGGED THE LOOPHOLES IN THE EXISTING LEGISLATION AND MIGHT HELP MINIMISE THE OCCURRENCE OF LABOUR DISPUTES, HE SAID.

MR TAM CALLED FOR AN EARLY ENACTMENT OF THE BILL TO PREVENT WORKERS WITH LONG SERVICES, IN PARTICULAR THE OLDER WORKERS, BEING DISMISSED BEFORE ITS ENACTMENT.

THE HON CHAN KAM-CHUEN POINTED OUT THAT MOST OF THE LARGE COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS ALREADY HAD WELL ESTABLISHED PROVIDENT FUNDS WHICH PROVIDED ADEQUATE RETIREMENT BENEFITS FOR THEIR EMPLOYEES.

HE THEREFORE ADVISED THE SMALLER BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS WHICH FORMED OVER 96 PER CENT OF THE BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS IN HONG KONG AND WHICH WERE NOT REGISTERED AS LIMITED COMPANIES, TO PLAN FOR FUTURE FINANCIAL ADJUSTMENTS AS FORWARD PLANNING WOULD AVOID A CASH FLOW PROBLEM.

HE SAID SMALL PRIVATE COMPANIES SHOULD BE CHANGED TO LIMITED LIABILITY COMPANIES SO AS TO SEGREGATE THEIR BUSINESS AND FAMILY FINANCES.

MR CHAN ALSO ADVISED EMPLOYEES NOT TO RELY SOLELY ON THE LONG SERVICE PAYMENTS, AND HE SAID SYSTEMATIC SAVING AND PROUDENT INVESTMENT WOULD ALLEVIATE A LOT OF UNPLEASANTNESS AFTER RETIREMENT EVEN IN THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH PROVIDED A PENSION FOR LIFE.

THE HON PANG CHUN-HOI ABSTAINED FROM VOTING ON THE MOTION SAYING THAT THERE WERE SERIOUS DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN THE BILL AND THE ORIGINAL PROPOSAL SUBMITTED BY THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT FOR DISCUSSION AT THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD.

HE SAID THE BILL WAS ENTIRELY CONTRARY TO THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE AND SPIRIT OF LONG SERVICE PAYMENT. HE ADDED THAT HE HAD STUDIED THE LABOUR LEGISLATIONS OF NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES BUT HAD FOUND NO SUCH UNREASONABLE AND DIFFERENT RATES OF PAYMENT FOR DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS.

MR PANG SAID REPRESENTATIONS MADE BY BOTH THE EMPLOYEES AND THE EMPLOYERS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AD HOC GROUP ON THE ISSUE REVEALED MUTUAL DISTRUST BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES. THIS WOULD LEAD TO MANY UNNECESSARY DISPUTES BETWEEN THEM AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SCHEME, HE SAID.

POINTING OUT THAT 1985 WAS THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE YOUTH, HE SAID IT WAS MOST REGRETFUL THAT A BILL OBVIOUSLY SHOWING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE YOUNG WORKERS HAD TO BE DECIDED.

HOWEVER, MR PANG HOPED THAT THE AUTHORITIES CONCERNED WOULD MONITOR THE SITUATION AFTER THE BILL CAME INTO EFFECT, AND CONDUCT A REVIEW IMMEDIATELY AFTER ONE YEAR. HE ALSO URGED THE AUTHORITIES TO CONSIDER SETTING UP A CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND.

THANKING UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS FOR THEIR COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON NEIL HENDERSON, SAID ANY NEW SIGNIFICANT PIECE OF LABOUR LEGISLATION WAS BOUND TO RAISE FEARS AMONG EMPLOYERS. +ATTEMPTS TO SEEK AGREEMENT ON THE UNRESOLVED ISSUES AT THIS STAGE WOULD PROBABLY HAVE DELAYED THE ENACTMENT OF THE BILL CONSIDERABLY, AND WE FELT IT WAS BETTER TO PROCEED WITH THE BILL IN ITS PRESENT FORM.+

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1985

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+ I SHOULD POINT OUT, TO CORRECT ANY MISAPPREHENSION, THAT THERE WAS BROAD AGREEMENT IN THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD OVER THE MAIN FEATURES OF THE BILL, AND INDEED I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CONGRATULATE BOTH EMPLOYERS' AND EMPLOYEES' REPRESENTATIVES ON THEIR SINCERE DETERMINATION TO REACH AN AGREEMENT ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH PARTIES.+

MR HENDERSON SAID THE OUTSTANDING ISSUES RAISED BY UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS WOULD BE CAREFULLY STUDIED WHEN THE SCHEME WAS REVIEWED IN A YEAR'S TIME.

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ANTI-ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION PROVISIONS EXTENDED

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A MOTION SEEKING TO EXTEND CERTAIN PROVISIONS UNDER THE IMMIGRATION ORDINANCE PROVIDING MEASURES AGAINST ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS AND VIETNAMESE REFUGEES FOR A FURTHER YEAR UNTIL THE END OF 1986 WAS ADOPTED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE MOTION, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON MICHAEL THOMAS, SAID IN THE FIRST 11 MONTHS OF THIS YEAR, 1 034 VIETNAMESE REFUGEES REACHED HONG KONG.

+AS REGARDS ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS FROM CHINA, THERE HAS BEEN A MARKED INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF ARRIVALS.+

HE SAID IN THE FIRST 11 MONTHS OF THIS YEAR, A TOTAL OF 11 536 ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS FROM CHINA WERE ARRESTED WHILE ATTEMPTING TO ENTER HONG KONG AND A FURTHER 3 014 WHO HAD EVADED SECURITY FORCES AT THE BORDER WERE ARRESTED SUBSEQUENTLY, COMPARED WITH 8 786 BORDER ARRESTS AND 2780 EVADERS DURING THE SAME PERIOD LAST YEAR.

+IT IS AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND THAT WE NEED TO RETAIN THE LEGISLATIVE POWERS NECESSARY TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH THE PROBLEMS OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AND ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS,+ MR THOMAS SAID.

UNDER THE PROVISIONS THAT WERE GIVEN THE EXTENSION TODAY, VIETNAMESE REFUGEES WHO ARE REFUSED PERMISSION TO LAND IN HONG KONG ARE SUBJECT TO REMOVAL FROM HONG KONG BY AN IMMIGRATION OFFICER AT ANY TIME AND NOT JUST WITHIN THE TWO MONTHS THAT APPLIES TO OTHERS REFUSED PERMISSION TO LAND.

AS REGARDS ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS, THE PROVISIONS STATE THAT ANY PERSON WHO AIDS ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS TO ENTER HONG KONG COMMITS AN OFFENCE.

SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE MOTION, THE HON MARIA TAM SAID UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AGREED THAT THE PROVISIONS SHOULD BE EXTENDED FOR A FURTHER YEAR.

/SHE STRESSED

SHE STRESSED THAT THE PROBLEM OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AND ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION WAS STILL WITH US AND WE SHOULD NOT RELAX OUR EFFORTS IN PROSECUTING AND PUNISHING THOSE WHO PROFITED FROM TRANSPORTING ILLEGAL +HUMAN CARGOES+.

SHE EXPLAINED IN DETAIL THE DETERRENT EFFECTS OF THE PROVISIONS UNDER THE IMMIGRATION ORDINANCE AND RECALLED THAT THEY WERE FIRST INTRODUCED AT A TIME WHEN THE NUMBER OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AND ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS ARRIVING IN HONG KONG WAS CAUSING A SERIOUS THREAT TO OUR SECURITY AND A DRAIN ON OUR RESOURCES.

SHE SAID THESE MEASURES WERE NECESSARY TO DETER RACKETEERS FROM GIVING OR ARRANGING PASSAGES FOR UNAUTHORISED ENTRANTS.

MISS TAM SAID THAT AN AD HOC GROUP FORMED UNDER THE CONVENERSHIP OF THE HON PETER C. WONG HAD CONCLUDED THAT HONG KONG MUST REMAIN RESOLVED IN STAMPING THE FLOW OF REFUGEES AND ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS INTO THE TERRITORY.

THE AD HOC GROUP ALSO FELT THAT ALTHOUGH THESE MEASURES HAD TO SOME EXTENT PLACED THE BURDEN OF PROOF OF INNOCENCE ON THE DEFENDANTS, THEY WERE EFFECTIVE AND SHOULD CONTINUE TO ACT AS A STRONG DETERRENT TO ANY SHIP-OWNER, CREW, OR THEIR CO-CONSPIRATOR TO CARRY OR TO ARRANGE PASSAGES FOR REFUGEES AND ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS TO HONG KONG, OR TO HELP THEM STAY, MISS TAM ADDED.

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ACCEPTABLE STANDARD MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS WELCOMED

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THE MOVE TO ENABLE THE HOLDER OF AN IRISH DIPLOMA, IRRESPECTIVE OF HIS NATIONALITY, TO REMAIN ENTITLED TO BE REGISTERED AS A MEDICAL PRACTITIONER IN HONG KONG RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM UNOFFICIAL MEMBERS TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1985, DR THE HON CHIU HIN-KWONG STRESSED THAT HE SUPPORTED IT BECAUSE THE IRISH DIPLOMA WAS OF AN ACCEPTABLE STANDARD WHICH HAD ALL ALONG BEEN RECOGNISED AND MONITORED BY THE GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED KINGDOM.

+WE SHOULD NOT AT THIS POINT AND AT THIS TIME FOLLOW STRICTLY THE POLICY OF THE GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL TO TAKE AWAY THE ELIGIBILITY OF A HOLDER OF A PREVIOUSLY RECOGNISED QUALIFICATION ON NATIONALITY GROUNDS BECAUSE WE CONSIDER THAT STANDARDS SHOULD BE OUR MAIN CONCERN,+ HE SAID.

+WE WELCOME DOCTORS WHO ARE OF AN ACCEPTABLE STANDARD,+ DR CHIU ADDED.

/ALSO SPEAKING

ALSO SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE BILL, DR THE HON CONRAD LAM SAID WHAT WAS IMPORTANT TO THE HEALTH OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC WAS HOW WE WERE GOING TO ASCERTAIN THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARD OF MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS IN HONG KONG.

+FROM THE STANDPOINT OF FAIRNESS, ALL THOSE WHO ARE NOT MEDICAL GRADUATES OF THE UNIVERSITIES IN HONG KONG SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO PASS A STANDARDISED TEST BEFORE THEY CAN REGISTER AND PRACTISE MEDICINE IN HONG KONG.

+ON THE OTHER HAND, FOR THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH DO NOT ALLOW HOLDERS OF HONG KONG MEDICAL QUALIFICATIONS TO REGISTER AND PRACTISE MEDICINE WITHIN THEIR TERRITORIES, WE OUGHT TO TREAT THEM IN A RECIPROCAL MANNER,+ HE SAID.

+THIS IS INDEED WHAT WE MEAN BY EQUAL FOOTING,+ DR LAM SAID.

HE NOTED THAT A MERIT OF THE BILL WAS THAT HONG KONG DID NOT FOLLOW A DECISION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM INDISCRIMINATELY.

+AT A TIME WHEN WE WANT TO SUCCESSFULLY DEVELOP HONG KONG INTO A PLACE TO BE RULED BY ITS OWN PEOPLE, THIS IS ONE THING WORTH BEARING IN MIND,+ DR LAM SAID.

HE REITERATED THAT THE BILL WAS WORTH SUPPORTING, BASED ON THE OVERALL INTERESTS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRINCIPLE OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND.

ACCORDING TO STATISTICS FROM THE HEALTH AND WELFARE BRANCH, A SHORTAGE OF DOCTORS STILL EXISTED IN HONG KONG, HE SAID.

DR LAM ALSO MENTIONED THE NUMBER OF DOCTORS RECRUITED LOCALLY EVERY YEAR AND THE NUMBER OF OVERSEAS TRAINED DOCTORS WHO PASSED THE LICENTIATE EXAMINATION OF THE HONG KONG MEDICAL COUNCIL.

+I HOPE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL ARRANGE SUITABLE POSTS FOR THOSE MEDICAL DOCTORS WHO HAVE NO INTENTION TO PRACTISE ON THEIR OWN IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE OBJECTIVE OF 'MAKING FULL USE OF RESOURCES',+ DR LAM SAID.

THANKING BOTH DR LAM AND DR CHIU FOR THEIR SUPPORT, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID HE SHARED THE VIEW EXPRESSED ON THE NEED TO MAINTAIN THE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF THOSE ELIGIBLE FOR REGISTRATION AS MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS.

IN VIEW OF THE SHORTAGE OF DOCTORS IN THE TERRITORY, HE SAID, IT WAS IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST THAT THE RECRUITMENT NET COULD BE CAST AS WIDE AS POSSIBLE, PROVIDED THAT PROPER STANDARDS WERE MAINTAINED.

+I DOUBT THEREFORE WHETHER IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE, AS SUGGESTED BY DR LAM, TO RESTRICT REGISTRATION TO DOCTORS FROM THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH AFFORD RECOGNITION TO HONG KONG MEDICAL GRADUATES.

+NOR WOULD IT BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE COMMUNITY TO REQUIRE ALL OVERSEAS MEDICAL GRADUATES TO UNDERGO AN EXAMINATION BEFORE BEING GRANTED THE RIGHT TO PRACTISE,+ HE SAID.

EXPRESS POWER TO REMOVE ARBITRATOR
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AMENDMENTS TO THE ARBITRATION ORDINANCE WERE PASSED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) TO GIVE EXPRESS POWER TO THE COURT TO REMOVE ANY EXISTING ARBITRATOR IN CONSOLIDATED PROCEEDINGS.

SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE ARBITRATION (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1985 AT THE RESUMED DEBATE, THE HON MARTIN LEE SAID AN AMENDMENT TO SECTION 6B(2) OF THE ORDINANCE WAS NECESSARY.

THE AMENDMENT WOULD GIVE EXPRESS POWER TO THE COURT TO REMOVE ANY EXISTING ARBITRATOR OR UMPIRE IN A CASE WHERE NOT ALL THE PARTIES TO THE ARBITRATION PROCEEDINGS WOULD AGREE ON THE CHOICE OF AN ARBITRATOR OR UMPIRE IN THE CONSOLIDATED PROCEEDINGS, HE SAID.

HE NOTED THAT A LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AD HOC GROUP, CONVENED BY THE HON PETER C. WONG, HAD HELD MEETINGS WITH THE ADMINISTRATION TO LOOK INTO THE BILL.

THE GROUP FELT THAT THE ORIGINAL PROPOSED AMENDMENT DID NOT CATER FOR SITUATIONS WHERE ALL THE PARTIES TO THE CONSOLIDATED ARBITRATION PROCEEDINGS WERE IN AGREEMENT AS TO THE CHOICE OF ARBITRATOR OR UMPIRE BUT THE EXISTING ARBITRATOR OR UMPIRE, CONTRARY TO THE WISHES OF THE PARTIES, REFUSED TO BE REMOVED.

THOUGH IT WAS APPRECIATED THAT SUCH A SITUATION WOULD BE UNLIKELY, AND INDEED IN MOST CASES IT WOULD BE COVERED BY AN EXPRESS PROVISION IN THE ARBITRATION AGREEMENT, MEMBERS FELT THAT SINCE THE WHOLE OBJECT OF THIS BILL WAS TO REMOVE ANY POSSIBLE DOUBT, IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE TO GO ALL THE WAY, MR LEE SAID.

IT WAS ALSO FELT THAT THE FORMULA OUGHT TO BE INTRODUCED WHEREBY THE EXISTING ARBITRATOR OR UMPIRE HAD TO BE REMOVED BY THE COURT WOULD BE UNNECESSARILY OFFENSIVE TO THE EXISTING ARBITRATOR OR UMPIRE, HE ADDED.

HE FURTHER POINTED OUT THAT DOUBT IN SECTION 30 OF THE ORDINANCE ALSO NEEDED TO BE REMOVED.

SECTION 30 READS: +ANY ORDER MADE UNDER THIS PART MAY BE MADE ON SUCH TERMS AS TO COSTS OR OTHERWISE (INCLUDING, THE CASE OF AN ORDER UNDER SECTION 29A, THE REMUNERATION OF THE ARBITRATOR IN RESPECT OF HIS SERVICES) AS THE AUTHORITY MAKING THE ORDER THINKS JUST.+

THE GROUP FELT THAT BECAUSE THERE WAS A SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO SECTION 29A OF THE ORDINANCE IN THE WORDS WITHIN THE BRACKETS, THERE SHOULD LIKEWISE BE A SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO SECTION 6B SO AS TO REMOVE ANY POSSIBLE ARGUMENT THAT BY THE EXPRESS OMISSION OF ANY REFERENCE TO SECTION 6B WHEN THERE WAS A SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO SECTION 29A, THE LEGISLATURE HAD THEREBY INTENDED THAT SUCH POWER TO AWARD COSTS OR OTHERWISE WOULD NOT INCLUDE A SITUATION COVERED BY SECTION 6B.

THE HON MARIA TAM MOVED TWO AMENDMENTS TO THE BILL AT THE COMMITTEE STAGE TO REFLECT THE ABOVE VIEWS.

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+FIRST ANNUAL REPORT+ TABLED IN LEGCO
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THE ANNUAL REPORT ON HONG KONG 1984-85 TO THE U.K. PARLIAMENT, WHICH IS THE FIRST SUCH ANNUAL REPORT, WAS TABLED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN THE FORM OF A WHITE PAPER.

TABLING THE REPORT, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, SAID ITS PURPOSE WAS TO KEEP THE U.K. PARLIAMENT INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENTS IN HONG KONG.

IT COVERED THE PERIOD FROM THE INITIALLING OF THE DRAFT SINO-BRITISH AGREEMENT ON HONG KONG IN SEPTEMBER 1984 TO THE OPENING OF THE 1985-86 SESSION OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ON OCTOBER 30, AND CONTAINED A GENERAL SURVEY OF THE MAIN EVENTS IN HONG KONG IN THIS PERIOD, HE SAID.

COPIES OF THE ANNUAL REPORT WILL BE AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC FROM TOMORROW.

IN LONDON, THE ANNUAL REPORT WOULD BE PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS AND PUBLISHED AS A WHITE PAPER FOR GENERAL RELEASE AT THE SAME TIME, SIR DAVID ADDED.

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CRIMINAL APPEAL RULES AMENDED
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A MOTION SEEKING TO AMEND CERTAIN PROVISIONS UNDER THE CRIMINAL APPEAL RULES WAS ADOPTED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE MOTION, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON MICHAEL THOMAS, SAID ONE OF THE AMENDMENTS WAS TO DRAW AN APPELLANT'S ATTENTION TO THE EXISTENCE OF THE SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AID.

ANOTHER AMENDMENT PROPOSED THAT A SUITABLE WARNING THAT THE COURT OF APPEAL HAS THE POWER TO INCREASE HIS SENTENCE SHOULD BE ADDED TO THE FORMS TO BE USED WHEN A CONVICTED PERSON WISHES TO APPEAL AGAINST HIS CONVICTION OR AGAINST HIS SENTENCE.

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JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE TO SET UP CLINIC NEXT YEAR

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THE JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE CONTINUES TO WORK TOWARDS IMPROVING ITS SUPPORT SERVICES AND WILL ESTABLISH A CLINIC FOR TREATMENT OF INJURIES EARLY NEXT YEAR, THE HON F.K. HU SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN TABLING THE CENTRE'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 1985.

MR HU SAID THE CLINIC WOULD BE ESTABLISHED WITH THE CLOSE COOPERATION FROM THE STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ORTHOPAEDIC AND TRAUMATIC SURGERY OF THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG AND GENEROUS SPONSORSHIP BY THE LEE HYSAN FOUNDATION LIMITED, SIR RUN RUN SHAW AND MR SIU MING.

NOTING THAT THE CENTRE HAD SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED ITS THIRD FULL YEAR OF OPERATION, HE SAID IT HAD CONTINUED TO MAKE STEADY PROGRESS IN ALL THE SPORTS INCLUDED IN ITS PROGRAMME.

MR HU CITED A NUMBER OF ASIAN REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EVENTS WHICH HAD TAKEN PLACE IN THE CENTRE DURING THE YEAR.

HE SAID THE USE OF THE CENTRE'S FACILITIES INCLUDING QUALITY OF ATHLETES BY THE GOVERNING BODIES OF SPORT WAS CONSTANTLY IMPROVING.

+ADDITIONALLY, THE CENTRE HAS RUN ITS OWN PROGRAMME OF COST-EFFECTIVE COURSES IN A NUMBER OF SPORTS FOR THOSE BELOW THE NATIONAL SQUAD STANDARD,+ HE SAID.

MR HU OBSERVED THAT THE INPUT OF A GROUP OF PROFESSIONAL COACHES HAD HIGHLIGHTED THE DIFFICULTIES FOR VOLUNTEER SPORTS OFFICIALS IN KEEPING PACE WITH DEVELOPMENT.

THE GOVERNING BODIES OF SPORT WOULD REQUIRE FULL-TIME ADMINISTRATORS OF A HIGH CALIBRE AS A MATTER OF URGENCY IF PROGRESS WAS TO BE MAINTAINED, AND THE JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE WOULD BE HAPPY TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN HELPING TO TRAIN THOSE STAFF, HE SAID.

MR HU NOTED THAT ITS PRIMARY OBJECTIVE WOULD CONTINUE TO BE THE CENTRE OF SPORTS DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS AND TO INCLUDE EXCELLENCE.

HE SAID JUDO HAD RECENTLY BEEN INCLUDED IN THE PROGRAMME, AND WITHIN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, THE BOARD WOULD NEED TO CONSIDER THE CLAIMS OF OTHER SPORTS PRESENTLY SEEKING COACHING SUPPORT FROM THE CENTRE.

MR HU FURTHER POINTED OUT THAT RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE GOVERNING BODIES OF SPORT WERE HARMONIOUS, AND THE HONG KONG TENNIS ASSOCIATION HAD ALREADY ESTABLISHED ITS DEVELOPMENT OFFICE AT THE CENTRE.

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+THE IMPROVEMENT IN STANDARDS AS THE RESULT OF THE COMBINED EFFORTS OF THE SPORTS ASSOCIATIONS AND THE JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE SHOWS THAT HONG KONG HAS ACHIEVED RECOGNITION IN CERTAIN SPORTS AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL,+ HE SAID, HIGHLIGHTING THE RESULTS OF SEVERAL INTERNATIONAL EVENTS DURING THE YEAR, WHICH INCLUDED THE WORLD CUP SOCCER QUALIFYING MATCH AND THE DAVIS CUP TENNIS TOURNAMENT.

MR HU SAID COACHES, ADMINISTRATORS, AND ATHLETES BOTH LOCALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY HAD BEGUN TO LOOK TO THE JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE FOR A LEAD AND FOR ASSISTANCE.

HOWEVER, THE PROGRESS WHICH HAD BEEN MADE HAD CREATED PROBLEMS FOR THE CENTRE IN KEEPING PACE WITH A CHANGING AND INCREASED DEMAND, HE NOTED.

MEANWHILE, HE SAID, THE BOARD HAD ACCEPTED PROPOSALS TO ENHANCE A NUMBER OF FACILITIES AT THE CENTRE BUT A DECISION FROM THE GOVERNMENT WAS STILL AWAITED.

+ADDITIONALLY, WORK WILL NEED TO BE UNDERTAKEN IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS TO REMEDY THE EFFECTS OF SUBSIDENCE ON THE OUTDOOR PITCHES AND ATHLETICS TRACK, WHICH IN THE CASE OF THE LATTER IS BECOMING DANGEROUS,+ HE SAID.

+ONCE THIS WORK IS COMPLETED, THERE EXISTS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY AHEAD TO CAPITALISE FULLY ON THIS SPECIAL INVESTMENT INTO LOCAL SPORT,+ MR HU ADDED.

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FINAL DRAFT PREPARED ON SECURITIES RULES

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THE SECURITIES COMMISSION HAS FINALISED THE SECURITIES (STOCK EXCHANGE LISTING) RULES AFTER A WIDE EXERCISE IN CONSULTATION, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON SIR JOHN BREMRIDGE, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON THOMAS CLYDESDALE, SIR JOHN SAID THAT THE SECURITIES COMMISSION CIRCULATED THE FIRST DRAFT OF THE SECURITIES (STOCK EXCHANGE LISTING) RULES TO RELEVANT INTERESTED PARTIES FOR COMMENT IN APRIL 1984.

HE POINTED OUT THAT CONSULTATION WITH THESE BODIES RESULTED IN A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF CHANGES TO THE INITIAL DRAFT.

+CONSEQUENTLY A FURTHER DRAFT - THE SEVENTH - WAS PREPARED AND CIRCULATED IN APRIL 1985,+ HE SAID.

/SIR JOHN

SIR JOHN SAID THAT AFTER AN OPPORTUNITY FOR DISCUSSION IN EXECUTIVE COUNCIL THESE RULES WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO THE GOVERNOR EARLY IN JANUARY, AND SUBJECT TO HIS APPROVAL, WOULD BE PUBLISHED IN THE GAZETTE NEXT MONTH.

+THEY WILL THEN COME INTO FORCE ON FEBRUARY 1, 1986. I DO NOT ANTICIPATE ANY FURTHER DELAY,+ SIR JOHN ADDED.

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HEALTH SERVICES NOT AFFECTED BY STAFF TURNOVER
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THE OVERALL QUALITY OF PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES CAN BE MAINTAINED SATISFACTORILY DESPITE THE PRESENT TURNOVER AND VACANCY RATES OF DOCTORS AND NURSING STAFF IN GOVERNMENT AND SUBVENTED HOSPITALS, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO THE HON LEE YU-TAI, MR CHAMBERS GAVE THE TURNOVER AND VACANCY RATES AS FOLLOWS:

	TURNOVER RATE ----- 1984	VACANCY RATE ----- END OF 1984
<u>DOCTORS</u>		
GOVERNMENT SECTOR	9.4 PER CENT	6.5 PER CENT
SUBVENTED SECTOR	23.6 PER CENT	10.7 PER CENT
<u>NURSING STAFF</u>		
GOVERNMENT SECTOR	3.2 PER CENT	0.9 PER CENT
SUBVENTED SECTOR	7.7 PER CENT	7.6 PER CENT

WHILE NOTING THAT THE TURNOVER RATES WERE HIGH, PARTICULARLY FOR DOCTORS IN THE SUBVENTED SECTOR, MR CHAMBERS SAID THAT SINCE THERE WAS A CONSIDERABLE MOVEMENT OF STAFF BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND SUBVENTED SECTORS, THE TURNOVER RATE FOR THE TWO SECTORS COMBINED WAS PERHAPS OF GREATER SIGNIFICANCE.

IN 1984 THIS TURNOVER RATE WAS 11 PER CENT FOR DOCTORS AND 3.7 PER CENT FOR NURSES, HE SAID. +THIS COMPARES FAVOURABLY WITH THE SAME TURNOVER RATES IN 1979 WHICH WERE 12.7 PER CENT AND 4.2 PER CENT.+

/MR CHAMBERS

MR CHAMBERS SAID THE PLANNED SUPPLY OF DOCTORS AND NURSES SHOULD ALSO BE SUFFICIENT TO ENABLE THE STAFFING NEEDS OF THE PLANNED MAJOR NEW HOSPITALS TO BE MET.

HE SAID THAT THE SUPPLY WOULD BE BOOSTED BY THE OUTPUT OF QUALIFIED DOCTORS FROM THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY, BEGINNING IN 1987.

THE INTAKE OF NURSE TRAINING SCHOOLS WAS ALSO BEING INCREASED WITH A VIEW TO MEETING THE NURSING REQUIREMENTS OF NEW AND EXPANDED HOSPITALS, INCLUDING THE EASTERN DISTRICT HOSPITAL, MR CHAMBERS SAID.

+THUS, BY PRESENT INDICATIONS, THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT STAFF TURNOVER AND VACANCY RATES WILL LEAD TO DELAYS IN DEVELOPING THE EASTERN DISTRICT HOSPITAL OR OTHER MAJOR MEDICAL PROJECTS,+ HE ADDED.

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TUEN MUN HOSPITAL TO BE COMPLETED IN 1988
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THE TUEN MUN HOSPITAL IS SCHEDULED TO BE COMPLETED BY EARLY 1988 AND, ALLOWING FOR THE USUAL 12-MONTH COMMISSIONING PERIOD, TO BE FULLY OPERATIONAL BY EARLY 1989, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING IN WRITING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON TAI CHIN-WAH, MR CHAMBERS SAID THAT WITH REGARD TO THE HIGHLY TECHNICAL AND COMPLEX NATURE OF HOSPITAL BUILDINGS, IT WAS NOT CONSIDERED FEASIBLE TO SHORTEN THE PERIOD TO ENABLE THE HOSPITAL TO BE COMPLETED AHEAD OF SCHEDULE.

THE WORK ON THE SUPERSTRUCTURE OF THE HOSPITAL STARTED AT THE END OF AUGUST 1984, AND THE CONSTRUCTION PERIOD WAS ESTIMATED TO BE THREE AND A HALF YEARS, HE SAID.

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24-HOUR CASUALTY SERVICE PROVIDED BY FOUR HOSPITALS

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FOUR SUBVENTED HOSPITALS -- KWONG WAH HOSPITAL, POK OI HOSPITAL, CARITAS MEDICAL CENTRE AND UNITED CHRISTIAN HOSPITAL -- PROVIDED A 24-HOUR CASUALTY SERVICE, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON TAI CHIN-WAH, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE FOUR HOSPITALS WERE EQUIPPED WITH BLOOD BANKS, AND EXCEPT FOR POK OI HOSPITAL, ALL OF THEM PROVIDED A 24-HOUR BLOOD CROSS-MATCHING SERVICE.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THAT 16 SUBVENTED HOSPITALS WERE EQUIPPED WITH X-RAY FACILITIES.

THERE WERE ALICE HO MIU LING NETHERSOLE HOSPITAL, GRANTHAM HOSPITAL, RUTTONJEE SANATORIUM, KWONG WAH HOSPITAL, OUR LADY OF MARYKNOLL HOSPITAL, UNITED CHRISTIAN HOSPITAL, HAVEN OF HOPE HOSPITAL, CARITAS MEDICAL CENTRE, THE DUCHESS OF KENT CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, NAM LONG HOSPITAL, TUNG WAH HOSPITAL, TUNG WAH EASTERN HOSPITAL, HONG KONG BUDDHIST HOSPITAL, WONG TAI SIN INFIRMARY, POK OI HOSPITAL AND YAN CHAI HOSPITAL.

OF THESE HOSPITALS, THE FIRST EIGHT PROVIDED A 24-HOUR X-RAY SERVICE, HE ADDED.

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THREE MORE INFIRMARIES IN NT BY 1995

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PLANS ARE IN HAND TO BUILD THREE GOVERNMENT INFIRMARIES IN SHA TIN, TAI PO AND TSUEN WAN BY 1995, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO THE HON TAI CHIN-WAH, MR CHAMBERS SAID THAT IN THE SUBVENTED SECTOR, A SECOND CHESHIRE HOME WOULD BE BUILT IN SHA TIN.

+THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF ESTABLISHING INFIRMARIES WAS TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF OVERCROWDING IN MAJOR ACUTE HOSPITALS,+ HE SAID.

+THEY ARE INTENDED TO CATER FOR THE LONGER-TERM AND CHRONICALLY ILL, WHO WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE TO BE ACCOMMODATED IN ACUTE HOSPITAL BEDS WHICH ARE IN GREAT DEMAND,+ HE ADDED.

/MR CHAMBERS

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MR CHAMBERS NOTED THAT INFIRMARIES WERE EQUIPPED AND STAFFED TO THE LEVEL OF CARE APPROPRIATE TO THESE PATIENTS AND WERE LESS LABOUR-INTENSIVE AND LESS EXPENSIVE TO OPERATE.

+IT IS THEREFORE MORE COST-EFFECTIVE TO PROVIDE BEDS FOR SUCH PATIENTS IN INFIRMARIES, THEREBY RELEASING THE ACUTE BEDS FOR THOSE WHO REQUIRE THEM,+ HE SAID.

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SIX BILLS PASSED
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SIX BILLS WERE PASSED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THEY ARE THE INSURANCE COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1985, THE ARBITRATION (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1985, THE EMPLOYMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL 1985, THE COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1985, THE BANKRUPTCY (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL AND THE MEDICAL REGISTRATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1985.

THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED TO JANUARY 8, 1986.

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JENKINS BILL VETO WELCOMED

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PRESIDENT REAGAN'S DECISION TO VETO THE THURMOND - JENKINS BILL WAS WELCOMED BY THE DIRECTOR OF TRADE, MR HAMISH MACLEOD, TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

+WE GREET THIS VETO WITH SOME RELIEF,+ HE SAID. +HOWEVER, AT THE SAME TIME WE MUST REMEMBER THAT PROTECTIONIST PRESSURES IN THE UNITED STATES WILL CONTINUE.

+THE TEXTILES AND APPAREL LOBBY THERE WILL CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR PROTECTION IN 1986 AND THIS WILL, NO DOUBT, INCLUDE ATTEMPTS FOR NEW LEGISLATION.

+WE ARE KEEPING A VERY CLOSE WATCH ON DEVELOPMENTS AND MAY WELL NOW ALSO SEE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE FUTURE OF THE MULTI FIBRE ARRANGEMENT START TO HOT UP.+

MR MACLEOD SAID THAT THE DEPARTMENT WAS NOW STUDYING THE FULL TEXT OF PRESIDENT REAGAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT.

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PROTECTIONISM TO REMAIN HK'S MAIN CONCERN

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THE PROBLEM OF PROTECTIONISM IN HONG KONG'S MAJOR MARKETS WOULD CONTINUE TO BE THE MAIN CONCERN IN 1986, THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR ERIC HO, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT A LUNCHEON MEETING OF THE HONG KONG EXPORTERS' ASSOCIATION HE SAID SUCH DEVELOPMENTS, PARTICULARLY IN THE U.S., POSED A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE INTERNATIONAL TRADING SYSTEM ON WHICH HONG KONG RELIED.

+MORE SPECIFICALLY, PROTECTIONIST SENTIMENTS COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THE OUTCOME OF THE NEGOTIATIONS ARISING FROM THE EXPIRY OF THE CURRENT MULTIFIBRE ARRANGEMENT AND THREATEN OUR VERY IMPORTANT TEXTILE TRADE.+

HE ASSURED EXPORTERS AND MANUFACTURERS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS FULLY ALERT TO THE SERIOUSNESS OF THIS THREAT, AND WAS TAKING ALL NECESSARY MEASURES TO SAFEGUARD HONG KONG'S INTERESTS AND TO COUNTERACT PROTECTIONIST MOVES WHICH THREATENED OUR LIVELIHOOD.

+WE SHALL CONTINUE TO USE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO PRESS HONG KONG'S CASE - THROUGH OUR OVERSEAS OFFICES, COORDINATION WITH OTHER LIKE-MINDED TRADING PARTNERS AT FORA ON INTERNATIONAL TRADE, AND ALL OTHER MEANS AT OUR DISPOSAL WHETHER BY MOUNTING MISSIONS OR LOBBYING VISITING DIGNITARIES.+

/MR HO

MR HO SAID ANOTHER MAJOR DEVELOPMENT IN 1986 ON THE TRADE SCENE WAS THE IMMINENT LAUNCHING OF A NEW ROUND OF MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS UNDER THE GATT.

+HONG KONG HAS BEEN PARTICIPATING IN THE PREPARATORY PROCESS FOR THE NEW ROUND ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROPOSED NEGOTIATIONS WOULD INCLUDE THE PROMOTION OF THE LIBERALISATION OF TRADE AND THE RE-VITALISATION OF THE MULTILATERAL TRADING SYSTEM.

+AT A RECENT MEETING BETWEEN THE CONTRACTING PARTIES OF THE GATT, IT HAS BEEN AGREED THAT A PREPARATORY COMMITTEE SHOULD BE SET UP TO PREPARE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PROGRAMME OF NEGOTIATIONS FOR THE PROPOSED NEW ROUND FOR ADOPTION AT A GATT MINISTERIAL MEETING TO BE HELD IN SEPTEMBER 1986.

+HONG KONG WILL FULLY PARTICIPATE IN THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE PREPARATORY COMMITTEE AND THE ULTIMATE NEW ROUND WHICH CAN ONLY ASSIST IN THE EFFORTS OF ALL TOWARDS MAINTAINING AND PROMOTING AN OPEN MULTILATERAL TRADING ENVIRONMENT,+ MR HO SAID.

HE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THE TASKS WE ALL FACED IN 1986 WERE BOUND TO BE FORMIDABLE, HE HAS EVERY CONFIDENCE THAT HONG KONG WAS WELL PREPARED TO GIVE A GOOD ACCOUNT OF ITSELF.

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TENANCY ORDINANCE CHANGES COME INTO EFFECT
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AS FROM TOMORROW (THURSDAY), DOMESTIC TENANCIES OF PREMISES WITH A RATEABLE VALUE OF \$30 000 OR ABOVE (PREVIOUSLY \$35 000) AS AT JUNE 10, 1983 ARE EXCLUDED FROM PART II OF THE LANDLORD AND TENANT (CONSOLIDATION) ORDINANCE.

THE EXCLUDED TENANCIES HOWEVER, BECOME PROTECTED UNDER PART IV WHICH AFFORDS SECURITY OF TENURE AT THE PREVAILING MARKET RENT.

ALSO EFFECTIVE FROM TOMORROW IS THE CHANGE OF THE MINIMUM RENT FROM 45 PER CENT TO 55 PER CENT OF THE PREVAILING MARKET RENT IN THE FORMULA REGULATING RENT INCREASES UNDER PART II OF THE ORDINANCE.

THIS ENABLES CONTROLLED RENTS TO REACH AT LEAST 55 PER CENT OF THE PREVAILING MARKET RENT.

A SPOKESMAN OF THE RATING AND VALUATION DEPARTMENT SAID THAT THE AMENDMENTS WHICH BECOME OPERATIVE TOMORROW WERE ENACTED IN JUNE THIS YEAR.

ANYONE WITH ENQUIRIES ON THESE AMENDMENTS SHOULD TELEPHONE RENT OFFICERS OF THE RATING AND VALUATION DEPARTMENT (TEL. 5-7957838) OR STAFF OF DISTRICT OFFICES.

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HONG KONG MOVING TOWARDS GENUINE BILINGUALISM

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HONG KONG IS MOVING TOWARDS GENUINE BILINGUALISM BECAUSE OF ITS INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION AND FOR OBVIOUS AND PRACTICAL REASONS, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, MR PETER C. WONG SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE CLOSING CEREMONY OF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE SEMINAR ORGANISED BY THE INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, MR WONG SAID THE SEMINAR ELOQUENTLY REFLECTED THE OBJECT OF THE INSTITUTE, FOCUSING ON WAYS AND MEANS TO IMPROVE STANDARD IN BOTH CHINESE AND ENGLISH LEARNING AND TEACHING.

+SEMINARS SUCH AS THE PRESENT ONE ARE THEREFORE EXTREMELY VALUABLE,+ HE SAID. THE THEME OF THE SEMINAR IS +LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION: FUTURE DIRECTIONS+.

APART FROM FOSTERING BETTER AND CLOSER UNDERSTANDING AMONG PARTICIPANTS, MR WONG SAID THE STIMULATING AND ENLIGHTENING EXCHANGES OF VIEWS WOULD NO DOUBT CONTRIBUTE TO THE EFFORTS MADE IN THE FIELD OF LANGUAGE EDUCATION.

MR WONG SAID HE WAS IMPRESSED BY THE RANGE OF THE SPECIAL TOPICS COVERED DURING THE SEMINAR, ADDING THAT THE DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS AND THE PARTICIPANTS MUST HAVE FOUND THE SEMINAR BOTH INTERESTING AND REWARDING.

+MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE EMPHASIS ON THE FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION SO EVIDENT IN THIS SEMINAR WILL NO DOUBT HELP PAVE THE WAY FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS VITAL AREA,+ HE ADDED.

+ALTHOUGH CHINESE AND ENGLISH ARE VERY DIFFERENT LANGUAGES, IT IS NOT BEYOND THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY TO DEVISE EDUCATIONALLY SOUND METHODS, WHEREBY PROFICIENCY IN BOTH LANGUAGES MAY BE ATTAINED BY THE AVERAGE STUDENT,+ HE SAID.

IN THIS CONNECTION, TEACHER PREPARATION WAS, OF COURSE, OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE, MR WONG SAID.

ON LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION, MR WONG SAID THE INSTITUTE OF LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION, THE LANGUAGE TEACHING CENTRES AND THE COLLEGES OF EDUCATION WERE CURRENTLY PROVIDING EXCELLENT COURSES IN THIS FIELD AND WOULD NO DOUBT CONTINUE TO PROVIDE SUCH COURSES, PERHAPS WITH CHANGING EMPHASIS AS CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATE SO THAT LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION WAS KEPT ABREAST OF THE TIMES.

MR WONG SAID THERE WAS A GROWING AWARENESS THAT WHILE ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE WAS IMPORTANT, CHINESE WAS EQUALLY IMPORTANT NOT ONLY BECAUSE CHINESE WAS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE IN HONG KONG, BUT ALSO IN VIEW OF THE PROXIMITY OF 1997, IT WAS INEVITABLE THAT THE USE OF CHINESE WOULD BECOME INCREASINGLY PREVALENT.

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THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALREADY TAKING THE LEAD IN HAVING OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS IN BOTH LANGUAGES AND THE USE OF BILINGUAL DOCUMENTS AND SIMULTANEOUS INTERPRETATION WAS RAPIDLY GAINING MOMENTUM, MR WONG SAID.

+OF COURSE, IT IS EXPENSIVE AND ENTAILS ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, BUT IT IS, IN MY VIEW, A MOVE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION,+ HE SAID.

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CLOSURE OF PRE-WAR BUILDING SOUGHT

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THE BUILDING AUTHORITY TODAY (WEDNESDAY) DECLARED NO. 177 QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL, HONG KONG, TO BE LIABLE TO BECOME DANGEROUS.

THE PRINCIPAL GOVERNMENT BUILDING SURVEYOR SAID THAT NOS. 175 AND 177 QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL, BOTH OF FOUR-STORY OVER BASEMENT, PRE-WAR BUILDINGS CONSTRUCTED WITH LOAD-BEARING BRICK WALLS, TIMBER FLOORS AND ROOFS HAD BEEN UNDER OBSERVATION SINCE 1968.

RECENT INSPECTIONS INDICATED THAT NO. 175 QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL HAD REACHED AN ADVANCE STATE OF DETERIORATION AND WAS DANGEROUS DUE TO THE STRUCTURAL TIMBER DECAY ESPECIALLY ON THE FIRST FLOOR AT THE VERANDAH AND THE FRONT PORTION OF FLOOR AND DUE TO THE OPENING UP OF MAJOR CRACKS ON THE MAIN WALLS.

THE PARTY WALL BETWEEN NOS. 175 AND 177 WAS SUBSTANTIALLY FRAGMENTED.

NO. 175 WAS CONSIDERED BEYOND REASONABLE REPAIR AND WAS CONSIDERED TO BE DANGEROUS. SINCE IT WAS A GOVERNMENT REVERTED BUILDING AND HAD BEEN VACATED FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS, THE PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SECTION OF LANDS DEPARTMENT WOULD BE REQUIRED TO DEMOLISH IT.

NO. 177 QUEEN'S ROAD CENTRAL WAS CONSIDERED LIABLE TO BECOME DANGEROUS DUE TO THE POOR CONDITION OF THE PARTY WALL BETWEEN NO. 175 AND 177 AND OVERLOADING. IT WAS UNLIKELY THAT THIS BUILDING COULD WITHSTAND THE EFFECT OF DEMOLITION OF NO. 175. IT WAS THEREFORE NECESSARY TO CLOSE AND TO DEMOLISH THIS BUILDING AT THE SAME TIME.

NOTICE OF INTENTION TO APPLY FOR A CLOSURE ORDER IN VICTORIA DISTRICT COURT AT 9.30 AM ON FEBRUARY 18, 1986 WAS POSTED TODAY.

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HONG KONG RAILWAY MUSEUM OPENS FRIDAY

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THE HONG KONG RAILWAY MUSEUM, CONVERTED FROM THE OLD TAI PO MARKET RAILWAY STATION, WILL BE OFFICIALLY OPENED ON FRIDAY (DECEMBER 20) AT 3 PM.

OFFICIATING AT THE OPENING CEREMONY WILL BE THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PROVISIONAL REGIONAL COUNCIL, MR CHEUNG YAN-LUNG; THE CHAIRMAN OF THE KCR, MR H.M.G. FORSGATE; THE CHAIRMAN OF THE TAI PO DISTRICT BOARD, MR STEPHEN WONG; THE FINANCE DIRECTOR OF KCR, MR FELIX CHOW, AND THE DIRECTOR OF REGIONAL SERVICES, MR MICHAEL SUEN.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE CEREMONY. TRANSPORT FOR MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES COVERING THE EVENT WILL LEAVE FROM KOWLOON PUBLIC PIER NOT LATER THAN 1.45 PM ON FRIDAY. A SHUTTLE SERVICE WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE BETWEEN THE EXISTING TAI PO RAILWAY STATION AND THE MUSEUM FROM 2.15 PM TO 4.45 PM.

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CORRECTIONAL SERVICES RECRUITS COMPLETE TRAINING

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ANOTHER BATCH OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES RECRUITS WHO HAVE SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE BASIC TRAINING AND TWO YEARS' PROBATION PERIOD WERE AWARDED TRAINING CERTIFICATES TODAY.

AT A CEREMONY HELD AT THE STAFF TRAINING INSTITUTE IN STANLEY, ACTING SENIOR SUPERINTENDENT, MR G.A. EBRAHIM, PRESENTED CERTIFICATES TO THE 10 OFFICERS AND 116 ASSISTANT OFFICERS.

THE OFFICERS HAVE UNDERGONE ONE-YEAR BASIC TRAINING WHICH IS DIVIDED INTO THE INITIAL, INTERMEDIATE AND FINAL STAGES, AND TWO PERIOD OF FIELD PLACEMENTS IN VARIOUS CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS.

THE TRAINING PROGRAMME, CONDUCTED AT STAFF TRAINING INSTITUTE, COVERS A WIDE RANGING SYLLABUS INCLUDING RULES AND REGULATIONS, PROCEDURES GOVERNING THE ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS, FOOT-DRILL, SELF-DEFENCE, WEAPONRY, RIOT CONTROL, FIRST AID, CRIMINOLOGY, PSYCHOLOGY, SOCIAL WORK, MANAGEMENT AS WELL AS LEADERSHIP TRAINING.

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CLIMATE RIGHT FOR ENTERPRISE - LORD YOUNG

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WITH SUCCESS BUILT ON THE FORESIGHT OF ENTREPRENEURS AND THE ADAPTABILITY OF THE POPULATION, THE CLIMATE IN HONG KONG IS RIGHT FOR ENTERPRISE -- LOW TAXATION, FIERCE COMPETITION AND LITTLE RED TAPE, BRITISH SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT, LORD YOUNG SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

ADDRESSING A LUNCHEON HOSTED BY THE HONG KONG CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, LORD YOUNG PRAISED THE ENTERPRISING SPIRIT AND INNOVATION OF THOSE IN HONG KONG WHO HAD CREATED ENTERPRISE CITY.

LORD YOUNG SAID HE BELIEVED THAT ENTERPRISE WAS ALIVE AND FLOURISHING IN BRITAIN TODAY, AND EMPHASISED THE SUCCESS OF GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES.

HE SAID THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WAS TAKING ALL THE STEPS NECESSARY TO RE-ESTABLISH THE ENTERPRISE CULTURE IN BRITAIN AND ALREADY THEY WERE STARTING TO SEE SOME OF THE BENEFITS.

+WITH MORE PEOPLE WORKING AS SELF EMPLOYED, UP 30 PER CENT SINCE THE START OF THE LAST DECADE, AND THE HIGHEST FIGURE FOR OVER 60 YEARS, AND IT IS IN THOSE SMALL BUSINESSES THAT INDIVIDUAL CHOICE AND INITIATIVE WILL PROSPER -- JUST AS THEY HAVE DONE IN HONG KONG,+ HE SAID.

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SWITCHING-ON AT CHAI WAN

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A SWITCHING-ON CEREMONY FOR THIS YEAR'S CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR LIGHTING DECORATIONS IN CHAI WAN WILL BE HELD AT THE BASKETBALL COURT IN CHAI WAN COMMUNITY CENTRE, 230 CHAI WAN ROAD, ON FRIDAY (DECEMBER 20) AT 7 PM.

OFFICIATING AT THE CEREMONY WILL BE ASSISTANT DISTRICT OFFICER, DR SIMON VICKERS; THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EASTERN DISTRICT BOARD'S COMMUNITY BUILDING COMMITTEE, MR LEE KWONG-LAM; AND SENIOR HOUSING MANAGER, MR YEUNG KWING-CHIU.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE EVENT.

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MEET-THE-MEDIA SESSION

THE ACTING DIRECTOR OF FIRE SERVICES, MR JOHN MARCH, WILL MEET THE MEDIA TOMORROW (THURSDAY) AT 4 PM IN THE GIS PRESS CONFERENCE ROOM, FIFTH FLOOR, BEACONSFIELD HOUSE.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND.

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DB MEMBERS BRING FESTIVE CHEERS

WONG TAI SIN DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) KEPT UP WITH THE TRADITION OF BRINGING CHRISTMAS JOY TO THE YOUNG, THE OLD AND THE UNDER PRIVILEGED WITH A GOOD WILL TOUR OF THE DISTRICT.

LED BY THE DISTRICT BOARD CHAIRMAN, MR MICHAEL CHENG, AND ACCOMPANIED BY DISTRICT OFFICER, MR NICHOLAS YEK, THE BOARD MEMBERS BROUGHT WITH THEM 800 GIFT PACKETS TO DISTRIBUTE TO ELDERLY CITIZENS AND CHILDREN OF FOUR WELFARE ORGANISATIONS.

THE VISIT STARTED AT THE CHOI HUNG CENTRE FOR THE ELDERLY WHERE BOARD MEMBERS CHATTED WITH THE RESIDENTS AND DISTRIBUTED GIFTS.

THEY NEXT VISITED THE CHUK YUEN CHILDREN'S RECEPTION CENTRE, WHICH PROVIDES TEMPORARY SHELTER AND CARE FOR ABANDONED CHILDREN.

MEMBERS ALSO VISITED THE WONG TAI SIN WORK ACTIVITY CENTRE WHERE THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED ADULTS ARE LOOKED AFTER. MEMBERS LEARNED THAT RESIDENTS IN THE CENTRE RECEIVED WORK TRAINING TO BECOME MORE INDEPENDENT.

THE LAST STOP OF THE VISIT WAS AT THE TSZ OI SOCIAL CENTRE FOR THE ELDERLY.

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SALT WATER CUT

SALT WATER SUPPLY TO CERTAIN PREMISES IN HO MAN TIN WILL BE TURNED OFF BETWEEN 9 AM AND 9 PM ON FRIDAY (DECEMBER 20) FOR MAINS WORK.

THE AFFECTED PREMISES ARE BOUNDED BY MAN FUK ROAD, MAN WAN ROAD AND PUI CHING ROAD.

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