



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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BROADCASTING AUTHORITY TO BE ESTABLISHED
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A BILL WILL BE PUT BEFORE THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SO THAT A BROADCASTING AUTHORITY CAN BE SET UP IN 1987, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON MICHAEL THOMAS, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

ANNOUNCING THE GOVERNMENT'S DECISION ON THE MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD'S REPORT IN THE COUNCIL, MR THOMAS SAID THE BRB'S PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A BROADCASTING AUTHORITY RECEIVED WARM SUPPORT FROM EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS AS WELL AS MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL.

+THE GOVERNMENT ACCEPTS THAT THERE IS CONSIDERABLE MERIT IN ALLOWING GREATER PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN CONTROL OVER THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY.

+THE GOVERNMENT, THEREFORE, SUPPORTS THE CREATION OF A BROADCASTING AUTHORITY WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR TV, RADIO AND CABLE TV,+ HE SAID.

THE AUTHORITY'S FUNCTIONS WILL INCLUDE ADMINISTERING THE BROADCASTING REGIME AS LAID DOWN IN THE ORDINANCE, SECURING COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRESCRIBED STANDARDS FOR ADVERTISING AND PROGRAMME CONTENTS, AND ENSURING THE TECHNICAL EFFICIENCY OF BROADCASTS.

MR THOMAS SAID THE AUTHORITY WOULD BE MADE UP LARGELY FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR AND WOULD BE SERVICED BY THE TELEVISION AND ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING AUTHORITY.

HE NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SUPPORTED TOO THE IDEA OF A TRIBUNAL TO RECEIVE COMPLAINTS FROM THE PUBLIC AND TO RESOLVE DISPUTES WITHIN THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY.

BUT IT CONSIDERED THAT IT WOULD BE ADMINISTRATIVELY MORE APPROPRIATE TO SET THIS UP WITHIN THE AMBIT OF THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY RATHER THAN AS A FREE-STANDING FORUM.

ON THE FUTURE OF RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG, MR THOMAS SAID THERE WAS MUCH SUPPORT IN THE COUNCIL AND FROM THE PUBLIC FOR THE CONCEPT OF GREATER INDEPENDENCE FOR RTHK ALTHOUGH VIEWS WERE MIXED ON HOW THIS INDEPENDENCE COULD BE ACHIEVED.

+THE GOVERNMENT IS UNABLE TO ACCEPT THE IDEAS THAT HAVE BEEN CANVASSED TO MAKE RTHK FINANCIALLY VIABLE IN ITS OWN RIGHT.

+THERE WAS LITTLE SUPPORT FOR THE BOARD'S PROPOSAL TO GIVE RTHK A MONOPOLY OVER PRIME TIME ON THE COMMERCIAL TV STATIONS.

/+NOR WOULD

+NOR WOULD IT BE RIGHT TO MAKE SUCCESSFUL LICENSEES PAY FOR RTHK OUT OF HYPOTHECATED ROYALTIES,+ HE SAID.

THE GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE THAT RTHK SHOULD IN FUTURE BE ANSWERABLE TO AN INDEPENDENT STATUTORY BOARD OF GOVERNORS TO BE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR.

+SO THAT THE BOARD WILL REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE AND TO ENSURE ITS INDEPENDENCE, IT IS PROPOSED THAT THE GOVERNORS SHOULD BE DRAWN FROM THE COMMUNITY WITH THE ADDITION OF A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE ADMINISTRATION.+ MR THOMAS SAID.

THE STATUTORY FUNCTIONS OF THE BOARD WOULD BE TO IMPLEMENT THE BROAD POLICY OBJECTIVES OF RTHK THAT WOULD BE LAID DOWN IN THE ORDINANCE.

THESE WOULD EMPHASISE THE DUTY TO INFORM AND EDUCATE THE PUBLIC, AND WIDELY TO DISSEMINATE NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS.

HE SAID +RTHK MUST CONTINUE TO BE AND BE SEEN TO BE A BALANCED AND OBJECTIVE PUBLIC BROADCASTER.

+THE FUNDING OF RTHK WILL CONTINUE TO COME FROM THE PUBLIC PURSE, AND ITS STAFF WILL REMAIN WITHIN THE PUBLIC SERVICE, SUBJECT ONLY TO THE CASH LIMITS SET BY GOVERNMENT YEAR BY YEAR, THE BOARD WILL BE FREE TO PURSUE THE POLICY I HAVE DESCRIBED, AND WILL MAKE A REPORT EACH YEAR,+ HE ADDED.

RTHK WOULD IN DUE COURSE BE GIVEN INCREASED ACCESS TO THE TELEVISION CHANNELS, ESPECIALLY PRIME TIME.

ARRANGEMENTS THAT WOULD BE INCORPORATED IN THE NEW TELEVISION LICENCES ON OFFER WOULD GIVE RTHK AN INCREASE IN THE TOTAL NUMBER OF HOURS THAT MUST BE MADE AVAILABLE FOR THEIR PROGRAMMES WITHIN DEFINED ACCESS TO PRIME TIME.

ON TOBACCO ADVERTISING ON TV AND RADIO, MR THOMAS SAID THAT AFTER CONSIDERING ALL THE ARGUMENTS CAREFULLY, THE GOVERNMENT HAD ACCEPTED IN PRINCIPLE THE CASE FOR A TOTAL BAN ON TOBACCO ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP ON TV AND RADIO.

THIS BAN WOULD HOWEVER, BE INTRODUCED BY A PHASED PROGRAMME SO AS TO LESSON ITS IMPACT ON THE TV AND RADIO STATIONS. THERE WOULD BE THREE PHASES.

/+AT FIRST,

+AT FIRST, THERE WILL BE STRICTER CONTROLS ON TOBACCO ADVERTISEMENTS BEING SHOWN ON TV THROUGH REVISIONS TO THE ADVERTISING CODE OF PRACTICE. THESE WILL BE BROUGHT INTO EFFECT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE,+ HE SAID.

+THE SECOND PHASE WILL BE INTRODUCED IN DECEMBER 1988 WHEN NEW LICENCES ARE ISSUED TO THE TV STATIONS. THERE WILL BE A BAN ON TOBACCO ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 4.30 PM AND 10.30 PM. THIS WILL EXTEND BY FOUR HOURS A DAY THE TIME WITHIN WHICH TOBACCO ADVERTISING WILL BE PROHIBITED.

+SIMILAR RESTRICTIONS WILL BE INTRODUCED FOR RADIO SERVICES FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW LICENCE PERIOD IN AUGUST 1989.

+THE THIRD AND FINAL PHASE WILL BE THE IMPOSITION OF A TOTAL BAN ON TOBACCO ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP ON TELEVISION AND RADIO IN DECEMBER 1990.

+IN THE MEANTIME, THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE EXAMINING WAYS OF RESTRICTING TOBACCO ADVERTISING IN OTHER FORMS.+

REFERRING TO THE RENEWAL OF EXISTING TELEVISION LICENCES, MR THOMAS SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED THAT WHEN THE EXISTING TV LICENCES EXPIRED IN DECEMBER 1988, THE PRESENT LICENSEES WOULD BE OFFERED A NEW LICENCE FOR A 12-YEAR PERIOD TO THE YEAR 2000 ON REVISED CONDITIONS AND SUBJECT TO A MID-TERM REVIEW IN 1994.

+THE GOVERNMENT CONSIDERS THAT THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF INVITING COMPETITIVE TENDERS FROM PROSPECTIVE LICENSEES RULE OUT THAT ALTERNATIVE WHICH THE BRB FAVOURED,+ HE SAID.

+THE FACT IS THAT THE LAND, TRANSMISSION EQUIPMENT AND HARDWARE PRESENTLY EMPLOYED ON TV BROADCASTING IS OWNED BY THE EXISTING LICENSEES. IT IS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT OUTSIDERS TO BE INTERESTED IN MAKING THE MASSIVE INVESTMENT TO ACQUIRE AND EQUIP TRANSMISSION FACILITIES ON THE NECESSARY SCALE GIVEN THE POTENTIAL REVENUE FROM A RELATIVELY SMALL MARKET.

+THE PROPOSED RENEWAL PERIOD OF 12 YEARS IS LONGER THAN THE PERIOD OF EIGHT YEARS RECOMMENDED BY THE BRB.

+BUT IT WILL GIVE THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY THE CONFIDENCE TO PLAN AHEAD AND TO MAKE THE NECESSARY INVESTMENT TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TELEVISION SO THAT THE INDUSTRY CAN FACE UP TO THE DRASTIC AND RAPID POLITICAL CHANGES IN THE YEARS AHEAD.

+AT THE SAME TIME A MID-TERM REVIEW WILL ENABLE THE LICENCE CONDITIONS TO BE AMENDED WHERE NECESSARY IN THE LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE, AND TO GUARD AGAINST ABUSE OF A 12-YEAR LICENCE PERIOD.+

ON THE CORPORATE STRUCTURE OF THE BROADCASTING LICENSEES, MR THOMAS SAID THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY OPPOSED THE BRB'S PROPOSAL THAT LEGISLATIVE CHANGES SHOULD BE MADE TO ENSURE THAT IN FUTURE, BROADCASTING COMPANIES SHOULD BE SOLELY CONCERNED WITH THE BUSINESS OF BROADCASTING AND SHOULD NOT BE ASSOCIATED WITH OTHER COMPANIES ACTIVE IN RELATED FIELDS. THE PROPOSAL HAD RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL SERVICE AND OTHER GRASS ROOT ORGANISATIONS.

+IT HAS BEEN POINTED OUT THAT THE LEGISLATIVE CHANGES PROPOSED WILL NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO ELIMINATE THE SCOPE FOR UNFAIR PRACTICES THROUGH ABUSE OF CORPORATE LINKS. THE GOVERNMENT IS ANYHOW RELUCTANT TO BE THOUGHT TO BE PENALISING COMMERCIAL SUCCESS,+ HE SAID.

THE GOVERNMENT THEREFORE PROPOSED THAT THE STRUCTURE, OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL OF TV LICENSEES SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE GOVERNED BY EXISTING POLICIES AND THE SPIRIT OF EXISTING LEGISLATION.

BUT IN ADDITION, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD PUT BEFORE LEGCO A PROPOSAL TO AMEND THE ORDINANCE TO GIVE THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY A RIGHT OF ACCESS TO THE BOOKS AND ACCOUNTS OF THE RELATED COMPANIES OF TV LICENSEES.

+IT IS BELIEVED THAT THIS WILL ENABLE THE FUTURE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY TO MONITOR THE PRACTICES OF COMMERCIAL LICENSEES THROUGH A CROSS CHECKING OF THE ACCOUNTS OF THE LICENSEE AND ITS RELATED COMPANIES,+ HE SAID.

FURTHERMORE, WHEN THE NEW TV LICENCES WERE ON OFFER, THE GOVERNMENT PROPOSED THAT ROYALTIES PAYABLE BY THE TV STATIONS WOULD BE CHANGED FROM A SYSTEM BASED ON NET PROFIT TO ONE BASED ON GROSS RECEIPT, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE BRB.

+SINCE TV STATIONS USE AIR WAVES WHICH ARE COMMUNITY FACILITIES, IT IS RIGHT THAT THEY SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO PAY FOR THEIR USE IRRESPECTIVE OF WHETHER A PROFIT IS MADE,+ HE SAID.

+HOWEVER, THE NEW SYSTEM WILL BE SO DESIGNED THAT THE ROYALTY TO BE COLLECTED BY THE GOVERNMENT WILL APPROXIMATELY BE AT THE CURRENT LEVEL.+

DEALING WITH CABLE TELEVISION, MR THOMAS NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALREADY ANNOUNCED IN JULY ITS ACCEPTANCE IN PRINCIPLE OF THE INTRODUCTION OF CABLE TV SERVICES IN HONG KONG. AN INVITATION CALLING FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST TO DEVELOP A CABLE SERVICE HAD RESULTED IN THE RECEIPT OF EIGHT SUBMISSIONS BEFORE THE END OF SEPTEMBER.

/+THESE SUBMISSIONS

+THESE SUBMISSIONS RANGE FROM VERY DETAILED AND COMPREHENSIVE PROPOSALS TO PROVIDE A FULL CABLE TV NETWORK FOR THE WHOLE TERRITORY, TO SIMPLE REQUESTS TO PROVIDE A LIMITED SERVICE IN A PARTICULAR AREA,+ HE SAID.

+ALL THESE ARE CURRENTLY BEING STUDIED BY THE GOVERNMENT. WORK IS ALSO IN HAND TO FORMULATE POLICIES FOR CABLE TV WHICH WILL NEED TO BE SPELLED OUT IN LEGISLATIONS AND IN LICENCE CONDITIONS. IT IS OUR INTENTION TO INVITE FORMAL TENDERS FOR CABLE TV LICENCES SOME TIME NEXT YEAR.+

IN CONCLUSION, MR THOMAS SAID THERE REMAINED A NUMBER OF OTHER MORE DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE BRB REPORT WHICH WOULD BE EXAMINED SHORTLY BY THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL. SOME MIGHT BE BETTER LEFT FOR THE FUTURE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY TO CONSIDER.

HE SAID MUCH VALUABLE ADVICE WAS OBTAINED FROM THE PAINSTAKING WORK OF THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF MR JUSTICE POWER AND THE FUTURE AUDIENCE OF TELEVISION AND RADIO WOULD OWE THEM A GREAT DEAL.

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+REASONED ANALYSIS+ BEFORE POLITICAL CHANGES
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THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE HON MICHAEL THOMAS, REITERATED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT NOW WAS NOT THE TIME FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO COMMENT ON THE DIRECTION OF FUTURE CONSTITUTIONAL AND RELATED CHANGES.

THESE WERE MATTERS FOR THE 1987 REVIEW, HE SAID ON BEHALF OF THE CHIEF SECRETARY IN HIS OPENING SPEECH AT THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S POLICY ADDRESS.

THANKING MEMBERS FOR THEIR VIEWS, MR THOMAS SAID THERE WERE GOOD REASONS FOR THE ABOVE ATTITUDE.

HE SAID: +FIRST, THERE IS THE SPEED AND THE DISTANCE WE HAVE TRAVELLED IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, AND PARTICULARLY IN THE LAST YEAR; SECOND, THERE IS THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED AND THE NEED TO FIND THE RIGHT SOLUTIONS TO THEM; AND THIRD, PUBLIC DISCUSSION AND PUBLIC OPINION HAVE CLEARLY NOT YET REACHED A POSITION WHERE ACCEPTABLE COMMON GROUND IS EASILY PERCEIVED.

/+IF THERE

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+IF THERE IS A COMMON VIEW IT IS THIS: BE CAREFUL, BE GRADUAL AND FOR THE SAKE OF HONG KONG, GET IT RIGHT.+

MR THOMAS SAID THAT NOW WAS THE TIME FOR THOUGHT, FOR OPINIONS TO BE EXPRESSED AND ANALYSED AND THEREAFTER FOR PROPOSALS TO BE DEVELOPED.

+MEMBERS' SPEECHES ARE PART OF THIS PROCESS AND THEMSELVES FORM PART OF THE MATERIAL AND THE BACKGROUND FOR THE DRAFTING OF THE GREEN PAPER TO BE PUBLISHED IN APRIL OR MAY NEXT YEAR,+ MR THOMAS CONTINUED.

+BUT I CANNOT STRESS STRONGLY ENOUGH THE IMPORTANCE AT THIS TIME, OF REASONED, CONSIDERED ANALYSIS, NOT MERELY OF THE SINGLE ISSUE OF DIRECT ELECTIONS BUT OF THE OBJECTIVES, THE MECHANISMS, AND THE IMPLICATIONS, OF ANY PARTICULAR COURSE OF ACTION.+

MR THOMAS NOTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN MORE WIDE-RANGING DEBATES, MORE ADJOURNMENT DEBATES, MORE QUESTIONS -- AND MORE PROBING QUESTIONS -- IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

LAST YEAR, A TOTAL OF 296 QUESTIONS OF TOPICAL CONCERN WERE ANSWERED BY OFFICIAL MEMBERS, AND 68 BILLS WERE PASSED INTO LAW.

+AND WHEN ALL IS SAID AND DONE, IT IS LEGISLATION AND THE CONTINUING IMPROVEMENT OF THE LAW IN RESPONSE TO CHANGING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC NEEDS THAT LIES AT THE VERY HEART OF OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT,+ MR THOMAS SAID.

MR THOMAS SAID ABOUT 100 BILLS WERE EXPECTED TO BE INTRODUCED DURING THE CURRENT SESSION.

TURNING TO LOCALISATION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE, MR THOMAS SAID FOR A LONG TIME TO COME THERE WOULD BE A PLACE FOR BOTH LOCAL AND OVERSEAS OFFICERS.

HE SAID: +OUR LONG ESTABLISHED POLICY IS TO GIVE PREFERENCE TO LOCAL CANDIDATES ON RECRUITMENT WHEN THEY ARE AVAILABLE AND TO RECRUIT OVERSEAS OFFICERS TO FILL AN INTERIM SHORTAGE IN FIELDS WHERE LOCAL EXPERTISE IS NOT AVAILABLE.

+AT THE SAME TIME, STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO IMPROVE THE LOCAL SUPPLY OF TRAINED STAFF AND TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH TRAINING SCHOLARSHIPS TO LOCAL OFFICERS TO ENABLE THEM TO ACQUIRE QUALIFICATIONS IN PARTICULAR DISCIPLINES.

+THE EXPANSION OF OUR TERTIARY EDUCATION PROVISION IN RECENT YEARS HAS ALSO GREATLY IMPROVED THE PROSPECTS OF RECRUITING QUALIFIED LOCAL CANDIDATES TO FILL CIVIL SERVICE VACANCIES.+

/MR THOMAS NOTED

MR THOMAS NOTED THAT FIVE YEARS AGO, THERE WERE SOME 300 LOCAL OFFICERS OCCUPYING DIRECTORATE POSTS, BUT NOW THERE WERE 500.

AT THE SENIOR PROFESSIONAL LEVEL, THE NUMBER OF LOCAL OFFICERS HAD INCREASED FROM 750 TO 1 150 DURING THE LAST FIVE YEARS.

MR THOMAS SAID WHILE THE GOVERNMENT RECOGNISED THE CONTRIBUTION OF CONTRACT OFFICERS, THEY HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPLY FOR TRANSFER TO THE PERMANENT ESTABLISHMENT, IF THEY WANTED A PERMANENT CAREER IN THE CIVIL SERVICE.

+THE ADMINISTRATION THEREFORE INTENDS TO CONTINUE WITH ITS GRADUAL AND CAREFUL POLICY OF LOCALISATION WHILE SAFEGUARDING THE QUALITY OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND ITS ABILITY TO PROVIDE THE PUBLIC SERVICE HONG KONG NEEDS,+ HE SAID.

+TO PUT THIS IN PERSPECTIVE ONLY 97 OVERSEAS OFFICERS OUT OF 1 460 (THAT IS ONLY ONE IN 15) WHO HAVE APPLIED FOR A FRESH CONTRACT IN THE PAST THREE YEARS HAVE BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL.+

COMMENTING ON THE PROVISIONS OF THE LAW WHICH SAFEGUARD FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, INCLUDING FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, MR THOMAS POINTED OUT THAT IN HONG KONG GREATER IMPORTANCE WAS ATTACHED TO THE LAW IN THIS FIELD.

+THE COMMON LAW HAS AN ESSENTIAL PART TO PLAY NOT ONLY IN SAFEGUARDING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, BUT ALSO IN ENSURING THAT VICTIMS OF THE ABUSE OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION ARE PROTECTED AND THAT THE INTERESTS OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE ARE NOT THREATENED BY STIRRING UP ALARM OR VIOLENCE AMONG ORDINARY MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY,+ HE SAID.

+THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT AMONG OUR ORDINANCES, ON THIS TOPICS AS ON SOME OTHERS, ONE CAN FIND PROVISIONS WHICH WERE INTRODUCED TO MEET SOME TRANSIENT PROBLEM AND WHICH NO LONGER HAVE A PART TO PLAY IN THE MODERN PROSPEROUS AND STABLE COMMUNITY WHICH HONG KONG HAS BECOME,+ HE CONTINUED.

TURNING TO THE CONTROL OF PUBLICATIONS CONSOLIDATION ORDINANCE, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL SAID THAT IT WAS ENACTED IN 1951, TO REPLACE EMERGENCY LEGISLATION WHICH PRECEDED IT, AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF POLITICAL UPHEAVAL IN CHINA.

+IT WAS A TIME WHEN THERE WAS MUCH CONCERN THAT THE SECURITY OF THE TERRITORY MIGHT BE DAMAGED BY SEDITIOUS OR SUBVERSIVE MATERIAL PUBLISHED LOCALLY. THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ORDINANCE HAVE ONLY VERY RARELY BEEN USED AND FOR NEARLY 20 YEARS, NOT AT ALL. SOME OF THEM OVERLAP WITH OTHER PROVISIONS OF THE CRIMINAL LAW ANYWAY,+ HE ADDED.

MR THOMAS ALSO NOTED THAT THE SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATION AND INFORMATION SERVICES HAD INDICATED THAT HE WAS REVIEWING THE ORDINANCE, INCLUDING THE PROVISIONS FOR REGISTRATION OF PUBLICATIONS, WITH THOSE POINTS IN MIND. THAT REVIEW WAS NOW WELL ADVANCED AND MEMBERS COULD EXPECT TO SEE A BILL IN THE PRESENT SESSION.

ON THE ISSUE OF WHETHER SERIOUS CRIMES WERE ADEQUATELY PUNISHED IN THE COURTS, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL RECOGNISED THAT THERE WAS IN THE COMMUNITY MUCH CONCERN ABOUT THE INCIDENCE OF RAPE, ROBBERY AND THEFT. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE OFFENCE OF RAPE LED TO 27 CONVICTIONS IN 1985 IN THE HIGH COURT.

+FOUR OFFENDERS WERE SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT, TWO GOT 15 YEARS, ONE GOT 14 YEARS, FOUR GOT SEVEN YEARS, FOUR GOT SIX YEARS AND EIGHT OTHERS GOT FOUR YEARS OR MORE. FOUR YEARS WAS THE LOWEST SENTENCE OF IMPRISONMENT HANDED DOWN. YOUNG OFFENDERS WERE SENT EITHER TO A TRAINING CENTRE OR TO A DETENTION CENTRE,+ HE SAID.

THESE FIGURES, WHICH BORE OUT THE AVERAGE OF NINE YEARS PUT FORWARD EARLIER, MIGHT WELL INDICATE TO MEMBERS THAT THE SENTENCES IMPOSED BY THE COURTS WERE SUFFICIENT TO DETER, HE ADDED.

MR THOMAS ALSO REFERRED TO ROBBERY OFFENCES. HE NOTED THAT OF THOSE CONVICTED IN THE HIGH COURT, FOUR OFFENDERS RECEIVED 20-YEAR SENTENCES, 13 OFFENDERS RECEIVED SENTENCES BETWEEN 14 AND 19 YEARS, AND A FURTHER 51 OFFENDERS RECEIVED TERMS BETWEEN 10 YEARS AND 14 YEARS.

HALF OF ALL THE OFFENDERS CONVICTED IN THE HIGH COURT RECEIVED SENTENCES OF EIGHT YEARS OR MORE.

HE SAID: +SENTENCES PASSED IN THE DISTRICT COURTS WERE INEVITABLY LESS SEVERE BECAUSE THEY DEALT WITH OFFENCES WHICH LACK THE AGGRAVATING FEATURES. EVEN SO APPROXIMATELY ONE HALF OF ALL OFFENDERS CONVICTED OF ROBBERY WERE SENTENCED TO BETWEEN THREE AND SIX YEARS, WHILE SOME 14 PER CENT OF OFFENDERS RECEIVED SENTENCES OF SIX OR SEVEN YEARS IMPRISONMENT WHICH IS THE HIGHEST THAT THE DISTRICT COURT CAN IMPOSE,+

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STRESSED THAT ROBBERY COVERED MANY FORMS OF CRIMINAL CONDUCT, RANGING FROM A GANG OF ARMED VILLAINS BURSTING INTO A JEWELLERY SHOP TO THE CASE OF A SIMPLE SNATCH BY AN UNARMED YOUTH.

GIVEN THE BREADTH OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN EACH INDIVIDUAL CASE, AND THE FACT THAT THE FIGURES QUOTED EARLIER INCLUDED JUVENILES AND FIRST OFFENDERS, THE GOVERNMENT WAS SATISFIED THAT OFFENDERS WERE APPROPRIATELY PUNISHED.

MR THOMAS SAID THE LEVEL OF VIOLENT CRIME HAD CONTINUED ITS DOWNWARD TREND IN THE FIRST THREE QUARTERS OF 1986.

IN PARTICULAR THE NUMBER OF ROBBERIES REPORTED DECREASED BY NEARLY 18 PER CENT COMPARED WITH THE SAME PERIOD OF LAST YEAR. ON THE FACE OF IT THERE WAS NO CAUSE FOR MEMBERS TO BE UNDULY CONCERNED.

ON MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCES, MR THOMAS SAID THE GOVERNMENT VIEWED IT AS A MEASURE OF LAST RESORT IN ITS FIGHT AGAINST CRIME, TO BE KEPT IN RESERVE IN CASE THERE WAS A SURGE OF SERIOUS CRIMINAL ACTIVITY.

+MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCES HAVE NOT FOUND FAVOUR IN OTHER COMMON LAW JURISDICTIONS,+ HE NOTED.

HE ADDED: +THE FLEXIBILITY THAT HAS BEEN CAREFULLY BUILT INTO SENTENCING POLICY IN HONG KONG ALLOWS THE COURTS TO STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN THE NEED FOR CONDIGN AND DETERRENT PUNISHMENT REFLECTING THE GRAVITY OF THE OFFENCE, ON THE ONE HAND, AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE OFFENDER AND THE COMMUNITY'S INTEREST IN HIS REHABILITATION, ON THE OTHER.

+THIS BALANCE CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED BY ALLOWING OUR COURTS A DISCRETION TO DO JUSTICE IN EACH CASE AND BY MAKING AVAILABLE TO THEM A VARIETY OF SENTENCING OPTIONS,+

HE SAID THE PRACTICE OF THE COURT OF APPEAL IN LAYING DOWN GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE SENTENCING DID MUCH TO ENSURE THAT THE LEVELS OF SENTENCING WERE MAINTAINED.

+IF A PARTICULAR SENTENCE IS THOUGHT TO BE MANIFESTLY INADEQUATE IN THE LIGHT OF THOSE GUIDELINES OR THE NORMS OF SENTENCING, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL MAY APPLY TO THE COURT OF APPEAL FOR A REVIEW OF SENTENCE,+ HE SAID.

+FOR ALL THESE REASONS THE GOVERNMENT FEELS IT WOULD BE A RETROGRADE STEP TO INTRODUCE MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCES FOR THE OFFENCES UNDER CONSIDERATION.+

MR THOMAS CONCLUDED BY POINTING OUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS AT PRESENT EXAMINING THE SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT ON COMPLEX COMMERCIAL CRIMES WITH A VIEW TO ITS EARLY IMPLEMENTATION, AND THE LAW REFORM COMMISSION HAD 11 SUB-COMMITTEES REVIEWING AREAS OF THE LAW WHERE THERE WAS A CASE FOR CHANGE.

+MY CHAMBERS HAS ALSO SET UP A HIGH LEVEL COMMITTEE ACTIVELY PURSUING THE OBJECTIVE OF INCREASED LOCALISATION SO THAT WE CAN MEET THE NEEDS OF HONG KONG IN THE YEARS AHEAD,+ HE ADDED.

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NO SYSTEMATIC TRIAD INFILTRATION OF SCHOOLS
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THE PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS FROM RECENT INTERVIEWS WITH HEADMASTERS, SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS AND STUDENT GUIDANCE OFFICERS SHOW THAT TRIADS ARE NOT TARGETTING SCHOOLS FOR SYSTEMATIC INFILTRATION. RATHER, THEY PREY ON CHILDREN OF SCHOOL AGE AND ATTEMPT TO INFLUENCE THEM OUTSIDE THE SCHOOLS, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON DAVID JEAFFRESON, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS, MR JEAFFRESON STRESSED THAT HE WAS MOST CONCERNED ABOUT OTHER GANG AND BULLYING ACTIVITIES IN SCHOOLS.

HE ALSO NOTED THAT THE INCIDENCE OF JUVENILES INVOLVED IN CRIME HAD INCREASED MORE THAN FOURFOLD SINCE 1975.

+THE REASONS FOR THIS INCREASE ARE NO DOUBT MANIFOLD AND MANY WILL BE SOCIAL,+ HE SAID.

+BUT ONE CERTAINLY SEEMS TO BE RELATED TO OUR SYSTEM OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION, THAT SOME ACADEMICALLY POOR STUDENTS WHO CANNOT KEEP UP WITH HONG KONG'S HIGH STANDARDS, TURN TO THIS TYPE OF ACTIVITY TO GAIN SOME SORT OF PERVERTED RESPECT FROM THEIR COLLEAGUES.

+PRECISELY WHAT WE CAN DO TO COUNTER THIS TREND IS STILL BEING CONSIDERED BY THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE.+

REFERRING TO REHABILITATION, MR JEAFFRESON SAID DISCUSSIONS WOULD BE HELD WITH LEGCO MEMBERS ON THE SCHEMES OF RELEASING PRISONERS UNDER SUPERVISION, PRE-RELEASE EMPLOYMENT AND PARTIALLY SUSPENDED SENTENCE.

HE ALSO SAID DETAILS OF A TRIAD RENUNCIATION SCHEME, WHICH THE PUBLIC STRONGLY SUPPORTED, WERE BEING WORKED OUT.

TURNING TO THE POLICE FORCE, MR JEAFFRESON SAID BOTH MORALE AND DEDICATION WERE EXCELLENT. HE SAID THE FORCE WAS FULLY AWARE OF THE LOCALISATION POLICY DESIGNED TO RESULT IN THERE BEING MORE LOCAL THAN EXPATRIATE OFFICERS IN THE GAZETTED OFFICER RANKS BY THE YEAR 2000.

+IN PRACTICE SOMETHING VERY CLOSE TO THIS OBJECT WAS GOING TO BE ACHIEVED ANYWAY AND VERY FEW OFFICERS' CAREERS WILL BE AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY,+ HE SAID.

+THE EFFICIENCY OF THE FORCE WILL NOT BE UNDERMINED.+

/MR JEAFFRESON

MR JEAFFRESON SAID THE REPORT OF THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE FOR 1986 WOULD BE PUBLISHED SHORTLY. IT WOULD SHOW THE EXTENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO TACKLE CRIME OVER A BROAD FRONT, AS WELL AS A WELCOME DECREASE IN OVERALL CRIME IN THE FIRST THREE QUARTERS OF THIS YEAR COMPARED TO SAME PERIOD IN 1985.

+WITH THE DEDICATION OF THE POLICE FORCE AND THE SUPPORT OF MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL, I AM SURE THAT THIS TREND WILL BE CONTINUED INTO 1987 AND WELL BEYOND,+ HE ADDED.

IN RESPONSE TO CONCERNS RAISED ABOUT ADOLESCENT INVOLVEMENT IN DRUG OFFENCES, MR JEAFFRESON SAID THE THRUST OF THE RECENTLY IMPROVED PREVENTIVE EDUCATION AND PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN OF THE ACTION COMMITTEE AGAINST NARCOTICS WAS DIRECTED AT YOUNG PEOPLE.

HE POINTED OUT THAT IN FACT THE NUMBER OF YOUNG PERSONS UNDER 21 PROSECUTED IN THE FIRST HALF OF 1986 FOR DRUG OFFENCES WAS ABOUT 12 PER CENT LESS THAN IN THE SAME PERIOD OF 1985 WHILE THE NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE NEWLY REPORTED TO THE CENTRAL REGISTRY OF DRUG ABUSE WAS DOWN 24 PER CENT IN THE SAME PERIOD.

THE SITUATION WAS ENCOURAGING, AND THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN THE ANTI-NARCOTICS CAMPAIGN, WHICH HAD BEEN GIVEN HIGH PRIORITY FOR 1987-88 AS IN PAST YEARS.

ON IMPROVEMENT OF IMMIGRATION SERVICES, MR JEAFFRESON REPORTED THAT GOOD PROGRESS WAS BEING MADE ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE TRAVEL RECORD AND IMMIGRATION CONTROL ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM.

THE SYSTEM, WHICH INVOLVED THE USE OF COMPUTERS, WOULD SPEED UP IMMIGRATION PROCEDURES AT CONTROL POINTS AND QUEUES IN FRONT OF THE IMMIGRATION COUNTERS SHOULD BE SIGNIFICANTLY SHORTENED.

BASED ON PRESENT PROGRESS, HE SAID IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO INTRODUCE THE SYSTEM AT VARIOUS CONTROL POINTS, IN FOUR PHASES, BETWEEN MAY 1987 AND JULY 1988.

AS FOR SETTING UP A TRAINING SCHOOL FOR THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT, MR JEAFFRESON SAID THE POSSIBILITY OF DEVELOPING ERSKINE CAMP IN SAI KUNG INTO A RESIDENTIAL TRAINING SCHOOL WAS BEING CONSIDERED.

DEALING WITH THE VIETNAMESE REFUGEE SITUATION, MR JEAFFRESON SAID: +WE ARE ONLY TOO WELL AWARE OF THE CONTRADICTION BETWEEN OUR POLICY ON VIETNAMESE REFUGEES AND OUR VERY NECESSARY POLICY (GIVEN OUR ACUTE POPULATION PRESSURES) TOWARDS ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS FROM CHINA.

+THE PRINCIPLES THAT GOVERN OUR SOCIETY ARE HUMANITARIAN, AND UNTIL SUCH TIMES AS WE CAN BE SATISFIED ABOUT THE TREATMENT OF ANY WHO ARE SENT BACK TO VIETNAM, WE MUST CONTINUE TO GRANT THEM ASYLUM HERE.+

HE POINTED OUT THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAD BROADENED THE FAMILY REUNION CRITERIA WHICH RESULTED IN 423 REFUGEES LEAVING HONG KONG FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM SO FAR THIS YEAR.

OTHER COUNTRIES HAD ALSO RESPONDED NOBLY BY TAKING MORE REFUGEES FROM HONG KONG WHILE THE MAJOR RESETTLEMENT COUNTRIES (THE UNITED STATES, AUSTRALIA AND CANADA) HAD EITHER MAINTAINED OR INCREASED THEIR REGULAR RELATIVELY HIGH MONTHLY OFF-TAKE FROM THE TERRITORY.

+WITHOUT THE BRITISH INITIATIVE, RESETTLEMENT FROM HONG KONG THIS YEAR WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY MUCH LOWER AND ABOVE ALL, ITS CONSEQUENCES HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT FOR HONG KONG.

+AT 8 165 ON NOVEMBER 21 OUR REFUGEE POPULATION WAS AT ITS LOWEST SINCE 1979, AND 1 280 LESS THAN IT WAS AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS YEAR,+ MR JEAFFRESON NOTED.

IT WAS TRUE THAT THERE HAD BEEN AN INCREASE IN ARRIVALS THIS YEAR. AT THE END OF OCTOBER, 1 900 REFUGEES HAD ARRIVED COMPARED WITH 950 DURING THE SAME PERIOD IN 1985.

HE SAID THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WAS NATURALLY CONCERNED BY THE COINCIDENCE OF THIS DOUBLING IN THE NUMBER OF ARRIVALS FOLLOWING THE BRITISH INITIATIVE IN TAKING MORE REFUGEES PLUS THE NOBLE RESPONSE OF THE OTHER RESETTLEMENT COUNTRIES.

+AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL FROM QUESTIONING THESE ARRIVALS, THEY WERE NOT SPECIFICALLY LURED INTO COMING TO HONG KONG BY THE INCREASE IN RESETTLEMENT IN 1986, AND IN PRACTICE THIS INCREASE HAS NOT BEEN THAT DRAMATIC ANYWAY.

+RATHER, THEY CAME HERE FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS OF WHICH BY FAR THE MAIN ONE IS THE HOPE OF A BETTER ECONOMIC LIFE IN ANY OF THE MAIN RESETTLEMENT COUNTRIES.

+THEY ARE IN EFFECT ECONOMIC MIGRANTS PREPARED TO CHANGE THEIR ARMS ON WHETHER OR NOT THEY WILL BE RESETTLED,+ HE SAID.

MR JEAFFRESON ADDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALSO BEEN PRESSING FOR AN APPROACH TO THE VIETNAMESE WITH A VIEW TO OPENING UP DISCUSSIONS ON MEANS OF RETURNING THOSE FOUND NOT TO BE REFUGEES.

THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT RECOGNISED THAT RESETTLEMENT COULD NO LONGER BE THE SOLE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM AND THE ISSUE NEEDED TO BE EXPLORED IN CONSULTATION WITH OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES INCLUDING THE UNHCR.

+MEANWHILE, WE HAVE PASSED ON THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED HERE BY HONOURABLE MEMBERS IN THIS DEBATE TO THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT,+ MR JEAFFRESON ADDED.

STEPS TO IMPROVE BUILDING MANAGEMENT OUTLINED
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THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN TAKING A THREE-PRONGED APPROACH IN ASSISTING LANDLORDS AND TENANTS TO IMPROVE BUILDING MANAGEMENT, THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DONALD LIAO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS, MR LIAO SAID THE APPROACH INVOLVED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE DEEDS OF MUTUAL COVENANT AND THE MULTI-STOREY BUILDING (OWNERS INCORPORATION) ORDINANCE, AND ASSISTANCE TO MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS.

HE SAID ALL DEEDS OF MUTUAL COVENANT ARISING FROM NEW, NON-INDUSTRIAL LEASES GRANTED SINCE FEBRUARY THIS YEAR WERE REQUIRED TO CONTAIN SOME STANDARD PROVISIONS CONDUCIVE TO THE PROPER MANAGEMENT OF BUILDINGS.

+THE DETAILED ARRANGEMENTS ARE BEING WORKED OUT BY THE REGISTRAR GENERAL IN CONSULTATION WITH THE LAW SOCIETY,+ HE ADDED.

HE STRESSED THAT A DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY WOULD BE PROVIDED IN DRAFTING AN INDIVIDUAL DEED OF MUTUAL COVENANT TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THE SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF A PARTICULAR DEVELOPMENT.

ON OWNERS' CORPORATIONS, MR LIAO SAID WORK WAS IN HAND TO AMEND THE MULTI-STOREY BUILDINGS (OWNERS INCORPORATION) ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE A CLEARER MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH SUCH CORPORATIONS COULD OPERATE MORE EFFICIENTLY.

+THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS WILL MAKE THE FORMATION OF OWNERS' CORPORATIONS EASIER, LAY DOWN RULES AND PROCEDURES TO BE OBSERVED BY THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE, SET OUT IN CLEARER TERMS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL OWNERS AND THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AND PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GREATER PARTICIPATION BY TENANTS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE BUILDING,+ HE SAID.

THESE PROPOSALS WOULD BE PRESENTED TO THE DISTRICT BOARDS FOR COMMENTS IN EARLY 1987.

MR LIAO POINTED OUT THAT DISTRICT OFFICE STAFF HAD ALWAYS BEEN GIVING RESIDENTS ASSISTANCE AND GUIDANCE ON BUILDING MANAGEMENT.

+AS A RESULT OF THESE EFFORTS, THERE HAS BEEN AN ANNUAL INCREASE OF AN AVERAGE OF 200 OWNERS' CORPORATIONS AND 60 MUTUAL AID COMMITTEES IN PRIVATE MULTI-STOREY BUILDINGS OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS,+ HE SAID.

/IN ADDITION,

IN ADDITION, FOUR SPECIAL TEAMS, HEADED BY A HOUSING MANAGER, HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED IN EASTERN, YAU MA TEI, MONG KOK AND KWAI CHUNG AND TSING YI TO DEAL WITH BUILDING MANAGEMENT MATTERS.

+THEIR MAIN TASK IS TO ADVISE AND ASSIST RESIDENTS AND MANAGEMENT BODIES IN DEALING WITH BUILDING MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS,+ HE SAID.

THE FOUR TEAMS HAD SO FAR PROVIDED ASSISTANCE TO 135 BUILDINGS.

+SUBJECT TO AVAILABLE RESOURCES, IT IS INTENDED TO EXTEND THIS SCHEME IN THE COMING YEARS TO OTHER DISTRICTS,+ HE ADDED.

TURNING TO SECURITY ASPECTS, MR LIAO SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS DRAWING UP PROPOSALS TO REGULATE THE WHOLE SECURITY INDUSTRY. +THIS WILL BE AN IMPORTANT STEP IN ENSURING THAT PROPER STANDARDS ARE ACHIEVED AND ARE KNOWN TO THE PUBLIC,+ HE SAID.

ON THE NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH SCHEME, HE SAID 28 500 FAMILIES HAD SO FAR FORMED ABOUT 2 800 NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH UNITS. ANOTHER 15 000 FAMILIES WERE EXPECTED TO BE INVOLVED IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS AS THE THIRD PHASE OF THE SCHEME WAS IMPLEMENTED.

REFERRING TO THE NEW TERRITORIES, MR LIAO SAID A NEW PUBLIC WORKS ITEM FOR +IMPROVEMENTS TO URBAN FRINGE AND RURAL AREAS IN THE NEW TERRITORIES+ WOULD BE ESTABLISHED IN THE COMING FINANCIAL YEAR.

IN ADDITION, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT HOPED TO ESTABLISH A NEW RECURRENT SUBHEAD FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF LOCAL PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS, SOME OF WHICH HAD FALLEN INTO DISREPAIR OVER THE YEARS.

ON HOUSING MATTERS, MR LIAO SAID THE PROJECTED FINANCIAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF THE HOUSING AUTHORITY MUST BE VIEWED IN THE CONTEXT OF A VERY SIZEABLE OUTSTANDING LOAN FROM THE DEVELOPMENT LOAN FUND WHICH HAD YET TO BE REPAID OVER THE LONG PERIOD OF TIME INVOLVED AND THE ON-GOING PROVISION OF FREE LAND BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR BUILDING RENTAL ESTATES.

+FINANCIAL SELF-SUFFICIENCY OF THE AUTHORITY MUST NOT THEREFORE BE TAKEN TO MEAN THAT THE AUTHORITY IS ABLE TO MEET THE ENTIRE COST OF IMPLEMENTING THE PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME FROM ITS OWN RESOURCES,+ HE SAID.

+GOVERNMENT WILL IN FACT CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE SUBSTANTIALLY TOWARDS THE PROGRAMME AFTER THE AUTHORITY BECOMES FINANCIALLY SELF-SUFFICIENT.+

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DEALING WITH THE SUBJECT OF ARTS, RECREATION AND SPORTS, MR LIAO SAID THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE EXAMINING THE QUESTION OF SPONSORSHIP AND TAKING ADVICE FROM THE COUNCIL FOR RECREATION AND SPORT AND THE COUNCIL FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS.

IN PROMOTING SPORTS, RECREATION AND THE UTILISATION OF FACILITIES, HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT, THROUGH THE COUNCIL FOR RECREATION AND SPORT, THE URBAN COUNCIL, THE REGIONAL COUNCIL AND THE JUBILEE SPORTS CENTRE, SHARED A COMMON AIM TO CO-OPERATE AND CO-ORDINATE ACTIVITIES AND POLICIES.

ALL PARTIES WOULD KEEP AN OPEN MIND ON POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENTS, HE ADDED.

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HEALTHIER FUNDING SEEN FOR WELFARE SERVICES

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THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THAT WITH THE IMPROVEMENT IN THE FINANCIAL SITUATION, HE WAS HOPEFUL THAT MORE RESOURCES COULD BE ALLOCATED IN 1987-88 BOTH TO IMPROVE EXISTING WELFARE SERVICES AND TO DEVELOP NEW ONES.

SPEAKING IN THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S OPENING ADDRESS, MR CHAMBERS SAID THAT IN ADDITION \$6 MILLION PER ANNUM WOULD BE AVAILABLE THIS YEAR AND THE NEXT TWO YEARS, FROM THE SURPLUSES ACCUMULATED BY THE AGENCIES, SPECIFICALLY FOR IMPROVEMENTS IN THE QUALITY OF WELFARE SERVICES.

+AS A START, PROVISION FOR 10 ADDITIONAL SOCIAL WORKERS HAS JUST BEEN APPROVED TO REDUCE THE CASELOAD OF FAMILY CASE-WORKERS IN THE SUBVENTED AGENCIES,+ HE SAID.

TURNING TO SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK, MR CHAMBERS SAID HE WAS PLEASED TO REPORT THAT GOVERNMENT HAD ACCEPTED IN PRINCIPLE THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE RECENT WORKING GROUP ON THIS SUBJECT.

ONE OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS WAS THAT THE MANNING RATIO FOR SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS SHOULD BE IMPROVED. THE WORKING GROUP ALSO RECOMMENDED THAT THE EXISTING MONITORING SYSTEM SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED AND THAT THERE SHOULD BE BETTER CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN COUNSELLING AND GUIDANCE SERVICE FOR STUDENTS.

/+SUBJECT TO

+SUBJECT TO THE NECESSARY RESOURCES BEING AVAILABLE, I HOPE THAT WE SHALL SEE SOME IMPROVEMENTS IN THIS AREA IN THE NEAR FUTURE,+ HE SAID.

MR CHAMBERS SAID IT WAS NOT TRUE THAT THE ALLEGED RELUCTANCE OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT TO ENFORCE THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR PRIVATE OLD AGE HOMES DERIVED FROM ANY TACIT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT AND THE MANAGEMENT OF THESE HOMES WITH THE OBJECT OF AVOIDING THE ADDITIONAL COST INVOLVED IN PROVIDING MORE SUBVENTED HOMES IF THE PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS WERE FORCED TO CLOSE.

+ON THE ADVICE OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, WE HAVE DECIDED TO GIVE THE PRIVATE HOMES AN OPPORTUNITY OF COMPLYING WITH THE CODE, BEFORE WE DECIDE WHETHER ANY FURTHER ACTION NEEDS TO BE TAKEN.

+THE DEPARTMENT WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SITUATION AND A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW WILL BE CONDUCTED IN A YEAR'S TIME,+ HE SAID.

ON MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, MR CHAMBERS SAID HE HAD RECENTLY ISSUED DRAFTING INSTRUCTIONS TO AMEND THE UNDESIRABLE MEDICAL ADVERTISEMENTS ORDINANCE TO FACILITATE PROSECUTIONS FOR OFFENCES UNDER THAT ORDINANCE.

REFERRING TO A SUGGESTION THAT A CENTRAL STATUTORY BODY SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED TO CO-ORDINATE THE MANY BOARDS AND COUNCILS WHICH EXISTED TO REGULATE THE VARIOUS MEDICAL AND PARAMEDICAL PROFESSIONS, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE BOARDS AND COUNCILS SECTION OF THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT ALREADY EXISTED TO SERVICE THESE BODIES WHICH WERE THEMSELVES STATUTORY.

+HOWEVER IT MAY BE THAT THE PRESENT MACHINERY FOR DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS AND PROSECUTING OFFENDERS NEEDS SOME STRENGTHENING AND I WILL CERTAINLY CONSIDER THIS WITH THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES,+ HE SAID.

TURNING TO THE POLLUTION PROBLEM, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE OBSERVATION THAT HONG KONG WAS A DECADE BEHIND IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION RECOGNISED THE FACT THAT YEARS OF RELATIVE NEGLECT HAD LEFT A BACKLOG OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS.

+NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT, AND THERE ARE ENCOURAGING SIGNS THAT HONG KONG PEOPLE IN GENERAL ARE BECOMING MUCH MORE CONCERNED ABOUT THEIR SURROUNDINGS AND ARE MUCH READIER TO COMPLAIN ABOUT POLLUTION AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS,+ HE SAID.

/HE NOTED

HE NOTED THAT A GOOD DEAL OF PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE RECENTLY, INCLUDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF WHAT SHOULD PROVE TO BE A MUCH MORE EFFECTIVE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT; THE MAKING OF THE REGULATIONS NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THE PROVISIONS OF THE WATER POLLUTION CONTROL ORDINANCE; THE APPROVAL IN PRINCIPLE OF A PACKAGE OF MEASURES TO DEAL WITH THE QUESTION OF AGRICULTURAL WASTES; AND THE INITIATION OF CONCRETE MEASURES TO CLEAN UP THE SHING MUN RIVER AND THE TUEN MUN NULLAH HAVE ALL OCCURRED IN THE PAST YEAR.

+DURING THE NEXT FEW MONTHS THE LONG-AWAITED NOISE CONTROL BILL, WHICH HAS PROVED EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO DRAFT, AND AN IMPORTANT SET OF AIR POLLUTION REGULATIONS SHOULD SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY,+ HE SAID.

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PROVIDENT FUND HAS WIDE IMPLICATIONS
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THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE, REITERATED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE IMPLICATIONS OF SETTING UP A CENTRAL PROVIDENT FUND WERE FAR-REACHING AND A DECISION COULD NOT BE TAKEN LIGHTLY.

SPEAKING IN THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, MR BRIDGE SAID: +WE MUST REGARD NOT SIMPLY TO THE WILLINGNESS OF THE INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE TO CONTRIBUTE BUT ALSO TO THE POTENTIAL EFFECTS UPON THE ECONOMY AS A WHOLE.+

MR BRIDGE NOTED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION'S REVIEW PAPER HAD BEEN CIRCULATED FOR CONSULTATION TO A LIMITED NUMBER OF ADVISORY BODIES WHOSE EXPERTISE WAS PARTICULARLY RELEVANT TO DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF THE ISSUE.

+IN THE LIGHT OF THAT ADVICE, CONSIDERATION WILL BE GIVEN TO THE NEED FOR FURTHER CONSULTATION,+ HE SAID.

HE ASSURED MEMBERS THAT THEIR VIEWS WOULD BE SOUGHT BEFORE A DECISION WAS TAKEN ON THE ISSUE.

MR BRIDGE POINTED OUT THAT WHILE THE GOVERNMENT WAS TAKING A FRESH LOOK AT THE ISSUE, IT WAS CERTAINLY NOT DOING SO FOR THE FIRST TIME.

/+THE GOVERNMENT

+THE GOVERNMENT HAS LOOKED INTO THIS PROPOSAL ON TWO PREVIOUS OCCASIONS, IN 1966 AND 1977. ON BOTH OCCASIONS, THE BALANCE OF THE ARGUMENTS WAS FOUND TO BE AGAINST GOING AHEAD WITH SUCH A SCHEME,+ HE SAID.

MR BRIDGE SAID THE DEVELOPMENT OF LABOUR POLICY HAD BEEN GUIDED BY THE VERY CLEAR PRECEPT LAID DOWN BY THE FORMER GOVERNOR IN HIS ANNUAL ADDRESS TO THE COUNCIL IN 1976.

THE OBJECTIVE WHICH HAD BEEN PURSUED SINCE THEN HAD BEEN TO ACHIEVE A FRAMEWORK OF LEGISLATION GOVERNING SAFETY, HEALTH AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT AT LEAST BROADLY EQUIVALENT TO THE BEST IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES WHOSE STAGE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND WERE SIMILAR TO THAT OF HONG KONG, HE SAID.

IN PURSUIT OF THIS OBJECTIVE, MORE THAN 150 ITEMS OF LABOUR LEGISLATION HAD BEEN INTRODUCED OVER THE PAST 10 YEARS.

TURNING TO EDUCATION, MR BRIDGE SAID SOME 265 OF THE 320 PUBLIC SECTOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS WERE NOW TEACHING COMPUTER STUDIES COURSES IN FORM 4 AND 5, USING EQUIPMENT WHICH WAS CENTRALLY PURCHASED AND MAINTAINED BY THE GOVERNMENT, AND MORE SCHOOLS WOULD TAKE PART NEXT YEAR.

THERE WERE ALSO PLANS IN HAND TO INTRODUCE COMPUTER LITERACY COURSES IN FORMS 1 TO 3, THE AIM BEING TO ENSURE THAT ALL STUDENTS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH COMPUTERS DURING THEIR PERIOD OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION.

THE OPENING OF THE FIRST COMPUTER EDUCATION CENTRE IN KOWLOON NEXT MONTH WOULD ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO GAUGE MORE ACCURATELY THE LONG-TERM DEMAND FOR IN-SERVICE COMPUTER COURSES FOR TEACHERS.

MR BRIDGE STRESSED THAT THE QUESTION OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT WAS NOT BEING OVERLOOKED AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS INDEED MAKING USE OF THE EXPERTISE AVAILABLE WITHIN THE TEACHING PROFESSION.

HE SAID: +AT PRESENT, SOME 75 SCHOOL HEADS AND 250 TEACHERS ARE SERVING ON THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AND ITS VARIOUS SUBJECT COMMITTEES WHILE ANOTHER 290 TEACHERS ARE ASSISTING IN THE CLOSELY RELATED TASK OF TEXTBOOK REVIEWING.

+IN ADDITION, UP TO 18 TEACHERS FROM GOVERNMENT AND AIDED SCHOOLS ARE SECONDED TO THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT EACH YEAR AS FULL-TIME MEMBERS OF THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT TEAMS.

+I DO, NEVERTHELESS, AGREE THAT WE NEED TO TAKE A FRESH LOOK AT THE MACHINERY FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT AND IMPENDING CHANGES TO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM. THIS IS A SUBJECT WHICH THE EDUCATION COMMISSION WILL BE CONSIDERING IN THE COURSE OF NEXT YEAR.+

ON PROBLEMS CONCERNING DISCIPLINE, MR BRIDGE SAID THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT ADVOCATED A POSITIVE APPROACH, INVOLVING COUNSELLING AND GUIDANCE. THE QUESTION OF CURRICULUM AND BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS WOULD BE STUDIED BY THE EDUCATION COMMISSION IN THE NEXT PHASE OF ITS WORK, HE ADDED.

REFERRING TO THE SHORTAGE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES IN SOME NEW TOWNS, MR BRIDGE SAID: +IN PLANNING THE SCHOOL BUILDING PROGRAMME, WE HAVE TO LOOK MANY YEARS AHEAD AND IT HAS PROVED EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE THE POPULATION AND AGE STRUCTURE ACCURATELY SO FAR IN ADVANCE.

+NEVERTHELESS, MUCH WORK HAS BEEN DONE ON THIS BY THE WORKING GROUP ON POPULATION DISTRIBUTION AND A COMPUTER MODEL HAS NOW BEEN DEVELOPED BY THE LANDS AND WORKS BRANCH WHICH SHOULD BE A GREAT HELP TO US IN PLANNING THE LOCATION OF NEW SCHOOLS AND OF SCHOOLS REPROVISIONED FROM AREAS OF SURPLUS SUPPLY.+

MR BRIDGE ALSO SAID THE GOVERNMENT ATTACHED GREAT IMPORTANCE TO RESEARCH AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

FOR THE CURRENT TRIENNIUM, FUNDS TOTALLING SOME \$45 MILLION WERE SPECIFICALLY RESERVED FOR RESEARCH IN THE FIVE SUCH INSTITUTIONS.

MR BRIDGE CONFIRMED THAT THE ASSESSMENT OF COURSES AT LINGNAN COLLEGE AND SHUE YAN COLLEGE WOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE REMIT OF THE HONG KONG COUNCIL FOR ACADEMIC AWARDS AS A LONGER TERM OBJECTIVE, THOUGH THE IMMEDIATE TASK OF THE PROPOSED COUNCIL MUST BE THE VALIDATION OF DEGREE PROGRAMME PROPOSALS FROM THE TWO POLYTECHNICS AND THE BAPTIST COLLEGE.

MR BRIDGE NOTED THAT THE PLANNING COMMITTEE FOR ACADEMIC AWARDS HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED.

+ITS REMIT IS TO CONSIDER IN DETAIL HOW FULL LOCAL VALIDATION OF DEGREES AWARDED BY NON-UNIVERSITY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN HONG KONG MIGHT BEST BE ARRANGED AND MANAGED,+ HE SAID.

+THE FIRST FULL MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE IS SCHEDULED FOR THE END OF DECEMBER AND IT IS EXPECTED TO PUT ITS RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT BY END OF JUNE NEXT YEAR.+

ON THE THIRD UNIVERSITY, MR BRIDGE SAID PLANNING FOR THIS WOULD NOT AFFECT THE FIVE EXISTING TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS, FOR WHICH SUBSTANTIAL EXPANSION IN THE NEXT DECADE HAD BEEN PLANNED.

BY THE MID-1990'S, THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PLACES THE INSTITUTIONS PROVIDED WOULD INCREASE FROM THE PRESENT 34 000 TO AROUND 50 000.

MR BRIDGE THANKED MEMBERS FOR THEIR HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS AND SAID THAT THESE WOULD BE STUDIED BY GOVERNMENT VERY CAREFULLY.

STEPS PLANNED TO TACKLE ILLEGAL BUILDING WORKS

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MEASURES TO DEAL WITH THE FORMIDABLE PROBLEM OF UNAUTHORISED BUILDING WORKS COULD BE INTRODUCED NEXT YEAR, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, THE HON GRAHAM BARNES, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS, MR BARNES SAID WITH THE HEAVY WORKLOAD OF APPROVING BUILDING PLANS AND DEALING WITH DANGEROUS BUILDINGS AND RELATED MATTERS THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE OFFICE TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM WERE LIMITED AND PRIORITIES TO CONTROL MUST BE SET REALISTICALLY.

+IT IS PROPOSED THAT PROMPT ACTION WOULD BE TAKEN ON HIGH PRIORITY CASES,+ HE ADDED.

THESE INCLUDED CASES WHERE THERE WAS DANGER TO THE PUBLIC, LARGE STRUCTURES WHICH CONTRAVENED BOTH THE BUILDING ORDINANCE AND LEASE CONDITIONS, AND CASES RECOMMENDED FOR REMOVAL BY DISTRICT BOARDS AND SUBSEQUENTLY ENDORSED BY AN INTERDEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED FOR THE PURPOSE.

+ALL OTHER LOW PRIORITY CASES WILL BE DEFERRED UNTIL RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO DEAL WITH THEM UNLESS THE PRIORITIES ARE CHANGED,+ HE SAID.

MR BARNES SAID COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES WOULD BE STREAMLINED AND IT WAS PROPOSED THAT DEMOLITION TEAMS BE ESTABLISHED.

THESE WOULD HAVE THE POWER TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO DEMOLISH UNAUTHORISED BUILDINGS UNDER CONSTRUCTION OR JUST COMPLETED.

LEGISLATIVE AMENDMENTS WOULD BE NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE THIS AND OTHER MINOR PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY IN TACKLING THE PROBLEM.

DISTRICT BOARDS, HE ADDED, WOULD BE CONSULTED SHORTLY ON THESE PROPOSALS AND IT WAS HOPED TO INTRODUCE THEM NEXT YEAR.

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE LISTING OF CONTRACTORS AND THE AWARDING OF TENDERS, MR BARNES SAID HE WAS NOW EXAMINING IN DETAIL THE POSITION OF THE LOCAL CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY WITH THE BUILDING CONTRACTORS' ASSOCIATION TO SEE WHETHER THERE WERE ANY GENUINE INEQUITIES IN THE PRESENT SYSTEM.

HE POINTED OUT THAT AS JUDGED FROM THE GOVERNMENT CONTRACTORS LIST THERE WAS NO INDICATION OF A DECLINING LOCAL INDUSTRY.

THE NUMBER OF LISTED LOCAL CONTRACTORS WAS SLIGHTLY HIGHER THAN IN 1983.

+ON THE LIST OF CONTRACTORS FOR GROUP C,+ HE ADDED, +WHERE BOTH LOCAL AND OVERSEAS CONTRACTORS COMPETE FOR CONTRACTS FROM \$15 MILLION OR OVER, THE NUMBER OF LOCAL CONTRACTORS HAS REMAINED ABOUT THE SAME SINCE 1983.+

HE SAID THE PROPORTION OF WORK DONE BY OVERSEAS CONTRACTORS WAS NOT CONTINUING TO INCREASE. +THE LATEST FIGURES SHOW AN OVERALL DECREASE.+

MR BARNES SAID THAT WHATEVER ASSISTANCE OVERSEAS CONTRACTORS MIGHT RECEIVE FROM THEIR OWN COUNTRIES, ALL TENDERS WERE COMPARED WITH GOVERNMENT'S ESTIMATES AND IF THERE WERE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES AND THE CONTRACTOR COULD NOT JUSTIFY HIS LOW RATES, GOVERNMENT MIGHT REFUSE TO ACCEPT THE TENDER.

FOLLOWING EARLIER DISCUSSIONS WITH THE BUILDING CONTRACTORS' ASSOCIATION, HE SAID, CHECKS ON FINANCIAL STATUS, MANAGERIAL, PLANT AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES, INITIAL PROBATIONARY STATUS AND DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS FOR OVERSEAS CONTRACTORS HAD ALL BEEN BROUGHT INTO LINE WITH THOSE FOR LOCAL CONTRACTORS.

MR BARNES SAID OVERSEAS CONTRACTORS EMPLOYED LOCAL LABOUR AND IN MANY CASES LOCAL PROFESSIONALS AND OTHER STAFF FOR THEIR PROJECTS AND ALSO LOCAL SUB-CONTRACTORS.

+THE IMMIGRATION POLICY APPLIED TO OVERSEAS CONTRACTORS IS THE SAME AS FOR OTHER OVERSEAS BUSINESSES IN HONG KONG,+ HE SAID.

TURNING TO THE TIME TAKEN TO APPROVE BUILDING PLANS, MR BARNES SAID THE PREPARATION OF PLANS AND SUBSEQUENT CONSTRUCTION OF THE BUILDING IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEM WERE GUIDED BY STATUTORY PROVISIONS RELATING TO SUCH MATTERS AS MEANS OF ESCAPE, SAFETY AND BUILDING MATERIALS, AND ONCE APPROVED THESE PLANS BECAME THE BASIS OF ALL SUBSEQUENT CONTROL.

THE BUILDING MUST BE CONSTRUCTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEM; IT SHOULD NOT BE ALTERED UNLESS IN ACCORDANCE WITH AN APPROVED AMENDMENT, AGAIN PREPARED BY A QUALIFIED PERSON; ILLEGAL ALTERATIONS WERE ALTERATIONS NOT COVERED BY APPROVED AMENDMENT.

+I BELIEVE I WOULD BE JUSTIFIED IN SAYING THAT OVER THE YEARS THE GOVERNMENT MACHINERY HAS COPEd WELL WITH CONSTRUCTION, BUT HAS FOR VARIOUS REASONS BEEN RATHER LESS SUCCESSFUL IN DEALING WITH MATTERS SUBSEQUENTLY,+ HE SAID.

/THIS HAD

THIS HAD BEEN PARTLY BECAUSE OF THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO DEAL WITH BOTH FUNCTIONS CONCURRENTLY, BUT IT MIGHT WELL BE THAT A MORE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE WAS NECESSARY AND THAT SEPARATE LEGISLATION TO DEAL WITH MINOR ALTERATIONS, MAINTENANCE AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED TO USE AND OCCUPATION OF BUILDINGS WAS NECESSARY.

TO PROCESS BUILDING PLANS IN RESPECT OF RELATIVELY MINOR WORKS, HE SAID OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS THE WHOLE TREND OF CHANGE WITHIN THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE HAD BEEN TOWARDS SIMPLIFICATION OF PROCEDURES, AND A VERY WIDE RANGE OF MINOR WORKS WERE ACTUALLY EXEMPTED FROM BUILDINGS ORDINANCE PROCEDURES.

MR BARNES THEN EXPLAINED THAT MODIFICATION PREMIA REPRESENTED THE ESTIMATED VALUE BETWEEN THE LAND BEFORE AND AFTER THE CONDITIONS HAD BEEN MODIFIED AND CLEARLY THE AFTER VALUE INCLUDED AN ELEMENT OF THE DEVELOPER'S EXPECTED PROFIT.

HE SAID IN PRACTICE OVER THE YEARS THERE HAD BEEN A STEADY FLOW OF DEVELOPERS' APPEALS AGAINST MODIFICATION FEES.

+SOME APPEALS ARE SUCCESSFUL, SOME NOT, BUT ALL ARE CONSIDERED PROPERLY AND MOST HAVE RESULTED IN MODIFICATIONS AND REDEVELOPMENT PROCEEDING AT A PROFIT TO THE LESSEE,+ HE ADDED.

TURNING TO NEW TOWNS, MR BARNES SAID THESE HAVE, BY AND LARGE, BEEN +EXTRAORDINARILY SUCCESSFUL VENTURE+.

HE SAID EXTERNAL FACTORS SUCH AS CONTINUED STRONG ECONOMIC GROWTH AND FIRST RATE UTILITIES PROVISION HAD CLEARLY HELPED ENORMOUSLY, BUT HE THOUGHT THAT THE SYSTEM OF MULTI-DISCIPLINE TEAMS, BALANCED DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRAMMES OF WORK ADOPTED BY GOVERNMENT HAD ALSO PROVED THEIR WORTH.

THE ADVICE OF THE LOCAL DISTRICT BOARDS, HE ADDED, HAD HELPED GUIDE THE ADMINISTRATION TO MAKE THE MINOR ADJUSTMENTS IN PROGRAMMING AND PRIORITIES WHICH MADE SO MUCH DIFFERENCE TO EVERYDAY LIFE.

+I BELIEVE THAT THE PRESENT BALANCE BETWEEN CENTRAL PLANNING AND LOCAL CONSULTATION, PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING IS ABOUT RIGHT AND I DOUBT IF OTHER COORDINATING MACHINERY WOULD DO MUCH BETTER,+ HE SAID.

ON URBAN RENEWAL MR BARNES SAID COMPENSATION ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE COVERED IN THE LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, AND THE CORPORATION'S RESPONSIBILITIES FOR REHOUSING WOULD ALSO BE MADE CLEAR.

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+I AM SURE THAT THESE PROVISIONS WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF CLOSE SCRUTINY BY THIS COUNCIL,+ HE SAID.

REFERRING TO THE PARKING PROBLEM AT THE KWAI CHUNG CONTAINER TERMINAL, MR BARNES SAID THAT CONTAINER PORT ROAD WAS NOW BEING REALIGNED AND WOULD PROVIDE A TWO-LANE DUAL CARRIAGEWAY WITH AN ADDITIONAL QUEUEING LANE FOR CONTAINER TRUCKS.

THE FIRST STAGE WOULD BE COMPLETED IN 1987 AND THE ROAD WOULD BE COMPLETED IN 1990.

ABOUT THIS TIME ALSO, HE ADDED, PARKING SPACE FOR 200 TO 250 CONTAINER VEHICLES +WILL BECOME AVAILABLE AT KWAI CHUNG CREEK RECLAMATION WHICH IS BEING FORMED TOGETHER WITH TERMINAL 6+.

MR BARNES SAID THAT THESE ADDITIONAL FACILITIES WOULD HELP, BUT THERE WOULD NEVER BE PLENTY OF SPACE AT KWAI CHUNG.

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HONG KONG WELL SERVED BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM
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THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON HARNAM GREWAL, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THERE HAD NEVER BEEN TOTALLY FREE COMPETITION IN THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES IN HONG KONG AND THAT THE PHILOSOPHY REMAINED THAT THE OPERATION OF THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM SHOULD BE BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR OR PUBLIC CORPORATIONS WORKING ON COMMERCIAL PRINCIPLES, WITH GOVERNMENT PROVIDING A STATUTORY FRAMEWORK, REGULATION AND DEGREE OF COORDINATION BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT MODES.

SPEAKING AT THE RESUMED DEBATE IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ON THE GOVERNOR'S OPENING ADDRESS, MR GREWAL SAID THE SYSTEM HAD SERVED HONG KONG WELL AND HAD +ENABLED US TO MAINTAIN A RANGE OF SERVICES WHICH COMBINES CHOICE AND EFFICIENCY AT REASONABLE FARE LEVELS TO A GREATER EXTENT THAN IN ANY OTHER LARGE CITIES IN THE WORLD+.

TURNING TO POINTS RAISED EARLIER THAT THERE WAS AN OVER-RELIANCE ON RAILWAYS, MR GREWAL POINTED OUT THAT IN DEVELOPING THE TRANSPORT NETWORK GOVERNMENT HAD TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT BOTH THE SHORT-TERM DEMANDS OF THE PUBLIC, FOR WHOM REASONABLE FARES AND CONVENIENCE WERE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS, AND THE LONGER TERM OBJECTIVE OF DEVELOPING A BALANCED SYSTEM THAT WAS GOING TO PROVIDE ECONOMICALLY VIABLE AND EFFICIENT SERVICES OVER A PERIOD OF YEARS.

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+AT THE LATEST COUNT THE MTR AND KCR WERE CARRYING 1.9 MILLION PASSENGERS EACH DAY ON AVERAGE, OR 21 PER CENT OF TOTAL PASSENGER BOARDINGS ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

+IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE THIS NUMBER OF PASSENGERS, MOST OF THEM TRAVELLING IN THE RELATIVELY CONGESTED URBAN AREA, BEING CARRIED BY OTHER MEANS WITHOUT SERIOUS DETERIORATION IN TRAFFIC CONDITIONS ON OUR ROADS,+ HE SAID.

MR GREWAL POINTED OUT THAT HE ANTICIPATED SOME FURTHER EXTENSIONS OF THE RAIL NETWORK IN YEARS TO COME, +ONCE POPULATIONS IN CERTAIN DEVELOPING AREAS PASS THE THRESHOLD THAT MAKES THE HEAVY INVESTMENT INVOLVED WORTHWHILE+.

HOWEVER, HE ADDED, BUSES REMAINED, AND WOULD CONTINUE TO BE, THE MOST HEAVILY PATRONISED FORM OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN HONG KONG.

ON THE POLICY OF COORDINATING PUBLIC TRANSPORT SERVICES, MR GREWAL SAID IT WAS AIMED AT PREVENTING WASTEFUL COMPETITION BETWEEN MODES, A RETURN TO THE PREVIOUS LEVELS OF ROAD CONGESTION IN THE URBAN RAIL CORRIDORS AND UPWARD PRESSURE ON BUS FARES WHICH WOULD RESULT FROM UNNECESSARY FLEET EXPANSION INCOMMENSURATE WITH OVERALL DEMAND.

TURNING TO THE CALL BY MEMBERS FOR AN ADEQUATE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM TO LINK NEW TOWNS WITH THE OLD ESTABLISHED URBAN AREAS, MR GREWAL SAID THIS WAS FULLY RECOGNISED AND THE SECOND COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORT STUDY WOULD LOOK AT HONG KONG'S OVERALL TRANSPORT REQUIREMENTS INTO THE MID-1990'S AND BEYOND TO THE END OF THE CENTURY.

IN ADDITION, HE CONFIRMED THAT THE KCRC AND MTRC WERE AT PRESENT CONDUCTING SEPARATE STUDIES INTO THE FEASIBILITY AND VIABILITY OF AN EXTERNAL RAIL LINK TO THE NORTH-WEST NEW TERRITORIES. THESE STUDIES WERE EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED BY THE END OF THE YEAR.

HE SAID THAT THE DECISION TO PROCEED TO THE CONSTRUCTION STAGE WOULD ULTIMATELY DEPEND ON THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF THE LINE, AND THAT THIS WOULD IN TURN DEPEND ON SUCH CONSIDERATIONS AS CAPITAL COSTS, THE SPEED OF POPULATION BUILD-UP IN THE WESTERN AND NORTH-WESTERN NEW TERRITORIES, AND THE AVAILABILITY OF OTHER MODES OF TRANSPORT.

+EVEN IF A DECISION TO GO AHEAD IS MADE I WOULD NOT EXPECT A LINE TO THE NORTH-WESTERN NEW TERRITORIES TO BE OPERATING MUCH BEFORE THE EARLY TO MID-1990'S.

+IN THE MEANTIME BUS SERVICES CONNECTING THE REGION INTO TSUEN WAN AND KOWLOON ARE CONTINUALLY BEING IMPROVED,+ HE ADDED.

ON THE SUGGESTION THAT THE PROJECTED POPULATION IN JUNK BAY BE PROVIDED WITH A LINK INTO THE MAIN RAIL NETWORK, MR GREWAL SAID THAT ALTHOUGH IT HAD SOME OBVIOUS ATTRACTIONS, HE AGREED WITH THE VIEW THAT +WE SHOULD NOT RUSH INTO THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN EXPENSIVE FIXED TRACK TO JUNK BAY IN ORDER TO SERVE JUST ONE POPULATION CENTRE AT THE END OF THE TRACK+.

HE ADDED THAT SUCH A SYSTEM WOULD BE EXAMINED IN THE SECOND COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORT STUDY.

AS TO A CALL FOR A GOOD ROAD NETWORK, MR GREWAL SAID GOVERNMENT FULLY RECOGNISED ITS IMPORTANCE TO HONG KONG'S ECONOMY AND POINTED OUT THAT IN RECENT YEARS, APPROXIMATELY \$1.6 BILLION HAD BEEN SPENT ON NEW ROADS ANNUALLY.

+THIS REPRESENTS BETWEEN 30 AND 40 PER CENT OF OUR PUBLIC WORKS BUDGET AND ALTHOUGH THIS IS A VERY SUBSTANTIAL SUM IT IS STILL NOT ENOUGH TO BUILD ALL THE ROADS WE WOULD LIKE.+

ON THE OTHER HAND, HE SAID THAT THERE WERE MANY OTHER PRESSING CALLS ON THE PUBLIC PURSE.

THE SECOND COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORT STUDY, HE ADDED, HAD A PART TO PLAY, AS THE INTENTION WAS THAT THE STUDY TEAM SHOULD DEVELOP APPRAISAL TECHNIQUES WHICH WOULD HELP IN MAKING DIFFICULT DECISIONS WHICH MUST BE TAKEN TO ENSURE THAT MONEY AVAILABLE FOR HIGHWAYS WAS SPENT WHERE IT WOULD BE OF MOST BENEFIT TO THE COMMUNITY.

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ACTION TAKEN TO DEFEND TRADE INTERESTS
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THE GOVERNMENT IS FULLY ALERT TO THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE THREAT OF THE GROWTH OF PROTECTIONISM IN THE UNITED STATES AND WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO COUNTER PROTECTIONIST PRESSURES AND TO DEFEND HONG KONG'S TRADING INTERESTS, THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, THE HON STEUART WEBB-JOHNSON, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DURING THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS, MR WEBB-JOHNSON SAID HONG KONG WOULD CONTINUE TO USE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN ITS OPEN MARKET POLICY AND FAIR TRADE PRACTICES.

IT WOULD ALSO CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE THOSE WHO WERE WORRIED ABOUT HONG KONG'S EXPORTS TO THEIR MARKETS TO SELL MORE TO HONG KONG AND THROUGH HONG KONG TO OTHER GROWING MARKETS IN THE REGION.

+IN THE MULTILATERAL TRADE FIELD, WE HAVE EXPANDED OUR REPRESENTATION IN GENEVA AND PLAYED AN ACTIVE PART AS A SEPARATE CONTRACTING PARTY IN THE PREPARATORY PROCESSES LEADING TO THE LAUNCHING OF THE URUGUAY ROUND UNDER THE GATT,+ HE SAID.

+IN THE U.S., WE HAVE ESTABLISHED A NEW OFFICE IN SAN FRANCISCO AND STRENGTHENED OUR REPRESENTATION IN WASHINGTON. THE CONTRACTS OF THE LOBBYISTS HAVE BEEN EXTENDED AND WE HAVE RECENTLY EMPLOYED CONSULTANTS TO REVIEW OUR PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORTS+.

TURNING TO INDUSTRIAL SUPPORT, MR WEBB-JOHNSON SAID THE GOVERNMENT'S INDUSTRIAL POLICIES HAD BEEN COMPREHENSIVELY REVIEWED THIS YEAR BY THE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD AND BY A LEGCO PANEL AND HAD GENERALLY BEEN ENDORSED.

+WITHIN THE WELL-ACCEPTED POLICY OF NOT FRUSTRATING MARKET FORCES AND LEAVING INVESTMENT AND OTHER BUSINESS DECISIONS TO BUSINESSMEN, AND WITHIN OUR RESOURCES, GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE TO IMPROVE ITS VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND INDUSTRIAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES; TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE OUR CAPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND TO EXPAND THE EXISTING RANGE OF INDUSTRIAL SUPPORT FACILITIES AND TECHNICAL BACK-UP SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT AND THE HONG KONG PRODUCTIVITY COUNCIL.+

MOREOVER, THE APPROPRIATENESS OF INDUSTRIAL POLICIES WAS BEING REVIEWED IN TWO OTHER WAYS, HE SAID.

+FIRSTLY, WE ARE ENGAGED IN A PROGRAMME OF CONSULTANCY STUDIES OF THE MAIN MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES, WHICH ARE DESIGNED TO IDENTIFY THE FACTORS WHICH FOSTER OR CONSTRAIN THEIR GROWTH AND DETERMINE WHAT MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE.+

+SECONDLY, A REVIEW IS BEING UNDERTAKEN AS TO THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT AND INCENTIVES OFFERED TO INDUSTRIALISTS BY OUR COMPETITORS IN THE REGION.+

ON INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT PROMOTION, MR WEBB-JOHNSON SAID THE GOVERNMENT SOUGHT TO PURSUE INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT PROMOTION VIGOROUSLY.

ALTHOUGH JUDGMENTS OF EFFECTIVENESS WERE DIFFICULT TO SUBSTANTIATE, IT WAS BELIEVED THAT THE AIM WAS LARGELY BEING ACHIEVED WITHIN THE RESTRAINTS OF PRESENT RESOURCES.

HE NOTED THAT OVERSEAS INVESTMENT IN MANUFACTURING IN HONG KONG HAD GROWN SUBSTANTIALLY IN RECENT YEARS RESULTING IN AN IMPRESSIVE RANGE OF NEW PRODUCTS AND PROCESSES BEING INTRODUCED AND THE INDUSTRIAL BASE BEING WIDENED

REFERRING TO THE SUGGESTION THAT INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT PROMOTION SHOULD BE TRANSFERRED FROM THE INDUSTRY DEPARTMENT TO THE TRADE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL, MR WEBB-JOHNSON POINTED OUT THAT THE COUNCIL'S ROLE WAS TRADE PROMOTION AND THAT IT COULD NOT TAKE ON INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT PROMOTION WITHOUT SPECIALIST STAFF AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.

THERE WERE ADDITIONAL REASONS FOR PLACING THE PRINCIPAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THIS WORK WITH THE GOVERNMENT.

+FIRSTLY, THIS VIEW WAS REACHED BY THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON DIVERSIFICATION AFTER VERY THOROUGH EXAMINATION AND ENDORSED BY THE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT BOARD AS RECENTLY AS LAST MONTH,+ HE SAID.

+SECONDLY, INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT PROMOTION WORK IS DIFFERENT IN MANY RESPECTS FROM TRADE PROMOTION WORK. EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT THE APPLICATION OF ENGINEERING, FINANCIAL AND OTHER SKILLS IS REQUIRED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM POTENTIAL INVESTORS AND TO PERSUADE THEM TO CONSIDER HONG KONG.

+THIRDLY, THERE ARE BENEFITS IN RETAINING HONG KONG'S SPOKESMEN IN THIS FIELD WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT WHICH PROVIDES THE INDUSTRIAL SUPPORT AND TECHNICAL BACK-UP SERVICES IN HONG KONG.+

REFERRING TO A CALL FOR GREATER CO-ORDINATION OF THE WORK OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND STATUTORY BODIES IN TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR WEBB-JOHNSON SAID THIS CO-ORDINATION WAS ENSURED BY THESE BODIES HAVING A DEGREE OF COMMON MEMBERSHIP AND BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY BEING A MEMBER OF, OR REPRESENTED ON, THEM ALL.

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RIISING EXPORTS GIVE ECONOMY HEALTHY BOOST
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THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, PAINTED A BRIGHT PICTURE OF THE HONG KONG ECONOMY TODAY (WEDNESDAY), NOTING THAT THE CURRENT EXPORT PERFORMANCE IS PROVING TO BE MUCH BETTER THAN APPEARED LIKELY EARLY IN THE YEAR.

+WE HAVE WITNESSED SUBSTANTIAL GROWTH RATES FOR DOMESTIC EXPORTS AS WELL AS FOR RE-EXPORTS IN THE THIRD QUARTER,+ HE SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DURING THE RESUMED DEBATE ON THE GOVERNOR'S ADDRESS.

MR JACOBS POINTED TO A WELCOME SIGN OF MARKET DIVERSIFICATION, STATING THAT THERE HAD BEEN HIGHER GROWTH RATES FOR DOMESTIC EXPORTS TO JAPAN AND MAIN EUROPEAN MARKETS THAN TO THE UNITED STATES IN THE FIRST NINE MONTHS OF 1986.

HE ALSO SAID HE WAS HEARTENED BY RECENT STATISTICS SHOWING A RECOVERY IN INVESTMENT IN CAPITAL GOODS, PARTICULARLY IN THE MANUFACTURING SECTOR.

IN ADDITION, THERE HAD BEEN A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN BUILDING CONSENTS FOR COMMERCIAL PROPERTY AND SOME SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN RELATION TO INDUSTRIAL PROPERTY.

ON MATTERS RAISED IN THE DEBATE, HE SAID THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE TO SHOW EITHER THAT EXISTING LAND POLICIES WERE INSUFFICIENTLY FLEXIBLE TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF MOST INDUSTRIALISTS OR THAT LAND OR ACCOMMODATION COSTS WERE ACTING AS A DISINCENTIVE TO INDUSTRIAL INVESTMENT.

AS FAR AS FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO INDUSTRY WAS CONCERNED, HE DID NOT SEE THE NEED FOR A SPECIALISED FINANCIAL INSTITUTION.

ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AUTONOMOUS SHIPPING REGISTER IN HONG KONG, MR JACOBS NOTED A PROPOSAL THAT INSTEAD OF TAXING PROFITS, REVENUE SHOULD BE COLLECTED BY THE IMPOSITION OF INITIAL REGISTRATION FEES AND ANNUAL TONNAGE DUES ON EACH SHIP REGISTERED IN HONG KONG. THIS WAS A DIFFICULT SUBJECT, HE SAID.

HOWEVER, A STEERING GROUP WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL SIDES OF THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY WOULD SHORTLY BE SET UP TO DEVELOP DETAILED PROPOSALS ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE REGISTER. THIS WOULD BE AN APPROPRIATE FORUM TO REVIEW FULLY THE SUBJECT OF TAXES, FEES AND CHARGES.

ON A SUGGESTION THAT THE TIME HAD COME FOR THE ECONOMIC SERVICES BRANCH TO CONSIDER GIVING FURTHER SUPPORT TO THE TOURIST INDUSTRY, MR JACOBS SAID THE BASIC PHILOSOPHY OF MINIMUM GOVERNMENT REGULATION CONSISTENT WITH HONG KONG'S OVERALL INTERESTS APPLIED TO THE TOURIST INDUSTRY, JUST AS MUCH AS TO ANY OTHER INDUSTRY.

+WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO BE PROUD OF OUR TOURIST INDUSTRY AND OF THE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION IT MAKES TO THE ECONOMY, AND I AM SURE WE CAN LOOK TO IT TO CONTINUE TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE ON ITS OWN INITIATIVE,+ HE SAID.

REFERRING TO DEMANDS MADE ON THE AIRPORT, MR JACOBS SAID IT WAS EXPECTED THAT KAI TAK WOULD BE ABLE TO COPE WITH TRAFFIC FOR A CONSIDERABLY LONGER PERIOD THAN JUST A FURTHER FIVE YEARS.

BUT HE EMPHASISED THAT NEEDS IN RELATION TO AIRPORT CAPACITY WERE RE-EXAMINED PERIODICALLY.

ON ISSUES CONCERNING ELECTRICITY, MR JACOBS POINTED OUT THAT CONSULTANTS EMPLOYED BY THE GOVERNMENT IN 1981 HAD FOUND THAT THE TWO POWER COMPANIES WERE OPERATING EFFICIENTLY, CONFORMING TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS IN ALL RESPECTS.

TO CREATE A BODY SUCH AS AN ENERGY COUNCIL WOULD ONLY DUPLICATE THE EXISTING, WELL TRIED AND EFFECTIVE MONITORING SYSTEMS. IN REAL TERMS HONG KONG WAS TODAY PAYING LESS FOR ITS ELECTRICITY THAN THREE YEARS AGO, HE ADDED.

DEALING WITH PUBLIC FINANCE AND MONETARY MATTERS, MR JACOBS NOTED SUGGESTIONS REGARDING TAX RATES AND FINANCIAL INCENTIVES, AND SAID THESE WERE SUBJECTS THAT HE WOULD BE CONSIDERING IN THE RUN-UP TO THE BUDGET.

HE EMPHASISED THAT THE LINKED EXCHANGE RATE SYSTEM WOULD BE MAINTAINED. +NO SYSTEM IS ENTIRELY FLAWLESS, BUT THIS ONE WORKS WELL,+ HE SAID.

ON A SUGGESTION THAT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY SHOULD USE MORE OF ITS OWN RESOURCES TO PROVIDE PUBLIC HOUSING, THEREBY RELEASING MORE GOVERNMENT REVENUE FOR WELFARE AND SOCIAL PROGRAMMES, MR JACOBS SAID:

+THE HOUSING AUTHORITY'S SHARE OF THE CAPITAL COST OF NEW RENTAL PUBLIC HOUSING, THAT IS TO SAY, THE SHARE THAT THE AUTHORITY PROVIDES, HAS INCREASED STEADILY IN RECENT YEARS FROM 22 PER CENT IN 1981-82 TO 43 PER CENT IN 1986-87 AND IS PROJECTED TO INCREASE FURTHER TO 59 PER CENT BY 1987-88.+

TURNING TO FINANCIAL SERVICES GENERALLY, MR JACOBS SAID BRINGING TOGETHER POLICY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR BANKING AND SECURITIES UNDER THE ROOF OF THE MONETARY AFFAIRS BRANCH WAS AN IMPORTANT STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, GIVEN THE GROWING INTEGRATION OF BANKING AND SECURITIES BUSINESSES.

WHETHER THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS SHOULD BE FURTHER DEVELOPED BY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SINGLE FINANCIAL INDUSTRY ADVISORY THINK-TANK WAS HIGHLY DEBATABLE.

HE SAID: +IT MUST BE ACCEPTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST ALWAYS DO A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF ITS THINKING OF POLICY ISSUES IN PRIVATE, PARTICULARLY IF THE ISSUES ARE MARKET SENSITIVE. FOR THE MOMENT I THINK WE HAVE THE RIGHT STRUCTURE TO ENSURE PROPER DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAS AND CO-ORDINATION OF POLICIES, AND TO SUPERIMPOSE YET ANOTHER BODY WOULD NOT IN MY VIEW REALLY HELP.+

THE WHOLE SUBJECT OF FINANCIAL SERVICES, BANKING AND SUPERVISION WAS IN A STATE OF RAPID CHANGE AND CHANGE BROUGHT WITH IT PROBLEMS, IF NOT DANGERS, AND THE GOVERNMENT HAD HAD TO INTERVENE IN THE BANKING SECTOR TO PROTECT DEPOSITORS AND THE INTEGRITY OF THE FINANCIAL SYSTEM.

HE ACCEPTED THAT ANY OVER-REGULATION MIGHT AFFECT HONG KONG'S ATTRACTIVENESS AS AN INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL CENTRE, BUT POINTED OUT THAT ADDITIONAL REGULATION WAS OFTEN THE RESPONSE TO ABUSE.

+LET THOSE IN THE MARKETPLACE REALISE THAT AT THE END OF THE DAY A GOOD REPUTATION BASED ON PROBITY IS A MOST VALUABLE ASSET,+ HE SAID.

AS TO THE QUESTION OF SPECIAL TREATMENT IN RELATION TO THE CAPITAL ADEQUACY RATIO REQUIREMENTS FOR DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES ENGAGING MAINLY IN OFFSHORE BUSINESSES, HE SAID THERE WOULD CONTINUE TO BE CONSULTATION WITH THOSE INVOLVED. IN ANY EVENT, THE REQUIREMENT WOULD NOT COME INTO EFFECT UNTIL SOME TIME IN 1988.

REFERRING TO SUPERVISORY ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONEY LENDERS, MR JACOBS SAID THE MONEY LENDERS ORDINANCE WAS NOT DESIGNED FOR LENDERS OPERATING IN TODAY'S SOPHISTICATED FINANCIAL MARKETS.

THE ADMINISTRATION HAD BEEN CARRYING OUT A GENERAL REVIEW OF THE ORDINANCE AND A LARGE NUMBER OF AMENDMENTS WERE ENVISAGED. SOME OF THESE WOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF EXCLUDING SOPHISTICATED LENDING ACTIVITIES FROM SOME OR ALL OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE ORDINANCE.

CONCLUDING HIS SPEECH, MR JACOBS SAID THE FAR-REACHING NATURE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S LONG-TERM PLANS AND PROGRAMMES DEMONSTRATED BEYOND ANY QUESTION ITS DETERMINATION TO GOVERN FULLY AND EFFECTIVELY.

HE SAID: +WE WILL PROVIDE THE FRAMEWORK NECESSARY TO ENABLE THE ECONOMY TO GROW. THAT GROWTH WILL IN ITS TURN ALLOW US TO IMPROVE OUR SERVICES TO THE SICK, THE ELDERLY, THE POOR AND THE DISABLED.

+WE WILL BE ABLE TO BUILD NEW AND IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES AND CONTINUE WITH OUR HOUSING PROGRAMME, WHICH IN MANY WAYS STANDS COMPARISON WITH ANY IN THE WORLD.+

DECISIONS MADE ON BRB REPORT
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DECISIONS WHICH WILL SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY WERE ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) FOLLOWING THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL'S DELIBERATION OF THE PACKAGE OF SOME 100 RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD.

THE MAJOR POLICIES WHICH ARE TO FORM THE BACKBONE OF NEW GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES ON THE ORGANISATION AND REGULATION OF BROADCASTING FOR DECADES TO COME INVOLVE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A BROADCASTING AUTHORITY WITH RESPONSIBILITY OVER TELEVISION, RADIO AND CABLE TV; LICENCE EXTENSION FOR A 12-YEAR TERM FOR THE EXISTING TWO TELEVISION LICENSEES; AND THE RETENTION OF RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG WITHIN THE PUBLIC SERVICE BUT AS AN EXECUTIVE ARM OF A BOARD OF GOVERNORS.

DECISIONS ON OTHER MORE CONTROVERSIAL PROPOSALS BY THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD (BRB) INCLUDE FURTHER RESTRICTIONS TO BE PLACED ON TOBACCO ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP ON TELEVISION AND RADIO; THE REJECTION OF THE BRB'S RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE CORPORATE STRUCTURE OF THE BROADCASTING LICENSEES; AND THE NEW METHOD OF PAYMENT OF ROYALTIES TO BE BASED ON TURNOVER.

EXPLAINING THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE DECISIONS AT A PRESS CONFERENCE, THE SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND INFORMATION, MR JAMES SO, POINTED OUT THAT THEY WERE MADE AFTER CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY THE PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONALS IN THE FIELD DURING THE EXTENDED CONSULTATION PERIOD WHICH ENDED IN FEBRUARY.

+EVERY SINGLE DECISION WAS TAKEN WITH THE LONG-TERM NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY IN MIND. IT IS ALSO VERY IMPORTANT TO KEEP A PERSPECTIVE VIEW OF THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY WHEN FORMULATING THESE POLICIES WHICH WILL SERVE THE PUBLIC FOR THE YEARS AHEAD,+ HE SAID.

THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL'S DECISIONS ON THE MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD ARE SUMMARISED THUS:

- * THE EXISTING PATTERN OF TWO TELEVISION LICENCES EACH OPERATING ONE CHINESE AND ONE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SERVICE SHOULD CONTINUE.
- * TO ENABLE MORE EFFECTIVE CONTROL TO BE EXERCISED OVER THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BROADCASTING LICENSEES AND TO ALLOW FOR GREATER PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE REGULATION OF THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY, A BROADCASTING AUTHORITY WILL BE CREATED WITH RESPONSIBILITY OVER TELEVISION, RADIO AND CABLE TELEVISION.

ITS FUNCTIONS WILL INCLUDE ADMINISTERING THE PROVISIONS OF THE FUTURE BROADCASTING ORDINANCE AND SECURING PROPER STANDARDS OF BROADCASTING WITH REGARD TO PROGRAMME CONTENT AND TECHNICAL EFFICIENCY OF BROADCASTS.

THE AUTHORITY WILL CONSIST OF NINE NON-OFFICIALS AND THREE OFFICIALS ALL OF WHOM WILL BE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR. THE TELEVISION ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING AUTHORITY WILL ACT AS THE EXECUTIVE ARM OF THE AUTHORITY.

A COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE WILL BE ESTABLISHED WITHIN THE AMBIT OF THE AUTHORITY TO RESOLVE DISPUTES IN THE BROADCASTING INDUSTRY.

- * THE EXISTING TELEVISION LICENCES, WHICH ARE DUE TO EXPIRE IN DECEMBER 1988, WILL BE RENEWED FOR A 12-YEAR PERIOD SUBJECT TO A MID-TERM REVIEW IN 1994.

ADDITIONAL REGULATORY MEASURES WILL BE IMPOSED ON THE NEW LICENSEES WHICH INCLUDE A REQUIREMENT FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF A COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE, PAYMENT OF ROYALTIES BASED ON TURNOVER, SUBMISSION OF AUDITED ACCOUNTS TO THE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY AND IMPOSITION OF HEAVIER FINANCIAL PENALTIES FOR CONTRAVENTION OF THE REGULATIONS OF THE FUTURE BROADCASTING ORDINANCE.

PUBLIC HEARINGS WILL ALSO BE CONDUCTED IN FUTURE BEFORE TELEVISION LICENCES ARE GRANTED, RENEWED OR REVIEWED.

- * RTHK WILL REMAIN WITHIN THE PUBLIC SERVICE AS AN EXECUTIVE ARM OF A BOARD OF GOVERNORS TO BE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR. THE BOARD WILL CONSIST OF EIGHT NON-OFFICIALS AND ONE OFFICIAL, AND WILL BE ESTABLISHED BY LEGISLATION.

ITS FUNCTIONS WILL BE TO DECIDE AND IMPLEMENT THE BROAD POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES OF RTHK, AND TO MAINTAIN THE EDITORIAL INTEGRITY OF RTHK SUCH THAT IT SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE, AND BE SEEN TO BE, A BALANCE AND OBJECTIVE PUBLIC BROADCASTER.

RTHK WILL CONTINUE TO RECEIVE PUBLIC FUNDING BUT WILL BE FREE TO ACCEPT SPONSORSHIP AND DONATION. IT WILL BE GIVEN AN INCREASED PRESENCE ON TELEVISION BOTH IN TERMS OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF HOURS MADE AVAILABLE FOR RTHK PROGRAMMES AND ITS ACCESS TO PRIME TIME HOURS.

- * FURTHER RESTRICTION WILL BE PLACED ON TOBACCO ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP ON TELEVISION AND RADIO. THE BROADCASTING OF TOBACCO ADVERTISEMENTS ON TELEVISION AND RADIO WILL BE TOTALLY BANNED IN 1990.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT CONCERNING RADIO POLICY, TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS, PROGRAMME CONTENT, FREQUENCY AND LENGTH OF ADVERTISING BREAKS AND CENSORSHIP STANDARDS WHICH HAVE STILL TO BE CONSIDERED. THESE WILL BE EXAMINED IN DUE COURSE BY THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL OR THE FUTURE BROADCASTING AUTHORITY.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1986

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REMUNERATION OF DB MEMBERS BEING REVIEWED
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THE DEPUTY TO THE GOVERNOR, SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOW REVIEWING THE REMUNERATION OF DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS AND THE RESULTS WOULD BE KNOWN SHORTLY.

SPEAKING TO REPORTERS AT THE FOUNDATION STONE LAYING CEREMONY FOR YAN CHAI HOSPITAL'S FOURTH PHASE EXPANSION PROGRAMME, SIR DAVID SAID HE HAD RECEIVED A LETTER FROM THE SENIOR LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBER, MISS LYDIA DUNN, CONCERNING DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS' REMUNERATION.

ASKED WHETHER THE ARGUMENTS IN THE LETTER WERE SOUND, HE SAID: +I THINK THEY NEED LOOKING AT VERY CAREFULLY. AND I THINK WE NEED TO LOOK AT THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE REMUNERATIONS OF THE DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS, URBAN COUNCIL MEMBERS AND LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS.+

HE SAID THERE WAS A NEED TO GET THESE RELATIONSHIPS RIGHT, BEARING IN MIND THE DIFFERENT RESPONSIBILITIES OF THESE THREE TIERS OF GOVERNMENT.

ASKED ABOUT THE BROADCASTING REVIEW BOARD REPORT, SIR DAVID SAID THERE WOULD BE A STATEMENT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL IN THE AFTERNOON.

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YAN CHAI CLOSER TO DISTRICT HOSPITAL STATUS
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THE YAN CHAI HOSPITAL WILL BECOME A FULLY SIZED DISTRICT HOSPITAL WITH 700 BEDS AND A COMPREHENSIVE RANGE OF SUPPORTING FACILITIES ON COMPLETION OF THE HOSPITAL'S FINAL PHASE OF EXTENSION IN 1990.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE DEPUTY TO THE GOVERNOR, SIR DAVID AKERS-JONES, AT THE FOUNDATION STONE LAYING CEREMONY OF THE HOSPITAL'S PHASE FOUR EXTENSION PROJECT THIS (WEDNESDAY) MORNING.

THROUGHOUT THE YEARS, SIR DAVID SAID, YAN CHAI HAD LIVED UP TO THE DEMAND FROM THE GROWING POPULATION IN THE WEST NEW TERRITORIES REGION WHICH HAD INCREASED FIVEFOLD BETWEEN 1962 AND 1986.

+THE LAYING OF THIS FOUNDATION STONE MARKS AN IMPORTANT OCCASION IN YAN CHAI'S EXPANSION PROGRAMME WHICH STARTED IN 1977,+ HE STRESSED.

/SIR DAVID

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SIR DAVID POINTED OUT THAT IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING LOW-COST MEDICAL SERVICES TO THOSE IN NEED EVER SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT, YAN CHAI HAD DIVERSIFIED ITS SERVICES INTO EDUCATION, CHILD CARE AND SERVICES FOR THE ELDERLY AND ALSO EXPANDED ITS MEDICAL SERVICES.

+ALL THESE PROJECTS REQUIRE HUGE INPUT OF RESOURCES,+ HE SAID. +PHASE 4 OF THIS EXPANSION PROJECT FOR YAN CHAI HOSPITAL ALONE, FOR EXAMPLE, COSTS OVER \$250 MILLION.+

NOTING THAT THE PRESENT AND PAST DIRECTORS OF YAN CHAI HAD THEMSELVES RAISED SUBSTANTIAL SUMS OF MONEY THROUGH FLAG-DAYS, CHARITY WALKS AND VARIETY SHOWS, SIR DAVID SAID, +I WISH TO PLACE ON RECORD GOVERNMENT'S APPRECIATION TO THE PAST AND PRESENT DIRECTORS OF YAN CHAI AND TO THOSE WHO HAVE RESPONDED GENEROUSLY TO THE CHARITY DRIVES.+

HE SAID THAT HONG KONG WAS FORTUNATE TO HAVE A HOST OF VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATING IN THE PROVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES.

+THE SPIRIT OF THOSE WHO HAVE A LITTLE MORE TO GIVE CARING FOR THE WELL-BEING OF THOSE IN NEED IS TO BE ENCOURAGED,+ HE ADDED.

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OPENING OF NEW CLUB HOUSE
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DEPUTY REGIONAL SECRETARY FOR HONG KONG AND KOWLOON, MR KEVIN MAK, WILL OFFICIATE AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE NEW CLUB HOUSE OF THE SHAM SHUI PO COUNCIL FOR PROMOTION OF CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL SERVICES TOMORROW (THURSDAY).

THE CEREMONY WILL START AT 4.30 PM AT THE CLUB HOUSE AT MAN FAT STREET, SHAM SHUI PO, KOWLOON (AT THE BACK OF CHEUNG SHA WAN COMMUNITY CENTRE).

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE EVENT.

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WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1986

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TRAFFIC CHANGES AT PUBLIC TRANSPORT TERMINUS
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THE WONG TAI SIN PUBLIC TRANSPORT TERMINUS WILL BE DESIGNATED A PROHIBITED ZONE FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY (NOVEMBER 29).

NO VEHICLE OTHER THAN GREEN MINIBUSES AND TAXIS WILL BE ALLOWED TO ENTER THE TERMINUS.

A TAXI STAND WILL BE PROVIDED AT THE TERMINUS NEAR THE JUNCTION OF CHING TAK STREET AND SHEUNG TAK STREET.

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TSUEN WAN ROAD SECTIONS TO CLOSE
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TWO SECTIONS OF TSUEN WAN ROAD WILL BE CLOSED TO TRAFFIC FROM 12.30 AM TO 5 AM ON NOVEMBER 29 (SATURDAY) AND NOVEMBER 30 TO FACILITATE CONSTRUCTION OF A FOOTBRIDGE.

THE SECTIONS ARE THE NEW TERRITORIES BOUND CARRIAGEWAY BETWEEN KWAI CHUNG ROAD AND TEXACO ROAD ROUNDABOUT AND THE KOWLOON BOUND CARRIAGEWAY BETWEEN TEXACO ROAD ROUNDABOUT AND KWAI TSING ROAD ROUNDABOUT.

NEW TERRITORIES BOUND TRAFFIC WILL BE DIVERTED TO KWAI CHUNG ROAD AND CASTLE PEAK ROAD. TRAFFIC ON THE KOWLOON BOUND CARRIAGEWAY OF TSUEN WAN ROAD WILL BE DIVERTED TO TEXACO ROAD, CASTLE PEAK ROAD AND KWAI CHUNG ROAD.

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