



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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TOP PRIORITY GIVEN TO SOLVING PROBLEMS: CS

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THE GOVERNOR AND THE CHIEF SECRETARY ARE TAKING A CLOSE PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOSPITAL SERVICE AND TOP PRIORITY IS BEING GIVEN BY THE ADMINISTRATION TO SOLVING THE CURRENT PROBLEMS.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THIS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES IN PUBLIC SECTOR HOSPITALS.

SPEAKING IN SUPPORT OF THE COMMENTS BY THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON T.H. CHAU, IN THE COUNCIL, SIR DAVID STRESSED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS DETERMINED TO TACKLE THE PROBLEMS URGENTLY.

HE ALSO DISPUTED SOME STAFF'S BELIEF THAT THE FORMATION OF THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY WAS BEING USED AS AN EXCUSE FOR DELAY. "THIS IS SIMPLY NOT TRUE," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID SAID CLEARLY MORE NEEDED TO BE DONE TO IMPROVE NOT ONLY THE QUANTITY BUT, MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE QUALITY OF PATIENT CARE.

"IF WE ARE TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF SERVICE WE MUST LOOK FOR A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS IN OUR HOSPITALS.

"A SOLUTION WHICH ADDRESSES HOW OUR HOSPITAL SERVICE SHOULD BE ORGANISED AND MANAGED, HOW WE CAN IMPROVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN STAFF MANAGEMENT AND, ABOVE ALL, HOW WE ENSURE THAT WE HAVE HIGHLY MOTIVATED AND CONTENTED HOSPITAL STAFF," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID SAID WHEN EMOTIONS WERE RUNNING HIGH AS THEY WERE AT PRESENT AMONGST SOME HOSPITAL STAFF, IT WAS IMPORTANT TO RETAIN A SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE ABOUT THE PROBLEMS THAT CONFRONTED US.

"OUR RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE FIELD OF HEALTH CARE OVER THE PERIOD OF THE LAST TWO DECADES ARE CONSIDERABLE AND HONG KONG CAN DERIVE SATISFACTION FROM THE FACT THAT THE STANDARD OF HEALTH OF THIS COMMUNITY IS VERY GOOD IN COMPARISON WITH MANY DEVELOPED COUNTRIES.

"FOR EXAMPLE, OUR INFANT MORTALITY RATE IS LOWER THAN THAT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, LIFE EXPECTANCY IS LONGER THAN THAT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE HIGH INCIDENCE OF TUBERCULOSIS, POLIOMYELITIS AND EPIDEMICS WHICH WERE OF SUCH CONCERN TWO DECADES AGO, ARE NO LONGER A WORRY," HE SAID.

HE AGREED THAT ALL THESE OWED MUCH TO THE DEDICATION OF THE DOCTORS AND NURSES, BUT ADDED THAT THE HIGH PRIORITY GIVEN TO THE HEALTH SERVICE AND THE EFFORTS OF THE ADMINISTRATION HAD BEEN BIG FACTORS ALSO.

"OF COURSE WE SHARE THE CONCERN OF DOCTORS AND NURSES ABOUT THE CONDITIONS IN WHICH THEY WORK AND THE QUALITY OF PATIENT CARE," HE SAID.

/"BUT I

"BUT I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT ANY REASONABLE PERSONS COULD EXPECT US TO COME UP WITH A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION OVERNIGHT TO THESE LONG TERM PROBLEMS."

SIR DAVID SAID A NEW ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE FOR THE HOSPITAL SERVICE AND REVISED CONDITIONS FOR STAFF MUST BE A MATTER FOR THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY SAID AS HEAD OF THE CIVIL SERVICE HE WAS CONCERNED BY THE RECENT ACTION TAKEN BY DOCTORS AND MORE RECENTLY BY NURSES, TO QUOTE THEIR WORDS, "TO EMBARRASS THE ADMINISTRATION BY TAKING INDUSTRIAL ACTION".

"WE HAVE A LONG TRADITION IN THE CIVIL SERVICE OF RESOLVING OUR PROBLEMS BY CAREFUL AND PATIENT DISCUSSION.

"THAT PRINCIPLE HAS SERVED BOTH SIDES WELL AND IN MOST CASES HAS ENSURED THAT THE SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG, WHICH IS AFTER ALL WHAT BEING A CIVIL SERVANT IS ALL ABOUT, HAS NOT BEEN AFFECTED.

"IN OUR RECENT DEALINGS WITH BOTH THE DOCTORS AND THE NURSES OVER RECENT WEEKS I BELIEVE THE ADMINISTRATION HAS SHOWN GREAT SINCERITY IN RESPONDING TO THE PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE BEEN RAISED WITH US," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID SAID THE SUBSTANTIAL MEASURES EXPLAINED TODAY BY THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE WERE CLEAR EVIDENCE OF GOOD FAITH ON THE PART OF THE ADMINISTRATION.

"WE HAVE EXPLAINED THAT NOT ALL THE PROBLEMS CAN BE TACKLED IN THE SHORT TERM AND I DO NOT THINK IT IS IN ANY WAY HELPFUL FOR IMPOSSIBLE DEADLINES, TWO WEEKS FOR EXAMPLE, TO BE SET BY THE STAFF SIDE FOR US TO COME UP WITH COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS SUCH AS OVERCROWDING."

SIR DAVID SAID AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND HE WAS SURPRISED TO FIND THE OMELCO STANDING PANEL ON HEALTH SERVICES WAS REPORTED YESTERDAY AS BEING IN SUPPORT OF INDUSTRIAL ACTION TAKEN BY THE NURSES.

"INDUSTRIAL ACTION SHOULD BE A MATTER OF ~~LAST~~ RESORT WHEN NEGOTIATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS HAVE BROKEN DOWN. CLEARLY THIS IS NOT THE CASE.

"WE HAVE MADE POSITIVE PROPOSALS TO THE DOCTORS AND THE NURSES WHICH WE EXPECTED THEM TO CONSIDER CAREFULLY, WE STAND READY AND WILLING TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS WITH THEM," SIR DAVID SAID.

HE SAID INDUSTRIAL ACTION, HOWEVER CAREFULLY DEvised, COULD HAVE AN EFFECT UPON THE ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATION OF HOSPITAL SERVICE. INDEED IT WAS INTENDED TO DO JUST THAT.

"THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE HAS ANNOUNCED A NEW HIGH-POWERED GROUP TO TAKE UP THE DIALOGUE WITH DOCTORS. TALKS WITH NURSES WILL CONTINUE.

"IN THESE

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"IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES I AM SURE THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG WILL EXPECT BOTH SIDES TO TALK OVER THE PROBLEMS AND NOT PUT PATIENTS' CARE AT RISK BY TAKING INDUSTRIAL ACTION OF ANY SORT.

"OUR HOSPITALS ARE FOR THE BENEFIT OF PATIENTS AND NO ONE ELSE.

"CLEARLY, WE AS A COMMUNITY WOULD NOT WISH THEM TO BE PUT UNDER ANY ADDITIONAL STRESS OR STRAIN AS A RESULT OF INDUSTRIAL ACTION," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID SAID HE HAD NO DOUBT THAT THE HOSPITAL STAFF HAD JOINED THEIR PROFESSION BECAUSE THEY WERE DEDICATED PEOPLE WHO ABOVE ALL WISHED TO SERVE THE COMMUNITY OF HONG KONG.

"THEY HAVE A FINE REPUTATION IN THIS REGARD," HE SAID, AND APPEALED TO BOTH DOCTORS AND NURSES TO CONSIDER VERY CAREFULLY ALL THAT HAD BEEN SAID THIS AFTERNOON, THE COMMITMENT THAT HAD BEEN GIVEN TO RESOLVING THEIR PROBLEMS AND, ABOVE ALL, THEIR FIRST DUTY TO PATIENTS UNDER CARE.

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GOVT DOCTORS INVITED TO JOIN HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE

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THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE HAS WRITTEN TODAY (WEDNESDAY) TO THE GOVERNMENT DOCTORS' ASSOCIATION TO INVITE THEM FORMALLY TO SEND REPRESENTATIVES TO PARTICIPATE IN A HIGH-LEVEL COMMITTEE WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO SET UP TO ADDRESS THE PRACTICAL AND STAFFING PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN THE MANAGEMENT OF GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS.

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON T.H. CHAU, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THIS AFTERNOON THE COMMITTEE WOULD BE CHAIRED BY HIM PERSONALLY AND WOULD INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CIVIL SERVICE BRANCH, FINANCE BRANCH AND THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND, SUBJECT TO THE GOVERNMENT DOCTORS' ASSOCIATION'S AGREEMENT, REPRESENTATIVES OF THAT ASSOCIATION.

"IT IS MY MOST SINCERE WISH THAT THROUGH THIS DIRECT DIALOGUE, EFFECTIVE MEASURES CAN BE IDENTIFIED AND INTRODUCED IN THE SHORT TERM TO ALLEVIATE SOME OF THE PROBLEMS THAT HAVE EXISTED FOR SO MANY YEARS," MR CHAU SAID WHEN SPEAKING IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES IN PUBLIC SECTOR HOSPITALS.

ON THE HIGH WASTAGE RATE OF DOCTORS IN THE GOVERNMENT SERVICE, MR CHAU SAID THE ISSUE WAS ANOTHER MAJOR CONCERN.

/"IT IS

"IT IS CLEAR THAT THE GOVERNMENT MUST PROVIDE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE, INCLUDING PROMOTION PROSPECTS, WHICH ARE ATTRACTIVE ENOUGH TO RETAIN IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE THOSE DOCTORS WHO FIND SERVICE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR MORE REWARDING PROFESSIONALLY AND MORE SATISFYING PERSONALLY THAN PRIVATE PRACTICE," HE SAID.

MR CHAU OUTLINED THE PROGRESS MADE SO FAR IN IMPLEMENTING THE PACKAGE OF IMPROVEMENTS IN THIS REGARD WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAD ANNOUNCED THREE MONTHS AGO:

- (A) 74 SENIOR MEDICAL OFFICER POSTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN CREATED WITH EFFECT FROM MARCH 1, 1989; THIS IS IN ADDITION TO THE ORIGINAL 316 POSTS;
- (B) A PROPOSAL TO PROVIDE AN HONORARIUM FOR DOCTORS WHO CONSISTENTLY WORK UNUSUALLY LONG HOURS WILL BE CONSIDERED BY THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE COUNCIL LATER IN THE AFTERNOON;
- (C) ACTION IS PROCEEDING WITH THE CREATION OF 32 CONSULTANT POSTS, ON TOP OF THE PRESENT 82 POSTS; THE NECESSARY APPROVAL BY THE VARIOUS COMMITTEES INCLUDING THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE COUNCIL WILL BE SOUGHT IN THREE BATCHES BETWEEN JUNE AND OCTOBER THIS YEAR.

MR CHAU SAID HE DISAGREED WITH A VIEW THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN MOVING AT A SNAIL'S PACE.

"WE ARE EQUALLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE HIGH WASTAGE OF GOVERNMENT NURSES IN THE PAST TWO YEARS AND THE RECENT RECRUITMENT DIFFICULTIES," MR CHAU CONTINUED.

"OUR NURSES ARE WORKING UNDER GREAT PRESSURE AND THE DEMANDS PLACED UPON THEM ARE HEAVY INDEED."

TO ADDRESS THESE AND OTHER RELATED PROBLEMS, A NURSING AND ALLIED GRADES REVIEW COMMITTEE WAS SET UP LAST DECEMBER BETWEEN THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT OF THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND THE NURSING STAFF.

"SO FAR THE REVIEW HAS IDENTIFIED THE NEED TO CREATE 205 NURSING OFFICER II POSTS AND 591 REGISTERED NURSE POSTS," MR CHAU SAID.

IT HAD ALSO RECOMMENDED INCREASING THE STARTING PAY OF STUDENT NURSES IN ORDER TO ATTRACT MORE RECRUITS.

"A PACKAGE OF IMPROVEMENTS WILL BE FINALISED IN TWO MONTHS' TIME AND, WHERE NECESSARY, PUT TO THE STANDING COMMISSION ON CIVIL SERVICE SALARIES AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE AND THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THIS COUNCIL," HE SAID.

/TURNING TO

TURNING TO DOCTORS IN THE SUBVENTED SECTOR, MR CHAU SAID CONTRARY TO THE VIEWS EXPRESSED BY SEVERAL MEMBERS, IT WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY TO PROVIDE SIMILAR RESOURCES OF MANPOWER AND EQUIPMENT TO BOTH GOVERNMENT AND SUBVENTED HOSPITALS WHICH PROVIDED SIMILAR SERVICES.

"THUS, RESOURCES ARE ALLOCATED ON THE BASIS OF THE TYPE OF FUNCTION WHICH EACH HOSPITAL PERFORMS, HAVING PARTICULAR REGARD TO THE RATIO OF ACUTE TO CONVALESCENT BEDS, IRRESPECTIVE OF WHETHER THEY ARE PART OF THE GOVERNMENT OR SUBVENTED SECTOR.

"IT THUS FOLLOWS THAT SIMILAR TREATMENT SHOULD BE GIVEN TO BOTH SECTORS IN RESPECT OF EFFORTS TO RETAIN EXPERIENCED DOCTORS," MR CHAU SAID.

"ACCORDINGLY, THE DOCTORS IN SUBVENTED HOSPITALS WILL BENEFIT FROM THE HONORARIUM, TO WHICH I REFERRED EARLIER, ON THE SAME TERMS AS THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE."

HE ADDED THAT SINCE JANUARY, THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH ALL THE SUBVENTED ORGANISATIONS TO IDENTIFY AREAS OF SERVICE WHICH REQUIRED MORE SENIOR POSTS.

THE EXERCISE WAS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN THE NEXT COUPLE OF MONTHS.

MR CHAU SAID SOME OF THE PROBLEMS HAD RECENTLY BEEN HIGHLIGHTED BY MEDICAL AND NURSING STAFF OF THE GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS.

"I CAN ASSURE THEM AND MEMBERS THAT I HAVE HEARD THEIR COMPLAINTS AND THAT I AM DETERMINED TO ADDRESS THEM AND TO FIND SOLUTIONS WHICH ARE CAPABLE OF BEING IMPLEMENTED IN THE SHORT TERM," HE SAID.

HE ALSO GAVE EXAMPLES OF SHORT-TERM MEASURES WHICH HE HAD ALREADY ASKED THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES TO IMPLEMENT:

(A) OUT-PATIENT SERVICE:

"A BLOCK APPOINTMENT" SYSTEM IS ALREADY IN FORCE IN A NUMBER OF OUT-PATIENT CLINICS.

THE INTENTION IS TO EXTEND THIS SYSTEM TO THE OTHER CLINICS IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THIS WILL CONSIDERABLY SHORTEN THE WAITING TIME FOR PATIENTS.

IN ADDITION, A SYSTEM FOR KEEPING PATIENTS' RECORDS WILL BE INTRODUCED ON A TRIAL BASIS IN A FEW GENERAL OUT-PATIENT CLINICS NEXT MONTH. SUCH A SYSTEM ALREADY EXISTS IN THE SPECIALIST OUT-PATIENT CLINICS.

(B) SUPPLY

(B) SUPPLY OF LINEN:

ACTION IS BEING TAKEN TO INCREASE THE STOCK OF HOSPITAL LINEN TO ALLEVIATE THE IMMEDIATE SHORTAGES WHILE LONGER-TERM SOLUTIONS ARE BEING WORKED OUT TO OVERCOME THE LONG-STANDING HIGH-WASTAGE AND CIRCULATION DIFFICULTIES.

(C) PHARMACY SERVICE IN REGIONAL HOSPITALS:

AS A START, THE CLOSING HOUR OF THE PHARMACY IN QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL WILL BE EXTENDED FROM 5 PM TO 10 PM WITHIN THE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS.

(D) CLERICAL AND OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES FOR DOCTORS:

TWENTY-TWO ADDITIONAL SECRETARIAL AND CLERICAL POSTS WILL BE CREATED IN THE QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL THIS MONTH AND ANOTHER 47 POSTS WILL BE CREATED SHORTLY AFTERWARDS FOR THE OTHER THREE REGIONAL HOSPITALS.

WHERE OVERCROWDING WAS CONCERNED, MR CHAU SAID OBVIOUSLY ONE OF THE LONGER-TERM SOLUTIONS WAS THE PROVISION OF MORE HOSPITAL BEDS.

"IN THIS REGARD, AN ADDITIONAL 5,000 BEDS WILL BECOME AVAILABLE IN NEW OR EXTENDED GOVERNMENT AND SUBVENTED HOSPITALS OVER THE NEXT THREE TO FOUR YEARS.

"THIS REPRESENTS AN INCREASE IN THE MEDIUM TERM OF 23 PER CENT OVER THE CURRENT NUMBER OF PUBLIC HOSPITAL BEDS AND SHOULD GO A LONG WAY TOWARDS REDUCING THE OVERCROWDING IN OUR MAJOR HOSPITALS," MR CHAU SAID.

FOR THE MORE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, MR CHAU SAID HE WOULD MAKE A DETERMINED EFFORT TO SEE IF SHORTER-TERM SOLUTIONS COULD BE FOUND TO REDUCE SOME OF THE EXISTING OVERCROWDING.

"IT OUGHT TO BE CLEAR FROM WHAT I HAVE SAID ALREADY THAT WHERE SOLUTIONS CAN BE FOUND AND IMPROVEMENTS MADE IN THE SHORT TERM, WE ARE TAKING ACTION," HE SAID.

"BUT, I REPEAT, THERE ARE NO INSTANT SOLUTIONS TO THE MANY PROBLEMS OF OUR HOSPITALS."

MR CHAU POINTED OUT THAT IN 1984, THE GOVERNMENT ENGAGED OVERSEAS CONSULTANTS TO EXAMINE THE DELIVERY OF MEDICAL SERVICES IN HOSPITALS BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT WAS ALL TOO CONSCIOUS OF THESE PROBLEMS.

/THE DECISION

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THE DECISION TO ESTABLISH A STATUTORY HOSPITAL AUTHORITY, WITH OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES IN ALL PUBLIC HOSPITALS, MR CHAU SAID, WAS A BOLD INITIATIVE TO ATTACK THE ROOT CAUSES OF THESE PROBLEMS.

IT WAS NOT AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO "PASS THE BUCK".

NOR WOULD IT PROVIDE THE PANACEA TO ALL ILLS, HE SAID.

"BUT IT IS A CRUCIAL FIRST STEP TOWARDS TACKLING THOSE PROBLEMS WHICH WE HAVE NOT MANAGED TO OVERCOME WITHIN THE PRESENT FRAMEWORK FOR PROVIDING SERVICES."

MEMBERS OF THE PROVISIONAL HOSPITAL AUTHORITY, WERE WORKING ENERGETICALLY AND WITH GREAT COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVE THE TARGET OF SETTING UP THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY IN APRIL 1990, MR CHAU SAID.

HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THE EXPERTISE AND BREADTH OF VISION WHICH MEMBERS WERE BRINGING TO THE TASK WOULD ENSURE THAT A FIRM FRAMEWORK WAS ESTABLISHED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PUBLIC HOSPITAL SYSTEM OF WHICH HONG KONG COULD BE TRULY PROUD IN THE YEARS TO COME.

"THE PROBLEMS WHICH CONFRONT US SHOULD NOT BLIND US TO THE ACHIEVEMENTS WHICH HAVE BEEN MADE IN THE PROVISION OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES TO THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG," HE SAID.

MR CHAU POINTED OUT THAT HONG KONG PEOPLE NOW ENJOYED A STANDARD OF HEALTH WHICH WAS IMPRESSIVE BY COMPARISON WITH MANY DEVELOPED COUNTRIES.

THE OVERALL DEATH RATE AND THE RATE OF MATERNAL MORTALITY HAD FALLEN STEADILY OVER THE LAST 20 YEARS.

THE INFANT MORTALITY RATE, ONE OF THE MOST SENSITIVE INDICATORS OF GENERAL HEALTH IN THE COMMUNITY, HAD DROPPED FROM 17.4 PER THOUSAND LIVE BIRTHS IN 1974 TO 7.6 IN 1988.

OVER THE LAST DECADE, THERE HAD BEEN A STEADY INCREASE IN LIFE EXPECTANCY FROM 70 TO 74 YEARS FOR MEN AND FROM 76 TO 80 YEARS FOR WOMEN.

"THOSE ACHIEVEMENTS OWE MUCH TO THE RAPID EXPANSION OF THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH SYSTEM WHICH HAS ENSURED THAT A COMPREHENSIVE RANGE OF SERVICES ARE WITHIN EASY REACH OF THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION," MR CHAU SAID.

"SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF THE 1974 GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER 'THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES IN HONG KONG', WE HAVE INVESTED HUGE SUMS IN THE BUILDING OF NEW HOSPITALS AND THE EXTENSION OF EXISTING ONES."

THE NUMBER OF BEDS IN GOVERNMENT AND SUBVENTED HOSPITALS HAD INCREASED FROM 14,900 TO THE PRESENT 22,170 AND THE BED TO POPULATION RATIO IMPROVED FROM 3.9 TO 4.5 PER THOUSAND POPULATION OVER THE SAME PERIOD, HE SAID.

/" THE EXPANSION

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"THE EXPANSION OF OUR HOSPITAL SYSTEM, BEFORE 1974 AND SINCE, HAD TO TAKE PLACE OVER A PERIOD DURING WHICH THERE WERE SEVERAL MAJOR AND UNEXPECTED INFLUXES OF PEOPLE, WHICH HAVE LED HONG KONG'S POPULATION TO INCREASE FROM TWO MILLION IN 1951 TO THE PRESENT 5.7 MILLION," MR CHAU SAID.

THE MOST RECENT SUCH INFLUX WAS THAT WHICH TOOK PLACE IN THE LATE 1970'S, WHEN SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND PEOPLE ENTERED HONG KONG IN THE SPACE OF A FEW YEARS.

"IS IT ANY WONDER THEN THAT THE HOSPITAL BUILDING PROGRAMME HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO KEEP PACE WITH THE EVER-INCREASING DEMANDS PLACED UPON IT?" HE SAID.

MR CHAU POINTED OUT THAT THE DAUNTING PROBLEMS THE PUBLIC HOSPITAL SYSTEM HAD HAD TO FACE HAD CERTAINLY NOT COME ABOUT BECAUSE THE GOVERNMENT HAD HELD BACK SPENDING ON MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES.

EXPENDITURE ON MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES HAD GROWN BY 1064 PER CENT SINCE 1974, WHEN THE WHITE PAPER WAS ISSUED, REPRESENTING AN INCREASE IN REAL TERMS OF 388 PER CENT.

MR CHAU SAID IT WOULD CONSTITUTE 8.9 PER CENT OF TOTAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE IN THE COMING FINANCIAL YEAR.

THE PROPORTION OF TOTAL GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURE ALLOCATED TO MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES WAS EXPECTED TO RISE FURTHER TO OVER 11 PER CENT IN 1992/93.

ON TRAINING, HE POINTED OUT THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD INVESTED AND WOULD CONTINUE TO INVEST HEAVILY IN THE TRAINING OF THE WIDE RANGE OF PROFESSIONALS VITAL TO THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES.

SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF THE 1974 WHITE PAPER, A SECOND MEDICAL SCHOOL HAD OPENED AT THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG, TWO NEW SCHOOLS OF GENERAL NURSING HAD BEEN COMMISSIONED AT THE PRINCESS MARGARET AND PRINCE OF WALES HOSPITALS AND THE TRAINING OF PSYCHIATRIC NURSES HAD BEEN EXPANDED AT CASTLE PEAK HOSPITAL.

THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC NOW PROVIDED COURSES LOCALLY FOR THE TRAINING OF A WIDE RANGE OF PARAMEDICAL STAFF.

FOR THE FUTURE, THE RECENT REPORT BY THE WORKING PARTY ON POST-GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING RECOMMENDED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ACADEMY OF MEDICINE TO ENABLE HONG KONG TO BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT ALSO IN THE FURTHER TRAINING OF DOCTORS TO SPECIALIST LEVEL.

MR CHAU SAID HE DISAGREED WITH THOSE ALLEGATIONS THAT PATIENTS IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS WERE BEING VICTIMISED OR EXPLOITED. "BUT I DO BELIEVE THAT THEY MUST BE PLACED IN THEIR PROPER CONTEXT," HE SAID.

/"ALL THAT

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"ALL THAT WE HAVE DONE IN THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC HOSPITAL SERVICES HAS BEEN ACHIEVED WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A LOW TAX ECONOMY, AND AT MINIMAL EXPENSE TO THE LARGE SECTOR OF THE POPULATION WHICH DEPENDS ON HEAVILY SUBSIDISED MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES," MR CHAU NOTED.

"IN THIS CONNECTION, I SHOULD POINT OUT THAT ANY HONG KONG RESIDENT WHO REQUIRES HOSPITALISATION IS ADMITTED ON DEMAND TO OUR PUBLIC HOSPITALS AT THE COST OF ONLY \$26 PER DAY, WHEN THE AVERAGE COST OF AN ACUTE HOSPITAL BED IS \$1,050 PER DAY."

THERE MUST BE FEW PLACES IN THE WORLD WHERE SUCH A WIDE RANGE OF MODERN AND SOPHISTICATED MEDICAL TREATMENT WAS AVAILABLE TO THE BULK OF THE POPULATION AT SUCH LOW COST, HE SAID.

WHILE THE GOVERNMENT REMAINED FIRMLY COMMITTED TO A POLICY WHICH ENSURED THAT NO ONE WAS DEPRIVED, THROUGH LACK OF MEANS, OF THE MEDICAL TREATMENT HE REQUIRED, MR CHAU SAID WE MUST RECOGNISE THE CHALLENGES THIS POLICY PRESENTED.

MR CHAU POINTED OUT THAT IT WAS NATURAL AND PROPER THAT THE DEDICATED AND HARDWORKING STAFF OF OUR PUBLIC HOSPITALS SHOULD SEEK TO PROVIDE AN EVER IMPROVING STANDARD OF CARE TO THEIR PATIENTS AND THAT THEY SHOULD, AT TIMES, FEEL FRUSTRATED AT THE APPARENT INABILITY OF THE SYSTEM TO ACHIEVE THESE IMPROVEMENTS.

HE ASSURED MEMBERS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS INDEED SINCERE IN ITS EFFORTS TO MEET THEIR CONCERNS.

"THE COMING MONTHS WILL PRELUDE MAJOR CHANGES TO THE WAY THE PUBLIC HOSPITAL SYSTEM IS MANAGED AND OPERATED.

"WORRIES AND UNCERTAINTIES ABOUT THE FUTURE ARE INEVITABLE AND ENTIRELY UNDERSTANDABLE.

"BUT WE MUST ENSURE, AT ALL COST, THAT STANDARDS OF PATIENT CARE DO NOT SUFFER AND THAT THE PRESENT HIGH LEVEL OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE QUALITY OF THE PUBLIC HOSPITAL SYSTEM, AND THE PROFESSIONAL INTEGRITY AND DEDICATION OF OUR STAFF, IS MAINTAINED," MR CHAU CONCLUDED.

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SINCERITY OF GOVT CHALLENGED

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THE GOVERNMENT'S SINCERITY IN IMPROVING MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES WAS CHALLENGED BY DR THE HON LEONG CHE-HUNG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), AND HE ALSO CRITICISED ADMINISTRATORS AS BEING INSENSITIVE TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE NEEDY.

DR LEONG WAS LEADING OFF THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON "MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES IN PUBLIC SECTOR HOSPITALS".

HE QUERIED HOW SERVICES COULD POSSIBLY BE IMPROVED WHEN THE TOTAL BUDGET ALLOCATED TO MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES IN THE COMING YEAR WAS REDUCED FROM 9.3 PER CENT TO 8.7 PER CENT AND YET THERE WERE TO BE EXPANDING MEDICAL PROJECTS WITHIN THE SAME PERIOD.

DR LEONG REFERRED TO SOME OF THE SYMPTOMS OF AN "AILING MEDICAL AND HEALTH SYSTEM WHICH DESERVES A COMPLETE OVERHAUL".

THESE INCLUDED THE "DETESTED" STATE OF CONGESTION IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS; THE COMMON MATTER OF THE SICK HAVING TO WAIT AS LONG AS ONE YEAR TO OBTAIN AN APPOINTMENT FOR A SPECIALIST CONSULTATION; AND THE ABSENCE OF A 24-HOUR PHARMACY SERVICE.

IN CRITICISING THE PUBLIC HOSPITAL SYSTEM, DR LEONG SAID THAT HE WAS NOT SPEAKING AS A DOCTOR BUT AS SOMEONE WHO HAD BEEN A VICTIM, HAVING WORKED IN THAT SYSTEM AND REPEATEDLY SEEN PATIENTS BEING VICTIMISED BY IT.

THE PATIENTS' MISFORTUNE WITH THE PUBLIC HOSPITALS REFLECTED THE LACK OF PROPER MANAGEMENT OF THE EXISTING MEDICAL AND HEALTH DELIVERY SERVICES, HE SAID.

PATIENTS IN SUBVENTED HOSPITALS WERE EVEN WORSE OFF THAN THOSE IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS.

"WITH THE SAME HEAVY WORKLOAD ON PATIENT CARE, SUBVENTED HOSPITALS ARE AFFORDED A MUCH LOWER RUNNING SUM PER HOSPITAL BED WHILST THEIR STAFF ARE ENTITLED TO MUCH REDUCED STAFF BENEFITS," HE SAID.

ON THE SITUATION OF PUBLIC DOCTORS AND NURSES, DR LEONG DESCRIBED THE FORMER'S DECISION TO PURSUE GRADED INDUSTRIAL ACTION AS AN EXPLOSION AFTER YEARS OF FRUSTRATION AND YEARS OF NEGLECT.

"THE WARNING SIGNS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN THERE FOR ALL TO SEE, BUT HAVE SIMPLY BEEN IGNORED BY THOSE IN CHARGE. THE CONDITION DETERIORATES, BUT TREATMENT, THOUGH ASKED FOR, HAS NEVER BEEN FORTHCOMING," HE SAID.

CITING EXAMPLES TO ILLUSTRATE THE FRUSTRATIONS OF DOCTORS IN BOTH GOVERNMENT AND SUBVENTED HOSPITALS, DR LEONG NOTED THAT IT WAS NOT UNUSUAL FOR A PUBLIC DOCTOR TO WORK 70 HOURS A WEEK.

/"WHAT SORT

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"WHAT SORT OF PERFORMANCE COULD ONE EXPECT FROM THE DOCTOR WHO IS COMPLETELY EXHAUSTED AFTER 36 HOURS OF CONTINUOUS STRUGGLE. WHAT KIND OF CARE AND DEVOTION CAN ONE EXPECT OF HIM?" HE ASKED.

SALARY WAS ALSO A BONE OF CONTENTION, DR LEONG SAID. THE DOCTORS AND NURSES HAD MADE REPEATED REQUESTS FOR A SEPARATE PAY SCALE BUT WERE DENIED. YET THEIR COUNTERPARTS IN THE LEGAL AND SECURITY DEPARTMENTS WERE GIVEN SUCH FLEXIBILITY.

HE URGED THE GOVERNMENT TO CONSIDER SINCERELY AN INDEPENDENT PAY SCALE AND ACROSS-THE-BOARD PROFESSIONAL ALLOWANCES FOR DOCTORS AND NURSES.

DR LEONG ASKED FOR IMMEDIATE POSITIVE ACTION FROM THE ADMINISTRATION, AND SAID THAT WHATEVER SHRED OF CONFIDENCE THAT THE STAFF HAD IN THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE LOST IF IT CONTINUED TO HIDE BEHIND THE NOT YET MATERIALISED HOSPITAL AUTHORITY.

DR LEONG ALSO REFERRED TO A LACK OF JOB SATISFACTION AMONG GOVERNMENT DOCTORS.

"REPEATED REQUESTS FOR IMPROVEMENT OF WORKING ENVIRONMENT SUCH AS OFFICE SPACE, BETTER CALL ROOMS AND AVAILABILITY OF CLERICAL HELP HAVE FALLEN ON DEAF EARS," HE SAID.

"ALL IS STILL NOT LOST IF THE DOCTORS FEEL THAT THINGS WILL AND CAN IMPROVE IN THE FUTURE. UNFORTUNATELY, THE LACK OF MANAGEMENT EXPERTISE IN HOSPITALS MAKES IMPROVEMENT A MOCKERY."

DR LEONG SAID THE LACK OF A CHANNEL FOR MEDICAL OFFICERS TO AIR THEIR GRIEVANCES WAS ANOTHER FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO FRUSTRATION.

HE BELIEVED THAT GRADED INDUSTRIAL ACTION WAS ONLY ONE FACET OF THEIR EXPRESSION OF DISGUST.

"PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANT IS THE STREAM OF WASTAGE OF STAFF INTO THE PRIVATE SECTOR," HE SAID.

HE SAID THAT IN THE CASE OF DOCTORS, THE WASTAGE HAD REACHED A CRITICAL RATE OF 10 PER CENT FOR GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS AND 23 PER CENT FOR SUBVENTED HOSPITALS, AND MOST OF THE LOSSES OCCURRED AT THE SENIOR LEVEL.

"URGENT MOVES MUST BE MADE BY THE ADMINISTRATION TO CURB THIS WASTAGE WHICH, GIVEN TIME, WILL UNDERMINE THE QUALITY OF MEDICAL CARE FOR OUR COMMUNITY," HE CONCLUDED.

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GOVT HAS TAKEN PROBLEMS ON BOARD SQUARELY

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GOVERNMENT MEDICAL AND PARAMEDICAL STAFF OUGHT TO HAVE NO FEAR THAT THEIR PLIGHT WOULD BE FORGOTTEN IF THEIR INDUSTRIAL ACTION WAS CALLED OFF, DR THE HON HENRIETTA IP SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"I DO BELIEVE THAT GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN THE PROBLEMS ON BOARD SQUARELY AND IS SINCERE IN TACKLING THEM," DR IP SAID IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES IN PUBLIC SECTOR HOSPITALS.

SHE SAID SHE WOULD BE PATIENT, AND URGED THE MEDICAL AND PARAMEDICAL STAFF ALSO TO BE PATIENT AS EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION WOULD TAKE TIME.

HOWEVER, DR IP SAID SHE WAS SAD THAT IT REQUIRED A STRIKE BEFORE THE GOVERNMENT WOULD ADMIT TO AND REMEDY THE PROBLEMS.

IN RETROSPECT, IT SEEMED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD LISTENED TO THE WRONG ADVISERS, HAD PLAYED DOWN THE IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICE IN RELATION TO OTHER SERVICES, OR HAD LACKED ADEQUATE MEDICAL AND HEALTH LEADERSHIP.

DR IP ADVISED THE GOVERNMENT AGAINST SPLITTING UP THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES INTO TWO DIFFERENT DEPARTMENTS. SHE SAID THE TWO WERE INSEPARABLE.

IF THE SPLIT WAS INEVITABLE, SHE SAID, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT DOWNGRADE THE POSTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF HOSPITAL SERVICES AND THE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH.

SHE ADDED THAT IMPROVING MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES TO MEET THE WISHES OF THE PEOPLE AND TO ACHIEVE A MODERN STANDARD UNDER THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EXISTING LOW FEES WITHOUT DEVELOPING A SYSTEM OF MEDICAL INSURANCE WOULD, IN 10 YEARS, STRAIN THE LOCAL ECONOMY.

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SUPPORT FOR DOCTORS AND NURSES

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GOVERNMENT DOCTORS AND NURSES ARE NOT IRRESPONSIBLE IN TAKING INDUSTRIAL ACTION IN THE WAY THEY DO, BEARING IN MIND THE VERY LIMITED SCOPE OF THEIR ACTION AND THE REASONABLE DEMANDS THEY ARE MAKING, THE HON MARTIN LEE TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE WAS SPEAKING IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES IN PUBLIC SECTOR HOSPITALS.

EXPRESSING FULL SUPPORT FOR THE DOCTORS AND NURSES, MR LEE SAID THAT HE DID NOT SUBSCRIBE TO THE VIEW THAT SINCE THE GRIEVANCES THEY RAISED DATED BACK MORE THAN 10 YEARS THEY SHOULD WAIT PATIENTLY FOR ANOTHER YEAR FOR THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY TO COME UP WITH ITS PROPOSALS FOR REFORM.

"FOR IF ONE WERE TO APPLY THIS CHOP LOGIC TO A HOSPITAL, IT WOULD MEAN THAT A PATIENT WHO HAS BEEN SUFFERING FROM PAIN FOR 10 HOURS SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN IMMEDIATE ATTENTION BECAUSE HE CAN PROBABLY BEAR IT FOR ANOTHER HOUR OR SO," HE SAID.

MR LEE NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT DOCTORS' ASSOCIATION (GDA) HAD OUTLINED SIX PRESSING PROBLEMS IN THEIR EARLIER LETTER TO THE CONVENER OF THE OMELCO HEALTH SERVICES PANEL.

THESE RELATED TO POOR OUT-PATIENT SERVICES, SHORTAGE IN THE SUPPLY OF LINEN, ACUTE SHORTAGE OF HOSPITAL BEDS, LACK OF AIR-CONDITIONING IN HOSPITAL WARDS, A 24-HOUR PHARMACY SERVICE IN GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS OTHER THAN REGIONAL HOSPITALS, AND WASTING DOCTORS' TIME BY REQUIRING THEM TO DO CLERICAL WORK.

NOT ONLY WERE ALL THESE CRITICISMS FAIR AND VALID, BUT THE GDA HAD ALSO PROPOSED CLEAR AND SIMPLE SOLUTIONS TO THESE PROBLEMS, MR LEE SAID.

MR LEE SAID HE FAILED TO SEE WHY THESE PROBLEMS WERE STILL THERE.

HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S PHILOSOPHY IN PUBLIC HEALTH CARE OVER THE YEARS HAD BEEN TO PROVIDE MINIMAL SERVICE AT THE MINIMAL COST, AND AS THE PUBLIC HAD GROWN UP WITH THE SYSTEM, THEY HAD ACCEPTED IT AS CHARITY BESTOWED UPON THEM BY THEIR GOVERNMENT.

"I INSIST THAT THIS PHILOSOPHY MUST NOW BE REJECTED. FOR THIS IS THE AGE OF CONSUMER RIGHTS AND HONG KONG HAS DEVELOPED INTO A STAGE WHEN ITS PEOPLE ARE ENTITLED TO HAVE THE QUALITY OF THEIR LIFE IMPROVED," MR LEE SAID.

"IT IS THEREFORE THE GOVERNMENT'S UNDOUBTED DUTY TO PROVIDE A PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE COMMENSURATE WITH THE NEEDS OF A MODERN SOCIETY AND TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT ALL PATIENTS HAVE CERTAIN BASIC RIGHTS."

THESE INCLUDED THE RIGHT TO PROMPT TREATMENT, THE RIGHT TO CONSIDERATE AND RESPECTFUL CARE, THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY, THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION AND TO MAKE A DECISION IN THE LIGHT OF SUCH INFORMATION, AND THE RIGHT TO COMPLAIN.

MR LEE SAID THAT HE ACCEPTED THAT IT MIGHT BE NECESSARY TO OVERHAUL THE WHOLE STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT HOSPITALS, AND THAT THE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY NEEDED TIME TO DO SO.

HE ALSO ACCEPTED THAT THE PRESENT SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE HAD BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN BRINGING ABOUT SOME IMPROVEMENTS.

MR LEE SAID HE WISHED TO THANK GOVERNMENT DOCTORS AND NURSES FOR HAVING DRAWN THE PUBLIC'S ATTENTION TO THESE PROBLEMS AND HE SALUTED THEM FOR HAVING DONE SO MUCH FOR THEIR PATIENTS UNDER SUCH TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES AND FOR STILL REMAINING IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE.

HE REGRETTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE CONSUMER COUNCIL COULD NOT GIVE ITS SUPPORT BECAUSE IT HAD NO JURISDICTION OVER SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE GOVERNMENT UNDER THE CONSUMER COUNCIL ORDINANCE.

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TRADE UNION TACTICS COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE

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THE TRADE UNION TACTICS ADOPTED BY GOVERNMENT DOCTORS CAN ONLY BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE, AND ARE CONTRARY TO THE SPIRIT OF THE HIPPOCRATIC OATH, THE HON JAMES TIEN SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES IN PUBLIC SECTOR HOSPITALS, MR TIEN SAID THAT WHILE HE AGREED CONDITIONS IN HOSPITALS WERE INADEQUATE, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT BE INTIMIDATED BY THREATS OF INDUSTRIAL ACTION.

THE QUESTION OF A SHORTAGE OF RESOURCES IN THE MEDICAL FIELD WAS A QUESTION OF MEDICAL POLICY, HE SAID.

"WHILE ON MEDICAL QUESTIONS MEDICAL PEOPLE ARE THE PROFESSIONALS, ON HIGH POLICY QUESTIONS THEY MAY BE RATHER TOO SELF-INTERESTED," HE COMMENTED.

MR TIEN NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S PROVISIONAL SOLUTIONS INCLUDED THE CREATION OF 74 SENIOR POSTS AND 32 CONSULTANT POSTS, AND A FURTHER 5,000 BEDS IN FOUR YEARS WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT STAFF.

HE SUGGESTED THAT, GIVEN THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD FIRSTLY TRAIN MORE DOCTORS FROM THE UNIVERSITIES OVER AND ABOVE THE 290 PRODUCED ANNUALLY NOW.

"WITHOUT TAKING THE WASTAGE FACTOR INTO CONSIDERATION, WE SHALL NEED UP TO 1,000 MORE DOCTORS TO ATTEND TO THE EXTRA 5,000 BEDS DUE BY 1992," HE SAID.

MR TIEN SUGGESTED THAT SECONDLY, IF EXPANSION IN THE UNIVERSITIES IN THE NEAR FUTURE WAS IMPOSSIBLE, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONSIDER "BUYING PLACES" AT OVERSEAS UNIVERSITY MEDICAL SCHOOLS.

"SUBJECT TO ADEQUATE SAFEGUARDS WE COULD, WITH LOANS AND GRANTS, SEND YOUNG PEOPLE FOR TRAINING AS DOCTORS, ON CONDITION THEY RETURNED TO HONG KONG ON COMPLETION OF THEIR STUDIES," HE SAID.

/MR TIEN

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MR TIEN SAID THAT TO REDUCE THE BURDEN ON OVERWORKED DOCTORS AND TO IMPROVE PATIENT CARE, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD IMMEDIATELY RECRUIT SEVERAL HUNDRED DOCTORS FROM COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES AND THE UNITED STATES.

ENHANCED OPORTUNITIES SHOULD ALSO BE CREATED FOR POST-GRADUATE STUDY, SO THAT DOCTORS' KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS COULD BE KEPT UP-TO-DATE.

IN ADDITION, THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD MOUNT A MEDIA CAMPAIGN TO ATTRACT MORE PEOPLE INTO THE NURSING PROFESSION, HE ADDED.

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TASK FORCE TO REVIEW SERVICES ADVOCATED

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THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD IMMEDIATELY APPOINT A HIGH POWERED TASK FORCE WHICH SHOULD COME UP WITH A COMPREHENSIVE LONG TERM PACKAGE TO IMPROVE MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, THE HON DAVID CHEUNG SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE WAS HOPEFUL THAT SUCH A MOVE WOULD HEAD OFF INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY DOCTORS AND NURSES, MR CHEUNG SAID IN THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS.

"THE TASK FORCE SHOULD COMPRISE HIGH LEVEL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS REPRESENTING THE ADMINISTRATION, PROFESSIONAL MEDICAL PERSONNEL CHOSEN BY THE DOCTORS AND NURSES THEMSELVES AS THEIR RIGHTFUL REPRESENTATIVES AND A THIRD ELEMENT OF NON CIVIL SERVANTS AND NON MEDICAL PERSONNEL BUT PEOPLE WITH EXPERIENCE IN ADMINISTRATIVE WORK, FINANCE AND LABOUR RELATIONS," HE SAID.

HE SUGGESTED THAT THE CHAIRMAN SHOULD COME FROM THE THIRD ELEMENT. THE THIRD ELEMENT WOULD ENSURE GREATER OBJECTIVITY AND SERVE AS A MEANS OF CHECKS AND BALANCES, AND ARBITRATION.

MR CHEUNG URGED GOVERNMENT DOCTORS AND NURSES TO STOP THEIR INDUSTRIAL ACTION.

HE URGED THEM TO BE PATIENT FOR A LITTLE TIME LONGER.

HONG KONG'S OVER-POPULATION HAD RESULTED IN A CONSTANT STRAIN BEING PLACED ON EXISTING RESOURCES, HE SAID.

THE PUBLIC HOSPITALS AND CLINICS WERE THE ONLY SOURCE OF MEDICAL CARE FOR THE MANY LESS WELL-OFF PEOPLE.

INDUSTRIAL ACTIONS WOULD, IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, AFFECT THE QUALITY OF SERVICE.

/MR CHEUNG

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MR CHEUNG SAID THAT BASED ON HIS PAST EXPERIENCE IN DEALING WITH THE GOVERNMENT AS A SCHOOL PRINCIPAL, HE COULD SAY WITHOUT HESITATION AND RESERVATION THAT IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN MOST DIFFICULT, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE, TO GET THE GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE ON THINGS BECAUSE GOVERNMENT WAS A HUGE BUREAUCRACY WITH IMPENETRABLE LAYERS.

"THE GOVERNMENT MUST NOT PROCRASTINATE. ACT NOW. MEDICAL PERSONNEL MUST NOT START OR PROLONG THEIR INDUSTRIAL ACTION. STOP NOW," HE URGED.

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PUBLICITY ON INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS

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THE ADMINISTRATION IS CURRENTLY MAKING FURTHER EFFORTS TO PROMOTE THE PUBLIC'S AWARENESS OF TWO INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS, THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE TWO COVENANTS ARE THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON SZETO WAH, SIR DAVID SAID THE ADMINISTRATION PLANNED TO DISTRIBUTE COPIES OF THE TWO COVENANTS AS WELL AS INFORMATION LEAFLETS, ESPECIALLY TO SCHOOLS AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES.

"WE ARE CONSULTING THE CIVIC EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON WHAT OTHER MEASURES WE MAY TAKE TO PROMOTE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF CIVIL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS.

"A COMMITTEE ON PROMOTING LEGAL AWARENESS HAS ALSO BEEN FORMED BY THE LAW SOCIETY, TOGETHER WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BAR ASSOCIATION AND OTHER LAWYERS.

"THIS COMMITTEE WILL BE DEVISING WAYS TO IMPROVE THE LEVEL OF LEGAL AWARENESS IN THE COMMUNITY," SIR DAVID SAID.

IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS WORK, THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE MAKING SUGGESTION TO THE COMMITTEE ON WAYS TO AROUSE THE PUBLIC'S AWARENESS OF THEIR CIVIL RIGHTS AND AWARENESS OF THE TWO COVENANTS.

SIR DAVID ALSO SAID THAT SINCE THE MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE IN NOVEMBER LAST YEAR, THE PART OF THE UNITED KINGDOM'S REPORTS TO THAT COMMITTEE RELATING TO HONG KONG HAD BEEN TABLED IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND PLACED IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES FOR THE INFORMATION OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.

"THESE DOCUMENTS REPORT ON THE MEASURES ADOPTED IN HONG KONG WHICH GIVE EFFECT TO THE RIGHTS RECOGNISED UNDER THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS," HE ADDED.

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RESTRICTION ON EATING, DRINKING AT BEACHES RULED OUT
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LITTERING WAS A RELATIVELY INSIGNIFICANT FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS THE POLLUTION OF WATERS OFF REPULSE BAY AND OTHER BEACHES, THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DONALD LIAO, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM DR THE HON HENRIETTA IP, MR LIAO POINTED OUT THAT EXISTING BATHING BEACH BY-LAWS DID NOT PROVIDE FOR PROHIBITION OR RESTRICTION OF EATING AND DRINKING ON BEACHES.

HE ADDED THAT ANY ATTEMPT TO INTRODUCE STRICTER MEASURES IN THIS REGARD WOULD BE CONSIDERED AS AN INFRINGEMENT UPON PEOPLE'S PERSONAL LIBERTIES, AND WOULD BE VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO ENFORCE.

THE PROBLEM OF LITTERING WOULD MORE APPROPRIATELY BE TACKLED BY ENFORCEMENT OF ANTI-LITTERING BY-LAWS RATHER THAN CONFINEMENT OF EATING AND DRINKING, HE SAID.

MR LIAO ALSO SAID THAT STRENUOUS EFFORTS WERE MADE BY THE URBAN AND REGIONAL COUNCILS TO KEEP BEACHES CLEAN.

THESE EFFORTS INCLUDED THE PROHIBITION OF COOKING OF FOOD EXCEPT IN DESIGNATED SITES, DAILY CLEANSING OPERATIONS, DEPLOYMENT OF ANTI-LITTER SQUADS TO ENFORCE ANTI-LITTERING BY-LAWS, AND THE ANNUAL KEEP HONG KONG CLEAN CAMPAIGN.

"IN FACT, BEACH-GOERS ARE NOWADAYS MUCH MORE CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO KEEP OUR BEACHES CLEAN AND IN GENERAL THEY DO BEHAVE THEMSELVES," HE ADDED.

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NO DISCREPANCY IN APPLICATION OF POLICY
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THE GOVERNMENT ADOPTS A GENERAL POLICY WHICH ALLOWS ENTRY FOR EMPLOYMENT IN HONG KONG WHERE A PERSON POSSESSES A SPECIAL SKILL, KNOWLEDGE OR EXPERIENCE OF VALUE TO AND NOT READILY AVAILABLE LOCALLY.

THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON NELLIE FONG.

FOREIGN DOMESTIC HELPERS WERE ADMITTED UNDER THIS POLICY GOVERNING THE ENTRY OF PERSONS FROM OVERSEAS TO TAKE UP EMPLOYMENT, MR ASPREY SAID.

"THERE IS NO DISCREPANCY IN THE APPLICATION OF POLICY AS BETWEEN DOMESTIC HELPERS AND OTHER WORKERS.

"OTHER WORKERS FROM OVERSEAS WHO MEET THE ADMISSION CRITERIA CAN BE AND ARE ADMITTED FOR EMPLOYMENT," HE SAID.

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STUDY ON IMPROVING LIFT CAR SECURITY
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THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT HAS INITIATED DISCUSSIONS WITH THE POLICE CRIME PREVENTION BUREAU, THE ENGINEERING CONTRACTORS' ASSOCIATION AND LIFT CONTRACTORS TO STUDY THE BEST WAY OF IMPROVING THE SECURITY IN LIFT CARS IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON MICHAEL CHENG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DONALD LIAO, SAID THE STUDY INCLUDED HOW BEST TO MAKE TRAP DOORS AND THE ALARM SYSTEM IN THE LIFT LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO INTERFERENCE.

"ON JANUARY 31, 1989, THE POLICE ARRESTED A FIVE-MEMBER GANG IN CONNECTION WITH 42 ROBBERIES AND TWO RAPE CASES COMMITTED IN LIFT CARS OVER THE LAST 13 MONTHS.

"ONE OF THE MEMBERS, A FORMER LIFT TECHNICIAN, IS BELIEVED TO BE THE PERSON WITH THE SPECIAL SKILL REQUIRED TO OPEN THE TRAP DOOR WITHOUT ACTIVATING THE ALARM," MR LIAO SAID.

WITH THE ARREST OF THE GANG AND THE INTRODUCTION OF MEASURES ARISING FROM THE STUDY, IT WAS HOPED THAT SECURITY IN LIFT CARS IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES WOULD BE IMPROVED, HE ADDED.

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ARRESTS MADE IN MAJORITY OF CASES
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THE POLICE MADE AN ARREST IN THE MAJORITY OF CASES OF REPORTED INTIMIDATION, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"WHERE AN ARREST CANNOT BE MADE, AND WHERE THE PERSON REPORTING THE INCIDENT APPEARS TO BE AT RISK, PROTECTION WILL BE OFFERED BY THE POLICE," MR ASPREY SAID IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON HUI YIN-FAT.

HE SAID 502 CASES OF CRIMINAL INTIMIDATION HAD BEEN REPORTED LAST YEAR, 527 IN 1987 AND 500 IN 1986.

NO DETAILS WERE AVAILABLE OF THE NUMBER OF CASES OF SUBSEQUENT ASSAULTS ON PERSONS WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY REPORTED INTIMIDATION TO THE POLICE.

"THE NUMBER OF SUCH CASES, HOWEVER, IS BELIEVED TO BE VERY SMALL," HE SAID.

/MR HUI

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MR HUI HAD REFERRED TO PRESS REPORTS THAT TWO EMPLOYEES OF A MAGAZINE WHO WERE CRIMINALLY WOUNDED HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN INTIMIDATED.

MR ASPREY SAID THAT IN THE CASE THAT HAD GIVEN RISE TO THE QUESTION THE POLICE HAD TWICE OFFERED PROTECTION BUT THE OFFER HAD BEEN DECLINED.

"THE PROTECTION GIVEN BY THE POLICE VARIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF EACH CASE. INDIVIDUAL PROTECTION IS OFFERED WHERE THE CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANT IT.

"CERTAINLY, ANY ASSAULT ON, OR INTERFERENCE WITH, A PERSON WHO HAD MADE A REPORT OF INTIMIDATION WOULD LEAD TO AN IMMEDIATE OFFER OF INDIVIDUAL PROTECTION," HE ADDED.

MR ASPREY POINTED OUT THAT PROTECTION MIGHT INCLUDE SPECIAL ATTENTION BEING PAID BY POLICE PATROLS TO THE VICTIMS' PROPERTIES OR PREMISES, OR PROVISION OF A POLICE ESCORT.

WHERE THE RISK TO A PERSON WAS ASSESSED AS SERIOUS, A SAFE HOUSE MIGHT BE PROVIDED TO ENSURE THAT NO APPROACH WAS MADE BY SUSPECTS TO THE VICTIM OR HIS FAMILY.

"IN CASES WHERE A REPORT HAS LED TO AN ARREST, A ONE-WAY GLASS MIGHT BE USED IN IDENTIFICATION PARADES SO THAT THE SUSPECT COULD NOT SEE THE VICTIM.

"AND THE POLICE WILL, WHERE APPROPRIATE, OPPOSE BAIL FOR A SUSPECT, OR APPLY TO THE COURT FOR AN ORDER THAT THE SUSPECT WHILE ON BAIL KEEP AWAY FROM THE ALLEGED VICTIM," MR ASPREY ADDED.

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CONTINUED VIGILANCE AGAINST PORNOGRAPHIC VIDEO TAPES

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THE GOVERNMENT WILL MAINTAIN FOR SOME TIME ITS PRESENT LEVELS OF VIGILANCE AGAINST PORNOGRAPHIC VIDEO TAPES AND LASER DISCS.

THE SECRETARY FOR ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES AND INFORMATION, THE HON PETER TSAO, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON DAVID CHEUNG.

MR TSAO SAID SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE OBSCENE ARTICLES TRIBUNAL IN SEPTEMBER 1987, 956 VIDEO TAPES AND LASER DISCS HAD BEEN CLASSIFIED AS OBSCENE AND 11 AS INDECENT.

ELEVEN OUT OF THE TOTAL OF 978 VIDEO TAPES AND LASER DISCS HAD BEEN CLASSIFIED AS NEITHER OBSCENE NOR INDECENT.

/"I ASSURE

"I ASSURE MEMBERS THAT IF THE NUMBER OF SEIZURES INCREASES, ADDITIONAL MEASURES FOR DETECTION WILL BE INTRODUCED," MR TSAO SAID.

"IT IS NOT A MATTER FOR SATISFACTION THAT NEARLY 1,000 PORNOGRAPHIC TITLES SHOULD COME TO LIGHT IN A PERIOD OF SOME 15 MONTHS.

"BUT DURING THIS PERIOD 48 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SENT TO PRISON FOR DEALING IN THEM," HE SAID.

MR TSAO SAID THE POLICE AND THE CUSTOMS AND EXCISE DEPARTMENT REGULARLY SEIZED ITEMS AND TOOK OUT PROSECUTION ACTION OVER OBSCENE AND INDECENT VIDEO TAPES AND DISCS.

THE TELEVISION AND ENTERTAINMENT LICENSING AUTHORITY (TELA) ALSO HAD AN INSPECTION TEAM OF FIVE TO LOOK OUT FOR PORNOGRAPHIC OR VIOLENT VIDEO TAPES AND LASER DISCS DISPLAYED IN SHOPS.

SUCH ACTION HAD RESULTED IN 212 PROSECUTIONS BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 1, 1987 AND THE END OF 1988, INVOLVING 3,700 VIDEO TAPES.

"OUR STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT THE GREAT MAJORITY OF VIDEO RENTAL OUTLETS WORK ON A MEMBERSHIP BASIS AND ONLY ACCEPT PERSONS OVER 18 AS MEMBERS," MR TSAO SAID.

"IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT HAS NOT BEEN POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN EVIDENCE TO TAKE OUT A PROSECUTION AGAINST ANY VIDEO RENTAL OUTLET FOR RENTING INDECENT MATERIALS TO A JUVENILE.

"PROSECUTIONS HAVE THEREFORE HAD TO BE BASED ON POSSESSION OF OBSCENE ITEMS PRESUMED TO BE FOR SALE OR RENTAL," HE SAID.

REGARDING AMUSEMENT GAMES MACHINES, MR TSAO SAID THAT NINE OUT OF 207 PRINTED CIRCUIT BOARDS OF AMUSEMENT GAME MACHINES SUBMITTED TO THE TELA HAD BEEN DISAPPROVED SINCE SEPTEMBER 1, 1987, BECAUSE OF EXCESSIVE VIOLENCE AND SEX IN THEIR CONTENT.

HE ADDED THAT 744 PROSECUTIONS HAD BEEN INSTITUTED SINCE SEPTEMBER 1987 FOR INSTALLATION OF UNAPPROVED PRINTED CIRCUIT BOARDS.

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LAW PROVIDES REMEDIES FOR EMPLOYEES

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LEGISLATION PROVIDES REMEDIES FOR EMPLOYEES IN CASES WHERE EMPLOYERS DELIBERATELY ATTEMPT TO EVADE PAYMENT OF WAGES OR SEVERANCE PAY, WHETHER OR NOT BECAUSE OF A MOVE OF OPERATIONS.

THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON RON BRIDGE, SAID THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON SO CHAU YIM-PING.

/MRS SO

MRS SO HAD ASKED WHETHER EXISTING LEGISLATION WAS ADEQUATE TO ENABLE EMPLOYEES IN HONG KONG TO RECOVER ARREARS OF WAGES OR SEVERANCE PAY IN CASES WHERE EMPLOYERS DELIBERATELY ATTEMPTED TO EVADE SUCH PAYMENTS WHEN MOVING THEIR FACTORY OPERATIONS INTO CHINA.

MR BRIDGE SAID THE LEGISLATION PROVIDED FIVE REMEDIES. THEY WERE:

- * IF THE EMPLOYER WAS STILL SOLVENT BUT DID NOT PAY THE WAGES, HE COULD BE PROSECUTED UNDER SECTION 63A(1) OF THE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE.
- * ANY EMPLOYEE WHO WAS OWED MONEY BY HIS EMPLOYER AND WHO HAD GOOD GROUNDS TO BELIEVE THAT HIS EMPLOYER WAS ABOUT TO ABSCOND OR TRANSFER HIS ASSETS ELSEWHERE, COULD APPLY TO THE COURT FOR A WARRANT OF ARREST UNDER SECTION 67 OF THE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE.
- * IF THE EMPLOYER WAS AN INSOLVENT LIMITED COMPANY SUBJECT TO WINDING UP, HE WAS REQUIRED UNDER SECTION 271 OF THE COMPANIES ORDINANCE TO DELIVER UP ALL THE PROPERTIES OF THE COMPANY IN HIS CUSTODY OR UNDER HIS CONTROL FOR DISPOSAL BY THE COURT.
- * IF A COMPANY WAS BEING WOUND UP AND THE LIQUIDATOR OBTAINED FROM THE COURT A DECLARATION THAT THERE HAD BEEN A BREACH OF TRUST OF MISFEASANCE INVOLVING ASSETS OF THE COMPANY, THE PERSON RESPONSIBLE WAS LIABLE TO REPAY OR RESTORE THE VALUE OF THE ASSETS OR PROPERTY UNDER SECTION 276 OF THE COMPANIES ORDINANCE.

THESE ASSETS COULD BE SOLD BY THE OFFICIAL RECEIVER FOR THE PURPOSE OF PAYING PREFERENTIAL AND ORDINARY CLAIMS TO EMPLOYEES.

- * SECTION 224 OF THE COMPANIES ORDINANCE ALSO PROVIDED FOR THE COURT TO ORDER THE ARREST OF ANY RESPONSIBLE PERSON OF A COMPANY WHO HAD ABSCONDED OR WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE HONG KONG TO EVADE PAYMENT OF PERSONAL DEBTS DUE BY HIM TO THE COMPANY, OR OF AVOIDING EXAMINATION RESPECTING THE AFFAIRS OF THE COMPANY.

THESE POWERS DID NOT APPLY IN RESPECT OF THE GENERAL DEBTS OWING OR OTHER LIABILITIES OF THE COMPANY TO ITS CREDITORS.

MR BRIDGE SAID THAT IN PRACTICE EMPLOYEES SO AFFECTED WENT TO THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT AND LODGED THEIR CLAIMS UNDER THE RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF THE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE.

"THE LABOUR RELATIONS SERVICE OF THE DEPARTMENT ARRANGES CONCILIATION IN THE FIRST INSTANCE," HE SAID.

/"IF CONCILIATION

"IF CONCILIATION DOES NOT SOLVE THE PROBLEM, THE CASE IS REFERRED TO THE LABOUR TRIBUNAL.

"IF THE EMPLOYERS ARE INSOLVENT, WAGES IN ARREARS, WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE AND SEVERANCE PAYMENTS OWED TO EMPLOYEES ARE PREFERENTIAL DEBTS UNDER THE COMPANIES AND BANKRUPTCY ORDINANCES.

HOWEVER, HE SAID, IF THERE WAS EVIDENCE OF A CRIMINAL OFFENCE, APPROPRIATE ACTION COULD BE TAKEN UNDER THE CRIMINAL LAW.

"IN ALL CASES, THE LEGAL AID DEPARTMENT IS AVAILABLE TO EMPLOYEES WHO MAY WISH TO PURSUE ANY CLAIMS AGAINST A DEFAULTING EMPLOYER," HE ADDED.

MR BRIDGE SAID EMPLOYEES MIGHT ALSO RECEIVE HELP UNDER THE PROTECTION OF WAGES ON INSOLVENCY ORDINANCE, WHICH AT PRESENT COVERED WAGES IN ARREARS AND WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE.

"WITHIN THE CURRENT SESSION I HOPE TO BE ABLE TO INTRODUCE A BILL INTO THIS COUNCIL TO EXTEND THE SCOPE OF THE ORDINANCE TO COVER SEVERANCE PAY," HE ADDED.

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BENEFITS OF 'TRADING FUND' SYSTEM BEING EXAMINED

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IT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE GOVERNMENT TO SEEK CONTINUOUSLY TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF THE CIVIL SERVICE SO THAT WORK CAN BE CARRIED OUT IN THE MOST COST EFFECTIVE MANNER, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

HE WAS REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG, WHO HAD ASKED WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT PLANNED TO PUT SOME DEPARTMENTS UNDER A "TRADING FUND" ACCOUNTING SYSTEM WHEREBY SUCH DEPARTMENTS WOULD IMPOSE CHARGES ON SERVICES PROVIDED TO OTHER USER DEPARTMENTS.

MR JACOBS SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS STILL IN THE PROCESS OF EXAMINING THE BENEFITS OF INTRODUCING A TRADING FUND ACCOUNTING SYSTEM IN SOME OF THE SERVICE DEPARTMENTS.

TRADING FUNDS, IF INTRODUCED, SHOULD HELP RAISE THE COST CONSCIOUSNESS OF CIVIL SERVANTS IN SECURING SERVICES FROM OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

"ALTHOUGH DEPARTMENTS WITH TRADING FUND ACCOUNTS SHOULD HAVE GREATER FINANCIAL FLEXIBILITY THAN TRADITIONAL DEPARTMENTS, THEIR STAFF WOULD REMAIN PART OF THE CIVIL SERVICE AND SUBJECT TO ITS TERMS AND CONDITIONS," HE POINTED OUT.

"THERE IS STILL A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF WORK TO BE DONE BEFORE WE ARE ABLE TO DETERMINE WHETHER TRADING FUNDS ARE APPROPRIATE FOR OUR CIRCUMSTANCES, AND WE WILL NOT EMBARK UPON ANY MAJOR CHANGE BEFORE THE ISSUES CONCERNED HAVE BEEN THOROUGHLY CONSIDERED."

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FIRE SAFETY AT THA'S, RENTAL UNITS SATISFACTORY

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FIRE SERVICES INSTALLATIONS IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES AND TEMPORARY HOUSING AREAS ARE SUBJECT TO REGULAR MAINTENANCE AND ANNUAL CHECKS BY A REGISTERED CONTRACTOR.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON HUI YIN-FAT IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DONALD LIAO, POINTED OUT THAT THIS WAS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE FIRE SERVICES (INSTALLATIONS AND EQUIPMENT) REGULATIONS OF THE FIRE SERVICE ORDINANCE.

IN ADDITION, MR LIAO SAID, THERE WERE FREQUENT INSPECTIONS BY MANAGEMENT STAFF OF THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT TO ENSURE THAT THE EQUIPMENT CONTINUED TO BE SERVICEABLE.

"THESE ARRANGEMENTS HAVE PROVED TO BE SATISFACTORY," HE SAID.

HOWEVER, MR LIAO DID CONCEDE THAT A PROBLEM HAD ARISEN RECENTLY IN A FIRE WHICH OCCURRED AT YICK YUEN TEMPORARY HOUSING AREA IN YUEN LONG LAST DECEMBER.

"IN THIS CASE, A FAULT IN AN AUTOMATIC ELECTRICAL SWITCH AFFECTED THE OPERATION OF A FIRE PUMP AND A FIRE ALARM.

"THIS WAS AN ISOLATED INCIDENT AND THE SWITCH HAS SINCE BEEN REPAIRED," HE SAID.

MR LIAO ALSO EMPHASISED THAT THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT HAD TO FOLLOW PROCEDURES AGREED WITH THE FIRE SERVICES DEPARTMENT IN RESPECT OF THE CLEARANCE OF FIRE SITES.

"ONCE A FIRE HAS BEEN EXTINGUISHED IN A TEMPORARY HOUSING AREA, TEMPORARY BARRIERS TO PREVENT UNAUTHORISED ENTRY ARE ERECTED AROUND THE SITE IMMEDIATELY, WITH MORE SUBSTANTIAL HOARDINGS PROVIDED WITHIN 10 DAYS.

"MOREOVER, THE SITE IS KEPT DAMP BY SPRAYING WATER, AND CLEARANCE IS ARRANGED AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, NORMALLY WITHIN 14 DAYS," HE SAID.

AND IN CASE ASBESTOS DEBRIS WAS FOUND, AN APPROVED SPECIALIST CONTRACTOR WOULD BE ENGAGED TO HANDLE ITS REMOVAL.

MR LIAO DESCRIBED THESE MEASURES AS HAVING PROVED SATISFACTORY IN KEEPING THE PUBLIC AWAY FROM FIRE SITES UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THE AREAS HAD BEEN CLEARED.

"IN THE EVENT OF A FIRE IN PUBLIC RENTAL UNITS, THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT WILL LOCK UP OR SEAL OFF THE AFFECTED UNITS AS APPROPRIATE UNTIL REPAIRS ARE CARRIED OUT," HE ADDED.

TRUST FUNDS ACHIEVE REMARKABLE GROWTH

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STATUTORY TRUST FUNDS HAD ACHIEVED REMARKABLE GROWTH DESPITE FOUR PREVIOUS STOCK MARKET FALLS.

THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DONALD LIAO, INFORMED THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF THIS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON ROSANNA TAM.

MR LIAO SAID THE INVESTMENT POLICY FOR THE TRUST FUNDS AND THE JUDICIOUS ADMINISTRATION OF THE FUNDS BY STATUTORY COMMITTEES PROVIDED THE BEST SAFEGUARD AGAINST UNDUE SPECULATION AND IMPROPER INVESTMENT.

THE OPERATION OF THE EIGHT STATUTORY TRUST FUNDS UNDER THE TRUSTEESHIP OF THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION INCORPORATED WAS OVERSEEN BY THE STATUTORY COMMITTEES WHICH MADE DECISIONS ON INVESTMENT MATTERS, HE SAID.

THE INVESTMENTS OF TWO OF THE FUNDS - SIR MURRAY MACLEHOSE TRUST FUND AND THE SIR EDWARD YOUDE MEMORIAL FUND, WERE HANDLED BY FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE STATUTORY COMMITTEES CONCERNED.

THE PERFORMANCE OF THE FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS WAS MONITORED CLOSELY BY THE COMMITTEES WHICH ISSUED INSTRUCTIONS TO THEM FROM TIME TO TIME.

AS FOR THE OTHER TRUST FUNDS, THE INVESTMENT PORTFOLIOS WERE ADMINISTERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ADVICE OF THE STATUTORY COMMITTEES AND CHANGES WERE MADE WHEN NECESSARY UPON PERIODICAL REVIEWS.

MR LIAO SAID ALL THE TRUST FUNDS OPERATED ON THE BASIS THAT ONLY THEIR RECURRENT INCOME WAS USED FOR THEIR RESPECTIVE PURPOSES IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THEIR CAPITAL FOR POSTERITY.

EACH FUND MAINTAINED A BALANCED INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO COMPRISING EQUITIES, BONDS AND BANK DEPOSITS.

WHILST BONDS AND BANK DEPOSITS WERE LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO MARKET PRICE FLUCTUATIONS, THEY GENERALLY DID NOT APPRECIATE IN CAPITAL VALUE.

INCOME FROM THESE INVESTMENTS REMAINED BROADLY THE SAME IN MONETARY TERMS YEAR AFTER YEAR, AND ITS PURCHASING POWER WAS LIKELY TO BE ERODED BY INFLATION.

A SUITABLE PROPORTION OF EACH PORTFOLIO WAS THUS INVESTED IN QUALITY EQUITIES OF PROVEN TRACK RECORDS AND GOOD PROSPECTS TO ACHIEVE LONG-TERM GROWTH IN BOTH CAPITAL AND INCOME, MR LIAO SAID.

MAJOR CAMPAIGN TO ENHANCE CHILD CARE

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THE HEALTH AND WELFARE BRANCH IS NOW PLANNING A MAJOR CAMPAIGN, TO BE LAUNCHED THIS SUMMER, WHICH WILL AROUSE PUBLIC AWARENESS OF CHILD NEGLECT, RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD AND THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN SUPPORTING THE WELL-BEING OF THE CHILD.

THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, STATED THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON ROSANNA TAM.

MRS TAM HAD ASKED WHETHER ANY MEASURES WOULD BE TAKEN TO DRAW THE ATTENTION OF PARENTS AND GUARDIANS TO THEIR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PROPER SUPERVISION OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSONS UNDER THEIR CARE AND TO THEIR LIABILITY UNDER THE JUVENILE OFFENDERS ORDINANCE.

"WE ARE NOW CONSIDERING WHETHER IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO INCLUDE IN THE CAMPAIGN REFERENCE TO PARENTS' LIABILITY UNDER THE JUVENILE OFFENDERS ORDINANCE," MR ASPREY SAID.

APART FROM THE MAJOR CAMPAIGN, HE POINTED OUT THAT THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT, IN CONJUNCTION WITH VOLUNTARY AGENCIES, HAD IN RECENT YEARS LAUNCHED A NUMBER OF FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS.

THESE CAMPAIGNS WERE ALL DESIGNED WITH RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD AND PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP AS THE MAIN THEMES.

"BOOKLETS, POSTERS AND CALENDARS HAVE BEEN WIDELY DISTRIBUTED TO THE PUBLIC; NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES, TELEVISION AND RADIO HAVE BEEN USED," HE SAID.

EXHIBITIONS, COMPETITIONS AND FAMILY CAMPS HAD ALSO BEEN ORGANISED TO PROMOTE THE CAMPAIGN MESSAGES.

IN ADDITION, SOCIAL WORKERS, AS WELL AS COUNSELLING CHILDREN WITH BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS, ALSO COUNSELLED THEIR PARENTS.

THIS WAS TO HELP THEM TO UNDERSTAND BETTER THEIR PARENTAL ROLE, AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PROPER CARE AND SUPERVISION OF THEIR CHILDREN.

FURTHERMORE, THE FIGHT CRIME PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS ON TRIAD INVOLVEMENT, DRUGS AND SHOPLIFTING, WHILST AIMING PRIMARILY TO DRAW THE ATTENTION OF THE PUBLIC TO THESE CRIMES, ALSO HAD THE EFFECT OF DRAWING THE ATTENTION OF PARENTS TO THIS END, MR ASPREY SAID.

SEPARATELY, UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE FIGHT CRIME COMMITTEE, A TELEVISION DOCUMENTARY PROGRAMME ON JUVENILE CRIME, WHICH WOULD EMPHASISE THE DANGERS OF PARENTAL NEGLECT, WAS UNDER PREPARATION AND WAS EXPECTED TO BE SCREENED SHORTLY, HE ADDED.

OPEN EMPLOYMENT FOUND FOR MILDLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS

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THE SELECTIVE PLACEMENT DIVISION OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT SUCCESSFULLY PLACED 181 MILDLY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS INTO OPEN EMPLOYMENT LAST YEAR, AN INCREASE OF 30 PER CENT OVER THE COMPARABLE FIGURE FOR 1987.

THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON T.H. CHAU, STATED THIS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM DR THE HON HENRIETTA IP.

MR CHAU POINTED OUT THAT THERE WAS NO ACCURATE INFORMATION ON THE NUMBER OF MILDLY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS OVER THE AGE OF 18 YEARS WHO WISHED TO BE EMPLOYED BUT HAD NOT YET FOUND JOBS.

HOWEVER, THE SELECTIVE PLACEMENT DIVISION WAS CURRENTLY ASSISTING ANOTHER 171 MILDLY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS TO FIND SUITABLE JOBS, HE ADDED.

MR CHAU SAID THE EMPLOYMENT OF THESE MILDLY MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS IN VARIOUS TRADES AND INDUSTRIES HELPED, TO A VERY LIMITED EXTENT, TO ALLEVIATE THE CURRENT LABOUR SHORTAGE.

HE SAID THE PLACEMENTS ACHIEVED BY THE DIVISION WERE MAINLY THE RESULT OF ITS PROMOTIONAL EFFORTS TO ENHANCE THE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES OF DISABLED PERSONS OF VARIOUS CATEGORIES.

LAST YEAR, THESE ACTIVITIES INCLUDED A SPECIAL CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE THE EMPLOYMENT OF DISABLED PERSONS IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY, AND AN EXHIBITION ON EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DISABLED.

TWO DISTRICT-BASED EXHIBITIONS ON THE WORKING ABILITIES OF THE DISABLED AND A PRESENTATION OF SOUVENIRS TO OUTSTANDING EMPLOYERS OF DISABLED PERSONS HAD ALSO BEEN HELD DURING THE YEAR.

FURTHERMORE, OFFICERS OF THE DIVISION MADE REGULAR VISITS TO PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYERS TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO EMPLOY DISABLED PERSONS, HE EXPLAINED.

THEY ALSO GAVE TALKS TO DISABLED STUDENTS AND THEIR PARENTS AND TO OTHER INTERESTED PERSONS IN SPECIAL SCHOOLS AND TRAINING CENTRES.

THESE EFFORTS WERE MADE TO PROVIDE THE STUDENTS WITH ADEQUATE EMPLOYMENT MARKET INFORMATION AND TO INTRODUCE THE SERVICES AVAILABLE TO ASSIST THEM.

ON THE QUESTION OF SHELTERED EMPLOYMENT, MR CHAU SAID THIS WAS PROVIDED TO THOSE DISABLED PERSONS WHO COULD NOT ENTER INTO OPEN EMPLOYMENT BECAUSE OF THEIR DISABILITY.

/SHELTERED WORKSHOP

"SHELTERED WORKSHOP PLACES ARE PROVIDED FOR ALL DISABLED GROUPS AND NOT JUST MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS ALTHOUGH IN PRACTICE OVER 60 PER CENT OF SHELTERED WORKERS BELONG TO THIS GROUP," HE POINTED OUT.

HE EXPLAINED THAT THE CURRENT ANNUAL COST FOR A PLACE IN A SHELTERED WORKSHOP AMOUNTED TO \$14,849, OF WHICH PER CAPITA COST ACCOUNTED FOR \$12,869 AND INCENTIVE PAYMENTS, CALCULATED ON THE BASIS OF 22 WORKING DAYS PER MONTH, MADE UP THE REMAINDER.

"DISABILITY ALLOWANCE IS NOT INCLUDED IN THE CALCULATION BECAUSE IT IS GRANTED ON ACCOUNT OF A PERSON'S DISABILITY BUT NOT HIS STATUS AS A WORKER IN A SHELTERED WORKSHOP," MR CHAU SAID.

ON THE ESTIMATED DEMAND FOR SHELTERED WORKSHOP PLACES FOR THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED, MR CHAU SAID THE 1987 REHABILITATION PROGRAMME PLAN ESTIMATED THE NUMBER OF PLACES NEEDED FROM THE YEAR 1989-90 ONWARDS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS WOULD RESPECTIVELY BE 5,299, 5,366, 5,431, 5,492 AND 5,550.

"IF HALF OF THESE PLACES WERE TO BE MET THROUGH SUCCESSFUL JOB PLACEMENT, THE AVERAGE ANNUAL SAVING WOULD BE \$40.3 MILLION, ALTHOUGH SOME ADDITIONAL RESOURCES WOULD BE REQUIRED BY THE SELECTIVE PLACEMENT DIVISION.

"HOWEVER, ONLY A SMALL FRACTION OF SHELTERED WORKERS ARE SUITABLE FOR OPEN EMPLOYMENT, AND IT IS UNLIKELY THAT AS MANY AS HALF OF THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED PERSONS COULD BE SO PLACED," HE SAID.

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BILL AIMS AT CONFISCATION OF DRUG MONEY

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ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE MEASURES TO COMBAT ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFICKING IS TO DEPRIVE THE TRAFFICKERS OF THEIR ILL-GOTTEN GAINS, THE ACTING SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON ALISTAIR ASPREY, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE DRUG TRAFFICKING (RECOVERY OF PROCEEDS) BILL 1989, MR ASPREY SAID THE BILL SOUGHT TO EMPOWER THE COURTS TO FREEZE AND CONFISCATE THE PROCEEDS OF DRUG TRAFFICKING.

MR ASPREY SAID THE BILL ALSO PROPOSED NEW POWERS OF INVESTIGATION TO PERMIT THE IDENTIFICATION OF SUCH PROCEEDS.

IN ADDITION, IT WOULD CREATE NEW OFFENCES OF ASSISTING A PERSON TO RETAIN OR CONCEAL THE PROCEEDS OF DRUG TRAFFICKING AND WOULD ESTABLISH A FRAMEWORK FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF CONFISCATION ORDERS MADE BY THE COURTS OF OTHER COUNTRIES.

/"AT PRESENT

"AT PRESENT THE DANGEROUS DRUGS ORDINANCE HAS PROVISION FOR THE FORFEITURE OF MONEY OR PROPERTY RECEIVED BY ANY PERSON AS A RESULT OF A DRUG TRAFFICKING OFFENCE," MR ASPREY SAID.

"HOWEVER, THIS APPLIES ONLY WHERE THE MONEY OR PROPERTY CAN BE PROVED TO BE RELATED DIRECTLY TO THE SPECIFIC OFFENCE FOR WHICH A PERSON HAS BEEN CHARGED.

"THE WEALTH ACCUMULATED BY A TRAFFICKER FROM HIS PAST ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES CAN THUS REMAIN LARGELY INTACT AND AVAILABLE TO HIM, DESPITE HIS CONVICTION ON A SPECIFIC OFFENCE," HE SAID.

MR ASPREY SAID CLAUSE 3 OF THE BILL WOULD EMPOWER THE HIGH COURT OR DISTRICT COURT, BEFORE SENTENCING A CONVICTED DRUG TRAFFICKER, TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE OFFENDER HAD BENEFITTED FROM DRUG TRAFFICKING.

IT WOULD BE DONE IRRESPECTIVE OF WHETHER OR NOT THIS BENEFIT HAD RESULTED FROM THE OFFENCE OF WHICH HE HAD BEEN CONVICTED.

"IF HE HAS SO BENEFITTED, THE COURT WILL ASSESS HIS PROCEEDS AND IMPOSE A CONFISCATION ORDER," MR ASPREY SAID.

FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS ASSESSMENT, THE COURT MIGHT MAKE CERTAIN REBUTTABLE ASSUMPTIONS UNDER CLAUSE 4.

THE COURT MIGHT ASSUME THAT THE WHOLE OF THE TRAFFICKER'S PROPERTY AT THE TIME OF HIS CONVICTION, TOGETHER WITH ANY PROPERTY WHICH HAD PASSED THROUGH HIS HANDS DURING THE PREVIOUS SIX YEARS, REPRESENTED THE PROCEEDS OF DRUG TRAFFICKING.

THE COURT MIGHT ALSO ASSUME THAT ALL HIS EXPENDITURE IN THAT SIX YEAR PERIOD WAS PAID OUT OF SUCH PROCEEDS.

REGARDING THE ENFORCEMENT OF CONFISCATION ORDERS, THE COURTS WOULD HAVE THE POWER UNDER CLAUSES 10 AND 11 TO FREEZE A PERSON'S PROPERTY BY IMPOSING RESTRAINT AND CHARGING ORDERS, MR ASPREY SAID.

THE COURTS WOULD ALSO HAVE THE POWER TO FIX AN ADDITIONAL TERM OF IMPRISONMENT, UNDER CLAUSE 8, TO BE SERVED BY THE OFFENDER IN THE EVENT THAT HE FAILED TO COMPLY X SUCH ORDERS, HE SAID.

A NEW OFFENCE OF ASSISTING A PERSON TO RETAIN OR CONCEAL PROCEEDS FROM DRUG TRAFFICKING WOULD BE CREATED UNDER CLAUSE 25, MR ASPREY SAID.

THE PURPOSE WAS TO COUNTERACT DRUG TRAFFICKERS' ATTEMPTS TO RETAIN THEIR ILLEGAL PROFITS, OFTEN BY DISGUIISING THEIR ASSETS BY WHAT WAS COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE "LAUNDERING" OF MONEY.

"THE OFFENCE WILL CARRY A MAXIMUM PENALTY OF 14 YEARS' IMPRISONMENT.

/"HOWEVER, NO

"HOWEVER, NO OFFENCE WILL BE COMMITTED IF A TRANSACTION WHICH IS BELIEVED OR SUSPECTED TO HAVE THIS PURPOSE IS REPORTED IMMEDIATELY TO THE AUTHORITIES," HE SAID.

MR ASPREY SAID THAT BANKS AND OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN PARTICULAR WOULD BE AFFECTED BY THIS OBLIGATION TO REPORT KNOWLEDGE OR SUSPICION OF DRUG TRAFFICKING.

TO ASSIST THEM TO COMPLY WITH THIS NEW REQUIREMENT, MR ASPREY SAID THE HONG KONG ASSOCIATION OF BANKS AND THE HONG KONG DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES ASSOCIATION HAD DRAW UP MODEL GUIDELINES FOR THEIR MEMBERS.

THESE WOULD ENSURE THAT PROPER INTERNAL PROCEDURES WERE IN PLACE FOR INDIVIDUAL STAFF TO REPORT SUSPICIOUS TRANSACTIONS TO A DESIGNATED MEMBER OF THE MANAGEMENT, WHO WOULD IN TURN REPORT SUCH TRANSACTIONS TO THE AUTHORITIES WHERE HE SHARED THE SUSPICIONS, HE SAID.

MR ASPREY SAID THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL WOULD BE PROVIDED THE POWER, UNDER CLAUSES 28 AND 29, TO DESIGNATE BY ORDER COUNTRIES OR TERRITORIES WHOSE CONFISCATION ORDERS, AND ORDERS FOR RESTRAINT OF PROPERTY LIABLE TO CONFISCATION, WOULD BE ENFORCEABLE IN HONG KONG.

"WE INTEND THAT THIS BE DONE ON THE BASIS OF RECIPROCITY," HE SAID.

"IT WILL ENABLE HONG KONG TO CO-OPERATE MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH OTHER GOVERNMENTS IN EFFORTS TO PREVENT CONVICTED DRUG TRAFFICKERS FROM RETAINING THEIR ILLEGAL PROFITS BY TRANSFERRING THEM OVERSEAS."

MR ASPREY SAID THE PROPOSALS IN THE BILL WOULD REQUIRE ADDITIONAL STAFF AND OTHER RESOURCES FOR THE POLICE, CUSTOMS AND EXCISE DEPARTMENT, ATTORNEY GENERAL'S CHAMBERS AND THE JUDICIARY.

"THE COST IS ESTIMATED TO BE ABOUT \$21 MILLION IN THE FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION OF THE LEGISLATION, RISING TO APPROXIMATELY \$28 MILLION IN FIVE YEARS' TIME AND THEREAFTER," HE SAID.

"IN ADDITION, IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO APPOINT PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS IN PRIVATE PRACTICE TO ASSIST IN INVESTIGATIONS AND THE ENFORCEMENT OF CONFISCATION ORDERS.

"THIS IS ESTIMATED TO COST AN ADDITIONAL \$10 MILLION PER YEAR."

MR ASPREY SAID THE BILL WOULD ALSO GENERATE REVENUE.

IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO FORECAST ACCURATELY HOW MUCH THIS WOULD BE, BUT EXPERIENCE OVERSEAS INDICATED THAT THE AMOUNT WAS LIKELY TO BE CONSIDERABLE.

IT ALSO INDICATED THAT THE AMOUNT OF REVENUE GENERATED WOULD SUBSTANTIALLY EXCEED THE RECURRENT COSTS OF ENFORCING THE LEGISLATION, HE ADDED.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

MOTION ON FUTURES EXCHANGE MEETING PASSED

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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY PASSED A MOTION WHICH WILL ALLOW THE HONG KONG FUTURES EXCHANGE LIMITED TO POSTPONE HOLDING ITS THIRD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING BY A FURTHER THREE MONTHS TO JULY 1.

THE MOTION WAS MOVED BY THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, UNDER SECTION 5 OF THE HONG KONG FUTURES EXCHANGE LIMITED (TEMPORARY PROVISIONS) ORDINANCE.

MR JACOBS EXPLAINED THAT TO FACILITATE THE SELF-INITIATED REFORMS OF THE FUTURES EXCHANGE ALONG THE LINES PROPOSED BY THE SECURITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE, THE ORDINANCE HAD BEEN ENACTED ON JULY 14 LAST YEAR.

THIS EFFECTIVELY POSTPONED THE HOLDING OF THE THIRD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE HONG KONG FUTURES EXCHANGE LIMITED DUE TO BE HELD ON OR BEFORE SEPTEMBER 30 LAST YEAR BY A PERIOD OF UP TO SIX MONTHS TO APRIL 1.

SECTION 5 OF THE ORDINANCE PROVIDED FOR A FURTHER POSTPONEMENT OF THREE MONTHS BY RESOLUTION OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

THE HONG KONG FUTURES EXCHANGE HAD HELD AN EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING ON FEBRUARY 23 TO SEEK SHAREHOLDERS' ENDORSEMENT OF ITS RECONSTITUTION PACKAGE.

THIS PACKAGE AIMED AT IMPROVING THE STRUCTURE, OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY AND RISK MANAGEMENT OF THE FUTURES EXCHANGE ALONG THE LINES RECOMMENDED BY THE SECURITIES REVIEW COMMITTEE.

"THREE RESOLUTIONS WHICH CONCERNED REVISIONS TO CAPITAL REQUIREMENTS AND THE MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE WERE PASSED WITHOUT DIFFICULTY," MR JACOBS SAID.

"A FOURTH RESOLUTION WHICH CONCERNED RECONSTITUTION OF THE BOARD AND THE PROPOSED DISENFRANCHISEMENT IN DUE COURSE OF NON-MEMBER SHAREHOLDERS AND THOSE MEMBERS IN DEFAULT OF THEIR OBLIGATIONS WAS ENDORSED BY JUST OVER 74 PER CENT OF THE VOTES CAST AT THE MEETING."

THE RESOLUTION THUS NARROWLY MISSED THE 75 PER CENT MAJORITY VOTE REQUIRED FOR ITS ADOPTION AS A SPECIAL RESOLUTION.

"THE FACT THAT THE RECONSTITUTION PROPOSALS WERE SUPPORTED BY ALMOST ALL ACTIVE MEMBER-SHAREHOLDERS WHO ATTENDED THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING INDICATES GENERAL SUPPORT OF MARKET USERS FOR THE CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS PUT FORTH BY THE BOARD OF THE FUTURES EXCHANGE," MR JACOBS SAID.

"IN VIEW OF THESE ENCOURAGING SIGNS, IT IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE PRESENT BOARD OF DIRECTORS, INCLUDING THOSE APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNMENT, WHO HAVE BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN PROPOSING THESE REFORMS, TO RETAIN THEIR POSITIONS FOR A FEW MORE MONTHS TO ASSIST IN SEEING THROUGH A FULL RECONSTITUTION OF THE EXCHANGE."

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, 1989

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COUNCILLORS SUPPORT BILL TO PLUG TAX LOOPHOLE

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THE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1988, WHICH SOUGHT TO PLUG A LOOPHOLE IN THE PRINCIPAL ORDINANCE, WAS SUPPORTED BY THE HON PETER POON AND THE HON PETER WONG IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MR POON NOTED THAT UNDER THE INLAND REVENUE ORDINANCE NON-RESIDENTS OPERATING IN HONG KONG EARNING ASSESSABLE INCOME OR PROFITS HERE WERE TAXED THROUGH THEIR AGENTS IN HONG KONG.

A RECENT COURT CASE DECIDED THAT IF THE PARTIES WERE DEALING DIRECTLY ON A PRINCIPAL TO PRINCIPAL BASIS, TAX DUE BY THE NON-RESIDENT WAS NOT RECOVERABLE BY THE COMMISSIONER OF INLAND REVENUE THROUGH THE PARTY WHO PAID SUCH A NON-RESIDENT.

THE PURPOSE OF THE AMENDMENT BILL WAS MAINLY TO PLUG THIS LOOPHOLE.

MR POON ALSO NOTED THAT SINCE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE ORIGINAL BILL, CONCERN HAD BEEN EXPRESSED THAT THE SCOPE OF SOME PROVISIONS OF THE BILL WAS TOO WIDE AND COULD CAUSE HARDSHIP AND UNCERTAINTY UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES.

HE SAID A LEGCO AD HOC GROUP, OF WHICH HE WAS CONVENER, HAD BEEN SET UP TO STUDY THE BILL AND HAD CAREFULLY CONSIDERED THE VARIOUS REPRESENTATIONS MADE.

IT HAD AGREED WITH THE GOVERNMENT ON A NUMBER OF COMMITTEE STAGE AMENDMENTS WHICH, IN THE VIEW OF THE AD HOC GROUP, WOULD ALLEVIATE THE CONCERNS EXPRESSED BUT WOULD NEVERTHELESS ENABLE THE AUTHORITIES TO COLLECT TAX DUE BY NON-RESIDENTS.

MR WONG SAID HE WAS PLEASED THAT THE AMENDED BILL HAD BEEN FOUND ACCEPTABLE TO TAX PRACTITIONERS WHILE CLOSING THE LOOPHOLE TO THE SATISFACTION OF THE INLAND REVENUE DEPARTMENT.

HE WAS, HOWEVER, DISAPPOINTED THAT THE COMMISSIONER OF INLAND REVENUE DID NOT SEE FIT TO RELEASE HIS "PRACTICE NOTES" AT THE SAME TIME THAT THE AMENDMENT WAS BEING ENACTED.

THE "PRACTICE NOTES" WOULD GIVE THE FULL DETAILS OF HOW THE COMMISSIONER INTENDED TO APPLY THE LAW IN PRACTICE, MR WONG SAID.

WINDING UP DEBATE ON THE BILL, THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON PIERS JACOBS, SAID HE WAS GRATEFUL TO MR POON AND MR WONG FOR THEIR SUPPORT, AND HE ALSO THANKED MEMBERS OF THE AD HOC GROUP FOR THE CAREFUL AND DETAILED CONSIDERATION THAT THEY HAD GIVEN TO THE MEASURE.

/"WITH REGARD

"WITH REGARD TO THE COMMENTS OF MR WONG ON THE TIMING OF THE RELEASE OF PRACTICE NOTES, IT SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND THAT PRACTICE NOTES ARE NO MORE THAN A STATEMENT OF DEPARTMENTAL PRACTICE ISSUED FOR THE INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE OF TAXPAYERS," MR JACOBS SAID.

"THEY HAVE NO BINDING FORCE AND DO NOT AFFECT A PERSON'S RIGHT OF OBJECTION OR APPEAL UNDER THE INLAND REVENUE ORDINANCE."

IN MANY CASES AMENDMENTS COULD BE MADE TO THE ORDINANCE WITHOUT THE NEED TO ISSUE A PRACTICE NOTE.

AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND HE CONSIDERED THAT THE CORRECT TIME FOR THE ISSUE OF A PRACTICE NOTE SHOULD BE SHORTLY AFTER THE LAW HAD BEEN ENACTED.

"IN THE PRESENT CASE THE DATE FOR THE NEW PROVISION TO COME INTO OPERATION IS APRIL 1, 1989," HE SAID.

"THE COMMISSIONER HAS ADVISED ME THAT THE PRACTICE NOTE WILL BE ISSUED BEFORE THEN.

"I CAN, HOWEVER, GIVE THE ASSURANCE SOUGHT BY MR WONG THAT A PRACTICE DOES EXIST OF ALLOWING A DEDUCTION TO NON-RESIDENT ENTERTAINERS AND SPORTSMEN OF AN AMOUNT EQUAL TO ONE-THIRD OF THE INCOME DERIVED."

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FOUR BILLS PASSED

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

THEY WERE THE INLAND REVENUE (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1988, LIFTS AND ESCALATORS (SAFETY) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1989, PHARMACY AND POISONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 1989 AND THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1989.

IN ADDITION, THE DRUG TRAFFICKING (RECOVERY OF PROCEEDS) BILL 1989 WAS INTRODUCED FOR FIRST AND SECOND READINGS. DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

AN ADJOURNMENT DEBATE WAS HELD ON THE MATTER OF "MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES IN PUBLIC SECTOR HOSPITALS."

THE DEBATE WAS LED OFF BY DR THE HON LEONG CHE-HUNG AND THE CHIEF SECRETARY, THE HON SIR DAVID FORD, AND THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON T.H. CHAU, REPLIED FOR THE ADMINISTRATION.

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'BELT UP' MESSAGE IN CHINESE AND ENGLISH ONLY
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THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PASSED A MOTION TO AMEND THE ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATIONS SO THAT THE NOTICE TO BE DISPLAYED IN TAXIS INFORMING FRONT SEAT PASSENGERS THAT THEY MUST WEAR A SAFETY SEAT BELT WILL BE IN ENGLISH AND CHINESE ONLY.

THE MOTION AFFECTS THE ROAD TRAFFIC (PUBLIC SERVICE VEHICLES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 1989.

IN MOVING THE MOTION, THE HON RONALD ARCULLI SAID UNDER REGULATION 7 OF THE SUBSIDIARY LEGISLATION, IT WAS PROVIDED THAT WITH EFFECT FROM JULY 1 THIS YEAR A NOTICE IN CHINESE, ENGLISH AND JAPANESE MUST BE DISPLAYED IN TAXIS INFORMING PASSENGERS THAT UNDER THE LAWS IT WAS COMPULSORY FOR FRONT SEAT PASSENGERS TO WEAR A SAFETY SEAT BELT.

MR ARCULLI SAID THAT MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL HAD CONSIDERED THE PROVISION CAREFULLY AND FELT THAT THE WRONG MESSAGE MIGHT BE GIVEN IF THE LAWS WERE TO DIRECT THAT SUCH A SIMPLE MATTER WARRANTED A LEGAL NOTICE IN A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN CHINESE AND ENGLISH.

FURTHERMORE, JAPANESE VISITORS MIGHT NOT APPRECIATE BEING SINGLED OUT IN SUCH A WAY, HE ADDED.

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FIXED RATES OF HONORARIA FOR MEDICAL STAFF APPROVED

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CERTAIN MEDICAL STAFF IN BOTH GOVERNMENT AND SUBVENTED HOSPITALS WHO, DUE TO STAFF SHORTAGE, CONSISTENTLY HAVE TO WORK UNUSUALLY LONG HOURS TO ENSURE THAT ADEQUATE SERVICES ARE PROVIDED WILL RECEIVE FIXED RATES OF HONORARIA.

THE NEW ARRANGEMENT, APPROVED BY THE FINANCE COMMITTEE TODAY (WEDNESDAY), WILL COME INTO EFFECT ON APRIL 1 THIS YEAR.

THE RATES FOR MEDICAL OFFICERS AND SENIOR MEDICAL OFFICERS WILL BE FIXED AT EITHER \$1,750 OR \$3,500 PER MONTH WHILE THE RATE FOR CONSULTANTS WILL BE \$1,750, ALL DEPENDING ON THE CLINICAL UNITS IN WHICH THEY WORK OR SERVICES THEY PROVIDE.

A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID THAT DUE TO THE ACUTE SHORTAGE OF MEDICAL STAFF, A SITUATION EXACERBATED BY THE HIGH WASTAGE RATE OF EXPERIENCED MEDICAL OFFICERS IN THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE MAJORITY OF MEDICAL STAFF ON-CALL DUTIES IN CERTAIN VERY BUSY CLINICAL UNITS IN GOVERNMENT AND SUBVENTED HOSPITALS HAVE TO WORK CONSISTENTLY LONG HOURS IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN ADEQUATE MEDICAL SUPERVISION OF PATIENTS OUTSIDE NORMAL OFFICE HOURS.

UNDER NORMAL RULES, CIVIL SERVANTS IN ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROFESSIONAL GRADES, IRRESPECTIVE OF RANK AND PAY POINTS, ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR OVERTIME ALLOWANCES AND HONORARIA FOR OVERTIME WORK.

HOWEVER, HE ADDED, THE CONSISTENTLY AND UNUSUALLY LONG HOURS OF WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE MEDICAL STAFF CONCERNED ARE SIGNIFICANTLY IN EXCESS OF ANY NORMAL OVERTIME WORK NORMALLY EXPECTED OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF.

"SUCH PROLONGED HOURS OF WORK UNDOUBTEDLY PLACE, AND WILL CONTINUE TO PLACE, A CONSIDERABLE BURDEN ON THE MEDICAL STAFF CONCERNED AND INEVITABLY CAUSE A DEGREE OF DISRUPTION TO THEIR FAMILY AND SOCIAL LIVES," THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

"IN VIEW OF THE EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES, PAYMENT OF AN HONORARIUM IS JUSTIFIED."

THE SPOKESMAN SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WILL REVIEW THE CONTINUED NEED FOR THE PAYMENT OF THE HONORARIUM WHEN SUBSTANTIAL IMPROVEMENTS ARE MADE TO THE MEDICAL STAFF POSITION.

THE NEW ARRANGEMENT IS ESTIMATED TO COST THE GOVERNMENT AN ADDITIONAL OF ABOUT \$50 MILLION PER ANNUM.

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NEW RADIO CHANNEL FOR TRAFFIC, WEATHER NEWS

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THE FINANCE COMMITTEE TODAY (WEDNESDAY) APPROVED THE FUNDING FOR A NEW RADIO CHANNEL TO BROADCAST TRAFFIC NEWS, WEATHER AND EMERGENCY INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC.

THE \$3.4 MILLION PROJECT WILL PROVIDE UPDATED INFORMATION ON A REGULAR AND REPEATED BASIS IN BOTH CHINESE AND ENGLISH, FROM 6 AM TO MIDNIGHT DAILY.

THE STATION WILL BE OPERATED BY RADIO TELEVISION HONG KONG (RTHK).

RTHK HAS ALREADY DEVELOPED CONTACTS WITH 30 GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE TRAFFIC-RELATED ORGANISATIONS, WHICH ARE READY TO PROVIDE UPDATED INFORMATION TO THE NEW CHANNEL.

COMMENTING ON THE PROPOSAL, A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID THERE WAS AN ACUTE NEED FOR UP-TO-THE-MINUTE INFORMATION ON TRAFFIC, WEATHER AND OTHER HAZARDS.

SERIOUS CONGESTION COULD BUILD UP EXTREMELY QUICKLY IN THE EVENT OF TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS OR OTHER INCIDENTS DUE TO THE COMPACT SIZE AND TRAFFIC CONDITIONS IN THE TERRITORY.

THE GOVERNMENT CONSIDERED THAT THE MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD OF DISSEMINATING EMERGENCY INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC WAS BY ESTABLISHING A NEW CHANNEL DEDICATED TO THE PURPOSE.

AT PRESENT, RTHK BROADCAST TRAFFIC ANNOUNCEMENT EVERY 30 MINUTES DURING RUSH HOURS AND HOURLY AT OTHER TIMES, WHILE COMMERCIAL RADIO ALSO MADE SUCH ANNOUNCEMENTS AT REGULAR INTERVALS.

"A SEPARATE CHANNEL IS NECESSARY AS THE POINT HAS BEEN REACHED THAT MORE TRAFFIC INFORMATION WOULD MEAN SERIOUS DISRUPTION TO NORMAL PROGRAMME SCHEDULING AND ANNOYANCE TO THE LISTENERS," THE SPOKESMAN SAID.

TO PROVIDE THE NEW SERVICE, AN ADDITIONAL MEDIUM FREQUENCY (MF) TRANSMITTER WILL BE INSTALLED AT RTHK'S TRANSMITTER SITE AT GOLDEN HILL AND ASSOCIATED STUDIO FACILITIES INSTALLED AT BROADCASTING HOUSE.

AN EXISTING SMALL RADIO CONTINUITY STUDIO AT BROADCASTING HOUSE WILL ALSO BE MODIFIED AND EQUIPPED.

INITIALLY, A SPARE MAST ANTENNA AT GOLDEN HILL AND ONE OF THE EXISTING TRANSMITTERS WILL BE UTILISED TO START THE SERVICE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

THE TRANSMITTER WILL BE REPLACED BY A NEW ONE IN MID-1989.

THE NEW CHANNEL WILL BROADCAST IN MF AS THERE IS NO SPARE CHANNEL AVAILABLE IN THE VERY HIGH FREQUENCY BAND.

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ELECTORS URGED TO CAST VOTES TOMORROW

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THE SECRETARY FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS, MR MICHAEL SUEN, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) APPEALED TO THE 1.2 MILLION ELECTORS IN THE CONTESTED CONSTITUENCIES TO VOTE FOR THE CANDIDATES OF THEIR CHOICE IN TOMORROW'S URBAN AND REGIONAL COUNCILS ELECTIONS.

VOTING WILL BEGIN AT 7.30 AM AT 245 POLLING STATIONS WHICH WILL CLOSE AT 10.30 PM.

A TELEPHONE HOTLINE, 5-8653911, HAS BEEN SET UP TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS THAT ELECTORS MAY WISH TO ASK.

TWENTY-SIX CANDIDATES WILL BE VYING FOR 11 SEATS IN THE URBAN COUNCIL, AND 20 OTHERS FOR NINE SEATS IN THE REGIONAL COUNCIL.

SEVEN OTHER CANDIDATES HAVE BEEN DECLARED ELECTED UNCONTESTED -- FOUR TO THE URBAN COUNCIL AND THREE TO THE REGIONAL COUNCIL.

SPEAKING AT A PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY, MR SUEN POINTED OUT THAT TOMORROW'S ELECTIONS WOULD BE THE THIRD OF THE CURRENT SET OF ELECTIONS WITHIN A YEAR.

"HOWEVER, I SINCERELY HOPE THAT REGISTERED ELECTORS WILL REALISE THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING THEIR CHOICE OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE THREE LEVELS OF THE SYSTEM OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HONG KONG, AND THE PART THE URBAN AND REGIONAL COUNCILS PLAY IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF THEIR DAILY LIFE," HE SAID.

"SO I CALL ON ALL REGISTERED ELECTORS TO SPARE A LITTLE BIT OF THEIR TIME TOMORROW TO CAST THEIR VOTES. THE TWO MUNICIPAL COUNCILS DESERVE THEIR SUPPORT."

MR SUEN NOTED THAT THE VOTING PROCEDURE WAS SIMPLE AND QUICK.

"ALL AN ELECTOR HAS TO DO IS TO MAKE UP HIS MIND AS TO WHICH CANDIDATE IS THE MOST SUITABLE CHOICE.

"HE SHOULD THEN BRING ALONG HIS POLL CARD AND IDENTITY CARD TO HIS DESIGNATED POLLING STATION, OBTAIN A BALLOT PAPER, MARK A CROSS IN THE BOX AGAINST THE CANDIDATE OF HIS CHOICE, FOLD UP THE BALLOT PAPER AND PUT IT IN THE BALLOT BOX."

FOR THOSE ELECTORS WHO ARE UNABLE TO MARK THEIR BALLOT PAPERS THEMSELVES, SUCH AS HANDICAPPED PEOPLE, MR SUEN SAID THE PRESIDING OFFICERS OR THEIR ASSISTANTS AT THE POLLING STATIONS WOULD BE READY TO HELP.

/HE SAID

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HE SAID THE POLLING STATIONS WOULD BE MANNED BY ABOUT 3,600 OFFICERS DRAWN FROM VARIOUS GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS WHO WERE ALL AWARE OF THE NEED TO REMAIN NEUTRAL AND IMPARTIAL IN PERFORMING THEIR DUTIES.

COUNTING OF VOTES WILL START SOON AFTER THE CLOSE OF THE POLL AT 10.30 PM. A TOTAL OF 15 COUNTING CENTRES WILL BE SET UP, ONE FOR EACH DISTRICT WHERE POLLING HAS TAKEN PLACE.

MR SUEN ALSO HAD A WORD OF ADVICE FOR THE CANDIDATES.

"I WISH TO EMPHASISE THAT ALTHOUGH IT IS RECOGNISED THAT SOME FORM OF CANVASSING IS A PART OF CAMPAIGNING, OVER-ENTHUSIASTIC APPROACHES MAY CAUSE INCONVENIENCE TO VOTERS AND HENCE MAY WELL BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE," HE SAID.

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12TH JLG MEETING TO BE HELD IN PEKING

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THE 12TH MEETING OF THE SINO-BRITISH JOINT LIAISON GROUP ON HONG KONG WILL TAKE PLACE IN PEKING FROM MARCH 14 TO 17, THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE ANNOUNCED THIS (WEDNESDAY) MORNING.

THE BRITISH TEAM WILL BE LED BY THE SENIOR REPRESENTATIVE, MR ROBIN MCLAREN, ASSISTANT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE (ASIA) AT THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE.

THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE BRITISH TEAM WILL BE MR DONALD LIAO, SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION; MR DICK CLIFT, POLITICAL ADVISER; AND MR DOUG MARTIN, COUNSELLOR, OFFICE OF THE BRITISH SENIOR REPRESENTATIVE, SINO-BRITISH JOINT LIAISON GROUP IN HONG KONG.

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CP TO SERVE UNTIL END OF NOVEMBER

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THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE, MR RAYMON ANNING, WILL CONTINUE TO SERVE UNTIL THE END OF NOVEMBER THIS YEAR, A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

ARRANGEMENTS FOR MR ANNING'S REPLACEMENT ARE BEING MADE AND WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN DUE COURSE, THE SPOKESMAN ADDED.

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LADY WILSON PRAISES WORK OF FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION

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THE FACT THAT HONG KONG'S POPULATION HAS NOT GROWN OUT OF ALL PROPORTION TO ITS RESOURCES IS LARGELY DUE TO THE WORK AND DEDICATION OF THE FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION, LADY WILSON SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE ASSOCIATION'S NEW HEADQUARTERS AT THE SOUTHOEN CENTRE IN WAN CHAI, LADY WILSON DESCRIBED THE WORK OF THE ASSOCIATION OVER THE PAST YEARS AS BEING "MORE THAN IMPRESSIVE".

WHILE NOTING THAT THE ASSOCIATION, WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED OVER 38 YEARS AGO, WAS MAINLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONCEPT OF A PLANNED FAMILY, LADY WILSON POINTED OUT THAT THIS CONCEPT HAD NOW BEEN FIRMLY ROOTED IN THE MINDS OF HONG KONG PEOPLE.

SHE SAID THE ASSOCIATION HAD GONE FURTHER IN ITS WORK, BY INITIATING CONFERENCES AND PLAYING AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGION ON FAMILY PLANNING MATTERS.

"IT WAS HONG KONG WHO SET UP THE INTERNATIONAL PLANNED PARENTHOOD FEDERATION, KNOWN AS THE IPPF.

"HOW GOOD THAT WE ARE SPREADING WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT," SHE ADDED.

LADY WILSON ALSO PRAISED THE ASSOCIATION'S YOUTH HEALTH CENTRE FOR OFFERING YOUNG PEOPLE A PERSONAL AND EXPERT SERVICE.

"THIS EMPHASIS ON YOUTH WORK AND THE SUPPLEMENTING OF HOSPITAL SERVICES IS MOST WELCOME," SHE SAID.

ON THE ASSOCIATION'S NEW HEADQUARTERS, LADY WILSON SAID: "IN THESE NEW PREMISES, I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING THE ASSOCIATION NOT ONLY HAVING A DIFFERENT FACE, BUT ALSO A NEW PHASE IN ITS DEVELOPMENT AND CONTRIBUTION TO OUR SOCIETY."

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PARTIAL CLOSURE OF TUEN MUN ROAD

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THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED THAT TO FACILITATE ROAD MAINTENANCE WORK, THE TRAFFIC LANES ON TUEN MUN ROAD BETWEEN TSUEN WAN ROAD AND TUEN HING ROAD WILL BE CLOSED IN TURN FROM SATURDAY (MARCH 11) TO AUGUST 10.

HOWEVER, AT LEAST TWO TRAFFIC LANES WILL BE MAINTAINED FOR SOUTHBOUND AND NORTHBOUND TRAFFIC RESPECTIVELY DURING THIS PERIOD.

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POLICE OFFICERS HONOURED FOR BRAVERY

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TWELVE SHAM SHUI PO TASK FORCE OFFICERS WERE TODAY (WEDNESDAY) HONOURED FOR THEIR BRAVERY AND SWIFT ACTION IN SOLVING AN ARMED ROBBERY IN JANUARY THIS YEAR.

AT A CEREMONY HELD AT SHAM SHUI PO POLICE STATION, THE PROPRIETOR OF WAH SING JEWELLERY COMPANY, MR WU YIU-MING, PRESENTED SOUVENIR PLAQUES TO THE POLICE IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR WORK.

RECEIVING THE PLAQUES WERE DEPUTY DISTRICT COMMANDER, SHAM SHUI PO, MR CHOW FOO-CHEONG AND SENIOR OFFICERS IN THE DISTRICT.

THE ROBBERY TOOK PLACE ON JANUARY 13 WHEN THREE MEN, ARMED WITH TWO FULLY LOADED STARTING PISTOLS AND KNIVES, BURST INTO A GOLDSMITH SHOP IN PEI HO STREET AND SNATCHED A QUANTITY OF GOLD ORNAMENTS WORTH ABOUT \$600,000.

UPON FLEEING, THE ROBBERS WERE INTERCEPTED BY A PARTY OF PATROLLING TASK FORCE OFFICERS WHO GAVE CHASE AND SUBSEQUENTLY APPREHENDED THE ROBBERS.

ALL OF THE STOLEN PROPERTY WERE RETRIEVED AND TWO PISTOLS WERE SEIZED. THE ARRESTED PERSONS WERE LATER CHARGED WITH RELATED OFFENCES.

SUBSEQUENT INVESTIGATION SHOWED THAT THE TRIO, AGED BETWEEN 21 AND 27, WERE ALL EVADERS WHO HAD JUST SNEAKED INTO THE TERRITORY WITH THE SEIZED FIREARMS A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE HOLD-UP.

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TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS ON HK ISLAND

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THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED THAT FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY (MARCH 11), VEHICLES WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO ENTER THE UNNAMED ROAD LINKING CAPE COLLINSON ROAD WITH SIU SAI WAN.

AT THE SAME TIME, TIN WAN PRAYA ROAD FROM A POINT ABOUT 40 METRES WEST OF ITS JUNCTION WITH ABERDEEN PRAYA ROAD TO A POINT ABOUT 375 METRES WEST OF THE SAME JUNCTION WILL BE DESIGNATED AN URBAN CLEARWAY ROUND-THE-CLOCK FOR ABOUT FOUR MONTHS FOR CABLE WORKS.

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

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TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SCHEME FOR KWAI FUNG CRESCENT INDUSTRIAL AREA
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TO IMPROVE TRAFFIC FLOW IN THE KWAI FUNG CRESCENT INDUSTRIAL AREA, KWAI CHUNG, SPECIAL TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY (MARCH 11), THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED.

THE RIGHT-TURN FROM CONTAINER PORT ROAD TO KWAI FUNG CRESCENT WILL BE BANNED.

ALSO, VEHICLES ON CONTAINER PORT ROAD SOUTHBOUND HEADING FOR KWAI FUNG CRESCENT WILL BE DIVERTED VIA KWAI HONG STREET, KWAI TAK STREET, KWAI SHUN STREET AND CONTAINER PORT ROAD NORTHBOUND.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE FOLLOWING ROAD SECTIONS WILL BE DESIGNATED PEAK HOUR (7 AM - 10 AM AND 4 PM - 7 PM) DAILY URBAN CLEARWAYS:

- * THE OFFSIDE LANE OF KWAI FUNG CRESCENT FROM ITS NORTHERN JUNCTION WITH CONTAINER PORT ROAD TO A POINT OUTSIDE NO. 28-36 KWAI FUNG CRESCENT;
- * THE NEARSIDE LANE OF KWAI FUNG CRESCENT FROM ITS SOUTHERN JUNCTION WITH CONTAINER PORT ROAD TO A POINT OUTSIDE NO. 33-39 KWAI FUNG CRESCENT; AND
- * THE WESTERN KERBSIDE LANE OF KWAI TAK STREET BETWEEN ITS JUNCTION WITH KWAI TAI ROAD AND A POINT ABOUT 30 METRES NORTH ITS JUNCTION WITH KWAI SHUN STREET.

IN ADDITION, THE FOLLOWING TWO ROAD SECTIONS WILL BE MADE 7 AM TO 7 PM DAILY URBAN CLEARWAYS:

- * THE NORTHERN KERBSIDE LANE OF KWAI SHUN STREET BETWEEN ITS JUNCTION WITH CONTAINER PORT ROAD AND ITS JUNCTION WITH KWAI TAK STREET; AND
- * THE NORTHERN KERBSIDE LANE OF KWAI HONG STREET BETWEEN ITS JUNCTION WITH CONTAINER PORT ROAD AND ITS JUNCTION WITH KWAI TAK STREET.

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DB COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS SQUATTER AREA IMPROVEMENT
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THE KWAI TSING DISTRICT BOARD'S COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE WILL DISCUSS THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR SQUATTER AREAS IN THE DISTRICT AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS AT ITS MEETING ON FRIDAY (MARCH 10).

A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT WILL ATTEND THE MEETING TO BRIEF MEMBERS ON THE ISSUE.

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IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION RAISED BY A DISTRICT BOARD MEMBER, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT WILL OUTLINE THE PLANNED SOCIAL SERVICE FACILITIES FOR NORTH KWAI CHUNG AREA.

THE COMMITTEE'S EIGHT WORKING GROUPS RESPONSIBLE FOR ORGANISING VARIOUS ACTIVITIES WILL ALSO REPORT THE WORK THEY HAVE DONE DURING THIS FINANCIAL YEAR.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE MEETING OF THE KWAI TSING DISTRICT BOARD'S COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE ON FRIDAY (MARCH 10) AT THE CONFERENCE ROOM, 10TH FLOOR, KWAI HING GOVERNMENT OFFICES BUILDING, KWAI CHUNG.

THE MEETING WILL BEGIN AT 2.30 PM.

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URBAN CLEARWAYS IN KWUN TONG, WAN CHAI

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THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED THAT FROM 10 AM ON SATURDAY (MARCH 11), TEMPORARY TRAFFIC ARRANGMENTS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN HIP WO STREET, KWUN TONG FOR ABOUT THREE MONTHS FOR ROAD WORKS.

HIP WO STREET BETWEEN A POINT ABOUT 160 METRES SOUTH OF ITS JUNCTION WITH WAN HON STREET AND ITS JUNCTION WITH MUT WAH STREET WILL BECOME AN URBAN CLEARWAY ROUND-THE-CLOCK.

AT THE SAME TIME, THE EXISTING PEAK HOUR (7 AM - 10 AM AND 4 PM - 7 PM) DAILY URBAN CLEARWAYS ON THE FOLLOWING TWO ROAD SECTIONS WILL BE LIFTED:

- * HIP WO STREET NORTHBOUND BETWEEN ITS JUNCTION WITH MUT WAH STREET AND A POINT ABOUT 65 METRES NORTH OF THE SAME JUNCTION; AND
- * HIP WO STREET SOUTHBOUND BETWEEN A POINT ABOUT 55 METRES NORTH OF ITS SOUTHERN JUNCTION WITH YUET WAH STREET AND ITS JUNCTION WITH MUT WAH STREET.

IN WAN CHAI, THE EXISTING 7 AM TO 7 PM DAILY URBAN CLEARWAY ON CANAL ROAD EAST BETWEEN LEIGHTON ROAD AND RUSSELL STREET WILL BE EXTENDED NORTHWARDS BY ABOUT 30 METRES FROM 10 AM ON THE SAME DAY.

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

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