



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Wednesday, November 29, 1972

NEW "SMALL HOUSE" POLICY FOR NEW TERRITORIES

The Government will implement, as from Friday (December 1) a major review of the policy and practices on the control of small houses - or village houses - in the New Territories.

The review aims at giving people in the rural areas an opportunity to live in decent, safe, bigger and more permanent houses with improved health standards.

The new "small house" policy and practices are interim measures which will complement the major job of producing a comprehensive plan for the development of the rural New Territories.

The main features of the new policy are:-

- * In the rural New Territories outside the village areas, building licences will be used rather than temporary modifications of tenancy for the construction of small houses on private agricultural land;
- * In the rural New Territories outside the village areas, leases of Crown land will be granted by private treaty for small houses in cases where there has been a structure on Crown Land Permit for at least 10 years;

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- * For the disposal of Crown land within village areas, to allow villagers to build small houses, the present system of closed village auction will be replaced by private treaty grants, with premium charged at two-thirds of full market value;
- * All buildings of less than 25 feet in height and 700 square feet in area in the New Territories, using reinforced concrete, will be exempted from the provisions of the Building Ordinance.

In all the three categories, the maximum built-over area allowed will be 700 square feet; the maximum height of the buildings allowed will be two storeys and 25 feet.

The premium for the land in the first two categories will be charged at full market value, assessed on an area basis and reviewed annually.

At the Legislative Council this afternoon, the District Commissioner, New Territories, the Hon. D.C. Bray, spoke on the new policy when he tabled the Buildings Ordinance (Application to the New Territories) (Amendment) Regulations 1972.

He said the regulations form just the statutory part of the implementation of the major review of the "small house" policy in the New Territories.

He pointed out that they referred only to applications to erect single small houses. Multiple applications would be treated differently for they must be built in a proper village formation.

Commenting on the major job of producing a comprehensive plan for the development of the rural New Territories, Mr. Bray said this was a much more ambitious task.

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"But until proper permanent planned development comes we must deal with the day-to-day needs of the people now living in the country. The policy dealt with today probably affects over 90 per cent of the dwellings in the rural New Territories."

Mr. Bray said the benefits from the review of the policy, which was started last year at the request of the Heung Yee Kuk, and with their close co-operation, were several.

Firstly, he said, applications from villagers to build a new house should be processed and approved much more quickly, generally within six weeks of receipt of the application.

"This will be achieved by delegating the authority to approve such applications to District officers, by doing away with the necessity to submit individual building plans and by abolishing so called restricted auctions and allowing Private Treaty Grants of sites within villages instead."

Secondly, he said more sophisticated health standards would be required in these houses in future.

These standards would be much more in keeping with modern practice and the Director of Urban Services intended to enforce them much more positively than in the past, but in a manner suited to each individual house, he said.

The regulations constitute a minor extension to the class of buildings exempt from many of the provisions of the Buildings Ordinance by allowing the use of reinforced concrete in two-storey buildings covering less than 700 sq.ft. and not exceeding 25 feet in height.

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Thirdly, Mr. Bray said, virtually no more permits for "temporary structures" would be issued.

He described the new houses which could be built under the extension as "permanent as any small house can be in this changing world".

"Not only will this give the individual concerned a decent, permanent and safe house to live in but it will also enable him to claim full compensation for the structure should it ever have to be cleared for development in the future."

Mr. Bray also emphasised that the siting of the houses would be subject to a set of planning controls so that they would not prejudice impending urban development or disfigure unspoilt parts of the countryside.

He said, the areas where new small houses might be erected would be defined on a more logical basis, based on uniform criteria throughout the New Territories.

"The main factors affecting the zoning will be future permanent development plans, roads and other public works and areas of recreational potential. The zone boundaries will be reviewed annually just before the Tuen Ng Festival and revisions will take effect from the day of that festival," he said.

Fourthly, owners of existing domestic temporary structures on private agricultural land and the permittees of domestic structures would be allowed to re-develop their structures up to the maximum size permitted for a small house.

"They will at the same time be able to acquire greater security of tenure for the land on which their buildings are erected.

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Mr. Bray also dealt with two criticisms that had been made of the regulations.

On the first criticism that people would be allowed to build without conferring to the Buildings Ordinance, he said neither the architectural profession nor the authorised contractors were able to deal with numerous small buildings in outlying areas.

"To attempt to apply the Buildings Ordinance in full to all such buildings might look nice on paper but would be quite unrealistic in practice. Controls must be much simpler."

The second critic feared that these policies would hamper more conventional permanent development. "I am afraid it is precisely this sort of attitude that has prevented us dealing more realistically with small houses in outlying areas in the past.

"We cannot expect everybody else to hold their breath until full permanent development reaches them. Many temporary structures have been up for 10 or 20 years. A similar period will elapse before many more will be incorporated in urban development. It is quite unreasonable to prevent people living in these areas from building decent small houses in the mean time," he said.

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AMENDS BUILDINGS BILL

The Legislative Council today decided to delete from the Buildings (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1972 a Clause which provides for the extension from 28 days to 60 days the statutory period within which the Building Authority can disapprove submitted plans.

Moving an amendment for Clause 6 to be deleted, the Hon. Oswald Cheung told the Council that the Hong Kong Society of Architects had made representation that this proposed extension would unnecessarily delay the development of their clients' sites.

They had requested that the proposal be reconsidered and had urged that, whilst it might be justified in the case of plans first submitted, it would generally be too long on a re-submission which corrects faults in the design which led to places being disapproved, he said.

"My Unofficial colleagues consider that there is a valid case for re-examining the proposal, and it is for that reason that we would ask that Clause 6 be deleted."

Mr. Cheung said both the Society and Unofficial members greatly sympathised with the Buildings Ordinance Office for the burden that has been put on it as a result of both the large number of plans submitted and the rain disasters last summer.

"I am therefore authorised to say that should the government wish to have the moratorium extended until March 31, 1973, my colleagues would have no objection to it," he said.

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Earlier, the Director of Public Works, the Hon. J.J. Robson, told the Council that the Building Authority had been receiving new plans at the rate of over 1,000 a month, and that the proposed extension could only be deleted on the understanding that this was accompanied by an extension of the operation of Section 30A(2) of the Buildings Ordinance to March 31, 1973.

This means that until that time, there will be no statutory period within which the Building Authority has to disapprove plans, he said.

The Director said he understood the concern expressed by Council members about Clause 6 of the bill, but it was simply not possible even to commence examining the mass of the plans within this period.

He explained that on November 1, there were 967 submissions of plans which had been with the Building Authority for more than 28 days, and the number had remained at around the 1,000 mark since July 1, as compared with 350 for the first five months of the year.

"New plans have been submitted at the rate of over 1,000 a month except for the months of February and July when they were a little less, and there is no indication of any recession," he said.

Mr. Robson said it would also be obvious that there could be no real improvement in the situation unless there was either an increase in the strength of the staff of the Buildings Ordinance Office or a reduction in the number of plans submitted for approval.

As regards building site inspections by government staff, he said far more inspections are required while building work is in progress and extra staff for this purpose was approved following the publication of the Chong Hing Mansion Report.

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He said recruitment of the necessary Building Surveyors is proving difficult although requests for recruitment have been put in the hands of agencies in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

"It has therefore been agreed that the Director of Building Development will go to England next week and see if he can obtain staff on secondment from the Ministry of the Environment or other U.K. bodies.

"He will at the same time take up the possible employment of Structural Engineers in the U.K. for processing structural calculations submitted to the Building Authority and the use of computers for this purpose," he said.

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STRICTER CONTROL OVER REGISTERED CONTRACTORS

A leading architect, the Hon. Szeto Wai, today described the performance of the majority of building contractors in Hong Kong as "below a satisfactory level in respect of both technical ability and organisational capacity".

Speaking in the Legislative Council during the second reading debate on the Buildings (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, he said that to remedy the situation their standards had to be raised, in addition to heavier penalties being imposed.

He said the principal ordinance and regulations put great stress on the qualifications and discipline of authorised architects, but did not appear to have the same regard to contractors.

"Registered contractors are allowed to get away frequently with site conditions that, in addition to contributing to environmental pollution, endanger the safety of their own workmen as well as the public, quite apart from contravening building regulations," Mr. Szeto said.

Mr. Szeto who devoted his speech to what he called "sub-standard materials and workmanship in building works" said that much of the sub-standard construction in recent years had been the work of the "developer-builder-architect collaboration".

He explained that under the existing legislation an authorised architect was only required to provide periodical inspection of the building works to ensure that they were being carried out according to plan, whereas the contractor was required to give continuous supervision.

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"The danger, however, lies in situations where a building owner or developer is also the builder. It is not uncommon in such situations that the architect is employed merely as a tool and a cover to process the developer's own plans through the Building Authority and therefore plays no part and has no authority in supervision.

"To protect public safety, effective legislation is needed to stop this malpractice," Mr. Szeto warned.

He also called on the government to look urgently at the question of the existing legislation covering the registration of building contractors, which he felt should be more stringent.

Mr. Szeto pointed out that while stringent requirements were laid down for authorised architects "hardly anything in the way of his technical experience, equipment and organisation is required of a registered contractor save his bank account" and no less than 37 firms were registered in the last quarter alone.

The government should also institute more control over the standard of concrete used in all buildings to allay the widespread concern caused by the sub-standard concrete in some completed buildings, he said,

During the debate, the Hon. Q.W. Lee said it was of great importance for the government to ensure that every effort was made to reduce to an absolute minimum, the time taken for a building plan to be approved.

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He said the supply of housing had not been able to catch up with the demand and "any further delay in plans can only result in higher cost of accommodation."

"The chain reaction will be higher cost of living and higher cost of labour, which will add to the cost of our export products as well as creating further social problems."

Mr. Lee appreciated the need for the bill and said he had considerable sympathy for the Public Works Department in view of the situation it was facing.

"I am sure we would all like to pay a tribute to the devotion of duty shown by the Director of Public Works and his staff, particularly in the Buildings Ordinance Office for having carried out the already very heavy load of work which has now been aggravated by the June disasters".

Mr. Lee was aware that to speed up the approval of building plans was not the sole responsibility of the P.W.D.. He suggested that urgent measures be taken to recruit "at the soonest possible date" the extra professional staff for whom the posts have already been approved by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council.

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TOUGH ACTION ON ILLEGAL STRUCTURES

The Director of Public Works, the Hon. J.J. Robson, today announced government's determination to act against illegal structures at newly completed buildings.

Speaking on the Buildings (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1972 in the Legislative Council this afternoon, he said experience in recent years had indicated that the building legislation required strengthening and enlarging.

He stressed that these measures were especially necessary to control the activities of those "enterprising gentlemen" who carried out wholesale modifications to buildings immediately an occupation certificate was issued.

Referring to today's press reports concerning a joint inspection at Nos. 1026-1046, King's Road, Mr. Robson described the scale of alterations at the premises as "incredible." "And that is an understatement."

He said legal opinion was being taken on the measures which could be adopted to remedy the situation at these buildings, including, if necessary, re-entry of each and every flat which contains illegal work.

In due course, Mr. Robson said the Buildings Ordinance had to be re-written to metric standards. "I am, therefore, making a recommendation that work starts immediately on a comprehensive redrafting of all our building legislation to cover not only the needs of metrication but also to remedy the many defects and deficiencies which are now apparent," he said.

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SUPPORT FOR COMPANIES BILL

Unofficial members of the Legislative Council today supported the government's first piece of legislation aimed at protecting investors.

The bill presently before the Council, the Companies (Amendment) Bill 1972, deals mainly with company prospectuses.

The senior Unofficial, the Hon. P.C. Woo said he was getting in touch with the Commissioner for Chinese Language with a view to standardising the translation of company prospectuses.

He pointed out that there had been some objections in respect of the provision in Clause 5 requiring every prospectus to contain a Chinese translation.

The objectors argued that there could be such difficulties as the availability of a sufficient number of competent translators, accuracy of the translation, and the legal liability of directors in respect of untrue statements in the translation which a director could not himself read or understand.

Mr. Woo said these difficulties had been exaggerated and he told the Council that recently several public companies had had their prospectuses translated into Chinese.

He also suggested that if the bill was passed, the effective date for this requirement should not be earlier than next February because of the additional time and labour needed in preparing a translation.

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Mr. Woo went on to clarify some misapprehension of the role which the Registrar of Companies would play in the exercise of his discretion to refuse to register a prospectus.

"The Registrar is only concerned to see that a prospectus on the face of it has contained all the statutory information and that such information is not prima facie misleading in the form and context in which it is included.

"His acceptance of a prospectus for registration is no guarantee that it contains no misleading or inaccurate statements, much less that the shares to be issued or offered for sale are regarded in any way as a sound investment," he said.

The Hon. Q. W. Lee, who also supported the bill, spoke at length about the "outstanding performance" of the Hong Kong stock market, and attributed it to an increase in the supply of money, the strength of our economy and the confidence it generates.

He said that since the beginning of January up till yesterday (November 28) the total volume of business transacted on the stock exchanges amounted to \$36,477 million. During the same period a total of \$1,550 million had been raised by 73 newly listed companies and \$1,030 million by 15 existing listed companies.

Giving another example of the buoyancy of the economy, Mr. Lee said despite the fact that \$2,585 million had been raised to finance new business in the past 11 months, bank deposits had still risen by \$4,356 million to \$23,141 million in the nine months to the end of October.

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Turning to the Companies Bill and the provision for the translation of prospectuses, Mr. Lee said that if the investing public were to have the protection designed for them "they must do their part to read and understand them (prospectuses) clearly." It was only on their judgment alone that they should finally rely to make an investment.

(S. 20) (Amendment) - - - - 0 - - - -

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CAREFUL USE OF GENERAL "STOP AND SEARCH" POWER ASSURED

The Legislative Council was assured today that the proposed general power for a police officer to search any member of the public in a public place for any offensive weapon will not be used indiscriminately.

Giving this assurance, the Attorney General, the Hon. D.T.E. Roberts, said that the Commissioner of Police fully agrees and he will do his best to ensure this will not occur.

Moving the second reading of the Public Order (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1972, Mr. Roberts said: "While the public has generally supported what have been called 'stop and search' operations in the past, I am aware that some misgivings have been expressed about this new wider power, which may cause some inconvenience to innocent members of the public going about their ordinary business."

He said he accepted the view that this power must be used with discretion.

At present, he said, a police officer may properly stop and search a person in a public place if he is acting in a suspicious manner or if the police officer suspects him of having committed, or being about to commit, any offence.

"The amendment proposed, therefore will relieve the police officer of having to form a reasonable suspicion, before he carries out a search of a member of the public and will enable areas to be cordoned off and anybody in the area searched for offensive weapons," he said.

The bill has two other objects. Firstly, it provides for a minimum sentence of six months' imprisonment to be imposed, or a detention order made, against a person convicted of the offence of possessing an offensive weapon in a public place; and secondly, it raises the maximum punishment for this offence from two to three years.

/Mr. Roberts

Mr. Roberts said although the imposition of a mandatory minimum sentence is a departure from tradition, "I suggest it is fully justified in present circumstances in Hong Kong, where we are faced with a growing menace from gangs of young men carrying offensive weapons for use in gang attacks and a serious increase in the number of robberies in which weapons are used to threaten or attack."

He hoped that the certainty of a custodial sentence will significantly reduce the practice of carrying offensive weapons.

The announcement that the government was considering a measure of this nature has been widely welcomed by the press and public, the great majority of which appears to give it strong support, he said.

Earlier, Mr. Roberts moved a motion to amend the Third Schedule to the Criminal Procedure Ordinance by adding to it the offence of possession of an offensive weapon in a public place, contrary to section 33 of the ordinance.

He explained that in relation to any offence listed in the schedule, two provisions of the ordinance do not operate.

The first provision was that a court shall not sentence a person over 15 and under 21 to imprisonment unless it is of the opinion that no other method of dealing with him is appropriate. The second was that a court which passes a sentence of imprisonment for a term of not more than two years can order that the sentence shall be suspended.

He said the amendment to the schedule will also ensure that there is no conflict between the ordinance and the provision in the Public Order (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1972 for a mandatory minimum sentence of imprisonment or a detention order on conviction of an offence against section 33 of the Ordinance.

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ADEQUATE PROTECTION FOR CONSUMERS

The law in Hong Kong already provides adequate protection for consumers in regard to food and drugs and some other items, and very few complaints have been received from the public about these goods.

This was stated by the Director of Commerce and Industry, the Hon. David Jordan, at today's Legislative Council meeting when replying to a question by Dr. the Hon. S.Y. Chung.

Mr. Jordan said the imposition in Hong Kong of safety and health standards would involve detailed protection legislation and an organisation of inspection and testing facilities to give practical effect to the provisions of the legislation.

"There would be substantial difficulty in determining what the standards ought to be for the many products which would have to be brought under control," he said.

Mr. Jordan said the commercial problems could also be severe and standards would have to be applied whether the goods were imported or made locally.

He was aware of increased public pressure in many countries for action to protect consumers against accidents arising from the sale of faulty products, particularly those sold for children.

But, he explained, even in these countries, very few national standards have been given legislative authority.

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"In Britain, for instance, most complaints are investigated at the local authority level, and the standards applied may differ between these authorities."

In Mr. Jordan's view, the extension of local controls to toys and electrical goods and then into other fields would be "much more difficult to administer than any existing domestic control" and would involve substantial expenditure of public funds.

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WATER INTERRUPTION IN NGAU TAU KOK

Water supply to a number of premises in Ngau Tau Kok will be interrupted for five hours from 1 a.m. to 6 a.m. on Friday (December 1).

The temporary stoppage is to enable the Waterworks Office to carry out a leakage test.

The area affected is bounded by Ngau Tau Kok Road between Elegance Road and Chun Wah Street, including Jordan Valley Resettlement Estate Blocks 1-9 and the factory blocks.

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PROTECTION OF WILD LIFE

The hunting or trapping of Chinese porcupines and a number of marine mammals will be prohibited under a bill introduced into Legislative Council today.

The Attorney General, the Hon. D.T.E. Roberts told the Council today that the government will endeavour to give maximum protection under the law to any species of wild life which are in danger of becoming extinct.

He was moving the second reading of the Wild Birds and Wild Mammals Protection (Amendment) Bill 1972.

The Chinese porcupine, a unique group of rodents of special zoological interest, is fast declining in numbers because it is frequently trapped for human consumption, and because of the difficulty in reproduction.

In addition to the Chinese porcupine, the bill also prohibits the hunting of dolphins, whales and dugongs or "mermaids".

To improve the enforcement of the legislation, the bill seeks to empower police officers, as well as Justices of the Peace and game wardens to inspect game licences, arrest offenders, and to seize nets, gins and snares used to trap or kill wild birds or animals.

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FINES FOR MOTOR VEHICLE EXHAUST

Twenty-eight people have been fined an average of about \$90 each recently for allowing their vehicles to emit excessive exhaust smoke.

The Colonial Secretary, the Hon. Sir Hugh Norman-Walker, disclosed this figure at the Legislative Council this afternoon when he apologised to the Hon. P.C. Woo for having misunderstood a supplementary question raised by Mr. Woo on the subject two weeks ago.

"I understood him to have asked how many prosecutions were registered, and answered correctly to that question that the number was 77."

In fact, Mr. Woo had asked how many convictions were registered and the correct answer at that time would have been nil, Sir Hugh said.

"In none of those prosecutions had the moment of truth then arrived. Since that time, however, the position has developed."

Out of the 77 prosecutions, 28 cases have now been completed and all have resulted in conviction. In addition, 41 cases are still outstanding in court and eight cases have been dropped due to insufficient evidence.

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REPORT ON CIVILIAN PERSONNEL IN POLICE UNDER CONSIDERATION

A "massive report" has been submitted by the working party considering the greater use which might be made of civilian personnel in the police force, the Colonial Secretary, the Hon. Sir Hugh Norman-Walker said today.

Replying to a question by the Hon. P.C. Woo, he said he received the report one week ago and it would take some time to process.

However, Sir Hugh said he had issued directions that the report should be dealt with "with the greatest expedition."

"From a preliminary examination, I hope that it will result in a substantial relief of the position in which the police find themselves - short of effective manpower engaged on the prevention and detection of crime - a matter which is very much in all our minds at the moment," Sir Hugh said.

In reply to a question by Dr. the Hon. S.Y. Chung, the Colonial Secretary said auxiliary police recruitment at inspector level had taken place in the past.

"But experience has shown that the present system - of appointing to the inspectorate from the lower ranks within the force - is in fact normally the best and is preferred by the auxiliary force itself," Sir Hugh suggested.

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CAR PARK PROJECTS TO RELIEVE ON STREET PARKING CONGESTION

The Director of Public Works, the Hon. J.J. Robson, today disclosed a number of government and private carpark projects which were either under construction or planned for the near future.

Speaking in the Legislative Council in reply to the Hon. Szeto Wai, he said a government multi-storey carpark, now under construction at Murray Road to provide 900 spaces, should be completed in August next year.

A private multi-storey carpark to provide 800 spaces is also being built at Great George Street, Causeway Bay, and should be ready in about two years.

In addition, he said, it is hoped that work can start shortly on Stage Two of the government Yau Ma Tei carpark to provide an additional 400 spaces in Kowloon by the end of 1974.

"It is also hoped that, in conjunction with the Cheung Sha Wan Wholesale Market, multi-storey parking can be provided for both lorries and cars."

On Hong Kong Island, 2,000 spaces are planned for construction with the office block known as Murray Building Two which will be built between Garden Road and Cotton Tree Drive.

Other government multi-storey carpark projects to be submitted to the Council's Finance Committee for approval are at Causeway Bay Magistracy (900 spaces); Kwun Tong Ferry Pier (900 spaces); Tsuen Wan Ferry Pier (900 spaces); and a combined market-carpark at Mong Kok Road-Fa Yeun Street.

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Mr. Robson said further multi-storey carparks to be constructed by private developers outside the main commuter areas are as follow:-

- * Oi Kwan Road, Wan Chai - site sold and should provide 500 spaces in two years' time;
- * Junction of Canton Road and Bute Street - site sold and will provide about 900 spaces;
- * Dundas Street - site sold and will provide 450 spaces;
- * Junction Road - site sold for a combined supermarket and multi-storey carpark with a minimum of 200 spaces.

The Director said there are also a number of tentative proposals under consideration for the development of multi-storey carparks either by the government or by private developers.

"These take a variety of forms ranging from independent parking buildings to combined market-carparks and combined petrol filling stations-garages-carparks.

"The situation is continuously under review and it seems likely that two further sites for private multi-storey carparks will be sold in the course of the next 18 months, one at Hip Woh Street, Kwun Tong and the other at Cheung Sha Wan Road," he said.

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DIFFICULTIES IN PROVIDING REFUSE CHAMBERS IN MULTI-STOREY BUILDINGS

The government hopes more can be done for proper refuse disposal arrangements in private buildings on lines similar to those in all government housing estates where refuse chambers have been provided for the past eight years.

The Director of Public Works, the Hon. J.J. Robson, said this at today's Legislative Council meeting when replying to a question from the Hon. T.K. Ann.

However, he said there were many practical difficulties about providing these facilities in some buildings: "for instance, they may be so narrow as to make provision virtually impossible."

"Moreover, refuse chambers could be a nuisance unless standards of management were high," he added.

For these reasons, Mr. Robson said, it has not yet been thought appropriate to introduce legislation to require refuse chambers to be provided in all new multi-storey buildings.

Nevertheless, the value of proper refuse disposal arrangements is fully recognised, and Mr. Robson gave an assurance that he is continuing to seek a solution to the problem and "if one can be found, I will seek to introduce suitable covering legislation."

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MORE PLACES TO PAY WATER BILLS?

The Public Works Department is considering, in collaboration with the Accountant General, whether water revenue can be collected at the Waterworks Office in Hong Kong and Kowloon to provide a better service for consumers.

Replying to a question by the Hon. P.G. Williams, the Director of Public Works, the Hon. J.J. Robson, told the Legislative Council today that the report is also awaited on a recently completed survey aimed at finding out whether additional Treasury cash collection offices are required in Kowloon.

At present, he said, water revenue is collected at the Treasury Main Office in Central; the Sub-Treasuries in Causeway Bay and Kowloon; at the District Offices at Tai Po, Yuen Long and Tsuen Wan; and at Resettlement Estate cash offices.

Bills may also be paid by post. In certain outlying places, the Tai Po District Office also arranges to set up temporary collection centres to serve the people there.

However, he said, water revenue collection at the Treasury and Sub-Treasuries and at Resettlement Estate cash offices are not always satisfactory because of their other functions.

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A consumer complaints service is operated at the Waterworks Head Office in Murray Building and at the Argyle Street branch office in Kowloon, but it happens often that when a complainant, after receiving a satisfactory answer to a query about his water charges, is not then able to pay his bill on the spot, he said.

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FINAL REPORT OF RAINSTORM DISASTER INQUIRY

The final report of the Commission of Inquiry into the June rainstorm disasters was submitted to the Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, today.

The report deals, among other things, with the landslips at Po Shan Road, and Shui Fai Terrace and also the disasters at five other places -- Ap Lei Chau, Belcher's Street (Western District), Bullock Lane (Wan Chai), Chai Wan and Shau Kei Wan.

It also includes the final conclusions and recommendations of the Commission.

The Commission began its work on June 23 and finished its public hearings on October 27. It was asked to hand in its final report by the end of this month.

The interim report of the Commission, which dealt entirely with the landslip disaster at Sau Mau Ping, was made public earlier this month.

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NEW HOME FOR AGED

A home providing free accommodation for aged and destitute people is to be built at Tai O Mun on Clearwater Bay Road, Sai Kung.

Sponsored by the Chamsan Monastery Ltd., the proposed Ts'u Te Home for Aged Persons will accommodate 100 male and female residents irrespective of race or religion.

Apart from the provision of dormitories and recreational areas, the home will also be equipped with a medical department to look after the health of the residents.

A spokesman for the Chamsan Monastery Ltd. stressed that liberal management measures will be introduced so that the residents will not feel enclosed or cut off from outside contacts.

The home was granted the site in Sai Kung in 1969, when the estimated construction cost was \$200,000.

But with more detailed estimates, a change in plans and increases in building prices, the cost has risen to \$730,000.

A sum of \$200,000 has been granted from the Lotteries Fund to help meet the capital cost, while the rest is to be made up from private donations and a contribution from the Jockey Club.

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PRISONS DEPARTMENT CEREMONIAL PARADE

The Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose will take the salute and present Colonial Prison Service Medals and Calps to 27 prison officers at the annual inspection and ceremonial parade of the Prisons Department to be held at Stanley on Friday (December 1).

Nine contingents from Hong Kong's prisons, training centres and the staff training institute will take part in the parade.

The Governor will inspect the parade, accompanied by the Commissioner of Prisons, Mr. T.G. Garner, and the Senior Superintendent of Prisons, Mr. J. Caldwell.

A march past will follow the presentation of medals and clasps.

The Cape Collinson Band, Pipes and Drums and selected instrumentalists from the Tai Tam Gap Training Centre will provide the music.

.....

Note to Editors: You are invited to cover the parade. It will start all 4.30 p.m. on Friday at the parade ground of the Staff Training Institute at Stanley.

Press transport will be provided and leave Queen's Pier at 3.40 p.m. sharp. Officers from the Information Services Department will be present to assist the press.

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Release time: 9.00 p.m.