



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 1, 1987

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MENTAL HEALTH LAW UPDATED TO MEET CHANGING ATTITUDE

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THE MENTAL HEALTH (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987 IS TO IMPROVE AND EXPAND THE PROVISIONS OF THE MENTAL HEALTH ORDINANCE WHICH GOVERNS THE RECEPTION, DETENTION AND DISCHARGE OF MENTALLY DISORDERED PERSONS, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, MR CHAMBERS EXPLAINED THAT MANY OF THE PROVISIONS OF THE MENTAL HEALTH ORDINANCE HAD BECOME INADEQUATE AS A RESULT OF CHANGES IN REHABILITATION CONCEPTS AND SOCIAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE MENTALLY ILL AND THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED.

HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT MENTAL HEALTH LEGISLATION HAD TO STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN THE DUTY OF THE STATE TO TAKE ACTION IN CERTAIN CASES TO DETAIN AND TREAT MENTALLY ILL PERSONS, BOTH IN THEIR OWN INTERESTS AND IN THOSE OF THE COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE, AND THE NEED TO PROTECT THE CIVIL RIGHTS OF THOSE SUBJECT TO THESE POWERS.

"THERE HAS BEEN AN UNFORTUNATE TENDENCY FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION AND MEDIA COMMENT ON THIS BILL TO CONCENTRATE ON ONE OR TWO OF ITS PROVISIONS WHICH MAY APPEAR TO INFRINGE THE CIVIL LIBERTIES OF MENTALLY DISORDERED PEOPLE, WHILE IGNORING THE MANY SAFEGUARDS WHICH ARE ALSO INCLUDED IN THE LEGISLATION."

HE ADDED THAT THE BILL WAS THE OUTCOME OF A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE ORDINANCE WHICH BEGAN IN LATE 1983 FOLLOWING THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE WORKING GROUP ON EX-MENTAL PATIENTS WITH A HISTORY OF CRIMINAL VIOLENCE AND ASSESSED DISPOSITION TO VIOLENCE.

HE SAID THE PRINCIPAL DEFECTS OF THE EXISTING MENTAL HEALTH ORDINANCE LAY IN FIVE MAIN AREAS:

- * THE ABSENCE OF A MANDATORY REQUIREMENT FOR A MEDICAL ASSESSMENT BEFORE A PATIENT WAS DETAINED IN A MENTAL HOSPITAL FOR OBSERVATION;
- * THE LACK OF PROVISION FOR GUARDIANSHIP OF MENTALLY DISORDERED ADULTS;
- * THE ABSENCE OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CONDITIONAL DISCHARGE OF MENTAL PATIENTS;
- * THE ABSENCE OF A CHANNEL FOR APPEAL AGAINST DETENTION BY NON-OFFENDER PATIENTS; AND
- * THE LACK OF CLEAR LEGAL AUTHORITY TO HELP SUSPECTED MENTALLY DISORDERED PERSONS WHO WERE IN IMMEDIATE NEED OF CARE AND CONTROL.

/MR CHAMBERS

MR CHAMBERS SAID CLAUSE 2(B) DELETED THE EXISTING DEFINITION OF "MENTALLY DISORDERED PERSONS" AND REPLACED IT WITH A DEFINITION OF "MENTAL DISORDER" WHICH INCLUDED 'PSYCHOPATHIC DISORDER'.

THE BILL ALSO MADE IT CLEAR THAT NO PERSON MIGHT BE DEALT WITH UNDER THE ORDINANCE AS SUFFERING FROM MENTAL DISORDER ONLY BY REASON OF PROMISCUITY OR OTHER IMMORAL CONDUCT, SEXUAL DEVIANCY, OR DEPENDENCE ON ALCOHOL OR DRUGS, MR CHAMBERS SAID.

TO ENSURE THE PROPER DIAGNOSIS OF PATIENTS' MENTAL CONDITIONS, CLAUSE 2(C) STIPULATED THAT OF THE TWO MEDICAL OPINIONS REQUIRED TO SUPPORT AN APPLICATION FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE INITIAL OBSERVATION PERIOD OF 7 DAYS, FOR COMPULSORY DETENTION IN A MENTAL HOSPITAL BEYOND THAT PERIOD OR PLACING A MENTALLY DISORDERED PERSON UNDER GUARDIANSHIP, ONE MUST BE GIVEN BY A DOCTOR WHO HAD HAD SPECIAL EXPERIENCE IN THE DIAGNOSIS OR TREATMENT OF MENTAL DISORDER.

CLAUSE 4 OF THE BILL PROPOSED THAT ORDERS FOR THE ADMISSION OF PATIENTS INTO MENTAL HOSPITALS FOR OBSERVATION FOR A PERIOD NOT EXCEEDING SEVEN DAYS, SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE MADE BY A DISTRICT JUDGE, A MAGISTRATE OR A JUSTICE OF THE PEACE AS AT PRESENT.

BUT THAT SUCH APPLICATIONS IN FUTURE WOULD HAVE TO BE FOUNDED ON THE WRITTEN OPINION OF A REGISTERED MEDICAL PRACTITIONER WHO MUST BE SATISFIED THAT THE ADMISSION WAS JUSTIFIED BY THE NATURE AND DEGREE OF THE MENTAL DISORDER AND WAS NECESSARY IN THE INTERESTS OF THE PATIENT'S HEALTH OR SAFETY OR FOR THE PROTECTION OF OTHER PERSONS.

THE BILL ALSO PROVIDED THAT WHERE AN APPLICATION FOR A DETENTION ORDER WAS MADE BY A DOCTOR OR SOCIAL WORKER, THE APPLICANT SHOULD TAKE ALL PRACTICAL STEPS TO INFORM A RELATIVE OF THE PERSON TO BE DETAINED, MR CHAMBERS SAID.

CLAUSE 6 INTRODUCED A NEW PROVISION TO ENABLE A MENTALLY-HANDICAPPED OR MENTALLY-ILL PERSON ABOVE THE AGE OF 18 TO BE PLACED UNDER THE GUARDIANSHIP EITHER OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE OR OF ANOTHER PERSON ACCEPTABLE TO THE DIRECTOR.

AN APPLICATION FOR GUARDIANSHIP MIGHT BE MADE TO THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE BY A RELATIVE, A DOCTOR, OR A PUBLIC OFFICER IN THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT, HE ADDED.

ALSO, IT MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A STATEMENT FROM TWO DOCTORS THAT THE PERSON CONCERNED WAS SUFFERING FROM MENTAL DISORDER AND THAT IT WAS NECESSARY IN THE INTERESTS OF HIS WELFARE OR FOR THE PROTECTION OF OTHERS THAT A GUARDIAN SHOULD BE APPOINTED.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THE GUARDIAN WOULD HAVE POWER TO APPOINT A PLACE OF RESIDENCE FOR THE PERSON UNDER GUARDIANSHIP, AND TO REQUIRE ACCESS TO IT TO BE GIVEN TO DOCTORS, SOCIAL WORKERS AND OTHER SPECIFIED PERSONS, AND TO REQUIRE THE PERSON UNDER GUARDIANSHIP TO ATTEND AT SPECIFIED PLACES FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT, TRAINING, EDUCATION OR OCCUPATION.

/PROVISION WAS

PROVISION WAS ALSO MADE FOR THE AUTOMATIC TRANSFER OF GUARDIANSHIP TO THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE IF THE GUARDIAN DIED OR RELINGUISHED HIS FUNCTION, AND FOR THE TRANSFER OF GUARDIANSHIP FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER UPON APPLICATION TO A DISTRICT JUDGE, HE ADDED.

TO ENSURE THAT GUARDIANSHIP WAS SUBJECT TO REGULAR REVIEW, ALL GUARDIANSHIP ARRANGEMENTS WOULD AUTOMATICALLY CEASE TWO YEARS AFTER THEIR COMMENCEMENT UNLESS THEY WERE RENEWED BY A FURTHER APPLICATION TO THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE.

MR CHAMBERS SAID CLAUSE 7 SET OUT THE GROUNDS ON WHICH A PATIENT IN A MENTAL HOSPITAL MIGHT BE DETAINED FOR TREATMENT BEYOND THE INITIAL PERIOD OF DETENTION FOR OBSERVATION.

TWO DOCTORS MUST CERTIFY THAT IT WAS NECESSARY FOR THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF THE PATIENT OR FOR THE PROTECTION OF OTHER PEOPLE THAT HE SHOULD RECEIVE THIS TREATMENT AND THAT IT COULD NOT BE PROVIDED UNLESS HE WAS DETAINED UNDER THIS SECTION; AND THIS CERTIFICATE MUST BE COUNTERSIGNED BY A DISTRICT JUDGE.

CLAUSE 13 EMPOWERED THE MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT, IN CASES WHERE A MENTAL PATIENT HAD A MEDICAL HISTORY OF CRIMINAL VIOLENCE OR A DISPOSITION TO COMMIT SUCH VIOLENCE, TO DISCHARGE HIM FROM HOSPITAL SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS, WHICH MIGHT INCLUDE A REQUIREMENT TO RESIDE IN A SPECIFIED PLACE, TO ATTEND FOR OUT-PATIENT MEDICAL TREATMENT, TO TAKE PRESCRIBED MEDICINE, OR TO BE SUPERVISED BY THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE.

HE SAID PATIENTS WHO FAILED TO COMPLY WITH ANY SUCH CONDITIONS MIGHT BE RECALLED TO THE HOSPITAL.

SUBJECT TO THE CONSENT OF THE GOVERNOR AND ON THE ADVICE OF A DOCTOR, THE COMMISSIONER OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES COULD SIMILARLY AUTHORISE CONDITIONAL DISCHARGE FOR OFFENDER PATIENTS DETAINED IN THE CORRECTIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT'S PSYCHIATRIC CENTRE, HE ADDED.

CLAUSE 17 OF THE BILL PROVIDED THAT WHERE AN OFFENDER PATIENT HAD BEEN DETAINED IN A PSYCHIATRIC CENTRE UNDER A SENTENCE OF IMPRISONMENT FOR A FIXED TERM OR A HOSPITAL ORDER AUTHORISING DETENTION FOR A SPECIFIED PERIOD, AND HIS MENTAL STATE WAS SUCH THAT IT WAS CONSIDERED THAT HE SHOULD NOT BE DISCHARGED AT THE END OF THE TERM OF THE SENTENCE OR PERIOD OF THE HOSPITAL ORDER, THE DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES MIGHT APPLY TO THE COURT FOR A HOSPITAL ORDER AUTHORISING FURTHER DETENTION.

SUCH APPLICATIONS MUST BE SUPPORTED BY MEDICAL OPINION AND JUSTIFIED BY THE NATURE AND DEGREE OF THE MENTAL DISORDER OF THE PATIENT CONCERNED AND THE NEED TO PROTECT THE PUBLIC.

CLAUSE 20 OF THE BILL ENABLED THE GOVERNOR TO ORDER THE TRANSFER OF A PATIENT DETAINED UNDER A HOSPITAL ORDER FROM A PSYCHIATRIC CENTRE TO A MENTAL HOSPITAL, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH IT WOULD BE MORE BENEFICIAL FOR A PATIENT TO BE HELD IN A MENTAL HOSPITAL RATHER THAN IN A PRISON ENVIRONMENT, MR CHAMBERS SAID.

CLAUSE 22 OF THE BILL PROVIDED FOR A NEW PART IV A OF THE ORDINANCE WHICH ESTABLISHED A MENTAL HEALTH REVIEW TRIBUNAL TO REPLACE THE EXISTING HOSPITAL ORDER APPEAL TRIBUNAL, WHICH ONLY DEALT WITH PETITIONS SUBMITTED BY OFFENDER PATIENTS.

HE SAID THE NEW TRIBUNAL WOULD BE CHAIRED BY A PERSON WITH SUITABLE LEGAL EXPERIENCE AND WOULD CONSIST OF MEMBERS DRAWN FROM THE MEDICAL, SOCIAL WORK AND OTHER PROFESSIONS. IT WOULD BE EMPOWERED TO REVIEW THE CASES OF PATIENTS LIABLE TO DETENTION, PERMITTED TO BE ABSENT FOR A TRIAL PERIOD, CONDITIONALLY DISCHARGED, OR ADMITTED TO GUARDIANSHIP.

IN ADDITION, THE BILL STIPULATED THAT IF A PATIENT OR HIS RELATIVE DID NOT EXERCISE THE RIGHT TO APPEAL TO THE TRIBUNAL FOR HIS CASE TO BE REVIEWED WITHIN 12 MONTHS AFTER THE RIGHT FIRST BECAME AVAILABLE, THE MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT, OR THE COMMISSIONER OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES AS APPROPRIATE, MUST REFER THE PATIENT'S CASE TO THE TRIBUNAL FOR AUTOMATIC REVIEW.

MR CHAMBERS SAID CLAUSE 26 INTRODUCED A NEW PROVISION WHICH REQUIRED THE MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT OF EVERY MENTAL HOSPITAL OR THE SUPERINTENDENT OF THE CORRECTIONAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT'S PSYCHIATRIC CENTRE TO TAKE SUCH STEPS AS WERE PRACTICABLE TO ENSURE THAT EVERY PATIENT BEING DETAINED, AND ALSO ONE OF HIS RELATIVES, WAS INFORMED OF THE PATIENT'S RIGHTS UNDER THE ORDINANCE.

CLAUSE 28 PROVIDED THAT A MAGISTRATE MIGHT GRANT A WARRANT AUTHORISING A POLICE OFFICER OR OTHER AUTHORISED PERSONS TO ENTER ANY PRIVATE PREMISES IN THE PRESENCE OF AN APPROVED SOCIAL WORKER OR COMMUNITY PSYCHIATRIC NURSE, IF THERE WAS REASON TO BELIEVE THAT A PERSON LIABLE TO BE TAKEN OR RETAKEN UNDER THE ORDINANCE OR A PERSON SUSPECTED TO BE SUFFERING FROM MENTAL DISORDER WAS TO BE FOUND THERE, HE SAID.

CLAUSE 28 ALSO EMPOWERED A POLICE OFFICER TO TAKE INTO CUSTODY A SUSPECTED MENTALLY DISORDERED PERSON, AND TO REMOVE HIM FORTHWITH TO THE ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT OF A GENERAL HOSPITAL WHERE HE MIGHT BE DETAINED FOR UP TO 24 HOURS FOR THE PURPOSE OF ENABLING HIM TO BE EXAMINED BY A DOCTOR AND OF MAKING THE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS FOR HIS TREATMENT AND CARE.

FOR THIS POWER TO BE EXERCISED, THE SUSPECTED MENTALLY DISORDERED PERSON MUST APPEAR TO THE POLICE OFFICER TO BE IN IMMEDIATE NEED OF CARE AND CONTROL AND THE POLICE OFFICER MUST CONSIDER THAT IT WAS NECESSARY TO TAKE ACTION IN THE INTERESTS OF THAT PERSON OR FOR THE PROTECTION OF OTHER PERSONS, MR CHAMBERS SAID.

/MR CHAMBERS

MR CHAMBERS SAID THERE HAD BEEN EXTENSIVE CONSULTATION OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS WITH THE MEDICAL ASSOCIATIONS AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL BODIES, THE UNIVERSITIES, THE HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND THE MEDICAL DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THE REHABILITATION DEVELOPMENT CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE.

HE URGED COUNCIL MEMBERS TO CONSIDER THE BILL AS A WHOLE.

"A GREAT DEAL OF CAREFUL THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION HAD GONE INTO IT, AND IN THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW IT REPRESENTS A BALANCED SET OF PROVISIONS FOR DEALING WITH THIS VERY DIFFICULT AREA OF OUR HEALTH AND WELFARE SERVICES."

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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INSOLVENCY FUND PROTECTION EXPANDED

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THE PROPOSALS CONTAINED IN THE PROTECTION OF WAGES ON INSOLVENCY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987 REPRESENT A VERY IMPORTANT STEP FORWARD IN THE PROTECTION WHICH THE PROTECTION OF WAGES ON INSOLVENCY FUND WILL GIVE TO WORKERS AFFECTED BY THE INSOLVENCY OF THEIR EMPLOYERS, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON MICHELANGELO PAGLIARI, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING DURING THE COMMITTEE STAGE OF THE BILL, MR PAGLIARI SAID THE PRINCIPLE HAD BEEN ACCEPTED THAT WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE COVERAGE OF THE FUND.

"BY INCLUDING SEVEN DAYS' WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE, THE LIABILITIES ON THE FUND HAVE BEEN INCREASED BY 30 PER CENT,"

"THIS IS A SIGNIFICANT ADDITIONAL BURDEN WHICH THE FUND APPEARS NOW TO BE ROBUST ENOUGH TO ASSUME."

COMMENTING ON THE MOTION PROPOSED BY MR SZETO WAH, MR PAGLIARI SAID IT WAS BASED ON TWO PROPOSITIONS.

"FIRSTLY THAT THE PROTECTION OF WAGES ON INSOLVENCY FUND HAS GROWN FROM \$39.5 MILLION AT THE END OF ITS FIRST YEAR OF OPERATION, TO \$68.1 MILLION AT THE END OF ITS SECOND YEAR AND IS PROJECTED TO GROW TO \$83.1 MILLION AT THE END OF THE PRESENT YEAR DESPITE THE EXTENSION OF ITS COVERAGE TO INCLUDE ONE WEEK'S WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE.

/"IT IS

"IT IS FELT THAT THE FUND CAN WELL AFFORD TO BE MORE GENEROUS BY EXTENDING THE PROTECTION OF WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE TO ONE MONTH'S WAGES INSTEAD OF THE PROPOSED ONE WEEK'S WAGES.

"THE SECOND PROPOSITION IS THAT, AS THE FUND'S COVERAGE OF ARREARS OF WAGES (FOUR MONTHS' WAGES OR \$8,000) IS CONSISTENT WITH THE LIMITS SET FOR PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT UNDER THE BANKRUPTCY AND COMPANIES ORDINANCES SO TOO THE LIMIT OF COVERAGE FOR WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE SHOULD BE THE SAME AS LAID DOWN FOR A PREFERRED CREDITOR IN THE EVENT OF AN EMPLOYER'S BANKRUPTCY," HE SAID.

AS FOR THE FIRST PROPOSITION, MR PAGLIARI SAID HE COULD SEE THE FORCE OF THE ARGUMENT THAT AS THE FUND'S RESERVES WERE INCREASING, IT SHOULD BE ABLE TO EXTEND THE PROTECTION IT GAVE TO THE WORKERS TO AREAS NOT PRESENTLY COVERED. HE ADDED THE FIGURES QUOTED AS THE SIZE OF THE FUND WERE SLIGHTLY OVERSTATED AS THEY WERE BASED ON AN ASSESSED SURPLUS OF THE FUND'S OPERATION WITHOUT THE FINAL ACCOUNTS.

HE SAID WAGES ROSE EVERY YEAR AND THE AMOUNT OF FUNDS WHICH NEEDED TO BE AVAILABLE TO MEET THE SAME NUMBER OF CLAIMS WENT UP EVERY YEAR.

"THIS TREND WILL INEVITABLY CONTINUE AND WILL BE EXACERBATED WITH EVERY ADDITION TO THE FUND'S COVERAGE," HE EXPLAINED.

"I NOTE THAT MR TAM YIU-CHUNG CONSIDERS THAT WE ARE WORRYING UNDULY ABOUT A POSSIBLE DOWNTURN IN THE ECONOMY," HE SAID.

MR PAGLIARI SAID ECONOMIC BOOMS WOULD NOT CONTINUE FOREVER, BUT THE NEED TO PROTECT WORKERS' WAGES FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR EMPLOYERS' INSOLVENCIES WOULD CONTINUE FOREVER.

"IT IS THEREFORE ESSENTIAL, AS I SAID WHEN I INTRODUCED THIS BILL, THAT THE FUND BUILDS UP A SOUND RESERVE DURING THE ECONOMY'S GOOD YEARS, SO THAT IT CAN PROTECT WORKERS' INTERESTS WHEN TIMES ARE HARD," HE SAID.

COMMENTING ON THE SECOND PROPOSITION, HE SAID IT WAS BASED ON A FALSE PREMISE THAT THE PROTECTION OF WAGES ON INSOLVENCY FUND WAS SET UP TO CATER FOR EVERY OBLIGATION WHICH AN INSOLVENT EMPLOYER MIGHT HAVE TO HIS EMPLOYEES.

MR PAGLIARI SAID IT HAD NEVER BEEN THE INTENTION THAT THE FUND SHOULD PAY WORKERS, IN FULL, ALL THAT MIGHT BE DUE TO THEM ON THE INSOLVENCY OF THEIR EMPLOYERS.

"THE FUND IS INTENDED TO BE A SAFETY NET: TO ENSURE THAT NO EMPLOYEE SUFFERS HARDSHIP WHILE WAITING FOR THE COURTS TO DETERMINE HIS SHARE OF THE PROCEEDS OF HIS EMPLOYER'S WINDING-UP AND FOR THE RECEIVER TO REALISE THE ASSETS."

IN THE CASE OF WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE, MR PAGLIARI SAID SOME WORKERS WERE CONTRACTUALLY ENTITLED TO A LONGER PERIOD OF NOTICE WHILE THE VAST MAJORITY OF LOWER-PAID WORKERS WERE LEGALLY ENTITLED TO SEVEN DAYS' NOTICE AND COULD STAND AS PREFERRED CREDITORS FOR ONLY THAT AMOUNT.

HE SAID THOSE LOWER PAID WORKERS WOULD BE COVERED IN FULL BY THE PROPOSAL IN THE PRESENT BILL.

"THE FORTUNATE MINORITY WHO ARE CONTRACTUALLY ENTITLED TO MORE, AND WHO TEND TO BE THE BETTER-PAID EMPLOYEES, WILL RECEIVE THE SAME COVERAGE FROM THE FUND AND WILL STAND AS PREFERRED CREDITORS FOR THE BALANCE.

"I CAN SEE NO JUSTIFICATION FOR THE FUND BEING REQUIRED TO DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN ONE WORKER AND ANOTHER WHICH WOULD BE THE INEVITABLE CONSEQUENCE OF MR SZETO'S AMENDMENT,"

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CAUTION IN MANAGEMENT OF FUND URGED

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THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG TODAY (WEDNESDAY) SPOKE AGAINST A MOTION BY THE HON SZETO WAH WHICH SOUGHT TO EXPAND THE SCOPE OF THE PROTECTION OF WAGES ON INSOLVENCY FUND FROM SEVEN DAYS' PAYMENT IN LIEU OF NOTICE TO 30 DAYS.

"ALTHOUGH I RECOGNISE THAT EACH AND EVERY MEMBER OF THIS COUNCIL HAS THE RIGHT TO PROPOSE ANY MOTIONS OR AMENDMENTS, YET, IF THIS AMENDMENT WAS ADOPTED TODAY, I FEAR IT WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE AN UNSETTLING EFFECT ON THE WELL TRIED WAY THROUGH WHICH MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL WOULD MONITOR, DEVELOP AND REFINE, THROUGH GENERAL CONSENSUS, GOVERNMENT POLICY PROPOSALS," HE SAID.

MORE IMPORTANTLY, HE BELIEVED THAT THE AMENDMENT, IF ADOPTED, RAN THE RISK OF CONTRIBUTING TOWARDS A FASTER PACE OF DEPLETION OF THE FUND.

"WE MUST NOT FORGET THAT THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE FUND IS TO PROTECT AS WELL AS TO PROVIDE PROMPT RELIEF TO OUR WORKFORCE, AGAINST THE UNFORTUNATE SITUATION WHEREBY THEY MAY BE OWED WAGES BY INSOLVENT ESTABLISHMENTS," HE SAID.

HE SAID THE LOGIC IN SUPPORT OF EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF THE FUND, WHICH WAS THAT THE FUND WAS NOW IN GOOD SHAPE, WAS QUESTIONABLE.

"WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED IF THE FUND WERE NOT IN GOOD FINANCIAL SHAPE TO-DATE?" HE QUESTIONED.

/HE ALSO

HE ALSO DISAGREED WITH THE ARGUMENT THAT THE AMENDMENT WAS HARMLESS BECAUSE THE \$2,000 CEILING WAS ALREADY IN PLACE.

HE SAID THIS ONLY HELD TRUE IF EVERY WORKER SEEKING RELIEF THROUGH THIS FUND WERE ENTITLED TO THE MAXIMUM. IF THE MAJORITY OF THE ENTITLEMENT DID NOT LIMIT THE MAXIMUM CEILING THEN EXPANDING SEVEN DAYS IN LIEU OF NOTICE TO 30 DAYS WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE THE EFFECT OF MAKING MORE PAYOUTS FROM THE FUND THEREBY MAKING A DEEPER DENT INTO THE FUND'S RESOURCES.

HE ADDED THAT THE FUND'S EXPERIENCE IN THE PAST TWO YEARS HAD BEEN GAINED WITHIN A PERIOD WHERE THE LOCAL ECONOMIC CLIMATE HAD BEEN VERY HEALTHY. GIVEN AN EXTERNALLY ORIENTED ECONOMY, HONG KONG MUST ALWAYS RECOGNISE THAT IN FUTURE THERE MIGHT BE A POSSIBLE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN. THAT WAS WHEN THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE OF THE FUND WOULD BE MOST NEEDED TO BE UPKEPT.

"WE MUST ALWAYS BE CAUTIOUS AND ALERT IN THE MANAGEMENT OF FUNDS FOR THE PUBLIC AND I CERTAINLY DO NOT BELIEVE WE SHOULD SPEND JUST BECAUSE THERE IS MONEY IN THE BANK," HE CONCLUDED.

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EXTENSION PROVIDES FAIRER PROTECTION FOR EMPLOYEES

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLOR THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG TODAY (WEDNESDAY) SUPPORTED THE HON SZETO WAH'S MOTION WHICH SOUGHT TO EXTEND THE SCOPE OF THE PROTECTION OF WAGES ON INSOLVENCY FUND TO COVER ONE MONTH'S WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE.

MR TAM SAID THAT THE MAXIMUM LIMIT OF SEVEN DAYS' WAGES OR \$2,000 IN LIEU OF NOTICE PAYABLE FROM THE PROTECTION OF WAGES ON INSOLVENCY FUND WAS INCONSISTENT WITH THE PREFERENTIAL PAYMENT OF UP TO ONE MONTH'S WAGES OR \$2,000 PROVIDED FOR UNDER THE COMPANIES ORDINANCE.

HE ADDED THAT IN NEARLY 40 PER CENT OF THE CLAIMS RECEIVED BY THE FUND IN 1985/86, THE PERIOD OF NOTICE REQUIRED WAS LONGER THAN SEVEN DAYS. AS THIS WAS A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER, THE ADOPTION OF A MINIMUM OF SEVEN DAYS' NOTICE FOR THE PAYMENT OF WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE IN ALL CASES WOULD THEREFORE BE UNFAIR TO ABOUT 40 PER CENT OF CLAIMANTS.

HE ALSO NOTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT CONSIDERED THAT IF ALL PAYMENTS WERE BASED ON SEVEN DAYS' NOTICE, IT WOULD AVOID THE UNNECESSARY TROUBLE OF VERIFYING THE AGREED ONE MONTH'S NOTICE IN ORDINARY VERBAL CONTRACTS.

/HE POINTED

HE POINTED OUT THAT ONLY THOSE CASES CLAIMING ONE MONTH'S WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE WOULD NEED TO BE INVESTIGATED. MOREOVER, IT WOULD NOT BE EASY FOR CLAIMANTS TO HOODWINK THE GOVERNMENT EVEN IF THEY HAD THE INTENTION. IT WOULD BE AGAINST THE SPIRIT OF THE FUND IF THE GOVERNMENT WAS TO MINIMISE ITS PROTECTION FOR EMPLOYEES JUST FOR THE SAKE OF SOME SMALL GAINS IN ADMINISTRATIVE CONVENIENCE.

MR TAM DID NOT AGREE WITH THE VIEW THAT THERE WAS A NEED TO TAKE A CAUTIOUS APPROACH TOWARDS ESTIMATES OF THE FUND'S INCOME AND EXPENDITURE BECAUSE OF A POSSIBLE DOWNTURN IN THE ECONOMY IN FUTURE.

HE NOTED THAT IF CLAIMS FOR ONE MONTH'S WAGES WERE TO BE ACCEPTED, ANNUAL PAYMENTS WERE ESTIMATED TO COST \$12.8 MILLION, WHEREAS IF THE SEVEN DAYS' LIMIT WAS ADOPTED, THE COST WOULD BE \$8.4 MILLION. THE DIFFERENCE WAS \$4.4 MILLION, WHICH REPRESENTS ONLY FIVE PER CENT OF THE ACCUMULATED SURPLUS OF THE FUND.

IF THE GOVERNMENT ACCEPTED THE PROPOSAL OF OMELCO MEMBERS AND THE WORKERS AND EXEMPTS IT FROM THE PAYMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE FEES, THE FUND SHOULD STILL BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN AN ANNUAL SURPLUS EVEN IF THE FORMER LIMIT WAS ADOPTED. IT WAS THEREFORE DIFFICULT TO APPRECIATE THE ANXIETY FELT BY THE GOVERNMENT, HE ADDED.

HE ALSO SAID LABOUR REPRESENTATIVES HAD EXPRESSED UNANIMOUS SUPPORT FOR EXTENDING THE SCOPE OF PROTECTION OF THE FUND TO COVER WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE AND SETTING THE LIMIT AT ONE MONTH'S WAGES AND \$2,000. "FOR THE ABOVE REASONS, I CONSIDER THAT SUCH AN EXTENSION WAS IN FACT ALREADY A VERY CAUTIOUS FIRST STEP AND SHOULD PROVIDE A FAIRER PROTECTION FOR EMPLOYEES," HE SAID.

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IMPROVEMENT OF BENEFITS SHOULD BE PRUDENT

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IMPROVEMENT OF BENEFITS SHOULD BE MADE STEP BY STEP AND AFFORDABLE BY TAKING THE FUTURE INTO ACCOUNT, THE HON CHAN KAM-CHUEN TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AGAINST A MOTION TO MOVE AN AMENDMENT TO THE PROTECTION OF WAGES ON INSOLVENCY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987 AT THE COMMITTEE STAGE, MR CHAN SAID HONG KONG MUST HAVE A SUBSTANTIAL RESERVE TO COPE WITH THE LEAN YEAR AND DID THE BEST IT COULD.

HE SAID THAT AS A SIGNATORY OF THE REPORT ON THE WORKING GROUP ON PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY WORKERS OF COMPANIES IN RECEIVERSHIP OF JUNE 1983, HE SUGGESTED THAT A LEVY OF \$100 PER ANNUM PER BUSINESS REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WOULD SOLVE THE PROBLEM.

/HE WAS

HE WAS GLAD THAT THE GOOD EMPLOYER REPRESENTATIVES VOLUNTARILY ACCEPTED THIS IN GOOD FAITH, BEARING IN MIND THAT THEY DID NOT OWE THE WORKERS A CENT IN WAGES OF COMPANIES IN RECEIVERSHIP.

HOWEVER, HE SAID EMPLOYERS OUTSIDE THE MEETING BELIEVED THAT THIS MIGHT BE THE THIN END OF THE WEDGE AND THE LEVY MIGHT BE INCREASED SUBSTANTIALLY TO MEET MORE AND MORE DEMANDS FROM EMPLOYEES AND TO COVER OTHER ITEMS BESIDES WAGES.

MR CHAN SAID THE PROTECTION OF WAGES ON INSOLVENCY FUND HAD EXTENDED COVERAGE TO THE 13TH MONTH WAGES (I.E., THE CHINESE NEW YEAR BONUS) AND "NOW WE ARE DEBATING ON THE COVERAGE OF WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE (WILON). THE BONE OF CONTENTION WAS 7 DAYS WAGES OR ONE MONTH, HE SAID.

"AS CHAIRMAN OF THE FUND BOARD, I WILL STAND BY THE MAJORITY VIEW OF THE BOARD, I.E., 7 DAYS WILON SHOULD BE COVERED BUT WITHOUT INCREASE IN LEVY FOR THE COMING YEAR."

MR CHAN SAID THE SURPLUS OF THE FUND WAS MADE UP OF SIX MONTHS RESERVE COLLECTED BEFORE DATE OF OPERATION OF THE FUND AND THE 1985/86 AND 1986/87 SURPLUSES WHICH STOOD AT A TOTAL AMOUNT OF \$68.2 MILLION.

HE SAID THE AVERAGE CLAIM PAID IN 1985/6 WAS \$2,292.02 AND IN 1986/7 IT HAD GONE UP BY SOME 12.6 PER CENT DUE TO INFLATION ETC. TO \$2,580.42.

"DISREGARDING THE 7 DAYS WILON PAYMENT AND NEXT YEAR'S INFLATION FACTOR, \$68.2 MILLION MAY BE SUFFICIENT FOR 26,439 PERSONS WHO MAY LOSE THEIR JOBS."

"IF WE OPEN THE FLOOD GATE LIKE THE WAR MEMORIAL FUND AND TRAVEL AGENTS FUND AND MAKE THE PROTECTION OF WAGES ON INSOLVENCY FUND INSOLVENT, THEN AS FUND ADMINISTRATORS, OUR IMPRUDENCE WILL BE DOING INJUSTICE TO THESE 26,439 PERSONS AND THEY WILL HAVE THE FEELING OF THE DOOR OF RELIEF SLAM SHUT IN THEIR FACE," MR CHAN SAID.

CAUTION URGED ON INSOLVENCY FUND

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ANY ESTIMATES OF BOTH INCOME AND EXPENDITURE OF THE PROTECTION OF WAGES ON INSOLVENCY FUND MUST BE TREATED WITH SOME CAUTION, ALTHOUGH ITS FINANCIAL POSITION IS HEALTHY DURING ITS TWO YEARS OF OPERATION, THE HON HO SAI-CHU SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AGAINST THE PROPOSAL PUT FORWARD BY THE HON SZETO WAH AT COMMITTEE STAGE TO EXTEND THE FUND TO COVER ONE MONTH'S WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE, MR HO SAID THIS WAS IN VIEW OF THE LIMITED EXPERIENCE TO DATE OF THE OPERATION OF THE FUND AND THE NEED TO ENSURE THAT ADEQUATE RESERVE MIGHT BE ACCUMULATED TO MEET OTHER POSSIBLE EXTENSIONS IN ITS SCOPE AND ANY UNFORESEEN DEMANDS ON THE FUND'S RESOURCES IN THE FUTURE.

HE ALSO SAID THE PROVISION FOR A LIMIT OF SEVEN DAYS' WAGES WAS CONSISTENT WITH THE MINIMUM PERIOD OF NOTICE AS STIPULATED IN THE EMPLOYMENT ORDINANCE AND THAT WAS ALREADY APPLICABLE TO MORE THAN 60 PER CENT OF THE WORKERS IN HONG KONG.

HE SAID ALTHOUGH THE MAJORITY OF THE EMPLOYER REPRESENTATIVES ON THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD WERE IN FAVOUR OF EXTENDING THE SCOPE OF THE FUND TO COVER SEVEN DAYS' WAGES IN LIEU OF NOTICE, THEY WERE NOT IN FAVOUR OF ANY FURTHER EXTENSION ON THE GROUND THAT THIS WENT BEYOND THE INTENTION OF THE ORIGINAL PROVISIONS OF THE ORDINANCE WHICH LIMITED ANY EX-GRATIA PAYMENT TO AN AMOUNT EQUIVALENT TO FOUR MONTHS' WAGES OR \$8,000, WHICHEVER WAS THE LESSER.

"I WISH TO STRESS THAT IT NEVER WAS THE INTENTION THAT WORKERS BE PAID IN FULL OUT OF THE FUND ALL THAT MAY BE DUE TO THEM ON THE INSOLVENCY OF THEIR EMPLOYERS."

"AT ANY RATE, AS THE MATTER IS TO BE SUBJECT TO A REVIEW IN A YEAR'S TIME, I FEEL WE SHOULD WAIT UNTIL THEN TO SEE WHETHER A FURTHER EXTENSION IS JUSTIFIED," HE ADDED.

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CO-ORDINATED EFFORTS IN HELPING STREET-SLEEPERS

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THERE ARE A GREAT MANY REASONS FOR STREET-SLEEPING AND WHAT IS REQUIRED IS A PERSONALISED APPROACH TO INDIVIDUAL STREET SLEEPERS TO FIND OUT WHAT ARE THEIR PROBLEMS AND TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE AND HELP TO SOLVE THEM.

THIS WAS STATED BY THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WHEN WINDING UP THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THIS TYPE OF SERVICE WAS PROVIDED BY THE STAFF OF THE 23 FAMILY SERVICE CENTRES OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT WHICH WERE LOCATED THROUGHOUT THE TERRITORY.

HE ADDED THAT SINCE MAY THIS YEAR, SPECIAL OUTREACHING TEAMS IN FOUR REGIONS HAD BEEN FORMED TO DEAL WITH DIFFICULT CASES.

THE TASK OF THESE SOCIAL WORKERS WAS TO MAKE CONTACT WITH STREET SLEEPERS AND TO BEFRIEND THEM, TO PROVIDE THEM WITH BLANKETS AND OTHER BASIC ITEMS, TO HELP THEM WITH APPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND FOR IDENTITY CARDS, AND TO REFER THEM FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT AND WELFARE SERVICES WHERE THESE WERE REQUIRED, HE SAID.

MR CHAMBERS ASSURED THAT THE RESOURCES OF THE DEPARTMENT STOOD BEHIND THESE TEAMS.

HE SAID FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE WAS BEING PROVIDED TO STREET SLEEPERS FROM THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM.

OF THE 1333 STREET SLEEPERS IDENTIFIED IN THE 1986 SURVEY, 769 HAD BEEN PROVIDED WITH PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, AMOUNTING TO ABOUT \$4.7 MILLION A YEAR.

EIGHTY-FOUR OF THESE STREET SLEEPERS ALSO RECEIVED SPECIAL NEEDS ALLOWANCES TOTALLING \$400,000 A YEAR, WHILE 205 OF THEM NOW RECEIVED RENTAL ALLOWANCES AMOUNTING TO ABOUT \$615,000 A YEAR; THIS GROUP OF COURSE WERE NO LONGER STREET SLEEPERS, HE SAID. DIRECT CASH PAYMENTS THEREFORE AMOUNTED TO NEARLY \$6 MILLION ANNUALLY, HE ADDED.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THE DEPARTMENT WAS ALSO PLANNING TO SET UP ON AN EXPERIMENTAL BASIS A DAY RELIEF CENTRE IN KOWLOON TO HELP THOSE SUFFERING FROM ILL HEALTH OR DISABILITY AND THOSE WHO APPEARED TO HAVE MENTAL PROBLEMS.

THE NEW CENTRE, TO BE OPERATED BY A VOLUNTARY AGENCY, WOULD PROVIDE FOOD AND CLOTHING, AND PERSONAL CARE SUCH AS BATHS AND HAIR CUTS; ITS STAFF WOULD LIAISE WITH CLINICS AND HOSPITALS TO ARRANGE MEDICAL TREATMENT AND WITH WELFARE AGENCIES FOR ACCOMMODATION AND OTHER LONGER TERM ARRANGEMENTS.

/MR CHAMBERS

MR CHAMBERS AGREED THAT EVERY EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO PERSUADE STREET SLEEPERS TO USE THESE FACILITIES, BUT HE DID NOT THINK THAT A MANDATORY REQUIREMENT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE, EXCEPT POSSIBLY IN CASES WHERE THE INDIVIDUAL CONCERNED POSED A DANGER EITHER TO HIMSELF OR TO OTHERS.

MR CHAMBERS NOTED THAT VOLUNTARY AGENCIES PLAYED A MOST USEFUL ROLE IN HELPING STREET SLEEPERS, PROVIDING NEARLY 1,000 TEMPORARY SHELTER PLACES.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT ALSO INTENDED TO INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY IN HELPING THE HOMELESS. ASSISTANCE FROM DISTRICT BOARDS AND YOUTH GROUPS WOULD BE ENLISTED.

MR CHAMBERS POINTED OUT THAT THE PROBLEM OF STREET SLEEPERS IN HONG KONG WAS QUITE COMPLEX AND CUT ACROSS THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A NUMBER OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND BRANCHES.

"IT SEEMED TO ME TO BE APPROPRIATE IN THIS YEAR OF SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS TO SET UP A CENTRAL CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE TO REVIEW THE VARIOUS POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES AND TO CO-ORDINATE ACTION TO HELP STREET SLEEPERS", HE SAID.

THIS INTER-DEPARTMENTAL GROUP, CONVENED BY THE DEPUTY SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, WOULD ALSO BE LIAISING CLOSELY WITH DISTRICT BOARDS AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES SO THAT A CO-ORDINATING COMMUNITY EFFORT COULD BE MOBILISED TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM, HE ADDED.

MR CHAMBERS ASSURED THAT MEMBERS' COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS IN TODAY'S DEBATE WOULD BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED BY THE COMMITTEE.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THE NUMBER OF STREET SLEEPERS IN RECENT YEARS HAD BEEN FAIRLY STABLE AND THERE WAS NO INDICATION OF ANY SIGNIFICANT INCREASE.

A SURVEY CONDUCTED IN MARCH THIS YEAR IDENTIFIED A TOTAL OF 1,319 STREET SLEEPERS, COMPARED WITH 1,333 IN 1986.

MOST STREET SLEEPERS WERE FOUND IN THE OLDER URBAN DISTRICTS SUCH AS YAU MA TEI, MONG KOK, SHAM SHUI PO, KOWLOON CITY, WONG TAI SIN, CENTRAL AND WESTERN AND WANCHAI.

MR CHAMBERS NOTED THAT IN THIS YEAR'S SURVEY, 34 PER CENT APPEARED TO BE IN NORMAL HEALTH, 30 PER CENT WERE DRUG ADDICTS, 12 PER CENT APPEARED TO SUFFER FROM SOME DEGREE OF MENTAL ILLNESS OR HANDICAP, 10 PER CENT FROM PHYSICAL AILMENTS AND EIGHT PER CENT WERE ALCOHOLICS.

SOME SAID THAT THEY SLEPT IN THE STREET BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT AFFORD THE HIGH RENTS CHARGED FOR ACCOMMODATION, BUT OTHERS, MAINLY THE YOUNGER, ABLE-BODIED STREET-SLEEPERS, DID SO APPARENTLY BECAUSE THEY FOUND IT CONVENIENT TO STAY CLOSE TO THEIR WORK, MR CHAMBERS SAID.

/IT HAD

IT HAD BEEN SUGGESTED THAT THERE SHOULD BE LEGISLATION TO PREVENT STREET SLEEPING WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE AUTHORITIES TO REMOVE THESE VAGRANTS FROM THE STREETS, BUT MR CHAMBERS DOUBTED WHETHER SUCH A PROPOSAL WOULD RECEIVE MUCH PUBLIC SUPPORT IN A FREE AND OPEN SOCIETY SUCH AS HONG KONG.

MR CHAMBERS SAID STREET SLEEPING WAS NOT A STRAIGHTFORWARD ISSUE WHICH COULD BE DEALT WITH BY A SINGLE PIECE OF LEGISLATION, OR EVEN A SINGLE POLICY.

"STREET SLEEPING IS A PROBLEM WHICH HAS A VERY LONG HISTORY IN HONG KONG, AND I DOUBT WHETHER WE SHALL EVER SUCCEED IN ELIMINATING IT COMPLETELY," HE SAID.

"BUT I THINK IT IS TRUE TO SAY THAT IN THIS INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS WE ARE MAKING A MORE CONCERTED EFFORT TO HELP THESE UNFORTUNATE PEOPLE THAN HAS BEEN THE CASE IN THE PAST.

"SOME STREET SLEEPERS MAY REJECT OUR OFFERS OF HELP, BUT I THINK THAT OUR AIM SHOULD BE TO ENSURE THAT HELP IS AVAILABLE FOR ALL THOSE WHO NEED IT AND ARE PREPARED TO ACCEPT IT." HE SAID.

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STREET SLEEPING PROBLEM BEING TACKLED

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GOVERNMENT EFFORTS ARE BEING MADE TO WORK OUT A CO-ORDINATED ENDEAVOUR TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM OF STREET SLEEPERS, THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DONALD LIAO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

WINDING UP THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS, MR LIAO SAID FAVOURABLE TREATMENT FOR STREET SLEEPERS MIGHT HAVE THE EFFECT OF ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO TAKE TO THE STREETS IN ORDER TO OBTAIN URBAN HOUSING.

"LIKE MOST PEOPLE SEEKING HOUSING, STREET SLEEPERS WOULD PREFER TO BE REHOUSED IN THE URBAN AREAS. HOWEVER, THIS IS DIFFICULT TO JUSTIFY PARTICULARLY IN THE CASE OF ABLE-BODIED SINGLETONS, WHEN MANY OTHERS WHO HAVE LOST THEIR HOMES IN SQUATTER FIRES HAVE TO MOVE TO THE NEW TERRITORIES FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT ACCOMMODATION IN THE URBAN AREA IS LIMITED," MR LIAO SAID.

ABLE-BODIED STREET SLEEPERS, SOME OF WHOM MIGHT ALREADY HAVE PERMANENT ACCOMMODATION, WERE LIKELY TO BE SLEEPING ON THE STREET BECAUSE THEY HAD JOBS NEARBY OR WERE LOOKING FOR WORK IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, WHILE THOSE WHO WERE DOWN-AND-OUT WITHOUT A PLACE TO LIVE OR THOSE WHO APPEARED TO BE MENTALLY ILL WERE OFFERED TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION IN SHELTERS RUN BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES, HE ADDED.

/ "THERE ARE

"THERE ARE ABOUT 1,000 SUCH PLACES TO WHICH STREET-SLEEPERS MAY BE REFERRED. THOSE SEEKING ACCOMMODATION, INCLUDING SINGETONS, MAY ALSO BE HELPED UNDER THE COMPASSIONATE REHOUSING PROGRAMME IN WHICH 900 FLATS ARE RESERVED EACH YEAR BY THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT FOR ALLOCATION ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT," HE SAID.

MR LIAO POINTED OUT THAT NEARLY 45 PER CENT OF THE TERRITORY'S POPULATION LIVED IN PUBLIC HOUSING AND THAT HONG KONG SHOULD BE JUSTIFIABLY PROUD OF THIS REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENT.

"OVER THE PAST 30 YEARS, GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTING A PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME DESIGNED TO ENSURE THAT THOSE WHO ARE HOMELESS AND INADEQUATELY HOUSED, ARE PROVIDED WITH PROPER HOUSING AT AN AFFORDABLE RENT OR PRICE," MR LIAO SAID.

"THIS IS ACHIEVED THROUGH THE ALLOCATION OF PUBLIC HOUSING UNITS TO APPLICANTS ON THE WAITING LIST, CLEARANCE AND REHOUSING FOR SQUATTERS, REDEVELOPMENT OF OLDER PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES, PROVISION OF TEMPORARY HOUSING AREAS AND SALE OF HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME FLATS," HE ADDED.

"IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THERE ARE 430,000 LAND SQUATTERS LIVING IN THE TERRITORY, OF WHOM 150,000 ARE IN THE URBAN AREAS AND 280,000 IN THE NEW TERRITORIES," HE SAID.

"OF THE URBAN SQUATTERS, 32,000 ARE LIVING ON DANGEROUS SLOPES," HE ADDED.

MR LIAO SAID GOOD PROGRESS WAS BEING MADE IN REHOUSING SQUATTERS AT AN ANNUAL RATE OF ABOUT 35,000. OF THIS, 11,000 WERE BEING CLEARED FROM DANGEROUS SLOPES AND AT THIS RATE ALL SQUATTERS IN THIS CATEGORY SHOULD BE REHOUSED BY 1991.

"IT IS PLANNED THAT THE REMAINING URBAN SQUATTERS WOULD BE REHOUSED BY THE MID-1990S," HE SAID.

THERE WERE ABOUT 7,000 MARINE SQUATTERS LIVING WITHIN VARIOUS TYPHOON SHELTERS, AND OVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS, MORE THAN HALF OF THEM WOULD BE REHOUSED BY DEVELOPMENT CLEARANCES, WHILE THE REMAINDER WOULD BE REHOUSED THROUGH NON-DEVELOPMENT CLEARANCES BY THE MID-1990S, MR LIAO SAID.

LIVING CONDITIONS FOR SQUATTERS IN THE NEW TERRITORIES WERE ON THE WHOLE BETTER AND MANY OF THE STRUCTURES WERE BUILT OF MORE SUBSTANTIAL MATERIALS WITH ONLY A FEW SITUATED ON HILLSIDES.

THE IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED WERE MAINLY IN THE PROVISIONS OF BASIC FACILITIES AND THESE WERE BEING PROVIDED UNDER VARIOUS PROGRAMMES, MR LIAO SAID.

/HE SAID

HE SAID GOOD GOOD PROGRESS WAS ALSO BEING MADE IN THE REDEVELOPMENT OF MARKS ONE AND TWO PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES WITH THE PROGRAMME DUE TO BE COMPLETED IN 1990. DETAILED PLANS WERE BEING WORKED OUT TO REDEVELOP MARKS THREE TO SIX ESTATES AND FORMER GOVERNMENT LOW COST HOUSING ESTATES STARTING IN MID-1990S.

A SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT IN 1984 SHOWED THAT THERE WERE 3,900 PEOPLE LIVING IN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS, OFTEN REFERRED TO AS CAGED MEN, AND OF THESE 75 PER CENT WERE UNDER 60 YEARS OLD, MR LIAO SAID.

"IT IS UNDERSTOOD THAT A NUMBER OF BEDSPACE LODGERS ALREADY HAVE ADEQUATE HOUSING OUTSIDE THE URBAN AREAS, AND THEY RENT BED SPACES IN CERTAIN URBAN DISTRICTS IN ORDER TO BE CLOSE TO THEIR PLACES OF WORK," HE ADDED.

HE SAID THESE PEOPLE WERE ALSO ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR PUBLIC HOUSING THROUGH THE WAITING LIST AND FOR THOSE WHO, FOR VARIOUS REASONS WERE IN PARTICULAR NEED, COULD BE REFERRED BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT FOR URGENT REHOUSING ON COMPASSIONATE GROUNDS.

THERE WERE OTHER TYPES OF ACCOMMODATION FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE SUCH AS SHARED ACCOMMODATION IN PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES, MR LIAO SAID.

A HOUSING DEPARTMENT SURVEY CONDUCTED LAST YEAR SHOWED THAT 86 PER CENT OF THE 1,322 SINGLE PERSONS REHOUSED ON A SHARED FLAT BASIS SAID THEY WERE LIVING TOGETHER HARMONIOUSLY, WHILE EIGHT PER CENT SAID THERE WERE OCCASIONAL DISPUTES AND SIX PER CENT SAID DISPUTES WERE FREQUENT, HE ADDED.

"AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO PUBLIC HOUSING, ELDERLY BEDSPACE LODGERS CAN ALSO APPLY FOR PLACES IN HOSTELS FOR THE ELDERLY OR OLD PEOPLE'S HOMES," MR LIAO SAID.

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LEGCO GROUP FINDS SIX AREAS OF CONCERN FOR THE HOMELESS

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THE LEGCO AD HOC GROUP TO PREPARE FOR THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS HAS IDENTIFIED SIX AREAS OF CONCERN, CONVENOR OF THE GROUP, THE HON MRS PAULINE NG, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"THEY ARE NAMELY, STREET SLEEPERS, PEOPLE LIVING IN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS, RUN-AWAY OR ABUSED CHILDREN NEEDING SHELTER, BOAT PEOPLE, SQUATTERS LIVING ON DANGEROUS SLOPES AND TEMPORARY HOUSING AREA TENANTS AWAITING PERMANENT HOUSING," SHE SAID.

/MRS NG

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MRS NG SAID THAT IN SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS TO THESE SIX CATEGORIES OF PEOPLE, THE GROUP WAS AWARE THAT THERE WERE VARIETIES OF BACKGROUND FOR THESE GROUPS AND THE PUBLIC ATTITUDE TO THEM ALSO VARY.

"ONE MAY LOOK WITH ABHORENCE THE SHABBY SOLILOQUYING STREET SLEEPERS IN THE CENTRAL, BUT BE MOVED AT THE PLIGHT OF THE DYING OLD MAN IN COLD WEATHER FROM NEWSPAPER READING, AND PROBABLY INFURIATED TO SEE SOME ABLE-BODIED STREET SLEEPERS FIGHTING FOR PRIORITIES IN URBAN GOVERNMENT HOUSING.

"IT SHOULD BE ACCEPTED THAT BOTH ASSISTANCE AND DETERRENCE ARE NECESSARY TO DISSUADE PEOPLE FROM STREET SLEEPING.

"IT IS THE BALANCE BETWEEN THE TWO THAT DIFFERENT VIEWS MIGHT BE HEARD AND I HOPE THE GOVERNMENT WOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT ALL VIEWS EXPRESSED AND ESTABLISH A SYMPATHETIC AS WELL AS MORE CLEARCUT POLICY TO THIS DESTITUTE GROUP OF PEOPLE IN OUR SOCIETY."

ON STREET SLEEPERS, MRS NG SAID IT WAS NOT A WELCOMING SIGN TO SEE INCREASING NUMBER OF STREET-SLEEPERS FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS, FROM 971 IN 1984 TO 1,333 IN 1986 AND THE NUMBER HAD ONLY STEADIED AT 1,319 THIS YEAR.

"INDEED MEMBERS OF THIS COUNCIL HAVE RAISED QUESTIONS ON STREET-SLEEPERS ALMOST EVERY YEAR. THIS PERENNIAL PROBLEM CONCERNS SEVERAL ASPECTS.

"ON THE ONE HAND, STREET-SLEEPERS MIGHT POSE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEM TO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND CONSTITUTE NUISANCE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY ARE THE MOST DESTITUTE GROUP IN THE SOCIETY DEPRIVED OF HUMAN DIGNITY, AND WANTING ASSISTANCE, BOTH WELFARE OR HOUSING."

SHE SAID THE BASIC SOLUTION FOR THE STREET-SLEEPERS WAS TO PROVIDE SHELTERS AND THE FOUR SHELTERS FOR STREET-SLEEPERS HAD PROVIDED MEANINGFUL SERVICE.

SHE SAID THE 1986 SURVEY IN STUDYING THE STREET-SLEEPERS' GENERAL AWARENESS OF SUCH SHELTERS AND THEIR USAGE HOWEVER, REFLECTED THAT A LOT MORE WAS TO BE DESIRED.

SHE SAID 74.8 PER CENT OF THE RESPONDED STREET-SLEEPERS HAD NEVER HEARD OF THE SHELTER FOR STREET-SLEEPERS, 8.7 PER CENT DID NOT KNOW THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE SHELTER FOR THE STREET-SLEEPERS AND ONLY 8.5 PER CENT KNEW OF THE SHELTER FOR THE STREET-SLEEPERS.

OF THE VARIOUS REASONS GIVEN BY THE RESPONDENTS OF NOT GOING TO THE SHELTER FOR STREET-SLEEPERS, SOME QUOTED SHORT OPENING HOURS, TOO CROWDED, OR TOO FAR AWAY FROM THE PRESENT LOCATION OF STAY.

"THESE POINT TO THE FACT THAT IMPROVEMENTS ARE IN FACT POSSIBLE AND NECESSARY TO ENCOURAGE MORE STREET-SLEEPERS TO MAKE USE OF THE SHELTERS AND THE SERVICES PROVIDED THERE," MRS NG SAID.

/"FIRSTLY, MORE

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"FIRSTLY, MORE SUCH SHELTERS IS DESIRED. THEY SHOULD BE LOCATED IN THE MORE ACCESSIBLE PLACES FOR THE STREET-SLEEPERS.

"SECONDLY, ADEQUATE MANPOWER AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES MUST BE GIVEN TO THESE SHELTERS TO PROVIDE SUCH IMPORTANT COUNSELLING SERVICE TO ENABLE THE STREET-SLEEPER RESTORE A NORMAL LIFE AND HIS DEEMED DIGNITY."

MRS NG SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD SO FAR DIRECTED ITS EFFORTS TO IDENTIFYING AND EVEN REACHING OUT TO THE STREET-SLEEPERS TO OFFER SUCH WELFARE ASSISTANCE WHICH WERE NO MORE THAN WHAT THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM OFFERED, E.G. OLD AGE ALLOWANCE, PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, COMPASSIONATE HOUSING, OR SPECIAL NEED ALLOWANCE, SO LONG AS THEY SATISFIED THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS.

"IT IS GOOD TO SEE GOVERNMENT HAS BEGUN TO PAY ATTENTION TO PROVIDING MORE OF SUCH SHELTERS. THIS IS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. BUT THE POLICY SHOULD NOT BE MERE PROVISION OF A PLACE TO SLEEP FOR THE STREET-SLEEPERS BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY THERE SHOULD BE COUNSELLING SERVICES TO ENABLE THEM A FULL RECOVERY READY TO INTEGRATE WITH THE REST OF THE COMMUNITY. FOLLOW-UP WORK IS IMPORTANT."

MRS NG ALSO SAID THAT ALTHOUGH SHE AGREED THAT HOUSING PRIORITIES SHOULD NOT BE UPSET TO MAKE ROOM FOR THE ABLE-BODIED STREET-SLEEPERS, SHE WOULD NOT ENDORSE THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD SHUT ITS DOOR TO THOSE DESTITUTE STREET-SLEEPERS WHO WERE IN NEED OF SHELTERS.

SHE SAID ACCORDING TO THE 1986 SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT, 47 PER CENT OF THE STREET-SLEEPERS WERE ABLE-BODIED. BUT THE REST MIGHT STILL BE NEEDING SHELTERS.

"WHILE SOME MIGHT REQUIRE SPECIAL INSTITUTES LIKE HALF-WAY HOUSES, CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO OFFERING SOME FORM OF GOVERNMENT ACCOMMODATION FOR THE NEEDY OTHERS SO THAT THEY MAY HAVE A PLACE TO SLEEP UPON DISCHARGE FROM HOSPITALS OR STREET-SLEEPER SHELTERS.

"AS AT APRIL 1986, 205 APPLICATIONS FOR ACCOMMODATION FROM THESE STREET-SLEEPERS WERE STILL IN PROCESS OR PENDING ACTION. SHOULD THEY BE SUCCESSFUL, THIS WOULD HELP REDUCING THE NUMBER OF STREET-SLEEPERS."

MRS NG SUGGESTED THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND HOUSING DEPARTMENT TO JOINTLY SERIOUSLY CONSIDER OPTIONS TO ACCOMMODATE THESE STREET-SLEEPERS.

"PERHAPS, UPON THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE, HOUSING DEPARTMENT MIGHT RELAX THE AGE CRITERIA FOR COMPASSIONATE HOUSING FOR THE ILL OR EX-MENTALLY ILL STREET-SLEEPERS,"

HOWEVER, MRS NG ALSO SAID THAT THE AD HOC GROUP WAS AWARE THAT THERE MIGHT BE CERTAIN GROUP OF STREET SLEEPERS WHO PREFERRED STREET SLEEPING.

/"IN THIS

"IN THIS REGARD, SOME MEMBERS FELT MORE EDUCATIONAL MEASURES SHOULD BE LAUNCHED TO DISAPPROVE STREET-SLEEPING. I DO CONCUR THAT LEGISLATION AGAINST STREET-SLEEPING MIGHT BE A BIT HARSH.

"BUT THERE ARE ALWAYS GOOD DISTRICT EFFORTS TO DETER STREET-SLEEPING, E.G. CONDUCT JOINT CLEARANCE OPERATIONS TO CLEAR THE STREET-SLEEPERS BLACKSPOTS. SUCH EFFORTS ARE COMMENDABLE AND BETTER CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS IS DESIRED."

AS FOR PEOPLE LIVING IN BEDSPACE APARTMENTS, MRS NG SAID THE SITUATION OF A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE CRAMMED IN AN APARTMENT GAVE NOT ONLY UNSATISFACTORY LIVING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE RESIDENTS BUT ALSO PROBLEMS LIKE FIRE RISK OR NUISANCE TO OTHER NEIGHBOUR.

BUT THE MAIN CRUX OF THE PROBLEM IS THE FACT THAT THESE APARTMENTS ARE PRIVATE BUILDINGS AND PRESENTLY NO GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT WAS WILLING TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY.

"I SUGGEST DEPARTMENTS CONCERNED TO SIT TOGETHER AND TO FIGURE OUT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF AND SOLUTIONS TO THIS PROBLEM," SHE SAID.

ON THE RUN-AWAY OR ABUSED CHILDREN NEEDING SHELTER, THE GROUP ENQUIRED THE ADMINISTRATION AS TO WHETHER ANY PROBLEM EXISTED IN PROVIDING SHELTER FOR THIS GROUP OF PEOPLE.

"WE ARE PLEASED TO NOTE THAT THE PROBLEM OF RUN-AWAY OR ABUSED CHILDREN IS CONSTANTLY MONITORED BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT AND THAT THE PROBLEM IS NOT CONSIDERED SERIOUS."

SHE NOTED THAT ACCORDING TO THE GOVERNMENT, THERE WERE A TOTAL OF 32,000 SQUATTERS LIVING ON DANGEROUS SLOPES.

THE GOVERNMENT HAD PLAN TO RE-HOUSE ALL THESE SQUATTERS BY 1989/90 AND TO CLEAR ALL OTHER URBAN SQUATTERS BY 1994.

"THIS SHOULD BE WELCOMED AND I HOPE THERE SHOULD BE NO DELAY IN RE-HOUSING THIS VULNERABLE GROUP ANY MORE.

"I AM ALSO GLAD THAT THE HOUSING AUTHORITY HAS APPROVED THE EXTENSION OF THE SQUATTER AREA IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME FOR TWO MORE YEARS. SUCH PROGRAMME ARE MUCH WELCOMED BY SQUATTERS IN BRINGING IMPROVEMENTS TO THEIR LIVING."

ON THE BOAT PEOPLE , MRS NG NOTED THERE WERE ABOUT 6,500 BOAT PEOPLE IN TOTAL.

"IT IS NOTED THAT PLANS FOR RE-HOUSING THE BOAT PEOPLE IN SHAUKEIWAN, AP LEI CHAU AND SAI KUNG ARE AT HAND FOR THE EARLY 1990S BY THE LATEST AND THE REMAINING BY MID 1990S. I HOPE THERE WOULD NOT BE DELAYS IN ALL THESE PLANS."

FINALLY, ON THE THA TENANTS WHICH TOTALLED AT 120,000 PEOPLE, IT WAS EXPECTED THAT THESE "TEMPORARY" ACCOMMODATIONS WOULD REMAIN A FEATURE OF HOUSING IN HONG KONG FOR A RATHER LONG TIME.

/"HENCE, WE

"HENCE, WE ARE TOLD THAT THE MORE RECENTLY BUILT THA ARE WITH IMPROVED FACILITIES LIKE SHOPS AND THAT ALL THAS ARE PROVIDED WITH INDEPENDENT WATER AND ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES."

IN HER CONCLUSION, MRS NG SAID THAT IN PREPARING FOR THE DEBATE, THE GROUP WAS SATISFIED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD INDEED TAKEN GOOD INITIAL STEPS TO TACKLE THE PROBLEM OF THE STREET SLEEPERS AND ALSO PLANNED FOR OTHER GROUPS OF THE HOMELESS.

"CERTAINLY THERE ARE ALWAYS ROOMS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT. THE SETTING UP OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON STREET-SLEEPERS AND THE PROPOSAL TO RUN TWO DAY-RELIEF CUM TEMPORARY SHELTERS ARE ENCOURAGING SIGNS OF GOVERNMENT TAKING ON THE ISSUE.

"I HOPE THE COMMITTEE WOULD CONTINUE THE WORK UNTIL THE COMMUNITY IS SATISFIED THAT THE PROBLEM OF STREET-SLEEPERS HAS BEEN REASONABLY CONTAINED." SHE SAID.

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PROBLEM OF STREET SLEEPERS CALLS FOR CONCERTED EFFORTS

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THE PROBLEM OF STREET SLEEPERS CALLS FOR THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION BY THE GOVERNMENT OF AN OVERALL, LONG TERM POLICY INVOLVING THE CONCERTED EFFORTS OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS, THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES AND THE COMMUNITY, THE HON DAVID K.P. LI SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

SPEAKING AT THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS, MR LI SAID THAT AS A COMMUNITY HONG KONG COULD NOT REMAIN INDIFFERENT TO THE PLIGHT OF STREET SLEEPERS.

"AN EDUCATION PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN IS NEEDED, AND THE PUBLIC MUST BE URGED TO SOUND THE ALERT TO CASES OF STREET SLEEPING."

MR LI SAID THERE WERE POSSIBLY 3,000 STREET SLEEPERS LIVING IN VARIOUS PARTS OF HONG KONG, AND HONG KONG AS A COMMUNITY CONDONED THIS GROWING HUMAN DESPAIR AND HUMILIATION THROUGH TOTALLY INADEQUATE ASSISTANCE TO THEM.

"STREET SLEEPERS 'LIVE' BY ROADSIDES, UNDER FLYOVERS, IN PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS, BY STAIRCASES, EVEN IN PUBLIC LAVATORIES. THEY ARE PREDOMINANTLY MEN, WHOSE AVERAGE AGE IS 49 YEARS. MOST HAVE NO FAMILY IN HONG KONG.

"WHILE SOME ARE IN REASONABLY GOOD HEALTH, MANY ARE DRUG ADDICTS, MENTALLY OR PHYSICALLY ILL, ALCOHOLICS, SENILE, AND PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED. SOME ARE EMPLOYED. MOST ARE NOT.

/ "ALL HAVE

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"ALL HAVE PROBLEMS WHICH HONG KONG COULD SOLVE IN THE IMMEDIATE TERM, THROUGH THE PROVISION OF HOUSING, MEDICAL CARE, PSYCHIATRIC CARE, COUNSELLING, FINANCIAL AID, AND JOBS. WE HAVE THE MEANS. WE LACK THE RESOLVE."

MR LI SAID THAT ACCORDING TO THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT'S 1986 ANNUAL REVIEW, PEOPLE BECAME STREET SLEEPERS BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT AFFORD HIGH RENTS, QUARREL WITH THEIR FAMILIES, OR WERE EVICTED BY THEIR LANDLORDS.

"AMAZINGLY, ONE OF THE REASONS LISTED IN THE REVIEW IS THAT STREET SLEEPERS 'LIKED TO SLEEP IN THE STREET'." HE ASKED HOW A DEPARTMENT WHICH PROFESSED TO OFFER ASSISTANCE AND UNDERSTANDING TO STREET SLEEPERS COULD ACCEPT SUCH A REASON, APPARENTLY WITHOUT QUESTION.

"TO ME THE CONTINUED INCLUSION OF THIS REASON CASTS DOUBT ON THE VALIDITY OF THE REVIEW, AND ON THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT'S ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND THE MENTALITY OF STREET SLEEPERS, AND ULTIMATELY TO SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS. MOREOVER, IT IS CONTRARY TO OTHER FINDINGS."

MR LI SAID THAT FOR INSTANCE, OVER HALF OF 239 STREET SLEEPERS INTERVIEWED IN SHAM SHUI PO IN JANUARY FOR A SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE CITY POLYTECHNIC AND THE SHAM SHUI PO DISTRICT BOARD, WISHED TO HAVE PERMANENT HOUSING AND NONE SAID THEY LIKED BEING STREET SLEEPERS.

"MAY I RECOMMEND THAT THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT REVIEW THEIR 'REVIEW' METHODS AS A MATTER OF PRIORITY," HE SAID.

MR LI ALSO SAID THAT IN THE 1986 REVIEW, THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT TOLD OF PASSING OUT NOTIFICATION CHITS TO 197 "MORE VULNERABLE" STREET SLEEPERS WHO WERE LIKELY TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR WELFARE SERVICES.

"THROUGH THIS DISTRIBUTION OF CHITS, THEY AIMED TO INDUCE SOME STREET SLEEPERS TO APPROACH THE DEPARTMENT FOR ASSISTANCE, MAINLY THOSE OVER 60, WHO WERE DISABLED, IN ILL HEALTH, DRUG ADDICTED AND EARNING LESS THAN \$2,000 A MONTH."

HE SAID THE REVIEW REPORTED THAT ONLY 19 STREET SLEEPERS, OR LESS THAN 10 PER CENT OF THOSE WHO RECEIVED CHITS, TURNED UP FOR ASSISTANCE.

"DISTRIBUTING CHITS IS NOT SOCIAL WELFARE. IT IS MISPLACED BUREAUCRACY. IT IS THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT THAT MUST GO TO THE STREET SLEEPERS, INITIATE CONTACT AND FOLLOW THROUGH. NOT VICE VERSA.

"THE DEPARTMENT HAD BETTER CLIMB DOWN FROM THEIR IVORY TOWER, REMOVE THEIR ROSE-TINTED GLASSES, AND CHANGE THEIR ATTITUDE TO SUIT THE REAL WORLD," HE SAID.

/MR LI

MR LI SAID THE PROBLEM OF STREET SLEEPERS SHOULD NOT BE LEFT TO THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT ALONE.

HE SAID THAT FOR INSTANCE THE 1985 ANNUAL REVIEW SUGGESTED THAT FOR STREET SLEEPERS WHO COULD NOT RECEIVE MEDICAL TREATMENT DUE TO "FINANCIAL OR MOBILITY DIFFICULTIES" MIGHT SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT'S COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICE.

HOWEVER, MR LI SAID A SPOKESMAN FOR THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT HAD TOLD HIM THAT THEY DID NOT EXTEND THE SERVICE TO STREET SLEEPERS BECAUSE THEY WERE WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT.

"IT SEEMS THE GOVERNMENT NEEDED TO FOSTER BETTER COOPERATION AND AWARENESS AMONG THEIR OWN DEPARTMENTS," HE SAID.

MR LI ALSO SAID THE VOLUNTARY WORKERS, SUCH AS THE STREET SLEEPERS SHELTER SOCIETY, AND THE CHRISTIAN YOUTH SERVICE ORGANISATION'S "YOUTH WITH A MISSION", WERE DOING AN EXEMPLARY JOB DESPITE LIMITED FUNDS.

HOWEVER, HE NOTED THAT A SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE HONG KONG COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICES HAD CONCLUDED THAT NO SINGLE AGENCY WAS PROPERLY EMPOWERED TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM OF STREET SLEEPERS EITHER AT POLICY OR FIELDWORK LEVEL.

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COMMITTEE TO HELP STREET SLEEPERS WELCOMED

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THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN TODAY (WEDNESDAY) WELCOMED A MOVE BY HEALTH AND WELFARE BRANCH AND VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS CONCERNED TO SET UP A CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE TO STEP UP SERVICES FOR STREET SLEEPERS.

SPEAKING DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS, MR CHEONG-LEEN SUGGESTED THAT THE COMMITTEE SHOULD CONSIDER THE FEASIBILITY OF PROVIDING TWO DAY RELIEF CUM TEMPORARY SHELTERS FOR STREET SLEEPERS, AS WELL AS SOME BASIC CLEANING UP SERVICES FOR THOSE WITH LONG HAIRS.

HE SAID THE NUB OF THE PROBLEM WAS TO WHAT EXTENT THE PROCEDURE SHOULD BECOME MANDATORY IN THE GENERAL PUBLIC INTEREST AND HAVING REGARD TO STANDARD OF PUBLIC HYGIENE AND MORALITY, WITHOUT GROSS INFRINGEMENT ON THE RIGHTS AND PERSONAL NEEDS OF THE STREET SLEEPERS WITH THEIR VERY PERSONAL AND INDIVIDUAL PROBLEMS.

HE ADDED THAT THE PROCEDURES WOULD HAVE TO BE CAREFULLY DRAWN UP, PUBLICISED AND ACCEPTED BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC BEFORE ENFORCEMENT.

/HE SAID

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HE SAID HIS OWN VIEW WAS THAT PROCEDURES SHOULD BE DEvised FOR LONG-HAIRED AND FILTHY STREET-SLEEPERS TO BE CLEANED UP AT REGULAR INTERVALS BUT THAT THEY SHOULD NOT BE FORCIBLY KEPT OFF THE STREETS AGAINST THEIR WILL UNLESS THEY WERE SUFFERING FROM MENTAL ILLNESS, DRUG RELATED PROBLEMS, ALCOHOLISM, OR IN A MANNER WHICH WOULD MAKE THEM A DANGER TO PUBLIC ORDER.

COMMENTING ON THE ANNUAL REVIEW OF STREET SLEEPERS 1986 PREPARED BY THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT WHICH LISTED OUT THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF STREET SLEEPERS, MR CHEONG-LEEN SAID SPECIAL APPROACHES WOULD HAVE TO BE THOUGHT UP AND SPECIAL FORMS OF ASSISTANCE FOR THEM WOULD HAVE TO BE IMPROVED UPON WITH THE EVENTUAL AIM OF PROVIDING ACCOMMODATION OFF THE STREETS FOR CATEGORIES SUCH AS THE DRUG ADDICTS, THOSE SUFFERING FROM MENTAL ILLNESS OR ALCOHOLISM, OR ILL HEALTH, THE PHYSICALLY DISABLED, OR THE BLIND.

HE ALSO ASKED THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT TO MAKE AVAILABLE AN ADDITIONAL QUOTA IF NEEDED TO RESETTLE STREET SLEEPERS OFF THE STREETS, AS NEARLY HALF OF THEM SURVEYED CLAIMED THAT THEY WERE FORCED TO BE STREET SLEEPERS BECAUSE THEY COULD NOT AFFORD THE HIGH RENT.

MR CHEONG-LEEN TOLD GOVERNMENT THAT WHEREEVER POSSIBLE THE PROGRAMMES TO BE IMPLEMENTED TO RESOLVE THE MULTIFARIOUS PROBLEMS OF STREET-SLEEPERS SHOULD BE FARMED OUT AMONG VOLUNTARY AGENCIES, WHICH WERE NORMALLY CAPABLE OF GREATER FLEXIBILITY AND COST-EFFECTIVENESS.

HE ADDED THAT ANOTHER AREA WHERE THE SPECIALISED AND CO-ORDINATED RESOURCES OF GOVERNMENT, SUPPORTED BY VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS, WOULD HAVE TO COME INTO FULL PLAY WAS THOSE STREET-SLEEPERS WITH PSYCHIATRIC PROBLEMS AND VIOLENT TENDENCIES WHO REQUIRED REGULAR MEDICAL SUPERVISION.

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FIRM COMMITMENT URGED TO TACKLE PROBLEMS OF HOMELESS

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEMBER THE HON HUI YIN-FAT TODAY (WEDNESDAY) SAID FIRM COMMITMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT AND THE COMMUNITY TO TACKLING THE PROBLEM OF STREET SLEEPERS ON ALL FRONTS WAS NEEDED TO ERADICATE THIS SOCIAL ILL THAT TARNISHED HONG KONG'S IMAGE.

SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DURING THE ADJOURNMENT DEBATE ON SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS, MR HUI SAID THAT AT THE MOMENT, VARIOUS GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS WERE DEALING WITH THE MANY AND VARIED PROBLEMS OF STREET SLEEPERS BY TAKING A PIECEMEAL, REMEDIAL APPROACH.

/HE SAID

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HE SAID THAT BEHIND THE LACK OF COORDINATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS WAS AN INDIFFERENT OFFICIAL ATTITUDE REFLECTED IN THE SETTING UP OF THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON STREET SLEEPERS LAST MONTH --- 10 YEARS AFTER THE RECOMMENDATION WAS FIRST MADE IN 1977.

HE SAID THERE ALSO SEEMED TO BE AN UNDER-ESTIMATION BY GOVERNMENT OF THE SIZE OF THE PROBLEM, WITH THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT FIGURES FAILING TO TALLY WITH THOSE PRODUCED BY THE STREET SLEEPER ACTION COMMITTEE AND THE SHAM SHUI PO DISTRICT BOARD SURVEY RESEARCH.

"GOVERNMENT'S APATHY IS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE TENDENCY OF VARIOUS GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS CONCERNED TO PASS THE BUCK TO THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT, WITH THE POLICE REFUSING TO PICK UP STREET SLEEPERS WHO CAUSE NO DISTURBANCE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC," HE SAID.

HE SAID THAT THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT, UNDERSTAFFED WITH ONLY EIGHT SOCIAL WORKERS MANNING ITS OUTREACH TEAM, FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO COPE, WHILE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES WITH LIMITED RESOURCES WERE UNABLE TO ASSIST.

HE ADDED THAT IN VIEW OF THE NATURE AND COMPLEXITY OF THEIR PROBLEMS, COORDINATION OF EXISTING SOCIAL SERVICES WOULD NOT BE SUFFICIENT TO UPROOT THE PROBLEM OF STREET SLEEPING. THE PROBLEM MUST BE LOOKED AT IN ITS ENTIRETY AND TACKLED BY A SPECIAL TASK FORCE WITH CONCENTRATED EFFORTS AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.

"TO BEGIN WITH, MULTI-PURPOSE ACCOMMODATIONS MUST BE DESIGNED AND MADE AVAILABLE --- INCLUDING COMPASSIONATE HOUSING FOR SINGLETON STREET SLEEPERS HANDLED BY A SPECIAL HOUSING DEPARTMENT UNIT; HOSTELS AT PUBLIC HOUSING ESTATES IN INNER URBAN AREAS RUN BY VOLUNTARY AGENCIES; AND SHARED APARTMENTS OR RENTED BEDSPACES IN PRIVATE HOUSING FOR THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD THE RENT," HE SAID.

OTHER SERVICE URGENTLY REQUIRED INCLUDED INTENSIFICATION OF MEDICAL AND PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES PROVIDED SPECIFICALLY FOR STREET SLEEPERS; EXPANSION OF SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT'S AFTER-CARE SERVICE, HALF-WAY HOUSES FOR MENTALLY ILL STREET SLEEPERS AND STREET SLEEPER SHELTERS AND HOSTELS; INCREASED EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE FOR STREET SLEEPERS; AS WELL AS SPECIAL SUPPORT GIVEN TO STREET SLEEPERS WITHOUT IDENTITY CARDS.

MR HUI STRONGLY RECOMMENDED THAT THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE BE GIVEN THE ROLE OF MONITORING ACTION PLANS FOR CONTAINING THE PROBLEM OF STREET SLEEPERS TO BE DRAWN UP BY VARIOUS GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

"ONLY WHEN THE COORDINATING COMMITTEE CAN ENSURE THAT THE ENTIRE GOVERNMENT MACHINERY IS WORKING SMOOTHLY TO PROVIDE BACK-UP SERVICES TO ACCOMMODATION PROVISIONS FOR STREET SLEEPERS CAN WE BE SANGUINE ABOUT A CONCRETE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM IN HAND," HE SAID.

/HE ALSO

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HE ALSO FULLY SUPPORTED THE RECOMMENDATION TO REINFORCE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT'S OUTREACHING SERVICE TEAM IN ORDER TO PROVIDE CONCRETE ASSISTANCE TO STREET SLEEPERS. THE SCOPE OF WORK OF THE OUTREACHING TEAM SHOULD EXPAND FROM PROVIDING BASIC COUNSELLING AND REFERRAL SERVICES, TO INTENSIVE CARE PROVIDED THROUGH EXISTING AND NEW CHANNELS ACCEPTABLE TO STREET SLEEPERS.

HE ADDED THAT EFFORTS MADE BY DISTRICT BOARDS IN DISTRICTS OF HIGH INCIDENCE OF STREET SLEEPERS, BY THE POLICE IN IDENTIFYING STREET SLEEPERS DURING THEIR NORMAL PATROLS, AND BY THE MASS MEDIA IN INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF ISSUES SURROUNDING STREET SLEEPERS TOGETHER CONSTITUTE A POSITIVE APPROACH TOWARDS SOLVING THE STREET SLEEPER PROBLEM.

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BANKING LAW IMPROVEMENTS SOUGHT

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THE BANKING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987 SEEKS TO IMPROVE THE WORKING OF THE BANKING ORDINANCE WHICH CAME INTO OPERATION LAST SEPTEMBER, THE ACTING FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON DAVID NENDICK, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON.

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, MR NENDICK NOTED THAT THE BANKING ORDINANCE HAD BEEN OPERATING SMOOTHLY SINCE IT CAME INTO OPERATION IN SEPTEMBER LAST YEAR. "BUT EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN THAT AMENDMENTS ARE REQUIRED TO SOME PROVISIONS TO IMPROVE THEIR WORKING, CLARIFY THEIR MEANING, REMOVE DOUBTS ON INTERPRETATION, OR IN SOME CASES, CORRECT MINOR DRAFTING ERRORS," HE ADDED.

MR NENDICK EXPLAINED THAT UNDER THE BANKING ORDINANCE, "DEPOSIT" WAS DEFINED TO INCLUDE DEBENTURES AND OTHER SECURITIES, IN RESPECT OF WHICH A PROSPECTUS HAD BEEN REGISTERED UNDER THE COMPANIES ORDINANCE, WHERE THESE WERE ISSUED BY AUTHORISED INSTITUTIONS, I.E., BANKS OR DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES.

"THIS MEANS THAT THESE ISSUES ARE REGULATED IN THE SAME WAY AS OTHER DEPOSIT-TAKING BY AUTHORISED INSTITUTIONS; IN PARTICULAR, THE REGISTERED DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES CANNOT ISSUE SUCH SECURITIES IN DENOMINATIONS OF LESS THAN HK\$100,000 OR THE EQUIVALENT IN FOREIGN CURRENCY.

"REPRESENTATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE TO US THAT THIS IS AN IMPEDIMENT TO THE ACCESS BY REGISTERED DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES TO SOME INTERNATIONAL CAPITAL MARKETS WHERE BONDS ARE OFTEN ISSUED IN DENOMINATIONS AS LOW AS 5,000 US DOLLARS TO PROMOTE MARKETABILITY," HE SAID.

/IT WAS

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IT WAS PROPOSED, THEREFORE, THAT THE DEFINITION OF "DEPOSIT" WOULD EXCLUDE THE ISSUE OF SUCH SECURITIES BY AUTHORISED INSTITUTIONS. THIS WOULD IN EFFECT TREAT AUTHORISED INSTITUTIONS IN THE SAME WAY AS OTHER COMPANIES AND REVERT TO THE POSITION UNDER THE PREVIOUS DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES ORDINANCE.

THE NEXT AMENDMENT CONCERNS THE TRANSFER OF DEPOSIT-TAKING LICENCES. MR NENDICK POINTED OUT THAT RECENTLY A LICENSED DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANY WHICH HAD BEEN OPERATING IN HONG KONG FOR A LONG TIME BUT WAS INCORPORATED IN THE CAYMAN ISLANDS SOUGHT TO TRANSFER ITS LICENCE TO ITS U.K. PARENT BANK.

"THIS TRANSFER WOULD HAVE BEEN WELCOMED FROM A SUPERVISORY POINT OF VIEW BUT COULD NOT BE CARRIED OUT AS THE PROPOSED TRANSFEREE WAS NOT A REGISTERED DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANY," HE ADDED.

TO ALLOW FOR SUCH TRANSFERS, IT WAS PROPOSED THAT AN APPLICATION FOR THE TRANSFER OF A DEPOSIT-TAKING LICENCE MAY ALSO BE MADE BY A PERSON OTHER THAN A REGISTERED-TAKING COMPANY.

"ANY SUCH TRANSFER WOULD STILL BE SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY, AND ALL OTHER PROVISIONS WOULD CONTINUE TO APPLY," HE STRESSED.

THE ACTING FINANCIAL SECRETARY WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THREE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS CONCERNING THE SALE OR DISPOSAL OF BUSINESS AND RECONSTRUCTION OF CAPITAL.

FIRST, IN THE CASE OF REGISTERED DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES, THE PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE COMMISSIONER OF BANKING WOULD SUFFICE SINCE HE IS THE REGISTRATION AUTHORITY FOR THESE INSTITUTIONS.

SECOND, TO CLARIFY THE AMBIT OF THIS SUBSECTION, ONLY THE SALE OR DISPOSAL OF AN INSTITUTION'S BANKING OR DEPOSIT-TAKING BUSINESS, FOR WHICH DEFINITIONS ARE PROVIDED IN THE ORDINANCE, WOULD REQUIRE PRIOR APPROVAL; THE SALE OR DISPOSAL OF OTHER THAN THIS CORE BUSINESS WOULD ONLY NEED TO BE ADVISED TO THE COMMISSIONER.

THIRD, ONLY CAPITAL REDUCTIONS WOULD REQUIRE PRIOR APPROVAL; OTHER CAPITAL RECONSTRUCTIONS WOULD ONLY NEED TO BE ADVISED TO THE COMMISSIONER.

MR NENDICK NOTED THAT THE AMENDMENTS AIMED TO REDUCE UNNECESSARY PROCEDURES IN ADMINISTERING THE ORDINANCE.

ANOTHER AMENDMENT REFERRED TO THE PROVISIONS IN THE BANKING ORDINANCE WHICH RESTRICTED THE GRANTING OF UNSECURED ADVANCES OR OTHER FACILITIES BY AN UNAUTHORISED INSTITUTION TO ANY NON-LISTED COMPANY IN WHICH ANY DIRECTOR OF THE AUTHORISED INSTITUTION WAS ALSO A DIRECTOR.

/MR NENDICK

MR NENDICK SAID THAT IN CERTAIN CASES THE PROVISIONS COULD WORK AGAINST THE BEST INTERESTS OF AN INSTITUTION AND ITS SUPERVISION BY ITS OWN BOARD. IT WAS THEREFORE CONSIDERED THAT THESE PROVISIONS SHOULD BE MODIFIED, PARTICULARLY AS THE COMMISSIONER HAD OTHER POWERS TO DEAL WITH IMPRUDENT LENDING TO CONNECTED COMPANIES.

ACCORDINGLY, IT WAS PROPOSED THAT THE COMMISSIONER BE GIVEN DISCRETIONARY POWERS TO EXEMPT FACILITIES GIVEN BY SPECIFIC AUTHORISED INSTITUTIONS TO SPECIFIC CONNECTED COMPANIES FROM THE LIMITS UNDER THESE SECTIONS; AND THE COMMISSIONER MIGHT ATTACH CONDITIONS TO SUCH EXEMPTIONS.

OTHER AMENDMENTS INCLUDED ONE WHICH REQUIRED THAT CHIEF EXECUTIVES OF LOCALLY INCORPORATED INSTITUTIONS, IN ADDITION TO DIRECTORS, BE APPROVED BY THE COMMISSIONER OF BANKING BEFORE THEY WERE APPOINTED.

ANOTHER AMENDMENT AIMED TO REMOVE DOUBTS AS TO WHETHER SOME NORMAL FINANCIAL SERVICES OFFERED BY AUTHORISED INSTITUTIONS MIGHT TECHNICALLY BREACH THE GAMBLING ORDINANCE.

MR NENDICK POINTED OUT THAT THE BANKING ADVISORY COMMITTEE AND THE DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE HAD BEEN CONSULTED AND THEY FULLY SUPPORTED THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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LAW AGAINST UNAUTHORISED DTCS ADEQUATE

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THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCTING AN UNAUTHORISED DEPOSIT-TAKING BUSINESS IN HONG KONG IS REMOTE AND STRENGTHENING THE LAW IN THIS AREA UNNECESSARY, THE ACTING FINANCIAL SECRETARY, MR DAVID NENDICK, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHUNG PUI-LAM, MR NENDICK SAID ADVERTISING WAS NECESSARY IN SUCH BUSINESS, AND ANY FORM OF PUBLICITY INVOLVED WOULD BE LIKELY AND PROMPTLY BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE COMMISSIONER OF BANKING.

REFERRING TO THE RECENT CASE IN WHICH A WRIT WAS FILED IN THE HIGH COURT AGAINST A COMPANY AUTHORISED AS A BANK IN VANUATU SEEKING THE RECOVERY OF FUNDS ALLEGEDLY DEPOSITED WITH THAT COMPANY, HE SAID INSTANCES OF THIS SORT WERE RARE.

"NO OTHER CASE HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO OUR ATTENTION WITHIN THE PAST FIVE YEARS," HE SAID.

/MR NENDICK

MR NENDICK SAID THE COMPANY IN QUESTION HAD NOT BEEN AUTHORISED TO TAKE DEPOSITS IN HONG KONG UNDER THE BANKING ORDINANCE.

MR NENDICK ALSO SAID ACCORDING TO THE VANUATU AUTHORITIES, THE COMPANY HAD HAD ITS BANKING LICENCE REVOKED AND WAS NOW IN THE COURSE OF LIQUIDATION.

"MOREOVER, NO OTHER DEPOSITOR HAS COME FORWARD IN THIS CASE TO REPORT THAT THE VANUATU COMPANY HAD TAKEN FURTHER DEPOSITS ILLEGALLY, DESPITE THE WIDE PUBLICITY WHICH HAS BEEN GIVEN," HE SAID.

HE ADDED THAT UNDER THE BANKING ORDINANCE, THE MAXIMUM SANCTION AGAINST ILLEGALLY CARRYING ON BANKING OR DEPOSIT-TAKING BUSINESS WAS \$500,000 AND IMPRISONMENT FOR FIVE YEARS.

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THIRD UNIVERSITY A MASSIVE VOTE CONFIDENCE

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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY REPRESENTS A MASSIVE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE OF THE TERRITORY, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON MICHELANGELO PAGLIARI, SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE UNIVERSITY WAS BROUGHT TO LIFE TODAY WITH THE PASSAGE OF THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY BILL 1987 IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

WINDING UP THE DEBATE ON THE BILL, MR PAGLIARI SAID THAT THE ONLY NATURAL RESOURCE IN HONG KONG WAS PEOPLE, AND HONG KONG WAS EXPLOITING THE RESOURCE" BY DEVELOPING THE POTENTIAL OF OUR PEOPLE THROUGH EDUCATION AND INDUSTRIAL TRAINING, PREPARING THEM TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN ALL ASPECTS OF THE LIFE OF THIS VIBRANT COMMUNITY."

HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT EDUCATION ACCOUNTED FOR THE LARGEST SLICE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EXPENDITURE AND IT WAS RIGHT AND PROPER THAT IT SHOULD.

"ITS SEEMS INEVITABLE THAT THE SHARE OF PUBLIC EXPENDITURE WHICH GOES TO EDUCATION WILL INCREASE AS MORE STUDENTS AT A HIGHER LEVEL TO MASTER THE INCREASINGLY COMPLEX SUBJECTS WHICH WILL BE NECESSARY IF OUR ECONOMIC SUCCESS IS TO CONTINUE AND INDEED IMPROVE IN THE HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED WORLD IN WHICH WE PLAY AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANTPART,"HE ADDED.

MR PAGLIARI ALSO NOTED THAT THE HIGH COST OF THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY REFLECTED THE HIGH TECHNOLOGY WHICH THAT INSTITUTION WOULD BRING TO THE EDUCATIONAL AND INDUSTRIAL LIFE OF HONG KONG AND SAID IT REPRESENTED A MASSIVE VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE OF THE TERRITORY.

THIRD UNIVERSITY BILL SUPPORTED

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THREE LEGISLATIVE COUNCILLORS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) SPOKE IN SUPPORT OF THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY BILL 1987.

SPEAKING DURING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, THE HON ALLEN LEE EMPHASISED THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT TO THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG.

HE PRAISED THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE THIRD UNIVERSITY, WHICH PLACED EMPHASIS ON THE FIELD OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS STUDIES, AND SAID THIS WAS THE TYPE OF COMMITMENT THAT ENSURED HONG KONG'S FUTURE.

HE SAID: "THE CONTINUED PROSPERITY OF HONG KONG'S ECONOMY DEPENDS GREATLY ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR HUMAN RESOURCES.

"IT IS THIS TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT WHICH BOOSTS MY CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG."

"I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT HONG KONG WILL BECOME A STRIKING INTERNATIONAL CITY IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD," HE ADDED.

MR LEE PAID TRIBUTE TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY'S PLANNING COMMITTEE AND IN PARTICULAR ITS CHAIRMAN, THE HON SIR S.Y. CHUNG, WHO HAD WORKED SO HARD AND WITH LIGHTENING SPEEDS TOWARDS THE SETTING UP OF THE UNIVERSITY.

HE SAID THEIR SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE OF HONG KONG SHOULD BE APPRECIATED AND PUT ON RECORD.

ECHOING MR LEE'S REMARKS, THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG, WHO IS A MEMBER OF THE UNIVERSITY'S PLANNING COMMITTEE, SAID THE TREMENDOUS COMMITMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT, FOR THE FUTURE GOOD OF HONG KONG, MUST BE APPRECIATED BY ALL IN HONG KONG.

HE SAID OF LATE, IT WAS ALL TOO OFTEN FASHIONABLE FOR SOME COMMENTATORS TO LABEL THE GOVERNMENT AS A LAME DUCK GOVERNMENT ACCORDING TO THEIR WHIMSIES AND POSSIBLY THEIR OWN PERCEIVED POLITICAL FORTUNES.

"I CERTAINLY PRAY AND HOPE THAT SUCH COMMENTATORS CAN OBJECTIVELY REFLECT UPON THE WISDOM OF THIS GOVERNMENT IN CONSCIOUSLY AND POSITIVELY COMMITTING SO MANY RESOURCES FOR OUR COMMUNITY'S FUTURE NEEDS," HE SAID.

"FAR FROM BEING A LAME DUCK GOVERNMENT, THIS GOVERNMENT, WHICH PLANS SO FAR IN ADVANCE AND CARES SO MUCH ABOUT OUR FUTURE, IS A GOOD, RESPONSIVE AS WELL AS A RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT," HE NOTED.

/MR CHEONG

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MR CHEONG ALSO SAID THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE THIRD UNIVERSITY WAS TIMELY. ECONOMICALLY SPEAKING, HONG KONG HAD DEVELOPED AND EVOLVED TO A LEVEL WHERE, IF IT WAS TO MOVE FURTHER FORWARD WITH CONFIDENCE, A CONTINUOUS SUPPLY OF WELL TRAINED SPECIALIST GRADUATES WOULD BE ESSENTIAL, HE SAID.

ANOTHER COUNCILLOR, THE HON CHENG HON-KWAN, WHO IS THE DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE UNIVERSITY'S PLANNING COMMITTEE, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THAT THE BILL ACCURATELY REFLECTED THE DESIRE OF THE COMMITTEE TO CREATE A MODERN TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY WHICH ON THE ONE HAND HAD THE NECESSARY AUTONOMY AND FREEDOM TO PERMIT THE DEVELOPMENT OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE, AND ON THE OTHER WOULD BE EFFICIENTLY OPERATED TO GIVE THE BEST VALUE FOR MONEY INVESTED.

ON THE NEED FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY AND HONG KONG'S INDUSTRY, MR CHENG SAID THIS REQUIRED THE DETERMINATION AND INITIATIVES FROM BOTH THE INDUSTRIALISTS AND THE UNIVERSITY AUTHORITIES AND ACADEMIC STAFF.

HE SAID IT WAS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE THAT HIGHER EDUCATION SHOULD SERVE THE NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY AS EFFECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE. ALTHOUGH IT WAS DIFFICULT TO IDENTIFY WITH PRECISION THE NEEDS OF THE MARKETPLACE FOR TRAINED DEGREE LEVEL PERSONNEL, IT WAS THE PLANNING COMMITTEE'S CONSTANT CONCERN TO DEVELOP AND REFINE AN ACADEMIC PROFILE FOR THE UNIVERSITY, WHICH WOULD MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE ECONOMY AS WELL AS THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE STUDENTS.

MR CHENG SAID THOUGH THE MAIN THRUST OF THE UNIVERSITY'S WORK WOULD BE AT THE UNDERGRADUATE LEVEL, IT WAS THE PLANNING COMMITTEE'S FIRM WISH TO SEE A HIGH PROPORTION OF THE UNIVERSITY'S RESOURCES EVENTUALLY DEVOTED TO POSTGRADUATE WORK.

HOWEVER, HE THOUGHT IT WAS ALSO IMPORTANT THAT IN THE INTEREST OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE COMMUNITY, GREATER EMPHASIS SHOULD BE PLACED ON RESEARCH.

"ALTHOUGH I BELIEVE THAT AT THIS STAGE OF OUR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THE RESEARCH SHOULD BE DIRECTED IN THE MAIN TOWARDS COMMERCIAL EXPLOITATION IN THE INTERESTS OF OUR ECONOMY; IN OTHER WORDS WE SHOULD BE ADVOCATING APPLIED RATHER THAN PURE RESEARCH," HE ADDED.

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PILOT PLAN UNDER WAY TO COMPUTERISE HOSPITAL INFORMATION

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THE GOVERNMENT PLANS TO EXTEND THE PILOT HOSPITAL COMPUTERISED INFORMATION SYSTEM IN THE PRINCESS MARGARET HOSPITAL TO ALL GOVERNMENT AND SUBVENTED HOSPITALS IF IT IS FOUND PRACTICABLE AFTER EVALUATION, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CHIU HIN-KWONG, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE PILOT SYSTEM WAS INTENDED TO COVER THE FOLLOWING KEY AREAS:

- (A) IN-PATIENT ADMISSION, DISCHARGE, AND TRANSFER SYSTEM, INCLUDING:
 - * DEMOGRAPHIC DATA ON PATIENTS (INCLUDING ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY PATIENTS) AND AN ADMINISTRATIVE PATIENT RECORD;
 - * RECORDS OF ALL ADMISSIONS, DISCHARGES AND TRANSFERS;
 - * DAILY AND ON-DEMAND OPERATIONAL REPORTS, E.G. BED STATE REPORT, WARD SHIFT ENQUIRY REPORT;
- (B) OUT-PATIENT REGISTRATION AND SCHEDULING SYSTEM, INCLUDING:
 - * OUT-PATIENT APPOINTMENT, REGISTRATION AND ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES;
 - * IMMEDIATE NOTIFICATION OF EMERGENCY LABORATORY TESTS;
 - * FOLLOW UP ON THE CURRENT STATUS OF PATIENTS AT SPECIALIST CLINICS.
- (C) LABORATORY INFORMATION SYSTEM, INCLUDING:
 - * AN ENQUIRY CAPABILITY AT WARD NURSING STATIONS;
 - * CUMULATIVE AND INDIVIDUAL TEST RESULT REPORTS FOR EACH PATIENT;
- (D) NURSING WARD-LABORATORY ORDER AND RESULT REPORTING SYSTEM, INCLUDING:
 - * AUTOMATION OF LABORATORY TEST ORDERING PROCEDURES;
 - * CHECKING ON DEMAND, STATUS OF ORDERS (TEST ORDERED, SPECIMENS OBTAINED, TESTS PERFORMED, RESULTS REPORTED);
 - * IMMEDIATE NOTIFICATION OF EMERGENCY RESULTS.

"THE ESTIMATED TOTAL COST OF THE WHOLE SYSTEM OVER A PERIOD OF FIVE YEARS IS \$38.5 MILLION," MR CHAMBERS SAID.

"A DRAFT FINANCE COMMITTEE AGENDA ITEM IS NOW BEING PREPARED AND SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO THE FINANCE COMMITTEE TOWARDS THE END OF THE YEAR.

"THIS PILOT HOSPITAL INFORMATION SYSTEM WILL BE MONITORED AND EVALUATED AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KEY AREAS MENTIONED ABOVE.

"IF IT IS FOUND PRACTICABLE, IT IS THE INTENTION TO EXTEND THE SCHEME TO ALL GOVERNMENT AND SUBVENTED HOSPITALS IN FUTURE.

"THE TIMING WILL DEPEND UPON THE RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION OF THE PILOT SCHEME AS WELL AS THE AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES," HE ADDED.

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WELFARE SERVICES INCLUDED IN ESTATE REDEVELOPMENT

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THE HOUSING AUTHORITY IS DRAWING UP A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMME FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF MARKS III-VI PUBLIC ESTATES AND THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT IS BEING CONSULTED ON THE REQUIREMENTS FOR WELFARE FACILITIES, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HUI YIN-FAT, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE DEPARTMENT WOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE PROJECTED TARGET POPULATION AND THE ESTIMATED DEMAND FOR THE VARIOUS SERVICES.

HE SAID IT WOULD ALSO CONSIDER THE PLANNING STANDARDS LAID DOWN IN THE FIVE YEAR PLAN FOR SOCIAL WELFARE DEVELOPMENT AND THE REHABILITATION PROGRAMME PLAN IN DECIDING ON THE FACILITIES TO BE INCLUDED IN THE NEW ESTATES.

"IN ORDER TO MINIMISE DISRUPTION DURING THE REDEVELOPMENT PERIOD, THE SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT WILL AS FAR AS POSSIBLE MAKE TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENTS TO CATER FOR SERVICES AFFECTED BY THE DEMOLITION OF EXISTING CENTRES," MR CHAMBERS ADDED.

HE SAID THE REDEVELOPMENT WOULD START IN 1989/90 AND IT WOULD PROVIDE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY FOR IMPROVING THE PROVISION OF SOCIAL WELFARE FACILITIES IN THESE AREAS.

"THE EVENTUAL OUTCOME SHOULD BE SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVED SERVICES, IN TERMS OF BOTH QUANTITY AND QUALITY IN THE REDEVELOPED ESTATES," HE SAID.

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IMPROVEMENTS TO HANDLING OF CHILD ABUSE CASES SOUGHT

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THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND JUVENILES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987 SEEKS TO IMPROVE THE PRESENT PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING CHILD ABUSE CASES, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, MR CHAMBERS SAID THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS WERE BASED ON RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE WORKING GROUP SET UP LAST YEAR TO REVIEW THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND JUVENILES ORDINANCE.

"ITS FOCUS HAS SHIFTED OVER THE YEARS FROM THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS FROM PROSTITUTION AND OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION TO THE PROTECTION OF JUVENILES AND CHILDREN FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT," HE SAID.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THE BILL WOULD AMEND FOUR SPECIFIC PROVISIONS IN THE ORDINANCE.

THE FIRST OF THESE WAS CONTAINED IN SECTION 34(1) UNDER WHICH A CHILD MUST BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE JUVENILE COURT BEFORE A DECISION WAS MADE ON WHETHER HE WAS IN NEED OF CARE AND PROTECTION, HE SAID.

"THIS REQUIREMENT DOES NOT APPEAR TO SERVE ANY USEFUL PURPOSE IF THE CHILD IS TOO YOUNG EITHER TO EXPRESS A VIEW OR FOR HIS VIEWS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT BY THE COURT. IT CAN ALSO BE A TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE FOR A VERY YOUNG CHILD IF THE CASE IS CONTESTED," HE SAID.

"IT IS PROPOSED THAT ONLY CHILDREN AGED SEVEN OR ABOVE SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO APPEAR BEFORE THE COURT."

"IT IS CONSIDERED THAT AT THAT AGE A CHILD IS OLD ENOUGH TO BE GIVEN THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD IN CARE PROCEEDINGS IN RESPECT OF HIS OWN WELL BEING."

MR CHAMBERS SAID THE COURT WOULD HAVE THE DISCRETION TO REQUIRE A CHILD UNDER THE AGE OF SEVEN TO BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE COURT IF NECESSARY. IN ANY CASE, THE COURT WAS REQUIRED TO NOTIFY THE CHILD'S PARENT OR GUARDIAN OF THE CARE PROCEEDINGS.

HE SAID THE SECOND AND THIRD AMENDMENTS WOULD ENABLE CHILDREN IN NEED OF CARE AND PROTECTION TO RECEIVE PROMPT MEDICAL TREATMENT.

HE SAID UNDER SECTION 34A OF THE EXISTING ORDINANCE, THE JUVENILE COURT WAS EMPOWERED TO INCLUDE IN SUPERVISION ORDERS SUCH REQUIREMENTS AS IT CONSIDERED NECESSARY IN RESPECT OF MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR THE MENTAL CONDITION, BUT NOT THE PHYSICAL CONDITION, OF A CHILD UNDER SUPERVISION.

"THIS HAS CAUSED DIFFICULTIES ESPECIALLY WHEN UNCO-OPERATIVE PARENTS HAVE REFUSED TO GIVE CONSENT FOR THEIR CHILDREN TO RECEIVE MEDICAL TREATMENT OR EVEN TO UNDERGO MEDICAL EXAMINATION TO FIND OUT WHETHER THEY HAVE SUSTAINED INJURIES," HE SAID.

"IT HAS ALSO PROVED DIFFICULT IN SOME CASES TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY PARENTAL CONSENT FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT. WITHOUT SUCH CONSENT, A SUPERVISED CHILD OR JUVENILE MAY BE DEPRIVED OF NECESSARY TREATMENT," HE ADDED.

MR CHAMBERS SAID CLAUSE 4 OF THE BILL AMENDED SECTION 34A OF THE ORDINANCE TO ENABLE THE JUVENILE COURT TO INCLUDE IN SUPERVISION ORDERS REQUIREMENTS AS TO MEDICAL TREATMENT, INCLUDING SURGICAL OPERATIONS, FOR BOTH THE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL CONDITION OF CHILDREN UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE.

MR CHAMBERS ADDED THAT THERE WAS AT PRESENT NO PROVISION FOR THE CHILD TO BE TAKEN TO A HOSPITAL FOR TREATMENT IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE A CHILD WAS SUSPECTED TO HAVE BEEN ABUSED AND REQUIRED MEDICAL TREATMENT OR EXAMINATION TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER HE HAD SUSTAINED INJURIES, AND WHEN PARENTAL CONSENT COULD NOT BE OBTAINED.

"THE CHILD CAN ONLY BE TAKEN TO A "PLACE OF REFUGE" IN THE FIRST INSTANCE UNDER SECTION 34E(1), AND THEN TRANSFERRED TO A HOSPITAL UNDER SECTION 34E(5)," HE SAID.

"THIS PROCEDURE IS CUMBERSOME AND MAY NOT BE IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD IF URGENT MEDICAL CARE IS NECESSARY."

"CLAUSE 5 AMENDS SECTION 34E(1) TO PROVIDE FOR A CHILD OR JUVENILE IN NEED OF MEDICAL TREATMENT TO BE REMOVED DIRECTLY TO AND DETAINED IN A HOSPITAL WHEN NECESSARY," HE SAID.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THE FOURTH AMENDMENT RELATED TO THE POWER OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WELFARE TO ENTER PREMISES BY FORCE AS PROVIDED IN SECTION 44(1) OF THE EXISTING ORDINANCE.

"IN THE LIGHT OF THE PUBLIC DISQUIET LAST YEAR OVER THE KWOK AH-NUI CASE, AND AFTER CONSIDERING THE PROVISION IN THE ENGLISH LAW WHICH REQUIRES A WARRANT TO BE ISSUED BY A JUSTICE OF THE PEACE BEFORE DOMESTIC PREMISES CAN BE ENTERED BY FORCE, IT IS PROPOSED THAT THE DIRECTOR SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO OBTAIN A WARRANT FROM A MAGISTRATE, JUVENILE COURT OR DISTRICT COURT BEFORE AUTHORISED OFFICERS ENTER ANY PREMISES BY FORCE IN PURSUANCE OF THEIR DUTIES UNDER THE ORDINANCE," HE SAID.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THE PROPOSALS IN THE BILL HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE SOCIAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, THE LAW SOCIETY AND THE BAR ASSOCIATION, AS WELL AS THE FAMILY LAW ASSOCIATION.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

MATERNITY LEAVE ARRANGEMENTS TO BE IMPROVED

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THE EMPLOYMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987 PROVIDES A BALANCED PACKAGE OF MEASURES WHICH WOULD BENEFIT BOTH EMPLOYEE AND EMPLOYER, THE SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION AND MANPOWER, THE HON MICHELANGELO PAGLIARI, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

MOVING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL, MR PAGLIARI SAID THAT IN RETURN FOR GREATER PROTECTION AGAINST UNFAIR DISMISSAL, A PREGNANT EMPLOYEE WOULD GIVE GREATER NOTICE OF HER INTENTION TO TAKE MATERNITY LEAVE, AND, IN RETURN FOR KEEPING HER JOB OPEN UNTIL SHE WAS ABLE TO RETURN TO WORK, THE BILL PROVIDED THE EMPLOYER WITH GREATER ASSURANCES THAT THE EMPLOYEE WOULD DO SO.

HE SAID THAT THE RIGHT OF A FEMALE EMPLOYEE TO UNPAID MATERNITY LEAVE WAS FIRST INTRODUCED IN 1970 TOGETHER WITH MEASURES TO PROTECT HER FROM DISMISSAL ONCE SHE HAD GIVEN A STIPULATED PERIOD OF NOTICE OF HER INTENTION TO TAKE MATERNITY LEAVE.

"THIS RIGHT WAS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED IN 1981 BY THE INTRODUCTION OF TEN WEEKS' PAID MATERNITY LEAVE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE WORKED FOR THE SAME EMPLOYER FOR FORTY WEEKS OR MORE AND BY THE EXTENSION OF THE PERIOD OF NOTICE FROM 8 WEEKS TO 12," HE ADDED.

THE LEGAL POSITION REMAINED THAT A PREGNANT EMPLOYEE MIGHT NOT HAVE HER EMPLOYMENT TERMINATED FROM THE DATE ON WHICH SHE GAVE NOTICE OF HER INTENTION TO TAKE MATERNITY LEAVE UNTIL THE DATE ON WHICH SHE WAS DUE TO RETURN TO WORK ON THE EXPIRY OF HER MATERNITY LEAVE.

"HOWEVER, UNDER THE LAW AS IT NOW STANDS, THE EMPLOYEE IS REQUIRED TO GIVE THIS NOTICE WITHIN TWELVE WEEKS OF THE EXPECTED DATE OF HER CONFINEMENT AND MANY OF OUR SLIGHTLY-BUILT LOCAL YOUNG LADIES DISPLAY DISTINCT EVIDENCE OF THEIR CONDITION AT A MUCH EARLIER TIME," HE SAID.

"THIS HAS GIVEN RISE TO ALLEGATIONS BY LABOUR GROUPS THAT UNSCRUPULOUS EMPLOYERS HAVE DISMISSED PREGNANT EMPLOYEES BEFORE THEY FALL WITHIN THE TWELVE WEEK PERIOD AND THERE APPEARS TO BE SOME EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THESE ALLEGATIONS," HE ADDED.

HE POINTED OUT THAT THIS BILL ENHANCED THE PROTECTION ALREADY PROVIDED IN EXISTING LEGISLATION BY REMOVING REFERENCE TO A PERIOD OF TWELVE WEEKS' NOTICE PRIOR TO CONFINEMENT AND BY STIPULATING THAT AN EMPLOYEE MIGHT GIVE NOTICE OF HER INTENTION TO TAKE MATERNITY LEAVE AT ANY TIME AFTER HER PREGNANCY HAD BEEN CERTIFIED.

"SHE WILL THUS BE PROTECTED FROM DISMISSAL THROUGHOUT HER PREGNANCY PROVIDED SHE OBTAINS THE NECESSARY CERTIFICATE AND PRESENTS IT TO HER EMPLOYER. THIS SHOULD ALSO GIVE THE EMPLOYER A LONGER PERIOD OF NOTICE TO ENABLE HIM TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO COVER THE ABSENCE OF A PREGNANT EMPLOYEE," HE SAID.

THE BILL ALSO PROVIDED THAT AN EMPLOYEE WHOSE PREGNANCY HAD CEASED OTHER THAN BY REASON OF CONFINEMENT SHOULD GIVE NOTICE TO HER EMPLOYER OF THE CHANGE IN HER CONDITION AS SOON AS WAS REASONABLY PRACTICABLE.

"THIS PROVISION WILL ENSURE THAT AN EMPLOYER IS MADE AWARE OF ANY CHANGE IN AN EMPLOYEE'S INTENTION TO TAKE MATERNITY LEAVE AND THUS ENABLE THE EMPLOYER TO UPDATE HIS STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS," HE SAID.

HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THE BILL FURTHER PROVIDED THAT AN EMPLOYEE MIGHT NOT USE ANY PART OF HER MATERNITY LEAVE AS A NOTICE PERIOD PRIOR TO LEAVING HER EMPLOYER.

"THIS PROVISION IS DESIGNED TO PROTECT EMPLOYERS, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO ARE OBLIGED TO PROVIDE PAID MATERNITY LEAVE, FROM THE POSSIBILITY OF A PREGNANT EMPLOYEE GIVING NOTICE OF TERMINATION OF HER EMPLOYMENT DURING HER MATERNITY LEAVE AND MAKING HER RESIGNATION EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY HER MATERNITY LEAVE EXPIRES," HE ADDED.

DEBATE ON THE BILL WAS ADJOURNED.

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LIFTS BILL TO IMPROVE PUBLIC SAFETY

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ENACTMENT OF THE LIFTS AND ESCALATORS (SAFETY) (AMENDMENT) BILL WILL LEAD TO IMPROVED PROCEDURES AND HIGHER STANDARDS IN THE EXAMINATION, TESTING AND MAINTENANCE OF LIFTS AND ESCALATORS WHICH IN TURN WILL IMPROVE PUBLIC SAFETY.

WINDING UP THE DEBATE ON THE BILL DURING SECOND READING, THE SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS, MR GRAHAM BARNES, PRAISED MR F.K. HU AND MR H.K. CHENG FOR STUDYING THE BILL AND FOR THEIR SUPPORT OF IT.

HE NOTED MR HU'S CONCERN THAT REGISTERED LIFT CONTRACTORS AND ENGINEERS WHEN WORKING ON GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY LIFTS WOULD NOT BE SUBJECT TO THE PRINCIPAL ORDINANCE.

"IN COMMENTING ON THIS I WOULD POINT OUT THAT THIS HAS BEEN THE SITUATION FOR GOVERNMENT SINCE THE ENACTMENT OF THE ORDINANCE IN 1960, AND THAT IT IS CONSISTENT WITH A SIMILAR EXEMPTION FROM THE BUILDINGS ORDINANCE," MR BARNES SAID.

PROCEDURES WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT WERE SUCH THAT LIFT WORKS WERE DONE TO HIGH SAFETY STANDARDS BY REGISTERED LIFT CONTRACTORS AND ENGINEERS UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF QUALIFIED AND EXPERIENCED GOVERNMENT ENGINEERS, AND THAT DURING THIS PERIOD ACCIDENTS HAD BEEN VERY FEW AND MINOR.

THE SAME PROCEDURES AND STANDARDS APPLIED TO HOUSING AUTHORITY LIFTS, ALTHOUGH PREVIOUSLY THEY WERE EXEMPT FROM THE ORDINANCE.

"WITH THIS SAID, I APPRECIATE THAT MR HU'S IS A WIDER AND MORE GENERAL CONCERN AND I AM PREPARED TO UNDERTAKE A REVIEW OF THIS AND OTHER BUILDING SAFETY LEGISLATION TO SEE WHETHER SUCH LEGISLATION SHOULD APPLY TO THE PUBLIC AS WELL AS THE PRIVATE SECTOR," HE SAID.

"ON WHETHER OR NOT THE PROPOSED QUALIFICATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR LIFT AND ESCALATOR ENGINEERS SHOULD BE APPLIED TO EXISTING PERSONS ON THE REGISTER, I CAN CONFIRM THAT THIS WILL NOT HAPPEN.

"THE REQUIREMENTS WILL ONLY BE APPLIED TO NEW APPLICANTS.

"EVEN IF THIS WERE NOT THE CASE I WOULD NOT SEE THIS AS A MAJOR PROBLEM, SINCE AS I MENTIONED WHEN INTRODUCING THE BILL TO THIS COUNCIL THE REQUIREMENTS PROPOSED FOR INCORPORATION IN THE ORDINANCE ARE ONLY THOSE THAT THE DIRECTOR OF ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL SERVICES HAS BEEN APPLYING IN PAST YEARS IN THE EXERCISE OF HIS DISCRETION.

"I AGREE WITH MR HU'S FINAL POINT ON THE NEED TO PUBLICISE THE NEW RESPONSIBILITIES OF OWNERS OF NON-INDUSTRIAL SERVICE LIFTS AND WILL MAKE THE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THIS TO BE DONE," MR BARNES SAID.

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AMENDMENTS TO LIFTS LAW TIMELY
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THE HON F. K. HU SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE LIFTS AND ESCALATORS (SAFETY) ORDINANCE WERE TIMELY IN ENSURING HIGHER STANDARD AND BETTER PROTECTION OF SAFETY FOR THE PUBLIC.

SPEAKING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL DURING THE SECOND READING OF THE LIFTS AND ESCALATORS (SAFETY)(AMENDMENT) BILL 1987, MR HU SAID THE ORDINANCE WAS ENACTED IN 1960 AND REQUIRED TO BE UPDATED AND IMPROVED.

HOWEVER, HE NOTED THAT THE PRINCIPAL ORDINANCE WOULD NOT APPLY TO LIFTS AND ESCALATORS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, AND QUERIED WHETHER THE ORDINANCE AND INDEED OTHER BUILDINGS ORDINANCE RELATED LEGISLATION SHOULD APPLY ONLY TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

HE THEREFORE SUGGESTED THE GOVERNMENT TO GIVE AN UNDERTAKING TO REVIEW THIS COMPLICATED ISSUE AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY.

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ON THE INTRODUCTION OF QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED FOR APPLICANTS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE REGISTERS OF LIFTS AND ESCALATORS ENGINEERS, MR HU SUGGESTED THAT THE PROPOSED REQUIREMENT WOULD APPLY ONLY TO NEW APPLICANTS BUT NOT TO THOSE ENGINEERS ALREADY IN THE REGISTERS.

HE SAID THIS WAS BECAUSE THERE WAS AT PRESENT A SHORTAGE OF REGISTERED ENGINEERS TO DEAL WITH A LARGE NUMBER OF LIFT AND ESCALATOR INSTALLATIONS IN OPERATION.

MR HU ALSO SUGGESTED THE GOVERNMENT TO CARRY OUT APPROPRIATE PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN TO REMIND THE OWNERS OF SERVICE LIFTS, WHICH WERE NOT SUPPLIED AND MAINTAINED BY REGISTERED LIFT CONTRACTORS, OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TO PROPERLY MAINTAIN THESE LIFTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RELEVANT PROVISION OF THE BUILDING (LIFTS) REGULATIONS.

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FUEL ASH LAGOONS POSE NO HEALTH RISK
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AFTER CAREFUL STUDY OF CURRENT SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE ON THE PROPOSED PULVERISED FUEL ASH LAGOONS AT TSANG TSUI, THE FORMER ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY CONCLUDED THAT THERE WOULD NOT BE A HEALTH RISK FROM RADIOLOGICAL SOURCES, THE SECRETARY FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE, THE HON JOHN CHAMBERS TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY PROFESSOR THE HON POON CHUNG KWONG, MR CHAMBERS SAID THIS ASPECT WAS THEREFORE NOT INCLUDED IN FURTHER STUDY.

IN 1984, THE GOVERNMENT ASKED THE CHINA LIGHT AND POWER COMPANY TO UNDERTAKE A COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSED PULVERISED FUEL ASH LAGOONS AT TSANG TSUI,"

"THIS STUDY WAS BASED ON TERMS OF REFERENCE PREPARED BY THE THEN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY," HE ADDED.

MR CHAMBERS SAID THE POSSIBILITY OF RADIOLOGICAL IMPACT ON LOCAL VILLAGERS AND SITE WORKERS HAD BEEN CONSIDERED IN PREPARING THESE TERMS OF REFERENCE.

PUMPING OF PFA INTO THE LAGOONS BEGAN ON JUNE 12 AND THE POWER COMPANY WAS MONITORING RADIOACTIVITY LEVELS AT THE SITE AND THE LEVELS RECORDED SO FAR GAVE NO CAUSE FOR CONCERN, HE SAID.

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REVIEW OF VISUAL ARTS DEVELOPMENT

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AN INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP HAS BEEN SET UP TO REVIEW GOVERNMENT'S EXISTING ACTIVITIES AND TO FORMULATE A CO-ORDINATED APPROACH FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF VISUAL ARTS, THE SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, THE HON DONALD LIAO, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"THE DESIRABILITY OF ESTABLISHING AN ACADEMY FOR THE VISUAL ARTS WILL BE EXAMINED IN THE COURSE OF THE WORKING GROUP'S STUDY," MR LIAO ADDED.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON HILTON CHEONG-LEEN ON THE PROMOTION OF VISUAL ARTS, MR LIAO SAID GOVERNMENT'S EFFORT IN PROMOTING THIS CONCENTRATED ON THE SUPPORT FOR TRAINING AND THE PROVISION OF EXHIBITION FACILITIES.

"APART FROM PROVIDING VISUAL ARTS TRAINING IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM, PLANS ARE IN HAND TO DEVELOP A SECONDARY SCHOOL, FUNDED BY THE ROYAL HONG KONG JOCKEY CLUB, IN SHA TIN FOR STUDENTS SHOWING TALENTS IN SPORTS OR VISUAL ARTS," HE SAID.

EXHIBITION HALLS AND GALLERIES ARE PROVIDED IN ALL THE MAJOR CIVIC CENTRES OPERATED BY THE URBAN COUNCIL AND THE REGIONAL COUNCIL.

MR LIAO NOTED THAT ADDITIONAL EXHIBITION FACILITIES WILL BE PROVIDED IN THE MUSEUM OF ART WHICH FORMS PHASE THREE OF THE HONG KONG CULTURAL CENTRE, AND WAS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED BY 1990.

"THE URBAN COUNCIL ALSO PLANS TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL EXHIBITION HALLS AND VISUAL ARTS STUDIOS IN ITS COMMUNITY ARTS CENTRES.

"A FEASIBILITY STUDY ON THE PROVISION OF A CERAMICS, PRINT AND SCULPTURE CENTRE WITHIN THE VICTORIA BARRACKS REDEVELOPMENT SCHEME IS BEING UNDERTAKEN," HE SAID.

BOTH THE URBAN COUNCIL AND THE REGIONAL COUNCIL REGULARLY ARRANGE VISUAL ARTS EXHIBITIONS AND ORGANISE LECTURES, PRESENTATIONS AND ARTS AND CRAFT SESSIONS, MR LIAO NOTED.

"THE HONG KONG ARTS CENTRE AND THE HONG KONG FESTIVAL FRINGE SOCIETY ALSO ORGANISE EXHIBITIONS AND CLASSES, AND MAKE AVAILABLE THEIR FACILITIES FOR USE BY LOCAL ARTISTS," HE SAID.

"IN ADDITION, MANY INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS AND PRIVATE TEACHERS ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE TRAINING OF STUDENTS AND PROMOTION OF VISUAL ARTS ACTIVITIES," HE ADDED.

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INFORMATION ON PROPOSED SHENZHEN AIRPORT SOUGHT
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THE GOVERNMENT WAS SEEKING INFORMATION ON THE PROPOSED NEW SHENZHEN AIRPORT THROUGH APPROPRIATE CHANNELS, THE ACTING FINANCIAL SECRETARY, THE HON DAVID NENDICK, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION BY THE HON NGAI SHIU-KIT, MR NENDICK SAID THAT ONLY WHEN THE GOVERNMENT HAD SUCH INFORMATION WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO ASSESS THE IMPLICATIONS FOR HONG KONG AND TO CONSIDER WHAT MEASURES WERE NECESSARY TO PROTECT HONG KONG'S INTERESTS.

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CARPARK BOMB AN ISOLATED CASE
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THE GOOD DETERRENT TO THE RECENT BOMB EXPLOSION IN THE YAU MA TEI CARPARK IS TO ARREST, TO CONVICT AND TO PUNISH THOSE RESPONSIBLE, THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY, THE HON DAVID JEAFFRESON, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON CONRAD LAM, MR JEAFFRESON SAID INVESTIGATIONS INTO THIS PARTICULAR INCIDENT WERE CONTINUING.

HE EXPLAINED THAT THE POLICE HAD TIGHTENED SECURITY IN SOME OF THEIR PREMISES BUT CONSIDERED STRINGENT SECURITY MEASURES IN ALL TO BE UNNECESSARY.

"SUCH MEASURES WOULD INCONVENIENCE THE MANY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC WHO REQUIRE ACCESS TO THE PREMISES EVERY DAY."

THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE WAS SATISFIED THAT HE HAD ADEQUATE MANPOWER AND RESOURCES FOR THE ADDITIONAL SECURITY MEASURES HE FELT NECESSARY TO INTRODUCE, HE ADDED.

MOREOVER, MR JEAFFRESON POINTED OUT THAT THE EXPLOSION OCCURRED IN THE PUBLIC LIFT LOBBY ON THE MEZZANINE FLOOR WHERE WERE THE OFFICES OF THE POLICE REGIONAL CRIME UNIT, KOWLOON.

"THE PREMISES WERE UNOCCUPIED AT THE TIME."

"THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE EXPLOSION WAS ANYTHING OTHER THAN AN ISOLATED INCIDENT," HE STRESSED.

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TAXI POLICY UNDER REVIEW

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THE OVERALL TAXI POLICY IS NOW BEING EXAMINED BY THE TAXI REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE OF THE TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE, THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON MICHAEL LEUNG, TOLD THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM DR THE HON CONRAD LAM, MR LEUNG SAID THAT THE QUESTION OF THE LIMIT ON TAXI NUMBERS WAS ALSO BEING EXAMINED BY THE SUB-COMMITTEE.

HOWEVER, THE NUMBER OF TAXIS THAT MAY BE REGISTERED IS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL ON THE BASIS OF THE ADVICE OBTAINED FROM THE TRANSPORT ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

COMMENTING ON THE CRITERIA USED IN DECIDING THE TAXI NUMBERS, MR LEUNG EXPLAINED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION ALWAYS TOOK INTO ACCOUNT THE SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF TAXI SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC, THE INTEREST OF THE TRADERS AND THE BROADER ASPECT OF ROAD USE.

"THESE INTERESTS ARE INTER-RELATED, AND HAVE TO BE BALANCED IN CONSIDERING A DECISION ON TAXI NUMBERS," MR LEUNG EMPHASISED.

"TO FACILITATE THE CONSIDERATION OF THE ISSUE, ANNUAL SURVEYS WERE CONDUCTED BY THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT TO MEASURE THE LEVEL OF TAXI SERVICE AND TO ASSESS THE FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE TAXI TRADE," MR LEUNG SAID.

"THE GOVERNMENT HAD ALWAYS BEEN CONCERNED ABOUT THE QUALITY OF TAXI SERVICES, WHICH IS ASSESSED IN TERMS OF SAFETY STANDARDS, THE DEGREE OF COMFORT AND THE CONDUCT OF TAXI DRIVERS, AND HAD TAKEN VARIOUS STEPS TO IMPROVE IT," MR LEUNG ADDED.

SOME OF THESE STEPS INCLUDE THE REQUIREMENT THAT OVER TWO-YEAR OLD TAXIS MUST UNDERGO ANNUAL VEHICLE EXAMINATION BY THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT BEFORE RELICENSING. FURTHERMORE, ALL TAXIS UPON FIRST REGISTRATION MUST BE NEW.

IN GENERAL, MR LEUNG SAID THAT THE QUALITY OF VEHICLES USED AS TAXIS IN HONG KONG WAS RELATIVELY HIGH, AS SHOWN BY THE AGE OF THE FLEET, THEIR STATE OF MAINTENANCE AND THE FEW PUBLIC COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE TRANSPORT COMPLAINTS UNIT (TCU) ABOUT THE CONDITIONS OF THE VEHICLES.

ON THE OTHER HAND, THE NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS ON THE CONDUCT OF TAXI DRIVERS RECEIVED BY THE TCU HAD INCREASED RECENTLY, PARTLY AS A RESULT OF THE DISPLAY OF THE TCU'S COMPLAINT HOTLINE IN TAXIS.

/MR LEUNG

MR LEUNG SAID THAT THE MOST COMMON COMPLAINTS INCLUDED REFUSING OR NEGLECTING TO ACCEPT A HIRE, ILLEGAL CHARGE OF TAXI FARES AND THE POOR MANNERS OF THE DRIVERS. ENFORCEMENT ACTION WAS TAKEN BY THE POLICE AGAINST DRIVERS WHERE COMPLAINTS WERE FOUND TO BE JUSTIFIED.

IN ADDITION, BOTH THE URBAN AND THE NEW TERRITORIES TAXI ASSOCIATIONS HAD BEEN URGED TO IMPROVE THEIR SERVICE AND TO MANAGE THEIR DRIVERS MORE EFFECTIVELY, HE ADDED.

OTHER MEASURES TO IMPROVE THE CONDUCT OF TAXI DRIVERS INCLUDED:

- (A) THE DISPLAY OF AN IMPROVE FARE PLATE IN THE TAXI FOR THE INFORMATION OF PASSENGERS. THIS FARE PLATE ALSO SHOWS THE TELEPHONE NUMBER OF THE TCU TO ENCOURAGE USE OF THE COMPLAINT FACILITIES; AND
- (B) THE PUBLICATION OF AN INFORMATION PAMPHLET ON TAXI SERVICES. IT IS PLANNED TO ISSUE THESE PAMPHLETS IN SUFFICIENT QUANTITIES FOR THE REFERENCE AND GUIDANCE OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC AS WELL AS THE TAXI DRIVERS.

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LIMITATION ON NUMBER OF LICENSED TAXIS EXTENDED
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A MOTION TO EXTEND THE PERIOD OF LIMITING THE NUMBER OF LICENSED TAXIS UP TO JULY 7, 1988 WAS MOVED BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON MICHAEL LEUNG, AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

"THE EFFECT OF THIS EXTENSION IS THAT THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VEHICLES WHICH MAY BE REGISTERED AND LICENSED AS TAXIS WILL REMAIN AT 14,400 IN THE CASE OF URBAN AREA TAXIS, 2,638 IN THE CASE OF NEW TERRITORIES TAXIS AND 40 IN THE CASE OF LANTAU TAXIS, AS ORDERED BY THE GOVERNOR-IN-COUNCIL ON JULY 8, 1986," MR LEUNG EXPLAINED.

THE PERIOD LIMITING THE NUMBER OF LICENSED TAXIS IS SPECIFIED IN SECTION 23(3) OF THE ROAD TRAFFIC ORDINANCE.

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DRIVING WITHOUT VALID LICENCES ON THE RISE

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THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE FINED FOR DRIVING A CAR WITHOUT A VALID DRIVING LICENCE INCREASED TO 6,431 LAST YEAR, 16.5 PER CENT MORE THAN 1985 AND 46.7 PER CENT MORE THAN 1984.

THIS WAS REVEALED BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON MICHAEL LEUNG, IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON CHAN YING-LUN IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

ABOUT 80 PER CENT OF THE OFFENCES IN 1986 WERE DEALT WITH BY THE ISSUE OF A FIXED PENALTY TICKET OF \$140 WHILE THE REMAINDER WERE PROSECUTED AND THE MAXIMUM FINE IMPOSED WAS \$3,000.

ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER A DRIVER'S INSURANCE COVER IS INVALIDATED UPON THE EXPIRY OF HIS DRIVING LICENCE, MR LEUNG SAID IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO GENERALISE SINCE THIS DEPENDED UPON THE PROVISIONS OF EACH INDIVIDUAL INSURANCE POLICY.

BUT HE SAID THAT A COMMON PROVISION IN INSURANCE POLICIES ISSUED IN HONG KONG WAS THAT THE POLICIES PROVIDED COVER FOR ANY PERSON WHO HELD OR HAD HELD A DRIVING LICENCE, PROVIDED THAT THIS PERSON HAD NOT BEEN DISQUALIFIED TO DRIVE THE MOTOR VEHICLE BY ORDER OF A COURT OF LAW.

"IN TWO LOCAL CASES, THE COURTS HELD THAT SUCH POLICIES WERE NOT INVALIDATED SOLELY BECAUSE THE DRIVER'S DRIVING LICENCE HAD EXPIRED AT THE TIME OF THE ACCIDENT, AND THEREFORE THE INSURANCE COMPANIES WHO HAD ISSUED THE POLICIES WERE NOT RELIEVED FROM THE LIABILITY TO INDEMNIFY THE INJURED PARTIES," MR LEUNG SAID.

NOTWITHSTANDING THIS, UNDER THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MOTOR INSURERS' BUREAU OF HONG KONG, THE BUREAU UNDERTOOK TO PAY OR CAUSE TO BE PAID ANY OUTSTANDING AWARD OF THE COURTS IN CASES WHERE AN INSURANCE POLICY WAS INVALIDATED BY THE EXPIRY OF THE CONCERNED DRIVER'S DRIVING LICENCE, HE ADDED.

MR LEUNG ALSO SAID THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT HAD CONSIDERED A PROPOSAL TO REMIND ALL MOTORISTS BY LETTER OF THE EXPIRY DATE OF THEIR LICENCES BUT IT WAS FOUND TO BE A VERY COSTLY EXERCISE THAT WOULD NOT BENEFIT THE MAJORITY OF ACTIVE DRIVERS WHO USUALLY RENEWED THEIR LICENCE ON TIME.

UNDER THE EXISTING REGULATIONS, DRIVING LICENCE HOLDERS MAY RENEW THEIR LICENCES WITHIN THREE YEARS AFTER EXPIRY WITHOUT THE NEED TO TAKE A DRIVING TEST. IN PRACTICE MANY OF THE INACTIVE DRIVERS TEND TO RENEW THEIR LICENCES ONLY JUST BEFORE THE STATUTORY PERIOD EXPIRES.

"TO SEND REMINDERS TO THIS GROUP OF LICENCE HOLDERS WOULD NOT THEREFORE SERVE ANY USEFUL PURPOSE," HE SAID.

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ON THE SUGGESTION TO ALLOW DRIVERS TO HAVE A CHOICE OF THE DATE OF RENEWAL OF THEIR LICENCES, THE REGULATIONS ALREADY ALLOW SOME FLEXIBILITY IN THAT A LICENCE MAY BE RENEWED AT ANY TIME UP TO FOUR MONTHS BEFORE ITS EXPIRY.

"FOR THOSE DRIVER WHO USE THE PROVISION IN THE REGULATIONS TO ALLOW THEIR LICENCES TO LAPSE AND PLAN TO RENEW THEM WITHIN THREE YEARS AFTER THE EXPIRY DATE, EVEN MORE FLEXIBILITY IS ALLOWED. IN EFFECT, THEY MAY RENEW THEIR LICENCES ON ANY WORKING DAY OF THE YEAR THAT SUITS THEM," HE SAID.

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ENFORCEMENT KEY TO CONTROL OVERLOADED LORRIES

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THE SECRETARY FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON ,MICHAEL LEUNG, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY) THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NO PLANS TO INTRODUCE LAW TO CONTROL THE SIZE OF THE BUCKETS OF TIPPER TRUCKS BUT WAS CONSIDERING THE INSTALLATION OF ROADSIDE WEIGHBRIDGES TO STRENGTHEN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF POLICE ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS AGAINST OVERLOADING OF SUCH VEHICLES.

IN A WRITTEN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON TAM YIU-CHUNG,MR LEUNG SAID THAT LAST YEAR 15,439 PROSECUTIONS WERE INSTITUTED FOR SUCH OFFENCES.

MR LEUNG SAID THAT THE ROAD TRAFFIC (CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF VEHICLES) REGULATIONS ONLY SPECIFY THE MAXIMUM PERMITTED DIMENSIONS OF VEHICLES AND THE MAXIMUM PERMITTED WEIGHT WHICH MAY BE CARRIED.

AS THERE WAS NO SPECIFIC REGULATION GOVERNING THE EXTENSION OF THE BUCKETS OF TIPPER TRUCKS, AND GOODS VEHICLES LESS THAN 10 YEARS OLD WERE NOT YET SUBJECT OF ANNUAL INSPECTION, IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO VERIFY THE EXTENT OF THE PRACTICE OF ENLARGING THE BUCKETS OF TIPPER TRUCKS AND ITS EFFECTS ON OVERLOADING, MR LEUNG ADDED.

HE SAID THAT THE SIZE OF THE BUCKET WAS NOT THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR WHICH DETERMINED THE WEIGHT OF THE TIPPER TRUCKS. THE TYPE AND DENSITY OF THE MATERIALS CARRIED BY THE VEHICLES COULD SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT THE WEIGHT OF THE LOAD.

MR LEUNG, HOWEVER, EMPHASISED THAT THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO TACKLE OVERLOADING BY TIPPER TRUCKS, AND GOODS VEHICLES IN GENERAL, WAS BY ENFORCEMENT.

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ELEVEN BILLS PASSED

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

THEY ARE : COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1987, BANKRUPTCY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987, COMMODITIES TRADING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987, INSURANCE COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1987, PILOTAGE (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987, LIFTS AND ESCALATORS (SAFETY) (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987, SUPERVISION ORDERS (RESIDENTIAL REQUIREMENTS) BILL 1987, KOWLOON -CANTON RAILWAY CORPORATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987, ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987, THE HONG KONG UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY BILL 1987 AND PROTECTION OF WAGES ON INSOLVENCY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987.

FOUR OTHER BILLS WERE READ A SECOND TIME AND DEBATE ON THEM WERE ADJOURNED. THESE BILLS WERE - BANKING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987, MENTAL HEALTH (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987, PROTECTION OF WOMEN AND JUVENILES (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987 AND EMPLOYMENT (AMENDMENT) BILL 1987.

A MOTION SEEKING TO EXTEND THE PERIOD TO LIMIT THE NUMBER OF TAXIS TO JULY 7, 1988 WAS ALSO PASSED.

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CALL TO WORK HARD ON THE FUTURE

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THE GOVERNOR, SIR DAVID WILSON, SAID HE HAD GREAT CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE OF HONG KONG AND THAT THERE WAS A LOT OF WORK TO BE DONE IN THE COMING DECADE.

"IF ALL OF US CONCERNED WORKED HARD TO MAKE SURE THAT THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FUTURE REALLY WORK OUT IN PRACTICE, I AM CONFIDENT THAT THAT CAN BE DONE," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID WAS REPLYING TO QUESTIONS FROM REPORTERS THIS (WEDNESDAY) MORNING AFTER TOURING THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT'S HONG KONG NEW IDENTITY CARD ISSUE OFFICE IN WAN CHAI TO SEE FOR HIMSELF ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE START OF THE FIRST PHASE OF THE NEW IDENTITY CARD RE-ISSUE SCHEME.

"THERE IS A LOT OF WORK TO BE DONE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS, A LOT OF PRACTICAL WORK, LIKE THE THINGS THAT I HAVE BEEN SEEING THIS MORNING," HE ADDED.

THE GOVERNOR ALSO TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET A NEW I.D. CARD AND FOUND THAT THE SYSTEM WORKED "VERY EFFICIENTLY AND EXTREMELY RAPIDLY".

"IT'S A VERY IMPORTANT PROJECT TO PRODUCE NEW IDENTITY CARDS WHICH WILL BE ABLE TO BE USED RIGHT BEYOND 1997. AND IT WILL ALSO BE ABLE TO HAVE, WHERE APPROPRIATE, THE RIGHT OF ABODE ENDORSEMENT, WHICH MEANS THAT PEOPLE FROM HONG KONG WILL BE ABLE TO HAVE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS WITH THAT SAME RIGHT OF ABODE ENDORSEMENT, AND THOSE TRAVEL DOCUMENTS ALSO CAN GO BEYOND 1997," HE SAID.

ASKED IF THE NEW IDENTITY CARD WOULD HELP PREVENT THE INFLUX OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS, SIR DAVID STRESSED THAT THERE WAS NO QUESTION OF NEW IDENTITY CARDS BEING GIVEN TO ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS, AND HAVING AN EFFICIENT IDENTITY CARD WAS A VERY GOOD CHECK AGAINST ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION.

COMMENTING ON THE RECENT INFLUX OF II'S INTO THE TERRITORY, HE POINTED OUT THAT VERY VIGOROUS MEASURES WERE BEING TAKEN TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM AND THE SITUATION HAD BEEN BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL.

"BUT IT IS A CONTINUING PROBLEM. WE HAVE TO REMAIN VERY VIGILANT BOTH ON THE BORDER, MARINE POLICE AND IN CHECKING AGAINST ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS BEING IN HONG KONG AND SENDING THEM BACK WHEN WE FIND THEM," HE SAID.

SIR DAVID STRESSED THAT ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS IN THE TERRITORY SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK FOR CHEAP WAGE RATES. HE SAID THAT REGULAR CHECKINGS WERE DONE BY THE POLICE TO CAPTURE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS.

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"IT IS A VERY EFFICIENT OPERATION, VERY FEW ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS GET THROUGH THE BORDER OR THE MARINE POLICE. NEARLY ALL OF THOSE WHO DO GET THROUGH ARE THEN PICKED UP AND SENT BACK," HE SAID.

THE GOVERNOR ADDED THAT HONG KONG HAD VERY CLOSE LIAISON WITH THE CHINESE AUTHORITIES OVER THE II SITUATION THROUGH THE NEW CHINA NEWS AGENCY.

ACCOMPANIED BY THE DIRECTOR OF IMMIGRATION, MR ALAN CARTER, SIR DAVID EARLIER SAW YOUNG MEN BORN IN 1967 AND 1968 WAITING THEIR TURN TO BE PROCESSED FOR THE TWO TYPES OF NEW CARDS TO BE RE-ISSUED.

HE LEARNED THAT THE FOUR-AND-A-HALF-YEAR EXERCISE WOULD COST ABOUT \$563.1 MILLION AND ABOUT 4.8 MILLION CARDS WOULD BE REPLACED.

MR CARTER INFORMED HIM THAT THE TWO TYPES OF NEW CARDS WOULD BE THE HONG KONG PERMANENT IDENTITY CARD, WHICH STATES THAT THE HOLDER HAS THE RIGHT OF ABODE IN HONG KONG, AND THE HONG KONG IDENTITY CARD WHICH DOES NOT STATE THAT RIGHT.

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SINO-BRITISH JOINT LIAISON GROUP SEVENTH MEETING

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THE SEVENTH MEETING OF THE SINO-BRITISH JOINT LIAISON GROUP WILL TAKE PLACE IN LONDON FROM JULY 7 TO 10.

THE BRITISH TEAM WILL BE LED BY THE SENIOR REPRESENTATIVE, MR ROBIN MCLAREN (ASSISTANT UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE (ASIA), FCO). THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE BRITISH TEAM WILL BE MR DONALD LIAO (SECRETARY FOR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION, HONG KONG), MR DICK CLIFT (POLITICAL ADVISER, HONG KONG), MR PETER THOMSON (COUNSELLOR, BRITISH EMBASSY, PEKING) AND MR CHRISTOPHER HUM (HEAD OF HONG KONG DEPARTMENT, FCO).

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GOVERNOR'S VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES

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THE GOVERNOR, SIR DAVID WILSON, IS PLANNING TO VISIT THE UNITED STATES IN MID-OCTOBER THIS YEAR.

THIS WILL BE SIR DAVID'S FIRST VISIT TO THE U.S. SINCE TAKING OFFICE. WHILE DETAILS OF HIS PROGRAMME HAVE NOT YET BEEN FINALISED, IT IS INTENDED THAT HE WILL VISIT BOTH WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK AND POSSIBLY ONE OTHER CITY.

DURING THE VISIT, HE WILL MEET U.S. CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS AND CALL ON SENIOR OFFICIALS IN THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION.

HE WILL ALSO TAKE ON A NUMBER OF SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS.

SIR DAVID WILL BE ACCOMPANIED ON THIS VISIT BY THE SECRETARY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY, MR HAMISH MACLEOD AND BY HIS PRIVATE SECRETARY, MR RICHARD HOARE.

COMMENTING ON THE ANNOUNCEMENT, A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THE EARLY VISIT REFLECTED THE IMPORTANCE HONG KONG ATTACHED TO MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONS WITH A MAJOR TRADING PARTNER AND INVESTOR IN HONG KONG.

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STUDENT LOAN FUNDS OFFERED FOR 1987/88

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STUDENTS OF POST-SECONDARY COLLEGES, TECHNICAL INSTITUTES AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NEED OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO SUPPORT THEIR STUDIES IN THE FORTHCOMING ACADEMIC YEAR (1987/88) MAY OBTAIN INTEREST-FREE LOANS FROM THE HONG KONG ROTARY CLUB STUDENTS' LOAN FUND AND THE STANDARD/SING TAO FAT CHOY DRIVE STUDENTS' LOAN FUND.

A SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT WILL BE ELIGIBLE FOR A MAXIMUM LOAN OF \$2,050 AND A POST-SECONDARY STUDENT FOR \$2,970 PER ANNUM.

APPLICATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE WILL BE CONSIDERED BY A JOINT COMMITTEE FOR BOTH LOAN FUNDS AND PRIORITY WILL BE GIVEN TO APPLICANTS WHO ARE APPROACHING THE COMPLETION OF THEIR STUDIES.

LOANS ARE MADE AVAILABLE ON A YEARLY BASIS. NEW APPLICANTS WHO WISH TO APPLY FOR LOANS AND PRESENT RECIPIENTS WISHING TO APPLY FOR FURTHER LOANS IN THE COMING ACADEMIC YEAR MUST COMPLETE A PRESCRIBED FORM.

/APPLICANTS WHO

APPLICANTS WHO INTEND TO ENTER THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG AND THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG SHOULD APPLY TO THE DEAN OF STUDENTS AND THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STUDENT AFFAIRS OF THE UNIVERSITIES RESPECTIVELY.

THOSE WHO WISH TO ENTER THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC AND CITY POLYTECHNIC OF HONG KONG SHOULD APPLY TO THE STUDENT WELFARE OFFICER AND STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICER OF THE POLYTECHNICS RESPECTIVELY.

STUDENTS WISHING TO ENTER THE HONG KONG BAPTIST COLLEGE SHOULD APPLY TO THE STUDENT FINANCIAL AID OFFICE OF THE COLLEGE.

THE CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATION TO ALL THESE TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS WILL BE OCTOBER 16.

APPLICANTS WHO WISH TO ENTER OTHER POST-SECONDARY COLLEGES, TECHNICAL INSTITUTES AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS ARE ADVISED TO OBTAIN AN APPLICATION FORM FROM THE OVERSEAS STUDENTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS SECTION, EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, 5TH FLOOR, LEE GARDENS, HYSAN AVENUE, CAUSEWAY BAY. COMPLETED FORMS MUST BE RETURNED TO THE OFFICE BEFORE SEPTEMBER 7.

SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS FOR LOANS FROM EITHER LOAN FUNDS WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER INTO A FORMAL UNDERTAKING TO REPAY THEIR LOANS BY INSTALMENTS OF AT LEAST 10 PER CENT OF THEIR MONTHLY SALARY FOLLOWING THE COMPLETION OF THEIR STUDIES.

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EXHIBITIONS ON VOCATIONAL TRAINING

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THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING COUNCIL WILL BE HOLDING THREE EXHIBITIONS OVER THE NEXT THREE WEEKS TO ENCOURAGE SECONDARY SCHOOL LEAVERS TO RECEIVE VOCATIONAL TRAINING BEFORE JOINING INDUSTRIES AND COMMERCE.

THE EXHIBITIONS WILL FEATURE COURSES PROVIDED AT THE EIGHT TECHNICAL INSTITUTES AND 14 INDUSTRIAL TRAINING CENTRES OPERATED BY THE COUNCIL.

THE FIRST EXHIBITION, AT NAM FUNG CENTRE, TSUEN WAN, WILL BE HELD FROM TOMORROW (THURSDAY) TO JULY 6. THE SECOND EXHIBITION WILL BE HELD AT THE MTR MONG KOK STATION FROM JULY 9 TO 13.

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE NEW TOWER PLAZA, THE LAST EXHIBITION WILL BE HELD AT THE PLAZA'S FOOTBRIDGE GALLERY, SHA TIN FROM JULY 16 TO 20.

THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE EXHIBITION WILL BE AN HOUR-LONG VARIETY SHOW AT THE ATRIUM PLAZA OF THE NEW TOWN PLAZA, SHA TIN AT 3 PM ON JULY 18.

CAREERS MASTERS, PARENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE INVITED TO THE EXHIBITIONS WHICH WILL BE OPEN FROM 10 AM TO 6.00 PM.

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GENERAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY UNDERWAY

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THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT WILL CONTINUE TO CONDUCT THE GENERAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY IN JULY TO SEPTEMBER 1987.

THE SURVEY, CONDUCTED MONTHLY SINCE AUGUST 1981, COLLECTS INFORMATION ON EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT, AND THE GENERAL SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POPULATION. IN ADDITION, QUESTIONS ON HONG KONG RESIDENTS' EXPENDITURE ABROAD; HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE ON RENT; SICK LEAVE AND MATERNITY LEAVE PATTERN OF EMPLOYEES AND USE OF TAXIS WILL ALSO BE INCLUDED IN THE MONTHS OF JULY TO SEPTEMBER 1987.

SOME 5,000 HOUSEHOLDS ARE SELECTED AT RANDOM EACH MONTH FROM ALL DISTRICTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE SURVEY.

ABOUT HALF OF THE HOUSEHOLDS INTERVIEWED THREE MONTHS AGO, WILL BE SURVEYED AGAIN TO MEASURE MORE ACCURATELY THE CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED SINCE THEN.

AN OFFICIAL LETTER, IN ENGLISH AND CHINESE, HAS BEEN SENT TO THE SAMPLED HOUSEHOLDS TO EXPLAIN THE PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY AND TO SEEK THEIR CO-OPERATION.

ASSISTANT CENSUS AND SURVEY OFFICERS, EACH CARRYING AN IDENTITY CARD ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT, WILL VISIT THESE HOUSEHOLDS TO COLLECT THE REQUIRED INFORMATION.

ALL INFORMATION COLLECTED WILL BE TREATED CONFIDENTIALLY AND WILL NOT BE REVEALED TO ANY PERSON OR ORGANISATION OUTSIDE THE DEPARTMENT.

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COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS NEW TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SCHEME

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MEMBERS OF THE KOWLOON CITY DISTRICT BOARD TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE WILL MEET TOMORROW (THURSDAY) TO DISCUSS AND SEEK MEMBERS' VIEWS ON A TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SCHEME IN KOWLOON CITY AREA.

THE SCHEME WILL BE INTRODUCED FOLLOWING THE COMPETITION OF THE CARPENTER ROAD WIDENING PROJECT IN MAY NEXT YEAR. THE PROJECT IS DESIGNED TO ALLEVIATE TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN NGA TSIN WAI ROAD AND IMPROVING PEDESTRIAN CROSSING FACILITY ON THIS ROAD.

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IN THE MEETING, MEMBERS WILL DISCUSS WHETHER IT IS NECESSARY TO CARRY OUT A COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY ON TRAFFIC CONDITIONS IN THE DISTRICT.

OTHER ITEMS ON THE AGENDA INCLUDE PROPOSALS BY DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS TO INSTALL TRAFFIC FACILITIES IN HUNG HOM, TO KWA WAN, AND KOWLOON TONG AREAS TO IMPROVE ROAD SAFETY.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE MEETING TO BE HELD AT 2.15 PM TOMORROW (THURSDAY) IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE KOWLOON CITY DISTRICT OFFICE, 141 KAU PUI LUNG ROAD, TO KWA WAN.

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KWAI TSING DISTRICT BOARD TO MEET TOMORROW

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THE 15TH KWAI CHUNG AND TSING YI DISTRICT BOARD MEETING WILL BE HELD TOMORROW (THURSDAY) TO DISCUSS A REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF RE-HOUSING FOR AN EXTENDED REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, THE "MEET THE PUBLIC" SCHEME AND APPLICATIONS FOR DISTRICT BOARD FUNDS.

MEMBERS WILL ALSO DISCUSS AMBULANCE SERVICES, WATER SUPPLY AT TSING YI INDUSTRIAL CENTRE, THE NUMBER OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES ON TSING YI, RENTAL POLICY OF AND THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE HONG KONG HOUSING SOCIETY AND HOW IT IS BEING MONITORED, AND THE OPERATION OF COMMUNITY HALLS AND CENTRES IN THE DISTRICT.

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NOTE TO EDITORS:

YOU ARE INVITED TO COVER THE 15TH KWAI CHUNG AND TSING YI DISTRICT BOARD MEETING TO BE HELD AT 2.30 PM TOMORROW (THURSDAY) AT THE CONFERENCE ROOM, 10TH FLOOR, KWAI HING GOVERNMENT OFFICES BUILDING AT 166-174, HING FONG ROAD, KWAI CHUNG.

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TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS IN TUEN MUN

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SPECIAL TRAFFIC ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN TUEN MUN FROM 10 AM ON FRIDAY (JULY 3) FOR ABOUT ONE MONTH FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT SYSTEM.

THE RIGHT TURN MOVEMENT FROM PUI TO ROAD EASTBOUND ONTO TIN HAU ROAD WILL BE BANNED. MOTORISTS ARE ADVISED TO DIVERT VIA KIN TAI STREET, KIN WING STREET AND TSUN WEN ROAD TO TIN HAU ROAD.

MEANWHILE, THE RIGHT TURN MOVEMENT FROM PUI TO ROAD WESTBOUND TO TSUN WEN ROAD WILL BE BANNED TO ALL VEHICLES EXCEPT FRANCHISED BUSES AND PUBLIC LIGHT BUSES. MOTORISTS HEADING FOR TSUN WEN ROAD ARE ADVISED TO DRIVE VIA TIN HAU ROAD SOUTHBOUND, HUNG CHEUNG ROAD NORTHBOUND, SAN ON STREET, HUNG CHEUNG ROAD EASTBOUND AND TIN HAU ROAD NORTHBOUND.

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RESTRICTED ZONES IN SHEUNG SHUI AND TAI PO

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FROM 10 AM ON FRIDAY (JULY 3), THE SECTION OF ROAD L9 BETWEEN ROAD D7 AND ROAD D3, SHEUNG SHUI, WILL BE MADE A 24-HOUR PUBLIC LIGHT BUS PROHIBITED ZONE DAILY.

NO PLB WILL BE ALLOWED TO ENTER THE PROHIBITED AREA.

WITH EFFECT FROM THE SAME TIME, THE LOOP ROAD LEADING FROM TAI PO ROAD (YUEN CHAU TSAI) WESTBOUND TO KWONG WANG STREET WILL BE DESIGNATED A 24-HOUR DAILY RESTRICTED ZONE.

WITHIN THE RESTRICTED ZONE, NO VEHICLE WILL BE ALLOWED TO STOP FOR GOODS AND PASSENGERS.

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