



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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BILLS PROPOSE CHANGES TO BANKING AND DTC BUSINESS
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THE BANKING (AMENDMENT) BILL 1981 AND THE DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL 1981 WERE GIVEN A SECOND READING IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THESE TWO BILLS HAVE TWO RELATED PURPOSES, NAMELY, THE REDEFINITION OF BANKING BUSINESS AND THE CREATION OF A NEW CLASS OF DEPOSIT-TAKING INSTITUTION, SO THAT THE BUSINESS OF TAKING DEPOSITS WOULD IN FUTURE BE CARRIED OUT BY THREE DISTINCTIVE CLASSES OF INSTITUTION.

THEY ARE LICENSED BANKS, TAKING DEPOSITS OF ANY MATURITY AND IN ANY AMOUNT IN THE COURSE OF THEIR BANKING BUSINESS- LICENSED DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES, CARRYING OUT THE EXISTING FUNCTIONS OF DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES, EXCEPT THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO TAKE DEPOSITS OF LESS THAN \$500 000- AND, OTHER (REGISTERED) DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES, CARRYING OUT THEIR EXISTING FUNCTIONS, EXCEPT THAT THEY WOULD NO LONGER BE PERMITTED TO TAKE DEPOSITS WITH AN ORIGINAL TERM TO MATURITY OF LESS THAN THREE MONTHS.

THE FINANCIAL SECRETARY THE HON SIR PHILIP HADDON-CAVE SAID SPLITTING THE BUSINESS OF TAKING DEPOSITS BETWEEN THREE TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS - BANKS, LICENSED DEPOSITS-TAKING COMPANIES AND REGISTERED DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES - WOULD HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE MONETARY SECTOR.

FIRST, AS REGARDS THE 30 COMPANIES USED BY LICENSED BANKS TO GARNER DEPOSITS OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE INTEREST RATE AGREEMENT: THE GREATER THE RESTORATION OF THE BANKS' DEPOSIT BASE WHICH IS ACHIEVED, THE LESS THE NEED FOR THE BANKS TO MAINTAIN THESE DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANY SUBSIDIARIES. WHILE SOME OF THEM MIGHT BE WOUND UP, OTHERS MIGHT BE MAINTAINED TO COMPETE FOR TERM DEPOSITS BETWEEN 3 AND 17 MONTHS (THE INTEREST RATE AGREEMENT DOES NOT APPLY TO DEPOSITS PLACED FOR 18 MONTHS OR LONGER).

SECONDLY, AS REGARDS THE 182 COMPANIES DOING +WHOLESALE+ BUSINESS: IT IS BASICALLY THESE COMPANIES WHICH WOULD BE ELIGIBLE (IF THEY MEET THE CRITERIA) FOR LICENSED STATUS, BUT ONLY A FEW WOULD QUALIFY. THERE ARE AT PRESENT ONLY 12 REGISTERED DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES WITH PAID-UP SHARE CAPITAL, OR PAID-UP SHARE CAPITAL PLUS RESERVES, IN EXCESS OF \$100 MILLION AND WHICH COULD, THEREFORE, MEET THAT OBJECTIVE EITHER AS OF NOW, OR AFTER CAPITALISING THEIR RESERVES.

THIRDLY, AS REGARDS THOSE 130 COMPANIES ENGAGED PRIMARILY IN +FINANCE COMPANY+ BUSINESS IN THE DOMESTIC ECONOMY: THEY WOULD LOSE A PROPORTION OF THEIR DEPOSIT BASE ONCE THEY WERE NO LONGER ALLOWED TO TAKE SHORT-TERM DEPOSITS, UNLESS THEY SUCCEEDED IN PERSUADING THOSE DEPOSITORS TO PLACE THEIR FUNDS FOR THREE MONTHS OR LONGER. AT THE END OF FEBRUARY 1981 THESE 130 COMPANIES HAD TOTAL DEPOSITS OF \$17 BILLION OR 37 PER CENT OF TOTAL DEPOSITS HELD BY DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES.

SOME OF THESE +FINANCE COMPANIES+ WOULD WITHDRAW FROM THE DEPOSIT-TAKING BUSINESS. THE CASE FOR WITHDRAWAL MAY BE STRENGTHENED FOR SOME OF THEM IF OTHER MEASURES, INCLUDING AN INCREASE IN THE MINIMUM PAID-UP SHARE CAPITAL, AND THE IMPOSITION OF TIGHTER PRUDENTIAL CONTROLS, PROPOSED IN THE DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES (AMENDMENT) (NO. 3) BILL, TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE OFFICIAL GAZETTE THIS COMING FRIDAY, ARE IMPLEMENTED.

FOR THOSE COMPANIES WHICH CHOSE TO STAY ON THE REGISTER, AND FOR OTHER COMPANIES WHICH APPLIED FOR REVOCATION OF THEIR REGISTRATION, CAREFUL TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE NEEDED.

THE TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS ENVISAGED HAVE TWO OBJECTIVES. THE FIRST IS TO ENSURE THAT THOSE DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES WHICH ARE NOT GOING TO APPLY FOR, LET ALONE ACHIEVE, LICENSED STATUS HAVE A REASONABLE PERIOD OF TIME IN WHICH TO RUN DOWN THEIR SHORT-TERM DEPOSITS.

THE SECOND OBJECTIVE IS TO ALLOW THOSE COMPANIES WHICH CHOOSE TO APPLY FOR LICENSED STATUS TO CONTINUE TO DEVELOP THEIR BUSINESS DURING THE PERIOD IN WHICH THEIR APPLICATIONS ARE BEING CONSIDERED AND DETERMINED.

SIR PHILIP SAID IT IS PROPOSED THAT A DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANY, WHICH HAS NOT BEEN GRANTED LICENSED STATUS BY THE END OF 12 MONTHS FROM A NOMINATED DATE, MUST HAVE REDUCED THE AMOUNT OF SHORT-TERM DEPOSITS IT HOLDS TO 50 PER CENT OF THE AMOUNT WHICH IT HELD ON THE NOMINATED DATE.

BY THE END OF A FURTHER 12 MONTHS - THAT IS, WITH EFFECT FROM 24 MONTHS FROM THE NOMINATED DATE - A REGISTERED DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANY, COULD NOT HOLD ON ITS BOOKS ANY DEPOSITS WITH AN ORIGINAL TERM TO MATURITY PERIOD OF LESS THAN THREE MONTHS, AND FROM THAT DATE IT COULD NOT ACCEPT ANY MORE SUCH DEPOSITS.

A DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANY WHICH WAS GRANTED A LICENCE WOULD, AS FROM THE DATE OF BEING GRANTED SUCH A LICENCE, BE RESTRICTED TO TAKING DEPOSITS OF AT LEAST \$500 000: ALL ITS SMALLER DEPOSITS MATURING AFTER THAT DATE WOULD HAVE TO BE REPAID ON MATURITY OR, IF AT CALL, AFTER A REASONABLE PERIOD.

SIR PHILIP SAID THESE TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS WOULD HAVE THE EFFECT OF PLACING A REDUCING ABSOLUTE CEILING ON THE TOTAL OF SHORT-TERM DEPOSITS HELD BY DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES WHILE, AT THE SAME TIME, NOT CAUSING APPLICANTS FOR LICENSED STATUS TO TURN AWAY NEW BUSINESS OVER THE PERIOD WHEN APPLICATIONS WERE BEING CONSIDERED.

DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES WHICH ARE REGISTERED AFTER THE NOMINATED DATE WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO TAKE OR TO HOLD ANY DEPOSITS WITH AN ORIGINAL TERM TO MATURITY OF LESS THAN THREE MONTHS. IF, AFTER REGISTRATION, THEY APPLY FOR LICENSED STATUS THEY WOULD ONLY BE PERMITTED TO ACCEPT SHORT-TERM DEPOSITS (OF \$500 000 OR MORE) ONLY FROM THE DATE THAT SUCH STATUS IS GRANTED.

+IT MAY BE THAT, IF THE THREE TIER STRUCTURE ENVISAGED IN THE TWO BILLS NOW BEFORE MEMBERS IS IMPLEMENTED, THE SCOPE OF THE INTEREST RATE AGREEMENT COULD BE REDUCED SO THAT IT APPLIES ONLY TO DEPOSITS OF LESS THAN \$500 000,+ HE SAID.

+THIS WOULD NEED TO BE CONSIDERED VERY CAREFULLY, WITH THE AID OF A STUDY OF THE SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF DEPOSITS WITH BANKS, WITH LICENSED DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES AND WITH OTHER DEPOSIT-TAKING COMPANIES AFTER THE MARKET HAS HAD SOME EXPERIENCE OF THE NEW STRUCTURE+.

SIR PHILIP POINTED OUT THAT A STUDY UNDERTAKEN BEFORE SUCH EXPERIENCE HAD BEEN ACQUIRED WOULD NOT BE SUFFICIENTLY VALID TO UNDERPIN SUCH A FAR-REACHING (AND, IN PRACTICAL TERMS, PROBABLY IRREVOCABLE) CHANGE TO THE INTEREST RATE AGREEMENT.

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MATERNITY LEAVE PROVISIONS APPROVED

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THE EMPLOYMENT (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL WHICH PROVIDES PAID MATERNITY LEAVE FOR SOME WORKING MOTHERS WAS PASSED BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY.

SPEAKING AT ITS SECOND READING, THE REV THE HON PATRICK MCGOVERN SAID HE SUPPORTED THE MAIN PROVISIONS OF THE BILL BUT HAD RESERVATIONS ON THE QUALIFYING PERIOD AND THE LIMIT ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN.

ON THE FIRST POINT, FR MCGOVERN SAID THE REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON MATERNITY LEAVE, HAVING CONSIDERED INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION CONVENTIONS AND THE PRACTICE OF NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES, RECOMMENDED THAT THE QUALIFYING PERIOD FOR PAY ENTITLEMENT IN HONG KONG SHOULD BE 26 WEEKS.

REPRESENTATIVES FROM WORKERS' ORGANISATIONS MOSTLY ASKED FOR 26 WEEKS, THOUGH SOME WANTED A SHORTER PERIOD.

HOWEVER, FR MCGOVERN SAID: +IT WAS AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE THEREFORE THAT THE LABOUR ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDED A QUALIFYING PERIOD OF 40 WEEKS AND THAT GOVERNMENT SAW FIT TO ACCEPT THAT ADVICE RATHER THAN THE ADVICE OF THE WORKING GROUP.

+NO COUNTRY MENTIONED IN THE APPENDICES OF THE WORKING GROUP REPORT HAS A QUALIFYING PERIOD OF MORE THAN 26 WEEKS.

+WE ARE OUT OF LINE WITH THE REST OF ASIA AND WE ARE OUT OF LINE WITH OUR OWN LAW.+

HE THOUGHT THE ONLY LOGICAL, THOUGH UNLIKELY, REASON FOR THE CHANGE FROM 26 WEEKS TO 40 WEEKS WAS THAT THE BILL WANTED TO IMPLY THAT +THE INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYER IS RESPONSIBLE NOT ONLY FOR THE PAYMENT FOR MATERNITY LEAVE, BUT ALSO FOR THE PREGNANCY ITSELF.+

/TURNING TO

TURNING TO THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN COVERED BY THE SCHEME, FR MCGOVERN SAID HE WAS DISSATISFIED THAT LABOUR LEGISLATION SHOULD BRING IN ANY NUMBER WHETHER IT BE TWO OR THREE OR TEN.

+WHILE MOST PEOPLE AGREE THAT SMALL FAMILIES ARE DESIRABLE IN THE OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS OF HONG KONG; MOST PEOPLE WITH ANY EXPERIENCE OF METHODS OF POPULATION CONTROL AS EXERCISED IN OTHER COUNTRIES ALSO AGREE THAT A POLICY OF DISINCENTIVES BRINGS DISASTROUS RESULTS,+ HE OBSERVED.

+THE INTRODUCTION IN THIS BILL OF A LIMITATION OF BENEFITS TO THE MOTHER OF THREE CHILDREN IS IN FACT A DISINCENTIVE.

+THE STATED INTENTION IS THAT THE EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY SHOULD NOT BE AN OPEN-ENDED COMMITMENT, BUT THE EFFECT IS THAT THE MOTHER OF A FOURTH CHILD IS DISADVANTAGED IN THAT SHE HAS TO TAKE UNPAID MATERNITY LEAVE IF SUCH A SITUATION SHOULD ARISE.+

FR MCGOVERN ARGUED THAT THE LIMITING PROVISION IS BAD LAW AND CONSIDERED IT UNNECESSARY FOR TWO REASONS.

FIRST, ACCORDING TO THE SUPPORTING PAPERS TO THE BILL, THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF LIVING CHILDREN FOR MOTHERS BETWEEN 15 AND 49 YEARS OF AGE IN 1976 WAS 2.9. WITH SUCH AN AVERAGE, THE NUMBER OF WORKING MOTHERS OF CHILD-BEARING AGE WHO ARE LIKELY TO HAVE A FOURTH CHILD IS NOT LIKELY TO BE LARGE AND CERTAINLY WOULD NOT CONSTITUTE AN OPEN-ENDED COMMITMENT TO EMPLOYERS.

SECONDLY, A MOTHER OF FOUR OR MORE YOUNG CHILDREN COULD NOT IN FACT, AND SHOULD NOT FOR SOCIAL REASONS, HAVE TIME TO TAKE ON FULL-TIME WORK IN ADDITION TO HER VERY FULL-TIME AVOCATION OF HOME-MAKER AND EDUCATOR.

FR MCGOVERN SAID HE HAD ALSO INTENDED TO DO A COSTING EXERCISE ON THE LIKELY EXPENSE TO EMPLOYERS OF GIVING PAID MATERNITY LEAVE WITHOUT RESTRICTION OF NUMBERS OF CHILDREN BUT WAS UNABLE TO GET STATISTICS ON THE NUMBERS OF LIVE BIRTHS PER ANNUM TO MOTHERS WITH THREE OR FOUR OR MORE CHILDREN.

+HOWEVER, IN SPITE OF THE LACK OF STATISTICS, I AM SURE THE NUMBERS AND HENCE THE COSTS WOULD BE VERY SMALL.

+SO APART FROM THE SOCIAL AND POLICY ARGUMENT, THE FINANCIAL ARGUMENT IS RATHER ON THE WEAK SIDE,+ HE SAID.

TWO OTHER UNOFFICIALS, DR THE HON HO KAM-FAI AND THE HON CHAN KAM-CHUEN ALSO SPOKE IN SUPPORT OF THE BILL.

DR HO SAID THE PROVISIONS IN THE BILL WOULD BRING OUR LABOUR LEGISLATION IN BROAD COMPARABILITY WITH OUR NEIGHBOURING ASIA COUNTRIES.

HE SAID: +THEY REPRESENT A SIGNIFICANT COMMITMENT ON THE PART OF THE EMPLOYERS IN ADVANCING THE HEALTH AND WELFARE OF THEIR EMPLOYEES AND THEIR FAMILIES.

+THEY ALSO REFLECT A COMMENDABLE AND SINCERE EFFORT ON THE PARTS OF OUR EMPLOYERS AND GOVERNMENT TO CONSERVE OUR HUMAN RESOURCES WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO MOVE THE WHEELS OF OUR INDUSTRIES AND OTHER ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES.+

/MR CHAN

MR CHAN NOTED THAT THERE WERE DIFFERENCES IN OPINION ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN, RANGING FROM TWO AS RECOMMENDED BY THE WORKING GROUP TO THREE AS INTRODUCED IN THIS BILL, AND TO THE UNLIMITED NUMBER AS ADVOCATED BY THOSE ON SOCIAL AND OTHER GROUNDS.

BUT HE OPINED THAT WORKERS WERE FREE TO HAVE AS MANY CHILDREN AS THEY DESIRED LONG BEFORE MATERNITY BENEFITS WERE INTRODUCED, AND THEY ARE HAVING AND WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE THIS FREEDOM AFTER PAID MATERNITY BENEFITS ARE LEGISLATED.

+IT IS THEREFORE THEIR HEALTH CONDITIONS, THEIR SENSE OF DUTY TOWARDS THEIR FAMILY PARTICULARLY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CHINESE CULTURE, AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO SHOULDER THE LONG YEARS OF RESPONSIBILITY IN BRINGING UP AND EDUCATING THEIR CHILDREN AS RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS, BUT NOT DELINQUENTS, WHICH MAINLY LIMIT THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN RESPONSIBLE PARENTS WISH TO HAVE.

+WHEN ONE COMPARES THESE HEAVY AND AWESOME RESPONSIBILITIES WITH THE MATERNITY BENEFITS GIVEN, EVEN WITHOUT ANY LIMIT ON THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN, THE LATTER WILL NOT AFFECT MATERIALLY THE WORKERS' DECISION ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.+

MOREOVER, MR CHAN CONTINUED, IN ASKING FOR MATERNITY BENEFITS FOR AN UNLIMITED NUMBER OF CHILDREN, ONE MUST BEAR IN MIND THAT THESE BENEFITS ARE PAID BY THE EMPLOYERS.

HE QUOTED STATISTICS TO SHOW THAT AN AVERAGE OF 96 PER CENT OF ALL ESTABLISHMENTS IN HONG KONG ARE SMALL IN SIZE AND ARE THEREFORE MOSTLY OF LIMITED MEANS TO COPE WITH AN OPEN-ENDED COMMITMENT FOR MATERNITY BENEFITS.

+LET US REMEMBER, SIR, THAT IT IS ALWAYS EASY TO IMPROVE ON EXISTING BENEFITS BUT WHEN UNFORESEEN CIRCUMSTANCES OR OTHER SIDE-EFFECTS APPEAR, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT CUT-BACKS.

+IT IS THEREFORE ADVISABLE TO ACCEPT THE PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS IN THIS BILL AS THEY STAND AND REVIEW THE RESULTS PERIODICALLY AND MAKE FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS WHEN THE STATE OF OUR ECONOMY PERMITS,+ HE SAID.

IN REPLY, THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR, THE HON J.N. HENDERSON, SAID THE PROVISIONS WOULD BE SUBJECT TO REGULAR REVIEW BY THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT IN THE SAME WAY AS ALL OTHER ITEMS OF LABOUR LEGISLATION.

MR HENDERSON THANKED THE UNOFFICIALS FOR THEIR SUPPORT AND SAID THE BILL REPRESENTED A MAJOR STEP FORWARD IN LABOUR LEGISLATION IN HONG KONG.

MR HENDERSON POINTED OUT THAT IN ENACTING LABOUR LEGISLATION IN THE PAST, THE NORMAL PRACTICE HAS BEEN TO ESTABLISH THE PRINCIPLE FIRST AND THEN TO REVIEW THE RELEVANT PROVISIONS REGULARLY AND TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS AS AND WHEN NECESSARY, IN THE LIGHT OF EXPERIENCE AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS.

HOPE FOR ADJUSTMENT IN EDUCATION POLICY

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THE HON CHARLES YEUNG, COMMENTING ON SCHOOL EDUCATION, WAS HOPEFUL THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD ADJUST ITS EDUCATIONAL POLICY WITH THE CONSEQUENTIAL FINANCIAL PROVISION IN ORDER TO IMPROVE OUR SCHOOL SYSTEM.

SPEAKING AT THE COMMITTEE STAGE OF THE APPROPRIATION BILL, 1981 HE FELT THAT IT WAS NOT FAIR FOR THE SCHOOL ALONE TO BEAR THE ENTIRE BLAME OF NOT GIVING OUR CHILDREN THE RIGHT SORT OF EDUCATION AND TO SHOULDER THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF EDUCATING THEM.

THIS RESPONSIBILITY, HE SAID, SHOULD BE SHARED BETWEEN THE SCHOOL, THE PARENTS, THE COMMUNITY AND THE GOVERNMENT.

HE POINTED OUT THAT WITHIN THE SCHOOL, THE TEACHERS SHOULD ESTABLISH GOOD PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE STUDENTS SO AS TO SECURE MUTUAL AFFECTION, TRUST AND CONFIDENCE.

+EFFECTIVE AND SINCERE COMMUNICATION AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN TEACHERS AND STUDENTS WILL ENCOURAGE THE STUDENTS TO RESPECT THEIR TEACHERS AND WILLINGLY TURN TO THEM FOR GUIDANCE AND ASSISTANCE THROUGH WHICH THE CHARACTER BUILDING AND MORAL EDUCATION OF STUDENTS MAY BE ACHIEVED.+

TO IMPROVE THIS PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP AND TO CREATE A CLOSER BOND BETWEEN THEM, MR YEUNG SUGGESTED THAT THE TEACHER/CLASS RATIO MUST BE IMPROVED AND THE CLASS SIZE REDUCED, SO THAT THE TEACHERS WOULD HAVE THE TIME AND OPPORTUNITY TO ATTEND TO INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS MORE CLOSELY AND TO BE IN CONTACT WITH PARENTS MORE FREQUENTLY.

THE COMMUNITY MUST RECOGNISE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION AND ACCORD THE TEACHERS DUE RESPECT AND DIGNITY SO THAT THE TEACHERS ARE INSPIRED TO TAKE PRIDE IN THEIR WORK AND TREAT TEACHING AS A LIFE-LONG CAREER, HE ADDED.

THE SUCCESS OF A SCHOOL, MR YEUNG THOUGHT, DEPENDED VERY MUCH ON CAPABLE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION, WHICH IN TURN DEPENDED ON INSPIRED AND ABLE LEADERS WITHIN THE SCHOOL.

+THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL ONLY IS INSUFFICIENT, AND HE SHOULD BE APPROPRIATELY ASSISTED BY LEADERS SELECTED FROM THE TEACHING STAFF.

+SUCH LEADERS SHOULD BE GIVEN NOT ONLY GREATER RESPONSIBILITY BUT ALSO A HIGHER STATUS AND BETTER PROMOTIONAL PROSPECT AND THE TIME SPENT BY THEM IN ADMINISTRATIVE WORK SHOULD BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT AS WELL,+ HE SAID.

MR YEUNG ALSO CALLED FOR THE PROVISION OF ADEQUATE SPECIAL CLASSES AND SPECIAL TUTORIALS WITHIN THE SCHOOL FOR SLOW LEARNERS AND LATE DEVELOPERS SO AS TO PROVIDE THEM WITH SPECIAL ATTENTION AND THERAPEUTIC TREATMENT WITH THE HOPE OF INTEGRATING THEM IN DUE COURSE INTO THE NORMAL CLASS, FAILING WHICH DEFERMENT SHOULD NOT BE DISCOURAGED.

+SPECIAL SCHOOL STREAM HAS, THEREFORE, TO BE STRENGTHENED AND THE RE-INTEGRATIVE SYSTEM HAS TO BE UNDER CONSTANT REVIEW,+ HE SAID.

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PLEA FOR MORE TEACHERS

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THE REV THE HON JOYCE M. BENNETT AGAIN PRESSED THE GOVERNMENT TO RE-EXAMINE ITS EDUCATIONAL POLICY FOR STRENGTHENING THE PERSONNEL IN THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT'S ADVISORY INSPECTORATE AND IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

SPEAKING AT THE COMMITTEE STAGE OF THE 1981 APPROPRIATION BILL AT THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY, SHE CRITICISED THE GOVERNMENT'S REPLIES TO HER QUESTIONS CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL POLICY WHICH SHE RAISED DURING THE SECOND READING OF THE BILL.

SAID MISS BENNETT: +THE OFFICIAL ANSWERS TO MY QUESTIONS ATTEMPTED TO COVER UP ITS WEAKNESSES, WHILE INDICATING AT THE SAME TIME THAT THE OBSERVATIONS OF THE SECRETARY FOR SOCIAL SERVICES WERE NOT INTENDED, AND I QUOTE, 'TO SUGGEST THAT SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED SOONER'.

+IN MY SPEECH ON MARCH 25 I MADE A NUMBER OF SUGGESTIONS OF SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS.

+BUT AS THESE SUGGESTIONS WERE NOT FULLY EXAMINED OR IN SOME CASES NOT EVEN CONSIDERED AT ALL, I WISH NOW TO REITERATE WAYS IN WHICH I BELIEVE WE CAN, WITHOUT GREAT EXPENSE, IMPROVE THE CONTENT OF OUR EDUCATIONAL POLICY.+

IN HER EARLIER SPEECH, MISS BENNETT ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO CONSIDER PROVIDING ONE CAREERS TEACHER FOR EACH STANDARD-SIZE SECONDARY SCHOOL AND TO RECOGNISE THE POST OF SENIOR MASTER OR DEPUTY PRINCIPAL AS EXTRA TO THE STAFFING.

SHE FURTHER SUGGESTED ONE TO THREE SUCH POSTS, AT THE NEW EDUCATION OFFICER LEVEL, ACCORDING TO THE SIZE OF THE SCHOOL.

+OUR GOVERNMENT'S ADMINISTRATION HAS FAILED TO COST PROPERLY THE WORK OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND SCHOOL STAFF DONE OUTSIDE THEIR SCHOOLS.

+IN OUR LOCAL COMMUNITIES MANY OF THE ACTIVITIES PROMOTED BY GOVERNMENT AND VOLUNTARY BODIES ARE DONE BY SCHOOL TEACHERS.

+ADD UP THE COST IN MANY HOURS AND THOSE ORGANISATIONS WOULD HAVE FAR HEAVIER COSTS,+ SHE SAID.

SCHOOL TEACHERS, MISS BENNETT EXPLAINED, ATTEND SPORTING ACTIVITIES, CDO SPONSORED DEBATES AND COMPETITIONS, AND GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGNS REQUIRING THEIR HELP AS ASSISTANTS.

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS HAVE ALSO TO ACT AS ADVISERS AT JUVENILE COURTS, AS ASSESSORS IN OTHER MAGISTRATE COURTS AND ATTEND EXAMINATION AUTHORITY MEETINGS, AREA COMMITTEE MEETINGS AND A MULTITUDE OF OTHER ACTIVITIES.

+I WOULD NOT HAVE IT OTHERWISE, HOW ELSE WOULD I BE HERE THIS AFTERNOON PLEADING WITH YOU FOR MORE STAFF IN OUR SCHOOLS?

/+OVER THE

+OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS MY COLLEAGUES IN THIS COUNCIL HAVE BEEN STAGGERED TO DISCOVER THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF HONG KONG DOES NOT RECOGNISE THAT SCHOOLS REQUIRE EXTRA BODIES AS DEPUTY PRINCIPALS, NOT JUST PROMOTION POSTS IN THE REGULAR ESTABLISHMENT.

+THEY HAVE BEEN STAGGERED TO DISCOVER THAT I TEACH EIGHT TO TEN PERIODS EACH WEEK.

+I CAN ASSURE YOU, SIR, THAT IF THERE IS NO RETHINK ON THE POSITION OF DEPUTY PRINCIPALS I MAY HAVE TO RESIGN FROM THIS COUNCIL IN ORDER TO PREVENT MY SENIOR STAFF AND MYSELF SUFFERING FROM EXCESSIVE OVERWORK,+ SHE SAID.

SHE NOTED WITH ALARM MR ERIC HO'S SUGGESTION THAT +IF INSUPERABLE DIFFICULTIES DO ARISE A REVIEW IS STILL POSSIBLE+.

+DO INSUPERABLE DIFFICULTIES IMPLY AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO STRIKE OR WORK TO RULE?+ SHE ASKED.

ALTHOUGH SHE DEPLORED SUCH A SUGGESTION, SHE WOULD NOT RULE OUT THOSE POSSIBILITIES, POINTING OUT THAT +THERE ARE PLENTY OF PEOPLE WISHING TO FERMENT TROUBLE IN THIS PLACE OF OURS+.

SCHOOL PRINCIPALS, DEPUTY PRINCIPALS AND STAFF ARE ALSO REGULARLY DEALING WITH SUCH PROBLEMS AS STOLEN PROPERTY, FIGHTING, GAMBLING AND FRAUD.

THESE PROBLEMS, WHICH WOULD WELL BE HANDED OVER TO THE POLICE, OCCUPY HOURS OF TIME AND OFTEN CAUSE STAFF TO WORK OVERTIME, MISS BENNETT SAID.

+AT THE MOMENT SCHOOLS DO NOT HAND OVER ALL SUSPECTED OF THESE CRIMES TO THE POLICE.

+ONLY THOSE THEY FIND UNABLE TO REFORM DO THEY HAND OVER TO THE POLICE TO BE PROSECUTED IN THE COURTS.

+WITHOUT EXTRA STAFF IN OUR SCHOOLS PRINCIPALS WILL BE SORELY TEMPTED TO HAND OVER ALL SUCH PROBLEM CHILDREN TO THE POLICE

+WE WOULD THEN HAVE FAR MORE JUVENILES AND YOUNG OFFENDERS CONVICTED IN THE COURTS AND WITH CRIMINAL RECORDS.+

MISS BENNETT REITERATED THAT MANY SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS WERE DISSATISFIED WITH THEIR PROMOTION PROSPECTS.

ALTHOUGH SHE ELABORATED THIS IN DETAIL ON MARCH 25, NO ANSWER WAS GIVEN TO HER REQUEST FOR AN EXPLANATION OF THE RATIONALE FOR PROVIDING IN THE AIDED SECTOR FEWER PROMOTION POSTS FOR GRADUATE MASTER TEACHERS COMPARED WITH THE CERTIFICATED MASTER TEACHERS.

SHE THOUGHT THAT TEACHERS WERE WILLING TO WORK LONG HOURS FOR THEIR STUDENTS, ADDING THAT THEY WOULD WORK BETTER WERE THEIR EXTRA DUTIES RECOGNISED BY HAVING MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROMOTION AND FOR HAVING MORE TIME TO BE WITH THEIR STUDENTS.

TURNING TO THE ADVISORY INSPECTORATE, MISS BENNETT SAID THE 274 POSTS FOR THE WHOLE OF THE ADVISORY INSPECTORATE ARE TOTALLY INADEQUATE TO COPE WITH THE DEMANDS CREATED BY THE INTRODUCTION OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION FOR NINE YEARS FROM PRIMARY ONE TO SECONDARY FORM THREE.

FURTHERMORE, MANY OFFICERS IN THE ADVISORY INSPECTORATE ARE JUNIOR TO THE TEACHERS THEY ARE MEANT TO ADVISE AND WITH NO EXTRA TRAINING OR EXPERTISE.

+IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT TEACHERS BECOME LAZY AND UNWILLING TO STIMULATE THEIR STUDENTS WITH NEW IDEAS.

+THEY THEMSELVES NEED CONSTANT STIMULUS AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO EXPERIMENT AND TRY OUT NEW METHODS.

+AND THIS MUST BE AN ON-GOING PROGRAMME,+ SHE ADDED.

MISS BENNETT WAS ALSO DISTURBED TO SEE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONTENT TO REPLY ON SURVEYS ON LANGUAGE TEACHING UNDERTAKEN BY OUTSIDE AGENCIES AND BY INTEREST GROUPS.

SHE CONSIDERED THAT TO BE HIGHLY DANGEROUS AS SUCH SURVEYS MIGHT CONTAIN QUESTIONS LOADED TO SECURE ANSWERS THAT WOULD HIGHLIGHT SITUATIONS THAT COULD BE USED BY GROUPS NOT WELL-SATISFIED WITH GOVERNMENT POLICY.

+THE EDUCATIONALISTS OF HONG KONG ARE DEMANDING THAT THE MONEY SPENT ON LANGUAGE TEACHING SHOULD BE SPENT ON UP-TO-DATE AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS THAT WILL ENABLE OUR STUDENTS TO GAIN HIGH PROFICIENCY IN THE USE OF CHINESE, BOTH SPOKEN AND WRITTEN, AND COMPETENT FLUENCY IN EVERYDAY ENGLISH.+

SHE ENDED WITH A PLEA FOR THE PROVISION OF MORE TEACHERS TO SCHOOLS.

+OUR SCHOOLS, PRINCIPALS, STAFF AND STUDENTS HAVE WAITED A LONG TIME TO SEE THESE IMPROVEMENTS.

+OUR MODERN SOCIETY NEEDS THEM WITHOUT FURTHER POSTPONEMENT AND DELAY,+ SHE SAID.

THE REV THE HON PATRICK MCGOVERN, WHO SPOKE IN SUPPORT OF MISS BENNETT, SAID HE WAS NOT SATISFIED THAT THE NEEDED ANSWER HAD BEEN PROVIDED.

TO SUMMARISE HIS OWN IDEAS, FR MCGOVERN QUOTED AN EDITORIAL IN ONE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE WEEKLYS, WHICH READ IN PART:

+POINT AFTER POINT SEEMED TO DEMAND EITHER EQUALLY CLEAR REFUTATION OR GENEROUS ACQUIESCENCE. IT WILL BE DEMAGING TO THE REPUTATION OF GOVERNMENT IF THE OFFICIAL REPLY IS A BLAND DEFENSIVE JUSTIFICATION OF EVERYTHING THAT GOVERNMENT HAS PROPOSED OR DONE THEY (THE OFFICIAL MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL) ARE ENTRENCHED IN RESPONSIBLE POSTS, AND THEIR DUTY IN DEBATE IS NOT TO SHOW THAT GOVERNMENT'S FIRST THOUGHTS ARE ALWAYS RIGHT, BUT RATHER TO SHOW THAT GOVERNMENT IS INTENT ON DOING WHAT IS BEST FOR THE COMMUNITY AND THAT IT IS READY, WHEN OCCASION OFFERS, TO ACCEPT VALID CRITICISM AND TO MODIFY ITS POLICY ACCORDINGLY.+

SAFETY OF CHILDREN A MAJOR FACTOR
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DISTANCES BETWEEN ESTATES AND THE SAFETY OF YOUNG CHILDREN ARE MAJOR CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL SITES IN HOUSING ESTATES, THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, THE HON COLVYN HAYE, SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM REV THE HON JOYCE BENNETT, MR HAYE SAID PRIMARY SCHOOL SITES SHOULD BE RESERVED TO A FORMULA WHICH WOULD ENSURE THAT CHILDREN WOULD NOT HAVE TO WALK MORE THAN 0.4 KM TO SCHOOL.

HE SAID THAT THE ACTUAL INCLUSION OF INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL PROJECTS IN THE PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME ONLY TAKES PLACE AFTER AN EXAMINATION OF THE CAPACITY AND ENROLMENTS OF EXISTING PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NEIGHBOURING ESTATES AND THE FEASIBILITY OF USING ANY SPARE CAPACITY IN SUCH SCHOOLS TO MEET THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE NEW ESTATE.

BUT IN THE CASES OF SOME HOUSING ESTATES WHICH ARE SEPARATED BY MAJOR ROADS OR A NATURAL BARRIER WHICH MAKE IT DIFFICULT OR UNSAFE FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN TO TRAVEL, IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO BUILD THE NEW SCHOOLS NEEDED, HE SAID.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON WONG LAM ABOUT MAKING THE FACILITIES GOVERNMENT AND AIDED SCHOOLS AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES, HE SAID GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS ARE REQUIRED TO DO SO AND AIDED SCHOOLS ARE URGED TO FOLLOW SUIT.

HEADS OF GOVERNMENT AND AIDED SCHOOLS ARE REMINDED OF THIS ANNUALLY.

THE EXTRA-CURRICULAR UTILISATION OF THESE PREMISES IS HIGH, HE ADDED.

MR HAYE AGREED WITH THE HON CHAN KAM-CHUEN THAT CHILDREN SHOULD ENROL AT THE SCHOOLS NEAREST TO THEIR RESIDENCE.

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GIVE RECOMMENDATIONS A TRY OUT: HAYE URGES
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THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STANDING COMMISSION ON CIVIL SERVICE PAY AND CONDITIONS OF SERVICE SHOULD BE TRIED OUT EVEN IF A VERY SMALL MINORITY OF THOSE AFFECTED FEEL AGGRIEVED, THE HON COLVYN HAYE, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, URGED IN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THIS (WEDNESDAY) AFTERNOON.

IN RESPONDING TO THE REV THE HON JOYCE BENNETT AND HER SUPPORTERS AT THE COMMITTEE STAGE OF THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1981 CONCERNING THE EDUCATION VOTE, MR HAYE ASSURED THAT ANY DECISION COULD BE REVIEWED IN DUE COURSE IF IT WAS FOUND TO REQUIRE MODIFICATION.

/MR HAYE

MR HAYE WAS REFERRING PARTICULARLY TO THE MERGER OF RANKS WHICH SEEMED TO HAVE UPSET VICE PRINCIPALS IN SCHOOLS -- A DECISION WHICH HAD BENEFITTED 871 TEACHERS AND IN NO WAY DIMINISHED THE SALARY SCALE OF ANOTHER 150. ONLY EIGHT TEACHERS SO FAR SEEMED TO BE LOSING ACTING PAY AND IN FAIRNESS TO THEM, THEIR ADDITIONAL DUTIES MIGHT BE REALLOCATED.

RESPONDING TO MISS BENNETT'S PLEA FOR EXTRA POSTS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS -- VICE PRINCIPALS AND OTHERS TO COVER ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND CAREERS GUIDANCE -- WHICH WOULD NOT DISTURB THE GENERAL TEACHER:CLASS RATIO, HE SAID HE WAS PREPARED TO LOOK INTO THIS IN SOME DETAIL BUT WARNED THAT THIS WAS NOT OPENING THE FLOODGATES. CASES WOULD HAVE TO BE JUSTIFIED ON FUNCTIONAL GROUNDS.

+MISS BENNETT AND I SHARE MUCH COMMON GROUND IN OUR MUTUAL CONCERN THAT SCHOOLS SHALL BE STAFFED ADEQUATELY TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE '80S.

+ANY DIFFERENCES THAT WE MAY HAVE MUST BE THOSE OF APPROACH: I AM BOUND BY CERTAIN RULES, WHICH I AM SURE MISS BENNETT APPRECIATES, AND MISS BENNETT IS FREE TO SUGGEST VARIATIONS OF THESE RULES. TOGETHER WE MUST WORK OUT A SOLUTION TO OUR MUTUAL PROBLEM AND I KNOW THAT I CAN COUNT ON MISS BENNETT'S CONSTRUCTIVE ADVICE,+ MR HAYE SAID.

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SATISFACTORY START TO PLACEMENT SERVICE

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DURING THE NINE MONTHS SINCE THE SELECTIVE PLACEMENT SERVICE OF THE LABOUR DEPARTMENT CAME INTO OPERATION LAST JULY 7, THE SERVICE CARRIED OUT NEARLY 1 000 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS OF DISABLED JOB SEEKERS AND MADE 556 REFERRALS TO EMPLOYERS FOR SELECTION INTERVIEWS, WHICH RESULTED IN 214 SUCCESSFUL PLACEMENTS.

IN ADDITION, THE SERVICE PAID 181 PROMOTIONAL VISITS TO EMPLOYERS FOR THE PURPOSE OF CANVASSING VACANCIES.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION BY THE HON HO KAM-FAI, IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE COMMISSIONER FOR LABOUR, THE HON J.N. HENDERSON CONSIDERED THE PLACEMENT RATE A SATISFACTORY START.

HE POINTED OUT THAT IN ESTABLISHING THE SERVICE, THE DEPARTMENT FOLLOWED THE ADVICE OF TWO INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION EXPERTS THAT EFFORTS SHOULD BE PLACED ON ACHIEVING QUALITY RATHER THAN QUANTITY, I.E. ON PLACING THE RIGHT PERSON IN THE RIGHT JOB WITH A CONTINUING FUTURE RATHER THAN PLACING A GREATER NUMBER OF PLACEMENTS IN ANY KIND OF A JOB.

THE SERVICE THEREFORE CARRIES OUT AN IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW FOR EACH REGISTRANT TO ASSESS HIS OR HER CAPABILITY AND ABILITY FOR WORK AND ALSO A PRE-SELECTION INTERVIEW TO MOTIVATE HIM OR HER FOR A PARTICULAR JOB WHICH IS CONSIDERED SUITABLE FOR HIM OR HER.

/THESE INTERVIEWS

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THESE INTERVIEWS, ALTHOUGH TIME-CONSUMING, ARE ESSENTIAL TO ENSURE THAT AFTER PLACING A DISABLED PERSON IN EMPLOYMENT, HE WILL STAY IN THE JOB THAT SUITS HIM. INDEED, OF THE 214 SUCCESSFUL PLACEMENTS, OVER 80 PER CENT HAVE STAYED IN THEIR JOBS.

PROGRESS SO FAR, MR HENDERSON NOTED, SHOULD BE VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF THE MORE DIFFICULT GENERAL EMPLOYMENT SITUATION PREVAILING OVER RECENT MONTHS AND THAT MANY OF THOSE JOB SEEKERS HAD LITTLE OR NO VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND SOME HAD A LOW LEVEL OF GENERAL EDUCATION.

TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR DISABLED PEOPLE TO OBTAIN EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE FROM THE SERVICE, IT WAS PLANNED TO OPEN A KOWLOON OFFICE IN 1981/82, PROVIDED THAT SUITABLE PREMISES COULD BE OBTAINED. FUNDS FOR THIS PURPOSE HAD BEEN INCLUDED IN THE 1981/82 ESTIMATES.

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SPECIAL MEASURES AGAINST ARMED ROBBERIES

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THE SECRETARY FOR SECURITY THE HON LEWIS DAVIES TODAY (WEDNESDAY) ASSURED MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL THAT SPECIAL MEASURES ARE BEING TAKEN BY THE POLICE TO COMBAT THE INCREASE IN ARMED ROBBERIES INVOLVING FIREARMS.

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON STEPHEN CHEONG, MR DAVIES SAID, HOWEVER, IT WOULD NOT BE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST TO DESCRIBE THESE MEASURES, SINCE TO DO SO WOULD HAVE OBVIOUS OPERATIONAL DISADVANTAGES AND WOULD IMPAIR THEIR EFFECTIVENESS.

HE SAID THE NUMBER OF REPORTED ROBBERIES INVOLVING FIREARMS HAD INCREASED FROM 47 CASES IN 1977 TO 75 IN 1978, 133 IN 1979 AND 194 IN 1980.

IN THE FIRST THREE MONTHS OF THIS YEAR THERE HAVE BEEN 62 REPORTED CASES. THIS COMPARES WITH 53 CASES FOR THE CORRESPONDING PERIOD IN 1980, AND 61 CASES FOR THE LAST THREE MONTHS OF THAT YEAR.

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MTR WORK EXEMPTION TO STAY

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THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT INTEND TO LIFT THE EXEMPTION GRANTED TO THE MASS TRANSIT RAILWAY CORPORATION WHICH ALLOWS THE CORPORATION TO CARRY OUT CONSTRUCTION WORKS 24 HOURS A DAY, INCLUDING PUBLIC HOLIDAYS.

IN REPLY TO A QUESTION FROM THE HON ANDREW SO IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY), THE SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT THE HON DEREK JONES SAID THE EXEMPTION WAS GRANTED TO MTRC QUITE DELIBERATELY BY STATUTE AS THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE RAILWAY WAS CONSIDERED TO BE ESSENTIAL IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST.

+TO DO OTHERWISE WOULD ADD TO COSTS AND, WHAT IS MORE OBJECTIONABLE, LENGTHEN THE CONSTRUCTION PERIOD,+ HE SAID.

+THE CORPORATION DOES, HOWEVER, TRY SO TO PROGRAMME ITS WORK AS TO REDUCE THE USE OF NOISY EQUIPMENT AT NIGHT TO THE ABSOLUTE MINIMUM.+

A FURTHER PERTINENT POINT, MR JONES SAID, IS THAT THE GREATER PART OF THE WORK ON THE TSUEN WAN EXTENSION WILL BE FINISHED BY THE MIDDLE OF NEXT YEAR- AND THE NEED TO USE NOISY EQUIPMENT SHOULD BE CONSIDERABLY REDUCED IN THE LATTER PART OF THE WORK ON THIS SECTION OF THE NETWORK, AS WAS THE CASE EARLIER WITH THE MODIFIED INITIAL SYSTEM.

+IN ADDITION, THE METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION TO BE USED FOR THE ISLAND LINE WILL BE MUCH LESS NOISY, IN THAT IT WILL GENERALLY EMPLOY BORED TUNNELLING TECHNIQUES RATHER THAN CUT AND COVER, AND MOST OF THE STATION CONCOURSES WILL BE BUILT OFF-STREET UNDER BUILDINGS,+ HE ADDED.

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NO CHANGE IN TUNNEL FEE COLLECTION METHOD

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THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT PROPOSE TO ASK THE CROSS HARBOUR TUNNEL COMPANY TO CONSIDER CHARGING CROSS HARBOUR TUNNEL FEES IN ONE DIRECTION ONLY, THE SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, THE HON DEREK JONES SAID TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

REPLYING TO A QUESTION FROM DR THE HON HARRY FANG, MR JONES SAID THAT THE CONSULTANTS STUDYING THE OPTIONS FOR ADDITIONAL CROSS HARBOUR FACILITIES HAVE ADVISED THAT THE MAJOR CAUSE OF CONGESTION IN THE TUNNEL IS NOT THE TOLL BOOTH CAPACITY BUT THE MERGING OF TRAFFIC AT THE ENTRANCES AT BOTH ENDS OF THE TUNNEL.

+THIS WOULD NOT BE ALLEVIATED -- AND INDEED IT COULD WELL BE AGGRAVATED -- BY THE INSTITUTION OF ONE DIRECTIONAL TOLL COLLECTION,+ HE SAID.

UNLESS STEPS WERE TAKEN TO PREVENT IT, HE ADDED, DRIVERS WOULD HAVE INCENTIVE TO USE THE TUNNEL IN THE FREE DIRECTION AND RETURN BY VEHICULAR FERRY, THUS AVOIDING PAYMENT WHICH WOULD IMBALANCE THE SERVICES AND LEAD TO A LOSS OF REVENUE FOR BOTH COMPANIES.

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PLAN TO EXTEND CHEUNG CHAU PIER
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PROPOSALS TO EXTEND THE PIER AT CHEUNG CHAU AND TO PROVIDE FACILITIES FOR THE BERTHING OF LARGE FERRY VESSELS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE PIER WILL BE SUBMITTED FOR INCLUSION IN THE PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME SHORTLY, THE SECRETARY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT THE HON DEREK JONES SAID IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THERE ARE ALSO FIVE ITEMS NOW IN THE PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME TO PROVIDE, RESPECTIVELY, NEW FERRY BERTHING FACILITIES AT SOK KU WAN, YUNG SHUE WAN AND PO TOI, A NEW PIER AT PENG CHAU AND A COVERED CROWD MARSHALLING AREA NEXT TO THE NEW PIER AT SILVERMINE BAY.

MR JONES WAS REPLYING TO REV THE HON JOYCE BENNETT WHO ASKED WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONSIDER REGULATING THE BOARDING AND LEAVING OF FERRIES AT CHEUNG CHAU AND AT THE OUTLYING ISLANDS FERRY PIERS AT WEEKENDS AND HOLIDAYS TO BRING ORDER OUT OF THE PRESENT CHAOS.

HE SAID THE OLDER PIERS AT THE OUTLYING ISLANDS WERE NOT DESIGNED TO ACCOMMODATE THE VERY LARGE NUMBERS OF PASSENGERS WHO VISIT THE ISLANDS TODAY, PARTICULARLY AT WEEKENDS AND PUBLIC HOLIDAYS.

+ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL ARE, HOWEVER, DEPLOYED BY BOTH THE FERRY COMPANY AND THE POLICE AT THESE TIMES TO CONTROL CROWDS WAITING FOR FERRIES AND TO HELP ENSURE ORDERLY BEHAVIOUR,+ HE SAID.

MR JONES ALSO POINTED OUT THAT THE FERRY COMPANIES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING BY-LAWS GOVERNING THE CONDUCT OF PASSENGERS BOARDING AND DISEMBARKING FROM THEIR FERRY VESSELS, AND PERSONS FOUND CONTRAVENING THE BY-LAWS ARE LIABLE TO A FINE OF \$2 000.

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APPROPRIATION BILL PASSED
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THE APPROPRIATION BILL 1981 WAS PASSED TODAY (WEDNESDAY) IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

OTHER BILLS PASSED WERE THE KOWLOON-CANTON RAILWAY (AMENDMENT) BILL 1981, THE EMPLOYMENT (AMENDMENT)(NO. 2) BILL 1981, THE INTERPRETATION AND GENERAL CLAUSES (AMENDMENT)(NO. 2) BILL 1981, AND THE CHATER MASONIC SCHOLARSHIP FUND (AMENDMENT)(NO. 2) BILL 1981.

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PROVISIONAL TRADE FIGURES FOR MARCH 1981

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THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT TODAY (WEDNESDAY) PUBLISHED THE PROVISIONAL TRADE FIGURES FOR HONG KONG'S MERCHANDISE TRADE IN MARCH 1981.

THE VALUE OF TOTAL EXPORTS FOR MARCH WAS \$9 111 MILLION, MADE UP OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS AT \$5 784 MILLION AND RE-EXPORTS AT \$3 326 MILLION.

WITH IMPORTS AT \$11 326 MILLION, THE VISIBLE TRADE DEFICIT FOR MARCH WAS \$2 215 MILLION.

COMPARED WITH MARCH 1980, THERE WERE THE FOLLOWING INCREASES BY VALUE: \$1 200 MILLION OR 26 PER CENT FOR DOMESTIC EXPORTS- \$1 124 MILLION OR 51 PER CENT FOR RE-EXPORTS, \$2 324 MILLION OR 34 PER CENT FOR TOTAL EXPORTS AND \$2 367 MILLION OR 26 PER CENT FOR IMPORTS.

COMMENTING ON THE FIGURES, A GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN POINTED OUT THAT, ALTHOUGH FUEL OIL WORTH ABOUT \$156 MILLION WAS IMPORTED AS PART OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EFFORT TO BUILD UP HONG KONG'S STRATEGIC RESERVES, THE GROWTH RATE OF THE VALUE OF TOTAL EXPORTS IN MARCH WAS FASTER THAN THAT OF IMPORTS.

THE VISIBLE TRADE +GAP+, THAT IS THE PROPORTION OF THE VALUE OF IMPORTS NOT COVERED BY THE VALUE OF TOTAL EXPORTS, WAS 19.6 PER CENT IN MARCH THIS YEAR, COMPARED WITH 24.2 PER CENT IN MARCH 1980.

THE GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN FURTHER POINTED OUT THAT THE ACCELERATION IN THE GROWTH RATE OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS, FROM MINUS 5 PER CENT IN FEBRUARY THIS YEAR COMPARED WITH FEBRUARY 1980, TO 26 PER CENT IN MARCH THIS YEAR COMPARED WITH MARCH 1980, WAS PARTLY THE RESULT OF THE DIFFERENT TIMING OF THE LUNAR NEW YEAR. HE EXPLAINED THAT, WHILE IN MARCH LAST YEAR DOMESTIC EXPORTS WERE STILL IN THE PROCESS OF RECOVERING FROM THE LUNAR NEW YEAR LULL, IN MARCH THIS YEAR THEY HAD ALREADY RECOVERED.

COMPARING THE FIRST QUARTER OF THIS YEAR WITH THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1980 TO AVOID THIS DISTORTION, THE GROWTH RATE OF THE VALUE OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS WAS 17 PER CENT. THE GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN CONSIDERED THIS GROWTH RATE TO BE ENCOURAGING BECAUSE IT SUGGESTED THAT THE SHARP SLOW DOWN IN THE GROWTH RATE OF DOMESTIC EXPORTS DURING THE SECOND HALF OF 1980 HAD BEEN ARRESTED. BUT HE CAUTIONED THAT IT WAS STILL TOO EARLY TO SAY WHETHER THIS DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTED THE START OF A NEW TREND.

USING THE SAME COMPARISON PERIOD, THE GROWTH RATE OF THE VALUE OF IMPORTS, AT 28 PER CENT, WAS SLOWER THAN THE GROWTH RATE OF TOTAL EXPORTS AT 30 PER CENT. THE VISIBLE TRADE +GAP+ IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF THIS YEAR WAS 17.7 PER CENT COMPARED WITH 18.5 PER CENT IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1980.

/THE CENSUS

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THE CENSUS AND STATISTICS DEPARTMENT HAS RELEASED THE FOLLOWING PROVISIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE FIGURES FOR MARCH:

MERCHANDISE:	DOMESTIC EXPORTS	:	\$ 5 784	MILLION
<u> </u>	RE-EXPORTS	:	\$ 3 326	MILLION
	TOTAL EXPORTS	:	\$ 9 111	MILLION
	IMPORTS	:	\$11 326	MILLION
	TRADE BALANCE	:	\$ 2 215	MILLION (IN DEFICIT)

COMPARATIVE FIGURES

<u>LATEST 3 MONTHS</u>	JAN - MAR	JAN - MAR	INCREASE OR	
	1981	1980	DECREASE	
	\$ MN.	\$ MN.	\$ MN.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS (% OF TOTAL EXPORTS)	16 068 (62.8%)	13 708 (69.4%)	+ 2 359	+ 17.2
RE-EXPORTS	9 527	6 036	+ 3 491	+ 57.8
TOTAL EXPORTS	25 595	19 744	+ 5 850	+ 29.6
IMPORTS	31 101	24 212	+ 6 889	+ 28.5
TRADE BALANCE	- 5 506	- 4 468	- 1 038	

<u>SAME MONTH LAST YEAR</u>	MARCH	MARCH	INCREASE OR	
	1981	1980	DECREASE	
	\$ MN.	\$ MN.	\$ MN.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS (% OF TOTAL EXPORTS)	5 784 (63.5%)	4 585 (67.6%)	+ 1 200	+ 26.2
RE-EXPORTS	3 326	2 202	+ 1 124	+ 51.1
TOTAL EXPORTS	9 111	6 787	+ 2 324	+ 34.2
IMPORTS	11 326	8 959	+ 2 367	+ 26.4
TRADE BALANCE	- 2 215	- 2 172	- 43	

/LAST MONTH

<u>LAST MONTH</u>	MARCH 1981	FEBRUARY 1981	INCREASE OR DECREASE	
	\$ MN.	\$ MN.	\$ MN.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS (% OF TOTAL EXPORTS)	5 784 (63.5%)	3 938 (57.8%)	+ 1 846	+ 46.9
RE-EXPORTS	3 326	2 878	+ 448	+ 15.6
TOTAL EXPORTS	9 111	6 817	+ 2 294	+ 33.6
IMPORTS	11 326	9 091	+ 2 235	+ 24.6
TRADE BALANCE	- 2 215	- 2 274	+ 59	

<u>LAST 12 MONTHS</u>	APRIL 1980 TO MARCH 1981	APRIL 1979 TO MARCH 1980	INCREASE OR DECREASE	
	\$ MN.	\$ MN.	\$ MN.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS	70 530	59 505	+ 11 025	+ 18.5
RE-EXPORTS	33 563	21 851	+ 11 712	+ 53.6
TOTAL EXPORTS	104 093	81 355	+ 22 737	+ 27.9
IMPORTS	118 540	92 490	+ 26 050	+ 28.2
TRADE BALANCE	- 14 447	- 11 135	- 3 312	

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PREVENTIVE HEALTH SERVICE WINS AWARD
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THE MEDICAL AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT'S PREVENTIVE HEALTH SERVICE HAS RECEIVED THE VOCATIONAL SERVICE AWARD FOR THE YEAR 1980, SPONSORED BY THE ROTARY CLUB OF KOWLOON, FOR ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO A HEALTHY COMMUNITY.

THE ANNUAL ROTARY CLUB OF KOWLOON AWARD IS PRESENTED TO AN ORGANISATION WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE CLUB, HAS MADE OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO THE WELL-BEING AND BENEFIT OF HONG KONG AND ITS PEOPLE.

THE PREVENTIVE HEALTH SERVICE WAS CHOSEN ON THE BASIS OF ITS WORK ON THE PREVENTION OF EPIDEMICS AND CONTROL OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASES.

/THE CLUB

THE CLUB WAS OF THE OPINION THAT HONG KONG'S FREEDOM FROM COMMUNICABLE DISEASES HAS BEEN ACHIEVED BY THE VIGILANCE AND HARD WORK OF THE HEALTH AUTHORITIES AND HEALTH WORKERS.

FOR MANY YEARS, HONG KONG HAS BEEN FREE FROM THE FOUR MOST FEARED QUARANTINABLE DISEASES WHICH ARE ENDEMIC IN MANY COUNTRIES -- SMALLPOX, YELLOW FEVER, CHOLERA AND PLAGUE.

STRINGENT PREVENTIVE MEASURES CARRIED OUT BY HEALTH OFFICERS HAVE ALSO BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL MOST OF THE COMMUNICABLE DISEASES SUCH AS MALARIA, TYPHOID, DYSENTERIES AND TUBERCULOSIS.

A COMPREHENSIVE IMMUNIZATION PROGRAMME EXTENSIVELY CARRIED OUT BY HEALTH WORKERS HAS ALSO ELIMINATED OR KEPT DOWN TO THE MINIMUM MOST OF THE CHILDHOOD DISEASES SUCH AS POLIOMYELITIS, DIPHTHERIA, MEASLES AND WHOOPING COUGH.

AS A RESULT OF THE PREVENTIVE HEALTH SERVICE'S CONTINUOUS EFFORTS, HONG KONG HAS BEEN A LEADER IN RECORDING THE BEST INDICES OF INFANT AND MATERNITY HEALTH.

HONG KONG'S INFANT MORTALITY RATE, AT 11.8 PER 1 000 LIVE BIRTHS, AND THE MATERNAL MORTALITY RATE, AT 0.05 PER 1 000 TOTAL BIRTHS, ARE AMONG THE LOWEST IN THE WORLD.

WITH THE CONTINUOUS INFLUX OF REFUGEES, THE PREVENTIVE HEALTH SERVICE OF THE DEPARTMENT HAS TAKEN ALL POSSIBLE STEPS TO ENSURE THAT NO QUARANTINABLE DISEASES ARE IMPORTED INTO HONG KONG AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASES DO NOT SPREAD.

THE FACT THAT NO MAJOR OUTBREAK OF DISEASE HAS BEEN REPORTED IN THE REFUGEE BOATS OR REFUGEE CENTRES IS A REFLECTION OF THE SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS TAKEN BY THE HEALTH WORKERS.

HEALTH OFFICERS MAINTAIN TOTAL VIGILANCE ON THE FLEETS OF REFUGEES STREAMING INTO HONG KONG, IN ADDITION TO THEIR OTHER HEALTH WORK.

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AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS VISIT ABERDEEN TUNNEL

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TWO GROUPS OF AUSTRALIAN CIVIL ENGINEERS TODAY (WEDNESDAY) VISITED ONE OF THE MOST AMBITIOUS ROAD PROJECTS IN HONG KONG -- THE ABERDEEN TUNNEL.

ONE OF THE GROUPS CAME FROM THE EASTERN SEABOARD OF AUSTRALIA AND THE OTHER FROM WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

THEY ARE ON THEIR WAY HOME FROM THE THIRD ROAD ENGINEERING ASSOCIATION OF ASIA AND AUSTRALASIA CONFERENCE IN TAIPEI.

THE TOUR WAS ARRANGED BY THE HIGHWAYS OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT WITH THE AUSTRALIA ROAD RESEARCH BOARD (ARRB) AND THE MAIN ROADS DEPARTMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

/THE VISITORS

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THE VISITORS, TOTALLING MORE THAN 60, WERE BRIEFED BY THE CHIEF RESIDENT ENGINEER, MR D.G.S. BARTLETT, AND THE TECHNICAL SECRETARY, MR H.C. PANG, OF THE HIGHWAYS OFFICE.

THE \$270 MILLION ABERDEEN TUNNEL IS EXPECTED TO BE PARTIALLY OPENED TO TRAFFIC TOWARDS THE END OF THE YEAR.

EARLIER IN THE DAY, MR HAROLD BEATON, PRINCIPAL GOVERNMENT HIGHWAY ENGINEER, GAVE A SHORT TALK TO THE VISITORS ON HIGHWAY ENGINEERING AND ROAD PROJECTS IN HONG KONG.

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SCHOLARSHIP TO HONOUR COLLEGE PRINCIPAL

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STAFF OF THE NORTHCOTE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION HAVE SET UP A \$6 000 SCHOLARSHIP FUND IN HONOUR OF THEIR RETIRING PRINCIPAL, MISS M.R. TEMPLETON.

TO BE KNOWN AS THE MARJORIE TEMPLETON SCHOLARSHIP, THE ANNUAL AWARD WILL GO TO THE OUTSTANDING SECOND-YEAR STUDENT AT THE NORTHCOTE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION BASED ON OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT.

AT A CEREMONY TODAY (WEDNESDAY) MARKING HER RETIREMENT FROM THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT FOLLOWING 26 YEARS OF SERVICE, MISS TEMPLETON HANDED A \$6 000 CHEQUE TO MR COLVYN HAYE, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP FUND.

IN TURN MR HAYE PRESENTED HER WITH A FAREWELL MEMENTO OF A GOLD NECKLACE ON BEHALF OF STAFF OF THE DEPARTMENT.

MISS TEMPLETON JOINED THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT IN 1955 AS A TEACHER AT KOWLOON JUNIOR SCHOOL. SHE WAS PROMOTED TO SENIOR EDUCATION OFFICER IN 1970 AND PRINCIPAL OF NORTHCOTE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION IN 1974.

IN WISHING MISS TEMPLETON A HAPPY AND WELL-EARNED RETIREMENT, MR HAYE SAID HER STRONG SENSE OF LOYALTY AND INTEGRITY AND HER COMPETENT MANNER HAVE COMMANDED THE RESPECT AND CO-OPERATION OF ALL THOSE WHO CAME INTO CONTACT WITH HER.

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SUPPLEMENTARY ROAD MARKING
FOR URBAN CLEARWAY RESTRICTION
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THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT IS TO PAINT A CONTINUOUS YELLOW LINE IN ALL ROADS WITH URBAN CLEARWAY RESTRICTIONS TO HELP MOTORISTS IDENTIFY THEM.

THE YELLOW LINE, WHICH WILL BE 100 MM IN WIDTH, WILL BE PAINTED AT THE EDGE OF CARRIAGEWAYS.

THE NEW MARKINGS WILL SERVE AS A SUPPLEMENT TO THE PRESCRIBED STATUTORY TRAFFIC SIGNS INDICATING AN EXISTING URBAN CLEARWAY RESTRICTION.

WORK ON PAINTING THE YELLOW LINE WILL BEGIN ON FRIDAY (MAY 1), AND IS EXPECTED TO TAKE ABOUT SIX MONTHS ON HONG KONG ISLAND AND IN KOWLOON AND FOUR MONTHS IN THE NEW TERRITORIES.

MOTORISTS ARE REMINDED THAT ALL VEHICLES, EXCEPT FRANCHISED BUSES, ARE NOT ALLOWED TO STOP FOR GOODS OR PASSENGERS IN AN URBAN CLEARWAY.

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SHEUNG SHUI HEUNG VILLAGE OFFICE OPENED
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ABOUT 6 000 VILLAGERS OF SHEUNG SHUI HEUNG, NORTH DISTRICT, ATTENDED THE OPENING OF THEIR NEW VILLAGE OFFICE TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE TWO-STOREY BUILDING IS ON A 1 700 SQUARE METRE SITE GRANTED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND REPLACES THE PREVIOUS VILLAGE OFFICE WHICH WAS LOCATED IN THE ANCESTRAL HALL.

IT WAS BUILT AT A COST OF \$1.5 MILLION, DONATED BY LOCAL VILLAGERS.

INCLUDED IN THE BUILDING ARE OFFICES, RECEPTION AND CONFERENCE ROOMS.

OFFICIATING AT TODAY'S CEREMONY WERE NORTH DISTRICT OFFICER, MR PETER JOHNSON, HEUNG YEE KUK CHAIRMAN, MR LAU WONG-FAT, AND LOCAL VILLAGE REPRESENTATIVES.

MR JOHNSON SAID THE COMPLETION OF THE NEW VILLAGE OFFICE WAS A JOINT EFFORT BY THE NORTH DISTRICT OFFICE AND LOCAL VILLAGERS.

HE HOPED THE NEW BUILDING WOULD BE WELL USED AND WISHED THE VILLAGE REPRESENTATIVES EVERY SUCCESS IN THEIR WORK.

SHEUNG SHUI HEUNG CONSISTS OF SEVEN VILLAGES AND DATES BACK MORE THAN 600 YEARS.

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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 29, 1981

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BALLET DEMONSTRATION IN NORTH DISTRICT

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MEMBERS OF THE HONG KONG ACADEMY OF BALLET WILL HOLD A BALLET DEMONSTRATION IN NORTH DISTRICT ON FRIDAY (MAY 1).

IT IS BEING ORGANISED BY NORTH DISTRICT OFFICE, THE RECREATION AND SPORT SERVICE AND NORTH DISTRICT ARTS ADVANCEMENT ASSOCIATION, WITH FUNDS PROVIDED BY THE DISTRICT BOARD. IT WILL LAST FOR THREE-AND-A-HALF-HOURS.

THE DISTRICT OFFICER NORTH, MR PETER JOHNSON, AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NORTH DISTRICT ARTS ADVANCEMENT ASSOCIATION, MR LIU CHING-LEUNG, WILL OFFICIATE AT THE EVENT.

THE DEMONSTRATION, CONSISTING OF TWO SHOWS, WILL BE HELD AT KEI SUN COLLEGE HALL, FANLING.

TICKETS HAVE BEEN SENT TO ALL LOCAL SCHOOLS AND ARE AVAILABLE AT THE NORTH DISTRICT OFFICE AT TAI PO AND SHEUNG SHUI SUB-OFFICE.

ADMISSION TO THE SHOW, WHICH STARTS AT 2.30 PM, IS FREE.

IT IS PLANNED TO ORGANISE A BALLET TRAINING COURSE FOR LOCAL CHILDREN WHEN THE DISTRICT COMMUNITY HALL IS READY BY THE END OF THIS YEAR.

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BLACK'S LINK OPENING HOURS

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THE OPENING HOURS OF BLACK'S LINK TO WESTBOUND TRAFFIC DURING MONDAY TO FRIDAY WILL BE EXTENDED TO LAST FROM 7 AM TO 9 AM WITH EFFECT FROM FRIDAY (MAY 1), THE TRANSPORT DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED TODAY (WEDNESDAY).

THE EXISTING RESTRICTION ON THE USE OF THIS ROAD BY PRIVATE CARS AND TAXIS OVER 2 500 C.C. IS STILL IN FORCE.

TRAFFIC SIGNS WILL BE ERECTED TO GUIDE MOTORISTS.

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