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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 2028 OF 19 JULY

INFO IMMEDIATE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT OFFICE LONDON, PEKING

INFO ROUTINE HK GOVT REPS WASHINGTON, CG NEW YORK, BRUSSELS,

UKMIS GENEVA

FUTURE OF HONG KONG: PRESS COVERAGE.

(A) GREEN PAPER

SUMMARY:

1. WIDESPREAD PUBLICITY. STRONG SUPPORT FROM MANY INDEPENDENT PAPERS. NCNA SAYS THAT CHINA ACCEPTS NO COMMITMENT REGARDING BRITAIN'S ARRANGEMENTS.

DETAIL:

2. ALL PAPERS GAVE VERY PROMINENT COVERAGE TO THE GREEN PAPER ON THE FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT IN HONG KONG, WHICH WAS PRESENTED TO LEGCO AND PUBLISHED ON 18 JULY. SEVERAL PAPERS, INCLUDING COMMUNIST PAPERS, PUBLISHED THE CHINESE TEXT IN FULL. SOME HEADLINED THE GOVERNOR'S STATEMENT THAT THE GREEN PAPER HAD BEEN DRAWN UP WITH REGARD TO HONG KONG'S SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE NEED TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH CHINA. OTHERS HEADLINED HIS STATEMENT THAT THE PROPOSALS HAD BEEN FRAMED SO AS TO ENSURE THERE NEED BE NO CONFLICT WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF CONTINUITY OF THE SYSTEMS IN FORCE BEFORE AND AFTER 1997.

3. UNOFFICIAL LEGCO AND DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS, PROFESSIONALS AND BUSINESSMEN, GENERALLY WELCOMED THE GREEN PAPER. BUT SEVERAL PRESSURE GROUP SPOKESMEN WERE REPORTED TO HAVE CRITICISED IT FOR NOT PROPOSING SUFFICIENT DEMOCRATIZATION. A "RESPONSIBLE PERSON" OF NCNA HONG KONG, (LI CHONG, CHIEF EDITOR) WAS QUOTED BY COMMUNIST AND INDEPENDENT PAPERS AS SAYING THAT THE PAPER HAD BEEN DRAWN UP BY THE BRITISH SIDE AND THE CHINESE SIDE ACCEPTED NO COMMITMENT REGARDING IT (CHINESE: BU CHENG DAN YIWU). MISS DOROTHY LIU, A PRO-PEKING LAWYER, SAW THE GREEN PAPER AS A BRITISH TRICK TO RETAIN CONTROL OF HONG KONG: PATRIOTIC PEOPLE SHOULD NOT REPEAT NOT REGISTER TO VOTE. HO SAI-CHU (A CPPCC MEMBER) THOUGHT THE SINO-BRITISH TALKS SHOULD DISCUSS THE GREEN PAPER: HE FAVOURED GRADUALISM BUT THOUGHT THE PROPOSALS TOO CONSERVATIVE.

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4. PRESS COMMENT: MOST INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED EDITORIALS IN SUPPORT OF THE GREEN PAPER, AGREEING IN PARTICULAR THAT DIRECT ELECTIONS AT THIS STAGE WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE. COMMUNIST PAPERS MADE NO COMMENT. CENTRE DAILY NEWS (PRO-PEKING) SAID THAT THE PROPOSALS SEEMED DESIGNED TO ACT AS A BARRIER AGAINST CHINA'S INTERFERENCE IN THE TRANSITION PERIOD: GIVEN PEKING'S ASSURANCES, THIS WAS UNNECESSARY AND THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT SHOULD INSTEAD CONCENTRATE ON A SMOOTH TRANSITION AND CONTINUITY. TIN TIN DAILY NEWS (PRO-PEKING) CALLED FOR FASTER DEMOCRATIZATION AND ALSO SUGGESTED THAT PEKING'S CONSENT SHOULD BE SOUGHT IN THE CASE OF AT LEAST HALF THE APPOINTED MEMBERS OF EXCO AND LEGCO. HONG KONG DAILY NEWS (PRO-TAIPEI), SUPPORTED THE GREEN PAPER.

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