



# DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Wednesday, March 6, 1974

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Daily guide to wholesale prices and supply of basic food commodities

Release time: 7.30 p.m.

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### BRIDGING THE EDUCATION GAP

More Intensive Use Of School Buildings Needed Says Mr. Bray

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A number of schemes are being considered to bridge the "education gap" for children in the 12-14 age group, the Secretary for Home Affairs and Information, Mr. Denis Bray, disclosed today.

The education gap, he told members of the Hong Kong Soroptimist Club, "is the biggest we know of" in services for youth and it would not be easy to fill it quickly.

"No real impact can be made in less than about five years," he said. "If we sweat at imaginative and ingenious schemes we might do something mildly useful in about five years."

He added, however, that if we went remorselessly for temporary ways of using school buildings more intensively, "we could kill this problem in five years by having the kids in school -- where they belong anyway."

No alternative programme would yield results more quickly than more intensive use of school buildings during the period when school building caught up with increased teacher training.

Mr. Bray pointed out that if school places could not be found for children aged 12 to 14, "there is precious little that can really be done for them."

"If we insist on using secondary school buildings as they are used now then tens of thousands of children will be turned out to face life as best they can at the age of 12."

/At present, .....

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At present, Mr. Bray said, 80 per cent of primary school leavers go on with their education. This high figure surprised him, "but the sobering thought is that 20 per cent of these kids in the top forms of primary schools now have only one more term's schooling in their lives."

He said the hard facts are three years old. At the 1971 Census, the education gap comprised 46,000 children aged 12-14 not at school -- 15 per cent of this age group. A total of 31,000 of them were at work of some sort and 16,000 were not.

Describing some of the schemes being considered in the meantime, Mr. Bray said the first problem was to find out where these children were.

This would involve some form of registration, and one idea was being examined to organise a three-day excursion to a holiday camp during school time so that as many 12 to 14 year children as possible could attend and be registered by City District Office staff.

This could then be accompanied by setting up a network of trained Community Recreation Officers throughout Hong Kong's 17 administrative districts.

Mr. Bray said this had already been endorsed by the Council for Recreation and Sport and, if accepted, could start to make itself felt in the autumn.

The aim, he explained, was to organise recreation and sport for people who are not in school. The 12-14 age group would be the main target but not the only one.

"Recreation grounds are not well used at the moment except by school-based recreation," he said, "and this scheme is aiming at full use of the recreation grounds we have."

Recreation alone, however, would not do the job and two other lines of approach are being looked at.

/The first .....

The first is a suggestion for a counselling and guidance service on a reaching out basis. "The plan is to use youth or community centres as operational bases to reach out to potential problem youths who have either dropped out or are about to drop out of school," he explained.

Experienced youth agencies would be approached but the first step would be to set up a steering group to consider the basic problems of such a service. Initial projects would have to be run for a year to see whether they were worthwhile.

At this stage, Mr. Bray said, nobody knows how many such projects would be necessary.

The other proposal concerned an expansion of craft classes which aim simply to get the children into a place where they could potter about under guidance with the sort of tools and materials that may be useful to them in earning a living.

A pilot scheme could be started on a trial basis, he said, to develop leisure-time activities classes -- similar to the 10 now operated by the Boys and Girls Clubs Association -- for children in the education gap.

For 1,000 children in 10 classes the annual cost would approach \$500,000, he said.

And if it worked, assuming it took two years to set up and evaluate this scheme, it would have to be expanded fifteen times to reach children not at school or at work, and forty-five times to get all children in the education gap, he added. The cost would then be \$22.5 million a year without building.

Mr. Bray said he knew that the Kwun Tong Vocational Training Centre would like to help, and with their present buildings could take in 120 children at a cost of nearly \$200,000 a year for instruction. The number of children could be doubled to 240 in, say two or three years after some building extensions, he noted.

Some 200 such centres would be required at a cost of \$80 million a year if buildings could be found to cover all children not at school, he said.

Note to Editors:      .....

Copies of the full text of Mr. Bray's speech  
are boxed for collection.

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STANDARD \$2 FLAGFALL FOR HONG KONG AND KOWLOON TAXIS INTRODUCED

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A new standard fare of \$2 for the first mile for taxis operating on Hong Kong Island and in Kowloon has been approved by the Governor in Council.

The subsequent charges will be calculated at 20 cents for each one fifth of a mile, which is the current rate for Hong Kong.

In announcing the fare revision today, a government spokesman said that the decision had been taken after a detailed examination of the economics of the taxi trade following requests for higher fares from taxi operators on both sides of the harbour.

The spokesman pointed out that taxi fares had not increased for more than 25 years, and during this period there has been a very substantial increase in operating costs.

It is estimated that the cost of a new vehicle has doubled, drivers' wages trebled, the price of fuel increased fourfold and rents for garages up tenfold. In fact the cost of fuel to taxi operators has increased from \$2.90 a gallon before October 26, 1973 to \$4.15 a gallon now.

Commenting on the decision, the spokesman said that the fare rise had only been approved after very careful consideration of its implications on the cost of transport.

It was felt, however, that to refuse the application it might have a serious effect on the viability of the taxi trade which plays an important part in our public transport system.

/The spokesman .....

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The spokesman said that with the introduction of the uniform fare, the present zoning system will be abolished. This will enable taxis to operate on either side of the harbour as is the case with all other vehicles, including public light buses and public cars.

The dezoning will increase taxi availability to meet heavy demands caused by regular events and special occasions, such as race days and festivals. These demands cannot be met under the present arrangements.

The new fares will come into effect at 0001 on Sunday (March 10) morning. This delay will take into account the time needed by the Transport Department to issue a temporary conversion table which must be displayed in all taxis until their meters can be recalibrated, tested and sealed at the new rate.

Any taxi whose meter has not been converted, and in which the table is not displayed will have to charge the amount shown on the existing meter.

The actual conversion of the meters is expected to take some weeks as almost 4,800 vehicles are involved.

With the abolition of the zoning system, the existing \$15 cross-harbour surcharge (by tunnel or vehicular ferry) is to be reduced to \$10. This will allow \$5 for the return journey across the harbour to compensate for any loss if the taxi were unable to collect a fare back to its original side of the harbour.

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IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT UNDERLINED

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The Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, this (Wednesday) evening said the problems of law and order and cleanliness are being tackled along the right lines and in a manner the community understands.

Addressing Hong Kong Island community leaders at the annual spring reception, held in the City Hall, he noted that some progress had been made in these fields and the basis for more progress had been laid.

Sir Murray said he attached great importance to community involvement in the day to day life of Hong Kong and he thanked the community leaders for their effort in improving local conditions.

"With unity of will great things can be achieved in our attempt to make Hong Kong a more satisfactory place to live in," he said.

Following is the full text of the Governor's speech:

"It is a great pleasure for me and my wife to attend this annual Spring reception and to meet so many of you this evening.

"I attach great importance to community involvement in the day to day life of this city, and this has been a very active year for all community workers, with the focus on law and order and cleanliness. I believe that these problems are being tackled correctly and in a way that the community understands. Some progress has been made, and the basis for more progress has been laid.

/"I am .....

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"I am grateful and gratified at the part that you leaders or the community have played, and I take this opportunity to thank you for the time and effort you have so generously given to organise and unite your neighbourhoods and communities to make life better and safer and more satisfactory for everyone.

"A city is built on the will of the 'Community'. With unity of will great things can be achieved in our attempt to make Hong Kong a more satisfactory place to live in.

"I ask you to drink with me a toast to a happy and successful New Year."

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FIREMEN ON PARADE

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Note to Editors: The Colonial Secretary, Mr. Denys Roberts, will take the salute at a passing out parade of firemen to be held at the Fire Services Training School at Pat Heung in the New Territories, on Friday (March 8).

Reporters and photographers are invited to attend the parade which starts at 3 p.m. A bus will be provided to take press representatives to Pat Heung, leaving from Canton Road Fire Station at 1.30 p.m. sharp and returning there after the parade has ended.

Mr. Donald Strange of Fire Services Department will accompany the press party to and from Pat Heung.

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NEW ESTATE TO HOUSE 29,000 PEOPLE

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A public housing estate is to be built to the south of Clear Water Bay Road to provide homes for about 29,000 people. At the same time, Clear Water Bay Road will be re-aligned and widened to cope with the heavy traffic.

The estate will be built in three stages, the first of which will involve site formation and the construction of public housing accommodation for about 10,000 people.

Site formation work is expected to start in a few months' time.

Housing Department staff today began clearing the strip of land which runs for a quarter of a mile adjacent to the southern side of Clear Water Bay Road in the Ngau Chi Wan area.

A total of about 470 structures are involved in the clearance operation, which will be completed in another two or three days time.

More than 430 of these are tolerated structures and about 700 people living in them have been offered public housing at Sau Mau Ping or Lam Tin Estate.

Ex-gratia allowances amounting to \$1.2 million were given to 50 eligible shop or factory operators.

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NEW AMBULANCE DEPOT OPENED

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The Ambulance Command has come a long way since its establishment as a small division in 1960, Mr. Li Fook-kow, Secretary for Social Services, said today when he officially opened a new ambulance depot at Yau Ma Tei.

Mr. Li said the division had been re-organised, strengthened and gradually expanded into a strong Command with its own administrative organisation and a fleet of 67 ambulances to meet the emergency requirements of the population.

He went on: "But the demands for this service by the growing population have increased rapidly and, in a recent review of the Ambulance Service, the government also approved an additional 19 ambulances for the Command. This considerable increase is not surprising if one takes account of the fact that the Ambulance Service is answering an average of about 300 calls a day."

At the same time, Mr. Li said, it is the government's intention to ensure a well-equipped ambulance service with well trained officers who are able to cope with all manner of unforeseen circumstances.

"With the increasing public awareness of the ambulance service, the expanding industrialisation, higher population and traffic densities, the demand for a bigger and better service will continue to grow. But I am confident that, with the dedicated spirit of the Ambulance Command and the combined efforts of all concerned, we will continue to have an Ambulance Service we can be proud of."

/Present at .....

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Present at the opening ceremony were the Director of Fire Services, Mr. A.E.H. Wood, the Chief Ambulance Officer, Mr. G.W. Doore, and other guests.

The depot, situated at the junction of Waterloo and Nathan Roads, is a nine-storey building with a total staff of 40 operating two shifts and a complement of nine ambulances.

There are 46 quarters for officers and Rank and File. The building occupies an area of 5,000 square feet and cost about \$2.8 million.

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Note to Editors: Copies of a photograph showing Mr. Li unveiling a plaque at the opening ceremony are boxed for collection.

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NEW ADDRESS FOR SHAM SHUI PO CDO

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The Sham Shui Po City District Office will be moving over the weekend from the present premises in Tai Po Road to Cheng Ka Building, 299-303 Lai Chi Kok Road.

It will occupy the ground, first and second floors and start operating at the new address from Monday (March 11). The new telephone number is 3-704251.

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DIRECT SALES OF RICE TO MAJOR RETAIL OUTLETS

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Officials of the Commerce and Industry Department had a series of meetings today with representatives of the rice trade to discuss possible measures to improve the operation of the rice control scheme.

A spokesman for the department said that full support was given to arrangements for major retail outlets to obtain rice from importers at prevailing market rates.

"The prices they will charge will provide an accurate indication of fair retail prices which should prevail across the whole of the retail sector of the trade," he added.

The major retail stores involved in the arrangements include Shui Hing, Park 'N Shop, Dairy Farm, Asia, Wing On and Daimaru.

Shui Hing has already put top-grade China See Mew rice on sale at \$2.10 per catty after obtaining supplies direct from importers at last week's prevailing market rates.

These prices will be raised to a maximum of \$2.40 per catty when further supplies are obtained at the new rates which came into effect on Monday, March 4.

There is legal provision in the legislation governing the operation of the rice control scheme for the Director of Commerce and Industry to instruct importers to sell rice directly to any designated company.

At the present time about 25 retailers are permitted to purchase rice directly from importers. There is also provision for at least 12 major employers, including factories, commercial companies and hospitals to make direct purchases.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY SERVICE

Daily Guide To Wholesale Market Prices And Supplies

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The following prices were realised today (Wednesday) at sales under the Rice Control Scheme and at the Vegetable Marketing Organisation Wholesale Market and the Fish Marketing Organisation Wholesale Market at (Sheung Sha Wan, Kowloon):

Supplies and Wholesale Prices of Rice

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price (\$/catty)</u>
<u>China Rice</u>		<u>Average</u>
See New -- old crop	Good	1.96
-- new crop		2.00
S.C.Jion -- old crop	Good	1.94
Po Ngai	Good	1.63
Chu Cho	-	-
<u>Thai Rice</u>	Good	1.91
100% Whole		
10-15% Broken	Good	1.89
A1 Super Extra	-	-
A1 Super	Good	1.42/1.52
Whole Glutinous	-	-
<u>U.S. Rice</u>	Good	1.82
<u>Australian Rice</u>	-	-
<u>Pakistan Rice</u>	-	-
<u>Taiwan Rice</u>	Good	1.60

/Supplies and .....

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Supplies and Wholesale Prices of Marine Fish

<u>Species</u>	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price (\$/catty)</u>		
		<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Average</u>
Golden Thread	Good	3.4	2.4	3.0
Big-Eyes	Good	2.6	0.7	1.6
Squid	Normal	6.3	2.5	4.5
Hair-Tails	Good	2.45	1.2	1.8
Lizard Fishes	Normal	2.5	1.0	1.8
Croakers	Good	2.6	0.8	1.6
Conger-Pike-Eels	Good	1.8	1.3	1.5
Melon Coat	Limited	2.0	1.2	1.5
Breams	Normal	5.0	3.0	4.5
Yellow Belly	Good	1.9	0.8	1.4
Mackerels	Normal	4.2	3.0	3.8
Red Goat Fish	Good	1.6	0.6	1.0
Fork-Tail	Normal	1.4	1.0	1.2
Horse-Head	Good	5.2	3.0	4.0
Melon Seed	Normal	3.4	1.8	2.8
Pomfrets	Limited	7.5	6.5	7.0
Grouper	Normal	6.5	5.0	6.0
Yellow Croaker	-	-	-	-

/Supplies and .....

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Supplies and Wholesale Prices of

Locally Produced Vegetables

<u>Type</u>	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price (\$/catty)</u>		
		<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Average</u>
Flowering cabbage	Normal	1.8	0.5	1.2
White cabbage	Normal	1.3	0.3	0.8
Chinese Lettuce	Normal	0.8	0.2	0.5
Chinese Kale	Normal	1.2	0.4	0.8
Spring onion	Good	0.7	0.2	0.5
Spinach	Normal	1.2	0.4	0.8
Water cross	Normal	1.0	0.2	0.6
Leaf mustard cabbage	Limited	0.8	0.3	0.6
Tomato	Limited	1.8	0.6	1.4

Supplies and Wholesale Prices of Pork (Live weight)

	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price</u>
		<u>( \$/ picul)</u>
		(Average)
Pork	Good	. 300

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