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HONG KONG GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES

DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Tuesday, June 20, 1972

THE QUEEN EXPRESSES SYMPATHY FOR FLOOD VICTIMS

Messages Of Condolence From U.K. Ministers

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Her Majesty the Queen has sent a message to the Governor expressing sincere sympathy to the relatives of those who lost their lives in the disastrous landslides in Hong Kong.

In her cable, the Queen said: "I was extremely sorry to hear about the flood disaster. My husband and I send our sincere sympathy to the relatives of those who lost their lives."

Messages of sympathy have also been received from the Foreign Secretary, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, and the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Mr. Anthony Royle, in London.

Both telegrams were received by the Governor this morning.

In his message, Sir Alec said: "I am greatly distressed to learn of the considerable loss of life and damage as a result of the recent heavy rains. Please convey my deepest sympathy and that of Her Majesty's Government to the bereaved, injured and homeless."

Mr. Royle's cable reads: "I was deeply shocked to hear of the terrible disaster which has struck Hong Kong. I extend my deepest sympathy to all those who have suffered injury, and my condolences to those whose families have suffered bereavement."

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FOREIGN SECRETARY SPEAKS ABOUT HONG KONG

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The British Foreign Secretary, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, said last night (Monday) that he was in touch with the Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, about an immediate contribution to Hong Kong's relief fund following the serious flooding over the weekend.

Sir Alec, who was speaking as guest of honour at the Hong Kong Association's Dragon Boat Dinner in London, said the banquet was inevitably overshadowed by the floods which had brought death and destruction.

Turning to Britain's entry into the European Economic Community, the Foreign Secretary said his Government well understood the concern expressed by Hong Kong about the future, including the assimilation under the community's system of generalised preferences.

He added: "In particular of course there is the immensely important question of Hong Kong's exports to Britain of textile products and clothing, and I wish to take this opportunity to convince you that Her Majesty's Government really does appreciate the problems involved. There is no easy way out, but we are determined that Hong Kong's interests shall not be neglected."

Sir Alec said his Government had initiated discussions with the Commission in Brussels on Hong Kong's cotton textile quota levels for 1973 and would naturally keep in close contact with the Hong Kong Government.

He said for the long term, Britain was working with its partners in the Common Market towards a unified policy on textiles.

/Sir Alec .....

Sir Alec went on: "Hong Kong's adaptability, ingenuity and industry have enabled her to overcome earlier challenges and turn them to her own advantage. Certainly, increased prosperity resulting from the enlargement of Europe will lead to an increased market potential there. For Hong Kong this means increasing opportunities for expansion of exports."

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EXTENSION OF BUSINESS HOURS

At Sha Tin And Tsz Wan Shan Post Offices

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The Post Office announced today that the Sha Tin Post Office has extended its business hours and is now open continuously from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays to Saturdays without closing between 1 p.m. and 2 p.m..

Similarly, the Tsz Wan Shan Post Office is now open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. from Monday to Friday, and from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday.

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ANOTHER PUBLIC ASSISTANCE FIELD UNIT TO OPEN

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The 14th Public Assistance Field Unit, to serve applicants for public assistance in another Kowloon district, will be opened tomorrow (June 21).

It is the Shek Kip Mei Field Unit, and will be located temporarily in the premises of the Sham Shui Po Field Unit until its own building is ready in about six weeks.

The Shek Kip Mei Unit will take over from the Sham Shui Po Field Unit all cases the latter is presently handling in Shek Kip Mei, Pak Tin and Tai Wor Ping.

It will also take over from the Mong Kok Field Unit the latter's cases in Kowloon Tong, Kowloon Tsai, Tai Hang Tung and Tai Hang Sai.

Mr. Chou Ting-hsun, Senior Principal Social Welfare Officer and head of the Public Assistance Division, says setting up of the 14th Field Unit has become urgent because of "a steadily rising caseload."

"Not only has the earlier target figure of 15,000 been reached and passed," he explains, "but there are indications that pressure will increase, instead of diminishing."

It is divisional policy, subject to funds being available, to provide a separate field unit for every 1,000 cases, and on this basis, the 15th field unit is already being planned.

Mr. Chou says the total caseload on May 31 was 14,876, and $16 million has been spent since the expanded public scheme became fully operational on April 1, 1971.

Following the announcement of improved payments from April 1 this year, more than 1,000 new applications have been received each month.

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SHARP INCREASE IN C.P.I. FOR MAY

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The General Consumer Price Index for May 1972 was 138, five points higher than that for the previous month.

The rise was due mainly to an increase of 10 points in the index for food.

There was also an increase of one point each in the indexes for alcoholic drink, and for miscellaneous goods. Movements in the indexes for other sections were insignificant.

The average retail price of fresh vegetables rose sharply as a result of unfavourable weather conditions.

Higher retail prices were also recorded for bread and cakes, salt water fish, fresh water fish, live poultry, dried beans and fresh fruits. Some restaurants also put up their menu prices. On the other hand, retail prices of other fish, pork, beef and eggs were priced lower.

The Modified Consumer Price Index for May 1972 was 142, six points higher than that for the previous month, and 12 points higher than that for the corresponding month in 1971.

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NEW LOOK FOR STANLEY PRISON CHAPEL

Serving Prisoner Redecorates Interior

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The interior of the Stanley Prison chapel has been completely redecorated by a serving prisoner.

The man who gave the chapel a new look is 48-year-old Aurelio Spacholtz, an Italian.

He is one of the three prisoners who escaped from the Chi Ma Wan Prison on Lantau Island on August 10, 1970. All three were recaptured about nine days later.

Mr. Spacholtz began the work in early January this year, with materials supplied by the Prisons Department.

The interior of the chapel now has oval-shaped murals featuring the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These have been done in multi-colours against the grey-white walls of the sanctuary.

A spokesman for the Prisons Department said: "The chief motive behind this project is basically two-fold: to utilise Mr. Spacholtz's skill in the best possible way and to allow him to practise his trade while in prison."

Before he came to Hong Kong, Mr. Spacholtz was an architect.

Previously he had carried out a similar task at the Victoria Reception Centre's chapel.

Mr. Spacholtz, who is to return to Rome after his release in October this year, expressed his gratitude to the Commissioner of Prisons, Mr. T.G. Garner, for giving him an opportunity to put his ideas into reality.

/The Stanley .....

The Stanley Prison chapel was opened some 16 years ago. Services are held there every Sunday by the Prison's chaplain. Attendance at services is entirely voluntary.

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Note to editors: Copies of a photograph showing the redecorated interior of the Stanley Prison chapel are distributed separately in the G.I.S. press boxes this evening.

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ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES MANPOWER SURVEY

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A second manpower survey of the electrical apparatus and appliances industry is to be held from July 3 to July 22 to up-date information on training requirements and to make new recommendations, where necessary, to the government and industry.

The survey will be conducted by the Electrical Apparatus and Appliances Industrial Committee, one of the 10 associated industrial committees of the Industrial Training Advisory Committee, with assistance from the Labour Department.

The first manpower survey was held in December 1968 and the committee subsequently published its findings and recommendations in September last year. At the time of the first survey there were 16,637 manual workers in the industry and 203 factories or firms registered or recorded with the Labour Department, excluding electrical wiring contractors. In March, 1972 the corresponding figures were 19,520 and 330, and in view of these changes it was decided to conduct the second manpower survey.

The information required from employers will include the number of workers employed at present; the number of workers receiving training; the number of vacancies; and a forecast of the total number of workers required by July 1973.

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The information collected will be handled in the strictest confidence and will be published only in statistical summaries without reference to any individual factory or firm.

Because of the size of the industry, a random stratified sampling method has been adopted to select 450 premises to be covered. An explanatory letter in English and Chinese, together with the questionnaire has now been sent to the selected firms.

If an employer has any queries he is asked to contact the Labour Statistics and Surveys Unit of the Labour Department, telephone number H-778271 ext. 3 or 4.

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HONG KONG'S RESERVOIRS RECEIVE INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION

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The Chief Engineer (Construction) of the Public Works Department, Mr. Li Hin-wing said today the construction of reservoirs in Hong Kong had attracted international attention and earned international praise.

Speaking at a luncheon meeting of the Rotary Club of Kowloon East at the Peninsula Hotel, he said two of the projects currently receiving worldwide attention were the High Island scheme on the Sai Kung Peninsula and the desalination plant near Castle Peak. Work on both schemes is already well under way.

Mr. Li added: "The days of looking up to Heaven for rain should become a thing of the past."

In the distribution of water, he said, the Government had adopted the use of computers and this had helped solve a rather complicated matter.

"Professional staff are employed to deal with the recording of the daily storage. Information on water consumption in various districts, together with the record of rainfall as forecast by the Royal Observatory are fed into a computer to obtain the best results.

"The use of computers is a must nowadays, if water is to be distributed most economically," Mr. Li said.

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SPEECH THERAPY SCHOLARSHIP

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Government is inviting applications for a Scholarship in Speech Therapy from young persons aged between 18 and 26.

The scholarship, tenable in Australia, is for a three-year course leading to a Diploma of the College of Speech Therapists. It includes passage and a substantial allowance to meet essential expenses.

Applicants should be born in Hong Kong or have resided in Hong Kong for not less than seven years. They should speak fluent English and Cantonese with the correct consonant and vowel sounds. Knowledge of other Chinese dialects will be an advantage.

Application forms and further details are obtainable from the Government Training Division (Tel. H-767201), Lee Gardens, second floor, Causeway Bay. Completed forms, in quadruplicate, should be returned to the Division before July 7, 1972.

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FLOOD AFFECTED BUILDINGS CLOSED

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The Building Authority has obtained closure orders for a total of eight buildings in the Peak and Mid-Levels districts following the torrential rains during the weekend.

The buildings affected in the Peak area are: 60 Plantation Road, 62 Plantation Road, 3 Severn Road, and 22 Barker Road. In the Mid-Levels the buildings are: 21 Po Shan Road, 47 and 51 Conduit Road, and 36 Kotewall Road, blocks one and two.

In each case the closure orders will be removed as soon as it is practicable and safe to do so.

No. 60 Plantation Road is being closed because the earth around a large boulder immediately above it has become loose and the boulder is in danger of slipping down onto the building. The other three buildings are being closed because of the possibility of further land slips.

All other buildings in this area and in the Mid-Level District around the Po Shan Road landslip have been inspected and are considered safe for occupation. However the area will be kept under constant review.

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EXPORT OF RESTRAINED TEXTILES TO NORWAY AND SWEDEN

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The Director of Commerce and Industry today issued a number of Notices to Exporters on the subject of export of restrained textiles to Norway and Sweden.

Two of the Notices cover the balances of quota remaining available for export to Norway and Sweden under two Special Shipment Schemes to be introduced on Thursday (June 22).

Another two Notices deal with quota control arrangements for the export of restrained textiles to Norway from the beginning of next month to the end of this year, and the continuation of the current Export Authorisation Scheme until the end of 1972.

Trade associations and companies on the Commerce and Industry Department's mailing list for Notice to Exporters, Series 6 (Europe, other than Britain and the European Economic Community) will shortly receive copies of the Notices.

Persons who wish to have advance notice of contents are invited to contact the following officers of the Commerce and Industry Department.

Mr. H.T.W. Lau - Assistant Trade Officer

Tel. No. H-229777

Mr. A.R. Swinton - Industry Assistant

Tel. No. H-247315

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RELIEF WORK CONTINUES FOR STORM VICTIMS

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A full-scale operation by various Government departments is now underway for the rehabilitation and relief of rainstorm victims.

An inter-departmental working party has been set up to help family members of rainstorm victims in Kwun Tong, especially in funeral arrangements.

The working party comprises representatives of the Secretariat for Home Affairs, the Social Welfare Department, the Medical and Health Department and the Urban Services Department.

Its office is in the Social Welfare Department's Kwun Tong Community Centre, at 8, Tsui Ping Road.

The City District Officer (Kwun Tong), Mr. Jack So, said today the group would begin assisting family members of the victims to identify the bodies, to look for burial sites and to claim funeral expenses from the Social Welfare Department.

Staff of the Resettlement Department are working at full speed on the provision of direct resettlement for 900 people living in the Sau Mau Ping licensed area, including the 200 survivors of last Sunday's mudslide there, in the nearby Sau Mau Ping Resettlement Estate.

The department has also decided to rehouse the 500 people who were evacuated from the licensed area in Sam Kar Tsuen because of possible landslides there.

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"It is expected that they will be able to move into their new homes either today or tomorrow," a department spokesman said.

Officers of the Social Welfare Department have begun investigations among victims of the thunderstorm to see what aid can be given to them within the terms of the Community Relief Trust Fund administered by the Director of Social Welfare as Trustee.

A spokesman for the department said members of the public wishing to donate to the Fund should make their cheques payable to the Community Relief Trust Fund and address them to the Director of Social Welfare

Distribution Of Funds

Of the $2 million available in the Fund for immediate allocation by the Director, $1 million is expected to go to the Agriculture and Fisheries Department to help residents suffering losses of life, stock, crops and pond fish.

An allocation of $200,000 has already been made to the New Territories Administration to assist people in the New Territories.

The Public Assistance Division of the Social Welfare Department is using the Fund for burial grants and cash allowances to families who have lost their chief bread-winners. It is also being used to help victims who have lost their homes, and to repair dwellings damaged by the thunderstorm.

Up to four o'clock this afternoon, a total of $100,320 had been received from members of the public for the Community Relief Trust Fund.

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In connection with the multiple house collapse in Po Shan, Conduit and Kotewall Roads on Hong Kong Island, the City District Officer (Western) has set up an information unit at the garage of No. 6 Kotewall Road to receive information or reports.

The City District Officer, Mr. Rafael Hui, today advised occupants of the affected premises to report to the unit on their present whereabouts or whether any members of their family are missing. Similar reports may also be made to the Western police station.

Searching Debris

Throughout the day some 600 men from the army, police, fire services, civil aid and auxiliary medical services worked at the Kwun Tong landslide in an effort to recover more bodies and any possible survivors. Public Works Department and Resettlement Department personnel were also at the scene clearing rocks and debris with the aid of bulldozers and lorries.

At the Kotewall Road slip more than 100 people continued to sift through the debris of collapsed buildings in search of survivors.

Up to 6 p.m. today (Tuesday), 90 people had died as a result of the rainstorm, 166 were listed as missing and 120 were injured.

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P.W.D. ENGINEER CHECKING

Sizeable Licensed Areas And Squatter Areas

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Checks on potentially dangerous squatter and licensed areas have been carried out for a number of years but an experienced Public Works Department engineer is now carrying out further checks on all sizeable licensed areas and squatter areas, which were affected during the recent rainstorms. Many areas will have to be checked in detail and the engineer's report will then be studied in the Resettlement Department to allow a decision on what needs to be done.

The engineer has already reported on a number of these areas, and as a result a total of 3,000 persons are being offered public housing. Some of the families from the Sau Mau Ping Licensed Area have already been admitted to Sau Mau Ping Estate.

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MAYOR OF OSAKA SENDS MESSAGE OF SYMPATHY TO GOVERNOR

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The Mayor of Osaka in Japan, Mr. Yasushi Oshima, has sent a message to the Governor, Sir Murray MacLehose expressing sympathy for the bereaved families of landslide victims.

The message reads: "I was shocked to learn of the catastrophic landslides which took the lives of so many innocent people in your territory and would like to extend through you on behalf of the citizens of Osaka our deepest condolence and sympathies to the bereaved families of the victims and wounded and I further wish the fast recovery of the diaster stricken people and area."

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Release time: 8.30 p.m.

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HONG KONG GOVERNMENT

INFORMATION SERVICES

DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

SUPPLEMENT

Tuesday, June 20, 1972

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO RAINSTORM DISASTERS

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The Governor in Council has tonight ordered a Commission of Inquiry into the recent disasters, with particular regard to Sau Mau Ping and Po Shan Road.

The terms of reference of the Commission are:

> "To inquire into the circumstances in which disasters causing loss of life occurred during the rainstorms between the 16th and 18th June 1972 with particular regard to those at Sau Mau Ping and Po Shan Road, and to report to the Governor.
>
> "And also to make recommendations to the Governor as to how such disasters may be avoided in the circumstances of Hong Kong and its climate."

The composition of the Commission of Inquiry will be announced later.

Hearings are expected to be heard in public but under the Ordinance it will be a matter for the Commission to decide.

Any recommendations which are made by the Commission are likely to be made public in due course.

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Release Time: 8.30 p.m.