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# DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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## Improvements to ACP Labour Importation Scheme

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The Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Joseph W P Wong, today (Monday) said that the package of measures to improve the operation and strengthen the monitoring of the Special Labour Importation Scheme for the New Airport and Related Projects (ACP Scheme) was to ensure that the Scheme will continue to achieve its objectives.

Writing to the Chairman of the Manpower Panel of the Legislative Council, Mr Wong said he hoped the improvement measures would help the Panel's on-going inquiry into the labour disputes involving workers admitted under the ACP.

He said the spate of labour disputes at the end of last year revealed that the operation of ACP Labour Importation Scheme needed to be improved, noting that the Government had reviewed the operation of the Scheme and had introduced a series of new measures in recent months. They include:

### Vetting and approval of quota applications

NAPCO (New Airport Projects Co-ordination Office) since February this year, has extended the vetting and verification procedures on the number, type, and duration of employment of imported workers from principal contract to the subcontract level. The move is to help the Government ascertain more accurately the manpower requirements of the awarded subcontracts and guard against excessive bids for quotas by subcontractors.

### Recruitment of Local Workers

To address the concern that local workers should be given priority in filling ACP jobs, Labour Department (LD) has provided a special placement service since March 1995 and assisted the Airport Authority and the Mass Transit Railway Corporation to open a job centre in mid-January this year to facilitate the recruitment of local workers.

In order to attract more local workers to work on Chek Lap Kok, improvements have been made to the ferry service and on-site accommodation has been made available at a fee for local workers.

### Labour Service Companies (LSCs)

A great majority of workers imported for the ACP come from China, Thailand and the Philippines. The Government has drawn to the attention of the relevant consulates and organisations of these countries, the malpractice of LSCs and the impacts they would have on imported workers. The response of these bodies has been very positive and they advised that their Governments would tighten control on the operation of the LSCs in their countries.

Since last November, the LD has operated a four-language (Cantonese, Putonghua, English and Thai) 24-hour telephone service to facilitate the imported workers' access to information and complaints channel.

### Early Termination of Contracts

With immediate effect, NAPCO will notify Immigration Department (ID) and LD regularly of any early completion of works contracts under which imported workers are employed. ID, on receipt of such information, will remind employers of their obligations under the conditions of the ACP Scheme to retrench their imported workers and arrange for their return to the place of origin within 14 days after their contract termination.

### Inspection of places of employment

Contractors have been asked to provide LD with information on related employment records and location of work sites relevant to the imported workers. The additional information will enable LD to ascertain whether there is improper deployment by cross-checking attendance records kept by contractors during inspection visits.

In addition to the established briefing sessions for workers and contractors, LD also conducts inspections to their places of work and accommodation to check wage and employment records, interview some imported workers and distribute copies of employment contracts to them.

These multi-pronged actions have been very effective in reaching out to some 90 percent of the workers on site. To ensure that in future all imported workers are aware of their rights and benefits, the Government has introduced a new condition compelling employers to grant paid leave to all imported workers to enable them to attend LD's briefing sessions within eight weeks after arrival.

Improper deployment of imported workers to jobs not stipulated in their employment contract

From February this year, the landing conditions on the employment visa have been changed by specifying that workers are not allowed to change employer, post, and place of work. The employment contracts that clearly identify the post and place of work of the worker will bear a unique employment contract number. Entry visas and landing conditions will also contain the employment contract number, thus effectively forbidding any unauthorised change of employer, post and place of work. These new requirements enable the government to prosecute those employers and workers who have breached any of the landing conditions.

With effect from March this year, employers at the time of visa application, are also required to give an undertaking to the effect that they will abide by the rules and conditions of the ACP Scheme.

Employers when applying for workers' visa extension are required to lodge a certification declaring that the workers are working in the approved posts and are paid the stipulated wages. Workers are also required to acknowledge by signing on the certification form.

Food and accommodation provisions

Since last November, LD inspects the accommodation of imported workers prior to their arrival. ID will not issue employment visas unless LD is satisfied that the employers have met the accommodation requirements as stipulated in the employment contract.

Since January, the clause on the employment contract regarding wage deduction for food provision has been deleted. With this change, meals have been made the responsibility of the employee. If meals are provided by the employer, they shall be provided free of charge.

Underpayment of wages

With effect from November last year, ACP contractors are required to provide the workers with details of their earnings including overtime wages and allowances and ask each imported worker to acknowledge the receipt of the wage information if he agrees to the amount of payment.

Contractors also need to keep the wage record and acknowledgement list for inspection; to arrange the distribution to workers their monthly bank statement so that they know all transactions of his bank account; and refrain from keeping passbooks or electronic teller machine cards of imported workers.

ID has also made it a condition of approval of entry visa that each imported worker is required to produce his original copy of employment contract for inspection at the time of their registration for Hong Kong Identity Card. Moreover, ID has made it a condition of approval for extension of stay that employers are required to provide a Certification of Wage with workers' signature, declaring that the workers are working in the specified posts and have been paid wages in accordance with their employment contracts.

Mr Wong stressed that the government would not tolerate any abuses of the Scheme and would take all possible measures to combat them.

"Any employers who have breached the labour laws will be liable to prosecutions and sanctions will be imposed on those who are in breach of the conditions of the Scheme, including the withdrawal of quotas, and refusal of future applications to import workers under the Scheme," Mr Wong said.

End

#### Latest unemployment and underemployment figures

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The provisional seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the period December 1995 - February 1996 edged further lower to 3.1%, while the provisional underemployment rate was also lower, at 2.2%. These latest labour force statistics are released today (Monday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the period November 1995 - January 1996 was 3.2%, and the underemployment rate was 2.4%.

Commenting on the latest figures, a Government spokesman said that decreases in the unemployment rate were recorded in most major sectors, including restaurants and hotels, transport, construction and manufacturing. As to the underemployment rate, decreases were recorded mainly in the construction and transport sectors. In overall terms, the labour market continued to stabilise in the most recent months.

Total labour supply continued to rise at a faster rate than total employment. In the three months ending January 1996, total labour supply rose by 3.6% over a year earlier, while total employment was 2.4% higher.

During the period November 1995 - January 1996, the number of unemployed persons with previous jobs was estimated at 89,300. Another 9,000 unemployed persons were first-time job-seekers. The number of underemployed persons was estimated at 74 800.

The unemployment and underemployment statistics were obtained from a continuous General Household Survey. The survey for November 1995 - January 1996 covered a quarterly sample of some 18,100 households or 61,400 persons, selected scientifically to represent the land-based civilian non-institutional population in Hong Kong. Data were obtained from the survey by interviewing each member aged 15 or over in the households sampled.

In the survey, the definitions used in measuring unemployment and underemployment follow closely those recommended by the International Labour Organisation.

'Seasonally adjusted' refers to adjustment for seasonal variations in the proportion of first-time job-seekers in the labour force.

Detailed analysis of labour force characteristics is given in the report on the General Household Survey which is published four times a year.

The next report covering the quarter ending December 1995 will be on sale at the Government Publications Centre on ground floor, Low Block, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong, by the end of March.

End

Senior postings announced

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A government spokesman today (Monday) announced that Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, Deputy Head of the Central Policy Unit, will take over from Miss Jacqueline Willis as Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower from March 29.

Miss Willis will succeed Mr Stephen Ip as the Commissioner for Labour in late April while Mr Ip will assume the post of the Secretary for Economic Services in June after attending a Tsinghua course.

Mr Joshua Law has replaced Mr Kevin Mak as the Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower from March 1 after Mr Mak had left the Branch to take up the post of Vice-chairman, Administrative Officers Recruitment Board.

End

Research into nine-year compulsory education

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The Faculties of Education of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the University of Hong Kong have been commissioned to conduct research into the existing nine-year compulsory education.

At a meeting today (Monday), members of the Board of Education (BOE) were told that the research will hopefully be completed in July as part of the initiatives taken by a sub-committee of the Board to review the school education system.

At a briefing on the work progress of the sub-committee, its convenor, Dr Tam Man-kwan, informed the meeting that so far, the sub-committee had held seven meetings and its two task groups had met 10 and eight times respectively.

The sub-committee has gauged views from primary and secondary school heads and teachers, school councils, associations and sponsoring bodies as well as tertiary institutions.

Dr Tam said these included the organisation of two public forums and a focus discussion session. The response was encouraging.

"A total of 21 written submissions were received and 204 participants attended the functions," he added.

The sub-committee also examined the existing system of nine-year compulsory education and identified areas of concern on aims, objectives, targets and enforcement of compulsory education as well as on assessment and allocation.

He said sub-committee members made a number of visits to various local schools to see for themselves the current school situation.

In addition, three overseas study visits were organised in early February this year to get more specific information about the education systems in North America and Scandinavian countries, and to share their experience in the implementation of compulsory education.

Dr Tam informed BOE members that the immediate tasks for the sub-committee would be the monitoring of the progress of the research; continuing to discuss the aims and objectives of nine-year compulsory education; continuing to examine the existing allocation systems with a view to making suggestions and improvements; and preparing a first draft of the review report.

"In view of the complexity of the review, it is likely that the sub-committee's work will straddle the 1996/97 school year," he said.

End

#### Lantau and Ma Wan bridged over

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Lantau and Ma Wan have been connected for the first time by the Kap Shui Mun Bridge following completion of the bridge's main span.

This historical moment came at noon today (Monday) when the cable-stayed bridge's "final closure" segment was lifted into position over the middle of the Kap Shui Mun Channel, bringing the nine-month long deck erection work to a successful conclusion.

Rising 45 metres above the sea, the Kap Shui Mun Bridge's 430-metre main span comprises a total of 39 prefabricated segments made of steel and concrete. Each segment measures 8.7 metres long, 35.7 metres wide and 7.7 metres high, as well as weighing 500 tonnes.

"It is most encouraging that the contractor has successfully completed all the lifting operations on schedule, a major step towards completing the bridge on time next year," said the Project Director of the Lantau Fixed Crossing Project Management Office of the Highways Department, Mr C K Lau.

The main span steel and concrete composite segments were fabricated in Shekou, China, and precast on site. After precasting, the segments were taken to the Kap Shui Mun Channel by a purpose-built barge, lifted by specially designed cranes and then connected at bridge deck level.

Following completion of the two side spans, erection of the main span started in late May last year with segments lifted by cantilevering from each side span towards the middle.

Before the "final closure" segment was lifted into position in the middle of the main span today, 19 segments have been erected on each side of the span.

The Kap Shui Mun Bridge has an overall length of 820 metres with a cable-stayed main span of 430 metres with a minimum clear vertical headroom of 45 metres.

Contract works on the \$1.6-billion Kap Shui Mun Bridge started in December in 1992 for completion in May 1997.

Together with the Ma Wan Viaduct and the suspension Tsing Ma Bridge, the Kap Shui Mun Bridge forms the Lantau Fixed Crossing on the 34-kilometre highway network of the Airport Core Programme linking the new airport at Chek Lap Kok and the Tung Chung new town to urban Kowloon and Hong Kong Island.

On completion next year, both bridges will be the longest of their kind in the world carrying both road and railway traffic.

"We anticipate that the last lifting for the main span of the Tsing Ma Bridge will also be carried out shortly. That will be another significant milestone for the Lantau Fixed Crossing. After that, the railway works can be completed and the electrical works and other finishing works can commence," said Mr Lau.

End

Four lots of land sold for \$6,000 million

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Four lots of government land were sold for a total of \$6,000 million at a public auction held by the Lands Department this (Monday) afternoon.

The first lot located at Hung Hom Bay Reclamation, southwest of Whampoa Street and Po Loi Street, was sold to Topcycle Development Limited at \$4,725 million, with bidding opening at \$3,200 million.

The lot has an area of 15,073 square metres and is earmarked for non-industrial use, excluding godown and petrol filling station.

The developer will need to complete a gross floor area of not less than 82,417 square metres on or before April 1, 2001.

The second lot located at the junction of Wyndham Street and Arbuthnot Road in Central, was sold to Firm Wise Investment Limited at \$765 million, with bidding opening at \$580 million.

Covering an area of 1,585 square metres, the lot is earmarked for non-industrial use, excluding private residential, hotel, service apartment and godown.

The developer will be required to complete a gross floor area of not less than 14,265 square metres on or before March 31, 2000.

The third lot located in Hong Man Street, Chai Wan, was bought by Forlink Limited at \$440 million, with bidding opening at \$250 million.

With an area of 1,590.7 square metres, the lot is intended for non-industrial use, excluding godown, hotel, and service apartment.

The developer has to complete a gross floor area of not less than 8,523 square metres on or before March 31, 1999.

The fourth lot located in Area 2, Tai Po, was bought by Cosmos Best Development Limited at \$70 million, with bidding opening at \$48 million.

With an area of 465.8 square metres, the lot is intended for non-industrial use, excluding godown.

The developer has to complete a gross floor area of not less than 1,700 square metres on or before March 31, 1999.

Held at the Concert Hall of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, Tsim Sha Tsui, the auction was conducted by Government Land Agent, Mr John Corrigall.

End

#### Industrial safety slogan designers awarded

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A number of students were awarded today (Monday) for drawing public attention to the importance of industrial safety through slogans.

The Slogan Design Competition on Safety at Work for Students 1996, held earlier this year, had attracted a total of 4,020 entries from 75 schools.

The competition aimed at promoting students' awareness of the importance of work safety. It was divided into Chinese Junior, Chinese Senior and English sections.

The top three winners for the Chinese Junior Section are Ho Wing-yin, Pau Ding-chung and Yuk Kai-yao. In the Chinese Senior Section, Wu Kei-shek, Chan Shuk-man and Pang Chi-man won the first, second and third prizes respectively.

The top three prizes in the English Section went to Allan Au, Cheng Yee-wah and Tsang Chi-mun.

Winners were awarded with cash prizes ranging from \$1,500 to \$3,500 and a certificate.

Merit prize winners each received a cash prize of \$350 in addition to a certificate.

The competition was organised by the Labour Department, Education Department, Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters and Guidance Masters as well as the Occupational Safety and Health Council.

End

Water storage figures

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Storage in Hong Kong's reservoirs at 9 a.m. today (Monday) stood at 78.9 per cent of capacity or 462.332 million cubic metres.

This time last year the reservoirs contained 397.467 million cubic metres of water, representing 67.8 per cent of capacity.

End

Fresh water cut in Sheung Shui

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Fresh water supply to some premises in Sheung Shui will be temporarily suspended from 11 pm on Thursday (March 21) to 6 am the following day to facilitate testing of watermains.

All premises in the area bounded by Hang Tau Road and Fan Kam Road, including Kwu Tung Tin Sum, Hang Tau Tai Po, Tsiu Keng, Tsiu Keng Lo Wai, Tsiu Keng Pang Uk, Chan Uk Po, Tong Kung Leng, Cheung Lek, Kwu Tung Market, Hang Tau, Hang Tau Tsuen and Lin Tong Mei will be affected.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tender results

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Tender date	18 Mar 1996
Paper on offer	EF notes
Issue number	5103
Issue date	19 Mar 1996
Maturity date	19 Mar 2003
Coupon	6.75 PCT
Amount applied	HK\$2,240 MN
Amount allotted	HK\$500 MN
Average price accepted (yield)	99.48 (6.99 PCT)
Lowest price accepted (yield)	99.43 (7.01 PCT)
Pro rata ratio	About 12 PCT
Average tender price (yield)	99.32 (7.03 PCT)

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

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	<u>\$ million</u>	<u>Time (hours)</u>	<u>Cumulative change (\$million)</u>
Opening balance in the account	1,559	0930	+1240
Closing balance in the account	2,165	1000	+1240
Change attributable to :		1100	+1240
Money market activity	+1,252	1200	+1254
LAF today	-646	1500	+1254
		1600	+1252

LAF rate 4.00% bid/6.00% offer TWI 123.7 \*\*+0.0\* 18.3.96

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	4.60	2 years	2802	5.16	98.39	6.16
1 month	4.88	3 years	3901	5.57	98.07	6.42
3 months	5.18	5 years	5012	6.38	98.25	6.93
6 months	5.29	7 years	7302	6.02	93.73	7.31
12 months	5.60	5 years	M502	7.30	100.73	7.24

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - \$27,485 million

Closed March 18, 1996

End