



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES
GARDEN ROAD, 5th-8th FLOORS, MURRAY BUILDING,
HONG KONG. TEL.: 2842 8777

Tuesday, February 25, 1997

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Hong Kong enjoying fruits of grand vision

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Hong Kong is beginning to enjoy "the fruits of a grand vision" with the progressive completion of the Airport Core Programme (ACP), the Chairman of the Airport Consultative Committee, Mr Hu Fa-kuang, said today (Tuesday).

Officiating at the opening ceremony of the Sai Ying Pun section of Route 7, Mr Hu said the road, which would be opened tomorrow, was one of the early harvest.

"The opening tomorrow will bring about substantial improvement to the traffic along our western waterfront and, finally, usher in the traffic to our third tunnel, our first dual three-lane Western Harbour Crossing," he said.

He added that the opening of the Sai Ying Pun section of Route 7 to traffic would be welcome by the general public, and he looked forward to the public opening of the Western Harbour Crossing in April.

"There is no better reward to myself and my colleagues on the Airport Consultative Committee to see the successful completion of the ACP projects and in May we shall celebrate together the full opening of the ACP transport corridor when we can drive from here all the way on a purpose built dual three-lane expressway to the new town of Tung Chung," he said.

Mr Hu congratulated all those who had taken part in the implementation of "this successful project", including the Western Harbour Tunnel Company, consulting engineers and the Highways Department.

Also speaking at the opening ceremony, the Director of Highways, Mr K S Leung, said the Sai Ying Pun section was another essential part of the ACP transport corridor which linked Hong Kong via the Western Harbour Crossing to the new airport at Chek Lap Kok.

Constructed as part of the Western Harbour Crossing, the road section also provided an additional, high capacity road link to the north western part of Hong Kong Island. Its opening would facilitate traffic flow between Central and the areas of Kennedy Town and Pokfulam, he said.

The new road is a 1.7-kilometre dual two-lane elevated highway from Rumsey Street Flyover to Belcher Bay with a slip road from the Hill Road Flyover. Connection to the Western Harbour Crossing is through the Sai Ying Pun Interchange which is situated half way along the new route.

Mr Leung said that in anticipation of increased traffic using Route 7, noise mitigation measures had been taken, such as using noise reducing surfacing on road decks and installing double glazing to windows and air conditioning to some 3,000 dwellings along Connaught Road West.

"This reflects the continuous effort of the Government in reducing the environmental impact of new projects on affected residence," he said.

End

TAC endorses ferry fare increase applications

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At the meeting held this (Tuesday) afternoon, the Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) endorsed an 8.35 per cent fare increase for Hongkong & Yaumati Ferry (HYF) and a 7.52 per cent fare increase for Star Ferry (SF). The recommendation would be submitted to Executive Council for consideration. The new fares are to take effect in June 1997.

HYF and SF last increased their fares in January and March 1996 respectively. The TAC noted that both companies had suffered from rising operating costs and falling patronage. If the recommended fare increase is implemented, SF is expected to make a small profit in 1997. As for HYF, even with the recommended fare increase, it would still suffer substantial losses in 1997 and 1998.

The recommended fare increase would mean about 86 per cent of HYF's passengers would have to pay 20 cents to \$1 more per trip. As for SF, about two thirds of its passengers would have to pay no more than 20 cents per trip, and one third of them would not be affected.

The proposed fare increases for HYF and SF are both below the forecast inflation rates between their last fare increases and June 1997 when the recommended new fares come into effect.

End

ExCo approves taxi fare increases

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The Governor in Council today (Tuesday) approved fare increases of 6.3 per cent and 7.4 per cent respectively for urban and New Territories taxis to take effect on April 13, 1997. The revised fares will be tabled in the Legislative Council on March 5.

Under the new fare structures, flagfall charges for the first two kilometres will be increased from \$14.00 to \$14.50 for urban taxis, and from \$11.80 to \$12.50 for New Territories taxis.

For every subsequent 0.2 kilometre, the fares for both urban and New Territories taxis will go up by 10 cents to \$1.30 and \$1.20 respectively.

The waiting time charge will rise by 10 cents per minute to \$1.30 for urban taxis and \$1.20 for New Territories taxis.

A Government spokesman said that in considering the fare increase applications, the Executive Council had taken into account such factors as the financial position of taxi trade, the quality of taxi service, the fare differential between taxis and other modes of public transport, and public acceptability.

He pointed out that the approved rates of increase for urban taxis was below forecast inflation and that for NT taxis was in line with inflation.

"An annual moderate increase would help the taxi trade maintain a healthy financial position," the spokesman said. "Most taxi operators are small operators with narrow profit margins, and freezing the fares may affect their livelihood."

Commenting on the recent rise in taxi licence premiums, the spokesman said, "There is no direct connection between taxi fares and taxi licence premiums."

The Executive Council also agreed that the current level of \$5.00 for telephone booking surcharge and baggage surcharge for urban taxis and \$4.00 for NT taxis should remain unchanged for the time being.

End

Conference on financial integration in Asia

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The Hong Kong Monetary Authority and the International Monetary Fund are jointly organising a conference on macroeconomic issues facing the Asian region with a particular focus on the role of Hong Kong.

The Conference on Financial Integration in Asia and the Role of Hong Kong to be held on March 7, 1997 will explore key aspects of regional economic and financial integration and the challenges and opportunities of growing regional integration for Hong Kong.

The Conference will be opened by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten and the Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang will be the luncheon speaker. The Managing Director of the IMF, Mr Michel Camdessus, will give a keynote speech.

Other leading speakers include UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Kenneth Clarke; Governor Dai Xianglong and Deputy Governor Chen Yuan of the People's Bank of China; Deputy Prime Minister Anwar bin Ibrahim of Malaysia; Managing Director of Goldman, Sachs & Co., Mr. Gerald Corrigan; Governor of Bank of Korea, Mr K.S. Lee; Governor Soedradjad Djiwandono of Bank Indonesia; Governor Gabriel Singson of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and the Secretary for Financial Services, Mr Rafael Hui.

Chief Executive (Designate) of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Mr Tung Chee Hwa has also agreed to speak at the concluding session.

The Managing Director of IMF, Mr. Michel Camdessus said: "For the IMF to co-host this conference is an indication of the importance we attach to stability and growth in the region. We stand at an important moment in history: for Hong Kong and for Asia."

Chief Executive of Hong Kong Monetary Authority, Mr Joseph Yam said: "We are very pleased that this conference will bring together top policymakers, leading central bankers and financial executives from Asia and beyond. We will be examining the implications of increasing integration of financial markets in Asia and the role of Hong Kong in the years to come."

Further information may be obtained from the Conference Secretariat at 2878 1457 or by fax at 2878 8260.

End

Experience nowhere supports retention of scale fees

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The Singaporean government believes that scale fees are anachronistic and should in time be abolished, the Deputy Law Officer of the Attorney General's Office, Mr Robert Allcock, told a Bills Committee of the Legislative Council today (Tuesday). One of the provisions of the Legal Services Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill which is being studied by LegCo is for abolition of scale fees for conveyancing work.

In his address to the Bills Committee, Mr Allcock pointed out that Singapore's Minister for Law, in answer to a parliamentary question in November 1995 has said he agreed in principle that a fixed scale was an anachronism in a free market economy such as Singapore's.

Although the Minister believed that there was merit in taking a gradual approach, he said that the complete abolition of scale fees was a matter of time, "and the legal profession should take this time to prepare itself for the free market"

Mr Allcock also noted that in England, the English Law Society did not even attempt to reintroduce scale fees when its Vice-President was Mr Robert Sayer. Mr Sayer recently came to Hong Kong to make a submission to the LegCo Bills Committee for retention of scale fees in Hong Kong.

The official position of the English Law Society set out in a letter to the Bills Committee does not describe the abolition of scale fees as a disaster. Instead, the letter merely states that "views differ as to whether or not the abolition of scale fees was on balance of benefit to the public," Mr Allcock said.

As for the experience of scale fees in Hong Kong, Mr Allcock dismissed claims that the Administration wants to compel solicitors to charge unreasonably low fees.

"After the abolition of scale fees, solicitors will be entitled to charge such sum as may be fair and reasonable having regard to all the circumstances of the case.

"This is the basis on which their fees are calculated for other non-contentious work, and that has not caused any problems," he said.

He also refuted allegations that price competition would lead to disastrous results, hurting the public interest; and that it was like planting a time bomb, since shoddy work would only show up after many years.

"Price competition was allowed before 1980. No evidence has been submitted of any disastrous consequences before then. And if price competition before 1980 amounted to a time bomb, why hasn't it exploded by now?" he asked.

Calling scale fees an unfair system, Mr Allcock said it is self-evident that they are anti-competitive.

"They deny consumers the benefit of price competition. Moreover, under the system, fees are based on the price of property, not the value of the work done. This is irrational and unfair to consumers. The unfairness is increased by the fact that when property prices rise, as they are now, there is a rise in conveyancing fees, even though the work done remains the same."

Furthermore, the Administration's view on the best approach to abolish scale fees is that one has to decide whether or not they are in the public interest. "If they are not, it is no use tinkering with them. You either have them or you don't have them. Tinkering will not alter the fact that the scales are still in place," he said.

End

Defence Secretary visits Hong Kong

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The Rt Hon Michael Portillo MP, Secretary of State for Defence, is to visit Hong Kong tomorrow (Wednesday).

This is part of a regular series of visits which the Secretary of State makes to British Forces stationed around the world and it will be the first time Mr Portillo visits the Hong Kong Garrison.

Mr Portillo will first visit Headquarters British Forces, where he will inspect a ceremonial Quarter Guard drawn from 1st Battalion The Black Watch.

He will then be brought up to date on the situation in the territory and progress of the Garrison's withdrawal plans. He will also be briefed on arrangements for the transition to the Chinese sovereignty and, in particular, on the pivotal role British Forces will play in the handover ceremonies on June 30.

The Secretary of State will tour Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force units, which form the Garrison, and meet personnel of all three services.

He will also hold discussions with the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, and senior officials of the Hong Kong Government.

Mr Portillo will depart for Brunei following his one-day visit to Hong Kong.

End

Transport Complaints Unit receives fewer complaints

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The number of complaints and suggestions received by the Transport Complaints Unit of the Transport Advisory Committee between October 1, 1996 and December 31, 1996 dropped by 17.9 per cent to 3,226 as compared with 3,928 in the previous quarter.

During the period, the major areas of complaint were related to public transport (72 per cent), road traffic conditions (14 per cent) and enforcement (8 per cent).

The number of complaints about public transport decreased by 22.1 per cent from 2,998 in the previous quarter to 2,335.

More significant decreases were noted in complaints against taxi driver malpractices (down from 1,519 to 1,208), China Motor Bus (down from 185 to 147), Kowloon Motor Motor Bus (down from 402 to 354), Citybus (down from 112 to 66), green minibuses (down from 358 to 267) and ferry services (down from 85 to 36).

Complaints about the malfunctioning of traffic lights and damaged traffic signs increased from 45 to 61. The number of suggestions for additional traffic lights and aids also increased from 122 to 127.

During the same period, complaints about traffic congestion dropped by 8.8 per cent from 226 to 206. Complaints about road conditions also dropped by 10.5 per cent from 76 to 68.

All suggestions and complaints received by TCU had been referred to the relevant authorities and Government departments for investigation.

Members of the public may complain direct by dialling the 24-hour Transport Complaints Unit hotline 2577 6866 or 2889 9999 throughout the year.

End

Leveraged Foreign Exchange Arbitration Panel appointed

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The Financial Secretary has re-appointed Mr Frank K S Wong, Regional Managing Director, Greater China and Global Financial Markets, Asia Pacific of NatWest Markets and Mr Anthony K T Yuen, Senior Vice President and Regional Treasurer of the Bank of America, respectively as the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Leveraged Foreign Exchange Arbitration Panel, a spokesman of the Financial Services Branch announced today (Tuesday).

The following persons have also been re-appointed as members of the panel:

- Mr Alan Chan Ka Wah, Senior Manager of Banque Nationale de Paris
- Mr Chu Lap Ying
- Mr Raymond H M Kong, Deputy Treasurer of Banque Indosuez
- Mr Davy Kwan Kwok Ki, First Vice President of International Bank of Asia
- Mr Lam Yim Nam, Deputy General Manager of Kwangtung Provincial Bank
- Mr Tommy Lee Cheuk Shun, Deputy Regional Managing Director, Financial Market, of Schroders Asia Ltd.
- Mr Anthony Nagi Mo Hung, First Vice President of Union Bank of Switzerland
- Mr Joseph Y W Pang, Executive Director & Deputy Chief Executive of Bank of East Asia
- Mr Stefan F Stosik, President & Chief Executive of Euro Yagi Martin Ltd.
- Mr T H Suen, Foreign Exchange Manager of Citibank
- Mr Ronald Tam Po Chiu, Assistant General Manager of Wing Lung Bank Ltd.
- Mr P S Tam, General Manager, Treasury, of Dao Heng Bank
- Mr Jimmy Tong Kwok Hung, Assistant General Manager of Hang Seng Bank Ltd.
- Mr Andrew Tsai, Executive Director of Morgan Stanley Asia Ltd.
- Mr Wong Fook Yuen, Treasury Director of N M Rothschild & Sons (HK) Ltd.
- Mr Yiu Park Chow, Treasury Manager of HSBC Investment Bank Asia Ltd.

The Financial Secretary has also appointed Mr Yang Jian Gang, Director of Everbright Finance & Investment Co. Ltd. as member to the Panel. The appointment and re-appointments are made for the period of two years, from 11 February 1997 to 10 February 1999.

"The Leveraged Foreign Exchange Trading Ordinance was brought in effect on 1 September 1994 and requires, among other things, all companies engaged in leveraged foreign exchange trading and their representatives to be licensed by the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC). Under section 7(5) of the Ordinance, in relation to any dispute between a licensed trader and a client, the licensed trader shall, if the client so requires, agree to the dispute being settled by arbitration in accordance with rules made by the SFC which has set up the Panel," the spokesman explained.

"Members of the Panel are all bankers or senior staff of investment houses. Hence, they are knowledgeable in foreign exchange dealings and are competent to act as arbitrators in any disputes involving leveraged foreign exchange trading," the spokesman said.

End

External trade statistics by mode of transport in 1996

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The value of Hong Kong's external trade by ocean accounted for 48% of Hong Kong's total value of external trade in 1996, according to statistics released by the Census and Statistics Department today (Tuesday).

Another 26% was transported by land and yet another 20% by air. The remaining 5.7% included shipment by river, postal parcels and accompanied goods of passengers travelling on various means of transport.

Shipment by ocean amounted to \$1,419.5 billion in 1996, representing an increase of 2.2% over that in 1995. Shipment by land went up by 4.4% to \$752.8 billion in 1996 while that by air rose by 3.5% to \$593.8 billion.

Table 1 shows details of changes in the value of Hong Kong's external trade analysed by mode of transport in 1996 compared with 1995.

The United States remained the largest destination for Hong Kong's total exports (comprising domestic exports and re-exports) by ocean, accounting for a share of 31% in value terms in 1996. The value of total exports by ocean to the United States went up by 1.2% in 1996.

Comparing 1996 with 1995, increases were also recorded in the value of seaborne total exports to China (+23%), Japan (+14%) and the United Kingdom (+6.2%). However, the value of total exports by ocean to Germany decreased by 1.0%.

Japan was the largest supplier of Hong Kong's imports by ocean, accounting for a share of 22% in 1996. The value, however, decreased by 4.7% over 1995. The value of seaborne imports from Taiwan and China also decreased, by 7.6% and 2.6% respectively in 1996.

Table 2 shows details of changes in the value of external trade by ocean with main trading partners in 1996 compared with 1995.

In 1996, the value of total exports by air to the United States accounted for 26% of the value of Hong Kong's total exports by air and increased by 2.0% over 1995.

The value of total exports by air to Germany and Japan increased by 8.4% and 6.7% respectively over 1995. However, the value of airborne total exports to Taiwan and Singapore decreased by 10% and 2.6% respectively.

In 1996, increases were recorded in the value of imports by air from the United States (+11%), Taiwan (+8.5%) and Singapore (+4.2%). However, the value of airborne imports from France and Japan decreased by 14% and 9.0% respectively.

Table 3 shows details of changes in the value of external trade by air with main trading partners in 1996 compared with 1995.

More detailed figures on changes in the value of external trade by ocean between 1996 and 1995 analysed by principal commodity division are shown in Table 4.

Comparing 1996 with 1995, increases were recorded in the value of re-exports by ocean for clothing (by \$6.5 billion or 9.4%); electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof (by \$6.4 billion or 14%); miscellaneous manufactured articles consisting mainly of baby carriages, toys, games and sporting goods (by \$6.1 billion or 4.9%); and footwear (by \$4.1 billion or 7.3%).

However, a decrease was recorded in the value of re-exports by ocean for telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment (by \$4.6 billion or 5.4%).

The value of domestic exports by ocean for all the top-five principal commodity divisions fell in 1996, with a more notable decrease for clothing (by \$5.0 billion or 10%).

Over the same period, an increase was recorded in the value of imports by ocean for electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof (by \$4.2 billion or 9.6%). On the other hand, more significant decreases were recorded in the value of imports by ocean for telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment (by \$7.9 billion or 14%); plastics in primary forms (by \$6.2 billion or 14%); and road vehicles (by \$5.9 billion or 14%).

Changes in the value of external trade by air between 1996 and 1995 analysed by principal commodity division are shown in Table 5.

Comparing 1996 with 1995, significant increases were recorded in the value of re-exports by air for office machines and automatic data processing machines (by \$6.7 billion or 28%); clothing (by \$3.0 billion or 15%); and photographic apparatus, equipment and supplies, optical goods, watches and clocks (by \$2.8 billion or 12%). But a decrease was recorded in the value of re-exports by air for electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof (by \$1.4 billion or 3.3%).

An increase was also recorded in the value of domestic exports by air for miscellaneous manufactured articles consisting mainly of jewellery, goldsmiths' and silversmiths' wares (by \$59 million or 0.8%). However, more significant decreases were recorded in the value of domestic exports by air for office machines and automatic data processing machines (by \$3.9 billion or 38%); and photographic apparatus, equipment and supplies, optical goods, watches and clocks (by \$1.3 billion or 12%).

Over the same period, increases were recorded in the value of imports by air for telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment (by \$4.9 billion or 15%); and office machines and automatic data processing machines (by \$3.6 billion or 11%). On the other hand, more significant decreases were recorded in the value of imports by air for non-metallic mineral manufactures (by \$1.8 billion or 6.3%); and photographic apparatus, equipment and supplies, optical goods, watches and clocks (by \$1.7 billion or 6.1%).

Changes in the value of external trade by land between 1996 and 1995 analysed by principal commodity division are shown in Table 6.

Comparing 1996 with 1995, more notable increases were recorded in the value of re-exports by land for textiles (by \$3.3 billion or 5.6%); and electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof (by \$3.3 billion or 17%). However, a more significant decrease was recorded in the value of re-exports by land for plastics in primary forms (by \$2.3 billion or 10%).

A more notable increase was recorded in the value of domestic exports by land for clothing (by \$1.5 billion or 26%) in 1996. But the value of domestic exports by land for telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment fell (by \$1.3 billion or 18%).

Over the same period, increases were recorded in the value of imports by land for clothing (by \$7.2 billion or by 9.3%); electrical machinery, apparatus and appliances, and electrical parts thereof (by \$6.2 billion or 18%); miscellaneous manufactured articles consisting mainly of baby carriages, toys, games and sporting goods (by \$3.4 billion or 5.1%); and footwear (by \$3.1 billion or 7.2%). But a decrease was recorded in the value of imports by land for telecommunications and sound recording and reproducing apparatus and equipment (by \$2.2 billion or 4.2%).

Detailed statistics of Hong Kong's external trade analysed by mode of transport are published in the December 1996 issue of the "Hong Kong External Trade" report which is now available for sale at \$129 per copy.

The report can be purchased at either the Government Publications Sales Centre on the Ground Floor, Low Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong, or the Publications Unit of the Census and Statistics Department on the 19th Floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai.

Enquiries regarding regular subscription to this report may be directed to the Publications (Sales) Office of the Information Services Department at 28th Floor, Siu On Centre, 188 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong (Tel No. 2598 8194) and enquiries on trade statistics to the Census and Statistics Department (Tel. No. 2582 4915).

TABLE 1 : EXTERNAL TRADE BY MODE OF TRANSPORT

MODE OF TRANSPORT/ TYPE OF TRADE	JAN-DEC	JAN-DEC	YEAR-ON-YEAR CHANGE	
	1996 HKD Mn.	1995 HKD Mn.	HKD Mn.	%
OCEAN				
DOMESTIC EXPORTS	84,843	95,134	- 10,291	- 10.8
RE-EXPORTS	654,309	615,552	+ 38,756	+ 6.3
TOTAL EXPORTS	739,152	710,687	+ 28,465	+ 4.0
IMPORTS	680,368	678,812	+ 1,556	+ 0.2
TOTAL BY OCEAN	1,419,520	1,389,499	+ 30,021	+ 2.2
AIR				
DOMESTIC EXPORTS	69,022	75,610	- 6,588	- 8.7
RE-EXPORTS	182,853	168,131	+ 14,722	+ 8.8
TOTAL EXPORTS	251,874	243,740	+ 8,134	+ 3.3
IMPORTS	341,935	329,789	+ 12,146	+ 3.7
TOTAL BY AIR	593,809	573,529	+ 20,280	+ 3.5
LAND				
DOMESTIC EXPORTS	50,986	53,155	- 2,168	- 4.1
RE-EXPORTS	240,573	235,919	+ 4,654	+ 2.0
TOTAL EXPORTS	291,559	289,074	+ 2,485	+ 0.9
IMPORTS	461,204	431,778	+ 29,426	+ 6.8
TOTAL BY LAND	752,763	720,852	+ 31,911	+ 4.4
OTHERS				
DOMESTIC EXPORTS	7,308	7,758	- 450	- 5.8
RE-EXPORTS	108,023	92,868	+ 15,156	+ 16.3
TOTAL EXPORTS	115,332	100,626	+ 14,706	+ 14.6
IMPORTS	52,075	50,742	+ 1,333	+ 2.6
TOTAL BY OTHERS	167,407	151,368	+ 16,039	+ 10.6
ALL MODES OF TRANSPORT				
DOMESTIC EXPORTS	212,160	231,657	- 19,498	- 8.4
RE-EXPORTS	1,185,758	1,112,470	+ 73,288	+ 6.6
TOTAL EXPORTS	1,397,917	1,344,127	+ 53,790	+ 4.0
IMPORTS	1,535,582	1,491,121	+ 44,461	+ 3.0
TOTAL TRADE	2,933,499	2,835,248	+ 98,251	+ 3.5

TABLE 2 : EXTERNAL TRADE BY OCEAN BY MAIN TRADING PARTNER

MAIN TRADING PARTNER	JAN-DEC	JAN-DEC	YEAR-ON-YEAR CHANGE	
	1996 HKD Mn.	1995 HKD Mn.	HKD Mn.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS (DESTINATION)				
UNITED STATES	30,810	36,089	- 5,280	- 14.6
UNITED KINGDOM	6,937	7,431	- 495	- 6.7
GERMANY	6,423	7,490	- 1,067	- 14.2
JAPAN	4,666	4,882	- 216	- 4.4
CHINA	4,412	4,147	+ 265	+ 6.4
ALL COUNTRIES	84,843	95,134	- 10,291	- 10.8
RE-EXPORTS (DESTINATION)				
UNITED STATES	200,226	192,239	+ 7,987	+ 4.2
CHINA	72,029	58,045	+ 13,984	+ 24.1
JAPAN	56,449	48,557	+ 7,893	+ 16.3
GERMANY	37,748	37,136	+ 612	+ 1.6
UNITED KINGDOM	29,188	26,584	+ 2,603	+ 9.8
ALL COUNTRIES	654,309	615,552	+ 38,756	+ 6.3
TOTAL EXPORTS (DESTINATION)				
UNITED STATES	231,036	228,329	+ 2,708	+ 1.2
CHINA	76,441	62,192	+ 14,249	+ 22.9
JAPAN	61,115	53,439	+ 7,677	+ 14.4
GERMANY	44,171	44,626	- 455	- 1.0
UNITED KINGDOM	36,124	34,016	+ 2,109	+ 6.2
ALL COUNTRIES	739,152	710,687	+ 28,465	+ 4.0
IMPORTS (SUPPLIER)				
JAPAN	151,471	158,956	- 7,485	- 4.7
TAIWAN	98,041	106,067	- 8,026	- 7.6
UNITED STATES	62,778	62,643	+ 135	+ 0.2
SOUTH KOREA	59,075	59,090	- 15	*
CHINA	49,985	51,313	- 1,328	- 2.6
ALL COUNTRIES	680,368	678,812	+ 1,556	+ 0.2

* denotes less than 0.05%

TABLE 3 : EXTERNAL TRADE BY AIR BY MAIN TRADING PARTNER

MAIN TRADING PARTNER	JAN-DEC	JAN-DEC	YEAR-ON-YEAR CHANGE	
	1996 HKD Mn.	1995 HKD Mn.	HKD Mn.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS (DESTINATION)				
UNITED STATES	23,029	25,137	- 2,107	- 8.4
SINGAPORE	7,344	9,252	- 1,908	- 20.6
JAPAN	6,630	6,941	- 311	- 4.5
GERMANY	4,953	4,673	+ 279	+ 6.0
UNITED KINGDOM	3,655	3,507	+ 148	+ 4.2
ALL COUNTRIES	69,022	75,610	- 6,588	- 8.7
RE-EXPORTS (DESTINATION)				
UNITED STATES	42,048	38,682	+ 3,366	+ 8.7
JAPAN	23,579	21,376	+ 2,202	+ 10.3
TAIWAN	12,896	13,921	- 1,025	- 7.4
SINGAPORE	11,707	10,313	+ 1,394	+ 13.5
SOUTH KOREA	11,671	11,069	+ 602	+ 5.4
ALL COUNTRIES	182,853	168,131	+ 14,722	+ 8.8
TOTAL EXPORTS (DESTINATION)				
UNITED STATES	65,078	63,819	+ 1,259	+ 2.0
JAPAN	30,208	28,317	+ 1,891	+ 6.7
SINGAPORE	19,051	19,565	- 514	- 2.6
TAIWAN	16,455	18,347	- 1,891	- 10.3
GERMANY	14,394	13,278	+ 1,116	+ 8.4
ALL COUNTRIES	251,874	243,740	+ 8,134	+ 3.3
IMPORTS (SUPPLIER)				
UNITED STATES	58,120	52,317	+ 5,802	+ 11.1
JAPAN	56,527	62,098	- 5,571	- 9.0
SINGAPORE	31,982	30,695	+ 1,287	+ 4.2
TAIWAN	25,110	23,145	+ 1,966	+ 8.5
FRANCE	16,984	19,854	- 2,870	- 14.5
ALL COUNTRIES	341,935	329,789	+ 12,146	+ 3.7

TABLE 4 : EXTERNAL TRADE BY OCEAN BY MAIN COMMODITY DIVISION

MAIN COMMODITY DIVISION	JAN-DEC	JAN-DEC	YEAR-ON-YEAR CHANGE	
	1996 HKD Mn.	1995 HKD Mn.	HKD Mn.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS				
ARTICLES OF APPAREL AND CLOTHING ACCESSORIES	45,103	50,127	- 5,023	- 10.0
MISCELLANEOUS MANUFACTURED ARTICLES (MAINLY PRINTED MATTER)	7,028	8,045	- 1,118	- 12.6
TEXTILE YARN, FABRICS, MADE-UP ARTICLES AND RELATED PRODUCTS	6,293	7,017	- 715	- 10.3
OFFICE MACHINES AND AUTOMATIC DATA PROCESSING MACHINES	3,757	4,742	- 985	- 20.8
ELECTRICAL MACHINERY, APPARATUS AND APPLIANCES, AND ELECTRICAL PARTS THEREOF	3,628	3,975	- 34	- 8.7
RE-EXPORTS				
MISCELLANEOUS MANUFACTURED ARTICLES (MAINLY BABY CARRIAGES, TOYS, GAMES AND SPORTING GOODS)	130,821	124,724	+ 6,096	+ 4.9
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND SOUND RECORDING AND REPRODUCING APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT	81,004	85,601	- 4,597	- 5.4
ARTICLES OF APPAREL AND CLOTHING ACCESSORIES	75,887	69,340	+ 6,547	+ 9.4
FOOTWEAR	60,724	56,584	+ 4,140	+ 7.3
ELECTRICAL MACHINERY, APPARATUS AND APPLIANCES, AND ELECTRICAL PARTS THEREOF	51,770	45,400	+ 6,370	+ 14.0
IMPORTS				
TEXTILE YARN, FABRICS, MADE-UP ARTICLES AND RELATED PRODUCTS	86,819	88,445	- 1,626	- 1.8
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND SOUND RECORDING AND REPRODUCING APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT	50,290	58,235	- 7,945	- 13.6
ELECTRICAL MACHINERY, APPARATUS AND APPLIANCES, AND ELECTRICAL PARTS THEREOF	48,176	43,959	+ 4,216	+ 9.6
PLASTICS IN PRIMARY FORMS	36,856	43,029	- 6,173	- 14.3
ROAD VEHICLES	36,117	42,060	- 5,943	- 14.1

TABLE 5 : EXTERNAL TRADE BY AIR BY MAIN COMMODITY DIVISION

MAIN COMMODITY DIVISION	JAN-DEC	JAN-DEC	YEAR-ON-YEAR CHANGE	
	1996 HKD Mn.	1995 HKD Mn.	HKD Mn.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS				
ELECTRICAL MACHINERY, APPARATUS AND APPLIANCES, AND ELECTRICAL PARTS THEREOF	21,330	22,164	- 834	- 3.8
ARTICLES OF APPAREL AND CLOTHING ACCESSORIES	16,928	17,801	- 873	- 4.9
PHOTOGRAPHIC APPARATUS, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES, OPTICAL GOODS, WATCHES AND CLOCKS	9,702	10,963	- 1,261	- 11.5
MISCELLANEOUS MANUFACTURED ARTICLES (MAINLY JEWELLERY, GOLDSMITHS' AND SILVERSMITHS' WARES)	7,160	7,101	+ 59	+ 0.8
OFFICE MACHINES AND AUTOMATIC DATA PROCESSING MACHINES	6,455	10,356	- 3,901	- 37.7
RE-EXPORTS				
ELECTRICAL MACHINERY, APPARATUS AND APPLIANCES, AND ELECTRICAL PARTS THEREOF	42,308	43,754	- 1,446	- 3.3
OFFICE MACHINES AND AUTOMATIC DATA PROCESSING MACHINES	30,481	23,829	+ 6,652	+ 27.9
PHOTOGRAPHIC APPARATUS, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES, OPTICAL GOODS, WATCHES AND CLOCKS	25,535	22,784	+ 2,752	+ 12.1
ARTICLES OF APPAREL AND CLOTHING ACCESSORIES	22,707	19,753	+ 2,955	+ 15.0
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND SOUND RECORDING AND REPRODUCING APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT	14,018	13,200	+ 818	+ 6.2
IMPORTS				
ELECTRICAL MACHINERY, APPARATUS AND APPLIANCES, AND ELECTRICAL PARTS THEREOF	104,474	105,109	- 634	- 0.6
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND SOUND RECORDING AND REPRODUCING APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT	38,477	33,586	+ 4,891	+ 14.6
OFFICE MACHINES AND AUTOMATIC DATA PROCESSING MACHINES	35,316	31,723	+ 3,594	+ 11.3
NON-METALLIC MINERAL MANUFACTURES	27,365	29,205	- 1,840	- 6.3
PHOTOGRAPHIC APPARATUS, EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES, OPTICAL GOODS, WATCHES AND CLOCKS	26,768	28,510	- 1,741	- 6.1

TABLE 6 : EXTERNAL TRADE BY LAND BY MAIN COMMODITY DIVISION

MAIN COMMODITY DIVISION	JAN-DEC	JAN-DEC	YEAR-ON-YEAR CHANGE	
	1996 HKD Mn.	1995 HKD Mn.	HKD Mn.	%
DOMESTIC EXPORTS				
ARTICLES OF APPAREL AND CLOTHING ACCESSORIES	7,303	5,785	+ 1,518	+ 26.2
TEXTILE YARN, FABRICS, MADE-UP ARTICLES AND RELATED PRODUCTS	6,093	5,851	+ 242	+ 4.1
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND SOUND RECORDING AND REPRODUCING APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT	5,989	7,270	- 1,281	- 17.6
ELECTRICAL MACHINERY, APPARATUS AND APPLIANCES, AND ELECTRICAL PARTS THEREOF	4,933	5,271	- 337	- 6.4
MISCELLANEOUS MANUFACTURED ARTICLES (MAINLY BABY CARRIAGES, TOYS, GAMES AND SPORTING GOODS)	3,427	4,204	- 778	- 18.5
RE-EXPORTS				
TEXTILE YARN, FABRICS, MADE-UP ARTICLES AND RELATED PRODUCTS	62,658	59,312	+ 3,347	+ 5.6
ELECTRICAL MACHINERY, APPARATUS AND APPLIANCES, AND ELECTRICAL PARTS THEREOF	22,582	19,259	+ 3,323	+ 17.3
PLASTICS IN PRIMARY FORMS	20,752	23,097	- 2,344	- 10.1
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND SOUND RECORDING AND REPRODUCING APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT	15,109	14,994	+ 115	+ 0.8
LEATHER, LEATHER MANUFACTURES AND DRESSED FURSKINS	9,590	8,810	+ 779	+ 8.8
IMPORTS				
ARTICLES OF APPAREL AND CLOTHING ACCESSORIES	83,950	76,797	+ 7,153	+ 9.3
MISCELLANEOUS MANUFACTURED ARTICLES (MAINLY BABY CARRIAGES, TOYS, GAMES AND SPORTING GOODS)	69,760	66,351	+ 3,409	+ 5.1
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND SOUND RECORDING AND REPRODUCING APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT	50,633	52,850	- 2,217	- 4.2
FOOTWEAR	45,811	42,731	+ 3,081	+ 7.2
ELECTRICAL MACHINERY, APPARATUS AND APPLIANCES, AND ELECTRICAL PARTS THEREOF	39,630	33,468	+ 6,163	+ 18.4

End

HK Monthly Digest of Statistics now on sale

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Two feature articles entitled "Wage statistics for 1987 - 1996" and "Mortality and morbidity of heart diseases in Hong Kong, 1971 - 1994" are published in the February 1997 issue of the Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics, which is now on sale.

The Census and Statistics Department collects wage data from establishments in major industry sectors of the economy through the Labour Earnings Survey (LES) at half-yearly intervals. The survey covers workers at supervisory, technical and craftsman levels and also includes clerical and secretarial workers, operatives and miscellaneous non-production workers.

The article "Wage statistics for 1987 - 1996" describes the general methodology of the LES in relation to the collection of wage statistics and presents the findings of the LES in respect of movements of wage rates, as measured by wage indices, by major industry sector and occupational group over the past decade. The differences between the concept of wage rate and that of earnings are explained.

The wage indices indicate that the growth of wage rates amongst various major sectors and various occupational groups varied during the past ten years, with the financing, insurance, real estate and business services sector and the clerical and secretarial workers recording comparatively faster rates of increase in wage rate than the other sectors and occupational groups.

The manufacturing sector registered the smallest rate of growth in wage rate during the same period. On the other hand, the workers at operative level had the lowest rate of increase in wage. Generally speaking, the year-on-year rates of increase of wage rates for all major sectors, in real terms, were relatively higher during the period from 1987 to 1990 than the period from 1991 to 1996.

In Hong Kong, heart diseases have been the second leading cause of death, after cancer, since the 1960s. The purpose of the article "Mortality and morbidity of heart diseases in Hong Kong, 1971 - 1994" is to analyse the trends of mortality and morbidity of heart diseases in Hong Kong from 1971 to 1994.

The analysis on mortality due to heart diseases is based on various statistics such as deaths, proportionate mortality, crude death rate, age-sex specific death rate, standardised death rate and potential years of life lost at age 65. Regarding morbidity of heart diseases, statistics on in-patients treated and percentage share of in-patients are used.

In the article "Mortality and morbidity of heart diseases in Hong Kong, 1971 - 1994", particular emphasis is given to coronary heart disease which has emerged as the top killer in Hong Kong in recent years.

The February 1997 issue of the Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics is now on sale at \$34 a copy. Apart from the above two feature articles, it contains the most up-to-date information on Hong Kong's development regarding economic growth, labour market, inflation and many other social and economic issues.

Purchase of this publication can be made at the Government Publications Centre, Ground Floor, Low Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong. The publication is also available for sale at the Publications Unit of the Census and Statistics Department, 19th Floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong. Regular subscription can also be arranged with the Publications Sales Office of the Information Services Department (Tel : 2598 8196).

End

Injured employees should not be dismissed

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The Labour Department today (Tuesday) reminded employers not to terminate the service of an employee who sustained work injury. Otherwise, they would face severe punishment.

The warning was made following a recent court case in which the owner of Marco Polo Pizza in Cheung Sha Wan was fined \$20,000 for dismissing an injured employee before a relevant certificate of assessment was issued.

Labour Officer (Prosecutions), Mr Raymond Ho, said that under Section 48 of the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (ECO), an employer was not permitted to dismiss an injured employee suffering from temporary incapacity for more than three days before the Commissioner for Labour or an Ordinary Assessment Board or a Special Assessment Board had issued the relevant Certificate of Assessment, or before the employer and the employee had entered into an agreement to settle the compensation direct for periods of temporary incapacity not exceeding seven days, whichever occurred the earliest.

"With effect from January 1 this year, an amendment has been made to the ECO to remove the more than three-day requirement for entitlement to periodical payments of injured employees," Mr Ho said.

"In relation to this, an additional clause is added to Section 48 of the ECO prohibiting employers from terminating or giving notice to terminate the employment of injured employees who suffer from temporary incapacity for not more than three days before the period of sick leaves has expired and the compensation involved has been paid," he added.

Failure to comply with the provisions will render the offender a maximum fine of \$100,000.

End

14 services projects to be financed by Government

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The Services Support Fund Vetting Committee today (Tuesday) approved 14 projects to be financed by the Government's Services Support Fund (SSF).

The SSF, which has a fund of \$50 million, is set up by the Hong Kong Government to provide financial support for projects which can contribute to the overall development and the competitiveness of Hong Kong's service sectors. The Fund is administered by the Industry Department.

A total of 112 applications were received by the Department under the first batch of applications which closed on December 31, 1996. The vetting process was not easy because of the large number and diverse nature of the applications. The main criterion adopted by the Vetting Committee was whether the application would contribute to the further development of the service sectors.

The approved applications cover a wide spectrum of service sectors, including information technology, wholesale and retail, import and export trade, tourism and transportation. The total project cost amounts to \$28 million.

The applicants will be informed of the decision of the Vetting Committee shortly and funds will be disbursed as soon as possible to the successful applications.

The second batch of applications will be invited in late March.

End

Heritage tour and basin meal for 1,000

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The first major event of the Year of Heritage will take place at Lung Yeuk Tau in Fanling, a renowned village for its "Five Wais and Six Tsuens" and numerous well-preserved monuments and relics, on March 9.

The event, known as the Heritage Day in Lung Yeuk Tau, aims to enable the general public to enjoy the unique past of the rural area through a variety of activities as well as to appreciate the architectural features, history and background of the monuments and the tradition and customs of walled villages.

It will feature a guided tour to the Tang Chung Ling Ancestral Hall, Lo Wai, Kun Lung Wai, Ma Wat Wai, Shun Him Church and Tin Hau Kung; and a display of relics including traditional farming implements, traditional wedding gift boxes, old style fire extinguishers, village ware, etc.

This will be followed by a basin meal and a traditional Cantonese opera will be performed by the Chinese Artists' Association of Hong Kong. Excerpts of two famous operas will be presented.

The basin meal is divided into three categories : supreme, traditional and vegetarian. The supreme meal covers abalone, shrimps, roasted suckling pigs, mushrooms, chicken, dried oysters, dried scallops, garoupa fillet, etc. The traditional menu is a typical basin meal which includes ducks, chicken, roasted pig, stewed pork, fish, mushrooms and different kinds of vegetables. The vegetarian menu is specially designed to cater for the requirements of vegetarians with vegetarian food like roast duck, chicken, abalone and a variety of traditional Chinese vegetables.

Admission ticket for the supreme basin meal is \$1,000 per person while that for the other two are both priced at \$250 each. The price includes transportation from KCR Fanling Station to Lung Yeuk Tau and return, basin meal, souvenir and a lucky draw.

All participants will be presented a souvenir cover which is specially designed to compliment the event. This is the second in a series of special postal items to commemorate the Year of Heritage.

The event is to cater for about 1,000 people and tickets are now on sale on a first-come-first-served basis at the Heritage Resource Centre of the Antiquities and Monuments Office, 136 Nathan Road, Kowloon. Further enquiries can be made at the Antiquities and Monuments Office at 2721 2326.

The Heritage Day in Lung Yeuk Tau is jointly organised by the Antiquities Advisory Board, the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust, and the Antiquities and Monuments Office of the Broadcasting, Culture and Sport Branch, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Tourists Association.

All incomes, after deduction of basic expenses, will go to the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust to promote the heritage work in Hong Kong.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tender results

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Tender date	:	25 February 1997
Paper on offer	:	EF Bills
Issue number	:	Q071
Issue date	:	26 February 1997
Maturity date	:	26 March 1997
Amount applied	:	HK\$10,980 MN
Amount allotted	:	HK\$5,000 MN
Average yield accepted	:	4.76 PCT
Highest yield accepted	:	4.82 PCT
Pro rata ratio	:	About 8 PCT
Average tender yield	:	4.87 PCT

Tender date : 25 February 1997
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Q709
Issue date : 26 February 1997
Maturity date : 28 May 1997
Amount applied : HK\$6,371.5 MN
Amount allotted : HK\$2,000 MN
Average yield accepted : 4.77 PCT
Highest yield accepted : 4.79 PCT
Pro rata ratio : About 85 PCT
Average tender yield : 4.83 PCT

Tender date : 25 February 1997
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : H759
Issue date : 26 February 1997
Maturity date : 27 August 1997
Amount applied : HK\$3,500 MN
Amount allotted : HK\$1,000 MN
Average yield accepted : 4.87 PCT
Highest yield accepted : 4.88 PCT
Pro rata ratio : About 16 PCT
Average tender yield : 4.88 PCT

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

Tender to be held in the week beginning - 3 March 1997

Tender date 4 March 1997

Paper on offer EF Bills

Issue number Q710

Issue date 5 March 1997

Maturity date 4 June 1997

Tenor 91 Days

Amount on offer HK\$2,000 MN + 500 MN

End