



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Transcript of remarks by Financial Secretary

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Following is the remarks made by the Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang, at a media session after attending a lunch of the International Monetary Fund/Hong Kong Monetary Authority Conference on Financial Integration in Asia and the role of Hong Kong this afternoon(Friday):

Financial Secretary: Well, do you want me to say something in English. I just want to echo the points made by my colleague, my very competent colleague, Mr K C Kwong, I have also read the newspaper reports on the public reaction, particularly, the reactions of our Legislative Council to our proposals of spending next year. We must remember that we are now proposing a public expenditure programme nearly as much as \$250 billion dollars and even government expenditure alone would be in excess of \$200 billion dollars. Mr Kwong had very carefully explained that we are now spending to the heel, the five per cent growth that we have allowed ourselves in accordance with our economic underlined growth rate, so in other words, in formulating our expenditure programme we had not been overly influence, we had not been affected by whatever they called political pressure of other kind. We had been planning as we had been planning to spend all these years. There are some positive comments on the expenditure programme, I am very grateful for that. There are also some concern about the level of spending on social welfare, in particular. Let me say these, over the last five years social welfare spending has increased 86 per cent in real terms and this is no small sum, in the coming year we are proposing to spend over nine per cent in real term together with inflation adjustment it will be near the 15 per cent growth in spending on welfare generally. And within the whole government expenditure programme, welfare spending now exceeds 10 pre cent, so in planning our expenditure programme, we have to ask ourselves, what sort of resources we should devote in this particular area of our social programme. We of course attach great importance looking after our elderly, and for elderly provisions, there had been some generous provision last year. But I am not saying that will be enough. But I do believe our elderly need affection and care, not only in terms of dollar but in terms of direct services. So for this reason this year we had concentrated in providing direct services to our elderly. My colleague, Mrs Fok will give details on these to you when she issue and explain what provisions had we proposed for elderly in the coming year. So the important thing for us to consider as a community, in considering the Budget is the total resources we had given to welfare generally and what sort of balance we should strike between our social welfare programme and our programmes of education, for law and order and for housing, for other programme as well. So and I'll have other things to say I'll say a bit more later on after the Budget Speech in the context of our revenue proposal as well. Thank you very much indeed.

End

Bill to localise JP system endorsed

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The Executive Council has endorsed the Justices of the Peace (JPs) Bill which seeks to provide a local statutory basis for the appointment of JPs and to update their powers and functions.

At present, JPs are appointed by the Governor under Article XIV of the Letters Patent as a form of recognition of an individual's standing in the community. The system has proven over time to be one of the most effective ways of promoting community service by individuals.

"We propose to enact a local JP Ordinance to enable the system to continue after June 30," a Government spokesman said today (Friday).

The Bill provides for the appointment of JPs by the Governor. It also sets out the conditions under which the Governor may revoke the appointment of any JP and transitional arrangements for existing JPs.

The Bill further seeks to remove the obsolete judicial/quasi-judicial functions of JPs, and to transfer to Commissioners for Oaths the power of JPs to administer oaths and declarations.

"Over the years JPs have accumulated a wide range of judicial/quasi-judicial functions under various local ordinances which are no longer exercised by lay JPs with the development of a professional judiciary.

"The Bill sets out the current duties of JPs, such as to pay visits to prisons, detention centres and other institutions and also provides that they shall perform other functions as directed by the Governor," the spokesman said.

The Justices of the Peace Bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council on March 19.

End

Volume and price statistics of external trade in Dec 96

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In December 1996, the volume of re-exports increased by 5.1% over a year earlier, while that of domestic exports decreased by 10%. Taken together, the volume of total exports increased by 2.4%. Concurrently, the volume of imports increased by 5.2%.

The Census and Statistics Department today (Friday) released detailed volume and price statistics of external trade for December and the whole year of 1996.

Comparing 1996 with 1995, the volume of Hong Kong's re-exports increased by 7.5%, while the volume of domestic exports decreased by 8.4%. Taking together, the volume of total exports increased by 4.8%. Meanwhile, imports increased by 4.3% in volume.

The growth in volume of trade is derived from the growth in trade value with the effect of price changes discounted.

Comparing December 1996 with December 1995, the prices of re-exports decreased by 0.7%, while that of domestic exports increased by 0.3%. Import prices on the other hand decreased by 1.7%.

As regards price changes in 1996 over 1995, the prices of re-exports decreased by 0.5%, while that of domestic exports increased by 0.3%. Import prices on the other hand decreased by 1.3%.

Price changes are reflected by changes in unit value indices which are compiled based on average unit values or, for certain commodities, based on specific price data.

The terms of trade index, defined as the ratio of total export price index to import price index, recorded an increase of 1.0% in 1996 over 1995.

The changes in the value, unit value and volume of re-exports by end-use category are shown in Table 1.

Analysed by end-use category, increases in re-export volume in December 1996 over a year earlier were recorded for fuels (+45%); capital goods (+24%); and consumer goods (+0.1%).

On the other hand, the volume of re-exports of foodstuffs; and raw materials and semi-manufactures decreased by 1.4% and 1.0% respectively.

Over the same period of comparison, increases were recorded in the prices of re-exports of fuels (+36%); foodstuffs (+0.1%); and consumer goods (+0.1%).

On the other hand, re-export prices of raw materials and semi-manufactures; and capital goods decreased by 2.7% and 1.5% respectively.

The changes in the value, unit value and volume of domestic exports by principal commodity group are shown in Table 2.

Comparing December 1996 with December 1995, decreases in domestic export volume were recorded for all of the principal commodity groups, except that of domestic electrical appliances which recorded an increase of 1.5%. The volume of domestic exports of radios of all kinds; footwear; travel goods, handbags and similar articles; and metal ores and scrap showed particularly significant decreases, by 64%, 43%, 34% and 33% respectively.

Commodity groups which recorded more notable increases in domestic export prices included textile yarn and thread (+7.9%); and metal ores and scrap (+7.8%).

On the other hand, domestic export prices of electronic components decreased significantly, by 4.2%.

The changes in the value, unit value and volume of imports by end-use category are shown in Table 3.

The import volume of foodstuffs increased by 12% in December 1996 compared with December 1995.

Significant increases in import volume were noted of sugar; and soya bean oil, peanut oil, vegetable oil and lard. However, notable decreases were recorded in the import volume of animals of the bovine species, live.

Over the same period of comparison, the import volume of consumer goods decreased by 1.2%.

Notable decreases in import volume were noted of alcoholic beverages; and passenger motor cars. However, significant increases in import volume were recorded for cameras, flashlight apparatus and supplies for photography.

The import volume of raw materials and semi-manufactures increased by 4.0% in December 1996 compared with December 1995.

Rapid increases in import volume were noted of lime, cement and fabricated building materials except glass, clay construction materials and refractory construction materials; and wood, lumber and cork. However, significant decreases were noted of raw cotton; and silk fabrics.

Imports of fuels increased by 50% in volume in December 1996 compared with December 1995.

As regards capital goods, the volume of imports increased by 13% in December 1996 over December 1995.

Notable increases were recorded in the import volume of textile machinery; and industrial machinery, other than electrical machinery and textile machinery. The import volume of construction machinery; and transport equipment however decreased.

Comparing December 1996 with December 1995, import prices of fuels and consumer goods increased by 23% and 1.3% respectively.

On the other hand, import prices of raw materials and semi-manufactures; capital goods; and foodstuffs decreased by 5.3%, 3.2% and 1.0% respectively.

Details of the above statistics are published in the December 1996 issue of the "Hong Kong Trade Index Numbers".

The report will be available on sale around 11 March 1997 at HK\$14 per copy at either (i) the Government Publications Centre on the Ground Floor, Low Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway; or (ii) 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 28/F., Siu On Centre, 188 Lockhart Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong (Tel. No.: 2598 8194) and enquiries on trade indices to the Census and Statistics Department (Tel. No.: 2582 4918).

Table 1 : Changes in re-exports by end-use category

End-use category	Comparing DEC 1996 with DEC 1995			Comparing JAN-DEC 1996 with JAN-DEC 1995		
	% changes			% changes		
	Value	Unit Value	Volume	Value	Unit Value	Volume
Foodstuffs	-1.3	0.1	-1.4	14.5	0.1	14.6
Consumer goods	0.2	0.1	0.1	4.9	0.5	3.8
Raw materials and semi-manufactures	-4.3	-2.7	-1.0	3.6	-2.2	6.0
Fuels	95.9	36.0	44.9	30.4	20.1	10.3
Capital goods	19.9	-1.5	24.3	14.3	-1.4	18.5
ALL COMMODITIES	3.5	-0.7	5.1	6.6	-0.5	7.5

Table 2 : Changes in domestic exports by principal commodity group

Commodity group	Comparing DEC 1996 with DEC 1995			Comparing JAN-DEC 1996 with JAN-DEC 1995		
	% changes			% changes		
	Value	Unit Value	Volume	Value	Unit Value	Volume
Clothing	-4.5	0.9	-4.8	-5.9	0.6	-6.2
Textile fabrics	-3.8	3.3	-6.0	-3.1	*	-3.8
Textile yarn and thread	-8.0	7.9	-14.3	20.3	5.1	15.6
Textile made-ups and related articles	-31.1	4.6	-32.9	-36.9	2.6	-37.7
Radios of all kinds	-64.3	2.7	-63.7	-28.6	5.8	-34.1
Electronic components	-28.5	-4.2	-27.4	-14.6	-3.2	-13.6
Footwear	-43.2	-3.5	-42.6	-47.2	-3.4	-45.2
Metal manufactures	-21.1	-1.0	-20.1	-8.4	4.0	-12.1
Metal ores and scrap	-25.3	7.8	-33.0	-10.3	9.1	-17.0
Watches and clocks	-16.3	2.1	-17.9	-12.0	0.5	-12.3
Travel goods, handbags and similar articles	-34.1	2.7	-34.2	-23.8	1.6	-25.2
Domestic electrical appliances	-2.4	-2.3	1.5	22.7	-3.1	28.6
ALL COMMODITIES	-9.6	0.3	-10.4	-8.5	0.3	-8.4

* less than 0.05%

Table 3 : Changes in imports by end-use category

End-use category	Comparing DEC 1996 with DEC 1995			Comparing JAN-DEC 1996 with JAN-DEC 1995		
	% changes			% changes		
	Value	Unit Value	Volume	Value	Unit Value	Volume
Foodstuffs	11.0	-1.0	12.2	6.7	-0.3	6.8
Consumer goods	-0.4	1.3	-1.2	1.9	1.5	0.5
Raw materials and semi-manufactures	-1.3	-5.3	4.0	-0.4	-4.1	3.7
Fuels	81.3	23.2	50.0	22.4	13.7	7.3
Capital goods	8.7	-3.2	12.9	8.7	-3.3	12.3
ALL COMMODITIES	2.9	-1.7	5.2	3.0	-1.3	4.3

End

Sir Edward Youde Memorial Fund

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A bill which seeks to empower the Council of the Sir Edward Youde Memorial Fund to solicit donations, subscriptions and bequests for the Fund is gazetted today (Friday).

Established in 1987 with initial donations from the community to commemorate Sir Edward Youde, the late Governor, the Fund seeks to encourage education and research among the people of Hong Kong.

At present, the Sir Edward Youde Memorial Fund Ordinance only provides for the Board of Trustees of the Fund to accept voluntary donations, subscriptions and bequests. It does not empower either the Board or the Council to solicit donations, etc.

"The proposed legislation aims at ensuring adequate funding for the Fund's existing awards and sponsorships, and facilitating any further expansion in the scope of its activities," a Government spokesman said.

"The bill will also enable the Fund to meet from its income all reasonable expenses incurred by the Council in exercise of its new power," he added.

Over the past ten years, the Fund has awarded a total of \$53 million in about 6,400 scholarships, fellowships and prizes for outstanding secondary and tertiary students, including 75 awards for disabled students.

The asset value of the Sir Edward Youde Memorial Fund now stands at about \$168 million.

Since 1992, the Fund has also sponsored the Young Friends of Hong Kong Arts Festival to increase secondary students' exposure to, and appreciation of, performing arts. The Scheme benefits about 25 000 secondary students each year.

Furthermore, the Fund's Visiting Professorship Scheme invites eminent overseas scholars to Hong Kong each year to promote education and cultural exchange between Hong Kong and overseas countries.

The bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council on March 19.

End

Good preparation needed for future careers

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Young people should start to develop their career plans while at school, Assistant Commissioner for Labour (Employment Services), Mrs Jennie Chor, said today (Friday) at the prize presentation ceremony of the 15th Careers Quiz.

Advising students on how to choose a suitable career, Mrs Chor said that they should have a deep understanding on their interest, personality, capability, expertise, expectation, qualification, physique and value before setting their own career goals.

"In addition, they should also actively look for information on the latest development on the employment market," Mrs Chor said.

She urged students to pay attention to the relevant training courses and grasp opportunities to build up working experience to meet the demands of the ever changing employment market.

In order to help students to choose a suitable career, Mrs Chor noted that the Labour Department's Careers Advisory Service (CAS) had been providing a wide range of career services including the annual Careers and Education Expo and school visits to the CAS's Careers Information Centres (CICs) and workplaces.

"Over 370,000 people had participated in CAS's activities last year, breaking all previous records," she said.

"We have also introduced the Bulletin Board System (BBS) last year to let schools and other users obtain the latest information on careers and details of CAS's activities through computers," she added.

Mrs Chor extended her appreciation to the Pentax camera, Cerruti 1881 sunglasses and Laser Computer Limited in sponsoring the Careers Quiz as well as to the Information Technology Services Department in marking the quiz papers and analysing the results.

In addition to the prize presentation ceremony, the CAS also organised different careers activities today at the CIC in Wan Chai including exhibition, seminars, video shows, sound-on-slide presentations, quiz and demonstration of the BBS.

The 15th Careers Quiz, conducted in November last year, was an associated activity of the 7th Education and Careers Expo. It aimed at enhancing the awareness of secondary school students of the importance of choosing suitable careers and encouraged them to actively look for up-to-date information on careers and further educational opportunities.

It has attracted record high participation of 140,847 students from 300 secondary schools.

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HK 18 district tourism guides published

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The Home Affairs Department (HAD) has produced a series of 18 brochures on the unique characteristics and favourite tourist spots in each of the 18 administrative districts in Hong Kong to help both tourists and local people explore the various districts' individual characteristics, attractions, changes and developments.

Speaking at a press conference to launch the Eighteen-District Tourism Promotion Project today (Friday), the Director of Home Affairs, Mrs Shelley Lau, said the "Hong Kong Eighteen Districts Tourism Guide" is aimed at enhancing the importance of District Administration while helping promote tourism in Hong Kong.

"We hope that this package will help encourage more tourists to visit Hong Kong and tie in with the efforts of the Secretary for Economic Services and the Hong Kong Tourist Association (HKTA) in promoting the tourism industry.

"The guides will also serve as educational materials for children and all students, enabling them to know more about the history and development of the 18 administrative districts," Mrs Lau said.

Each brochure is produced by the respective district office, with input and suggestions made by the respective district board. Well-illustrated with colourful photographs and maps, the guide provides a detailed record and account of the information relating to the history, antiquities, traditions, major festivals, annual district events and landmarks in the 18 districts in a systematic manner.

A list of telephone numbers and addresses of facilities useful to tourists is also provided.

The guides are produced in three versions - English, Chinese written in conventional characters and Chinese in simplified characters.

Mrs Lau also took the opportunity to thank all the District Board chairmen and HKTA for their contributions and support for the project.

The guides will be available for distribution to members of the public free of charge later at all district offices and HKTA's various channels.

Also present at the press conference were the Secretary for Economic Services, Mr Stephen Ip; the Deputy Director of Home Affairs, Mr Lui Hau-tuen; the General Manager (Marketing Communications) of Hong Kong Tourist Association, Mrs Lily Shum; District Board chairmen, District Board members and District Officers.

End

Plenum for Green Managers on environmental issues

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A Plenum was held today (Friday) for Green Managers and Energy Managers from various Government departments to broaden their knowledge on the environmental issues the community is facing.

Organised by the Planning, Environment and Lands Branch, the Plenum offered an opportunity for the participants to share their experiences on environmental auditing and environmental management systems.

They were also briefed on Government's strategy to tackle the problems within the civil service as well as those faced by the community.

Speaking at the opening of the Plenum, Deputy Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands, Mr Benjamin Tang, said concern for the environment was firmly entrenched. Hong Kong should perform to the standards required of the first world, in keeping with its economic and social status, Mr Tang said.

He said the Hong Kong Government should take pro-active steps at every opportunity and set an example for the community to follow.

He urged participating Managers to collectively be involved in deciding how everyone, as a government and as a community, should proceed.

The Green Manager Scheme was established within the Government in January 1994 to set a good green example for the private sector. Under the scheme, a Green Manager was appointed in each branch/department to help ensure that environmental considerations were taken into account during the formulation of policies and implementation of programmes.

Early initiatives focused on green housekeeping issues such as reduction in energy and resources consumption, and reuse and recycling of material.

To enlarge the scope of the scheme, it was subsequently extended to cover environmental auditing and environmental management system.

To share outside experience, speakers from the Centre of Environmental Technology, the Hong Kong Productivity Council and the Cathay Pacific Airlines were also invited to take part in the Plenum.

Over 110 managers from 65 branches and departments attended the full day session held at the New Annex of Central Government Office.

End

New flyover to improve traffic flow in Tsuen Wan

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A flyover will be built across Castle Peak Road at Sha Tsui Road in Tsuen Wan as part of a continuing programme by the Territory Development Department (TDD) for the development of the new town.

"The flyover, together with a footbridge underneath, will improve traffic condition at the junction of Tsuen King Circuit and Castle Peak Road," a spokesman for the department said today (Friday).

"The flyover will also serve as an alternative access from Tsuen King Circuit to Tsuen Wan town centre, which is particularly useful in times of emergency," he said.

To reduce noise impacts to nearby residents, noise barriers and road covers will be built at the flyover.

"The flyover will measure 300 metres long and 13.5 metres wide. Underneath the flyover is a footbridge measuring about 55 metres by 4.7 metres with a 50-metre long ramp on one side and a 65-metre long ramp and staircase on the other side," said the spokesman.

Retaining walls and associated road and drainage works will also be included in the project.

Construction will start in June for completion in 30 months.

The spokesman added that apart from this flyover project, the department had started works on four improvement projects in Tsuen Wan.

"These include improvement works to Lo Wai Village and San Tsuen, as well as to San Tsuen Road and an existing footbridge near Chung On Street," he said.

End

Stormwater Drainage Master Plan Study commissioned

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The Drainage Services Department has commissioned a Stormwater Drainage Master Plan Study for Tuen Mun and Sham Tseng to reduce flooding.

A \$7.38-million agreement was signed today (Friday) by the Assistant Director of Drainage Services/Operations and Maintenance Branch, Mr Raymond Cheung, and a representative of Binnie Consultants Limited.

Speaking after signing the agreement, Mr Cheung said the study would examine the existing drainage system and recommend short and long-term improvement measures to reduce flooding.

"Some of the drains, which were built some 30 years ago, were under capacity and fell short of the current flood protection standard.

"The study will also develop a computerised asset management system to facilitate future planning, management and operation of the drainage system," Mr Cheung said.

The 18-month study is the fourth of the seven drainage master plan studies initiated by the department.

The other three studies for north-west New Territories, north Hong Kong Island, and Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing districts started respectively in January, May and September last year.

End

Road works in Sha Tin proposed

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The Governor-in-Council has approved the construction of a new road linking Tung Lo Wan Hill Road and Mei Tin Road in Sha Tin.

The road, to be built by a private developer, is to provide access for a private residential development in Tung Lo Wan.

The developer will be required to build a three-metre high noise barrier along the section of the road close to Mei Wai House in Mei Lam Estate. The noise barrier will be about 68.5 metres in length.

Works are scheduled to start in July for completion in two years.

A notice on the proposed works is published in the Government Gazette today (Friday).

End