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# DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Tuesday, December 13, 1994

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### Governor to meet Japanese Emperor

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The Government has been informed by the Imperial Palace of Japan that the Emperor and Empress will meet with the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, and Mrs Patten, at 10.30 am on Friday (December 16), at the Imperial Palace, during the Governor's official visit to Japan.

Mr and Mrs Patten will arrive in Japan this (Tuesday) evening. During the four-day visit, the Governor will meet the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, other senior ministers, Government officials and leading businessmen. He will also meet two former Prime Ministers.

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### Governor meets Korean Trade Minister

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The Governor, The Rt Hon Christopher Patten, today (Tuesday) wound up the first official visit by a Hong Kong Governor to the Republic of Korea with a strong endorsement of Dr Kim Chul-su, Minister of Trade, Industry and Energy to be the first chief for the new World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Mr Patten called on Dr Kim this morning and discussed with him a wide range of trade issues and the forthcoming inception of the WTO for which Dr Kim is one of the three candidates for the position as the Director-General.

Mr Kim thanked the Governor for the support from Hong Kong, which he described as one of the world's strongest and most influential free traders.

Earlier at a breakfast meeting of the Korean Newspaper Editors' Association at the Korean Press Centre, Mr Patten said Hong Kong considered Dr Kim an outstandingly good candidate for that important post.

"We think it would be the best possible demonstration of the rest of the world's commitment to making the liberalisation of trade a continuing effective global policy if the world was to support for that post a distinguished public official from one of the strongest economies in the world which is dismantling barriers and accepting liberalisation and globalisation as the best way into the future," Mr Patten said.

During a 45-minute question-and-answer session at the breakfast meeting, Mr Patten was also questioned about the Vietnamese migrants problem faced by Hong Kong.

In response to that question, he said Hong Kong faced what was almost "a ludicrous paradox" -- on the other hand there were people living in camps in Hong Kong reluctant to return to Vietnam and Hong Kong was now the biggest investor in Vietnam.

Mr Patten said in places like Mozambique, Angola, in what was Yugoslavia, Afghanistan where there were problems of warfare, famine, drought, it was understandable that economic migrants from these countries did not want to return to their countries, but Vietnam was an economy that was starting to pick up speed, there should not be any reason why people should not return to it.

He said some of the migrants hang on in the hope that sooner or later the United States or Canada or Britain or some other countries would resettle them.

"All of them should return home and Hong Kong is encouraging them to do so," he said.

"There is not going to be any more right of resettlement around the world."

Later in the morning, the Governor held a meeting with Mr Hong Hae-hyong, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economic Planning.

They discussed aspects of South Korea's financial deregulation plans, and how that might help Hong Kong financial services firm operating in the country.

The Governor finished his busy schedule in the morning by meeting a group of Korean leading businessmen at a lunch hosted by Mr Thomas Harris, British Ambassador in Seoul at his residence. In the afternoon, he will leave for Tokyo for a three-day visit.

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Government announcement on ECVIIs

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A Government spokesman announced today (Tuesday) that 14 ex-China Vietnamese illegal immigrants (ECVIIs) plus two Vietnamese migrant spouses (five families --- eight men, four women, three boys and one girl) had been released from detention on their own recognizance.

"This particular group of ECVIIs have been detained since 1991 for the purpose of repatriation to China. The Chinese Government confirmed last week that they would not accept them back," the spokesman said.

"While it was clear that they had spent a number of years in China, the Chinese authorities were unable to verify their legal status there.

"In the light of this development and bearing in mind that there is no immediate prospect of being able to remove them from the territory, their continued detention would have been unlawful," he explained.

The spokesman said the Government would now seek to repatriate these ECVIIs to Vietnam. "In the meantime they will be offered accommodation at Pillar Point. They will have no legal status in Hong Kong either as visitors or residents; they remain illegal immigrants," he said.

The spokesman added that 2,000 ECVIIs had been repatriated to China since September last year. Only 473 currently remain in Hong Kong.

"Nine of them are scheduled to be repatriated to China on Thursday (December 15). A further 147 are expected to be returned in early January," he said. "The Government expects to receive clearance to repatriate the remaining ECVIIs in the near future."

"The overwhelming majority of Vietnamese migrants have of course reached Hong Kong from Vietnam," the spokesman added.

"Of them, almost 45,000 have been repatriated since 1989 and the programme of voluntary and orderly returns to Vietnam continues. Two further flights will take place this week, returning 450 migrants to Vietnam."

"However, despite the limited nature of this release, both the Hong Kong and British Governments share the community's concern about the problems posed by the release of even a small number of Vietnamese illegal immigrants into the community pending further discussions with the Vietnamese authorities," the spokesman said.

The British Government will continue to raise the issue at senior levels with the Vietnamese authorities both to convey the strength of feeling of the Hong Kong community and to seek to facilitate the earliest possible repatriation of those Vietnamese migrants remaining in Hong Kong.

In this connection, Mr Alastair Goodlad, the Foreign Office Minister with responsibility for Hong Kong, will be discussing these points with the Vietnamese Ambassador in London.

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TAC briefed on KMB route restructuring

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The following is issued on behalf of the Transport Advisory Committee:

The Transport Advisory Committee was briefed today (Tuesday) on the results of a review conducted by Kowloon Motor Bus and its proposals to restructure 23 bus routes in Kowloon. Members supported in principle KMB's proposals to rationalise services with a view to improving operating efficiency, frequencies, routings and service quality.

Members noted that most of the existing 160,000 passengers travelling on these 23 routes each day would not be affected.

Members were given to understand that services on the restructured routes would be more frequent and some passengers would enjoy lower section fares, some of the routes will be extended to provide new links, and some would be upgraded to air-conditioned services.

The overall impact of the restructuring proposals would lead to substantial savings in operating costs and hence less pressure on KMB fare increases.

Members will have a full discussion when KMB submits finalised route restructuring proposals for endorsement by the Committee.

Members were also briefed on the Hong Kong and Yaumati Ferry Company's five-year Forward Planning Programme.

The company was planning to buy eight vessels, including six new triple decks and two catamarans, to improve services to the outlying islands and the new towns.

HYF would continue to operate most of its low-patronage and loss-making routes until 1999 when good alternative public transport becomes available following the opening of the Western Harbour Crossing and Route-3 (Tsing Yi Section) in 1997.

Members were also briefed on the progress in 1994 of the Transport Department's Performance Pledge Scheme.

They noted that the scheme has been closely monitored since it was introduced in 1992, and the results of opinion and waiting time surveys indicated that the pledged waiting times have not been exceeded and the public were generally satisfied with the services provided.

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#### Sex Discrimination Bill an important milestone

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The introduction of the Sex Discrimination Bill will be an important milestone in the social development of Hong Kong, and will represent a major step towards maintaining an environment of fair and free competition.

Speaking at a joint luncheon meeting of the Lion's Club today (Tuesday), the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Michael Suen, said the Government believed that the bill would cater for the needs of Hong Kong, raise public awareness of the issue of discrimination and ensure that people in Hong Kong can enjoy a high degree of legal protection in respect of equal opportunities between the sexes, so that Hong Kong could compare favourably with other advanced countries.

Mr Suen pointed out that with the changes in demographic structure, economy and social norms in the past decades, the status of women in Hong Kong had been rising steadily.

"In recent years, we are seeing more and more women holding key positions in our society and successfully striking a balance between their family commitments and their needs in career development.

"Meanwhile, more men are playing a part in doing family chores and taking care of their children. All these show that we are moving towards the realisation of sex equality in Hong Kong," he said.

But the Government will not just rest on its laurels, Mr Suen added.

Besides, the community has also expressed concerns over the furtherance of the principle of sex equality on the established foundation

In response to these concerns, he said, the Government published the Green paper on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in August 1993 to solicit public views on measures to enhance gender equality.

Having conducted a thorough study and extensive consultation on this subject in the past 14 months, the Government has now come up with the Sex Discrimination Bill which was introduced into the Legislative Council on October 26 this year.

"Since the areas covered by this kind of legislation are completely new to Hong Kong, we should take a careful and practical approach in drawing up the legislation.

"The Government therefore has taken into consideration views expressed by different sectors of the community in the formulation of the bill

"While reflecting public exceptions, the bill will seek to achieve equality of opportunities for both women and men in a proper and prudent manner," Mr Suen said.

In short, the Sex Discrimination Bill is mainly to eliminate potential inequalities arising from difference in sex.

The bill renders unlawful sex discrimination and harassment in specified areas of activity; the areas will include employment, education, the provision of goods and services and the disposal and management of premises.

Moreover, taking into account the views expressing by various community organisations, the bill also makes it unlawful, in the employment field, to discriminate against a person on the ground of marital status or pregnancy.

"For example, sex or marital status shall not be made a requirement for a post advertised. Employers too shall not decide, on the basis of sex or marital status, whether the applicant is eligible to take up the post," he said

Furthermore, Mr Suen said the bill applied to both men and women. It can therefore, be seen that the bill is definitely not made just for the benefit of women but for upholding equality between both sexes.

On sex discrimination, the bill addresses the problems of both direct discrimination on the ground of sex and indirect discrimination without any valid grounds. For instance, for a man and a woman with the same qualifications and holding the same position doing the same jobs in the same establishment, if the man is paid better, then it is direct discrimination on the part of the employer.

Indirect discrimination without any valid grounds is also unlawful, he said.

"For example, for the position of teller in a bank, if the bank requires that the applicants should be at least six feet tall, without explaining why this height requirement is necessary, then it is indirect discrimination because this requirement may prevent many women applicants from becoming eligible for this position."

Regarding sexual harassment, the bill defines the following as sexual harassment behaviours, they are: making sexual advance, request for sexual favours or engaging in unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature; and in any of the above circumstances, a reasonable person would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

Mr Suen said in view of the wide-ranging scope covered by sex discrimination and sexual harassment, the emphasis on matters of principle in the definitions of these two terms, and given the fact that this is the first time that legislation against discrimination is being enacted in Hong Kong, the Government found it necessary to establish an independent mechanism to monitor the implementation of the legislation so that the public would not break the law inadvertently.

The Equal Opportunities Commission (the Commission), which is an independent statutory body, is responsible for working towards the elimination of sex discrimination and sexual harassment, promoting equality of opportunities between men and women, and investigating any act alleged to be unlawful by virtue of the bill and endeavouring, by conciliation, to effect a settlement of the matter in dispute.

"We propose that members of the Commission will comprise people drawn from various sections of the community including employers, employees, professionals and those people who have knowledge of and are interested in promoting equality of opportunities between the two sexes," he said.

Besides carrying out public education programmes and conducting researches into gender-related issues and investigating complaints, another important function of the Commission is to play a conciliation role in settling disputes.

The Commission will be empowered to make rules to direct persons relevant to a complaint to attend conferences, with a view to resolving the matter in dispute by conciliation.

Of course, he observed, the complainant might lodge a claim with the District Court direct or through the Commission, but the conciliatory function of the Commission should not be overlooked.

"According to overseas experiences, conciliation will help to reduce the number of disputes required to be resolved by proceedings before the District Court.

"We also anticipate that most complaints will be resolved in this process. The Commission will not seek to safeguard equality of opportunities between the two sexes at the expense of creating a litigious social environment and causing a panic among the public."

Turning to the exceptions provided in the bill, Mr Suen said the Government believed that the legislation should not impose unreasonable restrictions on individual freedom or undue financial burdens on the community.

For instances, he said, there were exceptions to allow for situations where being a particular sex was a genuine occupational qualification and it would not be unlawful for an employer to provide different levels of specified benefits or allowances for employees with different marital status.

"We believe that these exceptions will be acceptable to the public at large," he said.

As to small business employers' concerns over the possible problems arising from frivolous complaints and the cost implications arising from the need to comply with the legislation, Mr Suen said the Government was proposing to provide a grace period of five years to allow these establishments with not more than five employees to comply with the provisions of the bill on a gradual basis.

"This arrangement can provide small employees with the opportunity to better understand the operation of the bill and benefit from the experience of large business establishments.

"We hope the employers' associations will co-operate with the Equal Opportunities Commission with a view to promoting better understanding of the legislation," he said.

Hence, another important function of the Commission is to develop a code of practice, which will provide detailed guidance to assist members of the community to comply with the legislation, for example, by assisting employers to formulate their own equal opportunities policies, or to draw up detailed guidelines on sexual harassment behaviours so as to provide a basis for determining if a certain act is unlawful.

In fact, such codes are very common overseas, Mr Suen said.

One such example is the "Codes of Practice on Measures to Combat Sexual Harassment" issued by the Commission of European Communities in 1991.

And the bill also stipulates that the Commission shall consult employers' and employees' groups in drawing up the codes to ensure that they meet practical needs.

Equal Opportunities mean that both women and men should have the same chance and option to exercise their rights in every aspect of social life.

Mr Suen said: "We believe that the concept of equality is best achieved by providing the two sexes with equal opportunities rather than setting a quota and to lay down rigid rules which will only hinder the operation of a free market."

He reiterated that the Government subscribed to the principle of equality between women and men and would make every effort to promote gender equality.

"To eliminate sex discrimination, we have to arouse public awareness of this issue, encourage them to actively participate in discussions and develop community support for the principle of sex equality.

"Furthermore, we are well aware that such a sensitive issue may give rise to strong reactions from the community, and as such we have been dealing with it carefully and prudently.

"The bill is tailor-made for Hong Kong and provides for the establishment of an independent body to put the provisions into practice as well as taking up the essential task of educating the public."

Any comments on the bill can be sent to the Bills Committee of the Legislative Council or the Home Affairs Branch.

"I sincerely hope that there will be an early passage of the bill so that the Equal Opportunities Commission can be established in Hong Kong as soon as possible and the concept of sex equality brought to fruition," he added.

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Fund advisory committee celebrates 100th meeting

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The Subventions and Lotteries Fund Advisory Committee (SLFAC), since its establishment in October 1984, has played a significant role in advising the Government on the allocation of public funds to social welfare projects.

The terms of reference of SLFAC are to advise the Director of Social Welfare on applications from welfare agencies for subventions from public funds, for allocations from the Lotteries Fund and for permission to hold flag days.

The SLFAC is chaired by the Director of Social Welfare, Mr Ian Strachan, with members appointed by the Secretary for Health and Welfare.

"Over the past 10 years, the SLFAC has endorsed 3,468 applications for capital grants from the Lotteries Fund and allocated a total of \$1,674 million to various capital projects," Mr Strachan said.

One of the SLFAC's recent recommendations is a Lotteries Fund grant of over \$333 million towards the redevelopment of the Aberdeen Rehabilitation Centre, which is the largest fund grant ever endorsed by the Committee.

"Construction of the new centre will commence early next year and Phase I of the project is expected to be completed by the end of 1996.

"On final completion, the centre will have a total area of about 30,000 square metres with 24 service units providing 1,410 places to cater for the needs of persons with various kinds of disabilities," Mr Strachan said.

In addition, the SLFAC allocates subventions for recurrent expenditure to non-governmental organisations on a yearly basis. A total of \$10,632 million have been granted during the past 10 years.

For 1994/95 the revised estimate of recurrent subvention is \$2,860 million. This is disbursed to over 2,000 subvented service units operated by 167 agencies which employ 15,000 subvented staff.

As compared with the subvention expenditure of \$386 million in 1984/85, this represents an increase of 640 per cent, well illustrates a substantial expansion in social welfare and rehabilitation services during the past decade.

To celebrate its 100th meeting, all SLFAC members attended a reception at the Social Welfare Department headquarters immediately after the meeting was held today (Tuesday).

Unofficial members currently appointed to this Committee include Mr Paul Young, Mr Lincoln Soo, Dr Wong Hoi-kwok, Mrs Chong Wong Chor-sar, Mr Michael Lai, Dr Simon Wong, Mrs Camille Tang Yeh, Mr Hamilton Ho and Mr Darwin Chen.

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Two New Territories lots to be auctioned

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The Lands Department will auction two lots of Government land in the New Territories tomorrow (Wednesday).

The public auction will begin at 2.30 pm in the Concert Hall of the City Hall.

The first lot, located in Area 26, Kwai Chung, has an area of about 6,242 square metres for use as godown and public car park.

Located in Town Park Road North, Yuen Long, the second lot has an area of about 8,431 square metres earmarked for residential use.

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Attention News Editors:

Your representatives are invited to cover the auction.

A press area will be designated and photographers are advised to bring along telephoto lenses.

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### Hennessy Road reconstruction contract awarded

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Work on reconstructing Hennessy Road in Wan Chai will soon start with the award of the contract today (Tuesday).

The contract, worth \$63 million, was signed between the Highways Department and the contractor, Chiu Hing Construction and Transportation Company Limited.

A spokesman for the Highways Department said the work comprised the full reconstruction of the section of Hennessy Road between Fenwick Street and Canal Road East.

Also included are the resurfacing of the existing road between Justice Drive and Fenwick Street; reconstruction of associated footways; upgrading of existing storm water drainage and sewer system; and minor traffic improvements and landscaping works.

The work is expected to be completed in early 1997.

The spokesman said on completion of the works, a durable road with good riding quality would be provided for traffic in Wan Chai District.

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### Five employers nominated to Labour Advisory Board

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The Labour Department announced today (Tuesday) that nominations from five major employers' organisations for employers' representatives to serve on the Labour Advisory Board had been received.

They are:

Mr Martin Hayton of the Employers' Federation of Hong Kong,  
Mr Ho Sai-chu of the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce,  
Mr Joseph Lau of the Chinese Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong,  
Mr Andrew Leung of the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, and  
Miss Angela Koo of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce

In addition, one employer and one employee members will be appointed by the Government to sit on the board. Their appointments will be announced at a later date.

All members of the Labour Advisory Board will serve for a new term of two years starting from next month (January).

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Post local Christmas cards before December 19

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The Postmaster General, Mr Mike Pagliari, today (Tuesday) reminded the public that the latest date for posting Christmas cards for local delivery before Christmas was December 19 (Monday).

He advised members of the public to post as early as possible to avoid last-minute rush.

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176 Vietnamese return home voluntarily

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A group of 176 Vietnamese migrants today (Tuesday) returned to Vietnam under the Voluntary Repatriation Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Comprising 55 men, 49 women, 37 boys and 35 girls, they were the 221st batch to go back under the programme.

The group brought to 4,965 the total number of Vietnamese migrants who had returned voluntarily this year, and to 43,578 the total number of returnees since the programme started in March 1989.

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Hong Kong Monetary Authority tender results

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Tender date	13 Dec 94
Paper on offer	EF Bills
Issue number	Q450
Amount applied	HK\$4,530 MN
Amount allotted	HK\$1,500 MN
Average yield accepted	5.66 PCT
Highest yield accepted	5.68 PCT
Pro rata ratio	about 64 PCT
Average tender yield	5.73 PCT

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

Tenders to be held in the week beginning 19 Dec 94 -

Tender date	19 Dec 94	20 Dec 94	20 Dec 94
Paper on offer	EF notes	EF Bills	EF Bills
Issue number	5912	Q451	H480
Issue Date	20 Dec 94	21 Dec 94	21 Dec 94
Maturity date	20 Dec 99	22 Mar 95	21 Jun 95
Tenor	5 years	91 days	182 days
Amount on offer	HK\$500+100MN	HK\$1,500MN+300MN	HK\$800+160MN
Coupon	8.15 PCT		

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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	1,692	0930	-375
Closing balance in the account	1,147	1000	-375
Change attributable to :		1100	-355
Money market activity	-355	1200	-355
LAF today	-190	1500	-355
		1600	-355

LAF rate 3.75% bid/5.75% offer TWI 121.8 \*-0.1\* 13.12.94

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes/Hong Kong Government bonds				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	4.70	18 months	2605	6.35	98.97	7.24
1 month	5.14	24 months	2611	6.90	99.00	7.60
3 months	5.60	29 months	3704	6.15	96.73	7.83
6 months	6.12	35 months	3710	7.25	98.56	7.97
12 months	6.80	58 months	5909	7.45	97.02	8.38

Total turnover of bills and bonds - 8,120 million

Closed December 13, 1994

End/Tuesday, December 13; 1994