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Pilot scheme for Code on Access to Information

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The Government announced today (Thursday) the introduction of an administrative Code on Access to Information, initially in nine departments and policy branches on a pilot scheme basis, for six months, starting from March 1 this year.

The departments and branches selected for the pilot scheme are the Architectural Services Department, Customs and Excise Department, Government Supplies Department, Highways Department, Home Affairs Department, Social Welfare Department, Home Affairs Branch, Recreation and Culture Branch, and Works Branch.

The Code will subsequently be extended throughout the Government, by the end of 1996 at the latest, subject to whatever modifications may be necessary on the basis of experience gained in the pilot scheme.

Announcing details at a press conference today, the head of the Efficiency Unit project team which developed the Code, Mr David Weeks, said the scheme represented a step forward in the Government's commitment to greater openness and transparency.

"The Code, supplemented by comprehensive guidelines on its interpretation and application, was developed by a special project team in the Efficiency Unit, assisted by a consultant with wide experience of access to information systems elsewhere in the world," Mr Weeks said.

"In developing the Code we have drawn on legislative regimes overseas and also on the UK Code of Practice on Access to Government Information.

"During various stages of development, all Government departments and branches were consulted. Also, valuable advice was received from the LegCo Panel on Information Policy, the Hong Kong Bar Association, the Hong Kong Journalists Association and the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce."

Mr Weeks noted that it was Government's intention to pursue through the Code the policy that information held by the Government would be made available, either routinely or on request unless there were valid reasons related to public, private or commercial interests to withhold the information.

"To this end the Code fairly balances openness with the need to protect public and private rights essential to effective government, and personal and commercial privacy," he added.

The Code is divided into two parts. Part 1 describes the scope of the Code and the procedures of application, the system of charges and the availability of internal review process as well as the avenue of complaint to the Office of the Commissioner for Administrative Complaints (COMAC) if an applicant is not satisfied with the way the Code has been applied.

The existing machinery of COMAC provides an independent redress mechanism to deal with any differences of interpretation that may arise in the application of the Code.

Part 2 of the Code sets out the 16 categories of information to which public access may be refused.

"With a few exceptions, the withholding of information is subject to a harm test whereby a department must consider whether any harm or prejudice that may result from disclosure outweighs the public interest in disclosure," Mr Weeks explained.

Charges for access to information will simply be the standard charge for making copies of the records to which access is granted.

Requests for access to information held by the nine pilot scheme departments/branches may be made on application forms or in writing to their respective Access to Information Officer.

If members of the public are not sure which department holds the information they seek, they may obtain advice at any Public Enquiry Service Centre.

Copies of the Code and application forms are available at the Public Enquiry Service Centres of all District Offices and at the headquarters and branch offices of the participating departments and branches.

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6,730 agreements lodged with Land Registry in January

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A total of 6,730 sale and purchase agreements for building units, which include both residential and non-residential properties, were lodged with the Land Registry last month.

The figure represents a decrease of 7.3 per cent from that of December 1994, and a 37.4 per cent drop compared with January 1994.

The total consideration of these agreements is $17.08 billion, down 29.5 per cent and 57.9 per cent compared with the amounts for December 1994 and January 1994 respectively.

The figures are contained in the monthly statistics released today (Thursday) by the Land Registry on deeds relating to property transactions received for registration in the Urban and New Territories Land Registries last month. Relevant statistics for December 1994 and January 1994 were provided for comparison. Figures on sale and purchase agreements received for the past 12 months and the year-on-year rate of change were also released.

The statistics generally relate to land transactions executed up to four weeks prior to their submission for registration, as there is usually a time lag between the execution of deeds and their lodgement for registration.

End/Thursday, February 16, 1995

Revision of car parking fees at airport

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The fees charged for vehicle parking at the Hong Kong International Airport at Kai Tak will be increased from April 1 this year, a government spokesman announced today (Thursday).

"The last fee revision exercise was conducted in 1992. Since then, car parking rates in prime parking locations and the vicinity of the airport have risen considerably. The increase in fees is to discourage casual parking by non-airport users and long stay parking at the airport," the spokesman said.

"This will also help to ensure that the airport car parks are used efficiently so as to provide enough spaces for members of the public using the airport."

Details of the fee revision are:

	Present Fee	New Fee
Public Car Park		
At Multi-Storey Car Park and Cargo Circuit Car Park		
(a) First and second hours or part thereof	$13 per hour	$16 per hour
(b) Every subsequent hour or part thereof	$26 per hour	$32 per hour
At Concorde Road Car Park	$12 per hour	$14 per hour
Special Car Park		
Private car	$1,250 per month	$1,680 per month
Commercial Vehicle	$1,650 per month	$2,250 per month

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Outward processing trade in China for third quarter 1994

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In the third quarter of last year, 51% of Hong Kong's total exports to China were for outward processing; the figure was 74% for domestic exports, and 47% for re-exports.

On the other hand, 80% of Hong Kong's imports from China were related to outward processing, according to statistics released today (Thursday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

Over the same period, 82% of Hong Kong's re- exports of China origin to all countries other than China were produced through outward processing in China.

The corresponding proportions in the third quarter of 1993 were 47% for total exports to China, 73% for domestic exports to China, 41% for re-exports to China, 73% for imports from China and 81% for re-exports of China origin to all countries other than China.

In January-September 1994, 47% of Hong Kong's total exports to China were for outward processing; the figure was 73% for domestic exports, and 43% for re-exports.

On the other hand, 78% of Hong Kong's imports from China were related to outward processing.

Over the same period, 81% of Hong Kong's re- exports of China origin to all countries other than China were produced through outward processing in China.

The corresponding proportions in January- September 1993 were 48% for total exports to China, 73% for domestic exports to China, 42% for re-exports to China, 73% for imports from China and 81% for re-exports of China origin to all countries other than China.

To provide a better understanding of the nature and importance of outward processing in China initiated by Hong Kong firms, the Census and Statistics Department has been conducting a sample survey as from the third quarter of 1988 to distinguish Hong Kong's exports to China into those which are for outward processing and those which are not.

The scope of the survey has been extended from the first quarter of 1989 to segregate Hong Kong's imports from China into those that are related to outward processing and those that are not.

Starting from the first quarter of 1991, the scope of the survey has further been extended to cover Hong Kong's re-exports of China origin to all countries other than China.

The results for the third quarter and January-September 1994 are now available.

In value terms, $51,153 million of Hong Kong's total exports to China in the third quarter of 1994 were for outward processing, representing an increase of 24% over the third quarter of 1993.

The value of domestic exports to China for outward processing decreased by 1% to $11,593 million whilst the value of re-exports to China for outward processing grew by 34% to $39,560 million.

Over the same period of comparison, the value of imports from China related to outward processing increased by 29% to $104,452 million.

On the other hand, $122,209 million of Hong Kong's re-exports of China origin to all countries other than China were produced through outward processing in China, representing an increase of 17%.

In January-September 1994, $131,784 million of Hong Kong's total exports to China were for outward processing, representing an increase of 13% over January-September 1993.

The value of domestic exports to China for outward processing dropped by 6% to $31,365 million while the value of re-exports to China for outward processing grew by 20% to $100,419 million.

Over the same period of comparison, the value of imports from China related to outward processing increased by 24% to $262,609 million.

On the other hand, $305,232 million of Hong Kong's re-exports of China origin to all countries other than China were produced through outward processing in China, representing an increase of 15%.

The estimates for the third quarter and January-September 1994 and the corresponding changes over the same period in 1993 are summarised in the following table :-

ESTIMATED VALUE AND PROPORTION OF TRADE INVOLVING OUTWARD PROCESSING IN CHINA, 3RD QUARTER AND JANUARY-SEPTEMBER 1994

	3rd qtr. 1994 (HKD Mn.)	Percentage change over 3rd qtr. 1993 (%)	Jan-Sep 1994 (HKD Mn.)	Percentage change over Jan-Sep 1993 (%)
Total trade value * :				
Total exports to China	100,063	+14.7	278,180	+13.4
Domestic exports to China	15,721	- 2.3	43,197	- 5.1
Re-exports to China	84,342	+18.6	234,983	+17.6
Imports from China	130,943	+17.5	338,428	+16.3
Re-exports of China origin to all countries other than China	148,274	+15.1	375,003	+14.4
Estimated value involving outward processing in China :				
Total exports to China	51,153	+24.4	131,784	+13.0
Domestic exports to China	11,593	- 0.7	31,365	- 5.6
Re-exports to China	39,560	+34.4	100,419	+20.5
Imports from China	104,452	+28.9	262,609	+24.0
Re-exports of China origin to all countries other than China	122,209	+17.3	305,232	+15.1

Estimated proportion involving outward processing in China :

	3rd qtr. 1994 (%)	3rd qtr. 1993 (%)	Jan-Sep 1994 (%)	Jan-Sep 1993 (%)
Total exports to China	51.1	47.2	47.4	47.5
Domestic exports to China	73.7	72.6	72.6	73.0
Re-exports to China	46.9	41.4	42.7	41.7
Imports from China	79.8	72.8	77.6	72.8
Re-exports of China origin to all countries other than China	82.4	80.9	81.4	80.9

* The value excludes commodities and transactions not classified according to kind.

For the purpose of the survey, exports (domestic exports and re-exports) to China for outward processing refer to the exportation of raw materials or semi-manufactures from or through Hong Kong to China for processing with a contractual arrangement for subsequent re- importation of the processed goods into Hong Kong.

Imports from China related to outward processing refer to the importation of processed goods from China of which all or part of their raw materials or semi-manufactures have been under contractual arrangement exported from or through Hong Kong to China for processing.

Re-exports of China origin to all countries other than China produced through outward processing in China refer to those re-exports of which all or part of their raw materials or semi- manufactures have been exported from or through Hong Kong to China for processing with a contractual arrangement for subsequent re- importation of the processed goods into Hong Kong.

In interpreting the statistics, it should be noted that the value and proportion of imports from China and re-exports of China origin to all countries other than China involving outward processing in China refer to those of the entire goods instead of just the value added contributed by outward processing in China.

A sample of trade declarations in respect of Hong Kong's trade with China (domestic exports and re-exports to China, and imports from China) as well as Hong Kong's re-exports of China origin to all countries other than China is selected for enumeration to obtain the required information from the establishments concerned.

A spokesman for the Census and Statistics Department explained that under the internationally accepted system of recording trade flows, all movements of goods (except transhipments and goods-in-transit) across the border, whether for outward processing or not, are recorded as external trade.

Thus the movements of goods associated with outward processing are correctly included in the regular trade statistics.

The findings of the survey, however, facilitate a more informed analysis of the nature of Hong Kong-China trade. In this respect, the survey results are a useful supplement to the regular trade statistics.

The survey results will be included in the December 1994 issue of the "Hong Kong External Trade". The report will be on sale by the end of February at the Government Publications Centre, Queensway Government Offices, Low Block, ground floor, 66 Queensway, and at the Publications Section of the Census and Statistics Department, 19th floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai, at $86 a copy.

Enquiries on the survey results may be directed to the Trade Surveys and Research Section of the Census and Statistics Department on telephone 2582 5037.

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Business Prospects for 1995

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Manufacturers generally expect a mild increase in volume of orders in 1995 over 1994, according to the results of a recent Half-yearly Business Prospects Survey released today (Thursday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

For individual manufacturing industries, manufacturers in the electronic and electrical products and electrical machinery industries expect a significant increase in volume of orders, while manufacturers in the printing industry expect a mild increase in 1995 over 1994.

Manufacturers in the wearing apparel industry; textiles industry and fabricated metal products industry anticipate volume of orders in the first half of 1995 only to stabilise. However, some improvements in the orders position of these industries are expected in the second half of 1995.

In general, manufacturers expect capacity utilisation to remain stable in 1995 compared with 1994.

Profit margins, however, are generally anticipated to shrink in 1995 compared with a year ago.

An exception is the electronic and electrical products and electrical machinery industries where the majority of manufacturers expect an increase in the profit margins in 1995.

Exporters expect a moderate increase in both the values of domestic exports and re- exports in 1995 compared with last year.

Bankers are a bit more optimistic as a greater proportion of them look forward to a significant growth in exports in 1995.

Looking ahead, construction firms expect a significant increase in the volume of construction output in 1995 compared with 1994.

The Half-yearly Business Prospects Survey covered about 320 firms from major manufacturing industries, the import/export trades, the banking industry and the construction sector.

It collects views of firms on the short-term prospects of the various major business sectors covered and aims at providing a quick reference, with a minimum time lag, for assessing the short- term future economic performance of Hong Kong.

A spokesman for the department pointed out that in a survey of this nature, the results should be interpreted with caution as it was difficult to establish precisely the extent to which respondents' perception of the future accorded with the underlying trends.

The survey results are published in greater detail in the "Report on Half-yearly Business Prospects Survey, January 1995".

The report is now available for sale at $12 a copy at the Government Publications Centre, Low Block, ground floor, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong, or at the Census and Statistics Department Publications Section, 19th floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai. Regular subscription may also be arranged.

Enquiries about the survey results may be made of the General Economic Surveys Section of the Census and Statistics Department on telephone 2805 6641.

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Air quality report for January

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The Environmental Protection Department today (Thursday) released air quality information for last month.

A spokesman for the department said the purpose of the announcement was to keep the public informed of the air quality levels in the territory and to explain the measurements.

The announcement contains monitoring results from Mong Kok, Central/Western and Kwai Chung, which represent three important land use types in the territory :

* locations close to road traffic in built-up urban areas,
* combined commercial and residential districts, and
* districts close to industrial areas.

The department currently monitors air quality continuously at eight stations, including the three mentioned. Short-term measurement exercises are also undertaken as and where the need arises.

The reported air pollutants include sulphur dioxide (SO2), nitrogen dioxide (NO2), total suspended particulates (TSP) which comprise all sizes of dust particles, and the respirable fraction of the dust (RSP). All these pollutants can affect respiratory health in sufficient concentration.

Low wind speeds and limited vertical mixing on January 9 caused locally emitted pollutants to accumulate. High ambient concentrations of SO2 and NO2 were recorded at all three sites. At Mong Kok, the NO2 concentrations exceeded the 24-hour Air Quality Objective of 150 microgrammes per cubic metre.

The highest level of dust in the month was recorded on January 12. At Mong Kok, RSP levels exceeded the 24- hour Air Quality Objective value of 180 microgrammes per cubic metre.

The generally high dust levels were likely to be caused by the combined effects of local sources and northerly winds bringing in dust to the territory.

The gases and particles described originated from various sources. SO2 is mostly produced when fuels that contain sulphur are burned. NO2 is formed during combustion by the combination of nitrogen and oxygen, and by the atmospheric oxidation of nitric oxide (NO), also a product of combustion.

Vehicle exhaust is an important source of NO and NO2 in terms of impact on local air quality. It is also a major source of airborne particulate matter, especially the smaller respirable particles.

Diesel-engined vehicles such as taxis, public light buses, passenger coaches, franchised buses and light and heavy goods vehicles are the greatest contributor of particulate matter. Other sources include industry, furnaces and boilers, construction activities, the sea and the soil.

It is worth noting that while the weather and climate always affect the concentrations of pollutants in the air, the only sure way of reducing the levels is to reduce emissions from the man-made sources.

For further information on this air quality report, please contact Mr Raymond Leung on telephone 2594 6401.

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Electronics brings lively new dimension to Arts Festival

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The Chief Secretary, Mrs Anson Chan, tonight (Thursday) appreciated a special exhibition, with sculptures, drawings and photographs, not cast in bronze or stone or in static images, but in electronics.

More than 50 exhibits are on display covering computer installations, audio-visual installations, visual arts, networking and interaction installations, and video sculptures.

Officiating at the opening ceremony of the "Art and Electronics" exhibition held at the Hong Kong Arts Centre, Mrs Chan said local artists and even perhaps engineers in electronics would be greatly inspired by the work.

The exhibition, the first of its kind in Hong Kong, is being presented as part of the Arts Festival 1995.

"Few people are aware of the potential of the electronic media as a means of artistic expression. Significant advances in technology in the past few decades has made this possible.

"The creative arts have, as a result, become more pluralistic and lively," she said.

The exhibition is co-organised by the European Working Group for Culture and the Hong Kong Arts Centre.

"This is yet another excellent example of how our local arts associations can work together with their overseas counterparts to promote the development of arts in Hong Kong," Mrs Chan added.

End/Thursday, February 16, 1995

Conductive learning centre for mentally handicapped people

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The Chief Secretary, Mrs Anson Chan, today (Thursday) officiates at the opening ceremony of the Jockey Club Conductive Learning Centre of the Spastics Association of Hong Kong.

Having served Hong Kong for more than 30 years, the Spastics Association of Hong Kong provides rehabilitation services for mentally handicapped children and adults.

Conductive education was introduced by the association into Hong Kong in August last year. It is a kind of rehabilitation programme emphasising on training in everyday life activities, such as physical and mental training and social life skills.

The Jockey Club Conductive Learning Centre is the first of its kind in Southeast Asia. It is made up of two units: teaching unit and pre-school unit.

During the first four months of its operation, the pre-school unit has provided rehabilitation services to 30 children and more than 80 rehabilitation staff members have received training in the teaching unit.

Mrs Chan said: "The Social Welfare Department will subsidise the pre-school unit from October this year. After the demand is established, the Government hopes that in 1997-98, the centre will be fully subsidised."

End/Thursday, February 16, 1995

Tribute to Dr Sinclair

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The Council for the AIDS Trust Fund at its meeting today (Thursday) noted with sadness the death of Dr Michael Sinclair on February 14.

Members expressed their admiration for his important and courageous work as an AIDS educator and spokesman.

They also spoke of their appreciation for his valuable contribution as a member of the council's Publicity and Public Education Sub-Committee.

End/Thursday, February 16, 1995

Inter-school contest encourages acceptance of disabled

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The 1994-95 Inter-School Painting/Bookmark Design and Essay Competitions prize-giving ceremony will be held at Lok Sin Tong Wong Chung Ming Secondary School at 11 am on Saturday (February 18).

The Assistant Director of Education (Services), Mr Tse Kum-shing, will officiate at the presentation ceremony.

The competitions on "Equal Opportunities and Full Participation a Better Tomorrow of All" had attracted 3,708 entries from 218 primary and secondary schools.

Organised by the Education Department in collaboration with the Committee on Public Education on Rehabilitation and funded by the Health and Welfare Branch, the contests are aimed at cultivating understanding and acceptance of disabled persons.

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Attention news editors:

You are invited to send representatives to cover the 1994-95 Inter-school Painting/Bookmark Design and Essay Competitions prize-giving ceremony to be held at Lok Sin Tong Wong Chung Ming Secondary School, 161 Lok Sin Road, Wong Tai Sin, at 11 am on Saturday (February 18).

End/Thursday, February 16, 1995

Students compete in Chinese calligraphy contest

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The following is issued on behalf of the Committee on Home-School Co-operation:

The final round of the home-school co-operation Chinese calligraphy competition will be held at Queen's College on Saturday (February 18).

Forty winners -- 20 each from the primary and secondary sections -- will demonstrate their Chinese calligraphy skills in the event.

It is part of a series of promotion activities organised by the Home-School Co- operation Committee's Working Group on Publicity and Promotion.

The competition is aimed at cultivating artistic talent of the young, enhancing home-school co-operation and encouraging schools to set up parent-teacher associations.

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Attention News Editors:

You are invited to send representatives to cover the final round of the home-school co-operation Chinese calligraphy competition to be held at 10.30 am on Saturday (February 18) at Queen's College, 120 Causeway Road, Causeway Bay.

End/Thursday, February 16, 1995

Education programme on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV

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The Department of Health is launching a new series of education programme on sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and AIDS.

A spokesman for the department today (Thursday) said both STD and HIV infection would be transmitted through the same route and that the presence of STD would actually act as a cofactor in HIV infection.

He said the new education package was a joint effort of the department's Social Hygiene Service and AIDS Unit.

Members of the public can call the computerised AIDS hotline - 2780 2211 - and listen to seven pre-recorded messages on different types of STD and obtain addresses and registration hours of Social Hygiene Clinics, he said.

The caller can also obtain a fax copy of the messages, or choose to talk to a counsellor of the AIDS Unit if he is worried about contracting the HIV, the spokesman added.

On print materials, a new comic book aimed at arousing awareness of STD and AIDS will be distributed at the Social Hygiene Clinics.

To promote safer sex, condoms, together with a new condom flyer, are available free at all Social Hygiene and Methadone Clinics.

Two new videos on STD prevention and needle- sharing and HIV will also be shown at the Social Hygiene and Methadone Clinics in the second quarter this year, the spokesman said.

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Integration of patient service and research in fight against cancer

* * * * *

Mrs Patten stressed today (Thursday) the importance of integrating preventive education, curative treatment and research activities to fight cancer, the number one cause of death in Hong Kong.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony of the Sir Y K Pao Centre for Cancer and the Lady Pao Children's Cancer Centre, Mrs Patten said cancer took away 9,000 lives each year.

"Much progress has been made over the past two decades in alleviating the pain and suffering caused by cancer. Complete cures can now be expected in many cases.

"But, the rising incidence of cancer among those aged over 40 and a rapidly growing elderly population means that we must not be complacent," she said.

The opening of the two new medical centres in the Prince of Wales Hospital marks a major step in the combat against cancer.

The Hong Kong Cancer Institute of the Chinese University long had the aim of developing two centres for adults and children in which patient services and research activities could be housed.

"The Sir Y K Pao Centre for Cancer serving adult patients and the Lady Pao Children's Cancer Centre will turn this concept of service integration into reality," Mrs Patten added.

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Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

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	$ million	Time (hours)	Cumulative change ($million)
Opening balance in the account	1,270	0930	+1,124
Closing balance in the account	2,148	1000	+2,124
Change attributable to :		1100	+2,254
Money market activity	+2,258	1200	+2,258
LAF today	-1,380	1500	+2,258
		1600	+2,258

LAF rate 4.25% bid/6.25% offer TWI 120.9 *-0.1* 16.2.95

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes/Hong Kong Government bonds				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	5.93	15 months	2605	6.35	99.17	7.17
1 month	6.14	21 months	2611	6.90	99.41	7.39
3 months	6.45	29 months	3707	6.95	98.77	7.65
6 months	6.73	35 months	3801	8.00	100.71	7.87
12 months	7.02	58 months	5912	8.15	99.89	8.34

Total turnover of bills and bonds - $18,633 million

Closed February 16, 1995

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