



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Concern about suicide deaths

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The government is concerned about the increasing number of suicide deaths in recent years and points out that a range of social welfare services is already available to help those in need, the Director of Social Welfare, Mr Andrew Leung Kin-pong, said today (Saturday).

"Family caseworkers and medical social workers are ready to offer counselling and to help needy individuals or families with different support services such as financial assistance, accommodation and day or residential care service according to their needs," Mr Leung said.

"For the adolescents, school social workers, outreaching social workers, children and youth centre workers can also provide counselling and support to students or young people in or outside school," he added.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the new centre of the Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong at Choi Hung Estate, Mr Leung said suicide is a very complex problem and is caused by various reasons including social, psychological, emotional and situational factors.

Noting that the suicide rate among the elderly aged 65 and above is relatively high, totalling 199, 223 and 210 deaths in 1993, 1994 and 1995 respectively, Mr Leung said the high rate warranted special attention.

The Government set up a Working Group on Care for the Elderly in November 1993 which examined, among others, the elderly suicide problem.

He said that the problem of teenage suicide is of equal concern to the Government, adding that the known deaths among the age group of 10 to 19 in the last three years were 27, 34 and 23 respectively.

A Working Group on Services for Youth at Risk was also set up in July 1993 to examine the problem, among other major youth problems.

Believing timely counselling and support could help prevent a suicidal act, Mr Leung said that hotline service had a significant role to play.

He appealed to those who are in trouble to seek immediate help from social workers and professional counsellors and to members of the public, whose relatives or friends showing signs of depression, to approach these professionals for assistance.

"By doing this, you may help save a life," he stressed.

The Director also praised the Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong for setting up the first hotline service for people with suicidal thought.

End

Mission Hill morning walk trail in Sham Shui Po opens today

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Morning walkers in Sham Shui Po district will be able to enjoy a more beautiful and comfortable environment with the opening of the Mission Hill morning walk trail today (Saturday).

The \$2.3 million improvement project is part of the improvement programme under Home Affairs Department's Urban Environmental Improvement (UEI) scheme. Initiated by Sham Shui Po District Office in 1993, the project will up-grade the morning walk facilities in Mission Hill, a favourite morning walk spot for the 120,000 nearby residents.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Mission Hill morning walk trail, Director of Home Affairs Mrs Shelley Lau said a total of \$15 million under the UEI scheme had been allocated since 1994 for improvement works in nine urban districts.

Improvement works of the Mission Hill morning walk trail include paving of foot paths and staircases, erecting of railings, construction of rain-shelters and sitting-out and 'Tai-Chi' areas, Mrs Lau said. In view of the size of the area covered, the improvement projects are being carried out in stages.

Today also saw the laying of foundation stone for a Chinese-style pavilion in the sitting-out area at the southern side of Mission Hill. The \$500,000 project is expected to be completed in mid-1997 to further improve the environment. Another \$500,000 has been set aside to pave smaller foot paths near the top of the hill and construct more fitness facilities.

Of the \$3.3 million already spent on these projects, \$2.5 million is allocated from the UEI scheme with the balance of \$800,000 coming from Urban Council funds.

UEI projects were aimed at improving the living environment in urban areas. These projects usually included improvement works for local roads and paths, amenity planting and other environmental improvement projects identified and endorsed by the district boards.

A total of 30 UEI projects costing \$8 million have been undertaken by HAD's Urban Works Section in 1994-95 and 1995-96. Of these, 5 projects worth about \$1.7 million were carried out in the Sham Shui Po district.

Other officiating guests at today's ceremony included Director of Lands Mr Robert Pope and Sham Shui Po District Officer Mr John Leung.

End

New office to raise sheltered workshops productivity

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The Government has set up a new office - the Marketing Consultancy Office (Rehabilitation) - in October this year to raise the productivity of sheltered workshops.

This was stated by the Deputy Director (Services) of Social Welfare, Mrs Patricia Chu Yeung Pak-yu, when she officiated at the opening ceremony of the Wai Ji Christian Service's Hor Ping Sheltered Workshop cum Hostel and Yuet Ping Supported Hostel in Yuen Long today (Saturday).

"We hope the new office could introduce new management concept for sheltered workshops so as to strengthen their competitiveness and to raise income of individual workers," Mrs Chu said.

She said the Government had attached great importance to the provision of employment training for people with a disability in recent years.

The Wai Ji Christian Service, established in 1979, has been providing a wide range of rehabilitation services to meet the needs of disabled people.

End

English version for hiking safety booklet now available

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The English version of a booklet outlining basic safety hints and guidelines for hikers is now available free for members of the public at a number of locations throughout the territory.

A total of 5,000 copies of the English "Safety Hints on Hiking" booklet is produced. The Chinese version, which was launched in May, was well received and more than 70,000 copies had been distributed.

Both versions are obtainable at Agriculture and Fisheries Department (AFD) managed visitor centres at country parks in Aberdeen, Tai Mo Shan, Sai Kung, Clear Water Bay and Shing Mun; as well as the Lions Nature Education Centre, Tsiu Hang, Sai Kung.

They are also available on request at the public enquiry service centres of all district offices.

AFD country park management officer, Dr Yeung Ka-ming, hoped that the English version of the booklet would also benefit part of the community, especially those safety-conscious hikers who may not be able to read Chinese.

He said the main objective of producing the pocket-sized booklet was to promote safety in hiking and hill walking at country parks.

The booklet comprises several sections, including basic guidelines and hints, hiking preparations, points to note during journeys, potential dangers, methods of seeking assistance in accidents and a list of useful telephone numbers.

Although special techniques are not required for hiking, proper training and adequate preparation would always help hikers to cope with unpredictable changes in the countryside.

He hoped that hikers would study the booklet carefully and make reference on other relevant written materials and the most up-to-date maps when planning their journeys.

The printing cost of the booklets was sponsored by the Friends of the Country Parks, Countryside Heritage Society of Hong Kong and International Lions Clubs District 303.

End

Students to be quizzed on careers

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Over 140,000 students from 300 secondary schools in Hong Kong will be tested next week to see how much they know about different careers and education opportunities.

"The 15th Careers Quiz, an annual event organised by the Labour Department's Careers Advisory Service, aims at enhancing students' awareness of the importance of choosing a suitable career as well as encouraging them to actively look for information on careers and further educational opportunities," Senior Labour Officer, Mrs Louisa Poon, said today (Saturday).

The Quiz, to be held from November 4 to 8, requires participating Secondary 3 to Secondary 5 students to answer 50 multiple choice questions in 30 minutes.

They will be asked questions on careers information, tertiary educational opportunities, technical and vocational training, employment legislation and services offered by the Labour Department.

Winning schools and students will be awarded a total of about 1,000 prizes sponsored by Pentax camera, Cerruti 1881 sunglasses and Laser Computer Ltd. The answer sheets of the Quiz will be processed by the Information Technology Services Department (ITSD).

Mrs Poon expressed appreciation of the generous donations by the sponsor and the tremendous technical support by ITSD.

"The Career Quiz is an associated activity of the 7th Education and Careers Expo to be held from February 20 to 23, 1997, at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre.

"The quiz questions will be displayed at the Expo and members of the public are welcome to try the questions there," she said.

End

Autumn fair attracts thousands of people

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Visitors enjoyed a relaxed and day of fun at the Autumn Fair of the Correctional Services Department (CSD) at Stanley today (Saturday).

The event, popular among locals as well as tourists, was held at Stanley Football Field near to Stanley Prison.

This 44th Autumn Fair of the Department has been especially memorable this year because it was the last time the fair to be held at the football field soon to be converted into a medium security prison.

A variety of quality products made by inmates of various penal institutions were on sale at more than 30 stalls. The products including arts and handicraft items, toys, rattan and wooden furniture.

Proceeds raised at the fair are for charity purposes.

There were also games stalls and food stalls.

Apart from making bargain purchases, visitors enjoyed throughout the day a rich programme of entertainment and performances, including marching display by inmates of Tai Tam Gap Correctional Institution and the Cape Collinson Correctional Institution, dog show of CSD's Dog Unit, Wushu performance and parachuting display.

End

Flushing water cut in Tai Po

The flushing water supply to some premises in Tai Po (South) will be temporarily suspended from 2 pm on November 5 (Tuesday) to 2 am on November 7 (Thursday) for conversion to salt water flushing.

The suspension will affect all premises in Kwong Fuk Estate, Wang Fuk Court, Nam Wan Road south of Tai Po Tai Wo Road, Plover Cove Road, Po Wu Lane, Tung Mau Square, Tung Sau Square, Tung Fat Square, Tung Cheong Street, Luk Heung Lane, Kwong Fuk Road, Po Heung Street, Po Yick Street, Sui On Street, Yan Hing Street, Fu Shin Street, Tsing Yuen Street, Hei Yuen Street, Yan Wo Lane, Pak Shing Street, Shung Tak Street, On Fu Road, Wan Yan Street, Nam Shing Street, Wai Yi Street, Po Heung Square, Tai Wing Lane, Heung Sze Wui Square, Heung Sze Wui Street, Kwong Fuk Lane, Kwong Fuk Square, Tai Ming Lane, Tai Kwong Lane, Wan Tau Street, Wan Tau Square, Wan Tau Kok Lane, Tai Po Market Station, Uptown Plaza, Elegance Garden, Pan Chung Road, Yat Nga Court, Wan Tau Tong Estate, Tak Nga Court, King Nga Court, Classical Garden, Ma Wo Road, Ma Chung Road, Kam Shan Road, Kam Shek New Village and Shek Lin Road.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

	<u>\$ Million</u>	<u>Time (Hours)</u>	<u>Cumulative Change (\$ Million)</u>
Opening Balance in the account	2,959	09:30	-400
Closing Balance in the account	2,459	10:00	-400
Change Attributable to:		11:00	-400
Money Market Activity	+400	11:30	-400
Laf Today	- 900		

Laf Rate 4% Bid/6% Offer TWI 124.8 *-0.1* 2.11.96

End

Governor's "Letter To Hong Kong" broadcast

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Following is the text of the Governor, Mr Christopher Patten's "Letter to Hong Kong" broadcast on RTHK today (Sunday):

Just over a week ago, I opened an excellent exhibition in Edinburgh which showed what Hong Kong was like in the past, what it is like today, and what it could be like in the future. There were photographs, architects' models, videos and even some bamboo scaffolding. I was specially pleased that the exhibition homed in on two aspects of our life. First, it showed how ordinary people live - the development in public housing from the simplest housing blocks which replaced the squatter settlements destroyed by fire to today's more comfortable and roomy public Housing Authority flats. Second, it showed some of our projects for the future - the ones that are going to give us one of the finest urban infrastructures in the world. The bridges. Renewal projects for old, run down areas of the city. The extension to the Convention Centre, where next summer's handover ceremony will be held.

But of all the exhibits, one made a particularly strong visual impact on me. It was a blown-up photograph of the narrow end of a Mark 1 housing block, with the landings packed with people. Apparently, it was shot in Wong Tai Sin in 1965 during Chinese New Year. The people were all looking down towards the street as a parade of lion dancers went past.

It's a very striking photo. Full of action, and laughter, and the evidence which social history draws on. The poor clothing. The rough, unfinished cement on the walls. The graffiti - far more than you'd see in a housing estate today. The cheerful sense of community solidarity - working people and their families taken out of themselves for a moment by some happy spectacle.

The people in the photo are every age, from grand-parents to babes in arms. They are not rich, that's for sure. They are city strivers, street sharp I'd imagine, and they probably needed to be to survive and prosper in a tougher economic climate.

So what would have concerned them? What would they have worried about. Rice bowl issues I'd guess. Their welfare. The roof over their heads: was it now safe from fire and landslip? How could they fit granny into the flat? What chance of the kids getting secondary education? How to deal with that hacking cough they'd had for years? Would they get a wage rise this year for making more plastic flowers and toys? How long would water-rationing last this year? Would it be possible to get a place on the bus for an outing to the beach at the weekend?

I doubt whether many of them worried much about the subjects which seem to cause so much controversy these days - freedom of speech, the rule of law, accountable government. Life was a bit more basic. It tends to be the case everywhere that economic and social development creates its own political agenda. Look elsewhere in Asia. And I suppose that 1997 contributes to this process, too.

Most of the people in that photo must still be alive. Not all of them, of course, will be in Hong Kong. Some will have emigrated. But I should think the majority are still here. And still worrying about welfare issues.

But those issues will have changed a bit. How to afford to buy a flat here on the sort of income which would make it pretty straightforward in a lot of other places? How to get granny into a specially built flat of her own or even a care and attention home? How to get retrained to move from a factory job to an office one? How to brush up your English or Mandarin? How to help your student children pay their way through college? Can you manage a holiday in Malaysia this year, or a trip to visit relatives in the States?

Naturally, there are still some basic needs which have to be met. But as absolute standards have risen for nearly everyone, the social agenda has become more complicated and more sophisticated. That doesn't mean that solving our social problems has suddenly become cheaper. In the debate that's going on elsewhere about Hong Kong's future needs, I'm struck by the fact that no one seems to think we're a welfare state which can strip down its social programmes. We seem to have put all that nonsense behind us.

The people in the photo are likely overall to have rather different concerns and worries than they had all those years ago. That's because of what I mentioned earlier - the politics of progress, and it's also because of 1997, or rather some of the things that are said about 1997.

Is that a groundless assertion? Is that importing politics into areas where politics was never previously thought about, never discussed. That's sometimes the charge. "Forget about that freedom stuff. No one is interested." Not true. The big survey that was carried out by one of our universities this summer suggested that fewer than 1 in 10 of those questioned worried about the effect on their standard of living in 1997. But almost 6 in 10 worried about the effect that 1997 would have on their political freedoms and their civil liberties, and about the prevalence of corruption in Hong Kong. Another poll this week showed a similar order of priorities.

So what do you conclude? Most families have worries and ambitions about day-to-day living. But in most cases those are dwarfed by the questions they raise about the quality of our society and the quality of their lives.

I hope that in due course events, experience will give decent and convincing answers to those questions. But there are one or two things that could be said and done hopefully in the meantime.

It would help for a start if we could hear some reaffirmations of the promises and values contained in the Joint Declaration instead of statements which cast doubt on those pledges to Hong Kong.

It would help, too, if pledges to work for and stand by the Joint Declaration didn't slide off so often into conditional clauses and qualifications.

And it would help as well if we could be sure that all shades of opinion will be welcome to play a part in working out Hong Kong's future. The real question you know isn't whether the present government will co-operate with a few appointed politicians; the question is whether the future government will co-operate with those men and women who most clearly enjoy by every fair test public favour and support. I hope that happens. If it doesn't, then Hong Kong will lose out. Everyone will lose out.

Hong Kong has grown up. And grown-ups should be treated like grown-ups, wherever they live - especially if that's what they've been promised.

End

Press statement on stationing of PLA advance personnel

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A government spokesman today (Sunday) has the following response to the statement made by Cheng Shousan, Deputy Director of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office:

"The JLG has the first round of preliminary exchanges at the defence expert talks on October 24 and 25 on the Chinese side's proposal to station PLA advance personnel in Hong Kong before July 1, 1997.

"We have asked the Chinese side a number of specific questions and are awaiting detailed answers from them before we can take the discussions forward.

"No decision has been made and no agreement has been reached."

On the question of the Garrison Law, the spokesman said he hopes that the Chinese side will take into account the views of all sectors in the Hong Kong community before the Law is finalised.

End

\$255 million Lotteries Fund approved

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A total of \$255,377,825 has been approved from the Lotteries Fund to finance various social welfare service programmes during the third quarter of 1996, a spokesman for the Social Welfare Department said today (Sunday).

"Of the amount, \$13,452,625 are earmarked to family and child welfare services, \$186,397,500 to elderly and medical social services, \$50,008,400 to rehabilitation services, \$4,862,600 to youth services, \$78,900 to community development services and \$577,800 to social welfare support programmes," the spokesman said.

The Lotteries Fund was established for the purpose of financing, by way of a grant, loan or an advance, the operation or development of social welfare services and medical or educational projects with a welfare content.

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Rat prevention campaign launched

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The Department of Health is now launching a territory-wide education campaign to remind the public of the importance of rat prevention and to provide them with some basic rat prevention knowledge.

A spokesman for the Department said today (Sunday) that the campaign, bearing the theme "A clean environment prevents rats", was organised with the sponsorship of the Urban Council and the Regional Council.

"Rats are carriers of infectious diseases such as plague and murine typhus. They can also indirectly transmit gastro-intestinal diseases such as food poisoning.

"Besides, rats can gnaw on home fittings and furniture causing financial loss and may occasionally bite people of lower mobility," he said.

The spokesman added that the fundamental method in rodent control was to improve the sanitation of the environment.

During the campaign period, printed educational handouts such as posters, advisory letters and leaflets will be distributed to building management offices, incorporated owners and mutual aid committees to appeal for their adoption of rat prevention measures.

The printed materials will also be sent to the District Environmental Health Offices of the Urban Services Department and the Regional Services Department, District Offices of the Home Affairs Department, the Housing Department and the Education Department for wider publicity.

Members of the public can also make use of the new 24-hour telephone hotline 2380 2580 to listen to rat prevention messages in Cantonese and to obtain the information through facsimile. They can also choose to listen to other health educational topics such as environmental hygiene, food hygiene and food safety.

Further advice or assistance on rat prevention can be obtained from the Pest Control Units of the respective District Environmental Health Offices of the two municipal services departments.

Meanwhile, the spokesman advised the public to take the following precautionary measures to prevent rat infestations:

- * Keep the premises clean. Store all food properly and put all refuse and food remains into a proper dustbin so as to leave no food for rats.
- * Seal off any holes on ceilings, walls and floors. Inspect regularly the bottom and back of bulky furniture and concealed places so as to eliminate breeding places for rats promptly.
- * Keep drain gratings in good repair. Render all ventilation openings rat-proof by installing strong wire nettings with narrow gauges to keep rats away from the premises. Affix metal plates to the lower part of wooden doors to keep away rats.

End

Company fined for unlawful dismissal of pregnant employee

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The Labour Department today (Sunday) warned employers not to dismiss any female employee who had given notice of her intention to take maternity leave.

Advanced Creation Enterprises Limited was recently fined \$30,000 at the Eastern Magistracy for sacking a pregnant employee after she had submitted a notice of intention to take maternity leave to the company.

"Under the Employment Ordinance, a female employee is protected from termination of her employment from the date on which she gives notice of her intention to take maternity leave to the date on which she is due to return to work, if she has completed 12 weeks' service with the same employer," acting Senior Labour Officer (Prosecutions), Mrs Tonia Leung, said.

A female employee who has worked for the same employer under a continuous contract for not less than 26 weeks immediately before the expected date of her commencement of maternity leave is entitled to maternity leave.

She is also eligible for maternity leave pay if she has worked continuously for the same employer for not less than 40 weeks immediately before the expected date of her commencement of maternity leave and if she has no more than two surviving children.

Mrs Leung said that failure to comply with these provisions could incur a maximum fine of \$100,000.

End

Postage-prepaid Christmas cards

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The Postmaster General, Mr Robert Footman, announced today (Sunday) that two sets of Christmas greeting cards will be issued on November 12, 1996.

These Christmas Greeting Cards, which are prepaid in postage and to be sold in sets of six, were designed by Touch Media and printed by the Government Printer, Hong Kong.

The set for local use will be sold at \$21 while the other set for sending to any overseas destinations by airmail will be sold at \$30.

The design of the cards is based on a reproduction of the Christmas stamps released in 1990.

Mr Footman said that the postage-prepaid Christmas greeting cards would provide a convenient and more environmental friendly alternative to people sending Christmas cards in envelopes.

"First, these cards obviate the need for stamps and envelopes. Furthermore, they cards are printed on paper made from wood pulp derived from renewable forest, thus helping to preserve our tropical rain forests," he noted.

As from November 5 (Tuesday), the Christmas greeting cards will be on display for the advance information of the public at the General Post Office, Tsim Sha Tsui Post Office, Tsuen Wan Post Office and Sha Tin Central Post Office.

No special postmark will be introduced but on the first day of issue, hand-back service will be provided at all post offices to these greeting cards.

End

New post office for Kennedy Town

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A new Kennedy Town post office will be open in a week's time to replace the existing one, the Postmaster General, Mr Robert Footman, announced today (Sunday).

The new office, located at Shops C and D, Chi Ping Building, ground floor, 38 Hau Wo Street, Kennedy Town, will open at 9.30 am on November 11 and the old one at Shops A2 to 3, ground floor, 34 Forbes Street, Kennedy Town, will be close for business at 1 pm on Saturday (November 9).

The business hours and telephone number of the new office will remain the same.

A special handback service will be available at the new Kennedy Town Post Office on the day of opening.

Unregistered fully postage prepaid covers prepared privately, and bearing the superscription "first day cover" and a local address, will be accepted over the counter, impressed with the normal post office datestamp and handed back to the person presenting them.

End

Radio programme to promote teachers' image

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A new radio programme on "Respect Our Teachers and Love Our Students" will be broadcast from Tuesday (November 5).

An Education Officer, Mrs Lau Tam Lai-yi, said: "The programme is aimed at arousing awareness in respecting our teachers and loving our students, and promoting teachers' image."

The programme is jointly organised by the Education Department, Commercial Radio I and Sing Tao Limited.

Its target audience is teachers, students and parents.

Mrs Lau said that the programme, in the form of radio drama, will start with a song and end with a proverb with contents based on real experience and touching stories of teachers, students and parents. The programme will be performed by celebrities from different sectors while the teachers, students and parents involved will also be interviewed on their feelings.

During the programme, the audience can phone in to answer questions and be awarded gift sets, she added.

The three-minute programme will be broadcast on Commercial Radio I in the morning between 6 and 9 am and repeated in the evening between 7 and 9 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays between November 5, 1996 and May 1, 1997.

The broadcast stories will be published in Sing Tao Daily on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Enquiries on the programme and contributions should be directed to Education Department's Teacher Image Promotion Unit at Room 1404, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, or by phone on 2892 5783 or by fax to 2891 2593.

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