HKGIS 香港政府新聞處

DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Friday, June 15, 1973

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Friday, June 15, 1973

IMPROVED BUS SERVICES FOR THE NEW TERRITORIES

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Bus services in the New Territories are to be reshaped and expanded to cope with the increasing population and demand for services.

At the same time, the fare structure for KMB routes in the New Territories will be revised to allow for a number of increases and reductions.

The changes will come into effect on July 16 under an order by the Governor-in-Council which is published in today's gazette.

The plans for reshaping and expanding bus routes in the New Territories were produced by the Kowloon Motor Bus Company, in consultation with the Transport Department, and are supported by the Heung Yee Kuk.

As from July 16, the number of bus routes will be increased from 36 to 48 and the frequency on most routes will be stepped up. Another 91 double deckers and three single deckers will be added to the NT fleet of 226 buses, making a total of 320 (205 single deckers and 115 double deckers).

These vehicles are already available and no buses will need to be withdrawn from urban routes.

In addition, two long-distance express services will be introduced from Kowloon to Yuen Long and Sheung Shui. These routes will be served by a new type of double deck coach with more room and more comfortable seats.

The coaches will be able to carry a maximum of 65 passengers, but no standing passengers will be permitted.

Work is now in progress to remove overhanging branches from roadside trees to enable the double deck coaches to pass through.

/Commenting .....

Commenting on the fare revision, a government spokesman said the aim was to "rationalise" bus fares in the New Territories.

There would be 141 increases in fares and 14 reductions while 44 would remain unchanged, he said.

The average increase will be 10 cents. The highest increase will be 50 cents while the highest reduction in fare will be 40 cents.

"These changes will mean that KMB ceases to operate its New Territories service at a loss of about $4.5 million."

An up-to-date schedule of services for both Kowloon and the New Territories giving full details of the fare revisions will be published in a "Gazette Extraordinary" on Monday (June 18).

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NO CAUSE FOR ALARM OVER RICE SUPPLIES

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The Commerce and Industry Department said today there is no reason for the public to feel alarmed over the present position regarding rice supplies.

A spokesman for the department pointed out that Hong Kong had never been solely dependent on rice supplies from Thailand, but also imported from China, Australia and the United States.

"As China is our nearest supplier, and China rice is particularly popular here, it would be quite natural for imports from China to increase, if supplies from other sources are curtailed," the spokesman said.

He emphasised that Hong Kong rice importers could obtain supplies from any part of the world.

Hong Kong's annual requirements -- in the region of 340,000 tons -- were only "a drop in the ocean" compared with other countries where rice is the staple food, the spokesman said.

"We are confident, therefore, that supplies can be maintained at a satisfactory level.

He added that the government exercised stringent control over the rice trade to ensure that the control scheme is not abused and prices are maintained at a reasonable level.

At the same time, however, there was currently a world-wide shortage which had caused rice prices to increase sharply, and this must inevitably affect Hong Kong.

However, increases elsewhere to some extent could be "cushioned" because of the stocks that importers were required to maintain under the control scheme.

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SIXTY PERCENT OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

TO RECEIVE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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The Secretary of the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee, Mr. S.F. Bailey, said today that some 60 percent of the students at the two universities would be receiving financial assistance by the time the new tuition fees are fully operative in 1978.

Speaking at a luncheon of the Kowloon North Rotary Club, Mr. Bailey said that already the percentage of the total student body who were assisted under the student finance scheme had risen from its original 33 per cent in 1969 to 54 per cent during the current academic year.

He added that grants awarded under the scheme now averaged $1,245 a year for each of the 2,967 students assisted in this way, while interest-free loans provided to 3,196 students averaged out at $2,890 each.

"Moreover the way the scheme is organised we can change the figures whenever we want to," he pointed out. "We already feed in a cost-of-living element into the loan allocations. We can raise or lower the amounts according to the students' actual resources. And whenever the fees change we can run this into the calculations too, and go on providing the assistance actually needed whatever happens to the fees.

"It is because of this that we can say, quite categorically, and have been saying for some time, that no student who really cannot afford the new fees in full will have to pay the new fees in full, and those who cannot afford them at all will not have to pay them at all.

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"The only students who will suffer - if suffering is the right word - will be the wealthier students who can afford to pay. And even they will still be getting a substantial subsidy of roughly $13,000 per year which comes from the fact that the new full tuition fee will still only be about 12 percent of the actual cost."

Explaining the background to the fee increases, which would only affect new students starting courses next year, Mr. Bailey pointed out that the fees being charged today - and which would go on being charged for some students until 1978 - were set 12 years ago.

"No one," he added, "needs to be reminded that in the last 12 years costs - and incomes - have risen somewhat. Costs AND incomes."

He stressed that tuition fees were decided by the universities themselves, and not by the government or the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee. The University Councils had to be reasonably convinced it was the right thing to do before altering them.

Referring to the Joint Universities Committee on Student Finance, he remarked that it would be fair to say the student aid scheme was managed mainly by university people and that students - who were chosen by the student unions and not by himself or the Vice-Chancellors - made up half of them.

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ELEVATED ROAD FOR ARGYLE STREET

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The intersection at Argyle Street and Waterloo Road will have a new look by April 1975 with the addition of an elevated road which will run above the existing Princess Margaret Road flyover.

By then, traffic will be carried on three separate levels -- on the ground and the two flyovers -- without interference.

When completed, the 1600-foot long elevated road will greatly relieve traffic congestion at the junction of Argyle Street, Waterloo Road and Princess Margaret Road.

The three-lane elevated road, costing more than $20 million, will provide a free flowing facility for through traffic along Argyle Street in both directions.

All major turning movements will be provided for at ground level and, together with pedestrian crossings, will be controlled by a comprehensive traffic signal installation.

Tenders for the project are now being called and the work should start in August and take about 21 months to complete.

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Note to Editors: Photographs of a model of the elevated roadway are boxed today.

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20 M.P.H. SPEED LIMIT ON LANTAU

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Speed restrictions will be introduced for the first time on Lantau Island starting from Monday (June 18).

With effect from 10 a.m. on that day, vehicles travelling along certain sections of South Lantau Road and Tai O Road will be limited to a speed of 20 miles an hour.

A spokesman for the Transport Department explained that various parts of the island roads were narrow and steep with sharp bends, and it was necessary to impose a speed limit for safety reasons, especially where the roads pass through villages.

The sections of road affected pass through villages at Pui O, Tong Fuk and Shui Hau and cover a total distance of about 2½ miles.

Two other sections leading from the concourses at Mui Wo and Tai O are included because they are busy pedestrian ways near ferries.

At the beginning of this month, special measures were introduced to restrict the number of vehicles entering island to prevent the overcrowding of the limited road system on Lantau.

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LANDSLIDE BUILDING RE-OPENED

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Another building in the Kotewall Road area damaged in the landslide last June has been declared safe for occupation -- leaving only 21, Po Shan Road and half of Block one of Emerald Gardens still to be reopened.

The building is Skyline Mansion at 51, Conduit Road.

In a statement issued today, the Principal Government Building Surveyor said that the repair and reconstruction works to the building had been satisfactorily completed.

The stabilisation work to the hillside at the rear and side has also progressed to the stage where it is considered that the building can be safely occupied.

The notice of expiry of the closure order was posted on the building at 3 p.m. today.

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LEARNING TO SWIM - URBAN COUNCIL STYLE

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The Urban Council announced today that swimming courses will again be organised this summer at four of the public swimming pools managed by the council.

A spokesman for the Urban Council said today that this year's scheme is basically designed to cater for office and factory workers and young people who do not have other opportunities of taking swimming lessons.

No tuition fee will be charged this year as the council considers the scheme is a 'commitment' to the people of Hong Kong.

"Three main types of swimming courses will be offered this summer," he continued, "a beginners' course for non-swimmers; an intermediate course for those who are not strong swimmers but who can swim about 25 metres; and an advanced course for swimmers who can swim 100 metres free-style."

Swimming classes will be given either at Lei Cheng Uk, Kowloon Tsai or Kwun Tong swimming pools in Kowloon or Victoria Park swimming pool on Hong Kong.

"Courses will be provided in two separate series, the first of which will start on June 25 and the second on July 30. Each course will last for five weeks and participants are required to attend three 45-minute sessions each week," he said.

Application forms are obtainable at all public swimming pools and City District Offices. Completed forms should be handed in person to one of the four swimming pools of the applicant's choice.

More than 1,000 people attended the Urban Council's 'learn-to-swim' courses last year, which had an 82 per cent success rating. This year it is intended to give swimming instruction to about 1,900 people.

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NEW STADIUM IN KOWLOON TO BE OPENED

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The first sports stadium in Kowloon to be operated by the Urban Council will be opened by Mr. A. de O. Sales tomorrow (Saturday).

Formerly known as the Boundary Street Sports Ground, the site was converted into a stadium at a cost of $1,218,000 and renamed Mong Kok Stadium.

Tomorrow's ceremony will include a symbolic "kick-off" to mark the start of the Urban Council's "Summer Youth Soccer League '73" in which 30 teams will take part.

The stadium has seating capacity for 11,800 people, and it is the council's second stadium, the first being the Hong Kong Stadium on the Island.

The Mong Kok stadium is expected to alleviate greatly the pressure on the Hong Kong Stadium for professional football matches and other sports.

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Note to Editors: You are welcome to send a reporter/ photographer to cover the opening which is to take place at 3.00 p.m. tomorrow (Saturday).

The stadium is situated between Boundary Street and Flower Market Road.

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ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL WORKSHOPS TO BE EXPANDED

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The workshops and apprentice training facilities at the Electrical and Mechanical Office in Caroline Hill are to be expanded.

The project involves the construction of a single storey extension block and a five-storey building. Preliminary work on the project is expected to begin in the middle of next month.

This phase of the work will involve the demolition of a number of temporary brick buildings within the compound of the Caroline Hill workshop. At present they are used as offices and small workshops.

The site cleared will then be available for the expansion project. The single storey building will form an extension to the existing vehicle repair workshop and the five-storey block will house additional workshops and an expanded apprentice training workshop.

The new buildings will be constructed as soon as piling works are completed.

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RETIREMENT OF LABOUR DEPARTMENT OFFICER

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To mark the retirement of Mr. Leung Yiu-kwong, after 23 years of service with the government, the Commissioner of Labour, Mr. Paul Tsui, today presented him with a retirement gift on behalf of his colleagues.

Mr. Leung joined the government as a temporary clerk in 1950 and attained his present position of clerk class I in 1968. He moved to the Labour Department in 1959.

During his service as clerk-in-charge, Industrial Safety Training Centre, he contributed much to the work of the centre and thus indirectly, to the promotion of industrial safety.

Mr. Leung is married with three children. He is currently on leave prior to retirement and will officially retire from government service on December 28.

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TWO DANGEROUS BUILDINGS IN CENTRAL

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The Building Authority today declared 209 and 211 Wing Lok Street in Central District on Hong Kong Island to be in a dangerous condition.

The Principal Government Building Surveyor said that these three-storey pre-war buildings had been under observation for a considerable time following the demolition of adjoining buildings.

Fresh movement has recently occurred in the walls giving rise to a risk of collapse.

Notices of intention to apply for Closure Orders in Victoria District Court at 9.30 a.m. on July 25 were posted today.

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HEUNG YEE KUK DELEGATION TO LONDON

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Note to Editors: The Heung Yee Kuk Goodwill Delegation to Britain will leave for London on Sunday (June 17) evening.

Before the departure, the delegation will give a press conference in the V.I.P. press conference room on the ground floor of the airport terminal building, at 8.15 p.m.

Its leader, Mr. Chan Yat-sun, deputy leaders, Mr. Tang Nai-man and Mr. Stephen Wong, and the official spokesman for the delegation, Mr. Chan Po-fong will be present.

Also present will be the District Commissioner, New Territories, Mr. I.F.C. Macpherson, and the Liaison officer, N.T.A., Mr. C.C. Lo.

After the press conference, the members will board a bus outside the V.I.P. room for their plane.

You are invited to have the press conference and the departure covered.

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Release Time: 7.45 p.m.