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## DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
New permit control on waste import/export introduced .....	1
Unemployment and underemployment statistics .....	2
Food recall guidelines published .....	3
Professional guidance on building maintenance work .....	4
Japanese Foreign Minister to visit Hong Kong .....	5
Food surveillance results announced .....	6
Annual report on environment released .....	7
Arrangements for holiday clinic service .....	8
Water storage figure .....	8
Fresh water cut in Tsuen Wan .....	9
Hong Kong Monetary Authority tender results .....	9
Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations .....	10

New permit control on waste import/export introduced

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The Government will introduce a permit scheme with effect from September 1 to regulate the import and export of wastes in line with requirements set out in the Basel Convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous waste and their disposal.

The scheme will require waste importers/exporters to apply for a permit from the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) prior to the commencement of a waste shipment in a manner specified in the Waste Disposal (Amendment) Ordinance 1995.

A government spokesman said: "The scheme will enable us to put under proper control shipment of hazardous or contaminated waste into, from and through Hong Kong.

"At the same time it will facilitate the legitimate trade in non-hazardous waste which is contributing to conservation through waste recycling."

The spokesman said in the light of concern about the recent return of waste consignments from China, the Government was now bringing forward the implementation date of the scheme from the end of this year to September 1.

The scheme will enable EPD to issue either a multiple-shipment permit, which is valid for a period up to 12 months, or a single shipment permit. EPD will have control on the total quantity of waste to be shipped under a multi-shipment permit.

The waste to be subject to control is set out in schedules 6 and 7 to the Waste Disposal (Amendment) Ordinance.

Wastes listed in Schedule 6 are those with minimal environmental effect and will only be subject to permit control if they are contaminated or imported or exported for purposes other than recycling, recovery or reprocessing.

Wastes listed in Schedule 7 are those likely to create a significant health hazard and risk of pollution unless properly handled, and their import and export will be subject to control regardless of purposes.

A person, who imports and/or exports waste subject to control without a permit after September 1, will be liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment upon first conviction.

Permit application forms are now available either from EPD Headquarters, 28th floor, Southorn Centre, 130 Hennessy Road, Wan Chai, or the office of its Waste and Water Management Group, ninth floor, World Trade Square, Tower 1, 123 Hoi Bun Road, Kwun Tong.

End

#### Unemployment and underemployment statistics

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The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the period April to June 1996 was 3.1%, and the underemployment rate was 1.8%, according to the latest labour force statistics released today (Monday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

For the period May to July 1996, the provisional seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell further to 2.9%, while the provisional underemployment rate was also lower, at 1.6%.

Commenting on the latest figures, a government spokesman said labour market conditions continued to improve in recent months. In particular, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell below 3% for the first time in the past 14 months.

For the latest period May to July 1996, decreases in the unemployment rate were mainly observed in the wholesale, retail and import/export trades and transport sectors. As to the underemployment rate, decreases occurred mainly in the construction and transport sectors.

The unemployment and underemployment rates in the other major sectors remained generally stable.

In the three months ending June 1996, total employment continued to show an appreciable growth, by 3.1% over a year earlier. The growth in total labour supply was also 3.1%.

With the growth rate of total labour supply coming down to a level close to the growth rate of total employment, and with the latter growth continuing to be robust, this helped to lower the overall unemployment rate.

During the period April to June 1996, the number of unemployed persons with previous jobs was estimated at 86,200. Another 6,400 unemployed persons were first time job seekers. The number of underemployed persons was estimated at 56,900.

The unemployment and underemployment statistics were obtained from a continuous General Household Survey.

The survey for April to June 1996 covered a quarterly sample of some 23,400 households or 79,300 persons, selected scientifically to represent the land-based civilian non-institutional population in Hong Kong. Data were obtained from the survey by interviewing each member aged 15 or over in the households sampled.

In the survey, the definitions used in measuring unemployment and underemployment follow closely those recommended by the International Labour Organisation.

'Seasonally adjusted' refers to adjustment for seasonal variations in the proportion of first time job seekers in the labour force.

Detailed analysis of labour force characteristics is given in the report on the General Household Survey which is published four times a year.

The next report covering the quarter ending June 1996 will be on sale at the Government Publications Centre at ground floor, Low Block, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong, by the end of September.

End

#### Food recall guidelines published

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A food recall guidelines which sets out actions that should be taken when food products have to be removed from supply or use by consumers was recently published by the Department of Health (DH) and issued to major food suppliers in Hong Kong.

Introducing the guidelines, DH's Senior Administrative Officer (Hygiene), Mr Patrick Li, said similar to other consumer products, food might be recalled due to presence of defects or the possibility of causing harm to the consumer.

The guidelines recognise that companies supplying the food products carried the prime responsibility of implementing the recall and require them to notify DH immediately after the recall had been initiated and to inform its consumers of the recall at the earliest possible moment, he said.

The supplier also needs to prepare a report on the recall exercise, based on which, DH will assess the effectiveness of the recall.

Copies of the guidelines are available to the public at environmental hygiene district offices of the two Municipal Services departments and Health Education Resource Centre of DH at eighth Floor, Urban Council Fa Yuen Street Complex, 123A Fa Yuen Street, Mong Kok, Kowloon.

End

#### Professional guidance on building maintenance work

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Major maintenance or repair works to buildings should be co-ordinated and supervised by authorised persons to ensure public safety, the acting Director of Buildings, Mr Cheng Wei-dart, said today (Monday).

Mr Cheng made the appeal when commenting on an incident happened earlier today when a portion of external wall tiles fell off from a building in North Point.

Mr Cheng said the Buildings Department staff arrived at the scene soon after the accident and required the building owner to remove immediately other loose tiles from the external wall.

Public safety has now been restored and no structural danger on the building was found.

The department will carry out an investigation into the incident and will later issue a statutory order to require the building owner to employ an authorised person to carry out the necessary repair works.

Mr Cheng also noted that several cases of falling concrete from external walls had occurred in the last few days.

"The best way to prevent the occurrence of these accidents is to carry out regular building maintenance and repair works.

"If building owners or occupants have identified some irregularities in their buildings, such as spalled concrete, structural cracks with stains, or loose or bulging rendering, they should immediately engage building professionals to carry out proper repair works.

"It is also important that old buildings are inspected regularly. Building professionals can do a lot to help and I suggest that building owners seriously consider seeking professional services in building inspections," Mr Cheng said.

End

#### Japanese Foreign Minister to visit Hong Kong

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Hong Kong Principal Economic and Trade Representative (Tokyo), Mr David Lan, extended a warm welcome to the forthcoming visit to Hong Kong later this month by the Japanese Foreign Minister, Mr Yukihiko Ikeda, when he called on Mr Ikeda's office today (Monday).

Extending the welcome on behalf of Hong Kong, Mr Lan told the Foreign Minister that: "We are very happy that you are visiting Hong Kong during this important period of Hong Kong's transition.

"You will notice that Hong Kong is looking positively towards the change of sovereignty next year, and when you are in Hong Kong you can feel the vitality and high spirit of Hong Kong people."

Mr Ikeda told Mr Lan that he was looking forward to discussing various aspects of Hong Kong's transition with the acting Governor, Mrs Anson Chan.

The Foreign Minister was also quoted as noting that: "The continuing stability and prosperity of Hong Kong as the regional trade and financial centre is of vital importance not only to China or Japan, but also for Asia as well as Hong Kong's trading partners throughout the world."

Mr Ikeda will visit Hong Kong on August 28 and 29 after his Middle East trip. During his stay in Hong Kong, he will meet Mrs Chan and other senior officials as well as Hong Kong people at the dinner reception to be held at the Victoria House.

A helicopter tour will also be arranged for Mr Ikeda to view the new airport developments as well as other programmes now being planned.

End

#### Food surveillance results announced

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The Department of Health (DH) today (Monday) announced at a press conference the results of its regular food surveillance for the first six months of 1996.

A total of 21,122 samples were collected during the period for chemical, bacteriological and radioactivity tests.

The food surveillance programme is conducted by the department's Hygiene Division to monitor that food supplied to the community is wholesome, unadulterated and properly labelled.

Commenting on the results, Assistant Director for Health (Hygiene), Dr Leung Pak-yin, said: "The overall trend for January to June 1996 was similar to the corresponding period in 1995 and was within acceptable levels."

Of the 12,518 samples for chemical analyses, only 199 (1.6%) yielded unsatisfactory results. The majority of these unsatisfactory cases were vegetable samples containing prohibited pesticide residues.

Dr Leung attributed the increase in the number of unsatisfactory vegetable samples to the fact that a much larger number of samples were collected following Man Kam To Food Control Office came into operation earlier in the year.

"This provided much better import control at the border and better safeguard for public health," he said.

As for the 8,191 samples for bacteriological examinations, 526 (6.4%) gave unsatisfactory results. Sashimi and sushi samples yielded the highest unsatisfactory rates, 42.8% and 51.8% respectively.

"To improve the situation, actions have been taken by the two Municipal Services departments to put premises preparing, serving and selling sashimi and sushi under licensing control," Dr Leung said.

All the 413 samples for radioactive examination were found to be within acceptable level.

During the same period, DH had received 67 reports of food poisoning cases compared with the 97 reports received during the same period last year. The number of people affected had also dropped from 583 to 395.

The number of food poisoning cases due to pesticide contaminated vegetables had decreased from 13 in the first half of 1995 to two in the corresponding period this year. The number of persons affected had also decreased from 24 to six.

More than half of the food poisoning cases were due to bacterial contamination. The public are reminded to observe strict personal and environmental hygiene when preparing food, particularly in the summer months.

To enhance its public health education efforts, DH's Hygiene Division today launched a computerised telephone system for public to obtain food hygiene information.

Through the interactive voice and response system on "Hygiene Information For You", Tel 2380 2580, members of the public can get to know more about selected hot topics for the month, food safety, food hygiene, environmental hygiene, current health education campaign as well as procedures for import and export of food.

The hot topic for the month is E Coli O-157:H7.

End

Annual report on environment released

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The Environmental Protection Department has handled some 10,000 pollution complaints, set up an air pollution index and forecast system, and completed more than 30 major environmental impact assessment studies last year.

These are all part of the information contained in the annual report "Environment Hong Kong 1996" released by the department today ( Monday ).

The 153-page report covers a wide range of environmental programmes carried out by the Government, illustrated with diagrams and tables of technical information.

They include the phasing out of ozone depleting substances, noise control on construction, industrial and commercial activities and environmental monitoring work.

Both the Chinese and English versions of the report are now on sale at the Government Publications Centre, Low Block, ground floor, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong.

End

#### Arrangements for holiday clinic service

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The Department of Health today (Monday) announced that eight general out-patient holiday clinics will be open from 9 am to 1 pm on August 25 and 26 (Sunday and Monday), which are public holidays.

The eight clinics are Violet Peel Health Centre and Shau Kei Wan Jockey Club Clinic on the Hong Kong Island; Kwun Tong Jockey Club Health Centre, Robert Black Health Centre and Yau Ma Tei Jockey Club Clinic in Kowloon; and Lady Trench Polyclinic, Shek Wu Hui Jockey Club Clinic and Yuen Long Jockey Club Health Centre in the New Territories.

There will be no holiday out-patient clinic service on August 24 (Saturday).

All other general out-patient and evening clinics will be closed during the three days of holidays.

End

#### Water storage figure

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Storage in Hong Kong's reservoirs at 9 am today (Monday) stood at 97.1 per cent of capacity or 568.949 million cubic metres.

This time last year the reservoirs contained 543.410 million cubic metres of water, representing 92.7 per cent of capacity.

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Fresh water cut in Tsuen Wan

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The fresh water supply to some premises in Tsuen Wan will be temporarily suspended from 11 pm on Thursday (August 22) to 6 am the following day for waste detection work on watermains.

The suspension will affect Chung On Street, the Tsuen Wan Section of Castle Peak Road, Tai Ho Road, Sha Tsui Road including Sze Pei Square and Nos 271 to 295 Sha Tsui Road.

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Hong Kong Monetary Authority tender results

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Tender date	19 Aug 1996
Paper on offer	EF notes
Issue number	7808
Issue date	20 Aug 1996
Maturity date	20 Aug 2003
Coupon	7.24 PCT
Amount applied	HK\$2,795 MN
Amount allotted	HK\$500 MN
Average Price accepted (yield)	99.74 (7.42 PCT)
Lowest price accepted (yield)	99.74 (7.42 PCT)
Pro rata ratio	About 96 PCT
Average tender price (yield)	99.66 (7.43 PCT)

End

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	1,655	0930	+309
Closing balance in the account	1,574	1000	+309
Change attributable to :		1100	+309
Money market activity	+309	1200	+309
LAF today	- 390	1500	+309
		1600	+309

LAF rate 4.00% bid/6.00% offer TWI 123.9 \*+0.0\* 19.8.96

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	4.88	2 years	2808	6.00	99.92	6.13
1 month	4.98	3 years	3907	6.80	101.03	6.51
3 months	5.14	5 years	5106	7.23	101.14	7.06
6 months	5.27	7 years	7305	7.60	101.80	7.39
12 months	5.57	5 years	M503	7.35	99.99	7.49

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - \$4,804 million

Closed August 19, 1996

End