



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES
GARDEN ROAD, 5th-8th FLOORS, MURRAY BUILDING,
HONG KONG. TEL.: 2842 8777

Tuesday, March 18, 1997

<u>Content</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
Transcript of Governor's media session	1
Officials consulted on Lantau Link fireworks display	5
Last 1992 definitive stamp sheets sold out	6
Latest unemployment and underemployment statistics out	6
Contracts awarded for slope upgrading works	8
Insider Dealing Tribunal appointment	9
80 convicted pollution cases recorded in February	9
Man fined for possessing faked gold rings	10
More elderly health centres set up	10
Royal Navy to make Hong Kong beach shipshape	12
Secondary 6 admission procedure shortened	12
Hong Kong Monetary Authority tender results	14

Transcript of Governor's media session

* * * * *

Following is the transcript of the media session given by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, after the ExCo meeting at CGO this (Tuesday) morning:

Governor: Good morning. Perhaps I could just say a couple of things. We had a discussion this morning with the Commissioner of Police about our latest crime statistics and we were able to congratulate the Commissioner once again on really good figures for February. Comparing February this year with February last, overall crime has fallen by over 20% and violent crime by nearly 6%.

Now I realise that no crime is an acceptable level but nevertheless, what we can point to in Hong Kong is not just a statistical blip as far as the crime levels are concerned but a steady reduction in crime. Which means, for example, that the crime figures last year were not just lower than they were in the early 90's but were actually lower than they were 15 years ago. I think that is a great tribute to the whole community. I think it is a tribute to the Fight Crime committees. Above all it is a tribute to the police. And we, of course, in Hong Kong have a much higher police to population ratio than most similar communities - it is about 436 police officers for every 100,000 of population. I think that means that people see the police about in the community and that in itself is a deterrent to serious crime. So I repeat, the February figures were extremely good and I hope that we will continue to see falling crime in this community as a mark of the community's social and political stability.

One other thing that I would like to say but it should not be necessary to clarify this point - there was a statement put out by the Foreign Office's News Department yesterday which made the point. There has been some controversy in the last few days about whether or not Britain could or should monitor the implementation of the Joint Declaration after 30 June this year. I just want to make the position absolutely plain because we have had one or two statements which I think have generated heat rather than shed light.

The position is perfectly simple. The Joint Declaration is an international treaty. It is a binding treaty which has been lodged at the United Nations. Under that treaty China makes a number of solemn commitments to the United Kingdom about how Hong Kong is going to be governed and how Hong Kong is going to develop over the 50 years after 1997. So it is natural that Britain should and will wish to monitor how those commitments are kept and how the Joint Declaration is implemented.

And it is of course equally clear that the Joint Liaison Group which is where we consult with China about transition issues until 1 January 2000, will be a natural forum for discussing with Chinese officials just how the Joint Declaration is being implemented. Nobody is talking about the Joint Liaison Group having a supervisory role. That is specifically ruled out in the Joint Declaration, Annex II of which sets out in detail what the JLG's responsibilities are. But clearly, as part of the monitoring of the implementation of the Joint Declaration, British officials would wish, in the Joint Liaison Group, to raise any matters which they thought meant that the Joint Declaration was not being implemented faithfully.

I would only want to add that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have underlined Britain's determination to continue monitoring the implementation of the Joint Declaration. And the Foreign Secretary, of course, announced before Christmas that Britain will be tabling, every six months, a report to Parliament on the implementation of the Joint Declaration so that Parliament can consider what is happening and those reports will also be made available to the UN bodies at Geneva so that they can see the view of the British Government on the implementation of the JD.

I just set those points out in some detail because there has been some confusion about them in the last few days.

Reporter: Mr Patten, you seem to have increasing doubts with three months to go about China's willingness to live by the agreement, by the spirit or the letter of it. You are expressing increasing doubts are you not?

Governor: No, I am reacting to some statements which I think surprised many people, including members of the Legislative Council yesterday, which appeared to suggest that China was saying that Britain had no monitoring role after 1 July 1997.

As for optimism in the future, I think that there is very strong reason to be broadly-speaking optimistic about Hong Kong's future success, but there is no doubt that one or two of the decisions that have been taken in recent months have caused people here and people elsewhere considerable concern about Hong Kong's political and economic freedoms. And I will, as others will, continue to speak out on those issues.

Reporter: But Li Peng actually put it quite bluntly didn't he? He said it's none of your business; it's none of London's business what happens here after 31 June.

Governor: Well I have just set out in some detail what the Prime Minister's Government have signed up to: A solemn and binding treaty in which they make commitments to Britain and to the people of Hong Kong about the way Hong Kong is going to be governed. I think, as I have said on many occasions, that the whole world will be looking at how China implements the Joint Declaration as a sort of litmus test of how China is going to behave on the international stage and how it is going to live up to its other undertakings and agreements.

Reporter: But if after 1 July the Chinese are not, as you see it, as the British Government sees it, biding by this agreement, what happens then if they say to you, "Look, we told you, mind your own business"? There is nothing you can do is there?

Governor: What Britain would then have to do, as the Prime Minister has made clear, is to take up its concerns on the international stage. And I can assure you there would be other countries who would be as concerned as Britain, though Britain would have a primary responsibility as the co-signatory to the Joint Declaration.

Reporter: Is Britain going to be raising concern about this issue during the London JLG session?

Governor: I think we will, during the JLG session, remind Chinese officials of what the Joint Declaration means.

Reporter: Some legislators called for on the role of the JLG. Is it possible?

Governor: No, I have just explained what the role of the JLG is. There is no hidden agenda about the future role of the JLG. The JLG's role is set out very clearly at Annex II - I think it is Articles 2 and 3 - of the Joint Declaration. It makes it absolutely plain what the JLG's role is going to be after 1 July, just as it is plain what its role has been before 1 July.

Reporter: It seems that the Labour Party will take over the government - it's highly likely that the Labour Party will take over the government in the May Election. Will it affect the monitoring role of the British Government after July 1 and will it affect?

Governor: Well! You know the result already! How extraordinary. I can't, of course, speculate on the outcome of the British General Election. But it is, I think, a matter of considerable satisfaction in Hong Kong that the policy that we have pursued in the territory has had cross-party support and has had consistent support from the Labour and Liberal Democratic Parties as well as from the Conservative Party. So I don't think that if there were to be a change of government, I don't think that would make any difference to what I have just been saying.

Reporter: Will the Conservative Party be calling on your expertise in winning elections?

Governor: No, because they know that my expertise, such as it is, is required to go on governing Hong Kong.

Reporter: There have been reports that the ICAC might have to drop the "Independent" post-handover. Would you like to comment on that?

Governor: I must say that I am worried about those reports and I can't think that they reflect any intention to undermine the role of the ICAC. There was a report the other day, a survey the other day, which made it clear that one of the things which concerned people about the future was an increase in corruption. I think that was highlighted in the transition project survey. And we all know from our personal experience that that is a concern that people have. It is therefore, I think, imperative to underline our commitment as a community to the continuing effectiveness of the ICAC. The ICAC today is Independent in name and independent in action. It is not subject to political manipulation.

It is made clear in the Basic Law that the ICAC should continue to be independent and I think that if there are impressions that that may not be the case it is important to move to correct them very speedily.

I want to make it clear that I don't believe for one moment that the Chief Executive (designate) is less committed to the fight against corruption than I am. I am sure that he would agree with everything I have said about the importance of fighting corruption vigorously and having a credible Commission to conduct the fight. But it is obviously important that people should not get the impression that there is any weakening of resolve.

I have already found myself being asked questions by foreign media about the position of the ICAC and I think that was just a reflection of how these things can so easily give the impression of a change in Hong Kong's commitment in an important area. So I hope this can be sorted out in a way which does not undermine a policy which I am sure we all share.

Reporter: Mr Patten, would you like to comment on the recent corruption case relating to the Jockey Club?

Governor: I don't want to. The Commission have conducted an operation in their usual independent way and I don't think, not least given what I have just said, that it is appropriate for me to comment on a particular case. I will just say that the ICAC has very considerable public support and I am sure that the public will be right behind the ICAC in all their efforts to get rid of corruption in every walk of life in Hong Kong.

Reporter: What do you think of comments by the NCNA that there (inaudible) in Hong Kong after the handover (inaudible)?

Governor: Well, my range of responsibilities don't, as you may have noticed, include responsibility for the New China News Agency. While I have already made clear Britain's continuing commitment to monitor the implementation of the Joint Declaration, we have no responsibility for monitoring the role of the New China News Agency. I leave questions of the relationship between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hong Kong and the New China News Agency and other organs of the PRC Government, I leave matters like that to Chinese officials to explain. I am sure the community will be interested in what those relationships are but it is really not a matter for me. Thank you very much indeed.

End

Officials consulted on Lantau Link fireworks display

* * * * *

The Director of the New Airport Projects Co-ordination Office (NAPCO), Mr Billy Lam, today (Tuesday) denied a press report that the decision to hold a fireworks display was taken by the Governor alone and that government departments had not been consulted.

"I wish to make it absolutely clear that these claims are totally untrue," said Mr Lam.

He said the idea of an opening ceremony for the Lantau Link which includes a fireworks display was first mooted by NAPCO last summer and a working group, comprising 13 government branches and departments including Transport Branch and Department, the Police, Home Affairs Department and Broadcasting, Culture and Sport Branch, was formed in August last year to discuss the ceremony.

In January this year, a steering committee with representatives from 19 Government branches and departments was formed to co-ordinate the overall programme.

The decision was also endorsed by the Airport Development Steering Committee chaired by the Chief Secretary.

An application for staging the fireworks was made by the commercial sponsor, Sun Hung Kai Properties Ltd, and this was vetted in the normal way by the Fireworks Vetting Committee on 14 February and approved by the Governor-in-Council on March 4.

End

Last 1992 definitive stamp sheets sold out

* * * * *

The Hong Kong Post Office announced today (Tuesday) that the last stocks of 1992 definitive stamp sheets will be sold out today.

These stamps, being the last such stamps bearing the Queen's head, were available to the public at four post offices, namely the General Post Office in Central, Tsim Sha Tsui, Tsuen Wan and Sha Tin.

To ensure fairness, the Post Office implemented a quota system limiting the sale to each customer. The four post offices involved opened at 8 am. In addition to post office staff, over 70 security officers were hired specially for crowd control.

Some eleven thousand people are expected to have bought about a quarter of a million sheets of stamps. The last customers are expected to be served by late this evening.

The Post Office is greatly saddened by the death of an elderly gentleman, who died this morning of an apparent heart attack while queuing for stamps. This is an unfortunate and tragic incident.

The Post Office is committed to continuing to review its stamp sales procedures to ensure appropriate crowd control measures and fairness.

End

Latest unemployment and underemployment statistics out

* * * * *

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the period November 1996 - January 1997 was 2.5%, and the underemployment rate was 1.4%, according to the latest labour force statistics released today (Tuesday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

For the period December 1996 - February 1997, both the provisional seasonally adjusted unemployment rate and the provisional underemployment rate fell further, to 2.4% and 1.2% respectively.

Commenting on these figures, a Government spokesman said that overall labour market conditions seemed to have been tightening in recent months. The unemployment rate fell below the 2.5% mark for the first time since January 1995. Also, the underemployment rate, at 1.2%, was the lowest recorded since September 1994.

Comparing the latest period December 1996 - February 1997 with the period November 1996 - January 1997, declines in the unemployment rate were observed in the restaurants and hotels, import/export trade and transport sectors, while the situation in the other sectors remained generally stable. As to the underemployment rate, decreases occurred mainly in the construction, manufacturing and transport sectors. The situation in the other sectors was stable.

Total employment continued to grow at a pace distinctly faster than that of the labour force. In the three months ending January 1997, total employment registered a significant increase, by 4.2% over a year earlier. Over the same period, total labour force grew by 3.3%.

During the period November 1996 - January 1997, the number of unemployed persons was estimated at 74,100, and the number of underemployed persons at 43,400.

The unemployment and underemployment statistics were obtained from a continuous General Household Survey. The survey for November 1996 - January 1997 covered a quarterly sample of some 23,200 households or 77,600 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 December 1996 will be on sale at the Government Publications Centre at ground floor, Low Block, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong, by the end of March 1997.

End

Contracts awarded for slope upgrading works

* * * * *

The Buildings Department today (Tuesday) awarded two term contracts to Luen Cheong Tai Construction Company Limited for upgrading and stabilising a total of 40 dangerous private slopes and retaining walls in various parts of the territory.

Each contract is valued at about \$60 million and will begin early next month.

Speaking after signing the contracts, the Director of Buildings, Dr Choi Yu-leuk, said that the contractor would be responsible for carrying out upgrading and emergency works on dangerous private slopes and retaining walls.

"The Government is determined to remove dangers arising from old slopes and retaining walls. Efforts are being stepped up systematically to check the safety level of these slopes. Dangerous Hillside Orders will be served on property owners once danger is identified," Dr Choi said.

"About 200 dangerous hillside orders will be served every year under the Buildings Ordinance to require property owners to carry out investigation and remedial works to potentially dangerous slopes.

"If an owner fails to do so before the deadline, the contractor will carry out the works on his behalf and all the costs will be recovered from him.

"Owners who do not comply with the orders without a reasonable excuse are liable to be prosecuted under the Buildings Ordinance," Dr Choi said.

End

Insider Dealing Tribunal appointment

* * * * *

The Financial Secretary has appointed Mr James Wardell and Mr Peter Wong Shiu-hoi as lay members to the Insider Dealing Tribunal set up to inquire into possible insider dealing in the listed securities of the Hong Kong Worsted Mills Ltd. during the period from May 6 to June 16 1993 (inclusive).

The appointments were made in accordance with section 15(2) and section 15(5) of the Securities (Insider Dealing) Ordinance, and with paragraph 3 of the Schedule thereto.

Mr Wardell is a partner of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu and Mr Wong is the Managing Director of Tai Fook Group Ltd. They will be sitting in the Tribunal under the chairmanship of Mr Justice Burrell. Preliminary hearing of the case will be held on Thursday, March 20, 1997 at 2:30 p.m. in Room 702, Peregrine Tower, Lippo Centre, Queensway.

End

80 convicted pollution cases recorded in February

* * * * *

A total of 80 convictions were recorded in the courts in February for breaching anti-pollution legislation enforced by the Environmental Protection Department.

Among them, 23 were convictions made under the Water Pollution Control Ordinance (WPCO), 33 under the Noise Control Ordinance (NCO), 10 under the Air Pollution Control Ordinance (APCO), and 14 under the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO).

The fines ranged from \$2,000 to \$180,000, among which five cases were fined for more than \$100,000 under the NCO.

Chun Wo Building Construction Limited was fined \$180,000 for permitting to carry out prescribed construction work within a designated area during restricted hours without a valid permit. The company was fined another \$170,000 for permitting the use of powered mechanical equipment for carrying out construction work without a permit.

End

Man fined for possessing faked gold rings

* * * * *

A 49-year-old man, found by Customs officers in possession of faked gold rings, was fined \$10,000 at Fanling Magistracy today (Tuesday) after pleading guilty to charges under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance.

During a baggage examination on passengers arriving from China on Monday, February 24, Customs officers at the Lowu Arrival Hall found from a man 983 golden rings, each of which was marked wholly gold. Suspecting that the rings were not genuine, the officers detained the man for further investigation into possible offences under the Trade Descriptions Ordinance.

The officers conducted a preliminary testing on the rings and found that they were not made of gold. Further examination on the seizure by the Government Chemist confirmed that the rings were only gold-plated pieces of lead.

The man was subsequently charged with one count of importing and one count of having in possession for supply those rings to which a false trade description was applied.

The Customs and Excise Department is responsible for the enforcement of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance.

Complaints on deficiency in the fineness of gold or platinum articles can be lodged with the Trading Standards Investigation Bureau, Units 1201-7, Nan Fung Commercial Centre, 19 Lam Lok Street, Kowloon Bay, or by telephone on 2707 7711 during office hours and 2852 3185 outside office hours.

End

More elderly health centres set up

* * * * *

Three more elderly health centres (EHC) run by the Department of Health will begin operation on March 21 (Friday) to provide health screening, physical examination and health education to people aged 65 and above, bringing the total number of EHC to seven.

The three new centres are: Kennedy Town Elderly Health Centre, Tsuen Wan Elderly Health Centre, and Yuen Chau Kok Elderly Health Centre.

The existing four EHCs are located in Shek Kip Mei, Kwun Tong, Shaukeiwan and Sheung Shui.

A spokesman for the Department said: "The objectives of the elderly health service are for the promotion of the health and well-being of elderly persons as well as the prevention and early detection of common diseases."

"Services provided include health risk assessment and simple screening test. Those found to have health problems will be referred to appropriate specialist clinics for further assessment and follow-up." he said.

"Health education will be emphasised and conducted in the form of health talks, small group discussions and seminars.

"Each client is issued with a health record and will receive individual counselling." the spokesman added.

The annual fee for these services is \$220. For those receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA), the fee will be waived.

The addresses of the three EHCs are as follows:-

Kennedy Town EHC
G/F., Kennedy Town Jockey Club Clinic,
45 Victoria Road, Hong Kong.
Tel: 2817 3418

Tsuen wan EHC
G/F., Lady Trench Polyclinic,
213 Sha Tsui Road, Tsuen wan.
Tel: 2408 2267

Yuen Chau Kok EHC
G/F., Yuen Chau Kok Clinic,
29 Chat Wai Kon Street, Sha Tin.
Tel: 2637 2005

Those who wish to join the programme can book an appointment either in person at the general office of the centres or call the centres direct.

End

Royal Navy to make Hong Kong beach shipshape

* * * * *

Beachcombers from the Royal Navy will head for a beach on Kau Sai Chau tomorrow (Wednesday) in an effort to clean up the island.

Armed with rubber gloves and bin bags, 20 men from the Hong Kong Patrol Craft, HMS Starling, will attempt to clear one of island's beaches of all rubbish.

"A group of us were sailing in the Sai Kung area a few weeks ago and noticed that the beach at Kau Sai Wan was looking pretty foul," said Gunnery Officer Lieutenant Alastair Peppe.

"We're all very aware of how important it is to keep Hong Kong 'green', so we decided to come back and tidy the place up a bit," Lieutenant Peppe said.

All rubbish collected during their five-hour visit will be transported by ship to HMS Tamar, at Stonecutters Island, for disposal.

End

Secondary 6 admission procedure shortened

* * * * *

The Education Department today (Tuesday) announced that the Secondary 6 admission procedure for the 1997-98 school year would be shortened to a total of eight working days from 8-1/2 in 1996-97.

A Principal Education Officer, Mr P K Chiu, said the five-stage procedure for admission to Secondary 6 for the 1997-98 school year was basically the same as last year, except that the duration of Stage III, which was for schools to admit their own students having satisfied the minimum A-level entry requirements, would be shortened to a half-day operation.

"The shortening of the Stage III procedure is to tie in with the provision of a two-week pre-S6 Intensive English Language Programme for some students."

"As in last year, a total of eight centres will be made available for central allocation," Mr Chiu said.

[Missing 2 pages in the original document]

Tender date : 18 March 1997
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Y787
Issue date : 19 March 1997
Maturity date : 18 March 1998
Amount applied : HK\$2,755 MN
Amount allotted : HK\$500 MN
Average yield accepted : 5.50 PCT
Highest yield accepted : 5.52 PCT
Pro rata ratio : About 88 PCT
Average tender yield : 5.54 PCT

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tender to be held in the week beginning - 24 March 97:

Tender date : 25 March 1997
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Q074
Issue date : 26 March 1997
Maturity date : 23 April 1997
Tenor : 28 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$5,000 MN

Tender date : 25 March 1997
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : Q713
Issue date : 26 March 1997
Maturity date : 25 June 1997
Tenor : 91 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$2,000 MN + 500 MN
Tender date : 25 March 1997
Paper on offer : EF Bills
Issue number : H761
Issue date : 26 March 1997
Maturity date : 24 September 1997
Tenor : 182 Days
Amount on offer : HK\$1,000 MN + 300 MN

End