



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

Tuesday, February 26, 1974

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Daily guide to wholesale prices and supply of basic food commodities

Release time: 7.30 p.m.

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ARRANGEMENT REGARDING INTERNATIONAL TRADE IN TEXTILES

The Government of the United Kingdom yesterday (February 25) acceded to the Arrangement Regarding International Trade in Textiles on Hong Kong's behalf.

The Arrangement was concluded on December 20 last year in Geneva following several months of intensive negotiations among representatives of some 40 governments, including Hong Kong, under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

It runs for four years from January 1, 1974.

The new Arrangement, covering cotton, wool and man-made fibre textiles, replaces the Cotton Textiles Arrangements which expired on December 31 1973 after being in effect for over eleven years.

Commenting on the new Arrangement, a spokesman of the Commerce and Industry Department said that while Hong Kong still believed in free trade and would prefer to see all such restrictive arrangements removed, the new terms represented an improvement on the Cotton Textiles Arrangement.

Of particular significance is a provision for a Textiles Surveillance Body to oversee the workings of the new Arrangement.

Such international supervision will offer a new protection for the interests of the exporters whose trade is liable to be restricted.

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The spokesman said that in the course of 1974, Hong Kong would be joining consultations with a number of importing countries, including the USA and the European Economic Community, to modify the existing restraint arrangements and bring them into line with the terms of the new Arrangement.

These consultations should lead to a substantial improvement in the terms under which Hong Kong textile exports are at present restrained.

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SECOND LABOUR TRIBUNAL TO BE SET UP

A second Labour Tribunal will come into operation on Friday (March 1), to provide a quicker service of settling disputes between workers and employers over monetary claims.

Meanwhile, another Chinese-speaking presiding officer, Mr. Henry Wong Wei-chow, has been appointed by the Government to preside over the new tribunal.

Mr. Wong, a former President of the Tenancy Tribunal, is now on a familiarization visit to the various sections of the Labour Department and factories.

The second tribunal is located at Sincere Building, 9th floor, Des Voeux Road, Central.

Mr. Michael Wong, the Presiding Officer of the Tribunal, explained that the location of the new tribunal was chosen because it is situated conveniently near bus stations and ferry piers as well as the head office.

The new tribunal has its own court room, offices for tribunal officers and a general office. However, any person who wants to make enquiries or seek information are requested to call at the Registry of the head office at Permanent Comfort Building, first floor, 74-77 Connaught Road, Central or telephone 5-436666.

The first Labour Tribunal was set up in March last year under the Labour Tribunal Ordinance. It aims at providing a quick, inexpensive and informal method of settling monetary disputes between workers and employers and has been proved very successful.

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During the first eleven months of its operation ending in January, a total of 1,011 claims, involving about \$2.4 million, has been filed at the tribunal.

The number of claimants totalled 2,483 while there were 1,070 defendants.

Of all the claims, 842 had been heard and a total of about \$850,000 had been awarded to the claimants.

Mr. Michael Wong said the main claims were for wages in lieu of notices and arrears.

"There were also claims for statutory holiday pay, double pay, bonus, sickness allowance, overtime allowance, commission, rebates and recovery of deposit paid under contracts of employment," he added.

Mr. Wong also pointed out that over 90 per cent of the claims filed were referred to the Tribunal by the Labour Department where attempts at reconciliation had been unsuccessful.

"The tribunal in no way supersedes the Labour Relations Service of the Labour Department and it only strengthens the hands of the department's conciliation officers," he stressed.

"Its main function is to deal mostly with claims by individual workers against employers for money due either under a contract of employment or under the provisions of the Employment Ordinance," Mr. Wong said.

"The Labour Tribunal is the first tribunal in the Judiciary to conduct proceedings in the Chinese language," Mr. Wong added.

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COLONIAL SECRETARY TO VISIT SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT

The Colonial Secretary, Mr. Denys Roberts, will be visiting the Social Welfare Department on Thursday (February 28) afternoon to see some of the work that the Department is doing.

Accompanied by Mr. Kenneth Topley, the Director of Social Welfare, Mr. Roberts will be visiting four centres which the Department operates in Kowloon.

At the Centres he will be shown the varied type of work which the Department undertakes in providing rehabilitation for disabled people, care of abandoned children, supervision of juveniles and activities for the community.

Mr. Roberts will first call at the World Rehabilitation Fund Day Centre at 487, Kwun Tong Road, Kwun Tong. This is a three-storeyed non-residential centre run by the Department's Rehabilitation Division.

Since it was opened in 1968, the Centre has been providing full time vocational training courses for disabled adults and a pre-vocational training course for the younger disabled. This latter course consists of both informal education and practical work.

There is also a sheltered work shop in the Centre for severely disabled people who are unable to take jobs outside.

At present, the Centre accommodates about 300 people with disabilities ranging from physical handicaps to mental retardation.

From there Mr. Roberts will travel to the Children's Reception Centre run by the Family Services Division at Lung Fung Street, Chuk Yuen. It is at this Centre that the Department takes care of children who are abandoned, found wandering, or unwanted because they are illegitimate.

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The Centre provides care, guidance, informal education and recreational activities for those under its charge.

The children stay in the Centre usually for about six months or less during which time arrangements are made to find new homes for them.

From there the Colonial Secretary will drive to Begonia Road Boys Home in Yau Yat Chuen. This is a combined remand and probation home for boys, and it is operated by the Probation and Corrections Division of the Department.

This is a five-storeyed building designed to accommodate 164 boys under the age of 16 for three specific purposes, namely, for remand or detention, for those who are in need of care and protection and for probation cases.

Careful supervision and observation is made of these boys in this home and vocational training, primary education and recreational activities are arranged to enable them to develop a new outlook in life and make something better of themselves when they leave.

The final stop Mr. Roberts will make is at the Tai Hang Tung Community Centre in Tong Yam Street, Tai Hang Tung, one of five run by the Group and Community Work Division.

The Centre functions as the focal point for activities in which people in the surrounding area can participate whenever they have free time. The Centre was opened in 1966.

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Note to Editors: You are welcome to cover Mr. Robert's visit on Thursday (February 28). His visit will start at 2.35 p.m. and last until about 5.00 p.m.

Transport will be provided and anyone wishing to make use of this facility should meet at the Social Welfare Department, Public Relations Unit, Room 528A, 5th floor, Lee Gardens (entrance next to First National City Bank) at 1.15 p.m. that day.

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MORE SUPERVISION ON WORK SITE OPERATION URGED

Three workers were killed and 305 injured last month in accidents on Hong Kong construction sites, according to figures released today by the Labour Department. Two of the fatal accidents involved vehicles carrying materials or men on worksites.

The Industrial Safety Training Officer of the Labour Department, Mr. Nick Carter, said many construction site accidents involving transport were due to bad work practices.

"Bad driving, bad loading, bad mechanical conditions, striking against structures or overhead lines, hitting men or other vehicles, falling into excavations and carrying unauthorised passengers are common examples," he said.

Mr. Carter called on managements of construction sites to increase supervision on site operation and to maintain machinery and vehicles in efficient working order.

"Preventive maintenance will not only keep transport running, but also save repair costs," he said. "It helps prevent accidents and allows smooth operation, avoiding unnecessary hold-ups."

Mr. Carter advised drivers on construction sites to follow job instructions and to observe danger signals while driving.

He said: "Before moving off, a driver should check by walking around his vehicle to ensure that no other worker is being put at risk. And unless the driver has a clear view around his vehicle, he should reverse only under the direction of an attendant.

/"Accidents involving

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"Accidents involving vehicles falling into excavations or tipping over can be avoided by providing fixed stops at a distance from the edge of excavation or tipping points.

"Only close supervision by management and good practices by workers will help to cut down accidents on construction sites."

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BUILDINGS IN DANGEROUS CONDITIONS

The Building Authority today declared 183 Wing Lok Street and 19 Bonham Strand West to be in a dangerous condition.

In a statement issued this morning, the Principal Government Building Surveyor said that these four-storey pre-war buildings have been under observation for some time.

There is evidence of continuing deterioration in the brick-work at the rear which has now reached a stage at which it is considered there is a risk of collapse.

In addition extensive decay was observed in timbers to the floors and roof.

The position is further aggravated by defects in the party-walls between 17 and 19 Bonham Strand of which the former will be the subject of an application for closure in the near future.

Notices of intention to apply for Closure Orders in Victoria District Court at 9.30 a.m. on March 26 were posted today.

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QUOTA SYSTEM FOR PLASTICS SHARE-OUT

Distribution of two essential raw materials to local plastics firms which have applied to receive supplies under a share-out scheme will be worked out on a quota basis, the Commerce and Industry Department announced today.

The quotas will be calculated as a percentage of the supply requirements for March submitted by each firm, based on the amounts of materials available.

More than 1,100 firms have applied to receive allocations under the scheme, and over 90 per cent of the applications meet the qualifying conditions.

The details of the quota system were approved at a meeting yesterday of the working committee set up to institute the scheme. It comprises representatives of the three main plastic manufacturers associations, importers of plastic raw materials and officials of the Commerce and Industry Department.

Two types of polystyrene -- high impact and general purpose -- will be the first plastic raw materials to be allocated. The quota will amount to 80 per cent of requirements submitted by each firm.

Firms participating in the scheme will be notified of arrangements for collecting their allocated quota shortly. They will receive a written authorisation which must be presented to a specified supplier within 14 days of its receipt.

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Allocation of supplies of polyethylene will be arranged within the next few days. There are five categories of this material but quotas will be issued initially for only three of these. In the main category, the allocation will amount to 45 per cent of demand, and in the two others to 25 per cent of demand.

The Commerce and Industry Department will continue to seek from importers additional quantities in the final two categories before deciding on allocations.

In all, over 5,000,000 lbs of polystyrene and polyethylene will be allocated and all quota allocations will be issued within the next 10 days.

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CHANGES IN TARIFF SYSTEM OF POWER COMPANY

The Government has considered two major changes in the tariff system of the China Light and Power Company Ltd. which, in their overall effect, will not result in any increase in the current price to the consumer.

Announcing this today, a Government spokesman said that the changes would be introduced with effect from April 1, and the Company was giving due notice to consumers.

He pointed out that some nine years ago, the government and the Company had agreed on a scheme of control under which the return to the Company is not permitted to exceed 13½ per cent of net fixed assets.

But he added that the scheme of control does not require the Company to seek the approval of Government to alter their tariffs, provided the effect does not result in the Company's return exceeding the permitted maximum. This is not so in the case of the charges now to be made.

"The Government has been concerned to protect consumers from any unnecessary or excessive charges," said the spokesman, "and this intention has been achieved in the arrangements now to be introduced by the Company."

He explained that "on the one hand, there will be an increase in tariff of one cent per unit, while on the other, a revised formula for calculating the fuel clause will mean - at current oil prices - that the customer pays approximately one cent per unit less for his electricity.

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"In effect, therefore, these two changes cancel each other out."

In addition to the two major changes, the spokesman said that there would also be a minor change in the rate reduction rebate, under which a slightly lower rebate would now be passed on to the general tariff consumer.

He explained that under the scheme of control, a rebate is payable to the customer from a fund maintained by the Company. Over the last few years, this fund has been progressively decreasing, because the amount paid into it by the Company, under the terms of the arrangement with the Government, has been less than the amount paid out to consumers in the form of rebate.

"The change that will be implemented to correct this imbalance will affect the consumer only very slightly," he said. "The smallest bills will not be affected at all, and no bill will increase by more than \$3.50."

He added that to date no proposals for changes in tariff had been submitted to the Government by the Hong Kong Electric Co. Ltd.

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POWER TO ENTER BUILDINGS TO ENFORCE LIGHTING LAW

Police officers may now enter private commercial premises for the purpose of enforcing the Emergency (Advertising, Display and Floodlighting) (Restriction) Order 1973.

Authority to enter these buildings to enforce the lighting restrictions has recently been given by the Director of Oil Supplies, Mr. Roy Porter.

The authority does not, however, permit Police officers to enter or search domestic premises except with further specific approval given by the Director.

Since the Order came into effect last December, the Police have prosecuted over 200 offenders whose advertising and display lights are located in public places.

Shops and other commercial concerns using these lights inside shopping arcades and private commercial buildings outside the permitted hours could not be prosecuted hitherto as the Police had no powers of entry into them.

With the authorization, Police officers can now issue summonses to offenders located in all these premises.

Furthermore, they may enter shops for the purposes of checking on the interior display lighting.

"Many shops located in arcades have so far been ignoring the Order," Mr. Porter said.

"They are now much more likely to be prosecuted as a result."

He stressed, however, that the authorization should not be regarded as a further restriction but only as a fairer application of the present regulations.

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CONSUMER ADVISORY SERVICE

Daily Guide To Wholesale Market Prices And Supplies

The following prices were realised today (Tuesday) at sales under the Rice Control Scheme and at the Vegetable Marketing Organisation Wholesale Market and the Fish Marketing Organisation Wholesale Market at Cheung Sha Wan, Kowloon:

Supplies and Wholesale Prices of Rice

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price (\$/catty)</u>
<u>China Rice</u>		<u>Average</u>
See Mow -- old crop	Good	--
-- new crop		--
S.C.Jion -- new crop	Good	1.78
Po Hgai	Good	1.47
Chu Cho	Good	--
<u>Thai Rice</u>		
100% Whole	Good	--
10-15% Broken	Good	--
A1 Super Extra	Good	--
A1 Super	Good	1.42
Whole Glutinous	Good	--
<u>U.S. Rice</u>	Good	--
<u>Australian Rice</u>	Good	1.72
<u>Pakistan Rice</u>	Good	--
<u>Taiwan Rice</u>	Good	1.52

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Supplies and Wholesale Prices of Marine Fish

<u>Species</u>	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price (\$/catty)</u>		
		<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Average</u>
Golden Thread	Normal	5.00	3.20	4.00
Big-Eyes	Good	2.70	1.00	1.80
Squid	Limited	6.20	3.50	4.00
Hair-Tails	Good	3.40	1.20	2.80
Lizard Fishes	Normal	2.90	1.20	1.80
Croakers	Good	2.40	1.20	2.00
Conger-Pike-Eels	Normal	3.30	2.40	3.00
Melon Coat	Limited	3.20	2.00	2.80
Breams	Limited	6.00	3.50	5.00
Yellow Belly	Good	2.40	0.80	1.20
Mackerels	Limited	4.50	3.50	4.00
Red Goat Fish	Good	2.50	0.70	2.00
Fork-Tail	Good	1.60	1.00	1.40
Horse-Head	Limited	7.00	4.00	5.50
Melon Seed	Normal	3.10	1.70	2.80
Pomfrets	Scarce	10.00	8.00	9.00
Garoupas	Normal	7.00	5.50	6.00
Yellow Croaker				

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Supplies and Wholesale Prices of
Locally Produced Vegetables

<u>Type</u>	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price (\$/catty)</u>		
		<u>High</u>	<u>Low</u>	<u>Average</u>
Flowering cabbage	Scarce	2.5	1.0	1.8
White cabbage	Limited	1.2	0.4	0.8
Chinese Lettuce	Limited	1.4	0.5	1.0
Chinese Kale	Limited	2.0	0.8	1.4
Spring onion	Limited	1.0	0.4	0.8
Spinach	Limited	1.5	0.5	1.2
Water cress	Limited	1.6	0.5	1.0
Leaf mustard cabbage	Limited	0.8	0.3	0.6
Tomato	Limited	1.5	0.5	1.0

Supplies and Wholesale Prices of Pork (Live weight)

	<u>Availability of Supply</u>	<u>Wholesale Price (\$/picul)</u>
		(Average)
Pork	Good	300