



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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

Monday, March 17, 1997

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
Recommendations made on prevention of O157:H7	1
Development of captive insurance in Hong Kong	3
No change to illegal immigration policy	5
Guidelines for employers to eliminate age discrimination	6
HAD studies setting up Building Management Resource Centre	7
Summary Guide on Civil Service Regulations published	9
Stamps with Queen's head not valid from July	10
Environmental booklet to help manufacturers published	10
Germany/Hong Kong Joint Research Scheme	11
Young prisoners receive Pitman Medals for outstanding achievement	12
British Forces Rugby Team face PLA	12
Water storage figure	13
Flushing water cut in Wan Chai and Causeway Bay	13
Water cut in Sheung Shui and Tsuen Wan	14
Hong Kong Monetary Authority tender results	15

Recommendations made on prevention of O157:H7

* * * * *

Thorough cooking of meat at the consumer end remains the most effective way to prevent infection by E.coli O157:H7 since the bacteria can be easily killed at a cooking temperature of 75 degree Celsius.

The advice was given by the Assistant Director of Health, Dr Leung Pak-yin, today (Monday) as he summarised findings of a recent case involving the detection of the bacteria in some minced beef samples taken at a retail outlet.

He said the Department believed that the case was an isolated incident since only two samples from the same retail outlet were found to be contaminated.

"All other forty-three samples/swabs and environmental swabs taken subsequently from the abattoir, wholesaler, and other retail outlets of the same department store had been tested negative."

The second sample tested positive belonged to the batch that had already been voluntarily surrendered and destroyed.

On the possible causes of contamination, Dr Leung said it could take place at the abattoir, during the transportation process and at the wholesaler or retailer levels.

At the abattoir, there was the chance of accidental puncturing of intestines or stomach of cattle by the cutting knife during the slaughtering process and contacts between the cattle's upper offal and lower offal during the handling process.

Cross contamination could also take place at the transportation process and the wholesaler stage due to improper storage of cattle heart, liver and beef together.

At the retailer end, it was likely that the food preparation equipment including the mincing machine had not been cleaned well allowing cross contamination from one batch to the other.

"Although it is recognised world-wide that total elimination of E.coli O157:H7 from fresh meat is impossible, the Department made a number of recommendations to minimise the chance of such contamination," Dr Leung said.

The recommendations included:

Abattoirs

- * More stringent measures should be taken to ensure internal organs of cattle do not have contact with carcasses
- * Cutting knives should be sanitised if they have punctured into intestines or stomach of cattle
- * All carcasses should be washed by pressurised water before release from abattoirs
- * Hearts and livers of cattle should be thoroughly washed before release.
- * Meat swabs will be taken from abattoirs regularly for analysis to monitor the effectiveness of control

Transportation Process

- * Operators should be reminded that meat carcasses and internal organs should be separated during transportation

Fresh Provision Shops

- * Internal organs and carcasses of cattle should be separated during the handling and storage process
- * Fresh beef should be thoroughly washed before mincing
- * Mincing machines should be washed and sanitised after each session of operation and in no case less than twice each day
- * Meat trays should be washed and sanitised before being used for new batch of meat
- * General hygienic conditions should be improved

Dr Leung pointed out that a number of the above measures had already been implemented since the first detection of the bacteria in a meat sample.

He was satisfied that appropriate control measures had been taken immediately by all related parties to suspend the sale of the batch of beef in question and to conduct thorough cleansing of the possible contaminated places and machines. He also noted that no food poisoning case associated with the bacteria had so far been reported.

"In view of the incident, the Department of Health will step up its sampling of food for testing of E.coli O157:H7 bacteria," Dr Leung said.

"The two municipal services departments will also strengthen its inspection of these shops and ensure that the recommendations are implemented."

He said that the public do not have to be unduly worried by the incident since beef is safe for consumption so long as it is cooked thoroughly. Health education on this aspect will be strengthened.

Public are welcome to use the Department's interactive voice and response system on "Hygiene Information For You", Tel No 2380 2580, for more information and preventive measures on food-borne diseases including E.coli 0157:H7.

End

Development of captive insurance in Hong Kong

* * * * *

The Government is committed to promoting the development of captive insurance and reinsurance business in Hong Kong, the Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang, said this (Monday) evening.

Addressing the annual dinner of the Hong Kong Federation of Insurers, Mr Tsang said that the insurance industry would have to face up to many challenges in the years ahead. Rapidly changing cultural values, an ageing population, an affluent middle class with better education and higher expectation, business mobility and severe competition were some of the more important issues the industry would need to tackle as it moved into the 21st century.

"The insurance industry is one of our major targets for promotion.

"We believe that the development of captive insurance in Hong Kong will widen the range of insurance options to both local and multinational enterprises. This would also bring into Hong Kong additional capital funding and job opportunities," Mr Tsang said.

Mr Tsang said the Secretary for Financial Services had set up a Working Group comprising representatives from the insurance industry who had professional knowledge and experience in insurance, risk management and financing.

"It has worked out a number of proposed measures aimed at encouraging the setting up of captive insurance companies in Hong Kong.

"These measures include regulatory concessions, such as the reduction of minimum capital and solvency margin requirements, and exemption from the requirement to maintain assets in Hong Kong which apply to ordinary insurers," he said.

These proposals are in the Insurance Companies (Amendment) Bill 1997 which the Legislative Council is currently examining.

The Financial Secretary said the coming into effect of the proposed Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme would provide the insurance industry with further scope for expansion.

"The Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme will generate about HK\$30 billion each year, which will need to be managed and invested. I am sure that the insurance industry will be able to benefit from this project," he said.

Turning to the point on self-regulation, Mr Tsang commended the work of the Federation of Insurers.

"The Federation has been both responsive and responsible towards the promotion of self-regulation.

"The Federation has made great efforts to promote public confidence in the industry by developing business ethics and practices on the one hand, and promoting the professionalism and integrity of insurance practitioners on the other," Mr Tsang said.

Citing the adoption of the common disclosure standard for investment-lined long term insurance policies as an example, Mr Tsang said it enhanced the transparency of the sales process by providing more information to prospective policyholders.

"It is also very encouraging to note that the Federation is prepared to consider extending these standards to non investment-linked long term insurance policies, which form the bulk of Hong Kong's long term insurance business.

"The Federation's work is also consistent with the Government's policy of keeping bureaucratic intervention in the operation of the insurance market to the minimum," Mr Tsang concluded.

End

No change to illegal immigration policy

In response to press enquiries about recent newspaper reports on illegal immigration, a Government spokesman said today (Monday) that there will be no amnesty for illegal immigrants (IIs) before or after July 1, 1997.

Stressing that there is no change to the illegal immigration policy, the spokesman said that all IIs found in Hong Kong would be repatriated immediately.

He said that the existing controls applied on both sides of the land border would not be eased post-1997.

"We will continue to take stern action against those caught in smuggling IIs. We will also continue our close liaison with the Chinese with a view to stopping the problem at source," he said.

The spokesman described as "deplorable" the snakeheads' total disregard of safety of pregnant women and young children.

He added that a system existed for entry into Hong Kong for settlement in an orderly manner through the one-way permit system.

According to the Government's estimate of the population of the children in China aged under 20 who would have right of abode in Hong Kong after June 30, 1997, all these eligible children would be able to come to Hong Kong before the end of 1998.

"There is no need for their parents to risk their lives to arrange their entries into Hong Kong illegally," the spokesman said.

End

Guidelines for employers to eliminate age discrimination

* * * * *

The Government has produced a set of draft practical guidelines and the first in a series of Announcement in Public Interest (API) encouraging employers to eliminate age discrimination in employment.

This is part of the Government's sustained programme of public education, publicity and self-regulation to tackle age discrimination in employment following the results of a public consultation exercise last year.

A spokesman for the Education and Manpower Branch said today (Monday): "The draft practical guidelines cover a wide range of employment situations including recruitment, advertising, employment agency services, selection, promotion and training as well as redundancy and retirement."

"Copies of the practical guidelines will be sent to all members of the Legislative Council (LegCo), the LegCo Manpower Panel, employer and employee organisations and other interested parties for comment," the spokesman said.

Besides advising employers on how to develop a set of consistent criteria to select qualified persons, irrespective of their age, in the recruitment, promotion and training, the guidelines also encourage employers and employment agencies to specify clearly in recruitment advertisements that their vacancies are open to suitably qualified persons of any age.

On dismissal and redundancy issues, the guidelines ask employers to ensure that conditions for access to voluntary departure or redundancy schemes, if any, are on equal terms for employees without giving consideration to their age.

Employers are also advised to review from time to time their company policy on retirement, and consider in particular whether a compulsory retirement age is necessary.

"We are confident that these guidelines, once finalised, will facilitate the elimination of discrimination in employment on the ground of age," the spokesman said.

As regards the API, which will be on television next week, the spokesman said this was only the first in a series of APIs putting across the message that it is ability that counts, not age.

The series of APIs will feature a number of authentic cases where middle-aged employees who have worked in a particular industry for many years have successfully secured a new job in a completely different line of work.

"The Government is now planning the production of a second series of APIs to focus on employment opportunities for younger persons," the spokesman added.

Reiterating that the Government is committed to the promotion of equal employment opportunities for workers irrespective of their age, the spokesman urge members of the public to support the Government's efforts in the coming months to tackle the issue.

"We believe that the most appropriate way to deal with age discrimination in employment is through a programme of public education, publicity and self-regulation," the spokesman said.

End

HAD studies setting up Building Management Resource Centre

* * * * *

A study is being conducted by an inter-departmental working group on the setting up of a resource/enquiry centre on building management to provide a set of comprehensive supporting services to owners' corporations (OCs) and building management personnel, the Director of Home Affairs, Mrs Shelley Lau, said today (Monday).

Speaking at a meeting of the Tsuen Wan Rotary Club, Mrs Lau said the working group would later submit the findings of the study and its recommendations to the Secretary for Home Affairs for consideration and implementation.

"The proposed resource centre would provide professional advice and reference materials on various aspects of building management, such as legal counsel, repair and maintenance of buildings, finance and personnel management.

"The Home Affairs Department (HAD) is inviting professional organisations to participate in the project to offer their professional advice to help solve management problems of private buildings. The organisations being invited include the Hong Kong Association of Property Management Companies, the Law Society of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors and the Hong Kong Society of Accountants."

Mrs Shelley Lau stressed that the Government was committed to helping owners to manage their buildings effectively, adding that a series of measures had been introduced to improve residents' living environment and their overall quality of life.

In addition to the study on the setting up of a building management resource/enquiry centre, the Government had adopted legislative means to help owners carry out their building management duties. For example, the "Building Management Ordinance" was amended in 1993 to provide a legal framework to encourage owners to form OCs and to outline their rights and responsibilities in handling building management matters.

"To promulgate the proper concepts of building management, HAD and its district offices have regularly organised seminars and training courses as well as produced booklets, leaflets and video tapes on the subject.

"HAD is also actively encouraging and assisting owners to form OCs. The staff pay regular visits to OCs once they are formed to help solve their management problems," Mrs Lau said.

As regards buildings already beset with management problems, Mrs Lau said they could resort to the Building Management Co-ordination Teams (BMCTs) which HAD has set up in nine districts since 1985. The teams offer practical advice and act as a co-ordinator with various Government departments in rendering assistance to OCs.

"Over the past 12 years, more than 1,000 buildings have been selected for inclusion in the improvement programme. Over 400 have seen marked improvements and the Department will continue to work on the remaining buildings on the action list.

"The BMCTs have tried every year to get more buildings in the district to join the improvement programme so that more owners can benefit from it.

"On the staff training programme, HAD has included relevant legal aspects and offered guidelines to help them handle enquiries from OCs and owners.

"The Department has already obtained approval to increase the number of liaison officers by 10 per cent and to deploy more staff to the building management team in the headquarters in the coming financial year," she added.

End

Summary Guide on Civil Service Regulations published

* * * * *

The Civil Service Branch announced today (Monday) the birth of a Summary Guide on Civil Service Regulations.

The Civil Service Regulations, which is a 6-cm thick, A4 sized, heavy rule book on civil service conditions and conduct, has now been summarised into a 2-cm thick Guide in A5 size.

The Summary Guide covers the major provisions of the Civil Service Regulations in simple language. It is intended to be a handy and user-friendly reference tool, with clear subject index, for use by both management and staff.

The Acting Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service, Ms Grace Lui said that the Guide had been produced to explain civil service regulations in simpler, clearer and easier to understand terms.

"About 15,000 copies of the Guide (8,500 in Chinese and 6,500 in English) will be distributed to different government offices and units. This will hopefully enable easy access by all civil servants," she said.

The Staff Side representatives of the four Central Consultative Councils have participated in the chapter-by-chapter examination of the draft Summary Guide, production of which has taken some 12 months to complete.

"The Staff Side representatives have tendered invaluable advice and made significant contributions in the process," Ms Lui said.

"The Summary Guide is not a replacement of the Civil Service Regulations. The Civil Service Regulations remains the authoritative and authentic document," she added.

End

Stamps with Queen's head not valid from July

* * * * *

The Postmaster General, Mr Robert Footman announced today (Monday) that Hong Kong postage stamps bearing the Queen's portrait or the Royal Cypher will no longer be valid for postage as from July 1, 1997.

Arrangements will be made for customers to exchange these postage stamps if they wish for current definitive stamps of an equivalent value during the period from July 3 to 31, 1997. Details will be announced closer to the time.

End

Environmental booklet to help manufacturers published

* * * * *

The Industry Department has published the 1997 edition of its environmental booklet entitled "A Guide to Pollution Control Legislation Affecting Manufacturing Industries".

The Guide, first published in 1992, aims to assist manufacturers by providing basic information on environmental measures which may affect them, and where technical advice may be obtained.

The Guide provides a summary of Hong Kong's environmental legislation, and includes reference to major international environmental measures which may affect Hong Kong manufacturers, such as the ISO 14000 standards.

"To assist manufacturers in complying with environmental legislation, the Guide also includes information on support services available to manufacturers on environmental matters," a spokesman for the Department said today (Monday).

"Apart from useful addresses and telephone numbers for more detailed enquiries on different environmental legislation, the Guide contains a list of organisations which provide technical advice and training on environmental matters," the spokesman said.

The Guide will be distributed free of charge to major industrial and trade associations and 5,500 manufacturers most likely to be affected by environmental measures.

End

Germany/Hong Kong Joint Research Scheme

* * * * *

The Research Grants Council (RGC) announced today (Monday) that 25 research proposals have been awarded grants totalling HK\$1 million under the Germany/Hong Kong Joint Research Scheme.

Designed to encourage collaborative research between scholars in Hong Kong and Germany, the Germany/Hong Kong Joint Research Scheme is a pilot scheme introduced by the RGC and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in June 1996.

"The response to the pilot scheme has been very encouraging", Prof Ping Ko, Chairman of the RGC said.

There were 104 applications covering a wide range of subjects seeking more than HK\$10 million.

Under the Scheme, applications must be submitted jointly by a full-time academic staff member from a University Grants Committee-funded institution in Hong Kong and a similarly qualified academic from a university or research institution in Germany.

A joint selection committee comprising six members, three from Hong Kong and three from Germany, selected 25 out of the 104 research proposals for funding support. "The quality of the research proposals was generally very high", Prof Ko said.

Those funded cover such disciplines as molecular biology, biochemistry, physical sciences, environmental conservation, information engineering, language, education and religion, the subjects of which are of relevance to Hong Kong and Germany.

The grants provide the researchers with return air passages, accommodation and subsistence allowance to enable them to visit their research partners to discuss or conduct research projects.

The RGC and the DAAD have agreed to continue with the Scheme next year with at least the same level of funding.

The RGC also operates a joint research scheme with the UK which has been running since 1991.

The joint research schemes are part of the RGC's continuing efforts to develop the research culture in Hong Kong and increase opportunities for exchanges among members of the Hong Kong and the international academic communities.

The RGC is established under the aegis of University Grants Committee and functions as an advisory body within its organisational structure.

End

Young prisoners receive Pitman Medals for outstanding achievement

* * * * *

Two young prisoners who achieved outstanding results in public examinations in English for Speakers of Other Languages administered by Pitman, will receive their "Pitman Medals" at a certificate presentation ceremony at the Lai King Training Centre on Wednesday (March 19).

The two outstanding pupils are inmates of the Pik Uk Correctional Institution, and they, along with 28 inmates of Lai King Training Centre, will receive their awards from High Court Judge, Mr Justice Leong.

The two achieved first class pass in public examinations of the Pitman Qualifications held in April last year.

Twenty-eight inmates of Lai King also passed in examinations in English for Speakers of Other Languages; Practical Word Processing and Book keeping and accounting. Fourteen of the inmates also achieved the First Class Award.

End

British Forces Rugby Team face PLA

* * * * *

For the first time in their sporting history the British Forces will "scrum down" against the People's Liberation Army (PLA) at Happy Valley tomorrow (Tuesday).

Ideological differences will be put to one side and the international language of rugby will take over when the Royal Highlanders, drawn mainly from the 1st Battalion The Black Watch (1BW), meet the PLA's Sports Institute, from Guangzhou, in the first round of the Carlsberg Tens at the Hong Kong Football Club Stadium.

Colour Sergeant Billy Paterson, captain of the Royal Highlanders, said his men are looking forward to the match. "It's a privilege for us to have been drawn to play the PLA and we expect an exciting match," he said. "We're also hoping that after the game we can share a few refreshments with them."

Also attending this historic match will be Commander British Forces, Major General Bryan Dutton, and the Commanding Officer of 1BW, Lieutenant Colonel Alasdair Louden. Over 50 supporters from the Battalion are expected to be on hand to cheer their team on.

The British Forces and the PLA previously met at Borneo Lines, Sek Kong, in April 1996, when they combined forces in a rugby match against the visiting Kidderminster Carolians.

End

Water storage figure

* * * * *

Storage in Hong Kong's reservoirs at 9 am today (Monday) stood at 78.4 per cent of capacity or 459.317 million cubic metres.

This time last year the reservoirs contained 462.438 million cubic metres of water, representing 78.9 per cent of capacity.

End

Flushing water cut in Wan Chai and Causeway Bay

* * * * *

Flushing water supply to some premises in Wan Chai and Causeway Bay will be suspended from 11 pm on March 20 (Thursday) to 6 am the following day for alteration works on watermains.

The suspension will affect all premises bounded by Convention Avenue, Fenwick Pier Street, Arsenal Street, Lockhart Road, Percival Street, Leighton Road, Gloucester Road and Hung Hing Road.

End

Water cut in Sheung Shui and Tsuen Wan

* * * * *

Fresh and flushing water supply to some premises in Sheung Shui will be suspended from 11 pm on Thursday (March 20) to 6 am the following day for waste detection work on watermains.

The suspension will affect all premises at Kwu Tung section of Castle Peak Road, including Shek Chai Ling, Tung Fong, Tong Kok, Fung Kong, Fong Kong Shan, Kwu Tung, Ho Sheung Heung, Tsung Yuen, Ma Tso Lung, Ma Tso Lung San Tsuen, Lo Wu Camp and Lo Wu Rifle Range.

Meanwhile, fresh water supply to some premises in Tsuen Wan will also be suspended from 11 pm on Thursday to 6 am the following day for waste detection work on watermains.

The affected areas will include 38-216 Sai Lau Kwok Road, 344-350 Castle Peak Road and 1-27 Mei Wan Street.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority tender results

* * * * *

Tender date	:	17 March 1997
Paper on offer	:	EF Notes
Issue number	:	5203
Issue date	:	18 March 1997
Maturity date	:	18 March 2002
Coupon	:	6.55%
Amount applied	:	HK\$2,440 MN
Amount allotted	:	HK\$500 MN
Average price accepted (yield)	:	99.14 (6.87 PCT)
Lowest price accepted (yield)	:	99.13 (6.87 PCT)
Pro rata ratio	:	About 29 PCT
Average tender price (yield)	:	99.10 (6.88 PCT)
End		