



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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MECAB to adjudicate minor employment claims

The Minor Employment Claims Adjudication Board (MECAB) is set up to provide a quick, simple and inexpensive adjudication service to augment that of the Labour Tribunal so that the latter can concentrate on more complicated cases, the Commissioner for Labour, Mr Stephen Ip, said today (Saturday).

The MECAB, established by the Labour Department under the MECAB Ordinance, came into operation yesterday (Friday).

The board will adjudicate minor claims arising from disputes of statutory or contractual rights of employment when settlement of such disputes cannot be achieved through conciliation of the department's Labour Relations Service (LRS).

"Claims involving not more than five claimants and the amount of claim for each claimant not exceeding \$5,000 will fall within the jurisdiction of the MECAB," Mr Ip said.

A number of Senior Labour Officers with adequate experience in labour laws and labour relations in Hong Kong have been appointed adjudication officers. They have been trained especially in the legal aspect of the job before taking up the appointment.

Mr Ip said hearings would be conducted in public in a simple and informal manner.

Either Chinese or English can be used during a hearing and no legal representation is allowed.

Mr Ip pointed out that the decisions of the adjudication officers could be reviewed.

"The adjudication officer may, on his own motion or on the application of a party to a claim, review an award made by him within 14 days.

"Parties to a claim may also appeal to the High Court against the adjudication officer's decision on the ground of point of law or question of jurisdiction," he explained.

Mr Ip urged parties to a dispute to approach the Labour Relations Service for conciliation service before lodging their claims with MECAB.

"Only when conciliation fails could they file their claims with the MECAB," he emphasised.

"Claimants of unsettled minor employment claims who have made an appointment with the Labour Tribunal for filing their claims will be notified individually by the MECAB to file their claims formally with the Board.

However, claims that have already been filed with the Tribunal before the establishment of the MECAB should continue to be handled by the Tribunal," he added.

The MECAB aims at hearing about 1,300 claims a year and conducting hearing within four to five weeks after a claim is filed.

The MECAB's office is located on 14th floor, Ocean Centre, 5 Canton Road, Tsim Sha Tsui.

For enquiries, please call 717 1771.

End/Saturday, December 24, 1994

Public understanding of Basic Law very important

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The task to enhance public understanding of the Basic Law is of paramount importance and significance, the Director of Home Affairs, Mr Joseph Wong, said today (Saturday).

Speaking at the opening ceremony of "The Future of Hong Kong '94 Carnival", Mr Wong said the Government had taken various actions to promote the mini-constitution.

"For example, a teaching kit on the Basic Law has been produced and distributed to schools by the Education Department, and a lot of information on this subject is kept in the Civic Education Resource Centre for public information.

"Moreover, the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education (CPCE) will, in conjunction with other organisations, organise a series of activities to increase awareness of the Basic Law, such as an essay competition as well as publishing booklets on the Basic Law," he said.

In the year ahead, Mr Wong noted, CPCE would make the promotion of the rule of law one of the major themes of its work to enhance public understanding of and respect for the rule of law.

He said: "It is essential that the essence and spirit of the rule of law in Hong Kong must be preserved if Hong Kong is to maintain its stability and prosperity in order to enable its people to live a happy life.

"The rule of law in Hong Kong comprises a legal system which is strict, fair and open with an independent judiciary.

"All people, regardless of their financial position, occupation and status, are treated equally before the law."

In this regard, the Basic Law has provided very strong protection for the legal and judicial system and it is worthwhile to explain in greater detail the relevant provisions to the public, he added.

End/Saturday, December 24, 1994

Nominations invited for Commonwealth Youth Service Awards

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The Commonwealth Youth Service Awards Scheme for 1995 is now open for nominations.

A spokesman for the Home Affairs Branch today (Saturday) said nominations should be made through youth organisations, tertiary institutions and voluntary agencies.

"We hope to select three projects to represent Hong Kong next year.

"Projects carried out by a small group of young people to serve a community need and set an example for other localities will be considered favourably," he said.

The scheme, organised by the Commonwealth Youth Programme, was introduced in 1985 to commemorate the International Youth Year.

It is designed to recognise achievements of groups of young people who have made outstanding contributions to tackling problems in their communities.

It is also meant to encourage and inspire other young people to work for the good of their communities.

The spokesman said: "Up to five awards will be made next year, two of which are set aside for groups working specifically on enterprise development initiatives.

"The winning team will be granted 1,000 pounds sterling as well as medallions and certificates."

Youth groups in Hong Kong have won the awards several times in the past. The latest one was the Green Express in 1994.

A selection board will be formed in January next year to select eligible projects to represent Hong Kong.

Enquiries on the scheme can be made on 835 1736.

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Flag day on next Wednesday

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A permit has been granted to the Road Safety Association Ltd for selling flags in public places next Wednesday (December 28), a spokesman for the Social Welfare Department said today (Saturday).

The flag day, originally scheduled on July 23 this year, was cancelled because of the hoisting of the black rainstorm signal on that day.

Members of the public who have enquiries about the flag day may telephone 892 5319 or contact the department's hotline 343 2255.

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Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

	<u>\$ Million</u>	<u>Time (Hours)</u>	<u>Cumulative Change (\$ Million)</u>
Opening Balance in the account	1,978	09:30	+30
Closing Balance in the account	1,648	10:00	+30
Change Attributable to:		11:00	+30
Money Market Activity	+30	11:30	+30
Laf Today	-360	15:00	

Laf Rate 3.75% Bid/ 5.75% Offer TWI 121.8 *+0.0* 24.12.94

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Success in energy saving

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The Government has taken the lead to show that significant saving in electricity bill can be achieved through more efficient use of energy in offices.

The success story comes from the towering offices block of the Wanchai Tower that has chalked up more than \$520,000 saving in electricity consumption in a 12-month period ending February 1994 compared with the previous 12 months.

This was achieved through the implementation of recommendations made in an Energy Management Study commissioned by the Architectural Services Department.

These include installation of automatic devices to shut down equipment and lighting when not required; introduction of an energy conservation checklist for staff to switch off unnecessary light and heat-producing equipment; shut-down of non-essential lifts after office hours and optimising the use of the ventilation and air-conditioning systems.

A Government spokesman said the success of the trial scheme had prompted the administration to extend these energy-saving measures to more than 30 other Government buildings.

"The experience gained in the implementation of Energy Management Opportunity (EMO) in Wanchai Tower is being applied to government buildings whenever possible.

"Similar studies have been carried out for both the Immigration Tower and Revenue Tower. Funds are being sought for implementing EMOs requiring capital investment for these two buildings.

"Likewise, energy studies are also being carried out for over 30 other government buildings and funds are being sought for implementing EMOs requiring capital investment.

"Many EMOs involving general housekeeping only are already being implemented," the spokesman said.

End/Sunday, December 25, 1994

Statutory holiday reminder

The Labour Department today (Sunday) reminded employers that January 1, 1995 (Sunday) is one of the 11 statutory holidays for employees.

Where the rest day of an employee falls on January 1, he should be granted a holiday the next day (January 2).

Under the Employment Ordinance, all employees, irrespective of their wage levels, are entitled to statutory holidays and must be paid for the day off if they have worked continuously for the same employer for three months or longer immediately before the statutory holiday.

Holiday pay should be equivalent to an employee's earnings on a full working day and should include basic wages as well as allowances that can be expressed in money terms such as meals and cost of living allowances.

Where the earnings vary from day to day, holiday pay should be the average daily earnings during every complete wage period, which could be between 28 and 31 days, preceding the holiday.

If an employee is required to work on a statutory holiday, he must be given an alternative day off within 60 days before or after that day.

Enquiries about statutory holidays may be made at the Labour Department's general enquiry telephone service on 717 1771.

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Architectural Services Department wins gold medal

The Architectural Services Department has won an international award for its conservation project of the Kun Ting Study Hall in Ping Hall.

The Architects Regional Council Asia awarded a gold medal to the department at the Sixth Asian Congress of Architects in the Philippines on December 14.

The aim of the award is to encourage and recognise exemplary work done by architects in Asia.

The study hall was built in 1870 by descendants of the Tang clan to commemorate their 21st generation ancestor, Tang Kun-ting. It had been used for both ancestral worship and education.

The study hall was restored by the department to its original splendour in 1991.

The restoration project also won the President Prize of the Hong Kong Institute of Architects in 1991.

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40 new building plans approved in October

The Buildings Department approved 40 building plans in October this year.

Of the plans, 21 are for Hong Kong Island, six for Kowloon and 13 for the New Territories.

The approved plans include 17 for apartment and apartment/commercial developments, 10 for commercial developments and three for factory and industrial developments.

In the same month, consent was given for work to start on 21 building projects, which involve 16,364.8 square metres of usable domestic floor area and 88,263.5 square metres of usable non-domestic floor area.

The declared cost of new buildings completed in the month totalled about \$2,144 million.

Of the buildings certified for occupation in the month, usable floor areas for domestic and non-domestic uses are 56,789.1 square metres and 180,827.7 square metres respectively.

In the same month, the department issued 25 Occupation Permits - nine for Hong Kong Island, seven for Kowloon and nine for the New Territories.

In addition, six demolition consents involving nine buildings were issued.

The Buildings Department's Control and Enforcement Division received 701 complaints of unauthorised building works, carried out 2,021 inspections and issued 835 Removal Orders on unauthorised works.

The department's Dangerous Buildings Section also inspected 1,058 buildings and obtained seven Emergency Closure Orders from the court.

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