



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Statement by the Chief Secretary

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The following is a statement by the Chief Secretary, Mrs Anson Chan, after meeting the Director of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, Mr Lu Ping, in Peking today (Friday):

I have had a very useful and businesslike meeting with Director Lu Ping.

Mr Lu and I exchanged views on a wide range of key transitional issues, covering political as well as economic matters. We also followed up on a number of subjects which were discussed when we last met in Hong Kong earlier this month.

On co-operation with the Preparatory Committee (PC), I gave Mr Lu the preliminary response of HKG to the list of items for co-operation handed over to the Liaison Office by the PC secretariat. HKG have been able to provide assistance on some of the items. As for the other items, I explained to Mr Lu that we would require further clarification before we could take forward our consideration. I also reiterated to Mr Lu HKG's readiness to co-operate on the basis of our three established parameters. Both sides agreed that the Liaison Office and the PC Secretariat should maintain dialogue.

On the civil service, I told Mr Lu that my civil servant colleagues had found the public statement issued after the recent meeting at The Hague between the two Foreign Ministers reassuring. In particular, they welcomed China's agreement that continuity of the civil service was vital to a successful transition, that all civil servants were welcome to stay on to work for the SARG, and that civil servants should remain loyal to the people of Hong Kong and to HKG before 1 July 1997 and to the SARG thereafter. I expressed the hope that both sides would continue to build on that to maintain the morale and confidence of the civil service. Mr Lu fully agreed with my sentiments. He also repeated the hope that all civil servants would stay on to serve the SARG.

On the co-operation with the Chief Executive (Designate), we had some initial exchange of ideas. I made clear to Mr Lu that we would be offering positive co-operation and would provide the CE (Des) with sufficient support, whilst ensuring the morale of civil service and the effective administration of Hong Kong. Both sides agreed to continue discussion.

One of the subjects we also discussed was the Chinese proposal for a provisional legislature. There remains, of course, a fundamental difference between the two sides on this question. But we also agreed to try and find common ground. Mr Lu assured me there would not be a second power centre in Hong Kong and that the work of the PC would not interfere with the effective administration of Hong Kong.

I conveyed to Mr Lu the community's concern over Hong Kong's future economic autonomy and, in that context, urged for early Chinese agreement to the six mobile telephone licences. Mr Lu reaffirmed that Hong Kong would have autonomy in handling its own economic and financial affairs, as guaranteed by JD and BL. He also undertook to look into the question of the mobile telephones.

I took the opportunity to inform Mr Lu that a study conducted by the Airport Authority indicated that there was a strong case to bring forward the commissioning of the second runway at Chek Lap Kok to end 1998. I expressed to Mr Lu HKG's confidence that the AA would do this cost-effectively. Mr Lu said that the Chinese side had no problem with the project, and suggested that before we put the proposal to the Airport Committee for confirmation, we should brief the Economic Sub-group of the PC. This we will do soon..

All told, the meeting has achieved some useful progress on some of the key transitional issues. Mr Lu and I agreed that we should maintain contact, and that the two sides should step up and intensify co-operation in the final 14 months before the transition.

End

Renewal of China's MFN status vital to HK: Governor

* * * * *

Unconditional renewal of China's Most Favoured Nations (MFN) trading status and the continuance of the policy of engagement with China by the United States is the unanimous view not just of the business community, but of Hong Kong as a whole, the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, said.

Speaking at a luncheon organised by the General Chamber of Commerce today (Friday), Mr Patten said he would put Hong Kong's case for China's MFN renewal with two arguments during his visit in the US next week.

First, the preservation of the principal of free trade.

The Governor said Hong Kong owed its success not only to the hard work and enterprise of the workforce and business community, but also free trade - access to the US market in the post-war years - which gave the territory a big break. So, what concerns Hong Kong most is whether the US and China, the territory's two largest trading partners, can establish and maintain a normal trading relationship.

"Withdrawal of MFN would create an abnormal trading relationship between the United States and China, and that, it seems to me, is in no one's interests, certainly not Hong Kong's," he said.

"But I believe that MFN should not be used as a weapon. It should not be used as a bargaining counter for progress on other issues. Hong Kong, and its Governor, believe in free trade absolutely."

He said that the policy of engagement with China adopted by the US was the only policy which offered the possibility of making progress on the full range of issues in the relationship between these two countries.

The second argument is the preservation of jobs and incomes in Hong Kong.

Mr Patten noted that Hong Kong was now so closely integrated with the Chinese economy that anything which threatened the trade relationship between China and US threatened livelihood in Hong Kong.

If MFN is not renewed, Hong Kong will lose about 90,000 jobs and up to half of the forecast annual growth in GDP.

He stressed that while Hong Kong's economy was famously flexible, the blow caused by a loss of MFN would come at a time when the territory was particularly vulnerable to shocks to confidence about its future prospects.

"So, the message I shall be taking to the United States is that if you want to help Hong Kong, the best way to do so is by renewing MFN and by continuing the policy of engagement with China," he said.

Regarding Hong Kong's role as an international trade and business centre, Mr Patten said the territory was to enjoy a high degree of autonomy after the transfer of sovereignty.

This autonomy means that Hong Kong can continue to be treated by the world as a separate trade centre, to put its own arguments, to present its own distinct viewpoint and to press for its own best interest.

"I think it follows that before the transfer of sovereignty, we must do nothing to jeopardise this autonomy or our credibility, particularly on an issue as crucial to Hong Kong's future as free trade," he added.

The Governor noted the reason why Americans should care what would happen in Hong Kong was a straightforward question of commercial interest - the huge American investment in the success of Hong Kong, the hundreds of American firms, and the over 30,000 Americans who make a contribution to every aspect of lives in the community of Hong Kong.

"I think Hong Kong's continuing success as a two-way bridge from China to the rest of the world, I think Hong Kong's continuance in that role matters enormously to everyone's relationship with China in the next few years, not just the United States.

"I think the relationship between Peking and Hong Kong goes right to the heart of a lot of the issues which are going to decide what sort of country China is in the next generation," Mr Patten said.

End

Transcript of Governor's Q&A session

* * * * *

Following is a transcript of the question-and-answer session by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, following his speech at the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce luncheon today (Friday):

Question: Your Excellency, I will start the questions (inaudible) unconditional renewal of MFN status for China. That country being a so-called non-market economy, such renewal has to take place annually. Will you also be lobbying for the repeal of the Jackson/Vannick Act which says that such economies have to apply once a year, so that in other words if MFN status were granted it would be of a permanent nature rather than having to go back each year and ask for a further term of 12 months?

Governor: I hope it follows from what I have said that I believe very strongly that turning the economic relationship between China and the United States into an annual battle, a battle which conceivably becomes more difficult in presidential election years - I think it is not without some significance that the last year as difficult as this was 1992 - it doesn't seem to me that that is the best basis for any trading relationship, particularly one which matters so much to the rest of the world, not just Hong Kong.

But one thing at a time. And as I said to you, I certainly do not want to appear in the United States as a finger-wagging scold. I think the US Administration and US Congressmen are perfectly capable of working out what is in their own national interest. I am sure, looking as a well-wisher from outside, that it should be in their own national interest to see China as a full and fully committed member of the World Trade Organisation and a normal trading relationship between the United States and China. The sooner we can get that the better for all of us.

Question: Sir, in the past few days we have seen a seemingly new relationship between China and Russia arise. What impact do you think this will have on US Congress which is already sensitive?

Governor: It may have some, particularly it may have an effect on those congressmen who have not read that book that Harrison Salisbury wrote about 20 years ago in which he talked about the last, or was it the last but one, rapprochement - or was it the reverse? - between China and the Soviet Union as it then was. I don't think that any American politician should be too concerned about President Yeltsin's visit to China, nor in particular about the sorting out of a number of decades-old border disputes between China and Russia.

I realise that some of the interpretative comment on this successful visit will be used to stir up ancient anxieties and antagonisms but I really do not think that a successful visit by President Yeltsin should make people too worried or too anxious.

Europe needs to find the basis for a good relationship with Russia to the West, and is still struggling within the context of its discussions about the future of NATO to do that, and I think it is reasonable that China should sort out a reasonable relationship in the East as well.

Question: Governor, since the press and TV people are leaving --

Governor: They are leaving so that they can set up outside so that they can ask me questions as I walk past, which I won't answer because I have already made a speech, so --

I mean on that basis you may like to stay. It may be a particularly good question and I might not even be able to answer it.

Question: It might be a question that the press was willing to ask you but you might not answer. But since they are leaving, maybe I can ask you this question with closed-doors, Governor.

Did Anson Chan call you this morning and if so, can you tell us what she told you?

Governor: She did not call me this morning, either in her capacity as Chief Secretary or in her capacity as the wife of the Commandant of the Royal Hong Kong Auxiliary Police. She did not call me this morning but her meeting with Director Lu is not until this afternoon, so maybe she thought it better to talk to me after her meeting. And whenever she talks to me I am sure she will be even franker when she is back in Hong Kong than when she is talking on a telephone. I don't suggest anything.

Next question. Yes, there is one member of the press who is also, I am sure, a member of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce.

Question: In 'The Times' of London, Governor, you say that you would like members of this Chamber to press their American friends about MFN. Is there anything that you would like members of these Chambers to say to their friends in Peking about the continuation of Hong Kong's way of life and way of mind?

Governor: Of course! And this is an organisation which I know follows my speeches with considerable interest and I am sure they will be aware of my views about the relationship between Hong Kong's economic prosperity and its values as an open plural society. I think there are two particular areas where the business community can make a strong and important impact.

The first is in speaking out for Hong Kong's autonomy as an economic and trading city. I think that is exceptionally important. And it is a very important message for us to get across today, not least because some people out there in the world are a little sceptical about it. Some people start to ask whether they should really make all that much of a distinction between intellectual property legislation and policing in Hong Kong and what happens in China. Some people ask themselves questions about Hong Kong's autonomy in fiscal and monetary matters this side of 1997 and the other side. Some credit rating agencies ask those sort of questions as well. So I think it is very important that the business community, whatever views about other matters, should be up front there arguing the imperative of safeguarding Hong Kong's autonomy as an economic city.

Secondly, I think the business community - as I think it showed in the debate over the Court of Final Appeal - can and should make the case again and again about the fundamental importance of the rule of law for Hong Kong's way of life and for Hong Kong's success. One of the reasons why this great city has reached these undreamed of levels of prosperity is the effect of the rule of law and all of us must want to see that continuing and must speak out for it as well.

There is one other thing I would say which is more a question perhaps of attitude than specifics. I think that by and large there are two sort of unbelievable stories about Hong Kong and one which is not put as often which the rest of the world, when you try to put it, finds a good deal more credible.

You can take the view, as some do, that there is not a problem on the horizon - not a cloud in the sky, everything is going to be stunning. Do they believe that out there? Or you can take the view that it is all going to be an absolute calamity, all going to be a complete disaster. Should they believe that outside?

I think the truth is a lot more sensitive and a lot more sensible. I think the truth is that anybody in their right mind should be optimistic about Hong Kong, but pretty realistic in their optimism as well, recognising that there are some real difficulties in the months and years ahead but believing, as I do, that the one ingredient people always leave out when they give their assessment of Hong Kong is the people who live here.

People write about Hong Kong as though the six million people who live here are corks on the tide. Hong Kong is going to remain a very special place because the people who live here are very special. They are astonishingly resilient. They are economically wonderfully agile. They are also committed to a set of decent values which in my judgment represent the future in Asia not the past.

So, I do not deny that there are problems ahead and I think that it is more credible if you occasionally point to those as well. But because I believe and trust the people of Hong Kong I think that Hong Kong will, to borrow a phrase from my children, hack it and hack it extremely successfully.

Question: (inaudible) changes in relationship, one being that (inaudible) China has a relationship with France for the aeroplanes, and also it has been, in the papers, said that in Taiwan the tension has eased up a little bit. Do you think this will have an impact when you go to the United States as far as helping with the MFN situation?

Governor: Well, I am not sure what impact some of the contracts signed in France will have on lobbying by Boeing and McDonnell-Douglas in the United States. Look, I do not believe in getting politics and trade tangled up together. I do not think it works for other countries and I always raise an eyebrow when I see it suggested that China might be getting the two tied up together.

There is not, actually, all that much evidence that politics are what drive trade flows or shares of trade in China. But leaders from every country fly around the world and sign letters of intent and memorandum of understanding and then it is left for you guys - and ladies, to be politically correct - to try to turn those letters of intent and memorandum of understanding into real figures on a balance sheet. And that, as you know, is a more difficult job than the one that politicians have.

So, if I hope anything it is that the improvement of relations between China and other countries will help to create a better atmosphere for the debate on trade between China and the United States but I doubt whether recent events are very profound.

End

Improvements to Employees' Compensation Ordinance proposed

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The Government proposes to introduce a number of improvements to the Employees' Compensation Ordinance, including the extension of the Certificate System for determining the amount of compensation to all cases involving permanent incapacity, as well as the repeal of the Agreement System.

The proposals have been endorsed by the Governor-in-Council and details are contained in the Employees' Compensation (Amendment) Bill 1996 gazetted today (Friday).

A Government spokesman explained that under the existing provisions, there were two parallel systems for determining the amounts of compensation for permanent incapacity.

"For cases where the loss of earning capacity is not more than five percent, the amount is assessed and certified by the Commissioner for Labour (Certificate System); and for those where the loss of earning capacity is over five percent, the amount is agreed between the employer and the employee subject to the minimum level provided by the law (Agreement System).

"For cases settled by certificate, the Labour Department has pledged to issue a certificate within three weeks of the assessment of the loss of earning capacity by an assessment board.

"Experience in administering the Ordinance has revealed that the Agreement System involves a more time-consuming procedure as it requires both the employer and the injured employee to agree on the amount of compensation. The average time taken is 55 days.

"In order to reduce the lead-time in the assessment of claims and avoid the confusion caused by the existence of two systems, it is proposed to repeal the Agreement System and extend the Certificate System to all cases involving permanent incapacity," the spokesman said.

Another area of improvement involves the amendment of the definition of "dependants".

"The present provision covers only 'woman' and it is proposed to replace it by 'person' so that both sexes are entitled to equal protection.

"It is also proposed to extend the definition of 'member of the family' to cover parents-in-law, brothers-in-law and sons-in-law."

The Government also proposes to increase the levels of maximum fines for a number of offences. For some very serious offences, the maximum fine would be revised from \$20,000 to \$100,000. An example of a very serious offence is for an employer to terminate the contract of service or apprenticeship of an employee during incapacity.

"The proposed revision is to ensure sufficient deterrent effect and to maintain relativity with those offences of a similar nature under the Employment Ordinance," the spokesman said.

The levels of maximum fines were last revised in 1992.

End

Membership of Language Fund Advisory Committee extended

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The Government announced today (Friday) that the term of appointment of the membership of the Language Fund Advisory Committee will be extended to September 30, 1996.

A Government spokesman pointed out that the decision to extend the term of appointment is to enable the Committee to continue to discharge its functions until the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research is set up.

The Language Fund Advisory Committee was set up in May 1994 to advise the Government on policies and procedures governing the operation of the Language Fund under which financial resources are allocated for implementing approved projects to improve proficiency in the English and Chinese languages, including Putonghua.

The Fund is held in trust with an initial allocation of HK\$300 million under the Director of Education Incorporation Ordinance. To date, 74 projects at about HK\$97 million have been approved. Taking into account accrued interest earnings, the Fund now stands at HK\$241 million.

The Language Fund Advisory Committee is chaired by Professor Rosie Young and comprises 21 members including language experts, educationalists and representatives of the business sector.

They are Mr Chan Ming-kwan, Mrs Angela Cheung Wong Wan-yiu, Dr John Clark, Mr Kwan Ting-fai, Mr Ho King-on, Dr Richard Ho Man-wui, Dr Keith Johnson, Mrs Elim Lau, Dr Nancy S H Lee, Mr Leung Siu-tong, Mr Joshua Law, Dr Siu Ping-kee, Dr Daniel So Wing-cheung, Miss So Yan-lap, Mr Szeto Wah, Mrs Tai Lam Sau-mui, Ms Shirley Tang Siu-ling, Mr Clement Tao, Mr Michael Tien Puk-sun, Professor Benjamin Tsou Ka-yin and Mr Peter Wong Hong-yuen.

End

ExCo approves amendments to schools provident fund rules

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The Governor-in-Council has approved the amendments to the Rules governing the operation of the Grant Schools Provident Fund and the Subsidised Schools Provident Fund. The two Funds are statutory provident fund schemes open to serving grant schools and subsidised schools teachers. Each Fund is administered by its own Board of Control. A government spokesman said today (Friday) that it was necessary to update and streamline the accounting arrangements, and to remove certain transitional provisions.

The approved amendments seek to:

- (a) implement the market value basis of accounting for the Funds;
- (b) require the cost of administration of the Funds to be paid out of the income of the Funds;
- (c) clarify the types of investment that may be made by the Funds; and
- (d) remove certain transitional provisions.

The spokesman pointed out that the investments of the two Funds were currently carried at historical cost in the books of accounts which had no relevance to the financial position of the Funds.

"The Rules are amended to enable the investments of the Funds to be carried at market values. The amendment conforms to the international accounting standards and brings the Funds into line with arrangements for private sector schemes and in particular the Occupational Retirement Schemes Ordinance which requires disclosure of the market value of investments in the accounts," he said.

"Amendments are also made to allow the Funds to incur and pay for their administrative expenditure from its income by removing the requirement to charge administration costs of the Funds to the General Revenue in the first instance. This will add flexibility in the administration of the Funds.

"The wordings of Rule 10 of the Rules are also amended to clarify the types of the investment that may be made by the Funds."

The spokesman explained that certain transitional arrangements which were required when amendment was made in 1982 to change the qualifying period for benefits from 10 to five years with retrospective effect from 1980 were no longer needed. "The time element embraced by the Rules is no longer applicable for current teachers. All teachers who were first appointed to grant or subsidised schools during the period and were of the age 50 to 55 are no longer in service.

"These transitional provisions are therefore removed," the spokesman said.

End

EIA study for SSDS commissioned

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The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has commissioned, on behalf of the Drainage Services Department, a consultancy study to carry out an environmental impact assessment for the Strategic Sewage Disposal Scheme (SSDS).

The contract for the \$36 million study was awarded to the joint venture of Montgomery Watson Hong Kong Limited and Binhai Wastewater Treatment and Disposal (Hong Kong) Consultants Limited.

Speaking at the contract-signing ceremony today (Friday), EPD's Assistant Director, Dr Michael Chiu, said: "The study will evaluate and compare the various outfall and treatment options identified in the previous review study of SSDS Stage II.

"It will then determine the most preferred outfall location and the level of treatment for Stage II and remaining stages of the scheme needed to provide long-term protection for Hong Kong's waters in the most cost-effective manner."

The study would also identify possible sites for any additional sewage treatment facilities that might be required.

To be completed in 24 months, the study will be carried out in two phases. Phase I of the study will involve comprehensive surveys to collect water quality and ecological data, evaluate the identified treatment and outfall options, and select the preferred option.

Phase II will provide a schematic design and a comprehensive environmental impact assessment of the construction and operation impacts of the preferred option.

"The Government is currently implementing Stage I of the SSDS, which involves the construction of a deep tunnel sewage collection system for Kowloon and Hong Kong Island East, a chemically enhanced primary treatment works on Stonecutters Island and a short interim sewage outfall discharging into the western harbour," Dr Chiu said.

When completed in 1997, the system will collect and provide treatment to 70 per cent of the polluting flows now entering the main harbour area.

"While stage I work will bring about early improvements to the harbour, it is recognised that the problem of water pollution in the harbour will not be totally resolved until the full scheme is implemented," he said.

"There is therefore an urgent need to carry out the consultancy study so that an early decision on the implementation of the remaining stages can be made," he said.

Also present at today's contract-signing ceremony were the Managing Director of Montgomery Watson Hong Kong Limited, Mr Peter Chan, and the General Manager of Binhai Wastewater Treatment and Disposal (Hong Kong) Consultants Limited, Mr Liao Xiangui.

End

Legislative control on vehicle alarm systems

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The Governor in Council has approved the introduction of amending legislation into the Legislative Council to control vehicle alarm systems.

The Noise Control (Amendment) Bill 1996, gazetted today (Friday), seeks to limit the sounding of vehicle alarm to no more than five minutes in order to reduce noise nuisance, especially at night time, caused by repeated and continuous false activation of these alarms.

The Bill will require the registered owner of a vehicle to ensure that the alarm system in his vehicle will not emit audible signal unless the vehicle is physically interfered with. This is to prevent false activation of alarms caused by over-sensitive settings and improper installation.

The Bill will also introduce more stringent controls on the alarm systems installed in newly registered vehicles by prohibiting automatic re-alarms after an initial activation of the system. To guard against unauthorised entry, nonetheless, further activation of audible signal by the opening of doors, bonnet, boot or tailgate of the vehicle is allowed.

This provision will not be applied to existing vehicles because most of the alarm systems currently in use would need major modifications to meet the new requirement.

The proposed legislative control will enable enforcement action be taken against noise nuisance caused by the activating of vehicle alarms. The maximum fine for these offences is \$10,000. In the past two years, the Police received about 50-60 complaints a month about noise from alarms of unattended vehicles.

A spokesman for the Planning, Environment and Lands Branch said, "The proposed controls will have no significant financial implication on existing vehicle owners and only alarms which are prone to false activation would need to be checked.

"Most of the modification procedures to readjust the sensitivity settings are simple and cost very little to vehicle owners.

The control of alarm systems installed in premises will also be transferred from the Summary Offences Ordinance to the Noise Control Ordinance to consolidate noise control provisions on all intruder alarm systems.

"The Bill was endorsed by the Advisory Council on the Environment. A number of motor traders, accident insurance associations, major importers and agents of vehicle alarm systems also supported the proposed controls," the spokesman said. The Bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council on 8 May.

It is intended that the control on existing vehicle alarm systems will come into operation about three months after enactment of the Bill. The control on automatic re-arming of newly registered vehicles will be effective nine months after the Bill's enactment.

End

Appointments of SFC Non-Executive Directors

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The Secretary for Financial Services, Mr Rafael Hui, announced today (Friday) that the Financial Secretary, under delegated authority from the Governor, had re-appointed Mr Roderick Chalmers, Mr Vincent Cheng and Mr Robert Kotewall as Non-Executive Directors of the Securities and Futures Commission (SFC) for a further year in each case.

Under Section 5 of the Securities and Futures Commission Ordinance, the Governor shall appoint not less than eight directors of the Commission, half of whom shall be non-executive. At present, the Commission is served by five Non-Executive Directors.

The new terms of appointment of Messrs Chalmers and Cheng will end on April 30, 1997, and that of Mr Kotewall will end on May 31, 1997.

End

Cheung Sha Wan Outline Zoning Plan amended

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The Town Planning Board today (Friday) announced amendments to the draft Cheung Sha Wan Outline Zoning Plan.

A site at the junction of Fat Tseung Street and Fortune Street, with an area of about 2.2 hectares, has been rezoned from 'Open Space'(O) to 'Residential (Group A)' ('R(A)') for public housing development.

"The development will accommodate about 8,800 local residents who are going to be affected by redevelopment and demolition of old public housing estates in the district," a spokesman for the Town Planning Board said. To compensate for the loss of the 'O' site, the existing site of the Cheung Sha Wan Estate, which will soon be demolished, has been rezoned from 'R(A)' to 'O'.

"The new 'R(A)' site is more suitable for residential development as compared with the Cheung Sha Wan Estate site which is affected by the traffic noise of Lai Chi Kok Road," he explained.

The amendment plan (No S/K5/11) is now available for public inspection until May 17 during normal office hours at :

- * Planning Department, 16th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, Central, Hong Kong;
- * Tsuen Wan, Kwai Tsing and Sham Shui Po District Planning Office, 27th floor, Tsuen Wan Government Offices, 38 Sai Lau Kok Road, Tsuen Wan, New Territories; and
- * Sham Shui Po District Office, 6th floor, West Coast International Building, 290 Un Chau Street, Cheung Sha Wan, Kowloon.

Any person affected by the amendment plan may submit written objections to the Secretary of the Town Planning Board, c/o Planning Department, 13th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, Central, Hong Kong on or before May 17.

Copies of the draft plan are on sale at the Survey and Mapping Office, Lands Department, 14th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, Hong Kong and Kowloon Map Sales Office, ground floor, 382 Nathan Road, Kowloon.

End

Residential mortgage survey results for March

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Residential mortgage loans for the purchase of properties in Hong Kong continued to grow at a rapid pace in March, according to the results of the latest monthly survey conducted by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA).

The latest figures show that the total amount of outstanding mortgage lending by the 33 institutions in the survey increased by 1.6% (the same rate of growth as in February) to \$285 billion. The growth rate was in line with the monthly average of 1.6% over the last twelve months.

"The growth of residential mortgage lending in March reflected a continued rebound in activity in the property market," said Mr David Carse, the Deputy Chief Executive (Banking) of HKMA.

The annualised rate of growth in lending over the last three months increased to 18% from 17% in the three-month period to February. The twelve-month average of outstanding loans showed an annualised growth rate of 18.4%, compared with 17.2% in February.

The amount of new loans approved but not yet drawn increased by \$0.5 billion (6.9%) to \$7.6 billion in March. "Judging from these figures and the increased trading activity in both the primary and secondary market in March, the rapid growth of loans is expected to continue in April," said Mr Carse.

Lending for the purchase of properties in China increased by 1% to \$5.4 billion in March. Gross loans made in March increased both in number (to 342 from 185) and in amount (to \$154 million from \$88 million). New loans approved in March also increased both in number (to 363 from 260) and in amount (to \$153 million from \$149 million).

**Residential Mortgage Loans in Hong Kong
Results of Survey for March 1996**

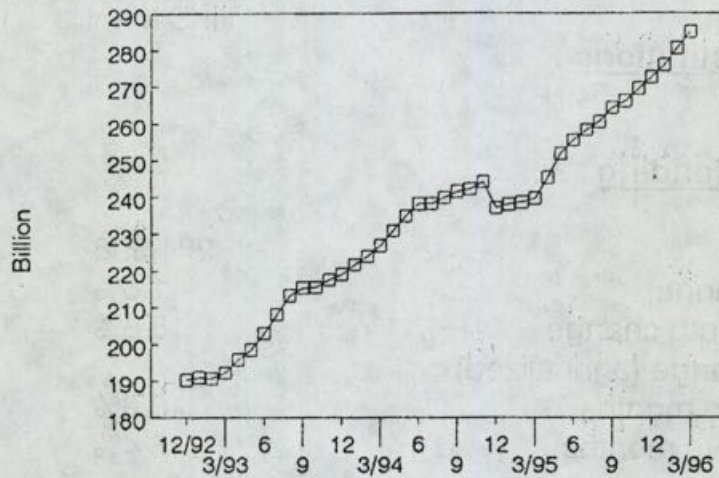
	Mar 1996 HK\$ Mn	Feb 1996 HK\$ Mn
<u>33 authorised institutions</u>		
1. <u>Outstanding lending</u>		
a. Amount	284,996	280,589
b. Monthly change	1.6%	1.6% **
c. Twelve-month change	18.6%	17.2% **
d. Average change (annualized)		
Latest three months	18.0%	17.0% **
Latest twelve months	18.4%	17.2% **
2. <u>Gross loans made during month</u>		
a. Amount	11,012	8,999
b. Number	7724	6762
3. <u>New loans approved during month</u>		
a. Amount	11,987	10,399
b. Number	7788	7243
4. <u>New loans approved during month but not yet drawn</u>		
a. Amount	7,630	7,139
b. Number	4810	4819

Note : ** Adjusted for the effect of the addition of a subsidiary of a banking group to the survey.

Chart A

RESIDENTIAL MORTGAGE LOANS IN HONG KONG
(33 institutions)

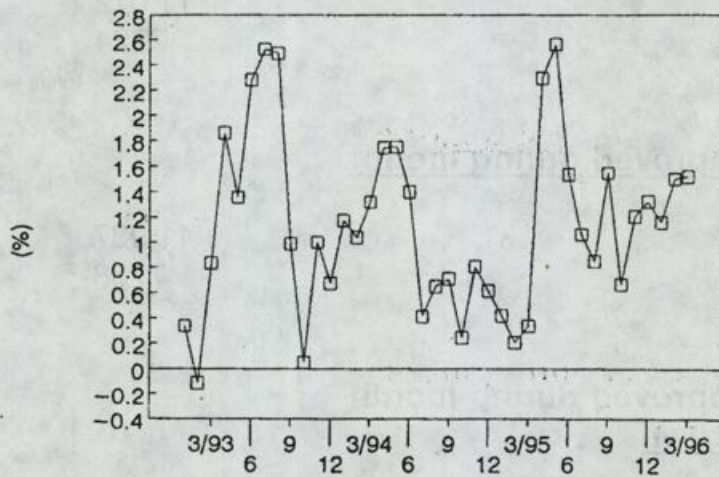
Outstanding balance at end of month



A1

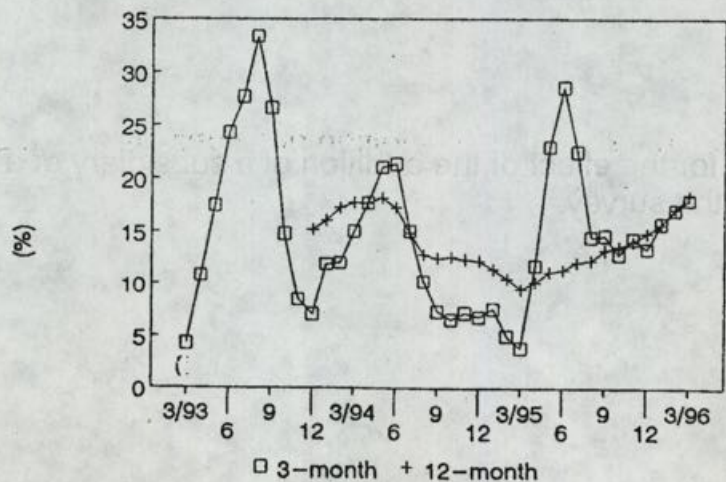
Remarks : The significant fall of outstanding balance in December 1994 was due to the effect of reclassification, securitization and sale of loans by some institutions.

Monthly growth rate



A2

3-month and 12-month moving average growth rate on annualised basis



A3

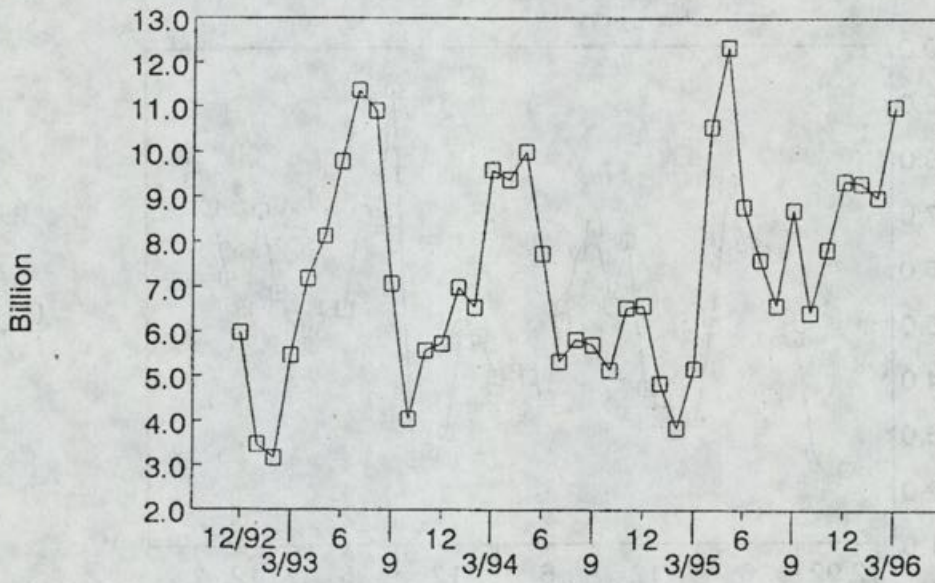
□ 3-month + 12-month

Chart B

RESIDENTIAL MORTGAGE LOANS IN HONG KONG
(33 institutions)

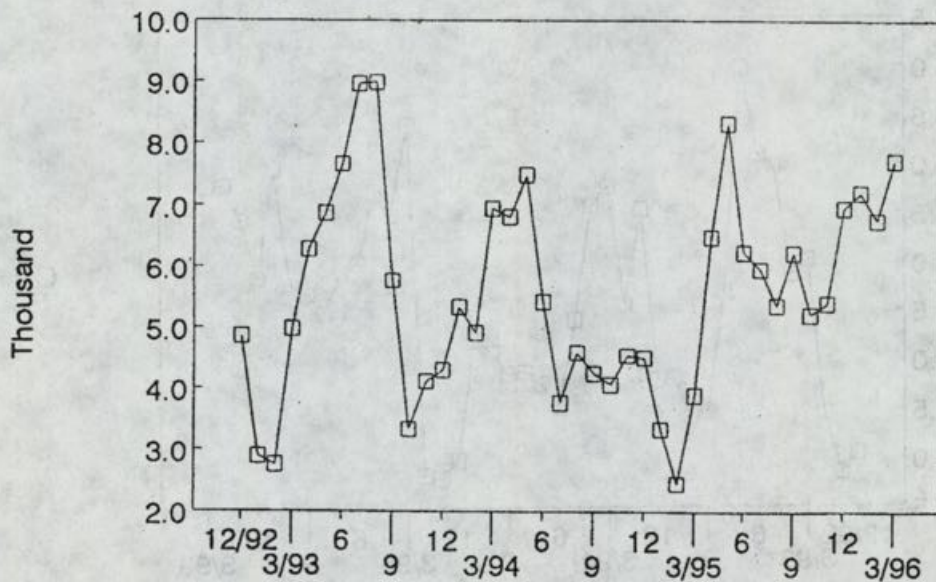
GROSS LOANS MADE DURING THE MONTH

Amount



B1

Number of accounts



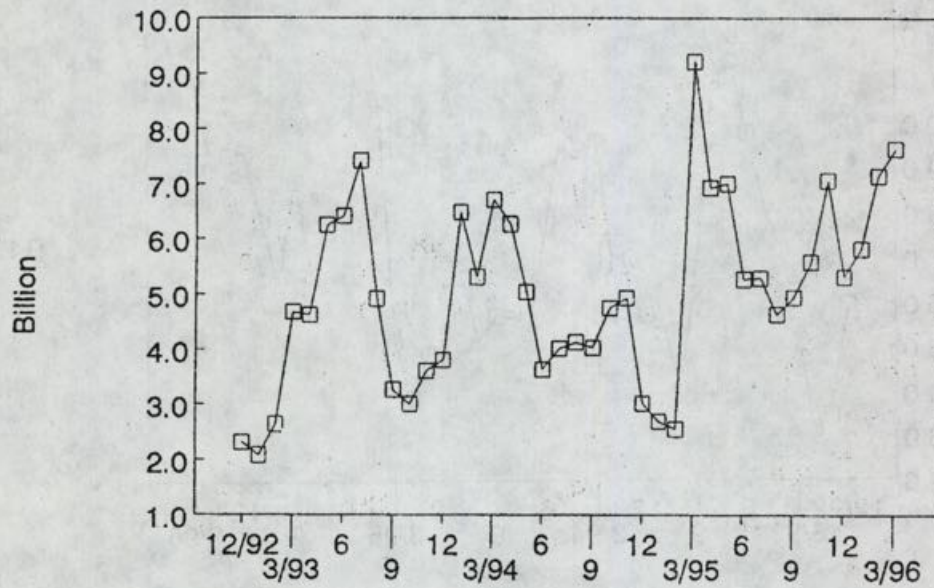
B2

Chart C

RESIDENTIAL MORTGAGE LOANS IN HONG KONG
(33 institutions)

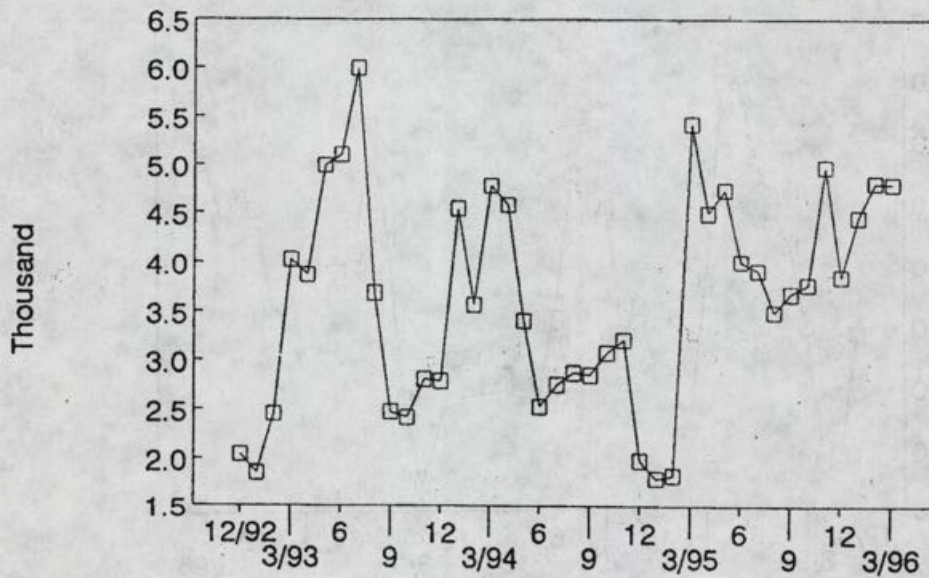
NEW LOANS APPROVED BUT NOT YET DRAWN

Amount



C1

Number of accounts



C2

Shipping movements in HK available on Internet

* * * * *

The Marine Department has become the first maritime administration to provide real-time shipping movements in port to a world-wide audience via the Internet.

Ocean-going vessels in the port of Hong Kong; those due to arrive in the next 36 hours; those have left during the last 36 hours and those have arrived within the last 36 hours are available from the Marine Department World-wide Web homepage on the Internet.

Speaking at a ceremony to mark the launching of this new service, the acting Deputy Director of Marine, Mr Tsang Man-ching, said that this latest service was one of the many new initiatives the Marine Department provided in line with its mission to promote excellence in marine services.

"Information on shipping movements in port not only vital to the operation of shipping companies, it is also popular with the insurance companies, banks, law firms, cargo forwarders, terminal operators, marine pilots, news media and also friends and relatives of seafarers," he said.

"Shipping movements in Hong Kong is instantly available to anyone with access to the Internet no matter you are a managing director of a shipping company sitting in a luxury office facing the harbour or the wife of a captain in a house thousand miles away from Hong Kong," Mr Tsang said.

"With about 200 ocean-going ships entering or leaving Hong Kong every day, and the average turnaround time is about 10 hours, we decide to update the reports on the shipping movements on the Internet every 30 minutes to keep the service live," he said.

A simple search facility incorporated into the system makes it more user-friendly. By keying in either the name of the ship, her callsign or her last port of call, the system will automatically display the relevant information.

The service is a joint effort of the department's Marine Officers and the staff of the Information Technology Services Department.

Shipping information has been popular with the business sector. Many companies including news media subscribe to this information provided by the Marine Department by paying a monthly fee of \$900. The subscription service will continue until there is no demand.

The address of the Marine Department Homepage is <http://www.info.gov.hk/mardep/>. The address to the shipping movements is <http://www.info.gov.hk/mardep/arridepa/arridepa.htm>.

The Marine Department World-wide Web homepage on the Internet was on line in mid-January this year. Since then more than 6,000 visits were recorded.

The page provides information on the port of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Shipping Register, a shipping directory and press releases, Marine Department notices, port statistics and the latest addition is the shipping movements.

End

Registration for asbestos personnel

* * * * *

Registration for asbestos consultants, contractors, supervisors and laboratories will start on May 1, the Government Gazette announced today (Friday).

"Those satisfying the qualifications as set out in the Air Pollution Control (Asbestos) (Administration) Regulation can apply to the Asbestos Administration Committee for registration," Senior Environmental Protection Officer of the Environmental Protection Department (EPD), Mr Perry Lai, said.

The Asbestos Administration Committee has been set up to assist in processing applications for registration and would conduct inquiry into complaints concerning misconduct of registered personnel, company or laboratory, he said. "With a registration system in place, people will have to engage registered asbestos consultants, contractors, supervisors and laboratories to carry out any work involving asbestos containing materials in their premises.

"As the registered parties have to conform to the codes of practice when carrying out asbestos related works, the risk of releasing asbestos fibres from such works would be greatly reduced," Mr Lai said.

Application forms for registration can be obtained from the EPD's Air Management Group, 33rd floor, Revenue Tower, 5 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai. Applicants would have to pay a fee of \$2,905 and an annual registration fee of \$910. Also gazetted today is a ban on the import and sale of the more hazardous types of asbestos, namely amosite and crocidolite, with effect from May 1.

"Any person who imports into Hong Kong or sells the banned asbestos is committing an offence and is liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and imprisonment for six months," Mr Lai said.

Enquiries on registration matters and banned asbestos can be made to the EPD on 2594 6232.

End

Traders of medicines with tiger/rhino ingredients fined

* * * * *

Chinese medicine traders are today (Friday) advised that trading in medicines containing or claiming to contain tiger or rhino ingredients without a licence could result in very heavy penalties if convicted by the court.

The reminder was issued by Agriculture and Fisheries Department's (AFD) conservation officer, Mr Cheung Chi-sun, after two traders were recently convicted and fined \$250,000 and \$150,000 respectively for possessing medicines claiming to contain tiger or rhino ingredients.

Mr Cheung pointed out that under the Animals and Plants (Protection of Endangered Species) Ordinance, any person found guilty of importing, exporting or in possession of a highly endangered species for commercial purpose without a licence is liable to a maximum penalty of \$5 million fine and two years' imprisonment.

The control covers a wide variety of endangered species, including their parts, derivatives and medicines containing or claiming to contain tiger or rhino ingredients.

Both cases came to light in October last year when AFD field officers raided a traditional medicine shop each in Aberdeen and Sham Shui Po respectively.

In Aberdeen, 27 packets of medicines claiming to contain tiger or rhino ingredients were seized in a dispensary at Wah Fu Estate.

The case was heard in the Western Magistracy earlier this month when the dispensary's 65-year-old shop-owner pleaded guilty for possessing controlled medicine without licence. He was fined \$150,000. In the second case, AFD officers conducted an operation at a medicinal shop at Un Chau Street and seized a total of 76 packets of medicines claiming to contain tiger or rhino ingredients.

The 75-year-old shop operator was convicted after trial in the North Kowloon Magistracy last week and fined \$250,000. Summing up the case, the magistrate also remarked that it was a serious offence.

Mr Cheung believed the heavy fines would serve an effective deterrent for similar offences. He called on members of the public to refrain from buying medicines containing or claiming to contain tiger or rhino ingredients as possession of such medicines without a licence for personal use is already an offence.

He also urged the public to report any illegal activities on endangered species to AFD by calling 2733 2144.

In a related development, Mr Cheung pointed out that Information Services Department had produced for AFD an updated information leaflet entitled "Protect Endangered Species". Copies of the leaflet have been, and are being, distributed to traders, schools and related associations. Any person wishing to obtain a copy can contact the AFD's Fauna Conservation Unit, sixth floor, Canton Road Government Offices, 393 Canton Road, Kowloon.

End

\$11.1 billion sewage projects under construction

* * * * *

New sewage infrastructure projects valued at some \$11.1 billion are currently under construction by the Drainage Services Department with a further \$6.3 billion worth of projects in various stages of planning and design, the Director of Drainage Services, Mr Ng Yee-yum, said today (Friday).

Addressing the annual meet-the-media session at the Strategic Sewage Disposal Scheme (SSDS) Stage I site on Stonecutters Island, Mr Ng said that the sewage treatment plant under construction at Stonecutters was the largest in both Hong Kong and Asia.

"The plant's circular pumping station, with a capacity of pumping over 31 cubic metres of sewage per second, is the largest of its kind in the world. The two-tray sedimentation tanks of the plant are also specially designed to minimise the area of land required," he said.

The SSDS Stage I is part of a \$6.8 billion High Priority Programme (HPP) for proper collection, treatment and disposal of some 70 per cent of sewage discharged into Victoria Harbour daily.

"The HPP also comprises six related Sewerage Master Plans for Tsuen Wan, Kwai Chung and Tsing Yi; Northwest Kowloon; North and South Kowloon; East Kowloon; Chai Wan and Shau Kei Wan; and Tseung Kwan O.

"On completion of the Programme in mid-1997, sewage from these catchment areas around Victoria Harbour will be collected and screened before being conveyed through a network of deep sewage tunnels to the Stonecutters Island Sewage Treatment Works.

"The sewage will then undergo chemically enhanced primary treatment before being discharged through a long submarine outfall into the Western Harbour," Mr Ng added.

Turning to the department's efforts in flood mitigation and control, Mr Ng said that a three-tier plan was formulated to tackle the problem. They are Long Term Structural Measures, Short Term Improvement and Management Measures, and Legislative and Institutional Measures.

Long term structural measures comprise major river training projects to carry away stormwater to the sea and village flood protection schemes to protect low lying flood prone villages.

"Our target is to construct in accordance with our programme the necessary capital infrastructure at an estimated cost of some \$5.3 billion.

"When all these works are completed, the severe flooding problem we now have, will, hopefully, become a thing of the past," said Mr Ng.

Short term improvement and management measures include local drainage improvement works, maintenance activities to identify and remove blockages in watercourses and stormwater drains and surveillance activities to ensure the drainage system was performing well.

"Most of these activities are carried out on a continuous basis, with actions being stepped up before and during the rainy season each year."

On legislative and institutional measures, Mr Ng said: "We are beginning to use our authority under the Land Drainage Ordinance to have proper control and maintenance of main watercourses passing through private lands.

"We have also formalised and published the requirements for Drainage Impact Assessment, which is a tool to minimise the adverse drainage impact of land use and infrastructure developments," he said.

Referring to the Sewage Charging Scheme, Mr Ng said that the scheme had largely been accepted by the public judging by the 0.02 per cent of water consumers who had not settled their accounts.

"During the past financial year, more than 4.4 million bills were issued to customers with \$360 million sewage charges and \$240 million trade effluent surcharges collected, so far, for the first year of operation."

End

Release of 21 Vietnamese migrants

* * * * *

The Government announced today (Friday) that a further 21 Vietnamese migrants (VMs), who fall under the terms of the recent Privy Council decision, would be released.

The VMs will be released this afternoon. Pending completion of renovation works in the Pillar Point Refugee Centre, they will be accommodated in the New Horizons Refugee Centre.

End

External trade figures for March

* * * * *

In March 1996, both re-exports and domestic exports registered decreases over a year earlier, while imports fell marginally. These are shown in the external trade figures for March released today (Friday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

The value of total exports (comprising re-exports and domestic exports) decreased by 7.5% over a year earlier to \$96.7 billion in March 1996. Within total exports, the value of re-exports decreased by 5.3% to \$82.3 billion. The value of domestic exports decreased by 19% to \$14.4 billion. Meanwhile, the value of imports decreased by 0.7% over a year earlier to \$120.8 billion in March 1996.

As the value of total exports in March 1996 was smaller than that of total imports, a visible trade deficit of \$24.1 billion, equivalent to 20% of the value of imports, was recorded. This was larger than the corresponding deficit of \$17.1 billion, equivalent to 14% of the value of imports, in March 1995.

For the first quarter of 1996 as a whole, the value of total exports grew by 5.7% over the same period last year. Within this total, the value of re-exports rose by 8.2%, while that of domestic exports decreased by 6.0%. The value of imports showed an increase of 6.4%.

In the first quarter of 1996, a visible trade deficit of \$39.8 billion, equivalent to 11% of the value of imports, was recorded. This compared with the deficit of \$35.6 billion, also equivalent to 11% of the value of imports, recorded in the first quarter of 1995.

Commenting on these latest trade figures, a Government spokesman said that the decline recorded for both domestic exports and re-exports was more abrupt than expected.

"Some specific factors were at work in the month of March causing the exports to fall more sharply. These could include the cold weather in North America earlier in the year leading to a slower intake of imports in that area, some deferral of imports into China pending the cut in import tariff in April, and reduced imports by Taiwan amidst the tension across the Taiwan Strait," the spokesman observed.

"Also of possible relevance was the late timing of Chinese New Year holidays and the related factory rest-days in the current year, with inactive production extending into the first few days of March," the spokesman added.

The spokesman went on to say that, in the light of these figures, a close monitoring of the trade situation was obviously necessary, in particular to see whether it would tend to stabilise in April.

A more detailed analysis of Hong Kong's external trade for March 1996, by commodity and country, will be released in mid-May 1996.

External Trade Figures for March 1996

一九九六年三月份對外貿易數字

(HK\$ Million)
百萬港元

MERCHANDISE TRADE VALUES for March 1996		一九九六年三月份商品貿易貨值			
	Domestic Exports		港產品出口		14,379
	Re-exports		轉口		82,304
	Total Exports		整體出口		96,683
	Imports		進口		120,808
	Trade balance		貿易差額		-24,125
<hr/>					
COMPARATIVE FIGURES 比較數字				Change 變動	
		March 1996	March 1995	Value	%
Same month last year	去年同月份	一九九六年三月	一九九五年三月	貨值	百分率
Domestic Exports	港產品出口	14,379	17,645	-3,267	-18.5
(% of Total Exports)	(佔整體出口百分比)	(14.9%)	(16.9%)		
Re-exports	轉口	82,304	86,909	-4,605	-5.3
Total Exports	整體出口	96,683	104,554	-7,872	-7.5
Imports	進口	120,808	121,614	-806	-0.7
Trade balance	貿易差額	-24,125	-17,060	-7,066	
<hr/>					
		March 1996	February 1996		
Last month	上月	一九九六年三月	一九九六年二月		
Domestic Exports	港產品出口	14,379	14,192	+187	+1.3
(% of Total Exports)	(佔整體出口百分比)	(14.9%)	(15.7%)		
Re-exports	轉口	82,304	76,227	+6,077	+8.0
Total Exports	整體出口	96,683	90,419	+6,264	+6.9
Imports	進口	120,808	95,974	+24,834	+25.9
Trade balance	貿易差額	-24,125	-5,555	-18,571	
<hr/>					
		Jan-Mar 1996	Jan-Mar 1995		
Latest 3 months	最近三個月	九六年一月至三月	九五年一月至三月		
Domestic Exports	港產品出口	47,564	50,588	-3,024	-6.0
(% of Total Exports)	(佔整體出口百分比)	(15.5%)	(17.4%)		
Re-exports	轉口	259,723	240,068	+19,654	+8.2
Total Exports	整體出口	307,287	290,656	+16,631	+5.7
Imports	進口	347,060	326,263	+20,797	+6.4
Trade balance	貿易差額	-39,774	-35,607	-4,166	
<hr/>					
		Apr 95 to Mar 96	Apr 94 to Mar 95		
Last 12 months	過去十二個月	九五年四月至九六年三月	九四年四月至九五年三月		
Domestic Exports	港產品出口	228,634	227,935	+698	+0.3
(% of Total Exports)	(佔整體出口百分比)	(16.8%)	(18.7%)		
Re-exports	轉口	1,132,124	990,733	+141,391	+14.3
Total Exports	整體出口	1,360,758	1,218,668	+142,090	+11.7
Imports	進口	1,511,918	1,321,052	+190,866	+14.4
Trade balance	貿易差額	-151,160	-102,384	-48,776	

Note: Value of domestic exports and value of re-exports may not add up to the value of total exports due to rounding.

註：由於進位關係，港產品出口貨值加上轉口貨值和整體出口貨值可能會略有出入。

This sheet can be obtained free of charge from:
Trade Statistics Dissemination Section
Census and Statistics Department
Address: 19/F., Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road,
Wan Chai, Hong Kong

本單張可以於下列地點免費索取：
香港政府統計處
貿易統計資料發布組
地址：香港灣仔港灣道十二號灣仔政府大樓十九樓
電話：2582 4915 傳真：2802 1101

Tel: 2582 4915 Fax: 2802 1101

4/96

End

Provisional statistics of retail sales for February

* * * * *

According to the provisional figures released today (Friday) by the Census and Statistics Department, the value of total retail sales in February 1996, estimated at \$18.5 billion, increased by 21% compared with February 1995. After discounting the effect of price changes over the period, total retail sales increased by 14% in volume.

Compared with a year ago, retail sales of all types of commodities (except motor vehicles and parts) recorded significant increases in value ranging from 15% to 52%. In terms of volume, the rates of increase varied between 8% and 41%. These included clothing and footwear (+52% in value, +41% in volume) and supermarkets (+48% in value, +39% in volume).

It should however be noted that retail sales in January and February are usually affected by the timing of the Chinese New Year and tend to show considerable volatilities in the first two months of the year. As the Chinese New Year occurred in mid-February this year, but in end-January last year, the year-on-year rate of change in retail sales in February this year was significantly affected by the low base of comparison in February last year. It is therefore more appropriate to compare the retail sales figures for January and February taken together.

Taking the first two months of 1996 together, total retail sales rose by 5% in value but decreased slightly by 1% in volume when compared with the same period last year.

The slight decline in total retail sales volume in the first two months of 1996 was attributable to a continued significant decline in the sales of motor vehicles, by 46% in value and 47% in volume.

Meanwhile, sales in department stores rose by 5% in value but dropped by 2% in volume. Sales of jewellery, watches and clocks and valuable gifts also went up by 4% in value but declined by 3% in volume.

Nevertheless, sales of other commodities recorded increases of various magnitudes. They included miscellaneous consumer goods (+13% in value, +8% in volume); clothing and footwear (+16% in value, +6% in volume); consumer durable goods other than motor vehicles (+9% in value, +6% in volume); food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco (+8% in value, +4% in volume) and fuels (+10% in value, +2% in volume).

Concurrently, sales in supermarkets went up by 10% in value and 1% in volume.

The volume of retail sales is derived from the value of retail sales after adjusting for price changes. The relevant components of the Consumer Price Index are used as deflators.

Table 1 presents the revised total retail sales figure for January 1996 and the provisional figure for February 1996.

Table 2 shows the value and volume indices of retail sales in February 1995, January and February 1996 for all retail outlets and by type of retail outlet, with average retail sales from October 1989 to September 1990 taken as 100. Comparisons of the February 1996 results with those for January 1996 and those for February 1995, as well as comparison of retail sales in the period from January to February of 1996 with the same period in 1995 are also given.

The report containing the analysis of the February 1996 results is now on sale at \$4 per copy at the Government Publications Centre, Queensway Government Offices, ground floor, Low Block, 66 Queensway; and the Publications Unit of the Census and Statistics Department, 19th floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai.

Enquiries about the survey results may be directed to the Wholesale and Retail Trade Statistics Section of the Census and Statistics Department on 2802 1258.

TABLE 1 : TOTAL RETAIL SALES

Total Retail Sales for February 1996 (Provisional Figure) = HK\$18,517.2 million
for January 1996 (Revised Figure) = HK\$19,224.2 million

TABLE 2 : VALUE AND VOLUME INDICES OF RETAIL SALES FOR FEBRUARY 1995, JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 1996

(Monthly average of Oct 89 - Sept 90 = 100)

Type of Outlet	Type of Index	Index Number			% Change		
		February 1995 (Revised figures)	January 1996 (Revised figures)	February 1996 (Provisional figures)	Feb 1996 compared with Jan 1996	Feb 1996 compared with Feb 1995	Jan - Feb 1996 compared with Jan - Feb 1995
		(Point)	(Point)	(Point)	(%)	(%)	(%)
(A) FOR ALL RETAIL OUTLETS							
	Value	163.1	204.7	197.2	-3.7	+20.9	+4.9
	Volume	125.8	149.3	143.4	-3.9	+14.0	-0.9
(B) BY TYPE OF RETAIL OUTLETS							
Food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco (other than supermarkets)	Value	122.5	146.9	146.9	#	+19.9	+7.6
	Volume	88.2	105.6	99.0	-6.3	+12.2	+4.2
Supermarkets ϕ	Value	134.0	164.1	198.6	+21.0	+48.2	+9.5
	Volume	91.4	105.1	127.0	+20.8	+38.9	+1.4
Fuels	Value	119.2	154.3	136.8	-11.4	+14.8	+9.8
	Volume	81.0	98.3	87.1	-11.4	+7.5	+2.2
Clothing, footwear and allied products	Value	195.6	376.5	298.0	-20.9	+52.3	+16.2
	Volume	136.0	236.4	191.3	-19.1	+40.6	+6.3
Consumer durable goods	Value	189.5	166.2	156.7	-5.7	-17.3	-15.3
	Volume	148.2	134.4	127.7	-4.9	-13.8	-13.8
- Motor vehicles and parts	Value	225.1	113.2	103.5	-8.6	-54.0	-45.8
	Volume	151.4	74.2	68.0	-8.4	-55.1	-47.4
- Consumer durable goods other than motor vehicles and parts	Value	163.8	204.6	195.2	-4.6	+19.2	+8.9
	Volume	145.9	177.9	170.9	-3.9	+17.2	+6.2
Department stores	Value	142.7	182.0	199.9	+9.8	+40.1	+5.5
	Volume	103.4	121.5	135.1	+11.2	+30.7	-2.1
Jewellery, watches and clocks, and valuable gifts	Value	174.2	202.1	209.3	+3.6	+20.2	+3.7
	Volume	166.2	182.9	185.4	+1.4	+11.5	-2.6
Other consumer goods not elsewhere classified	Value	186.7	249.0	221.3	-11.1	+18.6	+12.5
	Volume	144.1	185.2	162.5	-12.3	+12.7	+7.5

NOTE : ϕ Not including supermarkets operating in department stores.
denotes a figure within ± 0.05 .
The underlined figure was rounded up to 5.

Macau delegation visits Education Department

* * * * *

A fourteen-member of a committee on education of Macau today (Friday), during a visit to the Education Department, exchanged views and shared experiences with their Hong Kong's counterparts on school education. The delegation was led by Maria Edith da Silva, Directora dos Servicos de Educacao e Juventude.

On arrival, they were greeted by Senior Assistant Director of Education, Mr Tsui See-ming, and senior staff members.

The group was briefed by Assistant Director (Planning and Research), Mr Lee Hing-fai, on the education system in Hong Kong and Assistant Director (Schools), Mr Kwan Shu-tsun, on school administration.

Assistant Director (Curriculum Development Institute), Dr Leung Yat-ming, and Assistant Director (Chief Inspector of Schools), Mr Ho Che-leung, briefly introduced the school curriculum in Hong Kong.

The group also learnt from Education Officer, Mr Leung Cheuk, about the actions taken by the Education Department and schools in the event of tropical cyclones and heavy persistent rain.

End

Thank-you card drive to appreciate work of teachers

* * * * *

The following is issued on behalf on the Committee on Home-School Co-operation:

More than a million thank-you cards will be sent to teachers in appreciation of their work starting tomorrow (Saturday).

The sending of thank-you cards to teachers is part of the 'Parents also Appreciate Teachers' Drive 1996 organised by the Committee on Home-School Co-operation and Sing Tao Daily.

The distribution of thank-you cards will start at 10 am in a kick-off ribbon-cutting ceremony at Hong Kong Teachers' Centre.

The ceremony will be performed by the Chairman of the Committee on Home-School Co-operation, Mr Tik Chi-yuen; Legislative Council member, Mr Tong Ying-lin; Assistant Director of Education (Services), Mr David Pun; and Hong Kong Sports Institute Chief Coach (Badminton), Miss Amy Chan.

After the ceremony, executives from various parent-teacher associations will distribute thank-you cards to parents during a bus parade throughout the territory. The bus will stop at Time Square, Causeway Bay, New World Plaza and Whampoa Garden Shopping Centre (Phase VI).

Parents are requested to sign the cards and send them to teachers for appreciation.

Last year, the 'Parents also Appreciate Teachers' Drive had succeeded in distributing some 45,000 cards to teachers.

Backing with the success of last year, the response of this year is expected to be even better with more parents understand the importance of teachers after two teachers losing their lives in protecting their students during a tragic hill fire early this year.

End

More results of Conduct Council election

* * * * *

The Education Department today (Friday) announced results of the election for teacher-nominated categories in the Council on Professional Conduct, which was held on Wednesday (April 24). The election was held in 1,669 schools. A total of 42,689 teachers cast votes in the election, representing 84 per cent of all eligible voters in the teacher-nominated categories.

The Assistant Director of Education (Services), Mr David Pun, expressed satisfaction with the high turnout in the election.

The department had conducted 118 visits to schools throughout the territory on the election day and no irregularities had been detected.

The election returned 10 candidates to the council. They are:

Teacher Category	Name of Candidate	Number of Votes
Secondary (Government)	---	---
Secondary (Aided)	Ha Man-ho	8,218
	Chan Hon-sum	7,096
	Ho Hon-kuen	6,100
Secondary (Private)	Tao Chi-chiu	4,423
Primary (Government)	---	---
Primary (Aided)	Pun Tin-chi	12,448
	Lee Lai-ming	8,619
	Fung Man-ching	7,076
Primary (Private)	---	---
Kindergarten	Au Min-wa, Susanna	3,850
Special School	Tse Chung-yee, Andrew	852
	Yung Tsang Sun-may, Grace	646

The Director of Education will nominate three members, including the Assistant Director of Education (Services) and two lay members, to the council in the next few days.

The first meeting of the new council will be held on May 1, 1996.

End

Decision reached on Other Education Organisations seat

* * * * *

The Education Department today (Friday) announced that Mr Hui Wai-tin has been elected to fill the seat for Other Education Organisations category in the Council on Professional Conduct in Education.

A complaint was received yesterday evening questioning the validity of one of the votes in the election for this category.

The Director of Education, Mrs Helen C P Lai Yu, has reviewed the situation and consulted the two independent returning officers, Mr Teng Chong-tai and Ms Kwok Hiu-chong, who witnessed yesterday's vote counting. In the presence of the candidates and representatives of their nominating education organisations, the Director of Education concluded that the voting return form in question was null and void.

This form was received after the deadline stipulated in the letter issued to all chairpersons of 112 education organisations on March 27, 1996. This stated that the completed voting return form should be returned to reach the Education Department before noon on Wednesday, April 24, 1996 and that voting return forms received after the deadline would not be considered.

The delay in returning this form had been due to a misunderstanding in a verbal exchange between a voting organisation and the Education Department over whether the deadline for returns could be extended.

The Director of Education expressed regret over this unfortunate misunderstanding. She added that the experience gained from this election process would be taken into account in revising procedures for the future. "My prime concern is for fairness in the election and credibility of the Council," Mrs Yu said.

Mr Hui received six votes and Mr Tse Kar-cheung five.

Both candidates and their nominating organisations respected the decision.

End

54 prisoners pass public examinations

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Fifty-four prisoners from Shek Pik Prison today (Friday) received certificates for passing public examinations.

Some of the group took courses run by the Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Management Association. Some sat the Certificate of Education Examination, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Examination, City and Guilds of London Institute and Pitman Examination.

Seven prisoners have achieved distinction in various examinations.

Officiating at the certificate-presentation ceremony, the Director of the Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong, Professor Tam Sheung-wai said so far there had been eight inmates enrolled in the institute's degree courses.

Opportunities for academic pursuits are offered to adult inmates of CSD institutions on a voluntary basis. These are provided in the form of remedial classes and correspondence and self-study courses.

End

1000-Day Regiment takes to the field

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The following is issued on behalf of the Joint Service Public Relations Staff:

Cooks, drivers, storemen and mechanics from Hong Kong's newest and shortest-lived regiment, the Hong Kong Logistic Support Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps, take to the field this weekend during a three-day long training exercise.

On a day-to-day basis members of the Logistic Support Regiment are employed in a variety of specialist occupations throughout the Garrison but, like all members of the British Army, they are fighting soldiers first and foremost and during the event, known as the "Commanding Officer's Challenge", they will take part in a series of exercises designed to test their abilities under difficult conditions.

The regiment, known as the "1000-Day Regiment" because of its short lifespan, is unusual in that it is made up of personnel of three different nationalities. This weekend over 40 British and Gurkha soldiers will begin their training at Stonecutters Island before taking part in exercises at Sai Kung Country Park, Lo Wu Camp and Tai Lam Country Park.

The Logistic Support Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps, was formed in April 1994 as part of the drawdown of British Forces in the Territory and the need to concentrate and manage the remaining logistic expertise. The regiment employs over 500 military and civilian personnel and has its headquarters at Osborn Barracks, Kowloon Tong. It will disband in May, 1997.

End

Tenders invited for village improvement works

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The Civil Engineering Department is inviting tenders for village improvement works at Tai Tei Tong and Pak Ngan Heung in Mui Wo on Lantau Island.

The project comprises the construction of 1.3 kilometres of emergency vehicular access road, a sewerage system, water mains, refuse collection stations, together with site formation for amenity areas and an electrical sub-station for Tai Tei Tong and Pak Ngan Heung in Mui Wo.

The contract will also include the river training of 600 metres of Wang Tong River in the vicinity.

Work is expected to commence in August this year and will take 21 months to complete.

Tender forms and further particulars of the project can be obtained from the Chief Engineer, Development and Airport Division, Civil Engineering Office, Civil Engineering Department, second floor, Civil Engineering Building, 101 Princess Margaret Road, Ho Man Tin, Kowloon.

Tender offers for the project will close at noon on May 17.

End

Waterworks for Pokfulam and Central

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The Water Supplies Department is inviting tenders for mainlaying works to provide salt water for Pokfulam area and to improve fresh and salt water supply to the mid-level and high-level areas in Central, Hong Kong. The contract includes laying of about one kilometre of fresh water mains and five kilometres of salt water mains along Robinson Road, Mosque Street, Victoria Road, Sha Wan Drive and Sandy Bay Road.

Works will commence in August this year for completion in about 17 months.

Tender forms and further particulars can be obtained from the Water Supplies Department, Immigration Tower, 44th floor, 7 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong.

Tender offer will close at noon on May 17, 1996.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

	\$ million	Time (hours)	Cumulative change (\$million)
Opening balance in the account	1,872	0930	+530
Closing balance in the account	2,928	1000	+530
Change attributable to :		1100	+534
Money market activity	+536	1200	+534
LAF today	+520	1500	+536
		1600	+536

LAF rate 4.00% bid/6.00% offer TWI 124.0 *+0.1* 26.4.96

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	4.98	2 years	2802	5.16	98.68	6.03
1 month	5.01	3 years	3904	6.30	99.93	6.43
3 months	5.14	5 years	5103	6.75	99.28	7.04
6 months	5.24	7 years	7302	6.02	93.25	7.42
12 months	5.51	5 years	M502	7.30	100.47	7.30

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - \$12,076 million

Closed April 26, 1996

End