



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES
BEACONSFIELD HOUSE, HONG KONG. TEL.: 2842 8777

Wednesday, January 3, 1996

<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
Another year of sustained growth in HK's economy	1
1996 heritage programme gets off to good start	3
High APIs recorded for the territory	5
Application deadline for running 17 GMB routes due on Monday	6
TV series to promote teacher image	7
Causeway Bay Carnival to be held on Sunday	7
Multi-cycle riding to be banned on Cheung Chau	8
Mailing tubes available at 21 post offices from Monday	8
Fees of certificates for clubs to be revised	10
Ma On Shan lot to let by tender	10
Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations	11

Another year of sustained growth in HK's economy

* * * * *

Robust growth in East Asian economies and promising external environment bode well for Hong Kong to enjoy another year of sustained growth in 1996, the Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang, said today (Wednesday).

Speaking at a luncheon of the British Chamber of Commerce, Mr Tsang pointed out that the major industrialised economies were expected to show steady improvement in economic performance in 1996 and 1997.

He said China was expected to settle at a more stable growth of eight to nine per cent with moderate inflation and even the Japanese economy was climbing out from the doldrums.

"Interest rates generally show signs of stabilising. I expect the Presidential election in the United States in November to boost demand," he said.

"The external environment thus looks promising for a further sustained growth in our exports of goods and services, except that the recent rebound of the US dollar could impact on our export competitiveness in the early part of this year."

Investment would remain intensive, although the incremental growth would unlikely be as marked as in 1995, and there would likely be a mild revival in consumer spending in the latter part of 1996, Mr Tsang said.

"Overall, I remain optimistic that we will enjoy another year of sustained growth, with probably somewhat better performance in the latter half," he added.

Turning to the longer-term development, Mr Tsang said he was encouraged to see the consensus among our analysts that Hong Kong would remain the centre of trade, with excellent potential for further growth.

"The trend to global trade liberalisation as endorsed by the World Trade Organisation and Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) will unleash enormous opportunities for trade and investment," he said.

A task force has been established to review what the Government can do to support the further expansion of the service sectors, and to enhance Hong Kong's position as a major financial centre in the region.

Mr Tsang said Hong Kong's economic prospects seemed to revolve round three key issues: growth, employment and inflation.

On economic growth, Mr Tsang said Hong Kong's five per cent growth in real terms in 1995, although slower than in the preceding years (at 6.3 per cent in 1992, 6.4 per cent in 1993 and 5.4 per cent in 1994), was no recession by any standards.

He said external trade continued to grow strongly with total exports increased by about 13 per cent in real terms in the first 10 months last year.

"With a bit of patience, robust growth in our economy will return," he said.

On employment, Mr Tsang said during the rapid structural transformation in our economy, there were bound to be sectors expanding more rapidly than others.

The Government accepted a duty to help the workers who had been displaced and facing difficulties in finding alternative suitable employment, he said.

"We are doing so through the Labour Department's Job Matching Programme and the Employees Retraining Board.

"Retraining and job matching are the keys to helping the labour market work more efficiently and more humanely. They are among the highest priorities of the Government today," he said.

As for inflation, Mr Tsang said although inflation had moderated from the peak of 13.9 per cent in 1991 to the present 8.2 per cent, the Government would remain vigilant.

He said the recent easing in labour market conditions had dampened wage increases.

"Initially, workers would feel generally worse off. However, the moderating wage pressures are helpful in containing inflation and the cost of doing business," he said.

"So are the lower rentals in line with the consolidation of the property market. The rebound of the US dollar has also alleviated somewhat imported inflation.

"All these should be beneficial to our external competitiveness, and should help enhance our trade and development potential in the longer term," he said.

Mr Tsang said despite this positive note, the Government would hold down spending to reduce competition from the public sector for scarce resources in Hong Kong, and would continue to tackle the bottlenecks through an improved supply of skilled labour, land and a better transport and communications infrastructure.

End

1996 heritage programme gets off to good start

* * * * *

St John's Cathedral, the oldest surviving Western ecclesiastical building in Hong Kong, will be declared a historical building under the protection of the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance. A notice to this effect will be published in the Government Gazette on Friday (January 5).

The declaration of the cathedral brings the total number of gazetted monuments in Hong Kong to 60. These comprise eight rock carvings, one inscription, four Chinese fortifications, four archaeological sites, 14 traditional Chinese buildings, two villages, 26 western buildings, and one flight of steps.

St John's Cathedral is in the shape of a cruciform with a central nave and galleries. The style of the building was mainly adapted from the 13th Century Early English and Decorated Gothic style. There are a number of other historically interesting items within the compound, such as a memorial tablet on the north transept, a tombstone and a memorial cross in the precinct and so on.

The Dean of the cathedral, the Very Reverend C J Phillips, said he was pleased that the cathedral would be protected and recognised for its historical value and contribution to Hong Kong. He also appreciated being able to draw on the expertise of the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO) and the Architectural Services Department in maintaining the building's historical features in good order.

The Chairman of the Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB), Mr David Lung, today (Wednesday) thanked the cathedral authorities for their co-operation and interest in heritage preservation, adding that he was pleased to see the building could be declared a monument.

"This is a major historical building and landmark and its declaration also brings the total number of gazetted monuments to 60, a very auspicious figure for the Chinese," he said.

"The board and the AMO of the Recreation and Culture Branch have been working hard over the last year for the cause of preserving significant elements of our heritage.

"We were rewarded with success in declaring eight historical buildings in 1995, more than in any previous year, and we will continue our efforts in the year to come. The declaration of St John's Cathedral so early on has got us off to a very good start," he added.

Plans are in hand to declare five more Chinese temples, one Chinese monastery, one walled village and the relics inside the Kowloon Walled City Park, including the yamen building, as monuments. Other buildings and monuments may also be added during the year.

Mr Lung explained that it was important to declare and preserve these many items of our fast disappearing heritage for the benefit of current and future generations, adding that he was hopeful that approval would be given to all these items in due course.

He also paid tribute to the AMO staff, describing them as "a group of hardworking, knowledgeable and devoted professionals". "They serve the board extremely well and implement the decisions and programmes of the Antiquities Authority who is the Secretary for Recreation and Culture and whom our board advises. They deserve our, and indeed the community's, wholehearted thanks," Mr Lung said.

The Deputy Secretary for Recreation and Culture, Mr Benjamin Tang, said the AMO had been working over the past year on a wide range of projects, drawing on the expertise and advice of both the AAB and the Lord Wilson Heritage Trust. These projects included the grading of 14 historical buildings, the production of a 13-episode TV series on heritage, the organisation of an archaeological cultural exchange field programme with three Chinese archaeological institutions, the joint staging with the University Museum & Art Gallery of the Hong Kong University of an international conference on South East Asian archaeology, the opening of the Kowloon Walled City Park, and various other projects.

He pledged that 1996 would see the office continuing to work in full swing. "With additional resources granted to it, it will conduct two territory-wide surveys on archaeological sites and historical buildings respectively, computerise the office and its archives, produce publications on various heritage subjects, stage a School Heritage Festival in March and plan the establishment of another heritage trail in Kam Tin.

"A 10-part English language TV series on heritage will also be produced and screened," Mr Tang added.

Note to Editors:

The following is the historical background of the cathedral:

The foundation stone of St John's Cathedral was laid by Sir John Davis, the then Governor of Hong Kong (1844-48) on March 11, 1847. The stone was inscribed with the initials "VR" commemorating the year of foundation during Queen Victoria's reign.

Local labour was employed to build the church which was finally completed and opened in March 1849 for services. The church was formally accorded the status of cathedral in the same year. However, due to the shortage of funds, the tower was only completed in 1850. The management of the cathedral was transferred from the Colonial Chaplain to Bishop George Smith, who became the first Bishop of Victoria of the Anglican Church in March 1850.

The cathedral at this time had no chancel and the east end terminated in a small apse. It had 640 seats, of which 250 were allocated for the use of naval and military personnel. The size of the cathedral was soon found to be inadequate and an extension at the east was proposed and finally completed in 1873. The foundation stone for the extension was laid by His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh in 1869.

During the Japanese Occupation (1941-45), the cathedral suffered heavy damage though services still continued until 1944 when it became a public hall and social club for the Japanese community. After the War, the Cathedral Committee drew up plans for its restoration which was carried out by Leigh and Orange. Most of the present interior design and furnishings are post-war.

End

High APIs recorded for the territory

* * * * *

Air pollution indices (API) for the territory have for the first time exceeded 100 since the system was launched by the Environmental Protection Department on June 6 last year.

Today's (Wednesday) API is 117 for the urban area, 120 for the industrial area and 104 for the new development area.

"When the index exceeds 100, it means air quality is unhealthy. People suffering from asthma, lung or heart illnesses may be adversely affected and are advised to reduce physical exertion and laborious outdoor activities until the air quality situation improves," Principal Environmental Protection Officer, Mr Tse Chin-wan, said.

"Today's poor air quality is due to an elevated level of nitrogen dioxide and respirable particulates. Nitrogen dioxide is caused by the oxidation of nitrogen oxides under sunlight. Both nitrogen oxides and respirable particulates are mainly emitted by diesel vehicles in the atmosphere. The low wind speed and persistently stable atmosphere provide a condition for the formation and accumulation of air pollutants," he said.

"Due to changes in weather, air pollution for a few days in a year can be so bad that some people may feel an immediate effect on their health."

"The API system is put in place to alert the community when these days occur or are about to occur," Mr Tse said.

The API forecast for the territory tomorrow (Thursday) is 80 for the urban area, 80 for the industrial area and 70 for the new development area.

Members of the public can check the API readings on Tel 2827 8541.

End

Application deadline for running 17 GMB routes due on Monday

* * * * *

Operators who are interested in running the 17 new green minibus (GMB) routes in the territory are reminded to submit their applications on or before next Monday (January 8).

A spokesman for the Transport Department said today (Wednesday) that details of the new routes were gazetted on December 8, 1995.

Applications must be made on the application form entitled "Application for Passenger Service Licence in Respect of the Packages of Public Light Bus (Scheduled) Routes Gazetted in 1995" obtainable free of charge on request from the Transport Department Headquarters, its Kowloon and New Territories Regional Offices as well as its Hong Kong Licensing Office, Kwun Tong Licensing Office and Sha Tin Licensing Office.

Details of the new routes and guidance notes will be provided to assist applicants in completing the application form. Applicants are advised to read carefully the guidance notes in completing the application form.

"Completed application forms must be returned by registered post to the Transport Department Headquarters at 41st floor, Immigration Tower, 7 Gloucester Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong on or before January 8, 1996. Applications by any other means or late applications will not be considered," the spokesman added.

End

TV series to promote teacher image

* * * * *

The acting Director of Education, Mr Kwan Ting-fai; and the acting Director of Broadcasting, Mr Chu Pui-hing; will tomorrow (Thursday) jointly officiate at the launching ceremony of a TV series "Brave New Teacher".

Other guests attending the ceremony include teachers, headmasters, principals and representatives from educational bodies and the teaching profession.

The "Brave New Teacher" TV documentary-drama series - jointly produced by the Education Department and the Radio Television Hong Kong - aims to pay tribute to teachers for their contribution to the community and to promote the image of the teaching profession.

End

Causeway Bay Carnival to be held on Sunday

* * * * *

The Sixth Causeway Bay Carnival to be held on Sunday (January 7) is expected to attract some 20,000 visitors with its rich entertainment programme.

The carnival will feature singing, juggling, magic, dragon and lion dances, Chinese and Western art and craft demonstrations, palm reading and game stalls.

Popular singers including Mr Edmund Leung; Miss Chau hok-yee; Miss Joyce Lee; Miss Kelly Chan and the Wind, Fire and Sea Band are scheduled to perform.

Stalls demonstrating grasshopper weaving, caricature, dry flower making, dragon beard candy making, cotton candy making and other traditional art forms will brighten up the section of Paterson Street between Kingston Street and Great George Street which will be closed to traffic for the event.

The carnival is organised by the Causeway Bay Area Committee (CBAC) with the assistance of the Wan Chai District Office. Admission to the carnival is free.

Officiating guests at the carnival's opening will include the Chairman of the Organising Committee for the Carnival, Dr Charles Koo; the Chairman of CBAC, Mr Raymond Chow; the Chairlady of Wan Chai District Board, Mrs Peggy Lam; Wan Chai District Officer, Mrs Karen Pong and Wan Chai District Commander, Mr H M Blud.

End

Multi-cycle riding to be banned on Cheung Chau

* * * * *

The Transport Department announced today (Wednesday) that riding of multi-cycles on Cheung Chau will be banned from February 16 for the safety of residents and visitors.

Notice of such prohibition under the Road Traffic (Multi-Cycles)(Specification of Roads, Places, Traffic Signs and Road Markings)(Amendment) Notice 1996 will be published in the Government Gazette on Friday (January 5).

Cycle stall operators on Cheung Chau are advised to note the change and not to provide multi-cycles for hire there.

Following the concerns about the safety of multi-cycles on the island expressed by Cheung Chau residents, the change was made with the support of the Islands District Board and Cheung Chau Area Committee.

End

Mailing tubes available at 21 post offices from Monday

* * * * *

The Postmaster General, Mr Robert Footman, announced today (Wednesday) that mailing tubes will be placed on sale at 21 post offices from Monday (January 8).

"Mailing tubes provide convenience for our customers to send materials such as posters, drawings and maps, and complement the existing line of Postpak envelope and carton box," Mr Footman said.

The mailing tubes will be available in two sizes to suit different needs - large tubes measuring 740 millimetres in length and 50 millimetres in diameter and small tubes of 445 millimetres in length and 50 millimetres in diameter. They are made of strong cardboard paper with water-proof inner lining and plastic cap at each end.

The selling prices are \$12 for a large tube and \$6.3 for a small tube. Each tube is sold with a self-adhesive address label.

Initially, mailing tubes are put on sale at the following post offices -

Hong Kong

Aberdeen Post Office
Causeway Bay Post Office
General Post Office
Hennessy Road Post Office

Shaukeiwan Post Office
Siu Sai Wan Post Office
Tai Koo Shing Post Office
Tsat Tsz Mui Post Office

Kowloon

Airport Post Office
Canton Road Post Office
Cheung Sha Wan Post Office
Gillies Avenue Post Office

Kowloon Central Post Office
Kwun Tong Post Office
Tsim Sha Tsui Post Office

New Territories

Sha Kok Post Office
Sha Tin Central Post Office
Texaco Road Post Office

Tsuen Wan Post Office
Tuen Mun Central Post Office
Yuen Long Post Office

If there is popular demand, consideration will be given to making the product available at all post offices.

Key rings and paper weights embedded with Hong Kong stamps will also be available at all post offices as from Monday.

"These products have hitherto been available only at seven philatelic post offices," Mr Footman said.

"The items are of philatelic interest as they bear various issues of Hong Kong stamps. They are very much sought after as gifts as well as collectibles."

Key rings are available at \$12 each and paper weights at \$35 each.

"The Post Office is continuously expanding and adapting its range of products and services in response to customer needs. The introduction of mailing tubes and the extension of the sale of key rings and paper weights to all post offices are steps taken in this direction," Mr Footman said.

End

Fees of certificates for clubs to be revised

* * * * *

The fees for the issuing and renewal of certificates of compliance and certificates of exemption for clubs will be adjusted from March 1.

A spokesman for the Home Affairs Branch said today (Wednesday) that it was the Government's policy that fees should in general be set at levels sufficient to recover the full cost of providing the services.

He said the fees would go up by about nine per cent in order to cover the cost increase resulting from inflation since the last revision in January 1995.

The spokesman said the increase was modest, noting that there would be no impact on inflation and little effect on the operation of the clubs.

Under the new fee scale, the fee for issuing and renewing a certificate of compliance will range from \$3,500 to \$53,560, depending on the gross floor area of the club.

As to the certificate of exemption, the fee will be increased from \$660 to \$720 for clubs of all sizes.

Details of the new fees are set out in the Clubs (Safety of Premises) (Fees) (Amendment) Regulation 1996, which will be gazetted on Friday (January 5).

Club operators will be notified of the new scale of fees when they apply for or renew their certificates, the spokesman added.

End

Ma On Shan lot to let by tender

* * * * *

The Lands Department is inviting tenders for the short-term tenancy of a piece of Government land in Ma On Shan, Sha Tin.

Located in Ma On Shan Road, Area 73, Ma On Shan, the lot has an area of 9,240 square metres for use as a fee-paying public car park. The tenancy is for three years, renewable quarterly.

The closing date for submission of tenders is noon on Friday, January 19, 1996.

Tender form, tender notice and conditions may be obtained from the District Lands Office, Sha Tin, 2 Tung Lo Wan Hill Road, Sha Tin; the District Lands Offices/Kowloon, 10th floor, Yau Ma Tei Car Park Building, 250 Shanghai Street, Kowloon; and the Lands Department, 14th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, Central.

Tender plan can also be inspected at these offices.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

* * * * *

	<u>\$ million</u>	<u>Time (hours)</u>	<u>Cumulative change (\$million)</u>
Opening balance in the account	1,720	0930	+586
Closing balance in the account	2,281	1000	+586
Change attributable to :		1100	+586
Money market activity	+561	1200	+561
LAF today	Nil	1500	+561
		1600	+561

LAF rate 4.25% bid/6.25% offer TWI 122.8 *+0.1* 3.1.96

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	5.49	2 years	2711	5.60	100.29	5.50
1 month	5.47	3 years	3810	6.15	101.32	5.71
3 months	5.43	5 years	5012	6.38	101.11	6.21
6 months	5.42	7 years	7211	6.82	102.06	6.55
12 months	5.42	5 years	M502	7.30	103.40	6.57

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - \$24,633 million

Closed January 3, 1996

End