



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES
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Monday, March 25, 1996

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Third Review of Environmental White Paper published

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The Government is to develop a set of principles and indicators which will enable developments in Hong Kong to continue to thrive in a more environmentally friendly manner in the context of "sustainability".

This was announced today (Monday) by the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands, Mr Bowen Leung, when he made public the Third Review of the Environmental White Paper first issued in 1989.

Mr Leung said: "These principles and indicators will help us to assess how sustainable are various development scenarios and to help us to monitor trends so that further action can be taken to reduce adverse impacts of these developments.

"The principles and indicators which will be proposed will need to be appropriate to Hong Kong. They will help focus attention, particularly that of decision-makers, on matters of concern and importance to the community at large."

Mr Leung said: "We will commission a consultancy study later in the year to help us draw up the principles and indicators and also a framework to promote sustainable development.

"The public will be consulted on the recommendations made in the study."

Mr Leung noted that the Third Review also reports on the progress of the Waste Reduction Study that will put forward recommendations to stimulate positive changes towards waste minimisation.

"Consultation with concerned parties is now in progress. We will consult the public at a later stage before we work out a Waste Reduction Plan to set our priorities for action."

The Third Review also deals with Government's commitment to formulate a comprehensive conservation policy to ensure better co-ordination with the new initiatives on sustainable development. Proposals in these areas will be firmed up by May 1996.

Other new commitments mentioned in the Review include a proposal to produce a public consultation paper on environmental education and a study on an eco-labelling scheme which will provide consumer information on the environmental merits of products.

The other objectives of the Third Review are to report on the progress on the long term environmental action plans set out in the 1989 White Paper; to stimulate care and interest for the environment and to enlist public support for essential programmes and community consensus on the way forward.

Of the 132 targets reported on in the Review, 118 either have been completed or are on schedule. Only 14 items or about 10% are reported as behind schedule.

Mr Leung said: "While there is no room for complacency, the fact that we have achieved a 90% success rate on the targets we set out to accomplish is not bad for a programme of this scope, cost and complexity."

The main areas that are behind schedule are the construction of a central incinerator for medical waste and animal carcasses where the proposal is being re-examined in the light of comments received; charging for landfill disposal where arrangements are being revised to address some truck operators' concern about the payment method and more stringent control on emissions by diesel vehicles where proposals are being re-examined following a public consultation exercise last year.

Mr Leung noted that the Government is committed to further improving the environment in HK. Public expenditure on environment now accounts for a good percentage of Government's total spending. It has been growing in real terms from a modest 0.8% of Government's total expenditure in 1989 when the first White Paper was issued to 3.1 % in the 96-97 Budget.

End

Committee stage amendments will have adverse effect

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In response to press enquiries on a Committee stage amendment to the Appropriation Bill to be moved by Legislative Councillor, Mr James To, a spokesman for the Security Branch gave the following replies today (Monday):

"At the last meeting of the Security Panel on March 11, the Deputy Secretary for Security, Mrs Carrie Yau, had indicated that consideration was being given to briefing Legislative Council members in confidence on the role and function of the Security Wing.

"The Administration's intention was repeated by the Secretary for Security, Mr Peter Lai, at the special Finance Committee meeting last Thursday.

"The Administration has today informed the Legislative Council Secretariat that such arrangements can be made in early April. A convenient date and time is being worked out.

"As we have yet to receive details of the Committee stage amendment, we are not able to comment at this stage.

"As a matter of principle, we hope Legislative Council members would appreciate that the budget package as a whole is intended to serve the community needs, and Committee stage amendments which reduce provisions for any individual department would damage the operational efficiency and would adversely affect the provisions of service of the department concerned."

End

HK to host OECD workshop discussion on MAI

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Participants from member and non-member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) will tomorrow (Tuesday) hold a two-day meeting in Hong Kong to discuss the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) which is currently being negotiated in the OECD.

The MAI would be the first multilateral treaty providing high standards for the liberalisation and protection of international investment, and for effectively settling disputes. Negotiations on the terms of the MAI opened in the OECD last May and should conclude by mid-1997.

Although countries outside the OECD do not participate in the negotiations, OECD countries are eager to consult non-members as the formal talks progress.

Consultations at the meeting in Hong Kong are part of the regular policy dialogue between OECD Members and Dynamic Non-Member Economies (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Hong Kong, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Chinese Taipei and Thailand). Participants from China, India and the Indonesian private sector have also been invited to the meeting, which is organised by the OECD and hosted by the Hong Kong Government.

The OECD will present a publication entitled Towards Multilateral Investment Rules. The book presents key reports explaining the nature and purpose of the MAI, including background documentation not previously available to the public on : existing liberalisation, new disciplines, investment protection, dispute settlement and non-members and institutional issues. There are also articles by experts inside and outside of the OECD on various aspects of the MAI.

The meeting, to be held in the form of workshop discussion, will also address the liberalisation of foreign direct investment and how it will affect recipient economies. The discussion will be based, in particular, on the experiences of Chile, India and Portugal.

More than 100 senior Government officials, academics and other nominees will attend the workshop in their personal capacity.

The Hong Kong contingent will include the Deputy Secretary for Trade and Industry, Mr Francis Ho; the Director-General of Industry, Mrs Regina Ip; the Deputy Director-General of Industry, Ms Anissa Wong; Permanent Representative of Hong Kong to the World Trade Organisation, Mr Stuart Harbinson, and Government Economist, Mr K Y Tang.

The Secretary for Trade and Industry, Miss Denise Yue, will officiate at the opening of the workshop.

The Deputy Secretary-General of OECD, Mr Makoto Taniguchi; the Chairman of OECD's Committee on International Investment and Multinational Enterprises (CIME), Ambassador M Baldi (Switzerland); and Deputy Chairman of MAI Negotiating Group, Mr Akitaka Saiki will brief the media at the conclusion of the workshop on Wednesday.

End

Smoke-free workplace policy to take effect next month

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The Government announced today (Monday) that a new smoke-free workplace policy will be implemented in all Government premises with effect from April 1.

Under the new policy, smoking will be prohibited in both office and non-office environments. These include all enclosed or open-plan working areas, corridors, foyers, conference rooms, reception and counter areas, waiting rooms and public areas.

The restriction will apply to both staff and visitors.

Where appropriate, designated smoking areas will be set aside to cater for staff who smoke, the location and size of which is determined after consultation between management and staff -- both smoking and non-smoking.

Allowing designated smoking areas does not contradict this new policy, a spokesman for the Health and Welfare Branch explained.

"As a responsible employer, Government needs to balance between the interests of both smoking and non-smoking employees, while taking into account Government's overall anti-smoking policy objective.

"Through a general circular issued to all department heads in mid-January this year, we have already spelt out that the long-term objective is to eventually phase out designated smoking areas. We shall therefore review the situation regularly."

Two signs, "Smoke-free Workplace" and "Designated Smoking Area", have been produced and will be displayed conspicuously in all Government offices and workplaces.

The new policy has been introduced following a call from the World Health Organization and the Government signed a smoke-free workplace Charter drawn up by the Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health last year.

"As Hong Kong's largest employer, we should take the lead to provide a healthy and safe working environment for employees. We hope other employers will follow suit," the spokesman added.

End

Provisional statistics of retail sales for January

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According to the provisional figures released today (Monday) by the Census and Statistics Department, the value of total retail sales in January 1996, estimated at \$19.1 billion, decreased by 8% compared with January 1995.

After discounting the effect of price changes over the period, total retail sales dropped by 13% in volume.

In interpreting these latest figures, it should be noted that, affected by the timing of the Chinese New Year festival, retail sales 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 January this year was distorted by the high base of comparison in January last year. (In January 1995, retail sales rose sharply by 14% in value or 7% in volume, before easing off in the subsequent months.)

Largely for this reason, sales in department stores and supermarkets recorded decreases of 17% and 15% in value respectively in January 1996 over January 1995. In terms of volume, they decreased by 24% and 22% respectively.

Sales of other commodities also recorded decreases of different magnitudes. They included jewellery, watches and clocks and valuable gifts (-10% in value, -14% in volume); clothing and footwear (-3% in value, -12% in volume); food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco (-3% in both value and volume); and consumer durable goods other than motor vehicles (-1% in value, -4% in volume). Sales of fuels rose by 5% in value but dropped by 3% in volume.

Meanwhile, sales of motor vehicles continued to show significant decline compared with a year earlier, by 36% in value and 38% in volume.

Nevertheless, sales of miscellaneous consumer goods continued to record some increase, by 6% in value and 2% in volume.

Compared with December 1995 (but bearing in mind that this comparison is affected by seasonal factors), total retail sales in January 1996 decreased by 6% both in value and 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 December 1995 and the provisional figure for January 1996.

Table 2 shows the value and volume indices of retail sales in January 1995, December 1995 and January 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 January 1996 results with those for December 1995 and those for January 1995 are also given.

The report containing the analysis of the January 1996 results is now on sale at \$4.00 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 (Tel.: 2802 1258).

TABLE 1 : TOTAL RETAIL SALES

Total Retail Sales for January 1996 (Provisional Figure) = HK\$19,092.4 million
for December 1995 (Revised Figure) = HK\$20,317.8 million

TABLE 2 : VALUE AND VOLUME INDICES OF RETAIL SALES FOR JANUARY, DECEMBER 1995 AND JANUARY 1996
(Monthly average of Oct 89 - Sept 90 = 100)

Type of Outlet	Type of Index	Index Number			% Change	
		January 1995 (Revised figures)	December 1995 (Revised figures)	January 1996 (Provisional figures)	Jan 1996 compared with Dec 1995	Jan 1996 compared with Jan 1995
		(Point)	(Point)	(Point)	(%)	(%)
(A) FOR ALL RETAIL OUTLETS						
	Value	220.0	216.3	203.3	-6.0	-7.6
	Volume	169.4	156.9	148.2	-5.6	-12.5
(B) BY TYPE OF RETAIL OUTLETS						
Food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco (other than supermarkets)	Value	150.5	151.6	145.7	-3.9	-3.2
	Volume	108.2	109.0	104.8	-3.9	-3.2
Supermarkets ϕ	Value	197.2	181.1	167.3	-7.6	-15.2
	Volume	137.4	116.1	107.2	-7.7	-22.0
Fuels	Value	145.8	159.0	152.7	-4.0	+4.7
	Volume	100.4	103.1	97.3	-5.6	-3.1
Clothing, footwear and allied products	Value	385.1	372.5	372.6	#	-3.2
	Volume	266.3	230.0	233.9	+1.7	-12.2
Consumer durable goods	Value	191.5	165.2	164.0	-0.7	-14.4
	Volume	156.0	134.0	132.5	-1.2	-15.1
- Motor vehicles and parts	Value	175.1	101.7	112.6	+10.7	-35.7
	Volume	119.1	66.7	73.8	+10.7	-38.1
- Consumer durable goods other than motor vehicles and parts	Value	203.4	211.1	201.2	-4.7	-1.1
	Volume	182.6	182.8	174.9	-4.3	-4.2
Department stores	Value	219.4	224.2	181.9	-18.9	-17.1
	Volume	158.9	147.1	121.4	-17.4	-23.6
Jewellery, watches and clocks, and valuable gifts	Value	222.4	210.4	200.4	-4.7	-9.9
	Volume	212.0	192.1	181.3	-5.6	-14.5
Other consumer goods not elsewhere classified	Value	231.2	265.9	245.9	-7.5	+6.4
	Volume	179.2	196.5	183.0	-6.9	+2.1

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

End

Summer job safety advice for students

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Students seeking summer jobs are advised not to take up high-risk employments.

As many secondary school students may engage in temporary work during the summer vacation, it is necessary to remind them the importance of safety at work, especially temporary summer work, Senior Education Officer (Careers and Guidance Services Section), Mr Lo Man-fai, said today (Monday).

Mr Lo advised summer job students to avoid high-risk employments. They include:

- * working at a construction site;
- * operating heavy machinery, lifting appliances or giving signals in lifting operations;
- * operating power presses, cutting machines or woodworking machines;
- * working at height;
- * using chemicals; and
- * doing work which involves heat treatment or the use of fire.

He added that students should be careful if they work in restaurants or fast-food stalls. They should ensure safety and be cautious with mincers, blenders, stoves, scalding, slippery floors, knives and chemical cleansers.

They should also be aware of possible employment traps especially in those business or activities such as financial investment, entertainment, sales and promotion, unauthorised fund raising and pornographic enterprises.

Under Construction Sites (Safety) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulation 1994, young persons under the age of 18 are not allowed to work in construction sites unless they are receiving or have received appropriate training.

The Education Department and the Labour Department have organised a number of activities including poster design competition, slogan design competition and safety talks to promote the awareness of safety at work among secondary school students.

Enquiries on job safety and employment should be directed to the Careers and Guidance Services Section, Education Department on 2399 2174 or the Industrial Safety Training Centre of the Labour Department on 2852 3565.

End

Sai Wan Ho Clinic to open on Wednesday

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A new general out-patient clinic set up by the Department of Health in Sai Wan Ho will commence operation on Wednesday (March 27) to provide primary health care service to the general public.

"Local residents will benefit from better medical and health services with the opening of the new clinic," a spokesman for the department said.

The new clinic, Sai Wan Ho General Out-patient Clinic, is located on the first floor of Sai Wan Ho Health Centre at 28 Tai Hong Street, Sai Wan Ho.

The opening hours are from 9 am to 1 pm and 2 pm to 5 pm on weekdays, and 9 am to 1 pm on Saturdays. No service will be provided on Sundays and public holidays.

End

Water storage figure

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Storage in Hong Kong's reservoirs at 9 a.m. today (Monday) stood at 78.8 per cent of capacity or 461.913 million cubic metres.

This time last year the reservoirs contained 394.221 million cubic metres of water, representing 67.3 per cent of capacity.

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	1,769	0930	+1,029
Closing balance in the account	2,921	1000	+1,029
Change attributable to :		1100	+1,029
Money market activity	+1,032	1200	+1,032
LAF today	+120	1500	+1,032
		1600	+1,032

LAF rate 4.00% bid/6.00% offer TWI 123.6 *-0.1* 25.3.96

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	4.78	2 years	2802	5.16	98.61	6.03
1 month	4.91	3 years	3901	5.57	98.43	6.27
3 months	5.09	5 years	5103	6.75	100.30	6.79
6 months	5.16	7 years	7302	6.02	94.79	7.10
12 months	5.58	5 years	M502	7.30	101.47	7.04

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - \$18,543 million

Closed March 25, 1996

End