



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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

Dear DIB Clients

I write to thank you for your support over the past years in subscribing to the Daily Information Bulletin (DIB).

In the meantime, I am glad to inform you that DIB has now been uploaded onto the Hong Kong Government Home Page on the Internet (<http://www.info.gov.hk/isd/news/index.htm>) from April 1, 1997.

This arrangement has ensured that existing DIB subscribers as well as the general public can have quicker access to the press releases issued daily by the Hong Kong Government through the Information Superhighway.

Following the upgrading of services, the DIB will no longer be printed in hard copies and distributed by post to subscribers with effect from May 1, 1997.

This decision will do good to the community at large in terms of environmental protection as 3.1 million sheets of A4-size paper will be saved each year, not to mention the saving of postage and large quantity of ink for printing.

If you wish to have the DIB sent directly to your Internet e-mail account, please complete and return the attached slip to GIS, 8th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, Hong Kong, before May 1, 1997 or by fax through 2845 9078. You can, of course, provide your e-mail account to us through our Internet mail account : isdnews@isd.gcn.gov.hk.

It is the policy of this department that we should aim at running a paperless office in the long run, but if you have difficulties in the new arrangements, please contact the undersigned at 2842 8738.

Robert Yip
(Robert YIP)

for Director of Information Services

Return Slip

To : GIS, 8th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, Hong Kong
(Attn : Robert Yip)

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Friday, April 25, 1997

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Land exchange entitlements redeem in cash only after June

* * * * *

The Government gazetted today (Friday) the New Territories Land Exchange Entitlements (Redemption) (Amendment) Bill 1997 which seeks to make land exchange entitlements redeemable for cash only rather than land after a date, as currently planned, in June 1997 to be appointed by the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands.

The Bill adjusts the rates of redemption money set out in the Schedule to the New Territories Land Exchange Entitlements (Redemption) Ordinance, to be the monetised values of land exchange entitlements effective from April 1, 1997. These values would then be the most up-to-date available when the Ordinance comes into operation in June 1997.

"After the commencement of the Ordinance, any outstanding land exchange entitlements, commonly known as Letters A/B, can only be redeemed in cash. Redemption money will be payable at the rates set out in the Ordinance. It will bear interest from the commencement date of the Ordinance until the date of payment," a Government spokesman said.

Letters A/B were issued between 1960 and 1983 to land owners in the New Territories whose land was required for developments. The issue of Letters A/B was stopped in 1983 because of increasing difficulties in meeting the exchange commitment. Since 1984, holders of Letters A/B have been allowed to exchange their entitlements for either land or cash.

Redemption by cash has been based on the monetised values of land exchange entitlements. These values are revised and gazetted twice a year having regard to the movement of property prices in the New Territories. The most up-to-date values has been effective from April 1, 1997.

The Bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council on April 30, 1997.

End

Precautions to reduce flooding risks

* * * * *

The Drainage Services Department (DSD) today (Friday) urged residents to take all necessary precautions to prevent flooding and enhance safety with the approach of the rainy season.

The Assistant Director (Operations and Maintenance) of the department, Mr Raymond Cheung Tat-kwing, said the public should not dump rubbish into stormwater drains and watercourses, or leave rubbish around their inlets such as roadside gullies.

"They should regularly check and clear rubbish and obstacles within their premises to avoid blocking stormwater drainage systems," Mr Cheung said.

"Problems in the public stormwater drainage systems should be reported to the DSD hotline 2300 1444," he added.

Mr Cheung also asked contractors and developers not to interfere with or block any stormwater drains or watercourses without obtaining approval from the department.

To residents of low-lying areas in the New Territories, Mr Cheung said vigilance during the rainy season from May to October was essential.

"They should watch for TV and radio announcements during adverse weather and get familiar with rainstorm and flood warnings," he said.

"They should pay attention to warning signals given by sirens near their home, go to a safe place if flooding is imminent and call the Police or Fire Services Department for help in emergency evacuation.

"They should also know the locations of emergency shelters and other facilities near their home," he added.

On the part of the department, Mr Cheung said \$95 million was spent last year on inspecting, cleansing, desilting and repairing stormwater drains, nullahs and stream courses throughout the territory.

"A preventive maintenance programme has been in place to ensure that the problematic drains were inspected and cleansed on a regular basis before and during the rainy season," he said.

"We will spare no effort in locating possible problem areas, clearing all chokage and rectifying all defects once detected," Mr Cheung said.

Information leaflets on the precautionary measures can be obtained from the department and various District Offices in the New Territories.

End

HK listed on Dissemination Standard Bulletin Board of IMF

* * * * *

Signifying the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s formal acceptance of Hong Kong's subscription to its Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS), Hong Kong has been listed today (Friday) on the Dissemination Standard Bulletin Board (DSBB) of the IMF.

Details on available Hong Kong economic and financial statistics and the methodology employed have been put onto the DSBB as an electronic bulletin board established by the IMF on the Internet. The address of the Board is <http://dsbb.imf.org>.

Information presented on the DSBB includes descriptions on coverage, periodicity, timeliness, accessibility, integrity and quality of financial, economic and government finance statistics.

To qualify for listing on the DSBB, the subscribing economy will have to organize its statistical system in accordance with the SDDS prescribed by the IMF.

The SDDS, established just last year, stipulates standards at which statistics are to be compiled and disseminated. Economies that subscribe to the SDDS make an ongoing commitment to fully observe such standards and to provide accurate information for promulgation on the DSBB.

So far, a total of 42 economies have subscribed to the SDDS and 29 have details of their data and data dissemination practices posted on the IMF's electronic bulletin board.

The Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang, welcomed the IMF's acceptance of Hong Kong's application for the subscription, stressing that compliance with the high statistical standards laid down in the SDDS was only proper given our current level of economic development and our own need to have good statistics for planning and decision making.

For each category of statistics specified in the SDDS (e.g. Gross Domestic Product, Employment, Unemployment, Labour Earnings, Production, Prices, External Trade, Money Supply, Banks' Loans and Advances, External Claims and Liabilities, Government Revenue and Expenditure, Exchange Rates, International Reserves), the contact points in Hong Kong from which further details can be obtained are given on the DSBB. The contact points are specific subject officers in the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA), the Finance Branch (FB) and the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD).

To facilitate access to the relevant information, there are electronic hyperlinks between the IMF's DSBB and the summary statistics page of the HKMA web site (<http://www.info.gov.hk.hkma>). The HKMA summary statistics page contains further electronic hyperlinks to corresponding data pages of the FB and the C&SD. Hong Kong is among the first group of economies to have such electronic linkages with the IMF's DSBB.

"Hong Kong's subscription to the SDDS and listing on the DSBB demonstrate our commitment to openness and transparency in providing economic and financial statistics to the public and the international community," Mr Tsang said.

"Commensurate with our development as a major international financial centre, the increased transparency will strengthen investor interest and confidence in Hong Kong. The move also signifies our support of the IMF's effort to strengthen its surveillance functions for promoting global monetary stability," Mr Tsang added.

Hong Kong informed the IMF of its intention to subscribe to SDDS in October 1996. The HKMA, the FB and the C&SD have been working closely with the IMF on finer details relating to the listing of Hong Kong on the DSBB in the past few months.

End

Residential mortgage survey results for March 1997

New mortgage lending continued to slow down in March according to the results of the latest monthly survey conducted by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA).

Gross new loans made during the month fell by 10.6% to \$16.8 billion, compared with a drop of 8.9% in February. The average size of new loans also dropped to \$1.74 million compared with \$1.83 million in February.

The fall in gross loans made, coupled with a rise in repayment of loans in the month (which increased by 15% to \$11.3 billion), resulted in a slower rate of growth of outstanding mortgage loans - 1.6% in March compared with 2.7% in February.

The average rate of growth of outstanding loans in the three months to March also decreased to 30.1% (annualized) from 34.3% in the three months to February. But the average change over the last twelve months remained unchanged at 22.0% in March.

On the other hand, new loans approved during the month rose by 17.0% to \$21.1 billion, in line with the revival of primary market activity in March. Loans approved during the month but not yet drawn also increased by 29.7% from \$10.9 billion in February to \$14.1 billion in March.

"The slower pace of new mortgage lending in March was a reflection of seasonal factors in February. Loan demand accelerated again in March as more new properties were put up for sale, but there are indications that market conditions have since cooled," said Mr David Carse, Deputy Chief Executive of the HKMA. "Despite this we see no need for change to our existing guidelines on loan to value ratios for different types of properties," he added.

The monthly survey also shows that the price-cutting on mortgages further intensified in March. Of new loans approved during March, 53.3% had a margin of 0.25% above best lending rate, compared with 44% in February.

Gross new loans for the purchase of properties in China increased to \$195 million in March from \$93 million in February. The amount of outstanding loans increased by 0.98% to \$6.6 billion.

End

Provisional statistics of retail sales for February 1997

* * * * *

The value of total retail sales in February 1997, estimated at \$17.9 billion, decreased by 3% when compared with February 1996. After discounting the effect of price changes over the period, total retail sales decreased by 7% in volume.

These are provisional figures on retail sales released today (Friday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

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 early February this year, but in mid-February last year, the year-on-year change in retail sales in February this year was likely to have been affected by the high base of comparison in February last year. (In February 1996, retail sales increased by 21% in value or 15% in volume over a year earlier.) It is therefore more appropriate to compare the retail sales figures for January and February taken together.

Taking the first two months of 1997 together, total retail sales rose by 7% in value and 3% in volume when compared with the same period last year.

Among different types of commodities, sales of motor vehicles rose most significantly, by 38% in both value and volume terms in January and February 1997 combined over a year earlier. Sales of miscellaneous consumer goods and valuable goods (jewellery, watches and clocks and valuable gifts) also recorded notable growth, by 12% and 6% in value respectively. In terms of volume, they increased by 7% and 10% respectively.

Concurrently, sales of fuels surged by 9% in value and 1% in volume.

Besides, sales of commodities in supermarkets; food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco; and other consumer durable goods also registered increases, by 6%, 3% and 2% in value respectively, but all remained virtually no change in volume.

Meanwhile, sales of clothing and footwear rose by 4% in value, but dropped by 4% in volume. Sales in department stores decreased by 1% in value and 7% in volume.

Compared with January 1997 (but bearing in mind that this comparison is largely affected by seasonal factors), total retail sales in February 1997 decreased by 20% in both 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 January 1997 and the provisional figure for February 1997.

Table 2 shows the value and volume indices of retail sales in February 1996, January and February 1997 for all retail outlets and by type of retail outlets, with average retail sales from October 1994 to September 1995 taken as 100. Comparisons of the February 1997 results with those for January 1997 and those for February 1996, as well as comparison of retail sales in the period from January to February of 1997 with the same period in 1996 are also given.

Starting from the reference month of January 1997, a new series of value and volume indices reflecting changes in the combined sales of supermarkets and supermarkets operating in department stores was compiled. The new indices were shown in Table 2 as supplementary statistics to provide further reference for certain analytical purposes.

The report containing the analysis of the February 1997 results is now on sale at \$3.00 per copy at the Government Publications Centre, Queensway Government Offices, G/F., Low Block, 66 Queensway; and the Publications Unit of the Census and Statistics Department, 19/F., 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. No. : 2802 1258).

TABLE 1 : TOTAL RETAIL SALES

Total Retail Sales for February 1997 (Provisional Figure) = HK\$17,914.1 million
for January 1997 (Revised Figure) = HK\$22,268.9 million

TABLE 2 : VALUE AND VOLUME INDICES OF RETAIL SALES FOR FEBRUARY 1996, JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 1997

(Monthly average of October 1994 - September 1995 = 100)

Type of Outlets	Type of Index	Index Number			% Change		
		February 1996 (Revised figures)	January 1997 (Revised figures)	February 1997 (Provisional figures)	Feb 1997 compared with Jan 1997	Feb 1997 compared with Feb 1996	Jan - Feb 1997 compared with Jan - Feb 1996
(A) FOR ALL RETAIL OUTLETS		(Point)	(Point)	(Point)	(%)	(%)	(%)
	Value	106.4	128.3	103.2	-19.6	-3.1	+6.6
	Volume	103.1	119.8	96.3	-19.6	-6.6	+2.5
(B) BY TYPE OF RETAIL OUTLETS							
Food, alcoholic drinks and tobacco (other than supermarkets)	Value	105.0	112.4	103.9	-7.5	-1.1	+3.0
	Volume	99.4	109.1	96.2	-11.9	-3.3	+0.2
Supermarkets ϕ	Value	120.0	112.3	119.8	+6.6	-0.2	+5.9
	Volume	114.5	100.5	108.6	+8.0	-5.2	+0.1
Fuels	Value	84.4	106.4	89.8	-15.6	+6.4	+9.2
	Volume	80.5	94.4	79.1	-16.2	-1.7	+1.3
Clothing, footwear and allied products	Value	105.4	153.3	95.5	-37.7	-9.4	+4.3
	Volume	103.6	136.3	85.7	-37.1	-17.3	-4.1
Consumer durable goods	Value	92.9	122.2	93.4	-23.6	+0.6	+12.3
	Volume	92.3	120.2	91.3	-24.1	-1.1	+11.0
- Motor vehicles and parts	Value	68.8	129.5	69.6	-46.2	+1.2	+38.2
	Volume	68.3	128.3	68.9	-46.3	+1.0	+37.8
- Consumer durable goods other than motor vehicles and parts	Value	107.4	117.8	107.7	-8.6	+0.3	+2.1
	Volume	106.9	115.3	104.8	-9.1	-1.9	+0.4
Department stores	Value	125.4	124.9	113.0	-9.6	-9.9	-0.7
	Volume	123.6	114.2	103.6	-9.3	-16.2	-7.2
Jewellery, watches and clocks, and valuable gifts	Value	117.8	136.4	110.1	-19.3	-6.6	+6.4
	Volume	111.1	134.3	109.1	-18.7	-1.7	+10.4
Other consumer goods not elsewhere classified	Value	95.5	128.1	100.8	-21.3	+5.6	+12.4
	Volume	92.3	117.6	92.6	-21.3	+0.3	+6.5

NOTE 1 : ϕ The figures for "supermarkets" above do not include sales in supermarkets operating in department stores. Below are supplementary statistics covering both.

Supermarkets and supermarkets operating in department stores	Value	122.8	113.1	120.9	+6.9	-1.6	+5.3
	Volume	117.2	101.3	109.6	+8.2	-6.5	-0.5

NOTE 2 : The underlined figures were rounded up to 5.

End

Ocean vessel and seaborne cargo statistics

* * * * *

In the fourth quarter of 1996, 10 788 ocean vessels with a total capacity of 47.3 million net registered tons entered Hong Kong, according to the statistics released today (Friday) by the Census and Statistics Department. Compared with the fourth quarter of 1995, the number of vessels increased by 1%, and capacity increased by 6%.

Net registered ton (NRT) is a unit measure in volume terms of the space of a vessel available for carrying passengers or goods. One NRT is equivalent to 100 cubic feet.

During the same period, there were 10 829 outgoing ocean vessels with a total capacity of 47.2 million net registered tons. Compared with the fourth quarter of 1995, there was little change in number but an increase of 5% in capacity.

In the fourth quarter of 1996, the total tonnage of seaborne inward cargo, comprising seaborne imports and seaborne inward transshipment, was estimated to be 23.2 million tonnes, representing an increase of 4% over the same quarter in 1995. Within this total, the tonnage of both seaborne imports and inward transshipment grew by 4%.

During the same period, the total tonnage of seaborne outward cargo, comprising seaborne exports (domestic exports plus re-exports) and seaborne outward transshipment, was estimated to be 10.5 million tonnes, representing an increase of 3% over the same quarter in 1995. The respective increases in the total tonnage of seaborne exports and seaborne outward transshipment were 4% and 2%.

Of the seaborne inward cargo, 82% in terms of tonnage were seaborne imports and 18% were seaborne inward transshipment. 56% of these cargoes were containerized.

Of the seaborne outward cargo, 58% in terms of tonnage were seaborne exports and 42% were seaborne outward transshipment. 85% of them were containerized cargo.

The above statistics are summarized in Table 1.

In the fourth quarter of 1996, the top five countries/territories of loading for seaborne inward cargo were Singapore (which accounted for 16% in tonnage terms), Japan (13%), Taiwan (12%), China (11%) and the U.S.A. (8%). The top five countries/territories of discharge for seaborne outward cargo were China (29%), the U.S.A. (19%), Taiwan (7%), Japan (6%) and Singapore (3%).

The top five principal commodities of seaborne inward cargo in tonnage terms included petroleum, petroleum products and related materials (21%); artificial resins and plastic materials (9%); iron and steel (7%); coal, coke and briquettes (6%) and other manufactured goods classified chiefly by material (6%).

The top five principal commodities of seaborne outward cargo in tonnage terms included machinery (13%); other manufactured goods classified chiefly by material (10%); other manufactured articles (8%); petroleum, petroleum products and related materials (7%) and toys (5%).

The distribution of the top ten countries/territories of loading and discharge and their changes in the tonnage of seaborne inward and outward cargo between the fourth quarter of 1996 and the fourth quarter of 1995 are shown in Table 2 and Table 3.

Similar statistics for seaborne inward and outward cargo analysed by the top ten principal commodities are shown in Table 4 and Table 5.

Ocean vessel statistics are compiled primarily from general declarations submitted to the Marine Department by ship masters or authorized shipping agents and cover all ocean vessels entering and leaving Hong Kong, excluding yachts and pleasure craft.

Seaborne cargo statistics are compiled from a sample of consignments listed in the ocean cargo manifests supplied by shipping companies or agents to the Census and Statistics Department.

More details of ocean vessel and seaborne cargo statistics for the fourth quarter of 1996 are contained in the report entitled "Hong Kong Shipping Statistics, October - December 1996". This report is in bilingual form.

The report is now on sale at the Government Publications Centre, Queensway Government Offices, Low Block, Ground Floor, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong, and the Publications Unit of the Census and Statistics Department on 19/F, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai at \$66 a copy.

Enquiries on statistics contained in the report may be directed to the Shipping and Cargo Statistics Section of the Census and Statistics Department on telephone 2582 4887.

Table 1: Summary of ocean vessel and seaborne cargo statistics

	4th quarter <u>1996</u>	% change over 4th quarter <u>1995</u>
Incoming ocean vessel Number	10 788	+1
Capacity (Mn. NRT#)	47.3	+6
Gross weight (Mn. tonnes)		
Seaborne inward cargo	23.2(56)	+4
Seaborne imports	19.2(48)	+4
Seaborne inward transshipment	4.1(97)	+4
Outgoing ocean vessel Number	10 829	*
Capacity (Mn. NRT#)	47.2	+5
Gross weight (Mn. tonnes)		
Seaborne outward cargo	10.5(85)	+3
Seaborne exports@	6.0(75)	+4
Seaborne outward transshipment	4.4(99)	+2

- Notes : (1) # NRT denotes net registered tons.
 (2) @ Seaborne exports comprises domestic exports plus re-exports.
 (3) Figures may not add up to the respective totals due to rounding.
 (4) Figures in brackets denote the extent of containerization in percentage.
 (5) * Change of less than 0.5%.

Table 2: Seaborne inward cargo# by top ten countries/ territories of loading

<u>Country/territory of loading</u>	<u>4th quarter 1996 (^{'000 tonnes})</u>	<u>% share@</u>	<u>% change over 4th quarter 1995</u>
Singapore	3 652	16	-8
Japan	2 919	13	+2
Taiwan	2 873	12	+4
China	2 482	11	+7
U.S.A.	1 832	8	-15
Republic of Korea	1 790	8	+13
Indonesia	770	3	-14
Australia	766	3	+33
Thailand	663	3	+40
Republic of South Africa	658	3	-32

Notes : (1) # Seaborne inward cargo comprises seaborne imports and seaborne inward transshipment.

(2) @ % share in total tonnage of seaborne inward cargo.

Table 3: Seaborne outward cargo# by top ten countries/ territories of discharge

<u>Country/territory of loading</u>	<u>4th quarter 1996 ([']000 tonnes)</u>	<u>% share@</u>	<u>% change over 4th quarter 1995</u>
China	3 028	29	+18
U.S.A.	1 969	19	+12
Taiwan	786	7	+14
Japan	579	6	+1
Singapore	365	3	-4
Federal Republic of Germany	364	3	-23
Netherlands	337	3	-25
Philippines	273	3	+8
United Kingdom	253	2	-6
Australia	213	2	+6

Notes : (1) # Seaborne outward cargo comprises seaborne exports (domestic exports plus re-exports) and seaborne outward transshipment.

(2) @ % share in total tonnage of seaborne outward cargo.

Table 4: Seaborne inward cargo# by top ten principal commodities

<u>Country/territory of loading</u>	<u>4th quarter 1996 ([']000 tonnes)</u>	<u>% share@</u>	<u>% change over 4th quarter 1995</u>
Petroleum, petroleum products and related materials	4 789	21	+3
Artificial resins and plastic materials	2 124	9	-8
Iron and steel	1 642	7	+14
Coal, coke and briquettes	1 464	6	-34
Other manufactured goods classified chiefly by material	1 320	6	+16
Machinery	1 228	5	+17
Paper and paper products	1 216	5	+21
Cement and cement clinker	855	4	-1
Textile yarn, fabrics, made-up articles and related products	777	3	+4
Live animals chiefly for food and edible animal products	625	3	+14

Notes : (1) # Seaborne inward cargo comprises seaborne imports and seaborne inward transshipment.

(2) @ % share in total tonnage of seaborne inward cargo.

Table 5: Seaborne outward cargo# by top ten principal commodities

Country/territory of loading	4th quarter 1996 (^{'000 tonnes})	% share@	% change over 4th quarter 1995
Machinery	1 312	13	+3
Other manufactured goods classified chiefly by material	1 009	10	-3
Other manufactured articles	840	8	+36
Petroleum, petroleum products and related materials	776	7	+13
Toys	570	5	+1
Articles of apparel and clothing accessories	420	4	*
Artificial resins and plastic materials	383	4	*
Other chemicals and related products	362	3	-5
Footwear	294	3	-13
Textile yarn, fabrics, made-up articles and related products	293	3	-21

- Notes : (1) # Seaborne outward cargo comprises seaborne exports (domestic exports plus re-exports) and seaborne outward transshipment.
 (2) @ % share in total tonnage of seaborne outward cargo.
 (3) * Change of less than 0.5%.

End

Three Land Development Corporation members re-appointed

* * * * *

The Governor has re-appointed Mr Barry Cheung Chun-yuen, Mr Eoghan M McMillan and Mr David Lung Ping-yeo to the Land Development Corporation Managing Board for a further two years commencing May 1, 1997.

Mr Cheung and Mr McMillan are experienced executives from the commercial sector. Mr Lung is a professional architect.

All three members have made valuable contribution to the Managing Board. Their reappointments will continue to provide a good range of expertise and support to the Managing Board.

With the above reappointments, there will be no change to the composition of the Managing Board. A full list of the members is as follows:

Chairman: Mr Lau Wah-sum;

Chief Executive: Mr Abraham Razack;

Non-official members: Mr Barry Cheung Chun-yuen;

Mr Eoghan M McMillan;

Mr David Lung Ping-yeo;

Mr Michael Lai Kam-cheung;

Mr Ambrose Lau Hon-chuen;

Mr David Lee Tsung-hei;

Ms Angelina Lee Wong Pui-ling;

Ms Ophelia Cheung Look-ping;

Mr Pao Ping-wing;

Mr David Peter Yip; and

Mr James To Kun-sun;

Official members: Director of Home Affairs;

Director of Lands; and

Director of Planning.

End

Appointments to ACTEQ announced

* * * * *

The Government announced today (Friday) that seventeen members of the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ) have been re-appointed for a further term of one year with effect from May 1, 1997.

Commenting on the re-appointment, the Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Joseph W P Wong said that the Government was grateful for ACTEQ's valuable advice and contribution in the past years, and in particular its hard work in the language benchmarking exercise.

"The Government looks forward to the continued support and advice of ACTEQ in language benchmarking, as well as teacher education and qualification issues, which are highly important for raising the quality of our school education", he added.

Following is the membership of ACTEQ with effect from May 1:

Chairman

Prof the Hon Felice Lieh Mak, OBE, JP

Members

Ms Bow Sui-may, JP

Dr Ronnie Carr

Mr Chan Wing-kwong

Prof Cheng Kai-ming, JP

Miss Chow Lo-sai, Pauline

Prof Fu Hoo-kin, Frank

Mr Koo Yee-yin, Irving

Ms Koong May-kay, Maggie

Mr Lee Tseun-yuen, Ignatius

Dr Frederick Leung

Prof Lo Nai-kwai, Leslie

Ms Tang Mei-sin

Mr Tien Puk-sun, Michael

Dr Wong Hin-wah

Mr Yang Yu-wai

Mr Yau Hon-kee

Ex-officio Members

Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower

Deputy Secretary for the Civil Service

Director of Education

Secretary-General, University Grants Committee

Director of Hong Kong Institute of Education

Executive Director, Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation

End

Financial eligibility limits for legal aid scheme revised

* * * * *

The Legal Aid (Amendment) Ordinance 1997 will come into operation on May 1, 1997. Under the amendment Ordinance, the upper financial eligibility limit for the standard legal aid scheme will be increased from \$144,000 to \$169,700; and the lower and upper financial eligibility limits for the Supplementary Legal Aid Scheme from the present \$144,000 and \$400,000 to \$169,700 and \$471,600 respectively.

The Legal Aid (Assessment of Resources and Contributions)(Amendment) Regulation 1997 will also come into operation on May 1, 1997. The amendment Regulation prescribes a set of new scales of contributions to be made by legally aided persons under the standard legal aid scheme, as a result of the increase in the financial eligibility limit.

The Government is committed to reviewing the financial eligibility limits for the standard legal aid scheme and the Supplementary Legal Aid Scheme operated by the Legal Aid Department every two years to take account of inflation.

A recent review has recommended that the financial eligibility limits should be revised in line with inflation in the past two years (the accumulated inflation rate for the period from July 1994 to June 1996 was 17.9%).

End

Tender results for new Lantau taxi licences announced

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The Transport Department today (Friday) announced the results of the latest tender exercise for 10 new Lantau taxi licences.

A total of 177 bids offering premiums ranging from \$1,001 to \$2,378,000 were received in this tendering exercise in March.

Details of the successful tenderers and the premiums they offered were published in the Government Gazette today.

Speaking on the tender results, a spokesman for the department said: "The highest and lowest bids accepted are \$2,378,000 and \$2,275,000 respectively.

"The average accepted premium is \$2,320,909 while the average premium for the last tender was \$18,400."

The last tender exercise for Lantau taxis was in January 1985 when 10 licences were issued.

The current tender exercise was the second of its kind since Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) recommended in its 1994 Taxi Policy Review a number of measures to improve taxi services and to dampen speculation.

A total of 300 urban taxi licences and 100 New Territories taxi licences were tendered in 1994.

In the review, TAC recommended that two new conditions were to be included in tender exercises.

First, no tenderer may bid for more than one taxi licence; and second, these new taxi licences will not be transferable within 12 months from the date of first registration of the taxis concerned.

The spokesman said: "TAC has reconvened its Working Group on Taxi Policy Review to examine the effectiveness of the measures adopted since 1994 and, where appropriate, recommend new measures to tighten existing regulations."

At present, there are 40 taxis operating in Lantau.

"The issuing of new taxi licences will help to meet the increasing demand for taxi services in North Lantau," he added.

All successful tenderers should pay the premium within 14 days and complete the necessary registration and licensing formalities within six months after receipt of the notification of acceptance of their tenders.

End

Hong Kong to attend ESCAP 53rd plenary session

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The Deputy Secretary for Trade and Industry, Mr Tam Wing-pong, will lead a Hong Kong delegation to attend the 53rd plenary session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), to be held in Bangkok at the end of this month.

A subsidiary body of the United Nations, ESCAP conducts research and initiates measures to facilitate the economic development of the Asia-Pacific region, especially through the collection, evaluation and dissemination of economic, technological and statistical information of the region.

Hong Kong is an associate member of the ESCAP and actively participates in its work, notably in the Typhoon Committee and the Committee on Statistics.

The theme topic of this year's plenary session of the ESCAP is "Asia and the Pacific into the twenty-first century: opportunities and challenges for the ESCAP region". Mr Tam will deliver a statement at the session.

Other members of the Hong Kong delegation include the Assistant Commissioner for Census and Statistics, Dr Luk Chi-ming, the Assistant Secretary for Trade and Industry, Miss Monica Chen and the Assistant Trade Officer, Miss Helen Cheng.

End

Carnival to celebrate NT developments before handover

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A large-scale carnival to complement the Handover Ceremony will be held on June 29 to present a kaleidoscope of new town developments in the New Territories over the past 20 years.

Outlining the programmes of the "Celebration of Developments in the New Territories Carnival" at a press conference today (Friday), the Director of Home Affairs, Mrs Shelley Lau, said that it would be one of the community building programmes planned and organised by the Home Affairs Department to encourage greater public involvement in activities related to the handover prior to the historical moment.

"The public, both local residents and overseas visitors, will also be able to capture the harmonious co-existence of traditional practices and modern developments in the New Territories through a series of entertaining programmes," Mrs Lau added.

To generate and maintain public interest, a total of nine lead-in variety shows will be staged from April 26 to June 21, either on Saturdays or Sundays, in nine New Territories districts, to help residents and visitors alike know more about the historical and environmental developments in the districts.

Highlight of the programme, a carnival featuring game stalls, a food fiesta, exhibitions, cultural performances and a variety show, will take place in Sha Tin on June 29 (Sunday). Participating bodies will include the nine New Territories district offices, the Regional Services Department, community bodies and local performing groups.

The events are organised by the Home Affairs Department and co-organised by the Regional Council, the Education Department and the Hong Kong Tourist Association, with the assistance of the Commercial Radio.

Mrs Lau was joined at the press conference by the Assistant Director of Regional Services (Culture and Entertainment), Miss Choi Suk-kuen; Assistant Director of Education (Chief Inspector of Schools), Mr Ng Kwok-chuen; Manager (Local Public Relations Department) of Hong Kong Tourist Association, Miss Shirley Ping; and General Manager of Commercial Radio, Mr Ip Hon-leung.

Local artistes who had been appointed "District Ambassadors" for the carnival and representatives of the nine district offices were also present.

End

New public piers in Sai Kung

The Government will construct two public piers at Po Toi O and Yim Tin Tsai in Sai Kung to improve berthing and landing facilities for local villagers and other members of the public.

The piers, each with an area of 400 square metres, will facilitate the 400 local villagers and other members of the public who use fishing boats, kaitos and small motorized sampans for transportation.

Both projects are proposed by Sai Kung District Office and form part of the Rural Planning and Improvement Strategy programme.

The works will be carried out within 1,200 square metres and 1,730 square metres of foreshore and sea-bed near Po Toi O and Yim Tin Tsai respectively.

Both projects will begin in mid-1997 and will take about 18 months to complete.

The extent of the areas affected are published in the Government Gazette today (Friday).

End

District open space in Tseung Kwan O

Construction of a district open space will begin in July to provide additional leisure activities for residents in Hang Hau, Tseung Kwan O.

Occupying an area of about 7,800 square metres, the open space has been designed to cater for the needs of users of different age groups, and to maximise the provision of green areas.

Major facilities of the open space will include gateball courts, toddler play areas, sitting-out and landscaped areas.

Works will begin in July for completion in June 1998.

End

Draft Wu Kau Tang DPA plan approved

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The Governor-in-Council has approved the draft Wu Kau Tang Development Permission Area (DPA) plan, a spokesman for the Town Planning Board said today (Friday).

"The DPA plan will provide interim guidance for planning and to facilitate development control within the Wu Kau Tang area.

"After detailed studies on land use, infrastructural provisions and development options, a draft statutory outline zoning plan will be prepared and published to replace the approved DPA plan," he said.

The DPA plan (No. DPA/NE-WKT/2), published in today's Gazette, is available for public inspection during office hours at:

- * Planning Department
16th floor, Murray Building
Garden Road
Central
Hong Kong;
- * Sha Tin, Tai Po and North District Planning Office
Ground floor, Sha Tin Government Offices
6 Tung Lo Wan Hill Road
Sha Tin
New Territories; and
- * North District Office
3rd floor, North District Government Offices
3 Pik Fung Road
Fanling
New Territories.

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

End

Tenders for Siu Sai Wan footbridges

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Highways Department today (Friday) invites tenders for the construction of two footbridges in Siu Sai Wan.

To meet demands of future development in Siu Sai Wan, one of them will be across Siu Sai Wan Road and the other across unnamed Road 22/3 and Road 22/4.

The works also comprise associated road, drainage and landscaping works.

The works are scheduled to commence in July 1997 for completion in January 1999.

The Department's Hong Kong Regional Office is responsible for the design and construction of the project.

End

Parents consulted on mother tongue teaching

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The Director of Education, Mrs Helen C P Lai YU, will tomorrow (Saturday) attend a seminar on mother tongue teaching.

Organised by the Working Group on Parents' Centre of the Committee on Home-School Co-operation (HSC), the seminar is chaired by the Chairman of HSC, Mr Tik Chi-yuen.

Some 50 chairmen and representatives from parent-teacher associations will share their views on consultation document on the "Arrangements for Firm Guidance on Secondary Schools' Medium of Instruction" issued by the Education Department last month (March).

The Assistant Director of Education (Planning and Research), Mr Lee Hing-fai; Vice-President of the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union, Mr Au Pak-kuen; and Chairman of Hong Kong East Parent-Teacher Association Federation, Mr Eric Leung; will speak at the seminar.

End

Fifth anniversary of Curriculum Development Institute

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The Chairman of the Curriculum Development Council (CDC), Dr Cheng Hon-kwan, today (Friday) noted that the Curriculum Development Institute (CDI) and CDC are partners in curriculum development.

While attending a seminar to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the CDI, Dr Cheng said the institute played the roles of supporter and facilitator of curriculum reforms in the past five years.

The seminar captioned "Partnership in Curriculum Development" was an experience sharing seminar among partners in curriculum development.

Promoting curriculum development, providing support services and exploring developing direction were introduced by the CDI staff at the seminar.

The institute was set up in 1992, following the recommendations made in the Education Report No. 4. The number of staff has increased from 133 to 202.

End

Water cut in Quarry Bay and Yuen Long

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Fresh water supply to some premises in Quarry Bay will be suspended from 11 pm on April 28 (Monday) to 6 am the following day for waste detection work on watermains.

The suspension will affect all premises in the area bounded by Pan Hoi Street, Westlands Road, 986 and all odd number premises between 981-1037 King's Road.

Meanwhile, fresh and flushing water supply to some premises in Yuen Long will be suspended during the same period.

The suspension will affect all premises in the area bounded by Hop Yick Road, Tai Tong Road, Fau Tsoi Street and Yau Sun Street, including Kin Tak Street, 4-40 and 1-33 Hop Yick Road and 70 Fung Cheung Street.

End