



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Closure of Whitehead Detention Centre and a review of 1996

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The Whitehead Detention Centre for Vietnamese migrants (VMs) is closed today (Friday) as the VM population in Hong Kong drops to a record low of 6,300 since the late 1970s.

The acting Refugee Co-ordinator, Ms Sally Wong, said that since 1989, more than 63,000 VMs had been repatriated to Vietnam under the voluntary (Volrep) and orderly repatriation programmes.

She added that in 1996, the pace of repatriation was accelerated in May and again in October, resulting in several records being made in the year :

- * a total of 15,100 VMs were repatriated, the highest annual repatriation record;
- * 7,000 VMs were repatriated under ORP, the highest ORP figure achieved since the programme commenced in November 1991;
- * 2,155 VMs were repatriated (under Volrep and ORP) in November alone, the highest monthly figure;
- * over 700 VMs returned to Vietnam voluntarily on four flights on December 19, the highest daily Volrep figure.

The VM population, which stood at over 20,000 at the beginning of 1996, fell to about 6,300 at the end of the year, which was the lowest figure since the late 1970s.

With the successes in repatriation and the declining VM population, Tai A Chau Detention Centre was closed in September 1996. The main camp of Whitehead Detention Centre is also closing down today, leaving only two voluntary repatriation centres, a unit for Ex-China Vietnamese Illegal Immigrants, and the security unit in the camp to provide temporary holding facilities for some VMs immediately prior to their repatriation under ORP.

The bulk of the remaining VMs are now accommodated in High Island Detention Centre.

"We are pleased that the transfer operation today at Whitehead has proceeded smoothly," Ms Wong said. "This is likely to be the last major operation at the camp."

The Whitehead Detention Centre was first opened in January 1989 when the VM population in Hong Kong stood at about 11,000. When the VM population reached its height of nearly 60,000 in October 1991, the centre provided accommodation for about 25,000.

"The Government is firmly committed to resolving the problem of the remaining VMs in Hong Kong as soon as possible," Ms Wong said.

"Should the current rate of repatriation continue, it should be possible to close all VM camps by the middle of this year.

"The closure of the Whitehead Detention Centre is a watershed in the whole VM saga, signalling the beginning of the end of the problem," she said.

End

Transfer of VMs from Whitehead Detention Centre today

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A total of about 530 Vietnamese migrants (VMs) will be transferred from Section 6 of Whitehead Detention Centre (WHDC) to the security units of WHDC and High Island Detention Centre (HIDC) today (Friday) in preparation for their return to Vietnam under the Orderly Repatriation Programme.

They will go through pre-flight documentation and medical checks prior to their repatriation on January 7 and 14.

All remaining VMs in Section 6 will also be transferred to HIDC today.

The transfers will be observed by independent monitors.

After the transfers, the main camp of WHDC will be closed down, leaving only the two voluntary repatriation centres, about 270 ex-China Vietnamese illegal immigrants, and the security unit in the camp to provide temporary holding facilities for some VMs immediately prior to their repatriation under ORP.

End

Statement by the Medical Council of Hong Kong

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The following is a statement issued by the Chairman of the Medical Council of Hong Kong, Professor Rosie Young, in response to views expressed yesterday (Thursday) by Hong Kong students studying medicine abroad:

The Medical Council of Hong Kong considers it important to point out that the Universal Licensing Examination is not intended to bar medical students graduating from the UK, Australia or other Commonwealth countries from coming back to Hong Kong to practise medicine.

It merely requires them to pass a qualifying examination followed by a period of assessment for the purpose of registration; a system to ensure that those who return from abroad and are allowed to practise medicine in Hong Kong are at a standard that the Medical Council can recommend to our public.

The Medical Council believes that the holding of a Universal Licensing Examination for all overseas medical graduates seeking to practise in Hong Kong now and in future is the fairest way to all.

In this regard, the Medical Council trusts that these bona fide medical graduates from the UK, Australia or other Commonwealth countries should have no difficulties in passing the uniform standard of assessment set by the council.

Within the ambit of the law as it now stands, the Medical Council has explored some administrative means to help these medical graduates wherever possible. For example, the Medical Council will explore all possible means to minimise the time gap between the holding of different parts of the Licensing Examination so that students may complete the entire examination within the shortest time span, that is about three months' time.

Besides, they may be exempted from taking Part II of the Licensing Examination provided that English is used as the medium of instruction in the course of their medical training.

Concerning the 12-months' period of internship training following the Licensing Examination, the Medical Council will recommend to the Licentiate Committee to consider reducing the period of assessment within its authority on the basis of individual performance and upon application by the medical graduates concerned.

Furthermore, when these medical graduates undertake their internship training in our local hospitals, they will be employed by the Hospital Authority at a monthly salary of \$18,595 (rate as at January 1, 1997), which in a way may alleviate the financial burden of their family, if any, before they become a registered medical practitioner in Hong Kong.

These medical graduates will also be able to serve the community under limited registration if they obtain an employment in those institutions under the Medical Council's Promulgation (No. 2), for example the University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Department of Health and public hospitals administered by the Hospital Authority.

In respect of the problem faced by some Australian students in securing intern placements in Australia, the Medical Council considers that the internship training should, in fact, be part and parcel of their undergraduate medical training. Nevertheless, the Medical Council has provided assistance to these students to seek intern placement in Australia.

End

Plans to resume land in Mong Kok announced

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The Lands Department announced today (Friday) plans to resume 1,082.20 square metres of land at Argyle Street and Shanghai Street in Mong Kok.

The land will be resumed under the Crown Lands Resumption Ordinance for the implementation of a development scheme by the Land Development Corporation (LDC).

Details of the land lots affected are contained in a notice in the Government Gazette published today.

A government spokesman said the Government was satisfied that the LDC had taken all reasonable steps to acquire these interests on terms that were fair and reasonable, as required by the Land Development Corporation Ordinance.

"A total of 62 interests in Argyle Street, Hong Lok Street, Nelson Street, Portland Street, Reclamation Street and Shanghai Street will revert to the Government when the resumption notice expires in three months' time," the spokesman said.

"Owners and tenants affected may make statutory claims under the Crown Lands Resumption Ordinance and, if the claim cannot be settled by agreement, may apply to the Lands Tribunal for adjudication.

"Eligible domestic occupiers will be offered rehousing or ex-gratia cash allowance in lieu of rehousing by the LDC."

The spokesman added that upon completion of the resumption and clearance, a total of about 11,990 square metres of land would be granted by land exchange to the LDC for redevelopment.

The site will be developed as multi-storey commercial buildings with "Government/Institution/Community" facilities including a public light bus terminus, a cooked food centre and neighbourhood community centres.

"A public open space with an area of about 1,100 square metres will also be provided for environmental improvement," he said.

End

DB plays important monitoring role in district affairs

* * * * *

The Wan Chai District Board has played a vital role in reflecting residents' opinions and improving their livelihood as well as offering them a wide range of cultural, recreational and community activities, the Director of Home Affairs, Mrs Shelley Lau, said today (Friday).

Speaking at the opening ceremony of Wan Chai Festival '97, Mrs Lau said the Government attached great importance to district boards as a consultative and monitoring body in the provision of services at district level.

"Take Wan Chai District Board as an example, it has implemented a large-scale conservation programme that involved planting more than 700 trees to beautify the environment over the past few years.

"The board has also lobbied the Land Development Corporation (LDC) to reconsider its redevelopment of Wan Chai Road and Tai Yuen Street with a view to improving the environment and traffic in the area.

"LDC has since adopted the board's suggestions. The project has since been approved by the Town Planning Board and Executive Council and work will start soon," she said.

On the organising of community activities, she noted that Wan Chai was the first district to organise a district festival.

The festival for this year offers more than 30 activities for people from all walks of life, senior citizens, handicapped people, Comprehensive Social Security Assistance recipients and new arrivals.

Mrs Lau added that the festival had provided an opportunity for residents to establish contact with those in need of care and assistance, thereby fostering a harmonious community.

End

Voters urged to support Wong Tai Sin District Board by-election

* * * * *

The Wong Tai Sin District Officer, Miss Diane Wong, today (Friday) urged registered voters of San Po Kong constituency to cast their ballots in the Wong Tai Sin District Board by-election in respect of the constituency on Sunday (January 5).

Miss Wong said that advisory in nature, the district boards had made valuable contributions towards improving the well-being of residents in the districts - in terms of the provision of services and facilities at district level.

The balloting will be held from 7.30 am to 10.30 pm.

Two polling stations will be set up, one at Ho Lap College, 15 Tseuk Luk Street and the other in Kai Tai East Indoor Games Hall, 30 Luk Hop Street, San Po Kong.

Two candidates - Mr Mak Hoi-wah and Mr Lee Tat-yan - will be vying for the seat vacated by Mr Josephs Chan (alias Canon Chan).

San Po Kong constituency comprises all private buildings and two squatter areas (Ha Yuen Leng and Tai Hom Village) within the area bounded by Choi Hung Road, Lung Cheung Road and Prince Edward Road East. It has an electorate of 5,875.

Registered voters are reminded to bring along their identity cards and their poll cards to the polling stations.

Enquiries can be made to the Wong Tai Sin District Office on 2323 5668 ext 23.

End

Electors reminded to vote in by-election on Sunday

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The Registration and Electoral Office (REO) today (Friday) reminded the 5,875 electors of San Po Kong constituency to vote in the Wong Tai Sin District Board by-election in respect of their constituency on Sunday (January 5).

Two polling stations will be set up, one in Ho Lap College, 15 Tseuk Luk Street and the other in Kai Tak East Indoor Games Hall, 30 Luk Hop Street, San Po Kong. They will be opened from 7.30 am to 10.30 pm.

An REO spokesman said an elector must bring along his identity card to the polling station as specified in the poll card sent to him earlier. It would facilitate polling proceeding if he could also bring along the poll card.

For enquiries, please call 2827 1122.

End

Tech Week '97 to be launched next week

* * * * *

A five-day programme of events featuring a technology exhibition, an Asian industrial and technology congress, seminars on technology, a business and technology exchange forum, and a symposium on a study on the further development of Hong Kong's manufacturing industries will be held between January 6 (Monday) and 10 at the Hong Kong Exhibition and Convention Centre.

Announcing details of the Hong Kong Technology Week '97 at a press conference today (Friday), the chairman of the organising committee for the event, Professor Charles Kao, said the Technology Week was the first of its kind in Hong Kong.

"The objectives of organising the event are to demonstrate Hong Kong's technological achievements to local and overseas manufacturers and investors, and to promote public awareness and generate public interest in the latest technology advances," said Professor Kao.

"The programme of the Technology Week will show all of us that Hong Kong does have a robust group of technology-based industries and research organisations, and is highly competitive in many technology areas."

Commenting on the theme of the Technology Week, "Better Living, Brighter Future", Professor Kao said: "It depicts the fact that modern technologies have wide applications in our daily lives and will help improve our way of living and create a brighter future for us all.

"For example, developments in information technology has overcome the geographical constraints in communication through the use of the Internet, electronic mail and video conferencing; wrinkle-free fabric has saved us much time and trouble in handling some of our daily chores; the waste treatment technologies have alleviated the pollution problem and improved our environment."

Also speaking at the press conference, the Director-General of Industry, Mr Francis Ho, said the Technology Week would be kicked off with an opening ceremony to be held at noon on January 6.

The opening ceremony will be officiated by the Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang, and some 300 guests from the business and academic community have been invited to attend.

The core programme of the week, the Technology Exhibition, will be open to the public free of charge from 1 pm on January 6 to 2 pm on January 9.

"The Technology Exhibition, the first of its kind in Hong Kong, will have some 200 exhibitors from the commercial sector, tertiary institutions, industry support bodies and trade associations displaying the latest advances in seven technology areas," Mr Ho said.

Co-organisers of the Technology Week include The Chinese Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong, the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, the Hong Kong Industrial Technology Centre Corporation, the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the Hong Kong Productivity Council and the Young Industrialists Council.

End

Full portability of telephone numbers achieved

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The Office of the Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) announced today (Friday) that Hong Kong has successfully achieved full portability of telephone numbers using the intelligent network and database technique.

Hong Kong is the first city in the world to achieve full number portability.

"To the consumers, this means that all fixed telephone users can keep their numbers wherever they move their homes or offices within Hong Kong," a spokesman for OFTA said.

"They can also keep their numbers if they change their subscription from one telephone company to another."

- OFTA will conduct a study in the near future to consider the applicability and desirability of introducing number portability to mobile telephone services.

End

Hong Kong Island lot for sale by tender

* * * * *

The Lands Department is inviting tenders for the sale of a piece of government land at Pok Fu Lam Road on Hong Kong Island.

The Rural Building Lot No 1135 has an area of about 810.6 square metres. It is intended for use as a petrol filling station (excluding any ancillary vehicle servicing or lubricating facilities) and the retail sale of confectionery, drinks and motor vehicle accessories.

The closing date for submission of tenders is noon on Friday, January 31.

Tender form, tender notice and conditions can be obtained from the Lands Department, 14th floor, Murray Building, Garden Road, Hong Kong, and the District Lands Offices/Kowloon, 10th floor, Yau Ma Tei Car Park Building, 250 Shanghai Street, Kowloon.

Tender documents will also be available at the district lands offices of Sha Tin, Tai Po, North, Yuen Long, Tuen Mun, Tsuen Wan, Kwai Tsing, Sai Kung and Islands.

End

Fees for Certificate of Competency to operate boilers

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The Government proposes to increase the fees for the issue of a Certificate of Competency to operate boilers and pressure vessels from \$275 to \$330 starting from February 14, 1997 subject to the approval of the Legislative Council.

It is also proposed to increase the fees for carrying out examinations for the purposes of the issue or endorsement of such certificates from \$510 to \$610 from the same day.

The proposals are provided for under the Boilers and Pressure Vessels (Amendment) Regulation 1997 gazetted today (Friday). The regulation will be laid before the Legislative Council on January 8, 1997.

"It is Government policy that fees should in general be set at levels sufficient to recover the full costs of providing the services," a Government spokesman said.

"The fees were last revised in January 1995. The proposed fee increases are required to reflect the cost of services at 1996-97 price level."

End

Sewerage and road works planned for Tai Po

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The Director of Environmental Protection has proposed the installation of trunk sewerage along Ting Kok Road between Tai Mei Tuk and Sam Mun Tsai Road.

This is part of the continuing programme for the development of the Tai Po New Town.

The works include the construction of approximately 3.5 kilometres of gravity sewer and rising mains as well as sewage pumping stations.

Works will commence around mid-1997 for completion in mid-1999. During the construction period, Ting Kok Road between Shuen Wan Lei Uk and Tai Mei Tuk will be upgraded.

Details of the proposed sewerage works and the road upgrading works were published in the Government Gazette today (Friday).

The plans and schemes of the proposed works are now available for public inspection at:

- * Central and Western District Office,
Public Enquiry Service Centre, ground floor,
Harbour Building, 38 Pier Road, Central.

- * Tai Po District Lands Office and
Tai Po District Office,
Tai Po Government Office Building,
Ting Kok Road, Tai Po, New Territories.

Any person who wishes to object to the proposed works should submit his objection to the Director of Environmental Protection, 28th floor, Southorn Centre, 130 Hennessy Road, Wan Chai not later than March 3, 1997.

End

Upgrading of Ting Kok Road in Tai Po proposed

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The Government proposes the upgrading the section of Ting Kok Road between Shuen Wan Lei Uk and Tai Mei Tuk in Tai Po to a single-lane dual carriageway.

The road upgrading works form part of the continuing programme for the development of the Tai Po New Town.

Works will involve widening and improving about 3.5 kilometres of road, footpath and cycle track of the existing section of Ting Kok Road.

There will be improvement of the existing road bends adjacent to Sheun Wan Lei Uk and Tai Po Town Lot No 140 and modification of the two road junctions at Ting Kok Road and Shan Liu Road, and at Ting Kok Road and Tung Tsz Road.

Construction of run-ins to village tracks, footpaths, amenity areas, drainage networks, slope treatment works, retaining wall and noise barriers will also be included.

Works will start around September this year for completion in 1999.

A notice covering the proposed road upgrading works was gazetted today (Friday).

Plans and schemes showing the proposed works can be seen at Central and Western District Office, Central Enquiry Service Centre, ground Floor, Harbour Building, 38 Pier Road, Central, Hong Kong; Tai Po District Lands Office and Tai Po District Office which are located at the Tai Po Government Office Building, Ting Kok Road, Tai Po, New Territories.

Any person who wishes to object to the works or the use, or both, must send his objection in writing to the Secretary for Transport, Central Government Offices, East Wing, second floor, Lower Albert Road, Hong Kong, before March 4, 1997 describing his interest and the manner in which he alleges that he will be affected by the works or the use.

End

Proposal for further improvements to Victoria Road

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The Highways Department proposes to upgrade Victoria Road to the latest standards.

A department spokesman said today (Friday) that the Victoria Road Improvements Stage II Phase 2 works would enhance pedestrian and vehicular traffic on the section of Victoria Road between Sassoon Road and Pok Fu Lam Road.

The proposed works include:

- (i) widening and realignment of sections of Victoria Road;
- (ii) construction of two link roads connecting Wah King Street;
- (iii) extension of the link road leading to Pok Fu Lam Kennels;
- (iv) construction of footpaths and bus bays;
- (v) construction of a vehicular bridge and retaining walls; and
- (vi) associated landscaping, slope and ancillary works.

The proposed works are expected to commence in February 1998 for completion in mid-2000.

Details of the proposal were published in the Government Gazette today.

The plans and scheme of the proposed works may be inspected during office hours at:

- * Public Enquiry Service Centre, Central and Western District Office, ground floor, Harbour Building, 38 Pier Road, Central;
- * Hong Kong South District Lands Office, 20th floor, Southorn Centre, 130 Hennessy Road, Wan Chai; and
- * Public Enquiry Service Centre, Southern District Office, Shop 25, ground floor, Mei Fung Court, Aberdeen Centre, 7-11, Nam Ning Street, Aberdeen.

Any person who wishes to object to the works or the use, or both, is required to address his objection in writing not later than March 4, 1997 to the Secretary for Transport, second floor, East Wing, Central Government Offices, Lower Albert Road, Hong Kong.

End

Road works proposed for Ngau Tam Mei Treatment Works

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The Government plans to execute road works to improve the section of the existing access road leading to the proposed Ngau Tam Mei Treatment Works in Yuen Long.

The proposed road works form part of the Ngau Tam Mei Treatment Works project, which is to be implemented to increase fresh water supply to northwest New Territories.

The road works will commence in March 1998 for completion in 12 months. They will include the widening and realignment of a section of the access road and construction of associated earth retaining structures, earth works and drainage works.

In accordance with a notice published in the Government Gazette today (Friday), any person who wishes to object to the works or the use, or both, is required to address his objection in writing to the Secretary for Transport, Central Government Offices, East Wing, second floor, Lower Albert Road, Central, Hong Kong, before March 4, 1997.

The written objection should describe the interest and the manner in which he alleges that he will be affected by the works or the use.

The notice in both English and Chinese can be seen on a notice board posted on the site.

The plan (No 4201/3) and scheme describing the proposed works are available for public inspection during office hours at:

- * Central and Western District Office,
Public Enquiry Service Centre,
ground floor, Harbour Building,
38 Pier Road, Central,
Hong Kong;
- * Yuen Long District Lands Office,
Yuen Long Government Offices,
ninth to 11th floors, 2 Kiu Lok Square,
Yuen Long, New Territories;
and
- * Yuen Long District Office,
Yuen Long District Office Building,
269 Castle Peak Road, Yuen Long,
New Territories.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority interbank liquidity

		TIME	AGGREGATE BALANCE OF SETTLEMENT ACCOUNTS
OPENING AGGREGATE BALANCE	450 MN	0930 HR	9,671 MN
CLOSING AGGREGATE BALANCE	678 MN	1000 HR	13,942 MN
CHANGE ATTRIBUTABLE TO :		1100 HR	13,942 MN
MONEY MARKET ACTIVITY	- 254 MN	1200 HR	24,005 MN
LAF REVERSAL	+8,056 MN	1500 HR	24,105 MN
LAF TODAY	- 7,574 MN	1600 HR	37,028 MN

LAF RATE 4.00% BID/6.00% OFFER TWI 125.3 *+0.1* 3.1.97

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF Bills		EF Notes/MTRC Notes				
Terms	Yield	Terms	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	4.38	2 years	2811	5.72	100.13	5.72
1 month	4.40	3 years	3910	6.28	100.45	6.19
3 months	4.52	5 years	5112	6.57	99.18	6.88
6 months	4.73	7 years	7311	6.80	98.50	7.20
12 months	5.11	10 years	1610	7.37	100.17	7.48
		5 years	M503	7.35	101.25	7.15

TOTAL TURNOVER OF EF BILLS AND NOTES - \$12,539 MN

CLOSED JANUARY 3, 1997

End