DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Governor announces measures to tackle unemployment

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The Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, today (Tuesday) announced a 13-point package of measures to tackle unemployment.

The package included short, medium and long term measures to crack down on illegal employment; step up job placement and retraining; review of the General Labour Importation Scheme; and obtain more detailed information in respect of the profile of the unemployed and the vacancies so as to improve future manpower planning.

Speaking after the summit meeting called to discuss employment issues, Mr Patten said the meeting had been extremely useful in that despite differences in opinions, there were common grounds that should be pursued.

He called on employers and employees to focus on these common grounds and not allow the issue to polarise the community and sour Hong Kong's very good labour relations record.

The summit was attended by more than 80 representatives of employees, employers and Legislative Council Members.

The measures announced by the Governor after the summit are:

Short term:

1. Clamp down on the illegal employment of illegal immigrants, foreign domestic helpers, two-way permit holders, etc. This will involve doubling the size of the Task Force of the Immigration Department from the existing 46 to 92 by the end of this year, so that more frequent operations can be conducted; and adding a fax line on top of the existing 24-hour hotline provided by the Immigration Department to make it earlier for the public to report complaints on illegal workers.

2. Step up enforcement actions against abuses of the labour importation schemes. To achieve this, the Labour Inspectorate of the Labour Department will conduct more vigorous inspections at both the places of employment and the accommodation of imported workers to guard against abuses.

3. Review the operation of the General Scheme to remove/minimise its perceived/real effects on the employment opportunities of local workers. The review will include all the operational aspects of the Scheme, including the quota ceiling, the types of workers permitted, the quota allocation formula as well as the vetting and monitoring procedures. The Government will also positively consider setting up a tripartite committee involving employers and employees on the importation of labour.

4. Obtain more detailed information of the profile of the unemployed and the profile of job vacancies. From October, the Government will double the current sample size of 13,500 households per quarter of its General Household Survey, and also include more items in the survey of vacancies.

5. Step up the employment service by expanding the Pilot Job Matching Programme to all Local Employment Services offices. The Government intends to:

* expand the Programme from five Local Employment Services (LES) offices to all the nine LES offices;

* add nine job matching teams comprising two persons each plus a team of five staff responsible for promoting the Programme.

With the additional resources, the LES will be able to:

* increase the placement figures to about 100 placements per month;

* organise special recruitment forum for employers from particular sectors once every month on average; and

* make the service more outreaching and proactive.

6. Review the Employees Retraining Scheme so as to make it more placement focused, and ensure that the Employees Retraining Board (ERB) will have no resource constraints. The Employees Retraining Board will:

* step up their placement service for retrainees so as to help ensure that retrainees can re-enter the workforce after retraining; and

* introduce an Outplacement service for retrenched workers by offering them on-site retraining assistance to facilitate them to take up alternati employment early.

* plan to place up to 10,000 unemployed persons in jobs in the next 12 months.

Medium term:

7. Monitor the continuing structural change of Hong Kong's economy to identify the core group of displaced workers with low employability and its characteristics;

8. Monitor closely the relocation of jobs in the service sector;

9. Study whether discriminatory practices (e.g. age and sex discrimination) are contributing to rising unemployment;

10. Involve employers and employees in the monitoring of the labour importation scheme;

Long term:

11. Study the likely patterns of movement of local and imported workers into and out of Hong Kong which affect the size of Hong Kong's workforce;

12. Forecast the economic development and manpower requirements and formulate appropriate education, training and retraining policies accordingly; and

13. Explore ways to further improve productivity.

Closing the summit, Mr Patten said the Government should not start interfering in business and turn our back on all the virtues and benefits of a free economy. "We should instead aim for policies that preserve stability and social cohesion in Hong Kong, while retaining and sharpening the territory's competitive edge," he added.

Mr Patten said: "I want Hong Kong before and after 1997 to be a high wage, high growth, high employment and highly competitive economy."

The Governor announced that as a result of today's summit, the Government will be following up on many of the practical and positive ideas put forward, in particular those relating to the skills gap and information gap relating to the overall problem.

He also announced that a similar meeting will be held in the early autumn of those involved in the summit to discuss the interim findings and conclusions reached as result of the review of the Labour Importation Scheme.

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Transcript of Governor's meet-the-press session

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Following is the transcript of the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten's meet-the-press session after the Summit on Employment today (Tuesday):

Governor: I want to stress straightaway that we've had an extremely constructive meeting. People came to the meeting with different views and of course there was no unanimity. And there was one point about which there's quite a sharp disagreement or a difference in perception. But I think I can honestly say that everybody who made a contribution, was speaking not only with considerable sincerity, not only very constructively but avoiding simple political points, and trying to contribute to the development of policies which will help the workforce in Hong Kong and help to secure our jobs and our prosperity in Hong Kong. So I repeat though there were, of course, differences everybody was, I think, contributing in a very constructive and positive way. And I want to thank everybody who spoke, both the panellists and from the floor. There were many points on which there was agreement and many points that we want to develop. A number of arguments about retraining, about job placement, about our existing labour market policies and of course agreement as well on the importance of cracking down hard and more effectively on illegal employment.

The main focus of disagreement and it came out in some constructive exchanges is about the relationship, which in the importation of labour and the unemployment situation here in Hong Kong, on which to be fair, employers and employees disagree. Where I think we were moving towards agreement was on the importance involving everybody, and the management of whatever importation of labour into Hong Kong exists. We are committed when we next have, and when we've completed our interim review of the importation of labour scheme, to having a further meeting like this, that will be in the early autumn. And we are very open-minded in the administration about an idea which was put forward this afternoon from both sides. They are originally by Mr Henry Tang. The idea that we should establish a tripartite committee representing employers and employees to manage and review whatever importation of labour into Hong Kong takes place. But the first thing we have to do is to complete our review, to take an interim view and then to come back and discuss it with the employers' representatives and the employees' representatives who were discussing things with us today.

So while we'll obviously be wanting to spend summer following up a number of the ideas that we would put on the skills gap, on the information gap here in Hong Kong. We'll also be preparing for the next summit meeting like this, by which stage we would have completed the review of labour importation and I hope we'll be able to respond positively on the importance of involving both sides of industry in their managing or taking an overview of any importation of labour that exists in Hong Kong. All right? I am sure you'll want to talk to my colleagues on the platform who were putting different views but putting them in an extremely constructive way. If you want a couple of questions to me, otherwise I suggest to you ...

Question: Sir, what measures can you take in the interim before the actual report comes out?

Governor: What we'll be doing in the interim is we've stopped any new quota under the labour importation scheme and we're increasing the measures that we've already put in place to deal with illegal employment. We are stepping up our employee retraining and in particular we are extending our job placement programme to the whole community. We want that to be far more proactive, not waiting for people to come to us, but going out into the community and trying to match those who don't have jobs with the 60,000 or so vacancies which we are told exist.

Question: It has been said that the unemployment problem Hong Kong will have to live with it for 12 to 18 months... Is that something that you have agreed?

Governor: No, I don't necessarily agree with that. I was listening to, that was a view put by one of our distinguished speakers this afternoon, but I was listening to the economist of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce this morning who was putting rather a different point of view. I think the truth of the matter is we don't know exactly what's going to happen to the figures. We are still confident about our growth targets and predictions in Hong Kong which should mean that there isn't too much slippage in the employment market. But obviously we'll keep the position under very close review. In the longer term, the important thing is for us to have aas competitive economy as possible and that means having as skilled and well-trained a workforce as possible. And those as everybody was agreeing today have got to be our principal medium and long-term objectives.

Question: In concrete terms, what exactly will be done to crackdown on the abuse of...

Governor: I'll let Peter Lai who I think is with us talk to you about that afterwards. But I suggest what you do now is ask some of my colleagues on the platform. The simple first answer is that we're doubling the number of people who are actually dealing with illegal employment.

Question: Governor, a lot of people say that if you don't stop the labour importation scheme immediately, you are just doing some gestures, or doing a show to... the unemployment situation. How do you react to that?

Governor: There are a lot of people upstairs who had the experience of employing large numbers of workers who take exactly the opposite point of view. It is where the argument lies. But I think there are plenty of other issues on which we agree.

Question: Mr Governor, just an old point. Actually what is the biggest achievement that the summit has made?

Governor: The biggest achievement is that despite the fact that there are sincerely held disagreements about the causes of unemployment, we had a constructive, positive, civilised, sensible discussion and that I think means that we have a better chance of developing common ground and a consensus for our employment policies here in Hong Kong. Thank you very much.

End/Tuesday, June 6, 1995

Local workers are given employment priority

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The acting Chief Secretary, Mr Michael Leung, today (Tuesday) pointed out that both the General Labour Importation Scheme and the Special Scheme for Airport Core Projects are carefully controlled and they are targeted precisely towards the alleviation of shortages in the bottleneck areas.

"There is a proven economic necessity for imported workers. Our responsibility is to make sure that they are still working to their intended purpose," said Mr Leung when addressing the employment summit chaired by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten.

He reassured that government's importation of labour policy was built upon the principle that priority in employment must be given to local workers and that they should not be displaced by imported workers.

He warned that any employer who breached any of the conditions under the schemes would risk having their quotas withdrawn and being barred from future participation in the schemes.

On the immediate concern to assist the displaced workers to rejoin the workforce through job placement assistance and retraining, he invited employers who were looking for staff to provide the Labour Department with information on vacancies.

He also called on those workers who needed employment assistance to register with Labour Department's Pilot Job Matching Programme.

End/Tuesday, June 6, 1995

Government takes tough action against illegal workers

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The Secretary for Security, Mr Peter Lai, said today (Tuesday) that the Government was serious about its commitment to take tough enforcement action against visitors, imported workers and foreign domestic helpers who took up illegal work.

Speaking at the summit meeting to discuss employment issues, Mr Lai said illegal workers who were arrested would be prosecuted for breaching their conditions of stay and were punishable by a maximum fine of $5,000 and two years' imprisonment.

"Employers who hire unemployable persons are liable on conviction to a heavier fine of $250,000 and three years' imprisonment," he said.

Mr Lai said the levels of fines were being revised to account for cumulative inflation in past years.

"The new levels are expected to come into effect later this year and will be substantially higher than existing levels," he said.

Last year, the Task Force of the Immigration Department, the Police, the Labour Department and the Urban Services Department mounted more than 1,000 operations at places of employment, and in the past five months alone as many as 624 raids were carried out.

"As a result of these raids, more than 5,000 illegal workers and 1,400 employers were investigated last year, which eventually led to the prosecution of about 3,000 illegal workers and more than 900 employers," he said.

He added that the size of the Immigration Task Force would be doubled later this year and, with the additional manpower, raids of places of illegal employment could be further intensified.

The Secretary urged the public to help the Government tackle the problem by providing information concerning illegal workers and their employers.

On preventive measures, Mr Lai said the Immigration Department maintained a careful record of employers who applied for quota under the labour importation schemes.

"Employers with adverse records, such as those who have been convicted of deploying imported workers to do unauthorised work or for hiring illegal workers, can be denied quota," he said.

At present, there are 92 employers with adverse records in the department's data base.

To tackle the problem of visitors taking illegal employment, Mr Lai said Immigration Department officers would screen with extra care at the points of entry those visitors who had a greater propensity to engage in illegal work.

"Those who cannot show proof of sufficient means of support during their visit, or are found to have doubtful intention of visit, can be granted a shorter length of stay than they requested or refused entry," he said.

Mr Lai hoped that with co-operation between the Government and the public the problem of illegal employment would diminish.

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Hong Kong's first API launched

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Hong Kong's first Air Pollution Index (API) and forecast system was launched by the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) today (Tuesday).

API readings for the territory today range from 36 to 49, meaning that air quality is good.

Forecast of APIs for tomorrow will range from 40 to 55, representing good to moderate air quality.

Speaking at the launching ceremony, the Director of Environmental Protection, Dr Stuart Reed, said the API and the forecast system was meant to provide the community with a worthwhile and reliable guide to the air pollution levels to which they were exposed.

Noting that different air pollutants had different health effects, Dr. Reed said attempting to reduce all these complexities had taken the department some time before it was satisfied that it had a reasonably reliable indicator of the seriousness or otherwise of air pollution in Hong Kong had been achieved.

He thanked the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club for funding the entire project.

While it was important that the sort of information provided by the API was made available to the communities concerned, Dr Reed said: "it is equally important to take resolute action to reduce air pollution levels. I believe we in Hong Kong have made good progress in this direction, so far."

Cited as examples were the ban on high sulphur heavy fuel oil in 1990 which brought sulphur dioxide levels down by as much as 80 per cent in some areas, the introduction of lead free petrol, and the more recent control on sulphur content of diesel fuel and vehicle emission standards.

In general, the air quality in Hong Kong is in the range of "good" and "moderate".

For a few days in a year, when the index is between 101 and 200, the air quality is "unhealthy". People suffering from heart or respiratory illnesses are advised to reduce physical exertion and outdoor activities.

In the very unlikely event that the index exceeds 200, the general public are advised to reduce non-essential physical exertion and outdoor activities.

The API will be issued to the media everyday, except Sundays and public holidays. Members of the public can also obtain the API by calling 2827 8541.

Leaflets explaining the API system are now available at district offices and EPD offices.

Also officiating the launching ceremony was steward of RHKJC, Mr Michael Thornhill.

End/Tuesday, June 6, 1995

Civil servants offered 9.98 to 10.14 per cent pay rise

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On the advice of the Governor-in-Council, the Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Michael Sze, today (Tuesday) made the pay adjustment offer to the staff side of the civil service central consultative councils.

The Administration has offered a 9.98 per cent pay adjustment for the directorate and the upper salary band of the civil service (i.e. monthly salary at $34,691 and above) and 10.14 per cent for the middle and lower bands (i.e. monthly salary at $34,690 and below), with effect from April 1, 1995.

The offers are subject to the approval of funds by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council.

Mr Sze said the offer for the upper and middle bands was in line with the net pay trend indicators and the offer for the lower band was brought up to the same level as the middle band in line with the established practice.

"In advising on the size of the pay offer, the Governor-in-Council took into account the findings of the pay trend survey, the staff side's pay claims, the state of the economy, the budgetary position of the Government and the views of the community at large," Mr Sze said.

The proposed pay award, including the provision for subvented organisations, will cost an additional $7.13 billion a year.

The Government will make a final decision on the pay adjustment later this month following consultation with the central staff consultative councils.

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Registration of social workers proposed

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The Governor-in-Council has approved the drafting of a government bill to provide for the registration of social workers and control of their professional conduct in Hong Kong.

The bill will seek to establish a statutory Board with powers to register and discipline "registered social workers" and "enrolled social workers", a spokesman for the Health and Welfare Branch said today (Tuesday).

It will also set the qualifications needed for registration and assess those qualifications; issue a Code of Practice or Code of Conduct; and restrict the use of "registered social worker" to those qualified for registration, while continue to permit those not formally qualified as social workers to provide social work or social welfare services.

"It is important that those in, for example, religious organisations who make such a valuable contribution to welfare services should be able to continue to do so," the spokesman added.

However, the Administration proposes that "enrolled welfare workers", which is a non-professional grade, be excluded from the registration system.

There are over 20 grades in this category carrying out an extremely wide range of tasks and there is no specific qualification or training required by those who make up these grades.

"We do not believe that there is a clear definable basis on which to control these grades. Indeed, to do so would be an attempt to control the social welfare service as opposed to the social work profession," the spokesman said. "Our preliminary view is that, welfare workers should be supervised and disciplined by their employers rather than through legislation and a statutory body.

"But before reaching a final view, we would wish to consult the profession further," he added.

The Board will comprise a majority elected by and from the Council made up of registered social workers with the rest appointed by the Governor.

The spokesman said the Administration would consult those concerned fully during the drafting of the legislation.

The Private Member's bill prepared by Legislative Council member Mr Hui Yin-fat, "Hong Kong Social Workers and Welfare Workers Council Bill", would be a useful starting point for the Administration in drawing up its detailed proposals.

The Administration aimed to introduce the bill into the Legislative Council in the next session.

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Further improvements in rehabilitation services endorsed

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The Governor-in-Council has approved the issue of a White Paper on Rehabilitation entitled "Equal Opportunities and Full Participation: A Better Tomorrow for All".

The White Paper takes into account views expressed on the Green Paper on Rehabilitation published in early 1992 and sets out Government's policy decisions on the further development and improvement of rehabilitation services in Hong Kong over the next decade and beyond.

The Secretary for Health and Welfare, Mrs Katherine Fok, will announce details when she tables the White Paper in the Legislative Council tomorrow (Wednesday). The White Paper and its Executive Summary will also be published on the same day.

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Attention News Editors:

The Secretary for Health and Welfare, Mrs Katherine Fok, will hold a press conference at the GIS Theatre at 4.30 pm tomorrow (Wednesday). The Director of Social Welfare, Mr Ian Strachan, the Deputy Secretary for Health and Welfare, Mr Bob Wilson, and the Commissioner for Rehabilitation, Mr Allan Chow, will also be present. Your representatives are invited to cover the event.

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Trial scheme for cross-harbour taxi stands

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The Governor-in-Council today (Tuesday) approved that a trial scheme for cross-harbour taxi stands be introduced.

A Government spokesman said: "Under the scheme, two cross-harbour taxi stands will be set up on each side of the Cross Harbour Tunnel.

"They will be at Harbour Road near China Resources Building and Paterson Street on Hong Kong side, and San Wai Street in To Kwa Wan and Observatory Road near Chatham Road South on Kowloon side. The trial scheme is expected to commence on July 30, 1995 and would last for six months."

The spokesman said designating proper cross-harbour taxi stands at or near the existing unofficial stands would legitimise an established but unregulated practice.

Taxi drivers waiting to return to the other side of the harbour could pick up passengers for the return trip at proper cross-harbour taxi stands. Passengers would benefit by having to pay a single, instead of a double, tunnel toll for a cross-harbour trip departing from the cross-harbour taxi stands.

"The law will be amended to permit taxi drivers waiting at cross-harbour taxi stands to refuse hire for non cross-harbour journeys. However, this will be the only exception to the general obligation of taxi drivers to accept hire to any destination in their permitted area of trade.

"Outside the designated taxi stands, refusal to accept hire, whether or not across the harbour, will continue to be an offence, and the Police will step up enforcement during the trial period," he said.

The Transport Department will, in consultation with the Police, the Transport Complaints Unit and the taxi trade, monitor the scheme and assess the utilisation of the stands, traffic implications, public complaints about taxi malpractice at or near the stands, and complaints about refusing hire for cross-harbour trips in general.

A review will be conducted and the District Boards, the Transport Advisory Committee, as well as the Legislative Council Transport Panel will be consulted as necessary.

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Water supply to On Chiu House clean and clear

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The water supplied by Water Supplies Department to On Chiu House at Cheung On Estate, Tsing Yi, is clean and perfectly safe for consumption, a spokesman for the department said after the laboratory test results of water samples taken from the building came out today (Tuesday).

"The test results show that all the water samples are clean and clear, contain no sediment nor insect and are free from bacteria. They all comply bacteriologically and chemically with World Health Organisation Guideline Standards," the spokesman stressed.

The water samples were taken from some of the consumers' taps (including the complainant's tap) and the sump and roof tanks of On Chiu House yesterday (Monday) morning in response to a complaint of insects being found in the tap water at one of the flats in On Chiu House.

He assured the public that "the quality of the water supplied to consumers is closely monitored by regular and frequent testing of water samples taken from all strategic points of the water supply system, including the water treatment works, service reservoirs, distribution mains, consumer premises' sump and roof tanks and consumers' taps and complies fully with the World Health Organisation Guideline Standards for drinking water".

However, he pointed out that "consumers should also take good care of their own piping and storage tank system by carrying out regular maintenance in order to avoid contaminating their water".

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Schools administrators urged to be responsive

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The Deputy Director of Education, Miss Elaine Chung, today (Tuesday) urged school administrators to avoid defensive euphemisms and to keep the organisation responsive, effective and efficient.

Speaking at the opening of the conference of the Hong Kong Association of Heads of Secondary Schools, Miss Chung said: "To manage change well, school administrators must accept the inevitability of change in the first place."

The theme of this year's conference is "The Role of the School Administrator in the Flux of Change".

"School administrators should think positively, anticipate and take charge of change rather than become its conduit or victim," she said.

Miss Chung said school administrators must keep abreast of the latest developments not only in education but also in society around them.

She said school administrators should conscientiously seek feedback from students, parents and teachers and should make them their partners in self-assessment and peer assessment.

Miss Chung said: "For all intents and purposes, schools are extraordinarily complex organisations, increasingly more stratified and pressurised.

"The school administrator is expected to be a professional, a charismatic leader, combining discipline with compassion, a visionary who is also pragmatic and realistic," she said.

In the 20th century, Miss Chung said, change was a fact of life for school supervisors, principals, teachers and students alike.

"There are two main types of changes to schools: firstly, changes to its micro environment and secondly, changes to its macro environment.

"Examples of the former would include new regulatory requirements, parental expectations, curriculum changes, student behavioural problems and new subsidy schemes.

"Examples of the latter would include technological changes, the woman's role in society, environmental issues and the change of sovereignty in 1997," Miss Chung said.

She noted that a major macro change was that schools no longer held the monopoly to impart knowledge to students. This role is now shared with the mass media, travels and tools like the Internet.

"The paradox for school administrators is that while the influence of schools on students is probably less than ever before, demands for schools to have more influence on students are stronger than before.

"Schools can no longer be ivory towers. They are firmly an integral part of society in which they are located and they serve the future generation of that society.

"In short, schools impact on society and society dictates the types of school we have," Miss Chung noted.

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Water storage figure

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Storage in Hong Kong's reservoirs at 9 am today (Tuesday) stood at 62.6 per cent of capacity or 367.103 million cubic metres.

This time last year the reservoirs contained 375.501 million cubic metres of water, representing 64.1 per cent of capacity.

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Hong Kong Monetary Authority tender results

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Tender date	6 Jun 1995	6 Jun 1995
Paper on offer	EF bills	EF bills
Issue number	Q523	H566
Amount applied	HK$4,880 MN	HK$3,840 MN
Amount allotted	HK$1,500 MN	HK$800 MN
Average yield accepted	5.44 PCT	5.45 PCT
Highest yield accepted	5.46 PCT	5.46 PCT
Pro rata ratio	About 48 PCT	About 95 PCT
Average tender yield	5.47 PCT	5.49 PCT

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

Tenders to be held in the week beginning 12 Jun, 1995

Tender date	12 Jun 1995	13 Jun 1995	13 Jun 1995
Paper on offer	EF notes	EF bills	EF bills
Issue number	5006	Q524	Y590
Issue date	13 Jun 1995	14 Jun 1995	14 Jun 1995
Maturity date	13 Jun 2000	13 Sept 1995	12 Jun 1996
Tenor	5 Years	91 Days	364 Days
Amount on offer	HK$500+100MN	HK$1,500+300MN	HK$500+150MN
Coupon	6.60 PCT		

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Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

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	$ million	Time (hours)	Cumulative change ($million)
Opening balance in the account	1,913	0930	+593
Closing balance in the account	1,841	1000	+593
Change attributable to :		1100	+628
Money market activity	+630	1200	+630
LAF today	-702	1500	+630
		1600	+630

LAF rate 4.25% bid/6.25% offer TWI 118.6 *+0.1* 6.6.95

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	5.45	2 years	2705	6.40	101.32	5.75
1 month	5.45	3 years	3804	6.90	102.54	6.02
3 months	5.47	5 years	5003	7.75	105.27	6.55
6 months	5.48	5 years	M501	7.90	103.41	7.20
12 months	5.51					

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - $12,228 million

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