



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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<u>Contents</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
Transcript of the Governor's media session	1
FS speaks on Helping Business Programme	3
TAC endorses urban and NT taxi fare increase applications	5
Hong Kong's free trade policy continues	6
HK-Guangdong talks on boundaries of administration	8
Latest unemployment and underemployment statistics out	8
Changes to Mental Health Ordinance proposed	9
Pilotage dues to be revised from March 1	11
1996 third quarter industrial production index released	12
Three nominations received for Tai Po DB by-election	14
Garment manufacturer fined for malpractice	14
Secretary for the Civil Service visits penal institutions	15
Royal Navy patrol craft to visit Macau	15
Hong Kong Monetary Authority interbank liquidity	16

Transcript of the Governor's media session

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The following is a transcript of the media session by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, at the airport this (Thursday) afternoon after a duty visit to London:

Governor: Excuse my voice. I left with a Hong Kong cold. I added the London cold to it. So I've got a sort of ... voice. I had a useful visit to London. I saw the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, Home Secretary, the leader of the opposition and the deputy leader of the opposition, the shadow Foreign Secretary, the leader of the liberal democrats. I had a good session with the Foreign Affairs Select Committee of the House of Commons and with the Hong Kong Parliamentary Group. I talked a good deal about the present situation in Hong Kong. About the statement which the Foreign Secretary made before Christmas on the most unfortunate, unwise, unjustified decision to set up a so-called "provisional legislature" with all the damages that could do to Hong Kong and to the SAR Government. And I discussed some of the nationality and immigration questions which have been live on our agenda over the years. I think we are now in a situation in which 29 out of the 30 Hong Kong war widows would have received their passports by the end of this month. And in particular, I pressed in my meetings, all my meetings, I pressed the question of the ethnic minorities and their position in Hong Kong obviously we were pleased that the small move made by the government and the more substantial move made by the opposition. But I want to try to convince the government as well as the opposition parties that it is imperative before June 30 that this matter is dealt with and dealt with generously. So I'll be continuing to argue that and to make that case in the weeks and months ahead. Any questions?

Question: When the Government decided to take action against Laurence Leung, in other words, he left as immediate as he did. What sort of consideration that the Government made in terms of how it would affect integrity of the administration?

Governor: We were concerned about the integrity of the Immigration Department and their ability to do their job effectively at a very difficult time. Perhaps you'll just let me add this to the froth of words that has been written and uttered on this subject. W K Lam, our Secretary for the Civil Service, is an example of the sort of civil servant who has made Hong Kong a decent, clean and successful place, and the sort of standard of competence and integrity which he represents are the bulwark between Hong Kong being successful and Hong Kong declining into sleaze and cronyism. I have been utterly amazed at the suggestions which I have read in some places that the matters referred to in the letter that we would have issued under CR 59 to Mr Laurence Leung somehow were minor matters. I am amazed by that suggestion. The notion that somebody who is in charge of one of our most important and sensitive departments could not pass an integrity check but should, in some people's views, merely have been slapped on the wrist, allowed to continue; the idea that the commercial issues raised in that letter didn't fall well below - well below - the standards of conduct and integrity that we rightly expect of our public service; the suggestion that somehow all this is small beer - that it doesn't matter - I think reflects very poorly on those who apparently think you can run a decent public service without policing matters effectively and properly. If you had discovered that the director of the immigration service couldn't pass an integrity check, but the Government had swept it under the carpet and let him stay in office, you would have pilloried the Government and rightly. I believe that W K Lam, and others concerned, have taken the right decisions - and I just want to make this absolutely clear - at every single stage in this argument and this controversy. I am sure the Chief Secretary, whose integrity and competence I don't imagine anybody here questions, will be making exactly those points when she appears in front of the Legislative Council committee next week, when I hope that the Legislative Councillors will behave with the courtesy which the Chief Secretary deserves. But I imagine that the Chief Secretary will make it absolutely clear to them what she thinks about some of these questions about integrity and conduct. Now that is all I have got to say about this issue at this stage. I think there has been a lot of self-indulgent nonsense written and said about this case. But at the end of the day, the executive is accountable, but the executive takes decisions and the decisions the executive have taken in this case have been entirely in line with the best traditions of honourable service for which public service in Hong Kong is renowned. Thank you very much indeed.

End

FS speaks on Helping Business Programme

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The Financial Secretary, Mr Donald Tsang, said today (Thursday) that the Government must engender a helping business culture.

Speaking at a luncheon organised by the British Chamber of Commerce, Mr Tsang said to achieve this, it would require a great commitment by the civil service.

"At the same time, we will be looking for responsible members of the business community to volunteer their thoughts, their ideas and their time; to help us to help business," he said.

"Because at the end of the day, our success in these efforts will mean more and better opportunities for all of you."

The Financial Secretary said Hong Kong was already the best place in the world to do business and "together we can make it even better".

Mr Tsang said business was recognised as the lifeblood of Hong Kong and one of the main tasks of the Financial Secretary must be to ensure that the Government provided the best possible environment for businesses to flourish.

"More business means more jobs," he said. "And a growing economy means more revenue for the Government to provide new and improved services for the public, without raising taxes."

Mr Tsang said to provide the right business environment, the Government deliberately restrained its share of GDP so as to leave the bulk of the economy's resources in the hands of the private sector.

"We believe - we are sure - that that is where those resources can be put to their most productive use," he said.

"So we allow Government spending to grow each year only as fast as the trend growth rate of the economy.

"At present Government spending takes up only about 14 per cent of GDP. And even if we broaden the definition to bring in the Housing Authority and the Municipal Councils - the public sector- that still adds up to only around 18 per cent, a very low percentage by international standards."

The end result was that there was plenty of room for the private sector to keep the economy growing; and tax rates stayed low, Mr Tsang said.

"But if we are broadly on the right lines at the macro level, that does not mean we can be complacent at the micro level," he said.

"That is why in my Budget Speech last year I placed great emphasis on the need for the Government to become positively - as distinct from passively - business friendly."

According to Mr Tsang, over the last nine months, the Secretary for the Treasury had chaired a task force to turn these words into action.

He said: "The first phase of our Helping Business Programme was centred on seven pilot studies. All of these were completed, on schedule, by the end of November."

These included the provision of a "Hong Kong Background Information" service; putting public forms on the Internet; looking at ways to speed up land exchanges and lease modifications; looking at methods of payment and collection for the Government's own business transactions; and looking at the concept of a Business Licence Information Centre.

"This is only the beginning," Mr Tsang said. "The work to date has been ably carried out by the Efficiency Unit, as a key component of the 'Serving the Community' programme, and as a neutral extension of their work on making the Government machinery more efficient."

He said it was now time to focus in greater depth on the whole interface of the Government and the business community. To try as far as possible to see things from the business sector's perspective, a Business Advisory Group was recently set up.

The Group would be supported by a new unit whose head would report directly to the Financial Secretary. The Group had agreed to establish three working groups, one each to look at deregulation, cost of compliance, and the transfer of services out of the public sector to the business sector. Each working group would be chaired by a businessman.

"In this way, the central co-ordination of the Helping Business Programme will be strengthened," Mr Tsang added.

End

TAC endorses urban and NT taxi fare increase applications

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At its meeting held this (Thursday) afternoon, the Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) endorsed a 6.3 per cent increase for urban taxi fares and a 7.4 per cent increase for New Territories taxis to help operators meet rising costs.

The recommendations will be submitted to the Executive Council for consideration. If approved, the fare increases will take effect in late April this year.

The TAC recommended that for urban taxis, the flagfall charge for the first two kilometres should be increased by 50 cents to \$14.50, while the fare for every subsequent 0.2 kilometre and the waiting time charge per minute should be increased by 10 cents to \$1.30. The telephone booking surcharge and baggage surcharge should remain unchanged at \$5.

As for New Territories taxi fares, the TAC recommended a flagfall charge of \$12.50 for the first two kilometres, an increase of 70 cents over the existing fares, and the fare for every subsequent 0.2 kilometre to be increased by 10 cents to \$1.20. The telephone booking surcharge and baggage surcharge should remain unchanged at \$4.

Members felt that the fare increases were reasonable and necessary to ensure the financial viability of taxi operations, taking into consideration changes in revenues and operating costs.

The increases would also help maintain an acceptable level of taxi service and to maintain a reasonable differential between taxi fares and those of other public transport modes.

Members believed that the recommended increases would be acceptable to the public.

Urban and NT taxi fares were last increased by 8.5 per cent in February 1996.

End

Hong Kong's free trade policy continues

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Hong Kong will continue to practise unwaveringly a free trade policy and to play a leading role in world trade liberalisation after June 30, the Director-General of Trade, Mr Alan Lai, said today (Thursday).

Speaking at a luncheon meeting of the Hong Kong Exporters' Association, Mr Lai said: "The Joint Declaration (JD) states clearly that the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) shall retain the status of a free port and continue a free trade policy.

"The changeover will not affect Hong Kong's bilateral relations with our trading partners as the JD provides clearly that the Hong Kong SAR may on its own maintain and develop economic and trade relations with all states and regions.

"In accordance with the JD and the Basic Law, the Hong Kong SAR will continue to be a separate customs territory with full autonomy in the conduct of our external commercial relations and that it shall continue to participate, using the name 'Hong Kong, China', in international organisations including the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC).

"Hong Kong has been participating actively and constructively in the international trade forums and will continue to do so when it becomes an SAR," Mr Lai said.

He noted that Hong Kong had achieved very positive results in playing a leading role in world trade liberalisation in both the WTO and the APEC last year.

Mr Lai said that 28 members of the WTO including Hong Kong and economies in the process of acceding to the WTO, which accounted for some 83 per cent of world trade in information technology (IT) products, concluded an agreement in the First Ministerial Conference in Singapore last December to eliminate tariff on a wide range of IT products on a Most Favoured Nation basis by the year 2000.

"Parties to the IT agreement agreed to start implementing the first rate reductions no later than July 1, 1997, provided that participants representing about 90 per cent of world trade in IT products have no later than April 1 this year notified their acceptance," he said.

"Its Implementation will greatly enhance market access opportunities for our manufacturers and exports in those countries and economies which participate in the agreement.

"We estimate that the value of Hong Kong's domestic exports of the products covered by the ITA totalled at least HK\$39 billion to the world and over HK\$30 billion to the 27 participants at present already signed up to the agreement.

"Thus, one of our priorities this year is to secure the actual implementation of the agreement by the largest number of participants."

Mr Lai said another achievement of the Ministerial Conference was the launch of a balanced and forward looking future work programme to carry forward the momentum of trade liberalisation under the WTO.

The main features of the work programme, which are also the main focus of Hong Kong's work in 1997, include:

- * Commitment to faithful implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements which includes full and faithful implementation of the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC). The ATC provides for a 10-year programme for progressive elimination of quotas on textiles and clothing products.
- * Commitment to achieve a successful conclusion of the negotiations on basic telecommunications on February 15 and financial services which will resume in April. A successful conclusion will open up a huge market globally, estimated at over US\$500 billion per annum, with enormous market access opportunities for Hong Kong services suppliers.
- * Establishment of two working groups to separately deal with the relationship of investment and competition with trade.

"APEC is an informal dialogue grouping formed in 1989 in response to the growing inter-dependence among Asia-Pacific economies," Mr Lai said.

"Since our admission into APEC in 1991, Hong Kong's main objective is to open up markets for traders and investors in the region and to convince our trading partners that free trade will benefit their own economic development.

"Our main priorities in APEC this year will be to sustain the dynamic process of trade and investment liberalisation and facilitation in the region.

"More specifically, we will build on the Manila Action Plan for APEC (MAPA) which was endorsed by Economic Leaders in Subic last November and promote new liberalisation initiatives, including early voluntary sectoral liberalisation," Mr Lai added.

End

HK-Guangdong talks on boundaries of administration

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Further discussions on matters relating to the boundaries of administration between Hong Kong and Guangdong will take place in Shenzhen tomorrow (Friday) between the Hong Kong Government and the Guangdong provincial authorities, a Government spokesman said today (Thursday).

The Deputy Political Adviser, Mr John Ashton, will lead the Hong Kong team.

Mr Xiao Jinzhe, Deputy Director General of the Foreign Affairs Office of the Guangdong Provincial Government, will lead the Guangdong team.

End

Latest unemployment and underemployment statistics out

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The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the period September - November 1996 was 2.7%, and the underemployment rate was 1.5%, according to the latest labour force statistics released today (Thursday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

For the period October - December 1996, the provisional seasonally adjusted unemployment rate remained unchanged at 2.7%, while the provisional underemployment rate was marginally higher, at 1.6%.

Commenting on these figures, a government spokesman said that for the latest period, October - December 1996, slight declines in the unemployment rate were seen in the transport, community, social and personal services, and real estate and business services sectors, while a slight increase was observed in the wholesale, retail and import/export trades, restaurants and hotels sector. The overall unemployment rate thus remained unchanged over the period.

As to the underemployment rate, the slight increase occurred mainly in the transport sector, while the underemployment situation in the other major sectors was generally stable.

Total employment continued to show robust growth, at a faster pace than total labour force. In the three months ending November 1996, total employment increased by 3.6% over a year earlier, while total labour supply increased by 2.5%.

During the period September - November 1996, the number of unemployed persons was estimated at 83,500, and the number of underemployed persons at 47,600.

The unemployment and underemployment statistics were obtained from a continuous General Household Survey. The survey for September - November 1996 covered a quarterly sample of some 23,100 households or 77,900 persons, selected scientifically to represent the land-based civilian non-institutional population in Hong Kong. Data were obtained from the survey by interviewing each member aged 15 or over in the households sampled.

In the survey, the definitions used in measuring unemployment and underemployment follow closely those recommended by the International Labour Organisation.

"Seasonally adjusted" refers to adjustment for seasonal variations in the proportion of first-time job-seekers in the labour force.

Detailed analysis of labour force characteristics is given in the report on the General Household Survey which is published four times a year.

The next report covering the quarter ending December 1996 will be on sale at the Government Publications Centre, ground floor, Low Block, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong, by the end of March.

End

Changes to Mental Health Ordinance proposed

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The Executive Council has endorsed proposals to amend the Mental Health Ordinance to better protect the rights of mentally disordered and mentally handicapped persons, as well as their carers.

The existing Ordinance associates mental handicap with mental illness by subsuming the two under the same definition "mental disorder". "This may encourage a common misconception that the two disabilities are the same," a spokesman for the Health and Welfare Branch said today (Thursday).

Under the Mental Health (Amendment) Bill 1997, the definition of "mental disorder" will be redefined so that persons with only a mental handicap will be excluded. A new definition of "mental handicap" will also be introduced.

In addition, mentally disordered or mentally handicapped persons will be referred as "mentally incapacitated persons" under the Bill.

Another proposal is to set up a separate and independent Guardianship Board to improve the existing arrangements for guardianship of adult mentally incapacitated persons.

"At present, the Director of Social Welfare plays various roles in relation to applications for guardianship, i.e. he makes assessment and grants approval on the applications, and he can even be the applicant himself," the spokesman said.

"It is therefore proposed that in the interests of impartiality, the Guardianship Board will take over the functions and duties of the Director of Social Welfare as the approval authority."

The Board may confer on guardians more legal powers for the protection and well-being of mentally incapacitated persons. For example, guardians may be empowered to give consent for medical or dental treatment on behalf of the mentally incapacitated persons if the latter are incapable of so doing.

The Bill further empowers a doctor or a dentist to administer treatment without consent in the event of an emergency or where it is necessary and in the best interests of the mentally incapacitated person to receive the treatment. For special treatment, i.e. treatment of an irreversible or controversial nature, consent from the High Court will be required.

The powers of the High Court in handling cases in respect of management of property and affairs of mentally incapacitated persons and the relevant application procedures are also more clearly stated in the Bill.

The Mental Health (Amendment) Bill 1997 will be gazetted on January 24 and introduced into the Legislative Council on January 29.

End

Pilotage dues to be revised from March 1

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The minimum pilotage due will be revised from \$3,140 to \$3,330 from March 1, a Marine Department spokesman said today (Thursday).

The Pilotage Authority, who is the Director of Marine, will make an order to give effect to the revision in the Government Gazette tomorrow (Friday).

"For an average-size ship of 16,000 gross registered tons, the increase of pilotage due will be about 4.5 per cent," the spokesman said.

Other revised pilotage dues are as follows:

- * additional pilotage due for any pilotage service performed in the movement of oil rigs is increased from \$1,100 to \$1,400 per hour;
- * any pilotage service performed beyond a pilotage boarding area will attract additional due and that due is increased from \$550 to \$700 per half an hour;
- * the additional pilotage due for pilot boarding and disembarking off Ngan Chau is increased from \$1,800 to \$2,100;
- * the additional pilotage due for pilot boarding and disembark off East Brother Island is increased from \$1,800 to \$1,900; and
- * the fee for cancelling an engagement of a pilot within in one hour of the requested time is increased from \$3,140 to \$3,330.

The additional due charged for gross registered tonnage will remain the same at 6.5 cents per ton.

The revised dues are accepted by the Hong Kong Pilots Association which charges the fees and the Hong Kong Liner Shipping Association's members who will pay the fees. The new pilotage dues for 1997 was then endorsed by the Pilotage Advisory Committee.

End

1996 third quarter industrial production index released

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The index of industrial production for the third quarter of 1996 decreased by 4.8% over the same quarter in 1995, according to the results of a survey released today (Thursday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

Analysed by industry group, the production of the textiles (including knitting) industry and the wearing apparel (except footwear) industry both decreased by 8.4%.

Output of the industry group of electrical and electronic products, machinery, professional equipment and optical goods recorded a decrease of 8.3%. Within this group, the production of consumer electrical and electronic products decreased by 13.5%, whereas the production of machinery, equipment, apparatus, parts and components decreased by 4.2%.

Decreases were also registered in the basic metals and fabricated metal products industry (-5.8%); and the paper products and printing industry (-2.5%).

Production of the chemical, rubber, plastic and non-metallic mineral products industry increased only marginally, by 0.2%. But within this group, the production of plastic products decreased by 1.3%.

On the other hand, an increase of 8.7% was recorded in the food, beverages and tobacco industry.

Compared with the second quarter of 1996, the index of industrial production showed a considerable increase of 10.4%. This increase was, however, partly seasonal as manufacturing activities usually entered into peak season in the third quarter.

The index of industrial production reflects changes of local manufacturing output in real terms. In other words, it measures the volume of local production after discounting the effect of price changes.

More detailed information can be obtained from the Quarterly Index of Industrial Production, 3rd Quarter 1996 report, which is on sale at \$11 a copy at the Government Publications Sales Centre, Low Block, ground floor, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong and the Census and Statistics Department Publications Unit, 19th floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai. Regular subscription may also be arranged.

Enquiries about the survey result may be directed to the General Economic Surveys Section of the Census and Statistics Department on 2805 6643.

Indices of industrial production by industry group and
selected component industry
(1986 = 100)

Industry group / Selected component industry	Index for 3rd Qtr. 1996	% change over	
		3rd Qtr. 1995	2nd Qtr. 1996
1. Food, beverages and tobacco	177	+8.7	+16.2
2. Wearing apparel (except footwear)	116	-8.4	+11.5
3. Textiles (including knitting)	122	-8.4	+21.4
4. Paper products and printing	299	-2.5	+8.7
5. Chemical, rubber, plastic and non-metallic mineral products	65	+0.2	+2.8
within which : Plastic products	(39)	(-1.3)	(+15.0)
6. Basic metals and fabricated metal products	91	-5.8	+10.5
within which : Fabricated metal products (except machinery and equipment)	(89)	(-7.3)	(+14.0)
7. Electrical and electronic products, machinery, professional equipment and optical goods	175	-8.3	+8.4
within which : Consumer electrical and electronic products	(109)	(-13.5)	(+5.2)
: Machinery, equipment, apparatus, parts and components	(281)	(-4.2)	(+10.2)
8. Miscellaneous manufacturing industries	85	+1.0	+2.6
ALL MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES	131	-4.8	+10.4

Notes : 1. Four selected component industries, which carry relatively large weights and are major components of their relevant industry groups, are also included in the above table. For easy reading, the figures of these selected component industries are shown in brackets.

2. As from the first quarter of 1992, the Hong Kong Standard Industrial Classification (HSIC) is used to form the industry groups and selected component industries presented in the above table. For the exact coverage of the industry groups and component industries in terms of HSIC codes, please refer to the publication 'Quarterly Index of Industrial Production, 3rd Quarter 1996'.

End

Three nominations received for Tai Po DB by-election

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A total of three nominations were received for the Tai Po District Board by-election in respect of Shuen Wan constituency to be held on February 23, after the two-week nomination period closed today (Thursday).

Details of the nominations are as follows:

<u>Name (Age)</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Telephone No</u>
Mr Chan Mei-tak (39)	Company director	2368 1144 (day) 2665 6115 (night)
Mr Man Chen-fai (42)	Executive director	9042 9052 or 7988 0088 (day) 2656 9393 (night)
Mr Li, Roger Kwok-keung (45)	Accountant	2651 1899 (day) 2657 8177 (night)

End

Garment manufacturer fined for malpractice

* * * * *

A garment manufacturer was fined \$388,000 at San Po Kong Magistracy today (Thursday) after pleading guilty to 10 counts of making a false statement regarding the origin of goods in licence applications.

The court heard that the factory submitted 10 applications for export licences to the Trade Department covering more than 1,200 dozens of ladies dresses for export to the United States in 1995.

It was stated in the applications that the goods were of Hong Kong origin.

However, investigations by officers of the Customs and Excise Department found that the production of the goods were carried out in China.

A spokesman for the Customs and Excise Department said the offences were serious.

The department would step up enforcement actions to track down such malpractice to protect the commercial reputation of Hong Kong and to ensure that the confidence of its trading partners in Hong Kong's textile control system would not be undermined by some dishonest businessmen, the spokesman stressed.

The maximum penalty for making a false statement in licence application is a \$500,000 fine plus two years' imprisonment.

End

Secretary for the Civil Service visits penal institutions

* * * * *

The Secretary for the Civil Service, Mr Lam Woon-kwong, today (Thursday) visited a maximum-security and a medium-security prison to learn about the management and operation of the penal system, and to see firsthand, the working environment of Correctional Services officers.

Accompanied by the Commissioner of Correctional Services, Mr Raymond Lai Ming-kee, Mr Lam first visited Stanley Prison where he was briefed on the management of Hong Kong's largest maximum-security prison and the current project to redevelop the institution as well as the surrounding area.

Mr Lam toured different workshops in Stanley Prison and saw prisoners producing various products.

At Tung Tau Correctional Institution, Mr Lam was briefed on the work to build an annex to the prison to provide more places for prisoners to ease prison overcrowding.

End

Royal Navy patrol craft to visit Macau

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Two Royal Navy patrol craft of the Hong Kong Squadron, HM ships Starling and Plover, will sail for Macau this weekend on what is likely to be the last such visit to the Portuguese enclave.

Chief of Staff and Senior Naval Officer, Commodore Peter Melson, will embark on HMS Starling when the two ships arrive in Macau tomorrow (Friday). The patrol craft will return to Hong Kong on Monday (January 20).

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority interbank liquidity

		TIME	AGGREGATE BALANCE OF SETTLEMENT ACCOUNTS
OPENING AGGREGATE BALANCE	467 MN	0930 HR	6,884 MN
CLOSING AGGREGATE BALANCE	552 MN	1000 HR	9,016 MN
CHANGE ATTRIBUTABLE TO :		1100 HR	20,152 MN
MONEY MARKET ACTIVITY	- 119 MN	1200 HR	23,097 MN
LAF REVERSAL	+6,136 MN	1500 HR	29,435 MN
LAF TODAY	- 5,932 MN	1600 HR	32,638 MN

LAF RATE 4.00% BID/6.00% OFFER TWI 125.8 *-0.1* 16.1.97

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF Bills

EF Notes/MTRC Notes

Terms	Yield	Terms	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	4.37	2 years	2811	5.72	100.17	5.69
1 month	4.43	3 years	3001	6.17	100.15	6.21
3 months	4.59	5 years	5112	6.57	99.92	6.70
6 months	4.81	7 years	7311	6.80	99.75	6.96
12 months	5.10	10 years	1610	7.37	102.20	7.18
		5 years	M503	7.35	101.93	6.97

TOTAL TURNOVER OF EF BILLS AND NOTES - \$14,638 MN

CLOSED JANUARY 16, 1997

End