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Transcript of the Governor's media session

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Following is the transcript of the Governor's remarks to the media after opening the Fung Hon Chu Gifted Education Centre in Tsuen Wan today (Wednesday):

Governor: Good morning. I'm delighted to have the opportunity of opening this excellent centre for education and gifted children. It is a very considerable charitable tribute to the memory of Mr Fung and his family. And I think the whole community is grateful for what this centre will contribute to our educational service.

Question: Would the Government accede to the Democratic's request to amend the ordinance...?

Governor: Well. We've put proposals, as I think you know, to the Chinese side through the JLG, proposals which are entirely consistent with the Bill of Rights. I hope we'll get a response from the Chinese side before long and then we'll let the Legislative Council know how we think we should best proceed. Nobody should be very surprised that these issues are once again the focus of attention and debate. It is not because of anything the Hong Kong Government has done. And I think perhaps Chinese officials and Chinese advisers should ask themselves why there is so much concern in Hong Kong about these civil liberties matters.

Question: Would the Government ... push it through at JLG?

Governor: We'll continue, as we always do, patiently but firmly pressing for what we believe is in Hong Kong's best interest in the JLG.

Question: Any idea when there might be a reply?

Governor: No. But our patience while legendary is not infinite.

Question: (on remarks on Governor's role in the handover ceremony)

Governor: As it is Christmas, I think we should all be charitable and not comment on nonsense. Thank you very much.

End

Statement by Secretary for Works on sewage meeting

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Following is a statement made by the Secretary for Works, Mr Kwong Hon-sang, after the Fourth Round of the Expert Group Meeting on Sewage under the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group (JLG) today (Wednesday):

"As you will all know, this is the first meeting of JLG sewage experts since March this year when both sides agreed to the setting up of a Technical Group to look at a number of issues related to the Strategic Sewage Disposal Scheme (SSDS). The group has been working hard since then in a practical and harmonious way.

I am pleased to be able to report today, that we have been able to satisfy our Chinese counterparts over many of their concerns, and we have this morning endorsed the work of the Technical Group. I would like to thank the leaders and members of the Group on their hard work.

We have also agreed today that we should press ahead as quickly as possible with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for the SSDS in order to confirm the best options for future stages. Our Chinese counterparts will be participating closely in the EIA, both through this Expert Group, and directly with the consultants undertaking the work.

Both sides are committed to making SSDS a success, to bring maximum early environmental benefit to Hong Kong."

End

HK's role as regional centre assumes importance: D-G/I

* * * * *

Hong Kong's strategic location and excellent external communication links have enabled it to become a major regional centre of the Asia Pacific, the Director-General of Industry, Mrs Regina Ip, said today (Wednesday).

This role had assumed increasing importance with the rapid economic development in the Asia Pacific region in recent years, she added.

Speaking at a press conference to announce the findings of the 1995 Survey of Regional Representation by Overseas Companies in Hong Kong, Mrs Ip said the survey identified 2,068 regional operations by overseas companies in Hong Kong. They included 782 regional headquarters and 1,286 regional offices in Hong Kong.

In last year's survey, 714 regional headquarters and 1,132 regional offices of overseas companies were identified in Hong Kong.

The United States had the largest number of regional headquarters in Hong Kong, with 198 companies, followed by Japan (116 companies) and the United Kingdom (94 companies). The major lines of business of these regional headquarters included trading and distribution, manufacturing, finance and banking, and transport and related services.

As regards regional offices, the survey showed that Japan had the largest number, with a total of 303. The United States (228 companies) was next, followed by the United Kingdom (132 companies) and China (81 companies). Trading and distribution were the most common economic activities pursued by regional offices in Hong Kong, followed by finance and banking, manufacturing, and transport and related services.

On the perception of Hong Kong as a regional centre, more than 90 per cent of the respondents considered banking and financial facilities to be the most important and favourable factors. Other important and favourable factors included Hong Kong's infrastructure, regional location, availability of managerial, professional and technical skills, and government economic policy.

About 70 per cent of the respondents considered that, compared with last year, the overall attractiveness of Hong Kong as a regional representation centre had improved or had been satisfactory.

End

HK attracts external investment in manufacturing industries

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The continuing increase in external investment in Hong Kong's manufacturing industries in the past 10 years reflects the attractiveness of Hong Kong as a manufacturing base, the Director-General of Industry, Mrs Regina Ip, said.

Mrs Ip was commenting on the findings of the latest survey conducted by Industry Department on external investment in Hong Kong's manufacturing industries at a press conference today (Wednesday).

She said according to the latest survey findings, the total value of external investment totalled \$44 billion, at original cost, at the end of 1994, representing eight per cent higher than the amount identified in last year's survey. It was four times the figure of \$11.4 billion in 1984 when the first survey on external investment in Hong Kong's manufacturing industries was conducted.

"The increase was largely accounted for by the rise in stock of fixed assets," Mrs Ip said.

Japan kept its position as the leading source country of external investment, accounting for \$14.7 billion or 34 per cent of the total.

The United States of America was the second largest investor with investment totalling \$11.8 billion (27 per cent of the total), followed by China with investment valued at \$4.2 billion (10 per cent) and the United Kingdom at \$3 billion (seven per cent).

The electronics, electrical products, textiles and clothing, and food and beverages industries accounted for about 60 per cent of total external investment last year.

"External investment is important to Hong Kong not only because of the capital inflow, but also because it helps to introduce new or improved products, advanced technologies, innovative designs and management techniques to help Hong Kong's manufacturing industries remain competitive in the world market," Mrs Ip said.

The survey found that 149 of the 424 respondent companies (35 per cent) with external investment were joint ventures with local partners, which is a form of co-operation that facilitates technology transfer.

One hundred and seventy-seven companies (42 per cent of the respondents) also reported benefiting from the managerial, professional and technical skills of experts sent to work in Hong Kong by the parent overseas companies. Two hundred and forty-six companies (58 per cent) reported that they received assistance from external investors through engineering and technical assistance, acquisition of machinery and equipment, or licensing arrangements. Two hundred and twenty-three companies (53 per cent) reported that external investors had been involved in the transfer of one or more types of advanced technology.

On the attractiveness of Hong Kong as a manufacturing base, more than 80 per cent of the respondents considered banking and financial facilities and infrastructure were the most attractive factors, Mrs Ip said.

Other favourable factors included availability of managerial skill, regional location and availability of professional/technical skill.

With regard to the outlook of business in the coming few years, the majority of companies surveyed (61 per cent) expected business in 1995 to be satisfactory or good. Twenty-four per cent of the respondents revealed plans for expansion in Hong Kong and another 58 per cent planned to continue the current operations in the territory.

End

Manufacturing industries maintain high productivity

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Hong Kong's manufacturing industries have maintained a high level of productivity, the Director-General of Industry, Mrs Regina Ip, said today (Wednesday).

Introducing the report - 1995 Hong Kong's Manufacturing Industries - published by Industry Department, Mrs Ip said at a press conference that the dollar value of the gross output of Hong Kong's manufacturing industries increased at an average annual rate of six per cent from \$170.7 billion in 1983 to \$311.8 billion in 1993.

Productivity, measured in terms of value added per person, increased at an average annual rate of 14.4 per cent during the same period. The manufacturing sector enjoyed the highest growth rate in productivity among the four major economic sectors during 1983 to 1993. It was also higher than the growth rate of the Hong Kong economy as a whole, which was at 13.3 per cent.

Investment in Hong Kong's manufacturing industries, measured in terms of gross additions to fixed assets, increased at an average annual rate of some eight per cent between 1983 and 1993.

"These statistics demonstrate the substantial amount of manufacturing activities in Hong Kong, and the continued importance of the manufacturing sector to our economy. But the contribution of the manufacturing sector is really much more if one takes into account the Hong Kong-owned factories in Southern China and the businesses that they have brought to Hong Kong's manufacturing-support services sector," Mrs Ip said.

Mrs Ip also pointed out that Hong Kong's manufacturing sector was well-known for its flexibility and ability to adapt to frequent changes in market demand.

"Over the years, there has been a continuous shift from the assembly of relatively labour-intensive and simple products to the manufacture of more technology-intensive and sophisticated products with a higher value-added content," she said.

The report also contains the findings of a survey of Hong Kong's manufacturing environment conducted by Industry Department between June and September this year.

Questionnaires were sent to 2,867 sampled establishments in 14 selected manufacturing industries. A total of 2,081 valid returns were received.

When asked to comment on the favourableness of 12 given investment factors, at least half of the respondents considered six of those factors to be favourable. The six were: Hong Kong's infrastructure, banking and financial facilities, geographical location, availability of professional/technical skills, availability of managerial skills and labour productivity.

End

First gifted education centre officially opened

* * * * *

The Fung Hon Chu Gifted Education Centre will enhance the Education Department's services to gifted children and provide a good foundation for long-term support for the development of gifted education in Hong Kong, the acting Director of Education, Mr Kwan Ting-fai, said today (Wednesday).

Addressing the opening ceremony of the centre, which was officiated by the Governor, the Rt Hon Christopher Patten, Mr Kwan noted that the Education Department had been providing enrichment programmes for gifted primary school pupils since the eighties.

"The establishment of this centre will further enhance our services to children of high abilities," he said.

Mr Kwan said the centre would help raise the awareness of the general public in the area of gifted education and rally support from the community at large. Parents of gifted children will also be helped to maximise the potential of their children.

The centre is equipped with facilities and resources of a high standard to provide assessment and counselling services as well as training and enrichment programmes for gifted children, their parents and teachers.

The centre also houses a selection of audio-visual materials, computer assisted instruction and learning packages, library books, journals and magazines relating to gifted education.

Mr Kwan believed that the wide range of services offered will undoubtedly bring about positive cumulative effects on the education of pupils of high abilities.

He paid tribute to the late Fung Hon Chu, from whose education trust fund an \$8 million donation was made to establish the centre.

The Education Commission Report No 4 recommended that school-based programmes should be provided for academically gifted children with the support of a resource centre.

The Fung Hon Chu Gifted Education Centre is located at the vacated premises of the Tsuen Wan Government Secondary Technical School at 7 Shing Mun Road, Tsuen Wan.

It houses a theatre for 200 spectators, a library, a computer room, a language laboratory, a science laboratory, resource teaching rooms, training rooms, interview rooms and other ancillary facilities.

Being the first and only resource centre on academically gifted education, the centre is aimed at serving all the academically gifted children identified, in particular those in the pilot school-based programme, their parents and teachers.

Major services provided include -

- * training courses and enrichment programmes for individuals or groups of academically gifted children;
- * training courses, workshops and seminars for teachers, parents of academically gifted children and professionals on gifted education;
- * counselling services for academically gifted children and their parents;
- * research work on academically gifted education.

Learning and thinking skills activities will be conducted at the centre in 1995-96. There will also be a series of teacher training workshops by overseas consultants in December 1995 and January 1996.

From 1996-97 onwards, the programmes conducted at the centre will gradually be extended to serve 1,300 students in 81 primary schools who are already identified to be academically gifted. In the long run, it will serve all the academically gifted children in Hong Kong, estimated to be around 20,000, representing two per cent of the total population.

Schools which are interested in making use of the facilities in the premises may contact the centre-in-charge.

An Education Department spokesman said that to maintain a smooth operation of the Fung Hon Chu Gifted Education Centre, a management committee comprising representatives from the Education Department, the Board of Trustees of the Fung Hon-chu Foundation Trust Fund, tertiary institutions, school personnel and parents will be set up.

The spokesman said it has been the Government's explicit aim to develop the talents of young people in Hong Kong, which is why the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, the Hong Kong Sports Institute and the Jockey Club Ti-I College are established.

"The setting up of the Fung Hon Chu Gifted Education Centre represents another government effort to help the development of gifted children. The Government will continue to provide opportunities for young people to develop their talents," the spokesman said.

End

HKMA statement on Fed funds rate cut

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The Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) issued the following statement this (Wednesday) morning:

"The US Fed has decided to cut the Fed funds rate by 25 basis points, but not the discount rate.

The HKMA expects the movements of Hong Kong interbank interest rates, particularly those for short term money, would in time reflect the cut in the Fed funds rate.

The HKMA has decided to leave LAF rates unchanged, in line with the decision by the Fed not to cut the US discount rate.

It is for the Committee of the Hong Kong Association of Banks (HKAB) to decide on whether adjustments should be made to interest rates for retail deposits of less than 7 days.

It is for individual banks to decide on whether adjustments should be made to their best lending rates and other lending rates."

End

Proactive marine traffic management plans unveiled

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The Marine Department today (Wednesday) unveiled a series of proactive initiatives in marine traffic management to better manage traffic in the busy waters of Hong Kong harbour.

The General Manager (Vessel Traffic Services) of the department, Mr Roger Tupper, said these initiatives were designed to cope the ever increasing marine traffic and to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the port.

During the past 10 years ocean-going ship movements have increased by over 200 per cent whilst river-trade cargo vessel and ferry transits experienced similar growth.

The tremendous increase in the volume of traffic posed a major challenge to the Marine Department's marine traffic management style, which in the past was focused on passive monitoring of ship movements, Mr Tupper noted.

He said the response to cope with the increase required a more active interventionist form.

The department has hence embarked on a series of initiatives for better management of the fast growing traffic. Some of these initiatives begin to pay off while others are at the advanced stage of planning.

Mr Tupper said a latest round of re-alignment of the principal fairways and anchorages in the western part of the harbour had been completed.

"The new arrangement facilitates the movements of ocean-going traffic in line with the traffic activity level and minimises conflict vicinities," he said.

Additionally the department keeps constant watch on the sophisticated traffic management surveillance system which came into operation in 1989. A latest move in this direction is the introduction of Local Marine Traffic Control Centres at conflict vicinities.

"The first centre at the Ma Wan Channel commenced operation in June this year, initially with limited operating hours but starting from last Saturday (December 16) the centre is manned round the clock," Mr Tupper said.

"To supplement the surveillance system and to provide a physical presence on the spot, the operations of the patrol launch fleet has extended considerably over past year.

"More recently the compulsory pilotage, which was first introduced in 1985, has extended to all vessels over 3,000 gross registered tons and all tankers over 1,000 gross registered tons."

While these measures were able to meet the present challenge to maintain the port of Hong Kong as one of the safest and efficient ports in the world but there was no room for complacency, Mr Tupper said.

"Predicted growth of marine traffic for the next five years to 2001 sees further significant growth in both ocean-going and river-trade vessel movements," Mr Tupper added.

The department has taken another five-year Programme of Proactive Traffic Management. Major initiatives in the programme include -

- (1) Update on the Strategic Planning model through completion of the Marine Activities, Associated Risk Assessment and Development of a Future Strategy for the Optimum Usage of Hong Kong Waters Study by December 1996;
- (2) Improved response time at the Vessel Traffic Centre by the establishment of an additional work station in April 1997 to direct vessels approaching from the west;
- (3) To enhance the above, the installation of a very high frequency direction finder at Black Point to assist in vessel radar target identification;
- (4) To widen the radar coverage of the Vessel Traffic System by the installation of an additional radar to cover Mirs Bay by mid-1998;
- (5) To extend pilotage provision by establishing a pilot station at the southern end of the East Lamma Channel;
- (6) To construct additional Local Marine Traffic Control Centres at Kwai Chung Port in late 1998 and Green Island in 2000; and
- (7) To enhance the patrol vessel activities by the purchase of new vessels suited to local vessel control and management, and progressive extension of operation hours.

"With these initiatives in place, the Director of Marine, is satisfied that he can meet the demands of a vibrant growing port and maintain the present reputation of Hong Kong as a safe and efficient harbour," Mr Tupper said.

End

Regulations to localise UK enactments

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As part of an exercise to localise certain United Kingdom enactments relating to seafarers, the Government is introducing a series of regulations or rules made under the Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) Ordinance, a Marine Department spokesman said today (Wednesday).

A total of 28 sets of regulations or rules relating to the health, safety and welfare of seafarers and the mercantile marine industry have been prepared under the ordinance.

"Among them, 18 sets of regulations enshrine existing administrative practice in legislation while the others replace the existing items of subsidiary legislation," the spokesman said.

"The Government's intention is to bring the ordinance and its subsidiary legislation into operation on March 1, 1996," the spokesman said.

For administrative convenience, the 28 sets of regulations or rules have been divided into three batches for tabling to the Legislative Council for consideration.

"The first batch of nine sets of regulations will be gazetted this Friday (December 22)," the spokesman said.

The Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) (Allotments) Regulation prescribes the form of an allotment note, provides for the calculation of the amount which may be allotted, and limits the circumstances in which and the number of persons to whom an allotment may be made.

The regulation also prescribes the times and intervals at which the payments under an allotment note are to be made.

The Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) (Entry into Dangerous Spaces) Regulation requires the master of a ship to ensure that all entrances to unattended spaces on the ship be secured against entry, and requires the employer to ensure that procedures for safe entry and working in dangerous spaces be clearly laid down and observed.

It provides that drills be carried out in tankers of 500 tons or over and on other ships of 1,000 tons or over, and requires the employer to ensure that equipment for testing dangerous spaces be carried and maintained in good working order.

The regulation also provides the Director of Marine with the powers to inspect and detain Hong Kong ships and other ships while they are within the waters of Hong Kong.

The Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) (Health and Safety: General Duties) Regulation requires the employers of seafarers on board Hong Kong ships, other than certain fishing vessels, to ensure the health and safety of all those seafarers and of other persons who may be affected by their acts and omissions.

In particular, the regulation provides for the maintenance of plant, machinery and equipment, the use, handling, stowage and transport of articles and substances, the provision of information, instruction and training, the maintenance of the ship in a safe condition, the maintenance of a safe environment on board the ship, and collaboration with other employers.

It requires a seafarer to take reasonable care for the health and safety of himself and other persons.

The regulations provides for the inspection and detention of Hong Kong ships and other ships by the Director of Marine while they are within the waters of Hong Kong.

The Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) (Hours of Work) Regulation which applies to all seagoing Hong Kong ships of 500 GRT (gross registered tons) and over but excluding fishing vessels, requires masters of, and employers of seafarers on, ships to ensure that seafarers do not, except in an emergency, undertake navigational or engine room or machinery watchkeeping duties unless they are adequately rested, and that when in charge of such watches, they do not undertake excessively long periods of duty.

The Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) (Provisions and Water) Regulation specifies requirements as to provisions and water to be provided to seafarers employed in seagoing Hong Kong ships, and other seagoing ships while they are within the waters of Hong Kong.

In particular, it specifies the duties of the employer and master of a ship to ensure the standard of water provided on the ship. The Regulation does not apply to fishing vessels except certain trawlers.

The Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) (Returns of Births, Deaths and Missing Persons) Regulation deals with matters concerning the returns of births, deaths and missing persons from the ship.

The Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) (Safe Movement on Board Ship) Regulation requires that safe means of access be maintained to any place on a ship where a person may be expected to go, and that transit area be kept free from materials or substance likely to cause a person to slip or fall.

It requires that adequate lighting be provided, that standard safety signs be used, that guard rails be provided where appropriate, that ladders be soundly constructed and that vehicle movements be carried out safely.

It also provides for the inspection and detention of Hong Kong ships and other ships by the Director of Marine while they are within the waters of Hong Kong.

The Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) (Ships' Doctors) Regulation requires every Hong Kong ship, which is not a coastal-going ship and which goes to sea having more than 100 persons on board, to carry a medical practitioner.

The Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) (Crew Accommodation) Regulation governs the standard of the crew accommodation to be provided in Hong Kong ships.

End

Summonses issued to contractor for suspected late payment

* * * * *

The Labour Department today (Wednesday) issued six summonses to a building contractor for suspected late payment of wages to a group of imported workers from Thailand in July and August this year.

The summonses were served on Dragages et Travaux Publics, the contractor of a construction site under the new airport and related projects at the Central Reclamation Phase One under Section 23 of the Employment Ordinance.

Section 23 of the Employment Ordinance stipulates that wages shall become due on the expiry of the last day of the wage period and shall be paid as soon as practicable but in any case not later than seven days thereafter. The maximum penalty for the offence is a \$200,000 fine and imprisonment for one year.

The case will be heard in Western Magistracy on January 19, 1996.

A Labour Department spokesman said labour officers were still investigating a number of cases involving late payment of wages to imported workers engaged in the new airport and related projects.

"Prosecution will be taken once we collect sufficient evidence and upon receiving advice from the Attorney General," the spokesman added.

End

New drop-off area completed to relieve congestion at airport

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In a bid to improve customer service and relieve pressure on the already congested roads in the airport during the Christmas and Chinese New Year, finishing touches have just been put to the new drop-off area at Kai Tak Airport.

A spokesman for the Civil Aviation Department said today (Wednesday) the new drop-off area was converted from the second floor of the car park and was easily accessible from Olympic Avenue.

"This is a real boon for vehicles arriving at the airport from the cross-harbour tunnel and Tsim Sha Tsui," he said.

Huge new signs have been placed on the end of the car park marking the entrance to the drop-off area.

"Access by car is easy - just take the far right lane from Olympic Avenue and miss all the queues," the spokesman added.

"We now have three sets of lifts to take passengers straight to the check-in areas in the terminal, and there are plenty of trolleys provided."

He urged passengers to use the new area as much as possible.

"We are very conscious of the difficulties that drivers encounter, even at normal times, trying to drop off passengers at the departures level at Kai Tak.

"At this time of the year, the problem is particularly acute and we believe that the new drop-off area will help tremendously," the spokesman said.

End

December issue of Monthly Digest of Statistics published

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A feature article entitled "Gross National Product (GNP) Estimates for 1993" is published in the December 1995 issue of the Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics.

The first set of Hong Kong's Gross National Product (GNP) estimates, in respect of reference year 1993, has been released. It is compiled on the basis of the latest revised Gross Domestic Product (GDP) estimate (November 1995) and data obtained from a new annual survey (Survey of External Factor Income Flows).

The feature article introduces the basic concepts and compilation methods related to GNP and describes the salient features of the preliminary GNP estimates for 1993.

The December 1995 issue of the Hong Kong Monthly Digest of Statistics is already on sale at \$50 a copy. It contains all information about Hong Kong's latest situation regarding economic growth, the labour market, inflation and many other social and economic issues that have important impact on business and everyday life.

Purchase of this publication can be made at the Government Publication Centre, ground floor, Low Block, Queensway Government Offices, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong. The publication is also available for sale at the Publications Unit of the Census and Statistics Department, 19th floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong.

Regular subscription can also be arranged with the Publications (Sales) Office of the Information Services Department on 2598 8194.

End

Investigation into sinking of oil barge

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The Marine Department is investigating circumstances leading to the sinking of a Hong Kong licensed oil barge, the Ruby 3, off Western District yesterday (Tuesday).

The 10.97-metre, 18.94-gross registered ton Ruby 3, while carrying diesel oil from Tsuen Wan to Western District, listed to its port side and subsequently sank between mooring buoys B15 and B21 at about 9 am yesterday.

Two crew members of the oil barge swam to another barge.

No one was injured in the incident but it caused a spill of diesel oil measuring 10 metres by 10 metres.

The Pollution Control Unit of the Marine completed cleaning up the oil spill at 3.30 pm yesterday.

The oil barge has been salvaged and is now moored at Tsuen Wan Dangerous Goods Anchorage awaiting repairs.

End

Hong Kong Monetary Authority money market operations

	\$ million	Time (hours)	Cumulative change (\$million)
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Opening balance in the account	2,014	0930	-579
Closing balance in the account	2,031	1000	-579
Change attributable to :		1100	-559
Money market activity	-583	1200	-559
LAF today	+600	1500	-559
		1600	-583

LAF rate 4.25% bid/6.25% offer TWI 122.6 *+0.2* 20.12.95

Hong Kong Monetary Authority

EF bills		EF notes				
Terms	Yield	Term	Issue	Coupon	Price	Yield
1 week	5.74	2 years	2711	5.60	100.02	5.66
1 month	5.73	3 years	3810	6.15	100.84	5.91
3 months	5.63	5 years	5012	6.38	100.05	6.47
6 months	5.61	7 years	7211	6.82	100.63	6.82
12 months	5.57	5 years	M502	7.30	102.40	6.83

Total turnover of EF bills and notes - \$22,824 million

Closed December 20, 1995

End