



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Post Office to host 1997 Asia Pacific Post Workshop

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The Postmaster General, Mr Robert Footman, announced today (Saturday) that the Hong Kong Post Office has been given the honour of hosting the 1997 Asia Pacific Post Workshop from March 10 to 12 at the Regal Kowloon Hotel.

The objective of the workshop entitled "Today, Tomorrow, The Future" is to review the opportunities and threats facing the postal administrations in the Asian-Pacific region and to draw up a regional Business Plan for the Post on short and long term basis for the next decade.

A total of 26 delegates from 15 postal administrations including Hong Kong will be attending the workshop.

The organiser, Asia Pacific Post, is a business and information office set up in Singapore in 1995 under the auspices of the Asian-Pacific Postal Union to serve the commercial, operational and technical needs of the Asia-Pacific postal administrations. This is the third workshop of its kind. The last two Workshops in 1995 and 1996 were held in Indonesia and Australia respectively.

"The workshop will serve to draw the postal administrations in the Asian-Pacific region closer together for cooperation in meeting the changing needs of our customers in the region. It will also strengthen our ties and enhance our working relations with the participating administrations," said Mr Footman.

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Public urged to plant trees under popular scheme

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Members of the public are urged to take part in the annual popular Community Tree Planting Scheme in the coming weeks.

The appeal was made by the Acting Director of Agriculture and Fisheries, Mr Richard Yip Shui-ming, at the launching ceremony of this year's scheme at Kei Ling Ha, Ma On Shan Country Park this (Saturday) morning.

Starting tomorrow, four tree-planting sites will be opened to the public on Sundays and public holidays until the end of April. The sites are located at country parks in Ma On Shan, Quarry Bay, Hok Tau and Nam Shan (Lantau South).

Seedlings, planting tools and technical assistance will be provided for participants at the planting sites.

Planting activities can also be pre-arranged for schools and organisations at selected sites. Interested groups can contact the Agriculture and Fisheries Department's (AFD) Education Section on 2733 2121.

Mr Yip said that the main objective of the Community Tree Planting Scheme, now in its 40th year, was to encourage local residents' active participation in the greening of the territory.

He pointed out the scheme was a continuation of a territory-wide tree planting programme started in the early 1950s which had gradually turned eroded hillsides into woodlands.

"Since the 1980s, some 300,000 trees had been planted in country parks under the scheme each year, including many local species. These trees had enriched the territory's natural habitat and bio-diversity," he added.

He reiterated that the success of the scheme owed much to the public participation and support of many community organisations including the local Lions Clubs.

Also speaking at today's ceremony, Chairman of the Country and Marine Parks Board, Professor Jim Chi-yung said that the scheme, attracting more than 20,000 participants each year, would help enhance local residents' awareness on protecting trees and nature conservation.

"Trees can prevent soil erosion, conserve water resources, provide natural habitat for wildlife and enhance bio-diversity of our countryside."

The opportunity of physically planting trees by the public is an effective means to promote the message of countryside conservation, Dr Jim said.

Also present at the ceremony were the Lions Clubs District Governor, Mr So Chun-yu; Chairman of Country and Marine Parks Board's Public Relations committee, Mr Victor Hui; Chairman of the Board's Country Parks Committee, Dr Tam Wing-kun and Chairman of the Sai Kung District Board, Mr Ng Sze-fuk.

End

Commonwealth Day Message 1997 from Her Majesty the Queen,
Head of the Commonwealth

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The Commonwealth Day theme this year is "Talking to One Another". It is a fitting choice, because 1997 is a year when more people than ever before in the Commonwealth will have the opportunity to communicate with each other.

Modern travel has made it easy to meet and talk face-to-face. Many from throughout the Commonwealth will take advantage of this in 1997 for sports tours, youth exchanges, science conventions, and other gatherings. Here in Britain, for instance, the city of Edinburgh will be host to the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting later this year. At the same time, Commonwealth non-governmental organisations will be meeting there. So Commonwealth people will be getting together at all levels to exchange ideas.

But improved and easier travel is only one development. Recent advances in communications technology now enable us to talk to each other and to see each other without even needing to leave home. The Commonwealth uses this sort of technology for its distance education programme, especially through the Commonwealth of Learning based in Vancouver. Through communications like these, the barriers of distance can be removed and we can talk together, almost as if the whole Commonwealth was in one room. Many years ago, my grandfather first spoke to the Commonwealth by radio. Today my message is speeding its way around the world by radio and, for the first time, on the Internet.

Of course, having more ways of communicating and faster ways of doing so does not necessarily mean that we understand each other better. Technical advances do not automatically bring improvements. "Talking to One Another" is not a one-way process: we can explain our own points of view but we should also listen to the views of others. Commonwealth countries have an advantage in doing this because we have shared views of right and wrong, and because we use the common language of English. This makes it all the easier to listen, to exchange knowledge, and to share opinions and feelings with others whose daily lives may be very different from our own.

When we talk to one another, we can meet together in one place or we can use technology to hold discussions across the world. Whichever way we choose to communicate, the important point is that we keep talking and keep listening. By doing so, we ensure that the Commonwealth continues to grow as an informed and open-minded community of nations.

End

Hong Kong working days lost among the lowest in the world

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The small number of working days lost in the local labour market is among the lowest in the world - thanks to the hard work by staff of the Labour Relations Division (LRD) of the Labour Department.

Chief Labour Officer of the Labour Department, Mrs Jennie Chan, said today (Sunday): "The labour relations scene in 1996 was harmonious and stable. In 1996, the number of working days lost due to labour disputes was 0.99 per 1,000 wage earners and salaried employees which is among the lowest in the world."

She said the LRD provided free consultation service and voluntary conciliation service to employers and employees.

"The conciliation officers act as a neutral intermediary to help employers and employees understand their problems and assist them to reach mutually acceptable settlements.

"During the year, LRD handled 117,719 consultations and conciliated in 226 labour disputes as well as 22,840 employment claims. The average settlement rate was 65 per cent and the LRD has assisted employees in receiving a total amount of \$247 million.

"Among the 226 trade disputes, 112 were cases involving cessation of business and insolvency, representing about 50 per cent of the total number of disputes handled by the Division," she said.

Turning to promotional activities, Mrs Chan said that the LRD also organised promotional activities at district level, like Personnel Managers' Clubs, seminars on Human Resources Management and Certificate Courses on the Employment Ordinance, etc.

She said officers from the LRD also maintained close contacts with human resources practitioners and introduced to them the latest amendments to labour legislation and enlightened management practices.

"Additionally, the Division will strengthen its liaison with trade unions. It plans to build up an electronic data bank on trade union officials with their names and contact telephones and addresses.

"This will facilitate quick contacts when major labour disputes break out suddenly and this will enhance the chances of early settlement of such disputes," she said.

End

Travellers reminded to avoid Easter holiday rush

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The Immigration Department today (Sunday) reminded members of the public that they should apply for travel documents as early as possible if they intend to travel abroad during the Easter holidays.

"The number of people travelling outside Hong Kong will be greatly increased during this time of the year. In order to avoid last minute rush, people are advised to apply for British National (Overseas) passports and Hong Kong certificates of identity well in advance of the date on which they intend to travel," a spokesperson for the department said.

The spokesperson reminded applicants that with effect from April 1, 1997, the British Trade Commission would take over from Hong Kong Immigration Department the responsibility for issuing and renewing British National (Overseas) passports. The Immigration Department will cease taking applications for British National (Overseas) passport from April 1, 1997.

Other than applications for travel documents, applications for identity cards and other Registration of Persons services are also on high demand during this time of the year.

To avoid congestion, applicants are also requested to submit their applications before school/public holidays. Furthermore, applicants are encouraged to make use of the Automated Telephone Appointment Booking System which is operating 24 hours a day. The number is 2598 0888.

Information leaflets on application procedures and documents required are issued together with application forms which are available at the Immigration Headquarters and all Immigration Offices. For enquiry, members of the public may telephone 2824 6111 or use faxline 2877 7711.

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St John's Cathedral postmark to be introduced

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The Postmaster General, Mr Robert Footman, announced today (Sunday) that a special postmark will be introduced on March 11, 1997 to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of St John's Cathedral.

The Cathedral Church of St John the Evangelist stands today as a testament to the dedication and determination of the early residents and its leaders.

To mark the 150th Anniversary of the laying of the Foundation Stone, a programme of events is planned in and around the Cathedral, including the introduction of the postmark, during the week from March 9 to 16.

The Post Office will not issue any philatelic product on this occasion, but the special postmark will be made available for hand-back service on March 11 at the following 19 philatelic offices for any privately-made covers bearing an indication of the event:-

Airport Post Office
Aberdeen Post Office
Cheung Chau Post Office
Cheung Sha Wan Post Office
General Post Office
Granville Road Post Office
Harcourt Road Post Office
Hennessy Road Post Office
Kowloon City Post Office
Kowloon Central Post Office
Mong Kok Post Office
Peak Post Office
Sha Tin Central Post Office
Shau Kei Wan Post Office
Tai Po Post Office
Tsim Sha Tsui Post Office
Tsuen Wan Post Office
Tuen Mun Central Post Office
Yuen Long Post Office

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