



DAILY INFORMATION BULLETIN

ISSUED BY GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES
GARDEN ROAD, 5th-8th FLOORS, MURRAY BUILDING,
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Monday, February 3, 1997

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Chief Secretary's transcript

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The following is the transcript of a media session given by the Chief Secretary, Mrs Anson Chan, at the airport this (Monday) evening after her visit to the United States :

Chief Secretary: During this visit, I visited three American states and had the opportunity to meet with people in the business sector and also government officials. There are continuing to be very strong interests in Hong Kong and Hong Kong's future. But I have to say that the recent recommendations of the legal sub-group and the subsequent decision of the Preparatory Committee concerning the Bill of Rights Ordinance and repeal of legislation had sent an extremely negative signal to people in America and there is clearly concern about whether human rights will be protected after 1997 and in particular, there are doubts as to China's commitment to implementing the "one country, two systems" concept after 1997. Of course, I took this opportunity to try and put forward a positive side of Hong Kong. But I have to confess that the latest development has made my job rather more difficult. I clearly hope to be able to reflect the views and the feelings I have obtained on this trip to Mr Tung.

Question: You said you are in some delicate position of the legal issue....

Chief Secretary: I think that is a fact. Isn't it? I am part of the current administration but I have promised Mr Tung that I will stay on as Chief Secretary and therefore will be very much a part of the SAR Government.

Question: If you are unable to reconcile your position with Mr Tung....

Chief Secretary: I haven't exactly said I can't reconcile. I am simply just stating, as you know, the Hong Kong Government's position on the provisional legislature and on anything to do with human rights has been made abundantly clear. I am personally I share the community's disappointment that the Preparatory Committee has not seemed fit to recognise the widespread concern that has been caused by the legal sub-group's recommendations.

End

Estimates of GDP for third quarter of 1996 released

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The preliminary estimates of the expenditure-based gross domestic product (GDP) for the third quarter of 1996 and revised estimates for earlier periods are released today (Monday) by the Census and Statistics Department.

GDP grew by 5.1% in real terms in the third quarter of 1996 over the same quarter in 1995, following increases of 3.3% and 4.6% in the first and second quarters respectively.

Amongst the major GDP components, private consumption expenditure showed a year-on-year increase of 4.5% in real terms in the third quarter of 1996 over a year earlier. Government consumption expenditure increased by 5.3% in real terms.

On investment spending, gross domestic fixed capital formation recorded a year-on-year increase of 5.8% in real terms in the third quarter of 1996.

Within this, construction output in the public sector decreased by 6.6%, reflecting the peaking of work on the Airport Core Programme. But construction output in the private sector continued to pick up, to a growth of 4.5%. Taken together, overall expenditure on construction registered a slight decrease of 0.7%.

Expenditure on machinery and equipment decelerated from a 15.1% growth in real terms in the second quarter to a 6.5% growth in the third quarter.

As to external trade in goods, re-exports registered a year-on-year growth rate of 8% in real terms in the third quarter of 1996 over a year earlier, while domestic exports decreased by 9.9%.

Taken together, total exports increased by 4.9% in real terms. Imports of goods grew by 3.4% in real terms in the third quarter over a year earlier.

Exports of services increased by 7.1% in real terms in the third quarter of 1996 over a year earlier. The corresponding growth rate for imports of services was only 1.7%.

The implicit price deflator of the GDP, as a broad measure of overall inflation in the economy, rose by 4.6% in the third quarter of 1996 over a year earlier.

Summaries of the latest expenditure-based GDP figures are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

More details on the annual and quarterly estimates of GDP are published in a report entitled Quarterly Report of Gross Domestic Product Estimates Third Quarter 1996. The preliminary estimates of the production-based GDP for 1995 and final estimates for 1994 are also published in the report.

This bilingual report is now on sale at \$14 per copy at the Government Publications Centre, Queensway Government Offices, ground floor, Low Block, 66 Queensway, Hong Kong. It may also be purchased at the Publications Unit of the Census and Statistics Department, 19th floor, Wanchai Tower, 12 Harbour Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong.

Enquiries about this publication may be directed to the National Income Branch (1) of the Census and Statistics Department on 2582 5077.

Table 1 Expenditure-based GDP Estimates
first quarter of 1994 to third quarter of 1996
 表一 本地生產總值開支估計
 一九九四年第一季至一九九六年第三季

Year/quarter 年/季	GDP at Current Market Prices 本地生產總值以當時市價計算		GDP at Constant (1990) Market Prices 本地生產總值 以固定(一九九〇年)市價計算	
	HK\$ Mn 百萬港元	% change over same period of the preceding year 與上年同期 比較的增減百分率	HK\$ Mn 百萬港元	% change over same period of the preceding year 與上年同期 比較的增減百分率
1994	1,010,885	12.6	727,506	5.4
1995	1,084,570	7.3	762,007	4.7
1994				
1	231,931	14.8	169,621	6.5
2	244,549	13.8	174,073	5.5
3	263,814	11.0	190,727	4.3
4	270,593	11.5	193,085	5.4
1995				
1	249,889	7.7	180,372	6.3
2	263,009	7.5	183,235	5.3
3	282,552	7.1	198,801	4.2
4	289,120	6.8	199,600	3.4
1996				
1	271,699	8.7	186,270	3.3
2	289,971	10.3	191,688	4.6
3	310,662	9.9	208,940	5.1

Table 2 Expenditure-based GDP Estimates
Year-on-year growth rates, first quarter of 1995 to third quarter of 1996
表二 本地生產總值開支估計各季按年增長率
一九九五年第一季至一九九六年第三季

% change over same period of the preceding year
 與上年同期比較的增減百分率

		Expenditure Components of GDP 本地生產總值的開支組成部份										Gross Domestic Product 本地生產總值
		Private consumption expenditure 私人消費開支	Government consumption expenditure 政府消費開支	Gross domestic fixed capital formation 本地固定資本形成總額		Total exports of goods 貨物出口總額	Imports of goods 貨物進口	Exports of services 服務輸出	Imports of services 服務輸入			
				Total 總計	of which: 其中:							
				Machinery and Construction equipment 樓宇及建造 機器及設備								
At Current Market Prices 以當時市價計算												
Year/quarter 年/季												
1995		10.2	13.9	8.3	9.7	36.5	14.9	19.2	16.0	15.2	7.3	
1995	1	10.5	15.2	6.9	3.8	48.4	20.1	27.5	14.6	17.9	7.7	
	2	11.5	12.4	11.4	18.7	34.7	16.7	21.5	17.1	17.4	7.5	
	3	10.4	14.6	12.3	10.2	52.2	15.3	18.9	17.7	14.6	7.1	
	4	8.4	13.4	3.0	7.9	17.4	8.9	11.3	14.8	11.1	6.8	
1996	1	10.0	10.7	13.4	18.7	15.9	5.7	6.4	9.9	5.3	8.7	
	2	9.0	11.2	8.1	10.0	5.2	3.1	0.4	7.5	2.6	10.3	
	3	9.7	11.5	7.0	6.3	-0.6	3.5	1.3	8.9	3.3	9.9	
At Constant (1990) Market Prices 以固定(一九九〇年)市價計算												
Year/quarter 年/季												
1995		0.8	4.4	9.6	1.8	25.1	12.0	13.8	11.3	5.8	4.7	
1995	1	0.6	4.6	10.5	-1.7	37.9	17.6	21.7	9.7	6.9	6.3	
	2	1.3	2.3	8.6	10.3	16.0	12.7	13.6	12.2	6.5	5.3	
	3	1.0	5.6	15.3	1.3	40.4	12.2	13.5	12.9	5.4	4.2	
	4	0.4	5.0	4.7	-0.9	12.3	6.8	8.0	10.2	4.6	3.4	
1996	1	3.6	2.9	11.5	9.8	16.6	4.9	5.2	7.3	2.4	3.3	
	2	3.3	5.2	10.1	2.6	15.1	3.9	2.2	5.3	1.3	4.6	
	3	4.5	5.3	5.8	-0.7	6.5	4.9	3.4	7.1	1.7	5.1	

End

New handbook for new arrivals from China published

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A total of 200,000 copies of a new service handbook for new arrivals from China will be available from today (Monday) for distribution to the newcomers to help them integrate into the local community, the Director of Home Affairs, Mrs Shelley Lau, said.

Speaking at a press briefing to launch the second edition of the service handbook today, Mrs Lau said the handbook carried additional information on a wide range of services provided by government departments and non-governmental organisations.

"The first edition of the handbook prepared by the Home Affairs Department (HAD) last July received overwhelming response and newcomers found it very informative.

"We have therefore arranged to print more copies of the handbook with new chapters on vocational training, legal aid, consumers' rights, recreational and cultural venues, postal services, and services for new arrivals by non-governmental organisations as well as additional information on the Housing Department's Rent Assistance Scheme, squatter and roof-top structures, the Hospital Authority's emergency casualty services, and academic qualifications and accreditation.

"We hope the handbook will be useful to the new arrivals in helping them to adapt to the local way of life and to obtain the services they need," she said.

Written in simplified Chinese characters, the 151-page handbook also contains concisely presented facts on immigration, HAD services, social welfare, housing, education, employment, medical care, family planning, corruption prevention, transport, and emergency services.

It will be distributed at the Lo Wu immigration checkpoint, Registration of Persons - Kowloon Office at Empire Centre in Tsim Sha Tsui and all HAD district offices.

Mrs Lau also released today the findings of an HAD survey conducted with the assistance of the Immigration Department last year on newcomers from China.

She said firsthand information on the group was essential in helping the Government identify their special needs with reference to their age, dialect spoken and the district in which they lived.

Of the 35,635 questionnaires distributed to new arrivals from February to December last year, 20,040 were successfully completed and returned.

Mrs Lau said the survey found that 92.3 per cent of the respondents were aged between 11 and 49 and 76.3 per cent were female.

The majority of them, 65.3 per cent, were of Guangdong Province origin while 18.2 per cent came from Fujian Province. More than 70 per cent could speak Cantonese, over 60 per cent Putonghua and about 16.5 per cent Fujianese.

"Since only a quarter of the Fujianese new arrivals could speak Cantonese, language problems are thought to be one of the major obstacles faced by them in the process of integration.

"We found that quite a sizeable number of them have settled in Eastern District (27 per cent), Kowloon City (14 per cent), Tsuen Wan (12.3 per cent), Kwun Tong (10.3 per cent), Kwai Tsing (7.1 per cent) and Central and Western District (6.2 per cent). We expect to have greater demands for Cantonese training in these districts," Mrs Lau said.

On educational attainment, over 60 per cent have completed secondary school education or above.

Almost all the respondents, 99 per cent, said they came to Hong Kong for family reunion. Most of them settled in old urban districts, including Sham Shui Po, Eastern, Kwun Tong, Yau Tsim Mong and Kowloon City.

End

Sai Kung park visitor centre re-opens with facelift

The Sai Kung Country Park Visitor Centre is re-opened today (Monday) after being given a facelift with a wide range of new and attractive displays being added.

The centre was closed in January last year for a renovation programme to upgrade its facilities and exhibits.

Speaking at a ceremony to mark the re-opening of the centre this afternoon, the Director of Agriculture and Fisheries, Dr Lawrence Lee, thanked the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust for its generous donation of \$1 million towards the programme.

Dr Lee pointed out that the renovation was necessary because the original displays and exhibits in the centre had been there since the centre was set up in 1985.

"In addition, information has to be updated to cope with the latest development in nature conservation," he said.

New displays cover topics on marine parks, traditional customs in rural villages, change of landscape, computer data on hiking trails and other aspects.

He hoped all visitors to the centre could take the opportunity to gain a better insight into the natural environment of the Sai Kung Country Park.

Dr Lee also noted that visitor centres had been serving the purpose of providing information on country parks and as a base for the promotion of the countryside conservation message.

The Sai Kung centre is the largest among the six similar establishments in Hong Kong, he said, adding that it was very popular due to easy accessibility.

Its popularity is also attributed to the many displays there, including those on geological features, landscape, the High Island Reservoir, villages, flora and fauna habitats specific to the Sai Kung area.

The Director of Corporate Affairs and Charities, Hong Kong Jockey Club, Mr David Yau, said at the ceremony that the \$1 million donation for the renovation programme was part of the club's continuing efforts in promoting nature conservation.

Apart from subsidising the annual AFD forestry work camp project, the club also donated \$2.5 million last year for the production of five videos on Hong Kong's country parks to help promote the conservation message, Mr Yau added.

Also present at today's ceremony were the Chairman of Country and Marine Parks Board, Professor Jim Chi-yung; and the Chairman of the board's Public Relations Committee, Mr Victor Hui.

All visitor centres are open to the public daily between 9.30 am and 4.30 pm, except on Tuesdays.

No advanced booking is required by individual visitors. However, availability for group visits may be confirmed with the Agriculture and Fisheries Department's Education Section on 2733 2121.

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Employees must be covered by insurance

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Employers must take out insurance policies for their employees, otherwise they will face severe punishments.

Senior Labour Officer (Prosecutions), Mrs Tonia Leung, gave this warning today (Monday) following a recent court case in which the owner of Cheong Wan Shark's Fin and Seafood Restaurant in Tai Po was fined \$20,000 for failing to provide insurance cover for employees as required under section 40(1) of the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (ECO).

"Under the ECO, employers are required to take out insurance cover for all their employees so that they can fulfil their legal obligations to pay compensation for work-related injuries," said Mrs Leung.

"The Labour Department takes a serious view on compliance with this provision and our labour inspectors conduct frequent inspections to establishments to detect offences."

The maximum penalty for the offence is a fine of \$25,000 and imprisonment for 12 months.

End

Common code for Pay-per-call Recorded Information Service

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With the assistance of the Office of Telecommunications Authority (OFTA) and Television and Entertainment Licensing Authority (TELA), the four Fixed Telecommunication Network Services (FTNS) operators have agreed to adopt a Common Code of Practice for Pay-per-call Recorded Information Services.

The four operators are Hong Kong Telephone Company Limited, New T & T Hong Kong Limited, Hutchison Communications Limited and New World Telephone Limited.

A government spokesman said: "The 'Common Code' works under a self-regulatory principle.

"It sets out the obligations of FTNS operators in the delivery of pay-per-call services so as to maintain a common industry standard for the benefit of the public."

The code includes rules designed for the protection of consumers such as requirements for a pre-recorded announcement of the fees chargeable and an automatic mechanism to cut off the call after 10 minutes so as to avoid exorbitant bills arising from a caller forgetting to hang up his telephone.

The code also provides content control with measures to prevent children from accessing adult messages. All adult messages have to begin with a forewarning against accidental connection by children.

"In order to enforce the code, a Complaints Advisory Committee has been set up to deal with complaints. The committee is empowered to recommend disciplinary action ranging from warning, suspension to termination of the information provider's connection with FTNS operators' systems," the spokesman added.

The committee is chaired by Mrs Peggy Lam with Mr T L Tsim and Mr Paul Wong as members.

End

Welfare payment arrangements for Lunar New Year holidays

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Recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) under the bank payment system will receive their payments on Wednesday (February 5) if their pay days fall on the coming Lunar New Year public holidays (February 6 to February 8).

"Special payment arrangements will also be made for recipients of Social Security Allowance whose pay days fall within this period," a Social Welfare Department spokesman said today (Monday).

"Those who have bank accounts in Hongkong Bank or Hang Seng Bank can receive their payments on Wednesday (February 5) whereas those with accounts in other banks will get their payments next Monday (February 10)," he added.

In case of doubt, recipients are advised to contact their respective social security field units.

End

Water storage figure

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Storage in Hong Kong's reservoirs at 9 am today (Monday) stood at 78.1 per cent of capacity or 457.845 million cubic metres.

This time last year the reservoirs contained 467.508 million cubic metres of water, representing 79.8 per cent of capacity.

End